THE POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR OF YOUTH IN WHITEFISH RIVER FIRST
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation considers the political behaviour of youth in Whitefish River First Nation. This small Ojibway community located near Sudbury, Ontario is used as a case study to inquire into the political experiences, attitudes and behaviour of youth. Rooted in Community-Based Research and Indigenous Research Principles, conversations were carried out in a circle-method referred to as Discussion Circles to assess the political behaviour of youth between the ages of 16 and 25. While this study is heavily qualitative-focused, it includes some quantitative components. These include a youth political participation questionnaire and electoral participation data for Whitefish River First nation in federal, provincial and band elections.

Results demonstrate that these youth have a unique experience of politics defined by their identities, community and relationships. Their political behaviour is complex and nuanced. While they may not participate in conventional political activities, they are heavily involved in activities that are rooted in their culture and traditions. The community overall is democratically healthy and tends to participate widely in federal and provincial elections. Youth are for the most part satisfied with their lives in the community, but there are significant challenges due to the consequences of colonialism. Many of these implications affect their political behaviour.

Keywords: First Nations Youth, Youth Political Engagement and Participation, Community-Based Participatory Action Research, Anishinaabe or Ojibway Youth

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List of All Abbreviations and Symbols

AFN – Assembly of First Nations
CNFCCT – Council Fire Native Cultural Centre of Toronto
CBPR – Community Based Participatory Research
RCAP – Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996
INAC – Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
MRP – Matrimonial Real Property
MREB – McMaster University Ethics Board
MAARC – Manitoulin Anishinaabek Research Review Committee
WRFN – Whitefish River First Nation
IRP – Indigenous Research Principles
CWBI – Community Well Being Index
QDA – Qualitative Discourse Analysis
INM – Idle No More
MMIWG – Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Dedicated to the memory of Charles Shawanada

FIRST WORDS

Coming to Canada in August 1997 was a transformative moment in my life. The minute my family and I stepped out of the airport we knew this was home. Canada for many immigrants like us represents the land of peace and opportunity. My family and I had worked tremendously hard and endured unimaginable difficulties on our journey to this part of the world. Eventually over time we were integrated and became part of the Canadian mosaic. Yet, most of us had no clue that Canada was a nation built on the displacement, suppression and genocide of Indigenous peoples. Most of us either have forgotten or ignore the fact that we are all immigrants. While I am extremely privileged to live in Canada, I cannot ignore the fact that my being here ultimately leads to an illegitimate fabrication of this country.

Unfortunately, without realizing it, newcomers contribute to the colonial project that Canada has institutionalized since its existence. Newcomers are the foundation of the Canadian economy. They provide rich resources such as capital, knowledge and innovation. Immigrants come to Canada not only for a better life, but to fulfill their own Canadian dream. In our pursuit towards better lives we forget and ignore the dreadful conditions that many Indigenous peoples in Canada currently live in. We ignore injustices like the fact that First Nations children and youth living on reserves are continuously underfunded in comparison to the general population. This type of discrimination against First Nations peoples is unacceptable.

After taking numerous courses at the undergraduate and graduate level, I was unsatisfied with my level of understanding of Indigenous-Canadian history and relations. The reason I chose to attend McMaster University at the graduate level was because of an opportunity of being able to work on a SSHRC funded project that explores the impact of digital technology on First Nations participation and governance in Ontario. Only through involvement in this larger academic study, was I able to advance my current research with youth in Whitefish River First Nation. Therefore, I want to especially thank Dr. Nicole Goodman, Dr. Chelsea Gabel and Dr. Karen Bird for providing me with the opportunity of working on this tremendous project.

Being an immigrant and recent settler in this part of the world, I have a unique perspective and responsibility in the process of decolonization. The Canadian state and its institutions are not as deeply embedded in my system of thought. In addition, First Nations peoples are more sympathetic to my presence in their lands and have more patience in speaking with me than others. These two factors make this research not only attractive, but distinct from previous research with First Nations peoples.

As a result, this research is my way of learning about the culture and history of First Nations peoples in Canada while participating in the decolonization project. By conducting this research, I have had the privilege of meeting and discussing issues with First Nations peoples first hand. These conversations have yielded knowledge that goes beyond academic books and theories, they are tangible and personal. While this research is limited in scope and only embraces the youth experiences of an Ojibway community in Ontario, it has been a life changing experience. This community, with its leaders, elders and youth have forever altered my perspective on First Nations peoples in Canada and for this I will forever be thankful.

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Introduction and Important Considerations

On April 18, 1997, 30 members of the Native Youth Movement (NYM) occupied the British Columbia Treaty Commission Office overseeing the treaty negotiation process. The youth released a statement outlining their concerns regarding the treaty negotiations that were taking place. The youth were upset because they were not informed or consulted on the treaty process and their Indigenous leaders were "undermining their fiduciary duties and responsibilities to the future generations as native peoples" (NYM 1997). The young people insisted that their native leaders were brokering back door deals with government representatives and were not reaching out to their community members (Alfred 1999, 130). As a result, they claimed, the entire treaty process was illegitimate. Youth organized protests and rallies, occupied important offices and spaces, and expressed their distress over radio and television. This was not the first or last time Indigenous youth in Canada expressed alienation and exclusion from the political process and decided to take matters into their own hands.

Then in November 2012 something remarkable happened. One of the largest social movements in Canadian history known as Idle No More emerged. It was inspired by four women in Saskatchewan who believed the Conservative government of Stephen Harper was treating Indigenous peoples unfairly. The movement began as a protest against various initiatives of the Harper government, including a number that were being pushed through an omnibus bill also known as Bill C-45. Indigenous peoples, mainly First Nations, were tired of having their treaty rights ignored and encroached upon. This movement had no specific objectives and leaders. Rather, it was about reigniting an Indigenous protest spirit – "Idle No More" within an entire new generation of young people to become politicized and reconnect with their traditional values. Calls to action were initially prompted by the Twitter meme #Idle No More, which led to various forms of political activities that are considered widely unconventional (Scott 2013). Young First Nations were involved in protest moose hunts, rallies, traffic slowdowns, rail obstructions, traditional fasts, national events, benefit concerts, videoconferences, myth-busting exercises, and community outreach efforts (McMillan, Young and Peters 2013).

Evidently, First Nations youth are politically active, whether it is participating in conventional or nonconventional methods. The only issue is that this evidence is highly contingent on strong anecdotal data. We have very little evidence that supports the claim that First Nations youth, especially in the context of reserves, are politically active and in what capacity. Idle No More as a social movement was very urban-centred and many youth in northern community were not able to participate. Additionally, the argument advanced throughout the rest of the paper is that many forms of politically activities that are considered unconventional are in fact conventional to First Nation youth in this study. For example, healing marches, blockades, fasting are all considered unconventional methods, but they are political actions rooted in Ojibway traditions.

First Nations youth in Canada have been historically forced to exist on the margins of the political system They are both alienated by their local political communities and the wider Canadian political system. This was one of the main findings from the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996*. Many years have passed since the commission and not a single study has attempted to survey the political status of First Nations youth on reserves in Canada. This research in an attempt to fill this void makes an argument that the political behaviour of youth in Whitefish River First Nation (WRFN) is still largely influenced by the destructive processes and

implications of colonialism. The way the youth behave politically today is influenced by the lingering legacy of colonialism.

What is the puzzle?

There is a burgeoning field of study that examines the political behaviour of First Nations peoples in Canada with the majority of the work focused on their electoral participation (see Guerin 2003; Dalton 2007; Berdahl, Adams and Poelzer 2011; Harell, Panagos and Matthews 2013). While, there are some studies that look at politics within First Nations communities (Bedford and Pobihuschy 1995; Barsh et al. 1997), none of these focus specifically on youth. On the other hand, the only two studies that focus on youth (Silver et al. 2006; Alfred, Pitawanakwat and Price 2007), do not consider the community context. First Nations youth are the fastest growing demographic in Canada, yet we lack an elementary understanding of their political ideas and experiences, especially within their communities. Without such understanding, we will not be able to create and develop research and policies that are open and transformative for First Nations youth.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996 and various studies afterwards have demonstrated the need to bring First Nations youth into the political arena. Youth are excluded and alienated both in their communities and within Canada's institutions. The commission made numerous recommendations on empowering First Nations youth, but there has not been any evaluation or assessment done afterwards. One of the lesser objectives of this research is to assess the status of youth in WRFN and see whether the commission recommendations have had an impact on this community.

The objective of this research is to carry out an introductory examination of the social and political behaviour of youth in WRFN, focussing on participation within their community and outside of it. Adopting a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach, youth in this community participated in Discussion Circles and shared their experiences on a variety of topics related to the electoral process, politicians, social movements, politics in their community and more.

A Glimpse of WRFN

As a result, a case study emerges out of this dissertation that examines the young people's political efforts and aspirations in a single community. While this is a first step, understanding the political behaviour of youth in this community will provide us transferable knowledge and a conceptual framework of conducting similar research with youth in other First Nations. The details of the case, and the strengths and limits of the research design are discussed in greater detail in the research design and methodology chapter. However, a glimpse into WRFN make this community novel insofar as preliminary research shows the community is very politically active. Initial data on electoral participation rates suggests the community votes higher than many other First Nations. In addition, throughout the Idle No More campaign, community members participated in numerous blockades and education efforts. One of these events occurred right in the middle of the reserve on the highway that passes through the traditional lands of the WRFN.

The community is also ranked highly in comparison to other First Nations on the Community Well Being Index (CWBI)[1]. This ranking considers the social and economic levels of every community in Canada, including First Nations. WRFN comparatively to other First Nations as well as some of the smaller municipalities seems to be ranked reasonably. Community well-being is important because higher levels of education and income lead to greater political participation (Fournier and Loewen 2011). Additionally, the community is small in size and population and it is geographically located near many other First Nations. It has an active band government and the appropriate infrastructure to allow members to participate in various political efforts. These contextual factors propose that there should be opportunities for youth to become politically involved and research to be carried out.

Why Youth in Whitefish River First Nation?

This is an incredible opportunity to learn about the political experiences, perspectives, ideas and involvements of youth in this First Nations community[2] in Ontario. Case studies require immense introspection and justification. One of the primary objectives of this research is to arrive at the truth, which is one of the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The following questions are important in justifying this study: Why youth from this particular community? Are the youth included in this study representative of the youth in the community? Can the perspectives of these youth provide insight into the broader First Nations youth political behaviour?

WRFN is a close-knit small community with a small population but sizeable land and dispersed housing. There is a fire station, community centre, library, Youth and Elders centre, health centre, and government administration offices. There are 185 dwellings or homes in the community, with plans of building many more. On the WRFN traditional territory, there is a Lafarge cement quarry site and some other construction companies. There is a traditional burial site for community members. McGregor Bay is on one side of the community and other bodies of water on the other sides that are connected to Lake Huron. The community is engulfed in nature, with forests, rivers, and hills surrounding the community.

WRFN is the gateway to Mnidoo Mnising. This region has immense historical and spiritual significance to the Anishinaabe peoples. The community is located on the Great Spirit Trail and has a treasured history. Archaeologists have found stone tools, spears and arrowheads dating back to 9,000 years in this region. There are six other First Nations on the island and they make up the body of the UCCMM. In comparison to the other communities, WRFN is mid-sized and has many beneficial factors that make it an appropriate research site.

WRFN has 400 members living on the reserve and over 850 individuals living outside of the community. The total population of the community is around 1,293 as of July 2016 and it grew by 27.6% from 2006 to 2011. There are 425 Status or Registered Indians and 65 non-Status or Registered Indians living on the reserve. The median age of the community is 36.5 years, while the median age of the larger Indigenous population in Canada is 40 years old. Since the community is slightly younger in average age and is growing at a rapid rate, it will be an ideal site to consider the political behaviour of First Nations youth. The average income of community members is $24, 929.00 while the Ontario average income comparatively is

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[1] https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1345816651029/1345816742083
[2] Originally the intention was to work with another First Nations community in the region and they were approached, but they were not interested. Early on it became evident that it would be difficult to consider the political behaviour of First Nations youth without any prior relationship and trust.

$42, 264.00. Only 10.5% of the population has a university degree or higher, 30.5% of community members have no degree, certificate or diploma, and 18.5% have a high school diploma or equivalent. However, 37.5% have some trades/apprenticeship or non-university certificate. The unemployment rate in the community is 13.6% whereas the unemployment rate for Ontario in 2011 was 8.3%.

According to the CWBI, WRFN is a relatively healthy First Nations community. Compared to the other First Nations, its score of 73 is comparable to poor small municipalities in Ontario. The CWBI, however, captures disturbingly the horrid conditions in First Nations communities. Based on various economic factors such as income, education, housing and labour force activity, the CWBI shows the disparity between First Nations communities in Ontario and general communities. First Nations lag behind on all the indicators. WRFN being economically better off is valuable because there may be more economic and political opportunities for youth.

In addition to these sociodemographic factors, there are political reasons that WRFN is suitable for case study research. In preliminary research we learned about the proactive leadership of Chief Shining Turtle. He has been in power for over a decade and has been an outspoken voice of First Nations issues in mid-northwestern Ontario. He has testified to the Senate on First Nations issues and rallied youth in the community in at least two efforts. He has made considerable effort to improve the infrastructure, health, and the reputation of the community. He has provided space for not only young people, but also other members of the community to participate in politics.

However, the community has faced significant problems with suicide and political turmoil. Suicide rampaged through the First Nation from 2006 to 2011 taking many people's lives. In the most recent band election there were accusations that the voting process was tampered with. The community brought in an external returning officer from Six Nations to organize and manage the elections fairly. Yet, many community members including some youth challenged this external person that was brought in to oversee the electoral process[3].

Preliminary research showed WRFN has been active politically in numerous initiatives. While the political leaders led many of them, youth involvement appeared high. Idle No More, for instance, had a deep impact on the community and especially the young people. Before Idle No More youth in the community were involved in the HST campaign. They sent hundreds of letters to their MPPs and MPs. Youth coordinated petitions and gathered hundreds of signatures from community members. These examples indicate that WRFN is a politically active and driven community, with an active citizenry. The community is ranked highly on the CWBI and all of the indicators signified an overall healthy community. As a result, theoretically the young people in this community should be politically active. Community leaders and overall structures provide enough opportunities and programs for youth involvement.

Recruitment of youth was another difficult part of conducting this research. The community was located very far away and I was limited in the number of visits. The only way to recruit youth was through the help of community leaders like the youth and health workers. Working with these people we decided on "purposeful" and "convenience" sampling. This recruitment strategy allowed us to target youth in the community that may be interested in this study. Rather than seeking random or representative sampling, our strategy was based on putting

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[3] In March 2015, when I visited the community to work as a research assistant, there were certain experiences that led me to realize certain youth may have unequal access to opportunities in the community. Certain youth in the community may be more privileged than others leading to diverging political experiences and behaviours.

up posters and actively seeking youth recruitment over social media. Having worked with youth in the community previously in March 2015, they were approached over e-mail whether they would like to participate in this study and if they had any friends that would participate.

What is Political Participation or Engagement?

Before we can assess the nature of the political behaviour of youth in WRFN, we need to understand our core concepts: political participation or engagement. These two terms will be used interchangeably throughout this dissertation and are defined the same. Political participation or engagement is simply the way an individual is involved in the political decision-making process. Stoker (2006) argues that democracy, ultimately, must involve citizens in more than simply selecting leaders to govern them. It must be about average citizens being able to influence and engage in the political and policy debates. As a result, political participation is broadly considered one of the defining elements of democracy.

In our large democracies one of the primary ways of participating politically are through elections. When a segment or group within the population participates at lower rates it makes the democracy seem broken. In a representative democracy like Canada, political engagement is a central feature, and there is widespread belief that "a democracy without willing voters is a sham" (Centre for Research and Information on Canada 2001, 198). However, when electoral participation rates for an entire country drop then there is a systemic problem. As electoral participation rates dropped in Canada and other western democracies, it was common to read of a democratic deficit or malaise unfolding in these countries.

Putnam (2003) published *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* arguing that Americans are becoming increasingly disconnected from their families, friends and neighbours. This individualism is leading to lower rates of volunteerism and electoral participation. Wattenberg (2008) similarly argued that young people are not participating like previous generations. They are less likely to vote, contact politicians, and join political parties. Policy makers and scholars in Canada identified youth as the main culprit for the dramatic decline in electoral participation rates (Pammet and LeDuc, 2003). Alternatively, other research argued that youth held democratic ideals, but lost faith in elections. Young people are not only acquiring the habit of voting later than previous generations, they also do not appear to have the political knowledge to make informed decisions at the polls and have been labelled as "political dropouts" and the "tuned off" generation (Gidengil, et al. 2003; Milner 2006).

Another narrative emerged which made the debate more nuanced and relevant to this research. Other studies showed that while youth were refraining from the electoral process they were more likely to participate in unconventional types of political activities and volunteerism (Zukin et al. 2006; Poelzer, Beatty and Berdahl 2014). Contrary to common beliefs, young people are participating more in unconventional methods like petitioning, boycotting and buy-cotting (O'Neill 2007). According to these scholars, the democratic malaise cannot be blamed on young people because the way they participate in politics is evolving. They are turning more towards direct-action activities rather than voting periodically in elections. To complicate matters even more, recent research argues that young people who are involved in conventional forms of political engagement are also involved in the non-conventional forms (DeBardeleben and Pammet 2009).

The Political Participation of First Nations Youth

The way political participation or engagement is conceptualized and operationalized in qualitative and quantitative studies invariably leads to one conclusion: First Nations youth are apathetic and uninterested in politics. Previous research on the electoral behaviour of First Nations shows that they have far lower voting rates than other groups within Canadian society (Bedford and Pobihushchy 1995). There is an overemphasis on electoral behaviour as the primary method for political participation. In addition, recent studies argue that the First Nations and non-First Nations voters are very similar. The same variables or factors explain the reasons both groups participate or do not participate in Canadian elections (Fournier and Loewen 2011). Given that for First Nations their average age is younger, levels of education and income are lower and their rates of registration for elections are also lower, it is no surprise their electoral participation rates are low.

Considering this resource model of electoral behaviour proposes that First nations youth may be in fact the least electorally active group in Canadian society. Young people in general vote less and complement this their First Nations identity and we can see the problem with an overemphasis on voting in the literature. In many First Nations, youth are the most dependent and reliant cohort. They are in a difficult period in their lives looking for stability. Being younger, with lower income and education levels, lower sense of civic duty, makes voting inadequate as a factor in assessing the overall political participation rates of First Nations youth.

Meanwhile, there is minimal research that focuses specifically on the political behaviour of First Nations youth. Thus far, attempts to study the political behaviour of First Nations youth has not only been executed in a parochial way, it has failed to seriously consider colonial influences. Political participation is simply the way individuals in society become involved in the political process. Yet, this concept has been mainly examined and analyzed through the purview of citizenship (Pammet 2009, 197). First Nations peoples have a complicated relationship with Canadian citizenship. Canadian citizenship is often considered in conflict with their identity as First Nations or Indigenous peoples. John Borrows calls First Nations peoples "uncertain citizens" because they were always considered subordinate and only invited to be citizens when the Canadian state profited (Cairns 2003, 3).

R.J. Dalton (2008), on the other hand, provides an alternative approach to understanding the political behaviour of youth through citizenship. He advances two conceptions of citizenship: duty-based and engaged citizenship. Citizenship is normally understood via obligations, responsibilities and rights. Those that practice duty-based citizenship participate in conventional methods such as voting, paying taxes, donating to and joining political parties. Engaged citizenship, on the other hand, promotes a more assertive role for young people and broader definition of citizenship. These people will be involved in political activities ranging from volunteerism to public protest. This may be an entry way in conceptualizing political participation for First Nations youth by negating the importance of conventional methods and elevating the role of other methods of political involvement.

In pre-settler First Nations societies, there was interconnectedness between the young people and the other members of their community. Traditionally, the Ojibway youth in WRFN Nation travelled with their families, clans and communities across their vast territories surrounding the northern part of the Great Lakes (Hare and Pidgeon 2011, 97). Youth received guidance and support not only from their parents, but also from the entire community, especially elders. Unlike elders in European societies that received respect only insofar as they maintained power or status, in First Nations societies, the elders were recognized as the wisdom-keepers and

part of their moral duty was to pass on the traditional and political knowledge to young people. Native youth were considered "warriors" (Alfred 1999, 131). They were expected to carry out the leader and community's decisions on a variety of different endeavours from hunting to war. Not only were they fully involved and empowered in those societies, they were consulted and asked for their input on important decisions.

Drawing from this more complex and First Nations-centred understanding of political participation, this thesis seeks to problematize our current concepts and ideas of First Nations political behaviour. There are additional layers of complexity when it comes to the political participation of First Nations youth. In our study, an overwhelming majority of the youth identified with being Ojibway or Anishinaabe rather than a Canadian citizen. Although an individual can have multiple layers of identities and they do not need to be mutually exclusive, it is still impactful that the youth chose the former identity over the latter. This conundrum is precisely the reason voting as the defining variable for political participation for First Nations youth is problematic. In the next section, we will conceptualize political participation for First Nations youth in a more culturally appropriate and comprehensive way.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Chapter two looks at the relevant literature on the political behaviour of First Nations peoples in Canada. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of First Nations political behaviour prior to European contact. The remainder of First Nations political participation considers their electoral participation. Many of these studies stem from the poll-by-poll and public opinion methodologies. The objective of this chapter is to broaden the meaning of political participation for First Nations youth beyond voting.

Chapter three provides the theoretical framework for the remainder of the study. and attempts to provide the theoretical framework that we can use to understand the political behaviour of youth in WRFN. Research that is specific to the political behaviour of First Nations youth is considered. An argument is made that the political engagement has been conceptualized and operationalized narrowly, with an over emphasis on electoral participation. Instead a holistic view of political participation is advanced that incorporates First Nations worldviews and traditions.

Chapter four looks at the research design and methodology used to examines the social and political behaviour of youth in WRFN. The chapter begins with some of the main challenges including strengthening the relationship with the community and developing the Community-Based Participatory Research framework. The Seven Grandfather Teachings are the main theoretical base for conducting research with the Ojibway youth. Modifications made to the initial research design are presented turning the study from qualitative only study to a mixed methods study. Discussion Circles, youth political participation questionnaire and the electoral participation rates of the community are chosen and justified as the main data collection methods.

Chapter five presents the results from the discussion circles, youth questionnaire and electoral participation rates for the community. The core of the results for this research emanate from discussions with youth, however, the overall voting behaviour of the community and youth questionnaire add complementary information. Although this research utilizes some quantitative elements, it is heavily qualitative focused. Relying both on quantitative and qualitative elements allows for a more comprehensive assessment of the political behaviour of youth in WRFN.

Community leaders and elders were provided an opportunity to contextualize and provide their own analysis of the results. These commentaries are shared within the results and analysis sections of this dissertation.

Chapter six places the results in a critical context and explanations are provided for the way youth behave politically in WRFN. Lengthy and significant quotes by youth and elders are provided to support these explanations. An argument is made that the political behaviour of youth has been deeply impacted by colonialism and significant changes have not occurred since the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996*. Previous research is utilized to demonstrate the reasons youth in this community are politically active, but not represented by leaders in their community and in Canadian institutions. Finally, a model is advanced to better understand the political behaviour of the Ojibway youth in this community.

Lastly, Chapter 7 summarizes the dissertation and considers areas for future research. There is also a section with policy recommendations that WRFN Chief and Council will find beneficial to empowering youth. These policy recommendations stem from conversations with youth and elders themselves.

Other Important Considerations

This dissertation only considers the political behaviour of First Nations youth in the Ojibway community of WRFN. It is not intended to be generalizable or representative of all First Nations youth. In fact, it is not even intended to be representative of youth in WRFN. Rather, the objective is to highlight and emphasize the experiences, attitudes and voices of the youth who participated in this study. Opportunity sampling has been used with the support of community leaders to identify and recruit youth for this study. However, all youth in the community were approached equally and fairly in the recruitment process. Many were unavailable or declined. Throughout the dissertation political participation and political engagement are used interchangeably and mean the same thing. Additionally, this thesis is about the political behaviour of youth in WRFN, but also shares dimensions of their social lives and relations that are relevant to situate their political perspectives.   Previous research often uses the term Aboriginal to refer to the First Peoples of Canada. This dissertation uses the term Indigenous instead because it is more consistent with current discourse. The focus of this dissertation, however, is on First Nations peoples and specifically the Anishinaabe / Ojibway (Ojibwe) community of WRFN. The term Aboriginal or Indigenous is only used to refer to work by other scholars. This research is not relevant to the Métis or Inuit peoples of Canada.

An Overview of First Nations Political Participation in Canada

This chapter is a comprehensive examination of relevant academic articles, reports, publications, newspaper and online articles, and other material that look at the political participation of First Nations peoples in Canada. It is divided into three parts: 1) The historical overview of political and social organization of First Nations prior to settler contact, 2) Research on the voting behaviour of First Nations from poll-by-poll studies, and 3) Evidence on the electoral behaviour of First Nations from public opinion studies. This chapter is mainly occupied with voting because First Nations political participation has been emphasized consistently through this action. An argument is made that by focusing narrowly on voting, the political experiences of First Nations youth are not accurately captured by previous research.

Political Participation Prior to European Contact

First Nations people's political participation in the Canadian state is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Various intricacies and challenges stand between the First Peoples and their full-hearted participation and acceptance of Canadian institutions. Significant challenges such as assimilatory policies make it difficult for First Nations peoples to participate. This subsection looks at the historical political behaviour of First Nations peoples, and considers their historical traditions, conventions and political systems. This will help us contextualize current problems that First Nations youth may have with the colonial framework, which has replaced these traditional systems.

Long before Europeans came to this part of the world – Turtle Island or known more popularly as North America – the Indigenous peoples of this continent had well-established territories and social systems of organization. By the year 1000 myriad bands, villages and confederacies occupied the northeastern part of this continent in what is presently Ontario (Miller 2000, 6). While anthropologists have divided these people into two linguistic families, Algonquin and Iroquoian, there is great diversity amongst these groups. Within these socially constructed and imposed categorizations of Algonquin and Iroquoian, there are many distinct nations and tribes. The Algonquin nations of Ontario consist of the Nippising, Ojibway or Chippewa, and Cree. The Iroquoian tribes and nations of Ontario consist of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora, and are also known as the Six Nations.

It has been estimated that there were approximately 100 million Indigenous peoples living on Turtle Island prior to the European-settler arrival, with over hundreds of different peoples organized in bands, clans and nations (Ibid). Despite this mass lingua-cultural diversity, scholars have documented a surprising balance and harmony in the way these peoples interacted with each other. Without romanticizing the past because there was war and violence, these Indigenous peoples seemingly enjoyed more peace than their European counterparts. To many Indigenous nations, interconnectedness was a way of life and this concept provides an entryway for us to understand this concept of "Native American Political Tradition": commitment to a profoundly respectful way of governing, based on a worldview that balances respect for autonomy with recognition of a universal interdependency, and promotes peaceful coexistence among all elements of creation (Alfred 1999, xvi).

Indigenous political philosophies were based on respect, autonomy, and interdependence. For the First Nations, humans did not possess a special place within the cosmos. Rather, humans were interconnected with all the other creatures in a non-hierarchical system. This anti-

anthropocentric worldview has led to respectful relations with not only "Mother Earth" but also all the other creatures. When First Nations peoples make decisions, they think about seven generations to come and how they will be impacted. The overarching objective is equilibrium and harmony amongst peoples, tribes, nations and the entire cosmos. Politics for these societies was all encompassing because everyone from the youth to the elders participated within the community and shared in political decision-making.

The Haudenosaunee, commonly referred to as the "People of the Longhouse," embodied this harmonious Indigenous political philosophy. They had an "elaborate set of important rules for assigning political responsibility" (Mecredi and Turpel 1993, 90). The Gayanashagowa or the "Great Law of Peace" was the guide for the way Haudenosaunee people lived and interacted with one another. The Haudenosaunee peoples developed the Iroquois Confederacy, which is now widely cited to have influenced the American constitution and our contemporary democracies. This confederacy brought together five nations to peacefully co-exist and participate collectively in political affairs for over five hundred years. It originally consisted of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca nations and in the 1800s the Tuscarora nation joined to give it its present designation as the "Six Nations". An attractive element of this system was that each nation maintained its sovereignty, while they pursued collective peace and prosperity. Decision-making was on a consensus-basis, very different from the European majoritarian systems.

Wherein the confederacy brought harmony at the societal level, the longhouse served the same purpose at the individual level. The Iroquois lived in multi-family dwellings in fortified villages (Miller, 2009, 9) unlike the Anishinaabe peoples of northern Ontario who lived in smaller bands. Their reliance on crops led them to sedentary lives and provided relatively stable and secure food supplies. Thus, their villages were much larger and social organization involved three processes: 1) Their societies were matrilineal/matrilocal and women had particular important roles by choosing the political leaders that represented the community, 2) Youth were recognized as warriors and were entrusted with learning and preserving the sovereignty and culture of their nations, and 3) Elders were the wisdom keepers and their role was to pass down wisdom to future generations and use that knowledge to preserve the harmony or "way of life". On top of this highly complex social organization system was embedded the clan system. Each individual belonged to a clan and nation. Thus, it was very common within one village to find peoples of different clans and nations living together. Violence and war in these societies was unnecessary and unthinkable because it usually involved hurting an individual's own immediate or extended family member.

For the Haudenosaunee peoples, sovereignty had a different meaning than it does presently. Although there were strong chiefs within these societies, individuals always maintained their sovereignty. Any individual could challenge or confront the chief's power when there was a conflict of interest. Russell Barsh recognized this as the "primacy of conscience" whereby there was no central authoritarian or absolute power like those that dominated European societies. Decision-making was shared and individuals only held power insofar they used their leadership abilities to convince other community members to follow their examples. "A crucial feature of Indigenous concept of governance is its respect for individual autonomy. This respect precludes the notion of 'sovereignty' – the idea that there can be a permanent transference of power or authority from the individual to an abstraction of the collective called 'government'" (Alfred 1999, 25).

Anishinaabe people, commonly known as the Algonquin people of Ontario had similar forms of social and political organization that were likewise rooted in harmony and interdependence. The Ojibway youth from WRFN are Anishinaabe and are also known as Whitefish River Ojibways (Ojibwe) or Anishinaabek. They held similar anti-anthropocentric worldviews rooted in animism. Similar to the Iroquoian Confederacy, the Anishinaabe created their own confederacy called the Council of Three Fires. It consists of the Ojibway, Ottawa and Pottawatomi peoples and still serves to maintain the harmony and peace between these nations. Also commonly known as the Anishinaabeg Confederacy, the Council of Three Fires has an elaborate system of political participation through the nindoodemag (totem) system.

When Champlain and early missionaries came to the Great Lakes region they encountered the Anishinaabe nations. The Anishinaabe peoples, however, did not refer to themselves as nations or bands. Instead, they identified and signed their treaties through their nindoodem (individual totems). The Great Peace of Montreal treaty names 25 distinct political entities, but the natives created their own pictographic signatures on treaty documents for themselves and these contained 39 distinct signatories. Twenty of these images represented nindoodemag, or kinship networks like the catfish, crane, beaver, bear, plover, thunderbird, or eagle, marten, sturgeon and other fauna (Bohaker 2006, 26). What the French saw as nations, were in reality, extended family groups of Anishinaabe peoples and nindoodem identity.

Bohaker (2006) argues that the concept of nindoodem is more than family and collective identities. It transcends the physical world. Anishinaabe peoples trace their descent to an other-than-human progenitor, such as the first beaver. They lived in a highly spiritual world; wherein notions of human-animal divide did not exist as they do today. These worldviews shaped their social and political behaviour through kinship networks. Nindoodem identity maintained peace between different tribes, influenced settlement patterns and developed structural roles for individuals.

Today, the Anishinaabe peoples in Ontario have organized as the Anishinabek Nation and have united under the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) to represent their interests to federal and provincial entities. The UOI can trace its roots back to the Council of Three Fires. It represents 43 Anishinaabe First Nations surrounding the northern shores of the Great Lakes including the Ojibway peoples of WRFN. The WRFN community also belongs to the United Chiefs and Councils of Mnidoo Mnising (Manitoulin Island). This organization represents the First Nations communities that belong to Mnidoo Mnising. The other First Nations that are part of this organization are: Aundeck Omni Kaning, M'Chigeeng, Sheguiandah, Sheshegwaning and Zhiibaahaasing.

The earliest documented relationship that the Ojibways of WRFN had with non-Indigenous peoples were with the geological surveyors working for the federal government that repeatedly visited northwestern Ontario looking for mineral extraction ventures. It was not long before tension between the Ojibways and the surveyors erupted. Mr. William Benjamin Robinson was chosen to represent the federal government to negotiate a treaty for the lands no less than "the north shore of Lake Huron and the mining sites along the eastern shore of Lake Superior"[4]. In September 1850, W.B. Robinson secured virtually all the lands in present-day mid-northwestern Ontario from the Ojibways. In return, the Ojibways of this area received a schedule of land that was set aside specifically for their use and the communities on Mnidoo Mnising were created including WRFN.

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[4] https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100028974/1100100028976

In the beginning the First Peoples of this area possessed enormous sovereignty, power, and autonomy. Once the first and original treaties were signed and the First Nations peoples of mid-northwestern Ontario ceded their lands, their lives were never the same. The Robinson treaty-signing for the Ojibway peoples is a critical juncture. It symbolizes a shift in balance of power from the First Nations peoples of this region to the federal government. While the Europeans had been on the continent for centuries to this point, the Ojibways of this area never formally signed any treaties and were still independent from the settlers. Once the treaty was signed, the lives of the Ojibways changed forever and their political philosophies of respect, harmony, autonomy and peaceful coexistence were eventually overwhelmed by Eurocentric views and practices of political thought. More relevantly, this period signals the beginning in which the political status of the Ojibway youth went from being rooted in their culture and philosophy to what it has become today.

Following the signing of the Robinson Treaty the federal government shifted its policy towards Indigenous peoples. Prior to the treaty, Indigenous-Canadian relations were symbolized by the Two Row Wampum whereby the two peoples were to travel down the river of history in separate boats, remaining independent and autonomous yet interdependent (Cairns 2003, 6). The new policy advanced, however, wanted to assimilate and "civilize" all the Indigenous peoples of this land in order to control and preserve the dominion of Canada. Indigenous peoples and their ideas stood in the way of creating a unified Canada. The federal government considered Indigenous peoples as a problem and obstruction because they stood in the way of development. They created the Gradual Civilization Act to remove the Indigeneity from the First Peoples and assimilate them into the dominant culture. At the same time, the Indian Act legislated the current reserve system, which confined Indigenous peoples on land held in simple fee by the federal government. Indigenous governance systems were under siege. Harmony, autonomy and respect in this era were being suppressed by individualism, capitalism and power. Within the span of a few generations the Indigenous peoples in these regions were devastated and subordinated politically (Alfred 1999, 22). Ojibway peoples of this region had complex governance systems and social mechanisms for choosing their leaders and the Indian Act replaced them with an entire foreign political system. These policies remained from the 1850s until 1969 and were mainly about eradicating the Indigeneity and assimilation Indigenous peoples into the dominant culture (Cairns 2003, 2).

In traditional systems, First Nations youth like the Ojibways had elaborate roles in society. Through the Anishinaabe nindoodem, depending on the clan the youth was born their role was for the most part pre-determined in their communities. For example, individuals that belonged to the bear clan were normally warriors, healers and maintainers of peace. Individuals that belonged to the crane clan on the other hand were thought of embodying political prowess. Through the decades as the traditional systems were replaced by western systems of governance, First Nations youth were overwhelmed by a new form of political system that was incompatible with their worldviews and culture. The pre-contact system based on totems, while far from perfect worked relatively well. Replacing them with western electoral systems has resulted in many negative implications for First Nations youth. The Indian Act has accentuated the action of voting in elections and has made everyone dependent on community leaders.

What does voting mean for First Nations peoples in Canada?

A brief historical overview of enfranchisement for Indigenous peoples will be presented in this section. Generally voting is one the main mechanisms for citizens to participate in a

democratic country. It is widely considered the "litmus test for the vitality of democratic systems" (Fournier and Loewen, 2009, 9). There is a "democratic deficit" when a segment of the population is not participating electorally. According to Pammet and LeDuc (2003) lack of participation in electoral politics by a community is attributed to a lack of faith in the political system, a sense of alienation from the electoral system and political processes, feelings of exclusion, the existence of structural barriers within electoral politics that hinder participation, a perceived lack of effectiveness the non-affirmation of group difference by and within electoral politics, and the virtual lack of a group's presence or representation in electoral politics. This may be the case with Indigenous peoples in Canada with numerous studies showing that Indigenous peoples across this country participate at lower rates electorally than the general population (Bedford and Pobihushchy 1995; Guerin 2003; Bedford 2003; Dalton 2007; Bargiel 2012). Participating electorally is a complicated and multifaceted decision for Indigenous peoples that requires consideration.

Policies by the federal government and its provincial counterparts made electoral participation complicated in the formative years for Indigenous peoples. Canadian governments viewed Indigenous peoples as wards of the state with an inability of carrying out their own affairs, let alone making important political decisions:

> Enfranchisement was the surrender of Indian status and band membership in return for Canadian citizenship and the right to hold land in fee simple. It was based on the theory that Aboriginal peoples in their natural state were uncivilized. Once an Aboriginal person acquired the skills, knowledge and the behaviour valued by the civilized society, the Aboriginal person might qualify for citizenship (Jacobs 2009, 13).

From Confederation until 1920, First Nations members did not have the right to vote in federal or provincial elections. The Indian Act held that "registered Indians" could not vote in federal elections because as wards of the state, they were incapable of managing their own affairs. *The Indian Act, 1876*, introduced a new concept called "voluntary enfranchisement," which allowed Indigenous peoples to apply for enfranchisement. Individuals who held higher social status such as doctors, lawyers and those who completed university degrees were automatically approved. As an added incentive, individuals who were enfranchised had the ability to take their share of land out of the reserve system and own it privately. Other Indigenous peoples were subject to a review and once approved would be made into a "probationary Indian" for three years, after which, they would be able to vote and take their land out of the reserve system. From 1876 to 1920, only 250 Indigenous peoples went through this process and became "enfranchised" (Jacobs 2009, 14). Indigenous peoples had two options: either be able to vote or remain Indigenous. In 1920, the Indian Act was amended and a process of "involuntary enfranchisement" for First Nations men was pursued. Rather than have First Nations peoples volunteering for enfranchisement, this process aimed at identifying "registered Indian" males that deserved the vote. After two years, this amendment was repealed.

Enfranchisement, the process of providing the right to vote for Indigenous peoples has occurred on multiple levels and through varied contexts. At the provincial level, enfranchisement was offered on an ad hoc basis, with each province following its own agenda (See Table 1). In Quebec, for instance, Indigenous peoples could not vote until as recently as 1969. When Indigenous peoples received the right to vote in 1960 at the federal level, unlike other groups like women and ethnic minorities, not many of them celebrated (Ladner and McCrossan 2007, 11).

Table 1. Granting the Right to Vote for Status Indigenous Peoples[5]

Year	Jurisdiction
1885	Nova Scotia
1949	British Columbia
1949	Newfoundland
1952	Manitoba
1954	Ontario
1960	Canada
1960	Saskatchewan
1963	New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island
1965	Alberta
1969	Quebec

Ladner and McCrossan (2007) provide an in-depth historical account of when enfranchisement was offered for First Nations across Canada. The federal government offered the right to vote for Status Indians on several occasions: 1) In 1885 it was provided in Eastern Canada to individuals who met existing requirements, but this was revoked in 1889, 2) In both World Wars, it was offered to servicemen, however, veterans lost their right to vote when they returned back to their reserves, and 3) In 1950, the right to vote was offered again to individuals who gave up their tax exemption status. To complicate matters, for First Nations women the history of enfranchisement takes another level of perplexity. While women were not excluded from the right to vote in federal elections, their status was tied to their husbands. If a man wanted to enfranchise, his wife and children were also automatically enfranchised. Status women who married non-status men automatically lost their status, whereas non-status women who married status men would gain status. Many non-Indigenous peoples lost the right to vote when they married an Indigenous man. On the other hand, Indigenous women who married outsiders gained the right to vote at the same time as all women in 1918.

Voting for First Nations peoples has generally meant assimilating into the dominant culture and giving up their Indigeneity. Consider the three examples from above: First Nations women, servicemen and tax exemption. Status women who married non-Indigenous peoples involuntarily lost their unique status and rights. Conversely, they were able to vote in federal elections. Indigenous veterans who returned from the World Wars received the right to vote, but only insofar as they stayed away from the reserves. Lastly, in a desperate attempt to remove inherent unique rights for Indigenous peoples, the government provided the incentive to vote in 1950 only if they gave up their tax exemption status.

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[5] Source: Canada, Royal Commission On Aboriginal Peoples Vol. 1, 9.12.

While electoral participation of First Nations peoples in Canadian elections has been poor, the same is not true for Band elections. Many First Nations experience very high levels of participation in band elections, which are usually highly competitive, with many candidates vying for relatively few positions. The *Indian Act* places Indigenous peoples and the affairs of bands under the purview of the federal government. Each status or registered First Nations person normally belongs to a band or community. Communities, with the exception of some, hold elections that are similar to western democratic systems. These elections in many communities replaced the traditional systems of governance including hereditary chiefs for some Anishinaabe peoples. Until 1951, women were excluded from participating in band council elections, which demonstrates the extent new governance systems were influenced by western democratic systems. Women, especially in Iroquoian societies, maintained significant political roles.

There are several options for First Nations communities in Canada to carry out their band elections. In the beginning, all First Nations had to abide by the protocol set out in the *Indian Act* and the *Indian Band Election Regulation*. However, several amendments have provided First Nations three newer options. First, communities can create their own custom leadership selection process. These First Nations are not obligated to the *Indian Band Election Regulation* and these codes are unique to the specific community. Secondly, "self-governing" First Nations, those that have signed "Self-Government Treaties" establish their own laws and policies in regards to electing leaders. Lastly, the final option is a new legislation introduced by the Canadian government called the *First Nations Election Act*. This act came into effect on April 2, 2015 and makes up for the shortcomings in the previous policies under the *Indian Act* and the *Indian Band Election Regulation*. The Ojibways from WRFN currently hold their band elections under the *Indian Act*, but are in the process of developing their own custom election code. In fact, this research with youth is partly about youth input on how they envision elections and governance structures in their community. As a Community-Based Participatory Research project (CBPR), this research has provided space for the band council and community members to shape all aspects of the research design, implementation and analysis.

One the implications of the Indian Act is the dominating role that band governments have in reserves. Unlike federal and provincial elections, however, First Nations are very active electorally in band elections. They are either unaware or have simply forgotten that band elections are also imposed on their communities by the *Indian Act*. First Nations cite nonparticipation in federal and provincial elections because of their foreign imposition, yet seem to participate in band elections. This dichotomy is explained later in the paper. The issue though is that these western forms of governance have replaced the Ojibway nindoodemag and kinship networks. For young people to be represented in their communities, they have to participate in the electoral process and unfortunately not many young people vote.

Poll-By-Poll Studies

From the conventional electoral studies and voting behaviour perspective, a key issue has been to measure and account for differences in turnout between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. Early studies focused on the political participation of First Nations communities by assessing poll-by-poll results from electoral board data. Eventually as public opinion and survey research provided more accurate and larger samples, studies shifted towards examining individual level voting determinants. These two methods provide complementary and unique information on the political behaviour of First Nations peoples in Canada. For instance, the poll-

by-poll research emphasizes community participation rates and its variation across regions, communities and treaty regions.

The poll-by-poll research relies on a daunting and complex methodology. Electoral returning officers indicate polling divisions whose boundaries are entirely within First Nations communities and use those counts to indicate the electoral participation rate in those First Nations. In 2008, pursuant to the development of computerized geocoding applications, poll data could be superimposed on actual maps of First Nations communities provided by INAC to allow for more accurate and comprehensive findings. However, this poll-by-poll approach is not without major limitations. First Nations peoples may be assigned to vote outside of their communities, while non-Indigenous peoples living near First Nations communities may be directed to vote there. This methodology also does not capture the voting behaviour of off-reserve First Nations peoples who are members of bands. The main limitation, however, is that it cannot tell us anything about individual level factors like demographic data since ballots are confidential.

Public opinion or survey research, on the other hand, has its own strengths and limitations. It can provide accurate estimates of First Nations voter turnout as well as capture useful individual level correlates for voting such as socio-demographic characteristics, psychological and social attitudes. Public opinion studies move beyond diagnosis and attempt to provide explanation behind First Nations poor voting rates. Howe and Bedford (2009) outline and pose the limitations of these two methods:

> The "polling station within reserves" method produces data that can be trusted to a high degree, but it leaves out important sections of the Aboriginal population: Those who live off-reserve, whether status or not, are not surveyed. This is a significant weakness of the methods, as the two populations will not necessarily vote at the same rate. Nor can the polling station approach reveal much about important correlates of voter participation, such as socio-demographic characteristics or psychological or social attitudes. While the discrepancies in the self-reported data are significant and care must be taken in interpreting the data, the information provided by the survey method is a vital addition to what we know through the polling station method (Howe and Bedford 2009, 9).

We will begin by considering the poll-by-poll research and then turn our attention towards the public opinion studies.

The main conclusion from the poll-by-poll research is that First Nations peoples participate at lower levels in Canadian elections (federal and provincial) than the general population. Since Hawthorn's "A Survey of Contemporary Indians" (also known as the Hawthorn Report, 1967), it is widely known that Indigenous peoples in Canada participate at lower levels in Canadian elections. Various studies since have arrived at the same conclusion. In their seminal study Bedford and Pobihushchy (1995) verified Hawthorn's results, but indicated the dramatic decline of First Nations electoral participation. Their data show that First Nations participation in federal elections in New Brunswick declined from 70 percent in 1962 to 17.8 percent in the 1988 election. Nova Scotia shows a similar, but less dramatic trend. Electoral participation in Nova Scotia decreased from 89.3 percent in 1962 to 54 percent in 1988. While Prince Edward Island, with a lower First Nations population shows a consistently high participation in federal elections.

Guerin (2003), analyzing data from 264 First Nations, came across considerable variation in electoral participation rates across provinces and territories. He found that turnout was highest in Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, Nunavut, Alberta and British Columbia. The provinces with the lowest turnout were Manitoba and Quebec. First Nations peoples do not participate

electorally in a uniform manner and there is significant variation across communities and regions. For example, First Nations in northern communities tend to vote at higher rates than southern communities. In *Electoral Participation of Aboriginal People: Summary of Previously Conducted Research and Analysis*, Jean-Nicholas Bustros demonstrates that northern polls with a First Nations candidate raised the overall turnout for First Nations peoples.

Bedford and Pobihushchy (1995) assessed participation rates in band elections in addition to federal and provincial elections. They found that First Nations voting rates in band elections were comparatively and consistently higher than in federal and provincial elections. They explained this discrepancy through the "politics of dependency" theory:

> As an explanatory hypothesis—again we must emphasize that what we are proposing is hypothetical at this stage—we propose what we call the politics of dependency. That is, the high rates of voter participation in Band elections are to be explained as a complex function of the legacy of the colonialism experienced by Aboriginal people at the hands of the immigrant society. A political culture and a socio-economic reality of dependency has been created on Reserve communities which expresses itself in the form of (what would be for municipalities in the non-Aboriginal culture) abnormally high turnout. We believe that the only way to explain these striking results is by grounding them in the unique political, economic and social existence that one finds in Reserve communities. Local politics has a different meaning and different consequences for people living in Reserve communities than in other communities, and this difference must be central to any explanation of the vast differences in turnout rates that one finds between local elections on Reserves and in non-Aboriginal communities (Bedford and Pobihushchy, 1995, 273).

Long and Boldt (1987) highlighted another key factor in band election participation rates, by demonstrating their competitiveness in relation to municipal elections and offering an explanation. They explained that while municipal elections on average had two or more candidates, the average number of candidates for Chief in First Nations band elections were two to four times greater. More importantly, in municipal elections the successful mayoral candidate won 60 – 80 percent of the total vote, wherein band elections, the winning candidate normally was elected with the support of only 20 – 50 percent of the community vote. Long and Boldt propose kinship as one explanation for the competitiveness of First Nations band elections. This explanation is consistent with the Blackfoot political values, whereby every large family or clan usually select one candidate to represent their interests.

Barsh and colleagues (1997) conducted standardized interviews of one-sixth of all eligible voters in the Peigan Nation. This poll-by-poll study provides some unique findings that were not documented elsewhere: 1) participation in federal elections remains higher in Alberta First Nations communities compared to provincial elections, 2) First Nations voters in these communities have been moving to the left (towards the New Democratic Party) relative to their neighbours, and 3) First Nations candidates can improve electoral participation rates. These findings demonstrate there is variation between levels of elections (federal vs. provincial elections); First Nations peoples in these communities have party preferences; and, the presence of First Nations candidates can have a positive influence on electoral participation rates. This latter discovery, however, has been challenged by Berdahl et al. (2011) who used the 2007 Manitoba provincial election as a case study to answer whether the presence of any First Nations candidates appear to influence reserve voting behaviour. They find "only limited support – if that – for the idea that the presence of First Nations candidates positively influences on-reserve voter turnout (Berdahl et al. 2011, 10).

The Barsh study was especially innovative, however, as it was one of the first surveys of First Nations individuals to "understand better the subjective reasons for poor participation"

(Barsh et al 1997, 17). They conducted a standardized house-to-house interview with 99 eligible voters in the community. Individuals in this community claimed they had considerably greater influence on band elections, than federal and provincial elections. Yet surveyed members of the Peigan nation considered federal elections very important. Reasons for not participating electorally yielded rich responses from individuals:

> On the whole, their responses were pessimistic. A majority agreed strongly that money dominates politics, and this goes a long way explaining the basis of perceived powerlessness. One-third agreed strongly that white politicians are prejudiced, and that political parties differ only in name. Women and older respondents tended to have doubts about the cultural propriety of voting in non-Native elections, and voting generally, moreover (Barsh et al. 1997, 20).

A decade later, in a study of First Nations electoral participation in Ontario, Dalton (2007) argues that First Nations voting is highly complicated and cannot be reduced to simple explanations. For example, she found that First Nations voter turnout decreased at the federal level between 2000 and 2006, but increased at the provincial level at the same time (Dalton 2007, 266). This was contrary to all previous work that indicated First Nations electoral participation is usually higher in federal elections. Dalton identifies "distinct contributing factors" that affect First Nations voter turnout such as age and socio-demographic characteristics. She argues that the "First Nations population is younger than the general population in Canada, while a disproportionate number of First Nations live in poverty, with high levels of mobility and low levels of education (Dalton 2007, 257). Bargiel (2012) contributes to this sociodemographic proposition behind First Nations pool electoral behaviour by asserting that, "The median age in the Aboriginal population is 27 years old, compared to 40 years old for the general population. For a variety of reasons, youth electors are likely to be less likely registered [to vote]" (Bargiel 2012, 2). At the same time, Bargiel graphically illustrates that the First Nations voting behaviour closely follows the national turnout trend. Whenever turnout rates drop for the general population it also drops for First Nations voters. This leads Bargiel to claim that First Nations peoples are affected by the same contextual factors that the general population is affected by when exercising their vote.

These poll-by-poll studies have moved beyond simply acknowledging the poor participation levels of First Nations voters in Canadian elections. More recent studies demonstrate that First Nations voting behaviour has significant regional, community, treaty and contextual/situational variation. Consider the following two intricacies: 1) First Nations peoples participate more in federal than provincial elections, but Dalton's research challenges this via Ontario; 2) First Nations candidates can increase electoral participation levels, but Berdahl and colleagues have shown this may not be completely true. While recent work has emphasized that First Nations voters may be affected by same contextual factors as mainstream Canadians, denying the unique underlying complexities and factors that influence First Nations voting behaviour. Ladner challenges these notions by re-establishing the complication that is voting for First Nations:

> "Despite the fact that Aboriginal people have been able to vote federally since 1960, and that Aboriginal cultures and communities are extremely political, Aboriginal people fail to see themselves in the political process or to feel included and respected as both individuals and collectivities. By and large, Aboriginal people continue to see the Canadian political system as an instrument of their domination and oppression (Ladner 2003, 23).

Evidence from Public Opinion Studies

Although public opinion research into First Nations peoples voting behaviour is limited, a few studies make valuable contributions. The poll-by-poll literature indicated early on that First Nations voting behaviour is complex, nuanced and specific. There are multiple levels of variation that are interconnected and interdependent. These results complement First Nations unique histories, demographics, geographies, treaties, and relations with the federal and provincial governments. The public opinion research, on the other hand, provides an alternative set of explanations and results for explaining First Nations poor voting rates. According to these studies, First Nations voting behaviour is not as unique and particular as previously thought. Rather, Indigenous peoples display similar causes for nonparticipation as the general population in Canada.

Over time the voting behaviour or political participation literature has identified several important determinants of voting. Harell, Panagos and Matthews (2009) summarize the determinants of voting via their work:

> The political behaviour literature on electoral participation is massive, and a host of variables have been found to be important predictors of turnout. As suggested above, at the heart of many of these studies is a view of political participation that is strongly based in the individual-level resources at citizens' disposal. Standard models of turnout tend to emphasize three sets of factors: socio-economic resources (e.g. education and income), social networks (e.g. civic involvements and religious attendance), and psychological engagement (e.g. political interest and knowledge). The links between these factors and political participation are multiple and, for the most part, complimentary. Critical intervening variables include civic skills (especially cognitive ones), social and political trust, and political recruitment opportunities. At a more general level, scholars of turnout (particularly in Canada) have also emphasized the special significance of age-related differences in turnout – both as a feature of the life-cycle and as a reflection of generational changes – and the role of election-specific contextual factors, especially electoral competitiveness (Harell, Panagos, Matthews, 2009, 9).

Using data from the *2000-2001 Equality, Security and Community (ESC) Survey* and an additional sub-sample that includes self-identified Indigenous peoples from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, they find support for the standard voting determinants explaining First Nations voting behaviour. Socio-economic factors such as income and education are very important, but they also propose that specific factors influence First Nations voting rates. For instance, First Nations have a younger average age and lower political resources.

In contrast, the nationalism and post-colonial theses specify entirely different causes of lower First Nations turnout. These two hypotheses will be explained in much greater detail in theoretical consideration, but we were already introduced to them briefly. The nationalism thesis suggests that First Nations identify as distinct nations within the Canadian polity and as such they will always vote at lower rates because their participation in Canadian elections is inconsistent with being sovereign nations. The post-colonial thesis on the other hand proposes that First Nations view the electoral process as unable to meet their needs and use other mechanisms such as direct-action activities to advance their interests. Harell, Panagos and Matthews (2009) tested the nationalism hypothesis by theorizing that Indigenous organizations better represent the interests of Indigenous peoples, therefore, it is more likely they would turn away from Canadian elections by participating more in Indigenous organizations like the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). However, they found that involvement in Indigenous organizations means more likelihood of participation in Canadian elections. Thus, they argue that the nationalism thesis does not hold; rather First Nations peoples who are nationalistic will also

participate more in Canadian elections. They tested the post-colonial thesis on young people (below the age of 30), theorizing that this group is more likely to hold these views than other First Nations peoples. They hypothesized that First Nations youth, who hold negative attitudes towards the Canadian state, would be more likely to turn away from the Canadian electoral process. Strikingly, they found those who are dissatisfied with the way the federal government has handled the treaty and land claims process are more likely to vote, again suggesting that the post-colonial thesis does not hold in their study.

Howe and Bedford (2009) utilized the *General Social Survey* conducted by Statistics Canada in 2003 to examine Indigenous peoples' voting behaviour. Whereas the previous studies were confined to Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba in their sample, these researchers had access to a larger and more representative sample. Due to the size and comprehensiveness of their sample, Howe and Bedford were able to probe deeper into the electoral behaviour of First Nations peoples by considering even more factors. They looked at socio-demographic factors, belonging and trust, following politics, and practical matters. Like the previous authors, they found that age, education and income have considerable impact on whether First Nations peoples participate electorally. Belonging and trust were defined as attachments to provincial/national bodies, social trust in neighbours and institutional confidence. These factors have an important correlation with voting, in some cases more than the general population in Canada. Following politics was conceptualized by the survey as "How frequently do you follow news and current affairs?" This attentiveness to politics had an incredible influence on voting both in the general population and even moreso for Indigenous peoples. Lastly, practical matters were defined as high mobility rates, poor health and the presence or absence of other adults in a household. The survey indicated that First Nations peoples were more likely to move within the past three years, had poorer health, and were twice more likely to live in single parent families. Each one of these factors leads to lower levels of participation in Canadian elections.

While these two studies provided spaces for First Nations specific factors that influenced their voting rates, Fournier and Loewen (2011) discounted many of these distinct factors. Using "oversamples" of more than 500 Indigenous respondents in the 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2001 Elections Canada *Post-Election Surveys*, these researchers found that resources and a sense of civic duty were the two most important determinants of voting for First Nations peoples. Socio-demographic variables such as income and education were less important, but age remained significant. They summarize the implication of their research in the context of voting behaviour research with the following:

> The key implication of these findings is that the gap in turnout between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal electors can be completely accounted for by residence on or off a reserve, age, education, income, political resources and civic duty. Were it not for the lower rate of registration, fewer political resources, weaker sense of civic duty, younger average age and poorer socio-economic footing of Aboriginals, they could be expected to vote in federal elections at the same rate as non-Aboriginals. Our findings suggest that turnout among Aboriginals would increase by 20 percentage points if their profile on these determinants matched that of non-Aboriginals, completely closing the gap between them (Fournier and Loewen 2011, 7).

The First Nations-specific factors such as feelings of alienation, exclusion and impact of colonialism are not considered in this explanation. This study makes the logical argument that improving First Nations people's socioeconomic conditions will yield more electoral participation in Canadian elections. Previous research, however, suggests that First Nations perception of citizenship is different and will always impact their electoral participation.

These studies demonstrate that the standard predictors of voting can also explain the poor electoral participation rates of First Nations peoples in Canada. Predictors such as socio-demographic variables, psychological and political resources, and practical matters make an impact on whether First Nations peoples participate in elections. Having a sense of civic duty, like in the general population, is also an important predictor of voting for First Nations.

Conclusion

Voting for First Nations peoples is not the same as it is for the general population in Canada. First Nations peoples received the right to vote in Canada in 1960 and even later in some provinces for provincial elections. Enfranchisement was historically used to either assimilate First Nations peoples into the dominant society or deprive them of their unique treaty rights like tax exemptions. When First Nations received the right to vote at the federal level, they did not celebrate. Some First Nations like Akwesasne do not allow even to this day Elections Canada polling stations on their territories (Ladner 2003, 21). Many northern First Nations communities do not have access and resources to arrange transportation to polling stations and electoral boards have little presence up there. Similarly, political parties have done very little to entice First Nations voters. It is actually impressive that First Nations peoples do participate to the extent that they do in Canadian elections.

The two methodologies emphasized in this section share similar but competing explanations for the First Nations poor voting rates. Poll-by-poll studies suggest that voting for First Nations is highly nuanced and is driven by factors that vary from nation to nation. For instance, it is commonly held that First Nations in certain provinces like Prince Edward Island and British Columbia participate more than Quebec and Alberta. This is due to the fact that First Nations in Prince Edward Island, for example, had completely different relationships with the people they encountered than First Nations in Quebec. These First Nations-specific factors were slightly softened by the public opinion studies, which found that First Nations peoples voting behaviour was not too different from the general population. The main difference is that First Nations as an group have lower socioeconomic and political resources, average age and a sense of civic duty. Inevitably this will lead to lower electoral participation for First Nations peoples.

While this may be true, it does not take away from the fact that the political behaviour of First Nations peoples is highly derivative of the imposed colonial framework. The traditional governance systems, while not perfect, worked for First Nations peoples long before the arrival of the Europeans. The youth in these systems were interconnected with other members of their society and held social and political roles that were passed on from generation to generation. Under the new governance framework, First Nations youth are unrepresented because they do not participate electorally. For First Nations this is problematic especially given the dominant role that band governments have in the community. We currently have a situation whereby First Nations youth are not at home in either society. By not participating electorally they are represented neither in their communities nor by the federal and provincial governments.

Theoretical Considerations for Research with First Nations Youth

In the previous chapter, we learned about the historical political organization of First Nations peoples, and learned about contemporary trends in their voting behaviour through an overview of electoral participation studies. Prior to contact with the Europeans, the Indigenous peoples of North America had established complex social and political organizations that were rooted in their traditional principles and worldviews. These systems of governance and social organization were disrupted and distorted by the imposition of European forms of governance and political thought. In this chapter, we seek to problematize the contemporary research that focuses on the political behaviour of First Nations youth and develop our theoretical framework that will guide the rest of this research. This chapter is divided into three components: 1) The youth voting specific literature is highlighted in order for us to develop a theoretical framework that is more comprehensive than voting, 2) A conceptual model is provided that examines the political behaviour of First Nations youth via this comprehensive framework, and 3) A preliminary examination of the political behaviour of youth in WRFN.

Reasons First Nations Youth Do Not Vote

It is well known and documented by the electoral behaviour research that youth in Canada and across western democracies participate less than other cohorts. Despite having more education and resources at their disposal, youth are "less likely to vote, are less likely to be members of political parties and interest groups, are less interested in politics and know less about Canadian politics than other Canadians" (O'Neill, 2007, iii). In fact, Pammet and LeDuc (2003) identified youth as one of the major reasons the national average electoral turnout rate was lower than previous eras. Youth were largely responsible for the modern democratic deficit because as new cohorts came of voting age, they were less likely to vote than previous generations. These young people were not voting mainly because they had "negative feelings towards political candidates, parties, and leaders" (Pammet and LeDuc 2003, 5).

First Nations youth similarly participate at lower levels in the Canadian electoral process. Four major hypotheses are provided that seek to explain the reasons behind the poor electoral turnout rate by First Nations. First, the "post-colonial thesis" is a very broad theory about the underlying factors that make voting not only unprofitable, but in many ways anti-Indigenous. According to this theory, First Nations youth are refraining from participating in conventional political activities such as voting and turning towards direct-action initiatives like protests. The conventional methods of participation are unresponsive to First Nations and instead they need to use blunt instruments like blockades. Harell, Panagos and Matthews (2009) examined the postcolonial thesis in their study. They conceptualized the post-colonial thesis as the idea that Indigenous peoples will disengage from the regular political process and pursue the politics of confrontation or resistance. Relying on previous work that categorized young people as "neo-traditionalists" they identify them as the main proponents of these ideologies. While they found that negative attitudes towards the state are common among young people, this does not lead them to abstain from the political process. Instead, young people that are dissatisfied with the federal government's attempts to resolve outstanding land claims and treaties actually mobilize (become politicized or involved in the political process) the youth at comparatively high rates. Those who express more dissatisfaction are also more likely to vote. However, the way that the postcolonial thesis has been operationalized by these authors is problematic. The youth that are

knowledgeable about the lands claim and treaty process are arguably more informed and are more likely to vote regardless. In addition, post-colonial beliefs should not be ascribed only to youth because they may identify with these types of behaviours (for example protesting). To truly assess the post-colonial thesis, you have to consider it within the entire First Nations population.

By the time RCAP was being drafted in 1996, Indigenous communities across Canada were adding "Nations" to their band names at a rapid rate. By the end of the century more than 2000 bands were recognized as First Nations communities (Cairns 20003, 6). This led to the widespread idea that First Nations were making the name changes to be recognized by the Canadian government and the international community as sovereign "nations." Treaties that demonstrated "nation-to" relations framed the nature of the relationship between Canadians and Indigenous peoples in the formative years. The Two-Row Wampum symbolized that First Nations and settlers would travel down the river of life together but independently. First Nations that adhere to the nationalism worldview find voting in Canadian elections problematic because they are foreign and imposed.

Nationalism has been tested empirically and, while relevant, it certainly does not stand out as an important factor argue Howe and Bedford (2009). However, these authors have failed the capture nationalism correctly in their study. Their conceptual framework is that since First Nations peoples seek "nation-to-nation" relations they will participate more in their own band elections and become more involved in organizations like the AFN Their results show that those who participate in band elections and in organizations like the AFN are more likely to also vote in Canadian elections. Yet, some of the strongest proponents of this ideology consider the AFN flawed and strongly criticize band governments. The AFN receives funding from the federal government to carry out its services and objectives and is an emblem of the colonial framework. In addition, nationalist advocates do not support voting in band elections because they are imposed and inconsistent with traditional systems of governance.

Thirdly, First Nations people's lack of participation in the Canadian electoral process is due to their alienation, exclusion and marginalization by the system. First Nations feel excluded and marginalized by the political process in Canada, especially youth. The existing institutions and political culture is seen as protecting the interests of the dominant society and is an instrument of Indigenous oppression (Fournier and Loewen 2011). This sentiment is thoroughly captured in the *Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1996*, particularly in the youth section. Schouls (2003) using the results from the commission, articulates this feeling well:

> First, the testimony of Aboriginal women and youth is read in terms of exclusion: many women and youth are seen to be excluded from the most important Aboriginal decision-making institution, whether nation, tribe, or band council, or national political organization. Without participatory rights, Aboriginal women and youth are regarded as lacking equal standing in their communities and, by extension, the economic, social, and political opportunities that other Aboriginal persons take for granted. Second, where Aboriginal women and youth do possess participatory rights, their testimony is read in terms of marginalization. To be marginalized is regarded as no less a denial of standing because community standing is seen to carry with it the critical element of respect: the expectation not only that others will listen to you but also that you will exercise influence in the communal decision-making process (Schouls 2003, 99).

The electoral system perpetuates First Nations people's exclusion, alienation and marginalization. Due to the low number of First Nations voters, electoral participation does not translate to success and equal representation in the Canadian democratic system. The derivative of this exclusion, alienation and marginalization means that First Nations people "have been

conditioned to use very blunt instruments to make their point, such as highly charged political demonstrations, blockades and litigation" (Hunter 2003, 27).

Lastly, First Nations participate at lower rates in Canadian elections because of structural reasons. Many First Nations are mobile often moving from reserves to urban areas. They have lower levels of literacy, are more likely to be unemployed, are disconnected from the mainstream and are distanced from the discussion surrounding federal elections (Cairns 2003, 4). The First Nations population is younger than the general population, with a disproportionate number living in poverty; they have high levels of mobility and low levels of education (Dalton 2007). The age factor is significant in itself because a significant number of First Nations peoples are young and this cohort has a strong negative correlation with voting (Guerin 2003, 11). Structural and practical reasons make First Nations electoral participation difficult, particularly for youth.

The current electoral system is based on colonialism and is imposed on First Nations. Since First Nations played no role in constructing this system and its institutions, they do not feel affinity with it. More importantly, this imposed political system and culture is contrary to their political worldviews. The European system is based on majority-rule whereas the Anishinaabe system is based on consensus-rule. In the traditional political system there is no central or coercive authority that will make decisions for the benefit of all individuals (Alfred 1999, 25).

Additionally, voting has been used as a tool of assimilation and integration by succeeding Canadian governments. First Nations over the years have lost trust and faith in this political system. First Nations have a unique identity within the larger Canadian polity and do not want to assimilate into the dominant culture. Yet enfranchisement and voting has meant acceptance of the dominant culture. First Nations youth want to remain distinct and they want preserve their cultures. As "uncertain citizens" with continuous alienation and marginalization by the Canadian political process, it is not worthwhile for First Nations youth to participate electorally.

First Nations Political Behaviour Is More Than Voting

The electoral behavioural school sees the political behaviour of First Nations youth as fully contingent on voting, but this is not the case. The research that has come out of the poll-by-poll and public opinion studies while valuable are highly dependent on colonial dispositions of assessing political behaviour through the myopic lens of voting. First Nations peoples practiced politics very differently prior to European contact and First Nations youth in these societies were led by their unique political philosophies. The current system is imposed and predicated on western ideas of democratic participation and it has to be broadened.

Recent studies have attempted to examine the entire scope of the political behaviour of youth in Canada. Participating in formal or official types of activities like voting, joining and volunteering for political parties is no longer an attractive activity for young people, but this does not mean they are apathetic. O'Neill (2007) writes about this in her research report for the *Canadian Policy Research Networks*:

> Young Canadians are not, however, indifferent to politics. On the contrary, they show levels of engagement in non-traditional political activities – signing petitions, boycotting and buycotting – that are similar to those of other Canadians. They are also more likely than other Canadians to participate in political demonstrations, to volunteer and to be members of a group or organization. Rather than being indifferent or apathetic, their engagement is merely different (O'Neill 2007, iii).

Similarly, Samara Canada (2013) in its *Democracy Report* finds evidence for the same arguments. This reports validates that Canadians between the ages of 18 and 34 are more

politically active in all forms of political activities except formal or conventional politics. Petitioning, boycotting and volunteering are more popular with the younger cohorts than voting and participating formal mechanisms.

Poelzer, Beatty and Berdahl (2014) conducted extensive telephone survey and focus groups of 505 Indigenous people across the country. "Spread by media reports and repeated by many politicians as gospel, the result is a dangerous misperception among Canadians that Aboriginal people are disengaged and uninterested in politics" (Poelzer, Beatty and Berdahl 2014, 64). These authors argue that political participation does not end and begin with voting on election day. Rather, political behaviour should be viewed through a more comprehensive lens that includes activities like volunteering, attending meetings, donating to charity, writing to elected leaders, and serving office, for example. This new study explains that Indigenous peoples are model citizens because of their high level of social capital (Poelzer, Beatty, Berdahl 2014, 65). Close to 80 percent of Indigenous northerners in Saskatchewan give away traditional foods; 66 percent reported providing care or support, including counselling or friendly visiting in the past year; just under 50 percent report having helped organize or supervise activities or events for school, church or other organizations in the past year; 40 percent report volunteering for the band; 37 percent report teaching and coaching; 32 percent report serving as a member of a board or committee (Ibid). These numbers do not have parallels in the broader Canadian society.

This discrepancy between First Nations electoral behaviour and participation in unconventional political activities poses new ways of advancing research. Newer studies examine the political behaviour of their participants through a more holistic and comprehensive lens. They broaden the definition of political participation to include activities that are rooted in Indigenous traditions. Only through this broadened theoretical view of political participation will we truly understand and assess the political behaviour of First Nations youth. Research with youth at WRFN will follow this approach. In other words, political behaviour will be more than electoral behaviour. While voting will still be utilized as a crude measure for the overall political health of the community, other activities that are specific to youth are included like the use of social media for political reasons, discussing politics, contacting community leaders, organizing or attending community events, petitioning or standing up for a political cause, not purchasing certain products for political reasons, blockading, protesting, attending pow wows, and taking part in sweat lodges or fasting ceremonies. This conceptualization of political behaviour is decolonizing and liberates First Nations youth from the shackles of colonialism based on previous research.

Why is Considering the Political Behaviour of First Nations Youth Important?

The *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996*, devoted an entire section in volume four to the perspectives of youth. The commission held hearings and "youth circles" to comprehend the key issues and challenges confronting Indigenous youth. The youth expressed a sense of emptiness and inability to live in accordance with either the dominant culture or their own. Indigenous youth, the commission found, are unfairly over-represented in the youth-criminal system, have higher dropout rates from school, have high levels of unemployment, have less opportunities, lack positive role models, have lower self-esteem and face negative effects of racism and cultural devaluation. The commission was also indicative of something quite important – the lack of adequate recreation facilities and leisure activities available to youth in First Nations communities. In the absence of these opportunities, youth turn towards escapism and substance abuse "from the crushing boredom and dreary surroundings."

In terms of politics, Indigenous youth shared that they are ready to face the challenges confronting their communities. Youth asked for recognition and involvement in the political process and its institutions. Youth seek empowerment and freedom to shape their own lives. Among many other important inputs from the youth, this demand to have their voices heard is one of the main reasons research like the current one with youth from WRFN is important and valuable. Indigenous youth view empowerment in a comprehensive and holistic way:

> "Aboriginal youth say they need to be empowered individually, politically and economically. Individual empowerment means that young people must be healthy as individuals, able to help themselves and others. Political empowerment would enable them to speak out, take a stand on the issues that they care about, and work together at the local, national and international levels. Economic empowerment would ensure that they acquire the skills needed to contribute as valuable members of their communities and nations" (RCAP 1996, 169).

After RCAP, it was evident that youth needed to be involved in governance and local administration of communities. There had to be more mechanisms for youth to express themselves collectively in their communities and in the Canadian political process. The commission recommended a complete overhaul seeking a new "Indigenous youth policy." This policy requested "youth participation at all levels, leadership development, economic development and cultural rebirth, youth involvement in nation building, and cultural and spiritual development" (RCAP 1996,180).

Unfortunately, no such policy has transpired at any level of government. Power is often concentrated in the hands of few in Indigenous communities, a situation that regularly leads to patronage (Schouls 2003, 92). Schouls details the corruption in First Nations communities, "Testimony in this vein is filled with examples of how current "power brokers" in Indigenous communities all too often dispense favours to their next-to-kin in the form of limited reserve employment, housing allocations, housing repair, and other band-administered services" (Schouls 2003, 93). Schouls finds that Indigenous youth seek empowerment through recognition and involvement in the political process and institutions that affect their lives. Youth are excluded not only from the Canadian political process, but also within their communities. He summarizes that Indigenous youth are not consulted and governments exercise arbitrary power over young people.

Alfred (1999) critiques Indigenous leadership and calls for reconstructing the Indigenous systems of governance that are based on respect, harmony, autonomy and interdependence. He argues that in traditional Indigenous societies, young people were viewed as the future of the nations and warriors. This concept of warrior essentially meant that they were expected to carry out community decisions. They were respected and involved in the decision-making process and trained to be the next leaders by elders and other mentors. Alfred suggests that the current system, while it pays lip service to these traditions, in practice ignores the youth's concerns: "Because of this, young people are becoming increasingly alienated, and our communities are in real danger of losing the next generation of leaders. Others, disillusioned by the hypocrisy of older people, especially politicians, simply turn their backs on their communities and drift towards the mainstream society, where racism still prevents their participations as full human beings" (Alfred 1999, 129). Alfred echoes the problem for Indigenous youth is that they are disempowered through the political process both in their communities and by Canadian political institutions. As a result, the youth do not feel at home in either of these societies.

Assessment of Indigenous Youth Specific Research

In this section, we examine the specific research that considers the political behaviour of Indigenous youth with extra attention paid to First Nations youth. The research is relatively limited and there are only two studies to date that investigate the political behaviour of Indigenous youth and neither is specific to Ontario. It is important to remember that none of these studies look specifically at First Nations youth. Instead they consider the entire "Aboriginal" or "Indigenous" demographic and include those living on and off reserve. These factors make it even important to advance research with youth at WRFN because it is unique.

Silver, Keeper and MacKenzie (2005) interviewed Indigenous people in Winnipeg to find out whether they participated in the political process, and in particular whether they voted in federal, provincial and municipal elections. This study included 10 youth between the ages of 18 and 25 that lived in one of Winnipeg's inner city neighbourhoods. Although this work focused on a pan-Indigenous youth perspective, it does yield highly valuable insights. The study showed that nationalism is not a key factor for youth, rather the respondents claimed whether they liked it or not, this is the system they live in and they had to participate. Some participants maintained it was important to be involved in the political process "precisely to protect Aboriginal rights" (Silver et al. 2005, 21). A majority of the participants viewed voting as important and essential. Nevertheless, themes of alienation, exclusion and marginalization were consistently referenced by youth as reasons for not voting. Silver et al. conclude that young Indigenous people seem to be completely outside of the political process and the political system is unresponsive to their needs.

Alfred, Pitawanakwat and Price (2007) provide the second well-established study on the political behaviour of Indigenous youth in Canada. They aligned their methodology closely to the example of Silver's (2005) previous study. They conducted 29 interviews and focus groups with youth between the ages of 17 and 25 to assess their perceptions on political identity, citizenship and activism, and how they relate with the state and its electoral processes. They mention at the outset that their results are "not intended, nor should they be perceived, as representative of Indigenous youth across the country" (Alfred, Price and Pitawanakwat, 2007, 3). Interviews included youth from both an urban context and reserves.

The political behaviour of Indigenous youth in this study was largely dependent on contextual factors such as the individual's level of education, personal experience and community. Some of the youth claimed that the electoral arena was unresponsive to them and that they prefer direct-action methods like blockades and protests. However, voting in band elections seems to be more important to Indigenous youth, as one participant said: "When it comes to my reserve, I think it is really important because you are voting on people who are going to be representing you and leading your community" (Alfred, Price and Pitawanakwat, 2007, 6). In addition, many of the participants in this study demonstrated a higher level of knowledge about their identities, political systems and factors that affected their identities. Indigenous youth in this study held complex views on politics within their communities and outside of them.

One of the major limitations of both of these studies is that the researchers actively approached youth that were part of their "personal and professional networks" (Alfred, Pitawanakwat and Price 2007, 2). Thus making both studies unrepresentative of Indigenous youth perspectives. Secondly, these studies consider the pan-Indigenous youth perspectives and cannot accurately account for the particular experience of First Nations youth that live on reserves. Nevertheless, these studies also demonstrate the electoral process is an inappropriate

and unresponsive means to advance youth priorities and interests. Youth are still looking for opportunities to share their perspectives and influence change because they are regularly alienated and marginalized by the political process. Lastly, there is significant variation for not participating in the electoral process and some evidence that youth may be turning towards direct-action methods.

Theorizing the Political Behaviour of First Nations Youth

While youth regarded voting an important part of the political process, this did not translate to electoral participation. Youth repeatedly claimed that they were excluded, alienated and marginalized by the political process and sought empowerment. The way First Nations youth participate politically is influenced by numerous contextual factors like – whether they live in an urban context or in a First Nations community – the size, location, and liveliness of the Band Council in community affairs. First Nations youth are distinct and participating in politics is contingent on their experiences within their communities.

Assessing the political behaviour of First Nations youth only through voting leads to flawed interpretations. In electoral studies political behaviour is mainly intertwined with electoral behaviour and this is wrong. Political behaviour for First Nations youth needs to be more comprehensive and has to factor in First Nations-specific and other youth appropriate activities. Former AFN national chief, Ovide Mecredi, outlined the problems with viewing political participation only through voting: "The Indian Act has dictated a style of government that has forced our peoples to adopt what I call the ten-second model of democracy, since it gives us input at the ballot box for a total of about ten seconds every few years. We have gotten used to a style of government that does not reflect our traditions of fully involving the people" (Mecredi and Turpel 1993, 90).

Additionally, there are more complexities and other factors to consider when assessing the political behaviour of First Nations peoples that live on reserves. Poelzer and colleagues have shared some of these factors in their work:

> Broadly speaking, on-reserve populations tend to be younger, with lower educational attainment and lower income levels than off-reserve populations. And Aboriginal Canada is young: 46 percent of Aboriginal people are under the age of 25, compared with 29 percent for Canada as a whole. Over 81 percent of respondents aged 18-25 reported not voting in the last provincial election, and 92 percent reported not voting in the last federal election (Poelzer, Beatty and Berdahl 2014, 65).

Considering the political behaviour of youth in WRFN through voting will be meaningless. Instead, it may be more appropriate to look at their political behaviour more comprehensively and use the work of Scott (1985) *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* as a theoretical aid. Scott argues that the structurally disempowered like First Nations youth may strategically refrain from electoral participation and use tools that are more effective to advance their interests. Hunter (2013) argues similarly that First Nations peoples use instruments that are very blunt to affect policy changes.

Considering the Political Behaviour of Youth in Whitefish River First Nation

Considering the political behaviour of First Nations youth in traditional societies is very difficult, but we have some ideas of what it may have looked like. The First Nations that Jacques Cartier came into contact with were diverse and well established (Miller 200, 4). They lived in myriad bands, villages and confederacies and were highly distinct. There was also a common

political tradition based on a "commitment to profoundly respectful way of governing, based on a worldview that balances respect for autonomy with a recognition of a universal interdependency" (Alfred 1999, xv). Western or European political thought, on the other hand, was based on imperialism, capitalism, absolutism, and dominion. In European societies power was concentrated in the hands of a very few people that made policies and decisions that affected everyone. Youth in European societies were certainly not regarded as "warriors".

In the current era, the political behaviour of First Nations peoples and especially youth is shaped by colonialism. First Nations youth in the modern socio-political culture are alienated, excluded and marginalized. They face oppression through racism and structural inequalities. Politicians both within their communities and the Canadian system neglect their interests. Youth political behaviour under colonialism involves two frames of political participation – either through resurgence or reconciliation models. These two worldviews practically influence the political behaviour of all First Nations youth, whether it is the short-term investment of voting or participating in community events. These two paradigms are not completely separate and intersect at various points. They can be conceptualized as a spectrum or range, rather than opposing viewpoints and ideologies. Colonialism is an all-encompassing reality that affects all aspects of First Nations youth's lives and is partly the reason Indigenous resurgence exists at all.

Resurgence is about confronting colonialism and advancing traditional forms of political behaviour that is rooted in Indigenous political philosophy. Reconciliation, on the other hand, is accepting the complexities of the Canadian socio-political history and moving forward together towards a respectful co-existence together. Political participation for First Nations youth through the resurgence model involves directly confronting and challenging Canadian institutions. Conversely, political participation for First Nation youth through the reconciliation framework involves participating in Canadian political process and its institutions. In other words, the reconciliation means business as usual for First Nations youth.

Theorizing the political behaviour of First Nations youth in the modern era requires acceptance of colonialism and its negative policies like the *Indian Act*. It is the primary document, which governs the way Canada relates with First Nations. The act, which is wide-ranging in scope and influence, determines everything from who First Nations are to the fiduciary obligations Canada has to these peoples. The system of government that the *Indian Act* has created in First Nations communities is commonly referred to as a "colonial style municipal government," wherein Chief and Council are elected in a process similar to other Canadian governments (Mecredi and Turpel 1993, 89). It replaced the consensus-based decision-making processes and confederacies. Overall, the *Indian Act* made First Nations peoples wards of the state that required custodial care while they were being assimilated or integrated into Canadian society. In fact, amendments made to the *Indian Act* in 1960 provided First Nations peoples with the ability to vote in federal elections making the entire process of "enfranchisement" an assimilation policy. First Nation peoples in this early period did not exercise their right to vote and engage in Canadian politics. According to the Chief of Akwesasne, "Only one Akwesasne person has ever voted in Canadian elections" (Ladner 2003, 21). This early period signals the roots of alienation and lack of faith in the Canadian political system by First Nations. As First Nations political structures were eradicated, the *Indian Act* made First Nations peoples "uncertain citizens," in the sense that they were to be assimilated, but not fully incorporated into Canadian society.

More relevantly, the *Indian Act* impacted the political behaviour of First Nations youth on reserves. Although First Nations participation in the Canadian electoral process has been low,

electoral participation in band elections have remained consistently high. Bedford and Pobihushchy (1995) were the first to offer an explanation for the abnormal high voting rates in band elections. They characterized it the "politics of dependency theory" whereby, "a political culture and socio-economic reality of dependency has been created on reserve communities which expresses itself in the form abnormally high turnout" (Bedford and Pobihushchy 1995, 273). This is a complicated legacy of colonialism, which has subjugated members of First Nations communities in a process of subordination and dependency. Band Councils and the band administration control many of the resources and jobs that are located in First Nations communities. Given that socioeconomic conditions on First Nations reserves are well below the Canadian average with higher than average unemployment rates, these make unstable conditions for members of bands, including youth. In First Nations communities, "there is very little economic activity that is independent of the local band political system" (Bedford and Pobihushchy 1995, 274).

This early relationship between Canadian institutions, the political system and First Nations has generated "deep distrust" that is present today. Others have argued that this sort of colonial system led to other types of political behaviour. Due to the absence of formal mechanisms to facilitate political participation, First Nations peoples, particularly youth, have turned to "very blunt instruments to make their point, such as highly charged political demonstrations, blockades and litigation" (Ladner 2003, 27). Silver and colleagues (2006) have also advanced a similar theory they call "the politics of mobilization". Their study was based on open-ended interviews with 26 Indigenous people who are or have been active in various community development initiatives in Winnipeg's inner city. Many of the respondents shared that: "to make real changes… requires a different kind of politics; a politics built on mobilizing people and challenging systems" (Silver et al. 2006, 44). This is an alternative way of relating with the Canadian state and First Nations peoples have been very successful at using "direct-action" initiatives to advance their claims and gain victories. The politics of mobilization is about confrontation, collective and militant action. While this research is not specific to First Nations youth, it did consist of their perspectives.

They additionally found that government programs and policies – particularly those associated with Indian Affairs – are not in touch with the reality of Indigenous people, and repeatedly betray a lack of understanding of Indigenous issues; that government has created an 'Indian Industry'; that there are too many ineffective and costly big projects, as opposed to grassroots projects; that policies are short-sighted and do not have a long term vision; and that government has created a culture of dependency among Indigenous peoples (Silver et al. 2006, 42). They refer to this idea of 'politics of access' in which many organizations within urban centres and on reserves rely on government funding for programming and services. As a consequence, these organizations have to be extremely careful about the way their members relate with the Canadian institutions. This concept of the "politics of access" can be used to explain the behaviour of band councils when dealing with government agencies like INAC.

The type of political behaviour that this colonial framework and imposed band arrangement system encourages is one of competition, dependency, nepotism, patronage and friction. With small communities like WRFN, it is very important to have access to the resources and jobs that the Band Council controls. Education, health, community services, construction work, housing grants, unemployment insurance, welfare and post-secondary education grants are all within the jurisdiction of Band Council who allocate these resources to community members. This will inevitably lead to fierce competition for positions on Band Councils or access to the

limited jobs that are offered in the band administration. Community members like youth and elders are practically dependent on the band system and its resources for their living. Everything from funding, services, and employment is in the hands of a few people in the community. Based on this information, a model of political participation is advanced for First Nations youth.
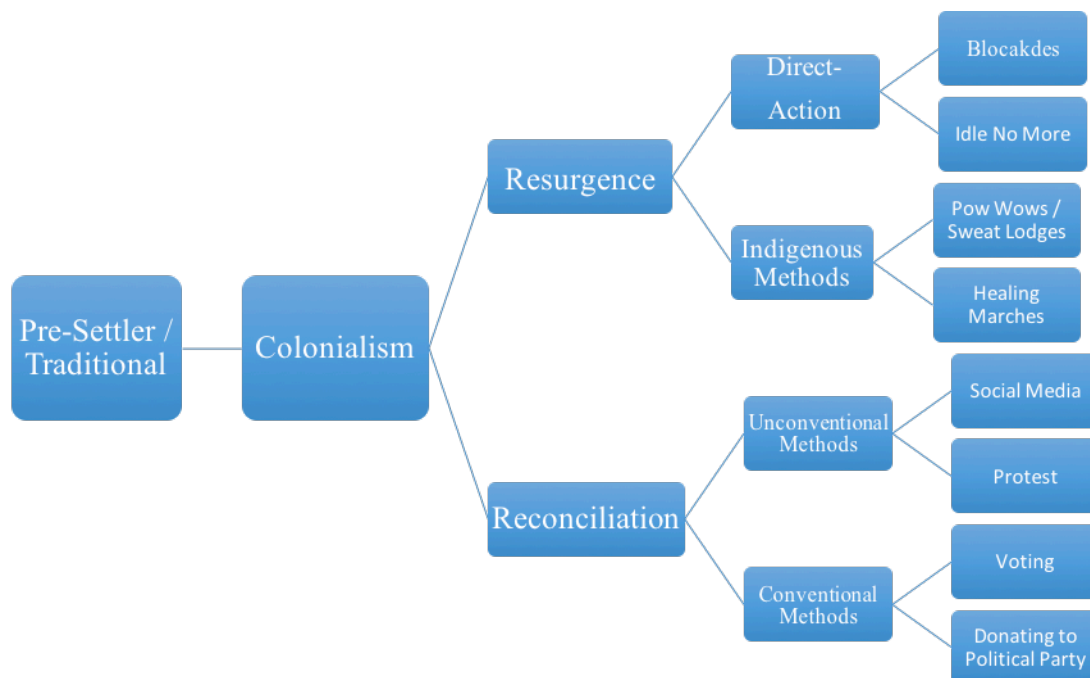
Picture 1: Political Participation Model of First Nations Youth

Preliminary Research of the Political Behaviour of Youth in Whitefish River First Nation

After some preliminary research and discussion, not only are the youth in WRFN politically active, but also the community in general is politically dynamic. Based on this preliminary research, it appears that one of the contributing factors to this dynamism is the leadership of the Chief, Franklin Paibomsai. The WRFN Chief, also known to his community as Shining Turtle, has led several campaigns and has been an active voice in various political efforts.

In May 2010, the Chief in partnership with his counterparts from other First Nations in Canada threatened to impose blockades on major transportation routes during G8 and G20 meetings in Ontario. Finance Minister Jim Flaherty personally reached out to the Chief and asked for an accord to be signed. The document provided First Nations peoples tax breaks on the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) that was being introduced across the country. Throughout this effort, the entire community participated in campaigns to raise awareness and to reach out to Canadian politicians about their unique treaty rights. The community, including many youth, sent over 2,500 e-mails to Jim Flaherty's office in to show their dissatisfaction with the HST (Howlett 2010).

Beginning in early 2013, WRFN was also very active in the Idle No More movement. The entire community including the youth participated in blockades and other efforts to educate mainstream Canadians on First Nation's treaty rights. A massive blockade was organized on January 16, 2013 on Highway 6, which travels directly through WRFN. Youth in this blockade

handed out pamphlets and educated people peacefully passing by in their cars. The pamphlets given out emphasized the ways Bill C-45 affected all Canadians, not only Indigenous peoples and encouraged individuals to contact their local Members of Parliament to oppose the legislation. The event included round dances and other ceremonies (Expositor Staff 2013). Additionally, many community members travelled to Ottawa for the National Day of Action on January 16, 2013. In conjunction with other First Nations on Manitoulin Island, community leaders organized buses to take their citizens to Parliament Hill.

Other community activities that youth participated in include fax mobs, rallies, letter writing campaigns and more. In February 4, 2013 youth in the community wrote a letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper (See Appendix). In this letter, they asked the Conservative government to pay attention to the future of youth in the community. It was signed by many youth in the community and mailed to Ottawa. The fax mob campaign led by the youth was designed to overwhelm the offices of Members of Provincial Parliament at Queen's Park and Members of Parliament in Parliament Hill. The youth wanted to raise issues concerning Bill C-27, C-45, Bill S8 and MRP Laws. The youth also "worked with the Chief to deliver a message of change on Treaties, by designing the letter, emailing, faxing and phoning MP's about our approach to a renewed relationship on treaties"[6].

Based on this preliminary research, we can surmise the some of the youth in WRFN are, on average, politically active. They are involved in direct-action activities and in the politics of mobilization. However, we do not know to what extent these engagements extend or translate into electoral participation – in both band council and external elections. One possible barrier to the political participation of young people in WRFN is the challenge of substance abuse and unfortunate high rates of youth suicides that plagued the community from 2009 to 2011. The community was put on a suicide watch list and received widespread media attention (Anishinabe Spiritual Centre 2012).

Conclusion

First Nations youth have been categorized as politically disengaged. This is largely due their lower participation rates in Canadian elections. However, other studies propose that First Nations youth are turning towards other types of political activities outside of the formal mechanisms. These include direct-action activities like protests and petitioning. INM demonstrated that First Nations youth are also involved in activities that are rooted in their traditional political philosophies like round dances, drumming circles, and healing journeys. Preliminary research on the political environment in WRFN shows that youth may be in fact highly politically active. Community leaders like the Chief have provided a suitable environment for youth to be involved in the political processes.

Previous research, for the most part, has ignored traditional and community-based forms of political participation for First Nations youth that is grounded in their worldviews. This study, therefore, will move towards assessing the political behaviour of youth in WRFN through a decolonized and comprehensive lens. While voting will always remain an important indicator of the political health of a community, it is but one indicator, and for First Nations youth may not be the most apt one. Our theoretical framework proposes that the political behaviour of First Nations youth across Canada, including in WRFN, is largely influenced by colonialism. First

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[6] Personal communication with the Chief Franklin Paibomsai over E-mail

Nations youth within this structure have two frameworks to participate with politics, either through resurgence or reconciliation. By assessing the political experiences, attitudes and opinions of youth in WRFN, I want to emphasize and share the voices of these youth.

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodology that is used to conduct the empirical research for this thesis. It is organized in the following way. First, I discuss the assumptions and perspectives that I bring to the research as an outsider, followed by a brief discussion about research in the context of decolonization. Secondly, I consider the difficult ethical dimensions of conducting CBPR in a master's level thesis. Lastly, the data collection methods are presented and reasons for their usage. Several modifications were made to the original design, including an addition of some quantitative elements. The modifications were made either at the request of WRFN leaders or in agreement with them.

Rooted in CBPR and Indigenous Research Principles (IRP), WRFN community leadership played an integral role in all aspects of the research process: designing the study, implementing its methodology, and interpretation and analysis of the final results. Part of the reason the community has taken a keen and vested interest in the project is because they want to comprehend youth perspectives and experiences of politics. As the community moves closer to implementing its own custom election code, some of the value from this project will be youth contribution on these important topics. One of the primary advantages of CBPR is that it benefits the communities that you work with.

Before addressing the methodology and the crux of this chapter, the objectives and challenges of this research project are presented. Outside researchers are viewed suspiciously and are not easily trusted by First Nations peoples and communities. This is due to the ways research has been misused in the past to advance and protect imperial and colonial interests. Indigenous peoples have expressed concern of being "researched to death" and are the "most researched peoples historically". Epidemiological research, for example, has portrayed Indigenous peoples as sick, powerless, and lacking in capacity (Mitchell and Baker 2005, 42). Outsider research has been historically based on western epistemology and its principles of positivism. These research paradigms are contrary to Anishinaabe concepts of research.

Major Challenges of this Research

The journey behind this research has been full of challenges and barriers that had to be overcome. This entire research project arose out of an opportunity and interest in working with First Nations youth. Throughout the life of the project, I have maintained a research journal, which tracks all the personal and confidential information that has influenced all aspects of the research project including its design, implementation and results. In qualitative-driven studies such as this, the researcher is the main instrument of the study and any pre-existing worldviews that individual holds will influence all aspects of the project (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 14-18).

Conducting this type of study with First Nations youth is not strongly supported and recommended for outsiders, especially someone with minimal research experience. While there were many challenges, five factors need to be disclosed. First, without having access to the community through my research work as a research assistant on a SSHRC funded project, this dissertation would not have been possible. Second, the community needed to have an interest in the project and it had to yield direct benefit to them. Third, there had to be individuals that supported the research and acted as gatekeepers that wanted this study to succeed. Fourthly, an incredible amount of energy and resources had to be spent on developing an honest relationship

with the community. Finally, reliance on mentors, supervisors and community leaders was crucial to the completion of the work. This type of study takes considerable time, energy, support and money. For instance, renting a vehicle for every trip to the community is not ideal for graduate students that have no funding. Moreover, there were additional costs with ethics, accommodation, food and beverage, and participant compensation[7].

I visited WRFN for the first time in early March 2015 to work on *the SSHRC project* with several professors from McMaster University. We went into the community to administer surveys to community members that were participating on a referendum concerning reforms to Matrimonial Real Property (MRP) Laws. This was an issue that youth years ago mobilized and were involved in. MRP laws were being changed to make lives easier for single parent women to keep their properties after divorce. My work in this trip included overseeing some youth that were helping us administer the surveys. Observing the youth in the community that day led to foundational questions behind this thesis including: what are the political experiences of youth in this community? We know that First Nations youth do not participate at high levels in electoral politics, but are there any other types of activities that they are involved in that are specific to their communities? We learned that youth were an immense part of Idle No More, but were the youth in this community involved in that social movement and what was the nature of their participation? What are the perceptions that youth may hold about politicians both in their communities and outside of it? What are the challenges and barriers that youth may face when wanting to become politically involved?

Luckily, on the day we were administering surveys to community members, one of the councillors expressed interest in these questions when I shared them with her. The councilwoman expressed deep interest and admiration for the idea of providing an opportunity for youth to share their political experiences. In qualitative research her role is known as a "gatekeeper" because of her status in the community. Without her support throughout the early phases of this project, many of those challenges would not have been overcome.

After returning to McMaster University, I did some preliminary research and read up on the political behaviour of First Nations youth in Canada. Many of the articles were similar to the political participation research that we learned about earlier in the year. This preliminary research signified an immense gap in the literature and an opportunity to develop meaningful work that not only contributes to our scholarly knowledge, but also could yield important policy implications. I decided from the beginning to focus on the political behaviour of the youth in the community, rather than all members, because it curtailed some of the challenges in terms of scope and expertise required to do this research[8]. Working with youth only for instance made it easier to recruit participants and concentrate on one body of literature.

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[7] Many argued that this type of project was unfeasible and would be untenable. Having been through this journey, I can now understand their concerns. This was certainly not an ideal way of conducting research work, but it was only possible due to the generous support of my supervisors, family and WRFN community leaders. The political science department at McMaster University also offered a research travel grant that made the research trips less stressing financially.

[8] Being a graduate student and with little primary research experience, it would have been more complicated to look at the political behaviour of the entire community and open the research to all members. Also, as an individual that is relatively close in age to the participants in this study, it made the conversation and discussion about their political experiences easier. This was evident in the discussion with Elders because working with them required greater critical thinking and listening skills.

This formative period led to further discussions with the community leadership and eventually to the signed Research Agreement (See Appendix 1). This project underwent a vigorous ethics process and received approval from both the McMaster University Ethics Board (MREB) and the Manitoulin Anishinaabek Research Review Committee (MARRC). The two boards had unique applications and prioritized different aspects of the research. MREB, for example, wanted to ensure the student researcher was attuned to the sensitivities of conducting research in Indigenous communities. MAARC, on the other hand, was more concerned that the research would lead to mutually beneficial relations between the researcher and the community. The ethics process for this particular project took over four months to complete and receive clearance by both boards.

Research as Decolonization

The term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism (Smith 2012). As indicated by the quote at the beginning of this chapter, First Nations peoples do not view "research" favourably. It has been historically utilized to advance western imperialism and preserve the legacy of colonialism. It has privileged Eurocentric political and worldviews over others. Due to research, Indigenous peoples around the world are dehumanized and made inferior through the practices and accumulation of work by western scholars. Moreover, research has been one of the ways the foundations of imperialism and colonialism has spread and strengthened on Turtle Island.

In the contemporary period, ideas around post colonialism make colonialism seem distant and in the past. However, imperialism and colonialism are everyday lived-experiences for First Nations youth in Canada. Colonialism still deeply impacts the lives of First Nations peoples across these lands and is recreated and experienced in ever evolving new forms. Rather than accepting ideas of post colonialism, decolonization is rooted in the present day challenges of colonialism and actively seeks to challenge the ideologies and institutions that regenerate them. Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike striving for decolonization are involved in an array of diverse activities all around the world. As a student-researcher, it is my intent to conduct research that is rooted in a decolonized context. This is one of the reasons the postcolonial is not considered seriously in this thesis. There cannot be postcolonial political behaviour because colonialism is still present. Activities like demonstrations and blockades are described as postcolonial behaviour, but this an error in semantics.

Nevertheless, the primary challenge in this project was being an outsider. As an individual from a post-secondary institution trained in positivist thought and influenced by anthropocentrism and eurocentrism rooted in western epistemology it was immediately clear at the beginning that I had to unlearn many of the ideas offered by the Canadian post-secondary education system. For example, I could not utilize interviews and focus groups. I arrived to this research with a lot of assumptions and bias that potentially could have led to negative or wrongful interpretation. This was the most challenging part of conducting research with youth in WRFN. It was not the ethics process. It was not the exhausting five hour drives to the community. Rather it was being critically reflexive and situating myself regularly within the confines of decolonized research principles while being truly accepted as an outsider in the community.

Decolonization and unlearning involved immersion into First Nations history, culture and the participation at the grassroots level. In qualitative research sometimes this type of behaviour is considered as going "native" and is not encouraged due to its ability to influence and bias

research results[9]. In other words, becoming close with your participants will lead to faulty results or erroneous conclusions. However, without becoming immersed in First Nations culture and seeing their struggles, this project would not have arrived at these results. As previously mentioned, the researcher is the instrument of the study in this type of research and interpretation has to be used to understand the phenomena at hand. Separation of the researcher from the participants or the community was not possible.

Western research paradigms are imbedded in naturalistic explanations of the world; wherein the human-researcher takes an elevated place above the natural world and objectively attempts to understand whatever phenomena being scrutinized. This idea is contrary to First Nations philosophies and research principles since their views are predominantly rooted in animism. Research understood in First Nations terms is a quest for the roots of a problem and a conversation and discussion between individuals to uncover answers. In First Nations communities, research is not necessarily the prerogative of "objective" elites with special technical skills. Rather it is a feature of the traditional community that seeks information sharing, decision-making, supportive connections, and strategies based on native views (Nabigon, et al. 1999, 114). First Nations research is ultimately rooted in attempting to restore the balance in a community, between the individuals and all other creatures.

This study has taken on the following steps to proceed in a decolonized approach of research. It is predicated on CBPR, rooted in IRP and grounded in the Seven Grandfather teachings. We know that research involving First Nations peoples and communities has often resulted in uneven economic gains. For example, traditional knowledge has been appropriated by non-Indigenous researchers and corporations for economic profits (Kershaw, Castleden and Laroque 2014, 395). These three elements will safeguard WRFN. The Band Council will own the data that from this research and will be able to terminate the study at any time. The leaders and community will be involved in all aspects of the research process and publications, including interpreting the results. No publications will be printed without their acknowledgement and approval. The intent has not been only to empower the youth, but the entire community through this project. By providing the youth with a voice to share their experiences and the rest of the community to understand their perspectives.

Establishing and Strengthening Relationships with the Community

The roots of CBPR can be traced back to the action school of research developed by psychologist Kurt Lewin (1946) in *Action Research and Minority Problems*. This type of research encourages involvement of those that are affected by the issues observed to be actively involved in the research. CBPR is particularly effective with First Nations communities because of its ability to counter the "colonizing" nature of western research. Research continues to oppress and marginalize communities, but when the community is involved in the research process and have ownership, they can influence the results and halt projects that are doing harm (Minkler 2005). CBPR is an overarching framework that uses a variety of approaches that have at their centre three inter-related elements: community participation, community initiated research and action taken when necessary.

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[9] Consider the fact that going "native" is problematic in western-based research. There is no coincidence here that native is considered linguistically less scientific. These kinds of ideas are all legacies of colonialism, which considered native people less civilized and advanced.

To begin this research, I contacted the councilwoman that acted as the "gate-keeper" in an introductory e-mail on March 9, 2015 and defined the objectives and scope of the study. She responded asking for a formal letter addressed to the Chief and Council indicating the objective and methodology. After some revisions, the letter was sent to the Chief and Council on July 2, 2015 (See Appendix 2). Community leaders sent an invitation for me to come and discuss the nature of the research with them on July 21, 2015. After some deliberation, Chief and Council unanimously accepted and supported this research project. However, they made several recommendations to consider moving forward. They encouraged the idea of lowering the participant age from 18 to 16 in order to include young people in the community between the ages of 16 and 25. They also recommended making the study inclusive to all youth, and not turning away participants that may be potentially younger or older than 16 and 25. They also suggested using data collection methods that aligned with First Nations worldviews, and making the questions broad and easy to understand. It was evident after this introductory meeting that community leaders genuinely supported the study and wanted youth participation.

On the recommendation of the Chief and Council, the appropriate changes were made to the Research Agreement and the official document was signed by the community leaders and myself on August 18, 2015. The Band Council made the Band Manager the primary contact for the project in the community and any other matters related to the research. The Band Manager continued to remain an active participant in the development of this study as well as an important resource to connect with other community members. For example, the Band Manager worked with the Youth Coordinator and the Health Coordinator in the community, to provide space for the Discussion Circles organized with the youth and elders.

Prior to beginning any sort of research related work in the community and data collection, approximately four months were spent on building and strengthening the relationship that was initiated with the community. There were countless e-mail exchanges with various members of the community including the Councilwoman, Band Manager, Education Coordinator, Health Coordinator and Youth Coordinator. These interactions were just as important to this study as the discussion with the youth. They created the positive foundation for CBPR to occur. Nevertheless, this project required ongoing and continuing relationships with community leaders, even after the study is completed. Relations that are rooted in IRP require the researcher to be available to the community even beyond the completion of the project.

Another challenge is that CBPR involves commitment from the community to ensure that the project is in fact collaborative in nature. Mitchell and Baker (2005) emphasized that developing community relationships and research practices that are beneficial to First Nations communities require indeterminate amounts of time. The uncertain time frame and success rate of community entry, ethics review process, recruitment, and publications create tension for researchers. In many circumstances, communities do not have the extra resources to dedicate to researchers. Fortunately, this was not the case with WRFN. While they are a small community, leaders supported this research from the beginning by providing input at all steps of the research process.

Considerable energy and time went into strengthening and continuing the relationship with WRFN leaders. In qualitative studies like these, the relationships that researchers create with their participants and the stakeholders are critical parts of the research process. The community leadership provided "access" to the youth and elders for this study. Only after the final research agreement was signed and the research received clearance from both ethics boards, did formal participant recruitment processes begin. The objective was always to maintain a

"fluid, symmetric, and reciprocal relationship." Instead of treating the relationships as a tool or strategy to gaining access to data (Tolman and Brydon-Miller 2001, 137-138) I had to develop trust and relationship with the community, I had to travel long distances for meetings with the Chief and Council. Occasionally these trips coincided with horrendous and wintry conditions.

Relationships in CBPR-driven research especially with First Nations youth requires attention, commitment and honesty. Although the nature of the relationship with the community is outlined in detail in the research agreement, the key feature of CBPR in this project showed that research is fluid and constantly evolving. The amount of participation that a community and its members wanted to commit was up to them. For example, in the design and formation of the project the community was highly involved. Community leaders wanted to know exactly what the research was attempting to uncover and what would happen with the data. The community was once again very involved when I visited for the Discussion Circles. However, community leaders gave space when I was writing up this dissertation. Their involvement made it easier to carry out the research because it reduced the insider-outsider tensions that were always present.

The research also included safeguards for participant privacy and protection of confidentiality. In a small community like WRFN, this is an important element and has to always be carefully considered. While the data is given to the Band Council, it conceals identities and is in aggregate form. This protects the youth because the data does not include individual participant responses. The data provided is summaries of responses from the youth. The raw data will be completely destroyed when the research is complete to prevent misuse by community leaders. Additionally, participants were told only to share information that they were comfortable with other people in the community knowing. Despite these measures, research adhering to Anishinaabe principles provides room for the data to be used by the community to restore the balance between relationships.

Methodology

Since this research concerns the Ojibway community of WRFN, the epistemology and methodology have to reflect their unique worldviews. It has already been established that this study relies on CBPR and is community driven. However, we have not indicated yet the value and impact of IRP. In simple terms, by adopting IRP in this study it denotes that we are moving away from western research principles and positivism. We are instead interested in research that is entrenched in traditional knowledge and this encompasses three features: empirical observation, traditional teachings and revelation (Castellano 2000). IRP acknowledges the relational nature of research and the interconnectedness of the all participants in the study including the researcher. Research through this context is fluid and non-linear (Kovach 2015). This is very different from positivist and western methodologies because it challenges the fact that through research we can understand everything. Maintaining objectivity and neutrality are neither realistic nor pursued in this study. Researcher and participants are situated in a non-hierarchical context, working together to understand the phenomena under examination and influencing each other's views.

Moreover, IRP is consistent with and rooted in the objectives of decolonized research methodologies. In other words, researchers working within this framework have to be reflexive about their prior assumptions and ideologies that may influence other parts of their studies. As the primary researcher, I needed to constantly decolonize my thoughts and ideas through critical thinking and reflection. Having the community involved in all aspects of the research process has also been helpful and curtailed some of the negative influences that I held as an outsider.

Lavallee (2009) used the medicine wheel as the theoretical base for her methodology. Similarly, I look towards the Seven Grandfather teachings as the theoretical base for the methodology of this dissertation. Nabigon and colleagues (1999) equally provide an excellent example to follow through their research work on Mnidoo Mnising.

Integrating the Seven Grandfather teachings into this study requires certain assumptions. This research is first and foremost a quest not only for the researcher but for the participants involved in the study. While the overarching objective is to understand the political behaviour of young people in the community, the journey will be just as transformative as the end results. This research is not carried out by an "elite" with special technical skills, but involves the entire community, including youth and elders working together within Anishinaabe/Ojibway or IRP to generate and share information, make connections, seek balance and make improvements in the community. Discussion Circles with the youth and elders will begin with a prayer or smudge ceremony, in which the Great Spirit will guide the course of the conversations with participants. This study is more than increasing our scholarly knowledge. The overall objective is to restore the sacred balance and remove barriers within community members, especially towards youth.

The Seven Grandfather teachings have been integrated into every part of this research project. They have been included in the research agreement and ethics applications. Traditionally, the practice of the Seven Grandfathers required that nothing shared by the individuals leave the circle to provide an ethical space for everyone to share and learn together. However, in the Anishinaabe context, conversations within the circles can be utilized for the betterment and improvement of participant lives. This serves as the theoretical base for the policy recommendations and community report that flows from this project that is shared in the final chapter.

The Seven Grandfathers each gave the Anishinaabe people a gift through the first elder to guide them towards "Mino-Bimaadizwin" (The way of the good life). These gifts were to help individuals live in balance with one another and the creator. The seven gifts include: wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility and truth. Each one of these teachings has been incorporated in different aspects of the research process and has been outlined in the MAARC ethics application (See Appendix 3). I attempted to rely on the Seven Grandfather teachings in all decisions made vis-à-vis this research and the community.

At various intervals in this project's life, I relied on the Seven Grandfather teachings for guidance. Each one of the teachings has played an essential role in defining the project. The Seven Grandfather Teachings are a highly spiritual and significant moral guide for Anishinaabe peoples. These teachings have to be used in good faith, especially in research. Their incorporation into this research is not intended as appropriation of First Nations traditional knowledge. Rather, it is an ontology embedded in the fluidity of qualitative research and acceptance of our inability to fully grasp reality. Some of the ways the Seven Grandfather teachings have impacted this study include: being available to the community after this study is long completed, developing and maintaining relationships with youth participants, being truthful to the results, treating everyone in the community equally, relying on the community for support and wisdom, and ensuring that the appropriate questions are presented in the search for truth.

Data Collection Methods

Adopting these concepts might seem difficult and incompatible, but in reality it was easy. Concepts like CBPR appear complicated, but it simply means community-driven and community-involvement in research. IRP seeks and supports community-based involvement in

projects and similarly is easy to operationalize. It involves utilizing Indigenous worldviews and epistemology, rather than western methods. This is the reason the Seven Grandfather Teachings of wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility and truth, have been integrated into this study. As a researcher, the Seven Grandfather Teachings have been my guide when there was a difficult decision or challenge ahead. These concepts are all interconnected and complement one another in this study, they are not complicated western abstractions.

Originally, as indicated in the ethics application, I had intended to use interviews and focus groups with youth in the community. These methods were suitable for youth sharing their perspectives on issues related to participating politically in their community and with Canadian institutions. The data collected from these interactions would inform the content of the thesis. No one objected to this idea, including my supervisors[10]. Nevertheless, two interrelated incidents changed this course of action. As I exercised reflexivity, I remembered the community leaders recommended using data collection methods that were consistent with Ojibway principles. Interviews and focus groups are not in conflict with Ojibway worldviews, but they stem from western research paradigms. Secondly, after an initial review of previous research with Indigenous youth, it became apparent that there were other methods that could be utilized more effectively. Interviews and focus groups are excellent data collection methods and could have been used sufficiently in this research as well. However, they are not fully aligned with First Nations worldviews for several reasons. In these research methods, the hierarchy between researcher and participants is visible and central to the discussions. In fact, researchers need to exercise skills to make sure that their questions are answered appropriately and the participants remain on topic. This sort of methodology does not work well with First Nations youth. Methods need to be less hierarchical and conversations more fluid. Preliminary research advocated circle oriented methods. This was first utilized in the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996* in discussion with youth through identified as "youth circles". Other studies have utilized this method, but have called them learning circles, healing circles, talking circles, and sharing circles.

In this dissertation we will use a modified version of the circle method called Discussion Circles. This method is heavily influenced by previous academic work with Indigenous Youth by Alfred, Pitawanakwat and Price (2007), Silver, Keeper and MacKenzie (2005) and Lavallee (2009). It is a variation of healing circles or sharing circles, but is specifically made for the youth in WRFN. After assessing previous data collection methods used in studies with First Nations youth, I remodelled one that catered to the specific needs of the youth under the supervision of the community. WRFN leaders wanted an approach similar to healing circles, where the youth were comfortable. Youth could share information, listen and learn from each other's experiences and contribute to the study. They wanted a non-invasive method that did not lead to contention and negative experience for the participants. Working with the community to develop this method took several weeks, but in the end it was an approach that everyone supported full heartedly.

Discussion Circles keep with IRP and resist western notions of hierarchy in research. This method is able to capture youth experiences through a group discussion on a variety of topics. They differ immensely from focus groups because they have a sacred meaning for Anishinaabe peoples. Discussions in the circle are guided by energy from the Great Spirit and ancestors. In focus groups, researchers are invested in acquiring as much information as possible

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[10] I attend the Laurier Summer Institute for Research Methods and received training in preparation for doing focus groups and interviews, with the financial support of my supervisors.

about a particular topic and managing discussions appropriately. Discussion Circles, on the other hand, put the researcher and participants on an equal level and place emphasis on sharing, healing and learning collectively rather than an inquest. As Lavallee argues, "The circle is non-judgemental, helpful and supportive" (Lavallee 2009, 29). The process is just as important as the end objective for both researchers and participants. Through the act of group discussions, listening and sharing, the circle is a mechanism for healing, empowerment and transformation. Discussion Circles with youth in the community fulfill the core objectives of this project by empowering youth and providing space for them to express their voices.

Especially for Anishinaabe peoples, this type of method is appropriate and has been used commonly in previous research. There is an element of healing associated with the Discussion Circles. As the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996* demonstrated, Anishinaabe youth need healing and empowerment on political matters in their communities and outside of them. These Discussion Circles seek to restore the balance within the community by providing a platform for young people to share their experiences and stories, as well as give the community leaders productive information to work with the youth. Nabigon (1999) shares the differences between circle oriented and western methods:

> The focus of this approach is not easily understood from a western research perspective. It is not "external" empirical research. Instead, it is interested in historical experiences, in the expression of the roots of the problems, in reflection on situations. It is not oriented to extracting data but rather to acts of sharing. Permission is given for the leaders to report in this case, but the write-up is not essential to the process or part of the tradition as it is currently practiced. The purpose is good for the community and good for Native people as a whole, and this good is conceived as balance (Nabigon, et al. 1999, 126).

Youth Participation Questionnaire and Electoral Participation Rates in Whitefish River First Nation

While discussion circles are at the core of the research design, any in-depth study of a community should seek various sources of data to help establish context, follow up on hunches, and provide information on specific queries. Since this is a comprehensive study, we are also interested in some specific items such as the type of political activities youth in this community were involved in. This required the inclusion of a political participation questionnaire that was given to youth participants before we began the Discussion Circles. This questionnaire has been influenced by Samara Canada (2013) and their political behaviour questionnaire of youth in the mainstream population. This exploratory questionnaire adds another dimension to the research, making it a mixed-method approach since it adds a quantitative factor.

Community leaders were approached and asked whether the inclusion of the questionnaire was appropriate and they agreed it was valuable. This quantitative survey is short, non-intrusive and youth had the option of not participating in it. It may appear that quantitative methods are contradictory to Indigenous Research Principles and the Seven Grandfather Teachings, but this is false. Quantitative-driven studies align with Indigenous Research Principles as long as they are utilized in an appropriate manner and adhere to Indigenous worldviews. For instance, the questionnaire is only appropriate insofar as the data are not appropriated and not intended for manipulation. More importantly, community members need to interpret the results from quantitative data not researchers.

This study also incorporates some of the insights from the voting behaviour scholarship. Motivated and influenced by poll by poll studies, I examined the electoral participation rates in

WRFN. Electoral participation rates were considered for federal, provincial and band elections. These data indicate the democratic health of the community and in particular of the value of voting within the community. Community leaders again were informed and consulted that this type of information was being requested. The community did not object, rather it is information that is valuable because they will be able to compare voting rates in different levels of elections.

Discussion Circles with Youth in the Community

Four Discussion Circles were organized in the community and 18 youth between the ages of 11 and 28 participated. Even though the research proposal, posters and agreement specified participants were to be between the ages of 16 and 25, community leaders emphasized that they wanted this research to be open, inclusive and available to all of the youth. As a result, no one was turned away. Regardless, the majority of the youth were between the ages of 16 and 25. The only two youth that were outside that category was youth aged 11 years old and another 28 years old. The remainder were all between 16 and 25.

Discussion Circles for the most part were conducted at the Youth & Elders Centre, but one was organized at the band office. One Discussion Circle occurred outside of the community in a nearby town called Little Current. All of them followed a similar protocol. When youth arrived at the Discussion Circles, they were provided with the Letters of Information and Consent Forms (See Appendix 4), Background Information Sheet (See Appendix 5) and Receipt and Honorarium (See Appendix 6). Discussion Circles normally began with either a prayer or a smudge ceremony depending on whether an elder was available. Afterwards I explained the purpose of the study, shared information on my background, clarified the ethics process including participant withdrawal and provided them with their compensation, and indicated that the proceedings were audio recorded for the purpose of transcription. The youth were informed early on that the Band Council received ownership of the data and they should only share information that they were comfortable with.

For the first data collection trip I drove to the community one night earlier prior to the Discussion Circle because they were scheduled early the next day. On my way to the township adjacent to the community, I came across three young men hitchhiking towards the same town. Without any consideration I stopped and asked them where they were headed and they replied Little Current. I offered them a ride and told them about my research and asked whether they lived in WRFN. All three of them lived in the community, but they would not be able to participate because they had prior plans for the following day. These youth told me that they are rarely informed about these type of activities and do not participate often in community events. Once again without any consideration, I asked the youth whether they wanted to participate in a Discussion Circle in Little Current in the lobby of my hotel. Although this was not exactly the type of environment I planned for the conversation with the youth, this was a remarkable opportunity to listen to youth that self-described themselves as disengaged. We met back at the lounge in the lobby of the Anchor Inn Hotel and I brought my transcriber and notes. These types of opportunities arise in qualitative research and I was prepared to listen to the youth. Youth were given their participant compensation and signed their ethics forms. This group of youth shared information that was not presented in any other circle and they positively impacted the rest of this study.

The following day, the first actual planned discussion circle ensued in the band office with youth in the "re-engagement program". The re-engagement program is basically an alternative school curriculum designed for young people in the community that are no longer in

the public school system. The intention is to have these youth take alternative courses and prepare them for re-entry to the public school system or continue with the program indefinitely until they graduate. Five youth between the ages of 16 and 25 participated in this Discussion Circle on December 16, 2015, which coincided with one of their courses in the re-engagement program. The instructor exited the classroom and allowed the Discussion Circle to proceed. Community leaders recommended organizing the circle with this group because they included some individuals that were experiencing difficulty in their lives.

The third and last Discussion Circle for this trip occurred later that day with the High School youth. The community operates its own bus for youth that attend the Espanola High School. There is an Elementary School in the community, but the nearest high school is 30 kilometers away. The Youth Coordinator that has helped with various parts of the project told me that he would bring these high school youth to the Seven Fires Youth & Elders Centre. They could come inside and find out about the study and should they wish to participate they could stay, otherwise they were free to leave for home. Seven young men from the community decided to stay and participate in this Discussion Circle. The proceedings started with a smudge ceremony and resulted in a lively and passionate conversation.

The next data collection trip coincided with a blizzard. Two Discussion Circles were organized during this trip. One with youth and the other with elders (See Appendix 7 and 8) and both conversations took place inside the Youth & Elders Centre. The proceedings followed similar protocols as previous Discussion Circles, normally beginning with a prayer or smudge ceremony, followed by remarks about ethics and the objectives of the study. After these administrative parts, the Discussion Circles proceed and are followed by informal conversation over food and beverages.

Initially, there was not any incentive for a Discussion Circle with elders, but this was a modification that had to be made. Several youth mentioned a disconnect between elders and young people in the community. Elders in First Nations communities traditionally occupied very important roles in the development of youth. As the wisdom keepers and sustainers of tradition, elders passed on their knowledge to the future generations. After speaking with the community leaders, we all agreed that elders had to be included in the study, both because of their wisdom and ability to contextualize youth responses.

Discussion with elders, however, presented some unique challenges and required an entirely altered approach. Elders, unlike youth, evidently had prior experience with this type of research and treated their circle as an opportunity to share. Youth responses were shorter and directly relevant, however, elders took their time and their responses were usually deep with several layers of connotation. Having no previous research experience with elders, I had not anticipated this and changed the questions as the conversation proceeded because it was clear that we would not be able to cover it all. Rather than worrying about all the topics and following the discussion protocol, elders were given the freedom to communicate whatever they wanted and had any amount of time they wanted. This strategy worked because the elders shared an incredible amount of information, not only about youth experiences and participation in politics, but also about the overall health of the community. Seven elders from the community participated in this Discussion Circle, including some residential school survivors.

The final Discussion Circle took place later that evening at the Youth and Elders Centre with post-secondary youth. These were the young people that were away from the community attending post-secondary education. This session included five youth, but two of them had already participated and were allowed to rejoin. After this discussion ended, participants were

thanked and we had some informal off-the-record conversation about the Indian Act and residential schools. Youth were interested in the study and asked for my opinion on some of these substantial matters. As I was planning to head back to my hotel, the Health Coordinator in the community invited for dinner with her entire family. This was an invaluable experience to sit with some of the participants and speak informally about issues that impacted their everyday lives.

Conclusion

Research with First Nations peoples is extremely difficult and challenging because it has been used negatively. The hegemony of colonialism and imperialism was advanced under the purview of western research. It is no surprise that First Nations communities are suspicious and sceptical of outsiders coming to them for research purposes. WRFN is no different, except fortunately there was a relationship forged with them through work on another academic project. With the support of a band councillor this research received the endorsement of other community leaders.

Everyone was in agreement that the community had to be involved in every step of the research process. With this the CBPR was adopted. However, community leaders also posed challenges to make the research more open and rooted in Ojibway traditions. Relying on work by other scholars, a theoretical framework rooted in IRP was chosen through utilizing the Seven Grandfather Teachings. These teachings have been the platform that this dissertation is built on. The primary data collection method emanates from Anishinaabe traditions of research and is rooted in IRP. It is commonly known as the circle-method and has been used in research with many Indigenous peoples. An adaptation of this method was developed specifically for this research called Discussion Circles. This qualitative method was complimented by a youth political participation questionnaire and data from electoral participation rates using the poll-by-poll methodology.

As a case study WRFN is justified as an ideal setting to study the political behaviour of First Nations youth. Firstly, it is very difficult to enter any First Nations community and examine the political behaviour of their members. Without the prior relationship with this community this research would not have been possible. Secondly, the community is relatively small and is located near many other First Nations. The community has a critical mass number of youth living on the reserve to provide a valuable sample of youth. In addition, its political leaders and community well-being are both exceptional. Community leaders have provided youth with countless opportunities to become involved in the political process and the community is faring relatively better than many other First Nations economically. All of these factors make the community and its youth advantageous as a research site.

In Their Own Words: Results from Interaction with Youth

Like all other aspects of this study, the input and participation of community members was essential in understanding and interpreting the results. The objective was to provide space for youth to share their experiences, stories, opinions and aspirations. This chapter will seek to fulfill this objective. On the other hand, these results are not intended to be generalized and exhaustive of the political behaviour of youth in WRFN. In addition, these results should not be used to homogenize the political behaviour and experiences of all First Nations or Indigenous youth in Ontario. The Ojibway youth of WRFN are unique in their political awareness, relations with institutions and authorities, treaty obligations, history, and experiences in their community and outside of it.

I visited the community on May 26, 2016 to attend a final meeting with Chief and Council. The reason for this meeting was to share my preliminary results and seek approval for writing up the dissertation and publications, and to provide an avenue for the leaders of the community to not only comment on the results, but also provide their own commentary and analysis. Originally, this meeting was supposed to take approximately half an hour, as the Chief and Councillors are always extremely busy, however, the meeting went on for more than an hour. The community leaders were tremendously interested in the results and they provided their own interpretations and analysis. The input and commentary given by the Chief and Council is included in the Discussion Circle section under the footnotes in italicized format.

Electoral Turnout Rates for Whitefish River First Nation

We learned in the literature review and theoretical framework that research with First Nations peoples has often been focused on voting behaviour. While this study takes a more comprehensive approach to understanding the political behaviour of First Nations youth, there remains space for voting statistics. Electoral participation rates provide us with insight into the overall democratic health of WRFN. It also provides facts and figures that can be used to reinforce information provided by youth in the Discussion Circles and youth participation questionnaire allowing for internal validity.

Utilizing the poll-by-poll method, I gathered data on electoral participation rates for federal, provincial and band elections for WRFN. I relied on Elections Canada, Elections Ontario and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada for accessing the data. For federal elections, I considered electoral turnout rates in the 2004, 2006, 2008, 2011 and 2015 elections. For provincial elections, I considered electoral turnout rates in the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2014. For band elections, data is provided from 1992 to 2015 accounting for 12 elections. Some of the data were readily available on the electoral board websites, but in many circumstances I relied on individuals within these organizations for specific information such as the name of the poll stations that were allocated to WRFN. When there was a matching polling station, I simply looked at the number of eligible voters and the number of residents that voted for the electoral turnout rate in that specific election.

Electoral turnout rates for federal elections in WRFN show a positive trend (See Graph 1). Except, a minor drop in 2008, the community has had increased turnout levels in every election year. Electoral turnout in the most recent federal election, which coincided with this research and was discussed by many youth, shows a record participation rate. In fact, these electoral participation rates for WRFN demonstrate that average participation rates in federal

elections are above the national average as well other First Nations (See Graph 2). According to these figures, this community is exemplary in its electoral participation rates and can be considered healthy as any in the democratic process.
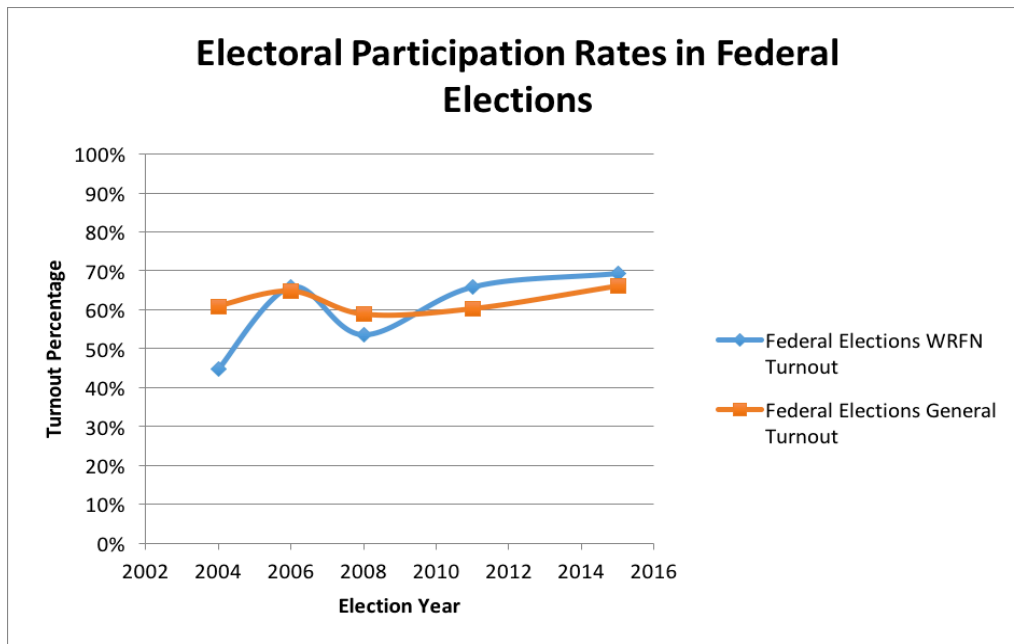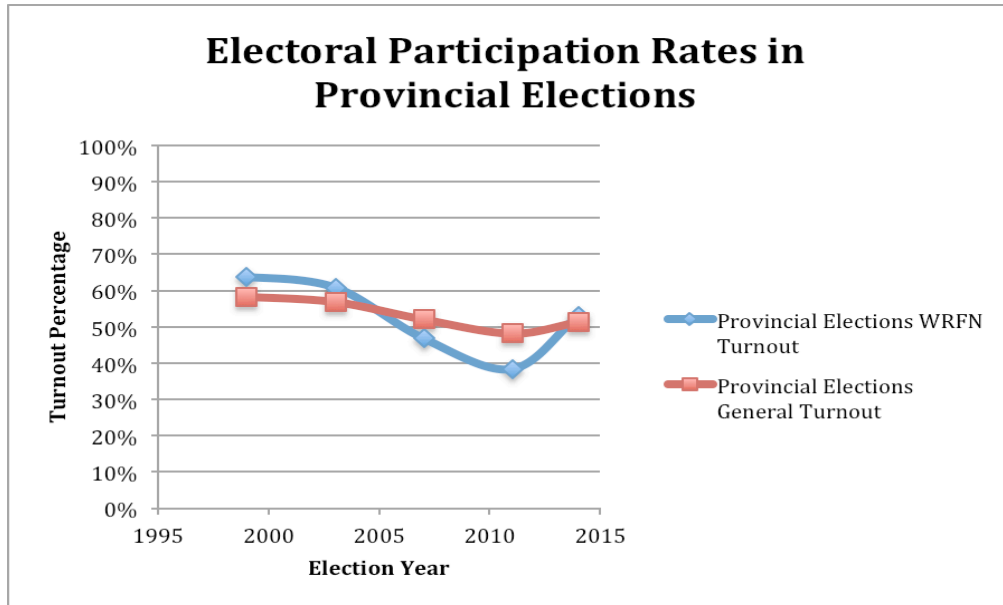

Graph 1: Electoral Participation Rates in WRFN in Federal Elections
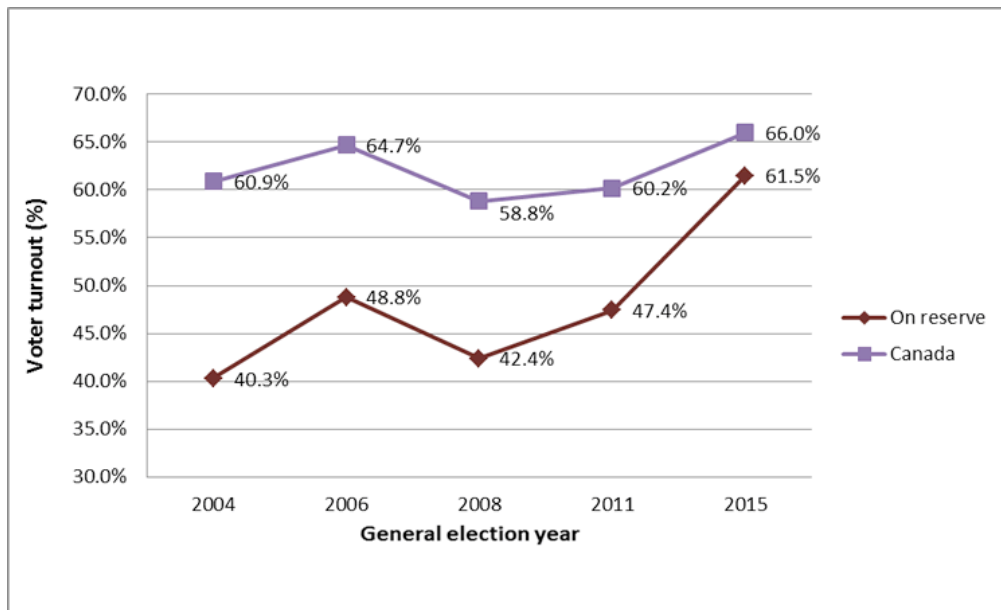
Graph 2: Elections Canada Graph of Electoral Participation Rates on Reserves

For provincial elections, WRFN electoral turnout rates indicate similar results (See Graph 3). While they are slightly lower than the federal elections, they are still relatively high. A drop in electoral turnout is normal when comparing federal and provincial elections, especially for First Nations peoples. Except for the dip in electoral turnout rates in the 2007 and 2011 provincial elections, the community is consistently participatory. While there is no comparative

data for electoral turnout in provincial elections with other First Nations, we do have some data that were collected by previous researchers (Dalton 2007, 265). For the 1999 and 2003 provincial elections, more people voted in WRFN than the average electoral turnout rate for all First Nations in Ontario. Like the federal electoral turnout rates, these numbers demonstrate that WRFN is a democratically healthy community.

Graph 3: Electoral Participation Rates for WRFN in Provincial Elections

Band elections, on the other hand, surprisingly yielded different results than expected (See Graph 4). Until the late 1990s, we see voting turnout rates in WRFN of around 80 – 90 percent. This is similar to the high turnout levels Bedford and Pobihushchy (1995) observed in First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada. This was the same trend for WRFN until the 1999 Corbiere decision by the federal government. In this landmark case, the judiciary decided that it was unconstitutional for bands to prevent First Nations peoples who are status members from participating in their local band elections. After this decision in 1999, the number of eligible voters in band elections in this community tripled and voting rates declined dramatically. The average band electoral participation rate has been around 50 percent since 1999 only increasing slightly over the past few elections.
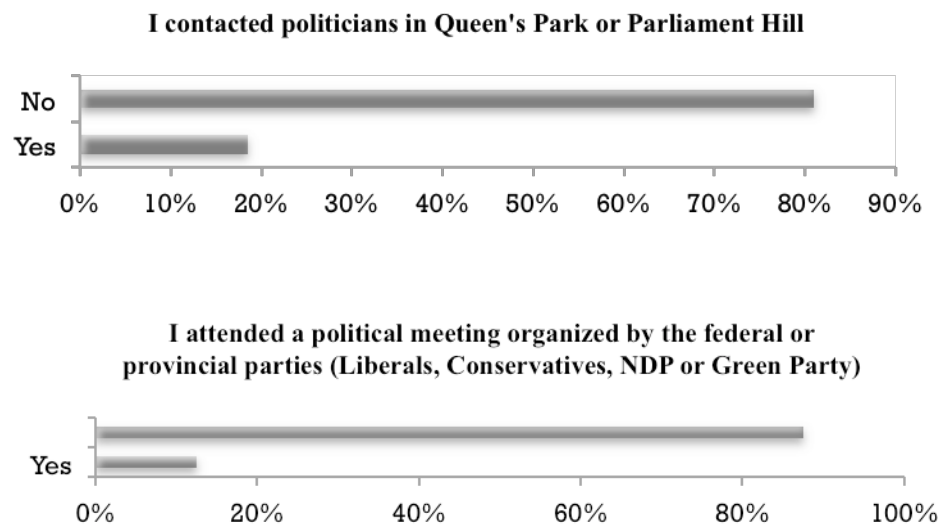
Electoral Participation in Band Elections in Whitefish River First Nation
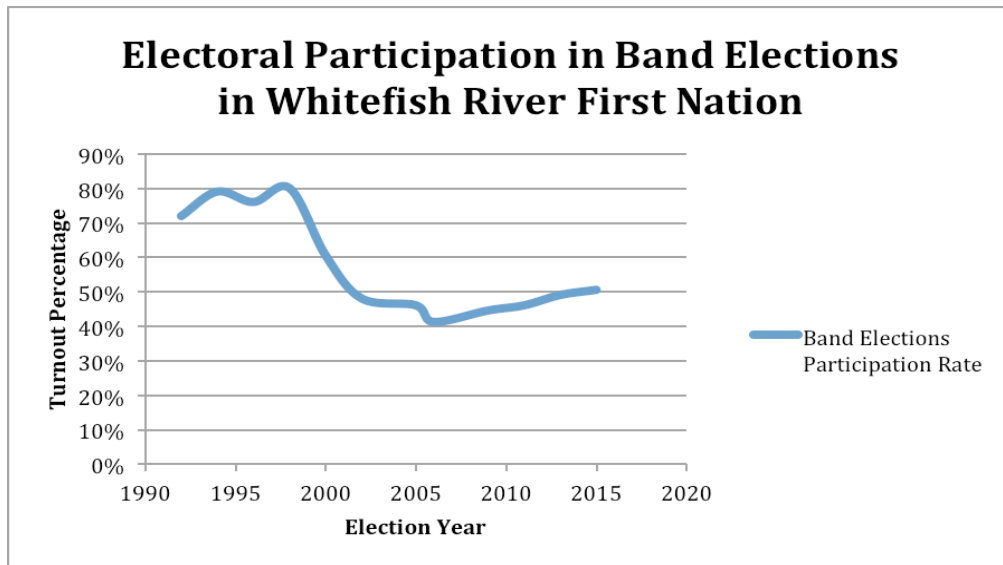
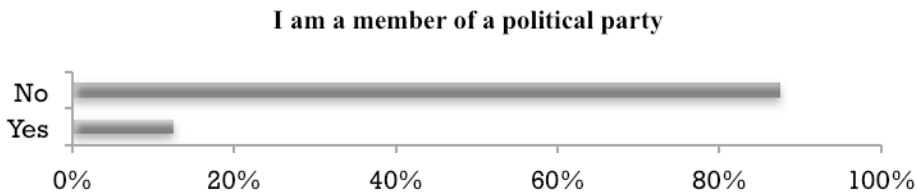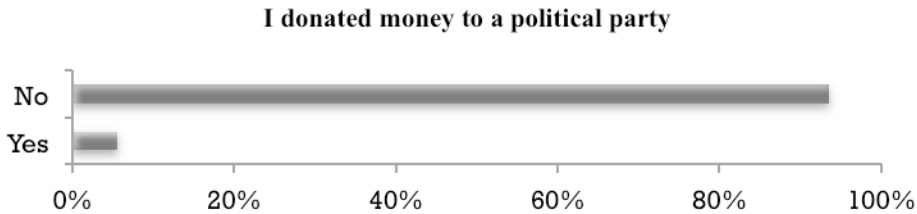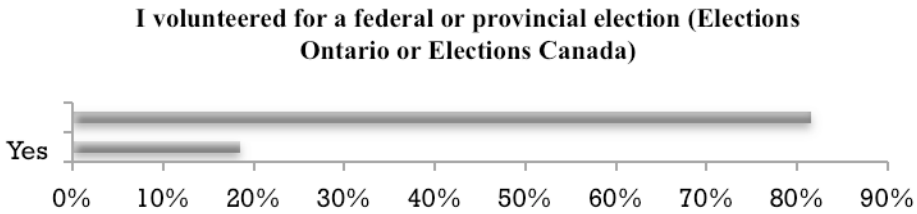Graph 4: WRFN Band Election Participation Rate

Youth Political Participation Survey

To examine the specific political behaviour of youth in WRFN a political participation questionnaire was provided to youth prior to beginning the Discussion Circles. Youth were asked to share the type of political activities that they were involved in. Questions were based on themes influenced by the previous research that arose from the political participation literature. The results of this questionnaire have been summarized in the subsequent pages. In total 15 participants took part in this questionnaire.

Youth Political Participation Survey
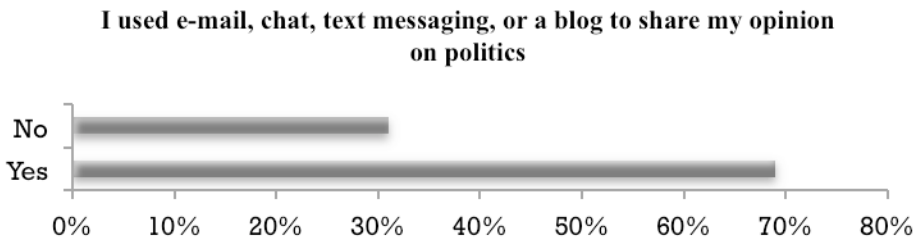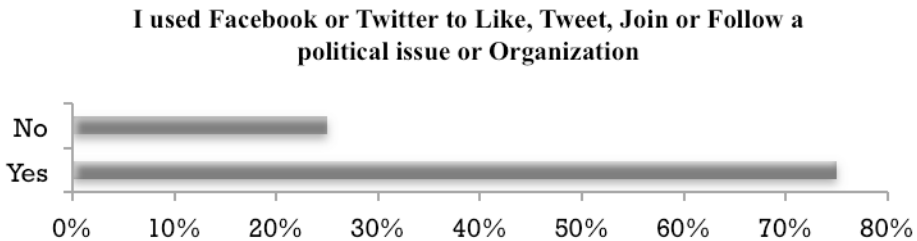
Conventional Political Activities

I contacted politicians in Queen's Park or Parliament Hill

I attended a political meeting organized by the federal or provincial parties (Liberals, Conservatives, NDP or Green Party)

I volunteered for a federal or provincial election (Elections Ontario or Elections Canada)

Yes

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%

I donated money to a political party

No

Yes

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

I am a member of a political party

No

Yes

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Unconventional Political Activities

I used Facebook or Twitter to Like, Tweet, Join or Follow a political issue or Organization

No

Yes

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%

I used e-mail, chat, text messaging, or a blog to share my opinion on politics

No

Yes

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%

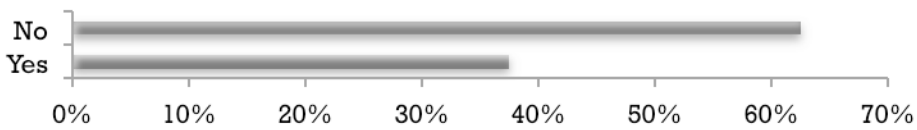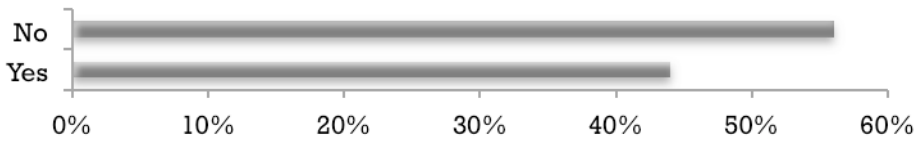### I did not buy a product because I did not agree with their political ideas

I signed a petition about a political issue

I wrote a letter to someone in the band office or band council
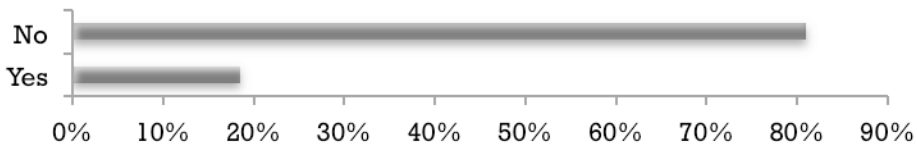
Community Based Political Activities

I talked to my parents, elders or friends about a political issue in the community

I went to an event organized by the band administration or council

I organized an event or meeting about a political issue in the community

I worked with others on an issue in my community

Yes

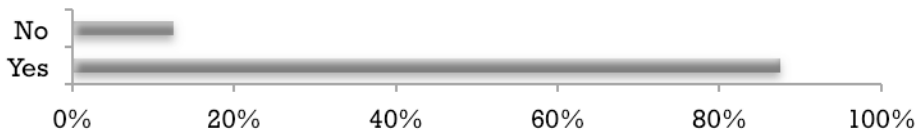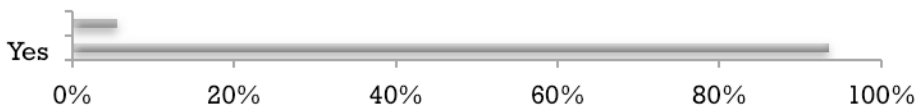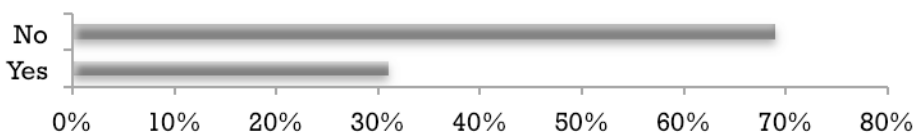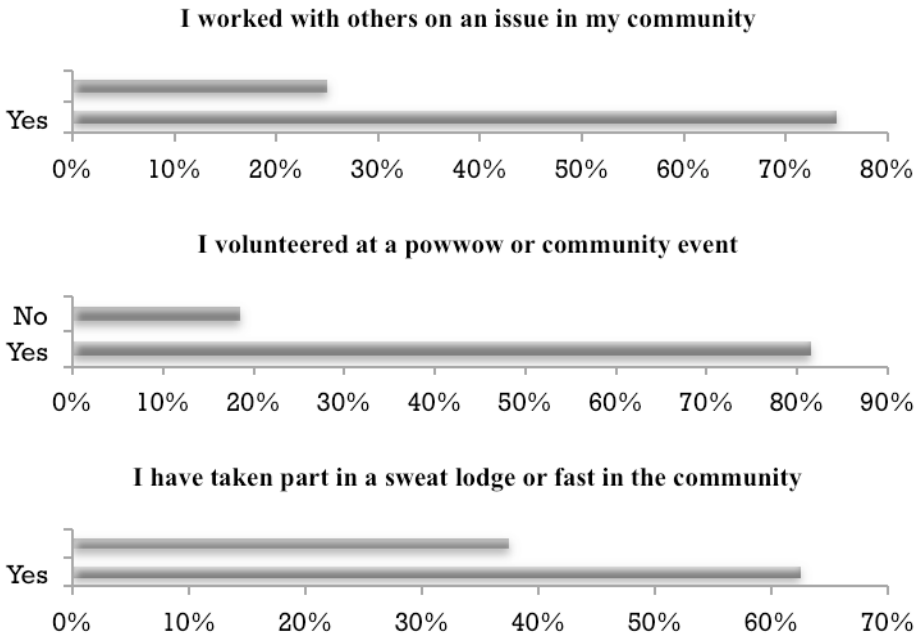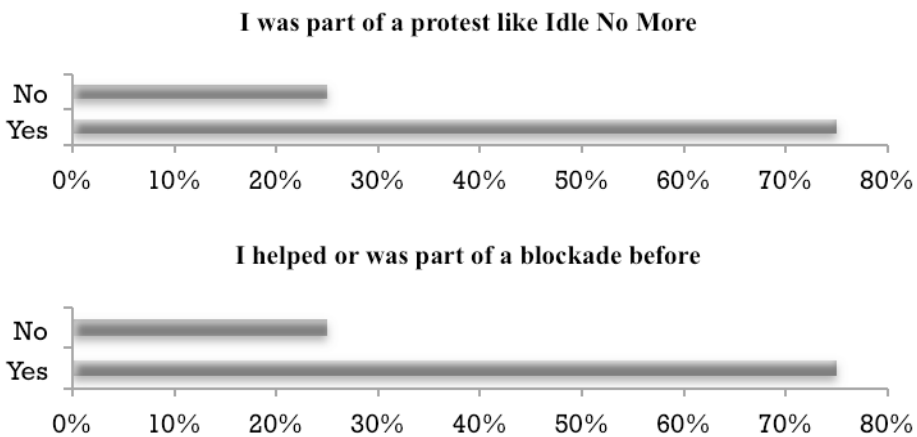0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

I volunteered at a powwow or community event

No

Yes

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90%

I have taken part in a sweat lodge or fast in the community

Yes

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%

Direct-Action Political Activities

I was part of a protest like Idle No More

No

Yes

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

I helped or was part of a blockade before

No

Yes

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

These results demonstrate that youth in WRFN are exceptional in their political behaviour. They participate heavily in actions that are rooted in the culture and community. The most popular forms of political activities were "community-based". These include speaking with parents or elders about an issue in the community, attending events organized by the band, working with others on community issues, volunteering at pow wows or community events, fasting or participating in sweat lodges. Similar to the research by Poelzer, Beatty and Berdahl (2014) youth in WRFN can be called "model-citizens".

Additionally, youth in WRFN like other Canadian youth are turning away from conventional political activities to unconventional forms. They are participating less in formal politics like contacting politicians, attending meetings, volunteering for elections, donating

money to or joining political parties. However, they are participating more in newer forms of engagement like using social media for political purposes, buy-cotting, and petitioning. More than conventional and unconventional forms of political participation, youth in WRFN are embracing direct-action initiatives. Research conducted by Silver (2005) on the politics of mobilization is evident in WRFN because youth in this community are turning towards direct-action and confrontation.

Results from Discussions with Youth in the Community

Four Discussion Circles were organized in WRFN between December 16 and 28, 2016 and in total 18 youth participated. Prior to beginning the discussion circles, youth were asked to fill out a Background Information Sheet (See Appendix 5), which essentially contains participant demographic information. Through this sheet, we can learn about the sample of our youth participants and whether any individuals are over or under represented. The majority of the youth in this study were between the ages of 16 and 25. Only two participants were outside the age limit, these participants were 11 and 28 respectively. There were 13 males and five female participants making the results more skewed towards males in the community. All of the participants lived on reserve with the exception of one. The majority of the participants had at least high school level education, with only one individual being in elementary school and two with college, university or equivalent level education. Lastly and most importantly, the majority of youth in the community identified as Ojibway and Anishinaabe rather than Canadian citizens. This simple descriptive fact from the Background Information Sheet proves that youth from this community choose to identify with their Anishinaabe/Ojibway ancestry more than being Canadian. This minor identification for youth is profound and complex because this intricacy helps us understand the complication that the theoretical section held with voting. Electoral participation in Canadian elections is largely understood through Canadian citizenship, but what happens when youth like in this community for instance do not identify as Canadian citizens?

Despite the community playing an important role in comprehending and analyzing the results, Qualitative Discourse Analysis (QDA) was used to make sense of the data from the Discussion Circles. QDA is a systematic method of dealing with messy, complex, and difficult qualitative data. Through the Discussion Circles we want to gain greater depth and understanding about the political behaviour of youth in this community by exploring, identifying, describing what youth shared. Youth responses were transcribed and coded by hand. Data from the Discussion Circles were reduced, organized and summarized first into "codes" and "themes," which are shared later. In the next chapter, patterns that emerge from the themes are put into the wider context of previous research to rationalize the political behaviour of youth in WRFN. Throughout the coding and analysis, reflexivity was used to contrast preconceived ideas and biases that I may have brought to the results.

Two patterns emerge from the Discussion Circles and they reflect largely the way open-ended broad questions that were posed to youth. Although this was not the initial intent, youth in the community shared their experiences either around politics and life within the community or participation outside of the community. The community always served as a partition for youth outlook and behaviour on politics. Youth view politics differently outside of their community as more foreign and distant. While politics within the community was familiar, closer and more personal. Other areas that youth were asked about were: social life for youth in the community, participation and voting in the community, representation of youth in Band Council, political and employment opportunities in the community, relationship with elders, involvement in Idle No

More and outlook on politicians.

The topics that were presented to the youth came directly from previous studies as well as input from community leaders. Rather than focusing entirely on one theme like voting, this study broadened conversations on political participation. Youth were asked to share their experiences and perspectives on a variety of topics that could help us arrive at a more fulsome understanding of their political behaviour[11]. One of the main values behind this research with youth on a First Nations community is that it will provide insight on their social and political experiences within their reserve. Through discussions with the youth we will learn about what life for youth is like on a present-day First Nations reserve – what are the challenges, barriers or opportunities for political participation? We will learn about what youth think about Canadian politics viewing from their traditional territories. In other words, what do these youth think about Canadian politicians, elections and its efficacy – is the system fair and representative?

Youth were also asked questions about traditional governance and whether they were informed about these political processes. Traditional governance reconnects youth with their culture and worldviews. As the literature review indicated, Anishinaabe communities prior to European contact had elaborate systems for representation and politics. Are the youth in WRFN aware of these traditional systems and cognizant that the current system is imposed? Another key reason the Discussion Circles with elders was organized was to assess whether they had any knowledge about these traditional governance systems and whether they were passing on this knowledge to the youth. Elders traditionally held an integral role in passing on political knowledge to youth[12].

Politics and Life within the Community

The youth expressed many diverging opinions about the community, but overall they were satisfied with life in WRFN. They felt that their community was healthier and better than other First Nations communities on the island. Not all, but some of the youth thought of leaving the community to experience what was beyond WRFN. However, these youth then retracted by saying they would like to return and settle on the island. The youth feel particularly close to the community and its members "Everyone knows and respects each other." They expressed fond memories of growing up attending pow wows, harvest and other community events. They recalled playing on the fields and taking part in games like manhunt. Youth in these discussion circles cited hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities as popular past-times.

Pow wows and the harvest, particularly, were important events in the community. Youth said that the pow wow and the harvest in the community "used to be a lot bigger" with "more people". The youth were knowledgeable about the purpose of pow wows by stating they "were sacred gatherings". These youth were aware of the importance of pow wows to their culture by claiming it was "very important". However, the pow wows and harvest that the community

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[11] Not all of the Discussion Circles were fruitful and not all questions were well received. Some of the most valuable information was shared outside of the Discussion Circles – either right afterwards or in private. One of the Discussion Circles was made up of entirely young males in the community and this power dynamic prevented many of them sharing their perspectives or they presented short answers.

[12] Discussion Circles with the elders often went away from the topic at hand and their responses were in story format. However, beneath these stories were profound meanings on the changes that have occurred in the community, their perspectives on youth, and the political structures. I was not prepared for the discussion with elders having no prior experience and had to change the framework as I went on.

organizes every year has gotten smaller. One youth asserted, "Our culture has gone to shits."
This youth associated the pow wow and harvest with his culture.

Youth in the Discussion Circles were very reminiscent of their childhood and adolescent years. The community is surrounded by nature. It provides youth with ample opportunities to participate in outdoor activities. Forests, rivers and lakes provide children with ideal conditions to immerse themselves in an active lifestyle. Furthermore, the community and its population are both small. These factors make it enjoyable for youth because their friends are close by and everyone knows each other. Youth described various opportunities like the "Right to Play" program, community trips, fundraisers and outdoor activities. There is an elementary school within the community making it easier for the young Ojibway's to receive community relevant and traditional education. The youngsters in this study are proud of being First Nation as was evident in the Background Information Sheet when most of indicated they were Ojibway and Anishinaabe[13].

Yet, not all of the sentiments and experiences by the youth were positive. Youth cited many problems and challenges they face in the community. The youth acknowledged that there are serious issues with substance abuse. One key concept repeated by the youth was "boredism" because as they entered early adulthood the community offered less for them. Youth said they participated in negative activities because there was little to do in the community. While there was an abundance of activities when they were younger, as they matured into young adults the outdoor activities were less enjoyable. Youth no longer played manhunt or biked around the community. They participated less in the "Right to Play" programs because they were for younger kids. Youth became distanced from their natural environment and spent more time playing video games and being occupied with technology.

Furthermore, youth mentioned that there was a problem with suicide and education in the community. Youth are "dropping out" from school at high rates and have lost motivation. They said that life on the reserve is always the same. The youth express that part of the problem with the community is that there are not enough opportunities and programs for them, both in terms of youth programming and political activities. Probing deeper into this, the youth said that while there may be programs for them, the problem is that they are not promoted and marketed well. There should be more effort made on advertising and marketing the opportunities that currently exist in the community. In addition, the youth in this study are not finding these programs attractive and they said it is usually the same people that attend community events.

Another key theme that was shared by the youth was the disconnect from elders in the community. Both the elders and youth indicated that there was an increasing disconnect between them. Some elders even declared that they were afraid of the youth in the community. There were break-ins into homes and many of the youth were having problems with substance abuse. Elders acknowledged that when they were younger life was different in the community. They had no choice but to listen to their parents and strict figures or they would be disciplined. Elders shared experiences of hardship and some even attended residential schools. They argued that the youth today were more preoccupied with technology rather than speaking and learning from

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[13] *The Chief and Council in our final meeting were proud that the youth were satisfied with their overall lives in the community. They explained that the community is branded. When outsiders enter the community they will see the welcome sign in distinct blue colours. The community has its own slogan: a place for vision and dreams. The website and all official documents include the Whitefish River First Nation logo. Chief and Council argue that these efforts by the community leadership have made youth aware of their community's distinctiveness.*

them. Many of the elders recognized their lack of traditional knowledge, especially in terms of political governance. While others said that they attempted to pass on teachings to young people, there were not enough of them interested. Some elders were afraid that many of the traditional teachings that were passed to them would disappear.

On politics within the community, the youth expressed mixed views. Voting in band elections is important to them, but this does not always translate to participation. For example, some youth in the discussions mentioned, "Voting is important "and "Every vote counts." However, others were not as positive about the voting process claiming, "No one good to vote for," and "Everyone voted against the Chief, but he still won." Reasons for not voting included sentiments like, "I already know who is going to win", "Don't want to pick sides," and simply, "Not old enough." One youth in particular said that the current voting systems are not consistent with First Nations traditional governance structures leading him to conclude, "I don't vote."

Many of the youth demonstrated an elevated level of knowledge about historical and contemporary issues that affect them. Examples include treaty rights, MMIWG, Syrian refugee crises, implications of the *Indian Act* and conditions on First Nations communities. More importantly, youth were not only critical of their own Chief and Council, but also of politicians in general. In the last band election there was a problem in with the electoral officer brought in to administer the election. That individual may have made certain mistakes that were noticed by some community members. One youth participated as a scrutineer in the voting process said, "A lot of mistakes in last election… people called them out… nothing was done… it was tampered with."

Another surprising theme was youth feelings towards off-reserve voters in band elections. The majority of the youth felt that off-reserve members should not be allowed to vote in band elections for various reasons including: "They don't live here", "They don't know what's going on here", "They are not impacted", "They don't see the politicians," and "It isn't fair". While this was not unanimous, many held these beliefs. In another Discussion Circle, one of the youth did not live in the community and the topic went ignored. These ideas were not captured in previous research with Indigenous political participation. The Supreme Court of Canada ruling in Corbiere 1999 held that band members living outside of First Nations communities held the right to vote in band elections. Dalton argues, "Among other things, this ruling substantially increased the number of eligible First nations voters" (J. Dalton 2007, 269). Youth attitudes towards off-reserve voters in band elections may be symptomatic of the dissatisfaction of the political situation in the community. It seems that members of WRFN that live away from the community are impacting the results of elections negatively because they have an inadequate understanding of the political realities within the community.

Many of the youth in WRFN claimed that the Band Council does not represent their interests. One male said "Council does not represent youth," and another added "The never ask us about what we want." In another Discussion Circle, some of the youth were critical of the leadership saying, "It is what the Chief wants," and "Chief does whatever he wants." This certainly signifies a dissatisfaction of the Chief by the younger members of the community. It also proves that youth are excluded and alienated by the political process and the individuals that are supposed to represent them. While this study is not

representative of all the youth in the community, this sentiment was strongly supported by the youth that participated in this study[14].

Youth lack of representation by their political leaders has led to decreases in opportunities such as employment and youth programming over the years. One youth said, "We have a Youth & Elders Centre, but we never do anything there." Another youth shared, "When we were younger there was so much to do, but now if we want to do anything we have to leave the reserve." Although these ideas demonstrate a decline in opportunities for youth, the Chief and Council suggest otherwise. There are still plenty of opportunities and programs for youth, but not all of the youth take advantage of them. There is truth to this remark because some youth have said there is lots to do in WRFN and the leaders try to help as much as they can, but not all of the youth are active or engaged in the community.

In another Discussion Circle youth argued that members on the Council are "family oriented." Because community leaders and elected officials have access to vast resources and control community affairs, they keep the power and access to resources concentrated within their families. Youth said, "People in the office have higher power." By office, they meant the Band Council and administration. Having family members on Band Council and working for the band administration provided youth with better access to opportunities like employment. When asked about how some of the youth found out about this study, one female responded with, "Found out from my mom who works at the band office."

Youth in the community were particularly distraught about their economic future. Many of them agreed, "There are not enough jobs," and "Jobs were important." One male said, "To work you would have to leave the community and look for work in one of the nearby towns. Then there is the problem with transportation to work. "Usually there is only one car available and my parents use it," said one of the youth. In another Discussion Circle, a male said, "To be successful you have to leave the reserve." The lack of employment opportunities in the community is hurting the youth psychologically. They are stuck in a "cycle of dependency" on family members, community leaders, and government funding. Many, but not all of the youth, portrayed a sense of hopelessness when it came to discussing their economic realities.

Part of the problem is that there are not many employment opportunities in the community for youth. The nearest townships are Little Current and Espanola. Both are modest small municipalities and are located 25 kilometers from the reserve. There is no public transportation infrastructure in this part of Ontario and you often see youth hitchhiking to places around the island. WRFN, however, does have employment opportunities for older youth and adults. For instance, Lafarge Canada Inc. has their cement terminal on WRFN territory and claim "The terminal is one-hundred percent operated by members of Whitefish River First Nation" (NationTalk 2014). The First Nation possesses its own construction company called the Birch Island Construction Company and have built many of the buildings in the community like the

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[14] *The Chief acknowledged that some community members may be critical of his work, but in a small community like WRFN it is difficult to satisfy everyone. He argued that youth should be critical of their leadership and participate in politics to implement changes. He provided an example in which the community leadership attempted to build positive relations with the youth. Many of the older youth in the community would hang out by the Church and the leadership noticed. After services some of these leaders would take cooked food to the youth and welcome them in to Church as well as interact with them. However, rather than improving relations with the youth, they simply relocated to another part of the community away from public view. The Chief wants the youth to be critical and organize themselves in the community. They do not need to participate and organize like the leaders; they can participate in politics through sports, events and in groups.*

Health Centre, Administration Building and Youth and Elders Centre.

Another opportunity for youth is the Waubetek Business Development Corporation, which claims to be an "Aboriginal-owned and controlled organization that delivers business financing and economic development services to First Nations and Aboriginal businesses located throughout Northeastern Ontario." They operate two initiatives for youth in the region: 1) The Jobs for Youth Program, and 2) Student Bursary Fund. Many of the youth that participated in the Discussion Circles were beneficiaries of at least one of these programs. However, these employment opportunities are temporary. Youth are often employed over the summer to help with administrative and general labour duties. Although these jobs provide some income, they have few transferable skills and little long term stability. Youth, especially the younger cohorts, face continued precariousness in terms of income and employment. Undoubtedly this has a negative effect on their financial and psychological health.

Unlike youth in the general Canadian population, youth in WRFN have no choice but to be involved and participate in politics. Youth said that their survival in the reserve depended on their political participation. It often meant who received funding, housing or employment. Especially in a small community like WRFN, decisions made by community leaders have profound impacts on everybody. Youth that ignore the political process and stay away are often marginalized. For example, the youth that participated in the random Discussion Circle argued that they were ignored and judged by the community. They lived in the community, but did not participated in community events and programs. This negatively impacted their status and roles in the community.

Politics and Participation Beyond the Community

Like the previous section, youth were provided an opportunity here to share their political experiences, attitudes and opinions about participating in politics beyond their community. Through preliminary research, we learned that WRFN has been active in the political process on numerous occasions led mainly by their Chief. This section provides an entryway to assess the extent that youth were involved in these political activities. While we know youth participated in INM, HST and fax mob campaigns, we do not have any information from the youth themselves about their involvements in these initiatives. In addition, this section will allow us to learn about what the youth think about the Canadian political system including voting.

Earlier we learned that youth had no choice but to be involved in local politics. While they found voting in band elections important, this did not transfer to participation. They also had an elevated level of awareness about political issues that affected First Nations peoples. In terms of Canadian politics, defined as provincial and federal politics, youth do have an option in participating because they are more removed from those bodies. Youth did not consider the band administration and Band Council as institutions of the state.

We learn early in the Discussion Circles that the youth in this community are very direct-action oriented, which supports the results from the political participation questionnaire. In other words, they choose to participate in political activities that have an immediate impact and are grass roots oriented. While they found voting in Canadian elections important, they would rather participate in direct-action oriented activities and evidence from this comes namely from INM and related activities. This social movement had a profound impact on the youth in the community. Although some of the youth did not participate for various reasons like, "Wasn't around," or "Never got heard of it." Many other youth were involved and shared fond memories of INM, such as "Happy with experience," "It brought communities on the island together," and

"About singing, dancing, and being free on streets." Most of the youth were familiar with what INM represented and meant for First Nations peoples. Only one youth in this study claimed, "I don't know what it is." Majority of the youth instead spoke of, "Aboriginal rights… taking back our land," "Changing stereotypes," "Raising awareness," "Tired of what government was doing," and "People realized they had a voice."

Beyond these points, the social movement's real impact is captured by the stories the youth shared. Youth in the community participated in two blockades during INM. One blockade was directly on WRFN territory on Highway 6. This blockade brought other First Nations communities on Mnidoo Mnising for a united effort. The second blockade was organized on the Trans-Canada Highway and youth walked out of their classes in school to participate in this protest. The schools in the area made a conscious and directed effort to keep the youth in the classes, but instead youth organized a massive walkout. Youth from across the island made their way to the Trans-Canada highway near Espanola and participated in the one of the largest INM blockades.

While blockades were effective according to the youth they also participated heavily in protests. Youth shared stories about taking buses to Sudbury and Ottawa for Days of Action protests. Days of Action were mass mobilization demonstrations that were organized throughout the country, mainly in large cities. Youth shared experiences of waking up as early as three or four in the morning to leave for Ottawa. The experience was exhausting but worth it to the youth. INM brought the entire community together. It instilled pride and activism into the youth. Elders said that youth were with them "side by side" during those events.

Another event that mobilized youth in the community was the anti-HST campaign. Again, youth said they were very active and engaged in this effort. Similar to INM, youth shared that they organized a massive walkout from their schools. Supposedly the teachers saw it coming and tried their best to keep the students in class, but everyone basically stood up together and walked out. Youth joined other community members in a blockade and peaceful protest on Highway 6 very similar to INM. Youth said "Government broke treaties," and "We were disagreeing with the laws." These examples support the research by Scott (1985) on his position that the most disempowered turn towards alternative and strategic forms of political efforts. Youth are using "very blunt" instruments like classroom walkouts and blockades to voice their political frustrations.

In terms of broader engagement with society, youth in this community held mixed views about Canadian politicians and institutions. As mentioned earlier, many youth found provincial and federal elections important. However, this did not transfer directly to participation in the voting process. Youth reasons for not voting included, "There was a mix-up with my identification because I am away for school," "I don't care," and "I didn't know where to vote." In this regard, youth from WRFN are similar to other Canadian youth. However, closer examination demonstrates that in fact many structural barriers stand in the way of First Nations youth participation in the election process. For instance, some of the youth are unsure and misinformed about the registration process for voting. Some of them were unaware that there was a polling station within the community in the band office. These responses are very different than reasons that non-Indigenous youth do not participate in politics (Pammet and LeDuc, 2003). Many of the youth shared practical and structural reasons for not being able to vote, such as lack of information and resources to participate electorally.

Youth in this study were sceptical of Canadian politicians. Unanimously they were unsatisfied with previous Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Some youth alleged, "Harper lied a

lot," and "Happy he is not there anymore." Conversely, youth are seemingly hopeful of the appointment of Justin Trudeau. Some youth said they are, "Putting faith in him," and "Hope he keeps promises." One young female was unconvinced by the new Prime Minister saying, "Still accepting pipelines… he is not that wise." When asked whether there were any First Nations politicians that they looked up to, the youth were not able to present a single name despite the appointment of people like Jody Wilson-Raybould in prominent cabinet positions like Minister of Justice. Like mainstream Canadian youth, when it comes to politicians, they are distrustful and suspicious of them. Especially in the post-Stephen Harper era, youth in this community will continue to remain doubtful of Canadian politicians. Trudeau in their words has made, "A lot of promises" and there are high expectations of him from youth in this community.

Youth in this community are interested in politics in general. Some of them discuss politics at the dinner table and were fascinated with American politicians like Donald Trump. The youth were well acquainted with the Syrian Refugee Crises that was unfolding at the time of the Discussion Circles. One of the youth asked, "How can we provide for Syrian refugees when our reserves are in third-world conditions?" It is hard not to conclude that the Ojibway youth in this community experience politics differently than other Canadian youth.

Discussion with Elders in the Community

Elders were asked to speak broadly about the youth in the community and about their political behaviour. Many of the elders, however, went into depth and shared their wisdom on a variety of topics. They began with their experiences and the changes they witnessed in the community. Elders spoke about the rapid change in the community, they said that there has been "a lot of changes," and back then they "didn't have machines like today." Elders found youth an integral part of the community, but were doubtful about their impact and future. They said things like "need youth input in community," "want to encourage youth," "youth are our future, but they "are struggling" because they are "born in alcoholic homes." Many of the elders accepted responsibility for not being positive role models and teaching the youth "we need to show good example to our youth," and "youth see parents and grandparents don't care, why should they care." According to many of the elders, the community has changed over time and not necessarily for the better. One elder said "back then community was very involved in political affairs." The elders mentioned there was an embedded patronage and nepotism crises within the community.

When asked about politics in the community, elders were distressed. Elders were pragmatic about political situation for the youth, "there's lots going on in people's lives." "People have immediate needs, politics comes after," and another added that there are "lots of programs for younger but not for older youth." The elders in the community acknowledge that their political system has been eradicated and replaced with these colonial structures. Elders shared that prior to colonial imposition, they chose their community leaders through the King's Day feasts and the voting process was transparent. You would "stand behind the person that you wanted to vote for," and "the way it is now is very untrustworthy." An elder concluded "we have forgotten how to be Anishinaabe." Many elders agreed by concluding that "our political process is a farce."

Indirectly, elders were telling me that the political system has led to many problems for the youth and other community members. They wanted to paint a broader picture for me to understand that political participation is not as straightforward for First Nations youth in their communities. For example, there were a perplexing number of candidates that were nominated

for the band election. Elders cited the breakdown of families and their traditional political processes as the main reasons for the pessimism around politics in the community. Many elders pointed to the fact that there are not enough opportunities for youth and the current programs are "missing those between ages of 19 and 30." Additionally, elders think youth "are missing traditional part of learning," and they "are not learning language."

Most of the elders agreed that there was a distance between them and youth. Recent work by Gabel, Pace and Ryan (2016) has documented similar intergenerational disconnect between youth and elders in a Labrador Inuit community. It appears that some elders in the community are scared of the youth because of the number of "break in and enters." Elders were saddened and hopeless when they speak about youth suicides in the community, they said the community "lost too many to suicide." In the end, however, elders are resilient and optimistic ending their stories with the "need to encourage youth," and provide "youth with guidance."

Conclusion

This chapter shared the results in crude form with some identifying words used by elders and youth to present their arguments. We began by considering the results from participation data in federal, provincial and band elections in WRFN. The community, surprisingly, is at times more participatory in federal and provincial elections than the general population. This was in fact the case with the 2015 federal election. Strikingly though, the community is not as engaged in band elections. The main reason for this is due to the 1999 Corbiere decision allowing off-reserve band members to vote in band elections.

In the next section we looked at the results from the youth political participation questionnaire. Just like we had hypothesized, youth in this community are more involved in political activities that are outside formal politics. They are also turning towards new and unconventional political activities voicing their opinions on social media. More importantly, youth are involved in political activities that are rooted in their Ojibway culture. This was certainly the case, with the most number of youth claiming that they participate in events organized by their band, volunteering and working on community issues. There was also strong evidence for youth involvement in direct-action efforts.

Using QDA, the data from the Discussion Circles was coded on common themes based on youth feedback. The pattern that emerged signified youth thought differently about politics within their community and outside of it. They felt closer and more attached to their community than beyond it. In regards to politics and life within the community, the youth held mixed views because there were many challenges. Youth faced serious problems with substance abuse, employment opportunities, education and suicide. Many of them felt unrepresented by their community leaders and could not connect with elders. While they found voting important, they thought that off-reserve band members should not be allowed to participate in their elections. In terms of politics and life beyond the community, the youth demonstrated elevated level of knowledge about issues that affected them. They were optimistic about the new federal government, but sceptical about all the promises.

While it was never an intention to hold any conversation with elders, this modification was made when several youth expressed weakening relations with elders. Previous research demonstrated that youth and elders in Anishinaabe traditions had special relations that needed to be preserved and nurtured. The deterioration of this relationship can be devastating for youth. The Discussion Circles with elders required a completely different set of questions and approach. Elders shared everything in the ensuing discussions and made comments on the situation for

youth only anecdotally. In the end elders confirmed that their relations with youth were not ideal and they were concerned about youth in the community.

Analyzing and Contextualizing the Discussions with the Community

In order to fully comprehend the political behaviour of youth in WRFN, it is important to place the previously discussed findings in the broader context of the overall impact of colonialism on the community. Colonialism has touched every facet of the Ojibway people's lives in this community and without addressing its implications we will not be able to understand youth perspectives. Throughout this section lengthy quotes from elders and youth will be shared in italicized form to illustrate and strengthen arguments. The quotes that have numbers beside them indicate response by different individuals to similar questions. We will then turn our attention to the overall political behaviour of the youth in the context of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996*, and a new model of youth political participation in this community is advanced.

Impact of Colonialism on the Political Behaviour of Youth in WRFN

The Ojibway peoples of this area participated in politics completely differently prior to European contact. These nations organized politically through the elaborate totem system and their peaceful confederacies. Over the years, their political structures rooted in harmony, autonomy, respect and interdependence were replaced by European traditions of authoritarianism, coercion, and dominion (Alfred 1999). One of the major implications of this has been the loss of political socialization that youth received from their communities and elders:

> "Traditional value systems attach great importance to honoring the interdependence of the generations, but this importance has for the most part been lost in the colonial system that have supplanted them. Stable societies are secure in the transmission of their culture from one generation to the next because respected elders shape the young people. The culture defines the rights and obligations – forms the moral universe – of all people. That circle of respect and responsibility has been broken in indigenous communities. Young indigenous people are developing a set of values very different from those of their parents – most of who have only a tenuous hold on tradition themselves" (Alfred 1999, 129).

In a couple of generations youth went from being warriors in their societies to insignificant political participants. Youth in WRFN mentioned the inability to connect and relate with elders. Meanwhile, some of the elders stated that they were afraid of the youth. This divide between youth and elders can be traced directly as impact of colonialism. As Mecredi argues, "Aboriginal people generally approach politics informed by their traditional values, ceremonies, and teachings of elders and other respected leaders" (Mecredi and Turpel 1993, 32). A separation between youth and elders is disastrous because it leads to loss of culture and traditions. One elder in the Discussion Circle shared this:

I dunno I leave my door open all the time I do a lot of traditional teachings and stuff like that go along with it and kids that I talk to wanna know how to do that and I say come and see me, to this day maybe two people have come and that's the thing. Whether they wanna avail themselves to the opportunity and then you don't wanna force yourself on anyone either. I've learned a lot over the years when I pass this is all going to go. No one is going to know this stuff and well there's a couple but not my own kids won't even pick it up. I know when they talk about knowledge one of our elders who is a fluent language speaker who leaves and takes a journey well that's a long bit of our language is gone. I feel the same way too.

On the other hand, there are still youth in the community that reach out to the elders and seek their wisdom. One of the participants in the Discussion Circles shared this with us:

I talk to quite a bit of elders. I talk to a few on a weekly basis, they talk to me and there's not them and there's no one else out there that wants to learn. I tell them I'm here right now, but they ask where's your friends. Why don't they want to do something and learn something? They're caught up in their own stuff I guess.

The relationship between elders and youth is very important in Anishinaabe traditions. This relationship has been compromised because of colonialism and youth in the community are not receiving the type of political knowledge that they would have. One area that elders relayed their wisdom on was politics and traditional governance structures and this is jeopardized currently.

Many elders and other community members spoke of the impact of residential schools and the sixties scoop on their lives. Residential schools were created to remove the indigeneity from Indigenous peoples and fully assimilate them into the dominant society. The process involved unlearning their culture, ceremonies, languages and history. Similarly, through the sixties scoop Indigenous children were taken from their families and placed into foster homes. These children were raised without little or no knowledge about their culture, traditions, languages and backgrounds. The implications of these policies continue to be experienced by survivors, but for many the damages are irreparable. These assimilatory policies have made it difficult for many elders to remember their own traditional teachings and pass it on to youth. Many elders in the community were not completely familiar with traditional governance structures and were cognizant of the void in their knowledge.

Assimilation policies like residential schools and the sixties scoop led to the breakdown of families. Relationships between children, parents and grandparents were damaged. In this type of dysfunctional environment, youth were unable to rely on positive role models or caregivers. In traditional societies, everyone was interdependent on each other and roles were assigned. Colonialism has broken down these roles and relationships. One of the community members shared this[15]:

Was at the pow wow yesterday in Atikamiksheng. My baby girl wanted a cotton candy, and a memory of my dad hit me. It was a memory of him taking me to a pow wow when I was little, and he bought me a cotton candy. Afterwards he tossed me up on his shoulders. And I remember feeling like a "daddy's girl." Over the years our relationship hasn't been as close as I would have liked it to be. I still love my daddy unconditionally. We all deal with pain/trauma from our past differently, some heal, some numb, some persevere to help others, some take action, and some get immobilized it's all about choice. My dad is a first generation residential school survivor. I never understood why things were the way they were, why he made the choices he did until I got older. Now I see him for whom he truly is. And he is strong, he is a survivor and he is my dad.

Many grandparents and parents are not able to be positive caregivers and nurturers for youth. Adults have their own serious problems and challenges to overcome. As a consequence, children and youth suffer because sometimes they lack access to basic necessities like food and shelter.

In traditional societies, individuals relied on hunting and their natural environment for sustenance. Modern economies based on capitalism have replaced traditional economic systems. WRFN as a community is suffering the repercussions of their traditional economies being

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[15] Shared through personal communication over Facebook

eradicated by capitalism. Mecredi captured the severity of this in *The Rapids: Navigating the Future of First Nations* (1993):

> The massive dispossession of First Nations peoples has brought dramatic changes in First Nations economies. Cash economies are replacing traditional sustenance activities, which required a large land base, and welfare and poverty are the hallmarks of First Nations communities. Unemployment is estimated at approximately seventy percent on Indian reserves across the country. The impact this kind of economic distress has on the lives of Indian people is staggering (Mecredi and Turpel 1993, 141).

Although the community leaders try to mitigate these problem by being progressive and providing incentives for outside investors, this community as well as many others continue to be reliant on federal government transfers. A majority of the employment opportunities exist either in the band office or outside of the community. There are even lesser employment opportunities for youth. One of the youth shared this in the Discussion Circle:

Back in the day, we had potatoes, squash, corn cause it's all… and for protein we would eat our fish. As young kids growing up that's all we had living off the land. Now a days cause all the water is so polluted we can't fish. That fish was our baby food and we can't even eat that now a days cause it's so polluted the fish. Apparently you need to be over 5 years old to eat fresh fish out of the lake now. The kids need to develop their immune system before they eat the fish. The paper mill has polluted the water.

Youth in this community were distressed about their economic conditions and employment opportunities. Unable to rely on traditional sustenance practices and without traditional knowledge, youth are dependent on their parents and band governments.

Unfortunately, First Nations governance structures have been replaced with colonial-western style governance structures. The *Indian Act* and the federal government still maintain authority over all First Nations in Canada. The Canadian government has always seen Indigenous peoples like the Ojibway in problematic terms: "as obstacles to the progress of civilization, wards of the Crown, relics of savagery and dregs of modern society, criminals and terrorists" (Alfred 1999, 3). The current governance model legislated in First Nations communities is the colonial-municipal model. Under this colonial system, the Ojibway youth are dependent on their band government and by association to the federal government. First Nations leaders and activists like Mecredi understand they are powerless and dependent in this system and want to revive their traditional systems:

> "We want to revive the traditions of consensus decision-making that involves everyone. Consensus democracy means that responsibility is put back where it belongs – in the hands of our people. But the Indian Act has dictated a style of government that has forced our peoples to adopt what I call the ten-second model of democracy, since it gives us input at the ballot box for a total of about ten seconds every few years. We have gotten used to a style of government that does not reflect our traditions of fully involving the people" (Mecredi and Turpel 1993, 90).

Due to colonialism this model of government has produced a political environment that is very inconsistent with Ojibway traditions. Formerly, the Ojibway's in WRFN selected their leaders through a transparent open process by standing behind the person they wanted to be their leader. Western governance structures rooted in representative democracy are problematic because they rely on secret ballots. This Ojibway community is having difficulty understanding and supporting this western-based electoral system as one elder shared:

When I got involved that's all we had one chief and two councillors and they would have a nomination night and an election night month later after that. But uh like uncle said, nobody would nominate your own adversary if you would nominate one chief why would you nominate someone to run against them cause that's defeating the purpose. You're putting your opinion out there but then you don't like it and you put another and then another one, three of them to run for the same position. Back in the day that wouldn't happen. Maybe two people would be nominated for chief and then uh you know out of those 2 councillor positions maybe 6 or 7 people that you put a lot of thought into that and see how that would be. In the last election there was like 15 or 16 nominated for chief and about 1 or 2 off the band list didn't get nominated there but there's a lot there was like 40 or 50 people running for about 6 positions in our community. The political process here is almost gone to a farce stage where people don't put any thought to who they want in there. Same person would come in there and nominate 6 or 7 people.

Regrettably many youth are influenced by their parents and they cannot understand the electoral system. They realize that it leads to friction within the community. Leaders want to acquire powerful positions on the band government and this causes division within the community. Some of the youth caught between the divides abstain from the electoral process. Youth in the Discussion Circles shared these points about voting and electoral participation in the community:

1. I just didn't want to because I didn't want to pick sides. I already knew who was going to win and voting this year was kind of ridiculous I thought. Everyone voted against our chief but he is still currently chief right now. He still won that vote which is ridiculous.

2. This year voting I was confused. There were probably 52 people running for council, there was a lot of people on that form, meanwhile there was a lot that dropped out, which meant their names shouldn't have been on that form. There were a lot of mistakes and most of the people I had no idea who they were, I had no idea what their plans or hopes are. Barely see them around the community. I don't know it was just different this year, even being in that community centre when they were counting everything it was pretty upsetting.

Electoral participation data showed that community members in WRFN are less participatory than other First Nations in band elections. One of the obvious reasons participation rates are low is because of the Corbiere decision in 1999. The other explanation is found in the statements by these youth. There is a loss of faith in the western imposed electoral system. Youth were highly skeptical of off-reserve members voting in band elections because they were not aware of the local situations. As one of youth said in the Discussion Circle:

They don't know what's going in the community. They don't even know who they are voting for and what they're voting for. They don't wanna stay cause there's not much opportunities. You see most of the families that work in the office mostly help each other out. People pick and choose not the person with the experience or education or degrees.

There is a common Anishinaabe political tradition that leaders need to "have face" in the community in order to be respected and accountable to the people (Hunter 2003, 30). It is unwise of leaders to be only seen at elections times because they need to make an effort to participate in ever day community affairs. Without understanding the interests of the community, leaders will not be able to represent their people. In Anishinaabe political tradition, leaders were only as effective as their ability to convince their constituents to follow their examples. Colonialism has put barriers and divides up between leaders and the people in WRFN. By creating complicated electoral systems and governance structures, leaders have been distanced from their community members. An elder in the Discussion Circle explained the importance of "showing face" in the community using the example of one of their leaders:

He/She didn't even acknowledge me that was one of the hurtful things, when you're in that position you acknowledge people. He/She walks in with people in technical power, we call them high foreheads, so they all come in walk into the school and not even acknowledge me, he/she swirls everybody around and then they walk out without even saying hello. To me if our young people are seeing this they say who are these people.

Considering Political Participation of Youth in the Context of RCAP

In the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996*, the youth asked for empowerment and involvement in the political decision-making that affected their lives. They were excluded from both the political system within their communities and the broader Canadian political system. Unfortunately, due to the deep impact of colonialism and the embedded negative policies of the *Indian Act*, youth in this community are still unrepresented by the political system. According to majority of the youth in this study, Chief and Band Council can do better at representing youth interests. Here are some of the points the youth made about their lack of representation:

1. No I better just, uh… No they don't. Well first of all you would see more youth activities around here. You would probably see us going to school more often instead of dropping out. Shit like that, yeah. Straighten up and shit. It's never asked about what we want. It's always about what they want. What they think is best. Never ask us about what we want.

2. Well first of all, half of us around here can't be trusted. It's either cause of some last name or shit you did in the past. People on this reserve can't see people changing. Like me for instance I used to be a bad ass, but now I'm older and I'm changing my life around. They still see me for that kid.

The community is very small and the population low, therefore, friction is bound to exist. However, many elders and youth spoke about patronage and nepotism in the current political system. Schouls (1999) said that power is often concentrated in the hands of few in First Nations communities leading to corruption, patronage and nepotism. Youth are evidently cognizant and aware of these problems. Many of the youth held serious reservations about the implications of a political system overwhelmed by corruption, patronage and nepotism. Two youth in the Discussion Circles shared examples of access to housing and favouritism:

1. They're all family oriented. Um I'll give you an example. Say somebody has a house here and it's a big three-bedroom house with one girl living in it and she got it. It has to do with family, her uncle or aunty is working in the office and she can get a house. She doesn't need a big house it's only her.

2. I feel the same about that. Well in my house we had to build an extra room so that my family can live there. I go to other people's places and we had to pay for our own stuff. I have a feeling it was because of my family. I'm only half way from to being a community member the way I see it. We had to pay for the supplies, the walls, electric stuff like wires, to put them in and uh I go to see my friend's houses and they are the same. I don't know why we had to do that cause we are half. I'm half native; my dad is a white man. That's a big problem, it's why people don't like me, and they judge me.

The colonial-municipal model that the *Indian Act* has imposed on Ojibway peoples of this community is problematic. Many youth still feel excluded, marginalized and alienated by the Canadian political processes and their own communities. The political system in First Nations communities is causing youth to suffer unfairly. Colonialism has re-structured the position of youth in their societies from warriors and future of their nations to political victims in their own communities. As Alfred writes, "If Indigenous peoples are to have any future at all, every person counts. But those young people who self-destruct are not the only ones lost to society. So too are

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the apathetic – those who have become so alienated that they simply don't care" (Alfred 1999, 130). The type of colonial-municipal system in WRFN is not effective and appropriate for youth representation because their voices are still unheard.

Additionally, the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996*, emphasized the importance of adequate recreation facilities and leisure activities for First Nations youth. According to the Commission, "in the absence of leisure opportunities, substance abuse may be their only escape from crushing boredom and dreary surroundings (RCAP 19996, 161). In fact, youth in WRFN referred to this "boredism" in our conversation due to the lack of opportunities, programs and events catered towards their specific age groups. Programs and services are offered to youth that are younger in age, but not anything attractive for the older cohorts. As a result, certain youth turn towards alcohol, drugs and crime simply to keep occupied. Several youth directly mentioned boredom or the lack of activities as reasons for turning towards negative behaviours:

1. Listen to this, I'm a troubled youth. I drink. Been in trouble smoking. I drink cause I'm bored. I smoke cause I'm bored. When I'm not bored I'm doing something productive like I'm learning to hunt. I learn to fish. This is stuff that you need to learn. You might've never learned that you grew up. I learned on my own how to make a home. You start with four trees and you build something with that. I can live off the land. Catch my own food. Grow my own plants, fruits and vegetables. You never learned that because they don't teach you that at school. They want you to get into business and they want you to pay. For me I'm dependent on hunting. You need to buy a house with property.

2. No that's because of bord-ism cause that's when you start drinking. That's when you start tapping into drugs. Next thing you know you're kicking down some doors for some booze.

3. They built us a basketball court, soccer field, a track, they invested money, but there's no programs, no teams. My friend and I were talking bout going to the bush and making some bike trails, but we need money to buy bikes. We are people that go and do our own thing but it'd be nice to be part of the community and do something like that.

4. There's nothing here no more. There's not much tourism, not much people out about and that's a big reason why people are drinking because there's nothing else to do. I wake up every morning six in the morning. If I have nothing to do by lunchtime I will go drink a beer. I know it's not right, but there's nothing to do. I used to get myself in trouble because there was nothing to do. To solve that problem I went to drinking. Been sober for a while but yeah. I want to help people, I help out my uncle, cut his wood, sweep his chimney, haul his wood, do everything for the guy, but if he doesn't call me I got nothing else to do. I checked out Little Current and the Island all day with my school bag handing out resumes. Couple of bucks in my pocket but if I got nothing to do I will go to a bar. I got a stack of my resumes in my bag right now. I drop my resumes at the fish store at the Food Land and it's not working, but I'm trying. I'm trying to do something. I don't want to sit here and drink all day. I want to go and do something positive. At times I'll get up, I'll walk to the bush and grab a handful of nails. I got a couple of forts out there. Some guy driving by seen me in the bush says hey you can't be doing that, but I ain't bugging no one. I'm not cutting down trees, these trees down on the ground. He drove off and that was the last time I did because I felt like I wasn't allowed to.

It is easy to criticize and blame the leaders of this community for not providing enough opportunities for youth, but this is unfair and inaccurate. The problem is endemic and originates from colonialism and the dependence system it has institutionalized. Leaders in this community including the current Band Council have worked tirelessly to improve conditions for all community members. Community leaders have provided youth with numerous opportunities to become politically involved. Yet, conditions in the community are not favourable to youth and they continue to be unrepresented in the political process. There is a disparity between participation and representation.

Neoliberalism as an economic policy has influenced many government policies in Canada and the same is true for Indigenous affairs. Communities like WRFN receive funding from the federal government to provide their services and programs. It is common knowledge that First Nations are heavily dependent on federal transfers for delivering these services and programs. This has forced First Nations to compete with one another for various funding opportunities. One elder shared his/her experience as the community health representative:

I started working as a community health representative and there was an application at the store. We need a community health rep you need to speak the language and you need to work well with people. I applied and came to chief and council meeting and they said you can start tomorrow. I better let my boss know. In them days there was only 100 people living here in 12 houses. They said once you hit 100 more there'll be one more, but we're up to 500 and there's only still me.

From conversations with youth and elders in WRFN we can discern that the recreation and leisure activity situation has not improved tremendously since the commission. One of the youth captured the problem perfectly by arguing that there are sports fields, courts and community centres, but no programs. There is little organized recreation activities especially for older youth cohorts. For example, youth in one of our Discussion Circles claimed they wanted their old workout centre to be reopened. Band administration closed it because some equipment went missing and there was not funding to hire someone to work at the facility. Leadership was not able to provide this demand because of limited resources and funding.

While the commission made the right recommendations, they are not achievable due to the political system. Adequate recreation facilities and leisure activities cost money that First Nations communities cannot raise themselves. This colonial-based system requires First Nations to apply for funding to offer programs and services to youth based on strict criteria and requirements. Funding is allocated based on the number of youth in the community, and their immediate needs and priorities. According to one of the community leaders, funding structures through INAC have changed over the years from regular funding to application-based funding. In other words, First Nations used to receive funding regularly without any attachments. As a result, community leaders need to hold positive relations with politicians outside their community. Silver (2006) called this the politics of access, whereby community leaders and government agents develop constructive relationships often at the disfavour of community members.

Assessing the Political Behaviour of Youth in Whitefish River First Nation

On the one hand, we know these imposed colonial structures negatively impact the political participation of youth in the community. On the other hand, youth in WRFN on average seem to be politically active and involved. This looks like a positive in terms of political participation, but it is not. Youth mentioned they were marginalized, excluded and unrepresented by the political processes in Canada and WRFN, yet they still participated in the political system. Bedford and Pobihushchy (1995) through the "politics of dependency" provide us insight and explain the reason youth may be politically active despite lack of results. Band Councils in First Nations communities have unparalleled political powers and not participating in community affairs can be detrimental to youth. Youth are completely dependent on community leaders for housing, funding, jobs and education. While the politics of dependency leads to "abnormally high" electoral participation rates in band elections, evidence of this was not captured in WRFN. It has though led to more community involvement in other types of activities beyond formal

politics. Youth in this community were highly uncertain of their economic situations and outlooks. They were worried about the lack of income and employment opportunities in the community and were confronted with immense structural barriers with employment outside of the community. In this type of environment, youth are in weak positions and are dependent on others. They have thus turned to the use of unconventional, direct-action and community-based efforts to participate and pursue their interests.

Since the electoral process is not leading towards substantial improvements in the lives of youth, they are turning towards other activities rooted in direct-action. Silver (2006) referred to this as the politics of mobilization. To make "real changes" youth in the community participated largely in mobilization efforts. One of the youth captured this in our Discussion Circle:

We could shut down a bunch of industries by blockading the roads on our reserves and that will get a lot of people angry but they shouldn't be coming through here walking right over us, thinking they own our land. That's the big thing – the protest – the government doesn't like it. It takes away billions of dollars from transports, imports and exports.

Model of Political Participation for Youth in Whitefish River First Nation

In lieu of these results, we can develop a better understanding of the political behaviour for youth in WRFN. As this analytical section has attempted to establish, all forms of behaviour in this First Nations community have been deeply impacted by colonialism. The political participation of youth in this community is nuanced and context-dependent. Not all the youth are involved politically, but their environment makes it necessary to be politically active. In addition, youth in this community identify heavily with being Anishinaabe and Ojibway and are rooted in their culture. This influence the type of political activities that are important to them. Youth in this community are more likely to participate in community-based efforts and activities that are rooted in their culture like participating in pow wows, sweat lodges and fasts.

At first it may seem participation in pow wows, sweat lodges and fasts are not political activities. Instead these activities can be categorized as cultural or social events. Yet, given the Canadian government's persistence in trying to eradicate these cultural practices make their contemporary exercise a form of political resistance and challenge to the legacy of colonialism and inversely an act of decolonization. Youth participation in pow wows, sweat lodges and fasts are these Ojibway youth's way of challenging and confronting colonialism.

Drawing from our earlier model of political participation for First Nations youth, we can surmise that youth in this community apply both the resurgence and reconciliation framework. On the one hand, they are less involved in formal or conventional political methods because these are not responsive to their needs. On the other hand, they are more focused in efforts that are community-driven and traditional-focused. These latter types of political activities help the youth grasp their realities and affect change in their lives. These youth, like their Canadian counterparts, want to be involved and empowered by politics.

Conclusion

The impact of colonialism on the political behaviour of First Nations youth in this community is deep and complex. Youth continue to live in an environment with fewer opportunities, programs and funding. To make matters worse, the economic opportunities are even less accessible. Leaders in this community attempt their best at providing opportunities for

youth, but are restricted due to the funding criteria the federal government has legislated. Circumstantial evidence suggests there is patronage and nepotism in the community with certain youth having access to resources and opportunities more than others. All of these factors contribute to the way youth in the community engage and perceive politics. As one of the elders in our conversation shared, it is not easy for youth in the community:

As for the youth here I see our youth are struggling. Like when my kids were youth there was a lot of struggles, we had a youth worker you know. Today when I uh umm they are struggling I guess and um sometimes I'm even afraid for my own youth like my grand children they're at that stage too where they're um finding their own selves you know. They start to grow and learn about this and that and I'm glad we have a youth worker. To me I uh I wanna really help them too after our between 20 and 30 our young men and women they're the ones that are finding the hard road. They can't seem to find that right road, it's always up and down and I hate to see that happening. I wish there was something we could do for them.

Colonialism has deeply impacted youth in WRFN and their political behaviour. Despite this, the youth in this community remain devoted to their nation and culture. They have embraced community-driven efforts and actively participate in an array of political activities. Not all youth are involved, but for the most part politics is central to their lives.

Final Conclusion, Policy Recommendations and Areas for Future Research

In this chapter, I will summarize the dissertation, provide policy recommendations for WRFN leadership to empower youth and identify areas for future research. The objective of this dissertation was twofold: 1) To better understand the social and political experiences of youth in WRFN, and 2) To provide the youth with a platform to share their ideas, experiences, attitudes, and perspectives on politics. Overall, we learn that the political behaviour of these youth is severely impacted by colonialism. Whether they participate in conventional, non-conventional, or community/traditional rooted political activities, they are operating under the colonial structures. Youth have two choices, either to participate politics as usual, which can be described as the reconciliation framework or practice resurgence and confront the Canadian state and its institutions. These two paradigms of political participation for First Nations youth are not mutually incompatible. In fact, youth in WRFN demonstrate behaviour that is typical of both of these approaches.

In the earlier chapters we learned that the political behaviour of First Nations peoples in Canada has been mainly assessed through electoral participation. Via this lens it was commonly believed that First Nations youth were absent, uniformed and uninterested in politics. However, we also learned that there are layers of complexities involved when First Nations peoples exercise voting. An argument was advanced that the entire political behaviour of First Nation youth should not be reduced to voting.

First Nations had elaborate and complex systems of social and political organization prior to European settler contact. Youth in these societies were "warriors" and interdependent on other members of their community. Indigenous political traditions were based on respect, autonomy, and interdependence. The Ojibways of mid-northwestern Ontario were eventually outnumbered and overpowered by these newcomers/settlers. This led to the signing of the Robinson Treaty in 1850 and the establishment of WRFN as a reserve. Another argument was advanced that the signing of this treaty was a critical juncture in the way politics was experienced by the Ojibways. After signing this treaty, their governance systems were eventually replaced with western forms of individualism, power, capitalism and dominion. Over generations, youth went from being warriors to politically irrelevant.

The only reason the Canadian government had a friendly relationship with First Nations in the early periods were to protect its own interests. In 1960 when the federal right to vote was offered to First Nations, there was little cause for celebration. First Nations, by this point had realized that their own political structures and traditions were vital to their survival and became critical of enfranchisement. Canada, on the other hand, could not be considered a legitimate democracy without their active electoral participation. Due to the diversity of First Nations across Canada, some communities and their members decided to participate in federal and provincial elections, while others remained critical and pursued self-governance. However, political participation has always been contingent on many factors including the political situation, treaty and historical relationship and the individual outlook of the community.

This dissertation, however, considered the individual-level forms of political participation and experiences of youth in a modern day reserve. The youth political participation questionnaire showed youth in this community are turning away from conventional to unconventional methods. Youth in WRFN were less likely contact politicians, join and/or donate to political

parties. They were more likely to utilize efforts that were rooted in their culture and community. This involved activities like attending community events, working with others in the community on an issue, volunteering at a pow wow or community event, and/or taking part in a sweat lode or fast. Additionally, there was strong evidence for youth participation in direct-action activities like blockades and protests.

Discussion Circles provided youth with an opportunity to express their voices and be heard. Youth had mixed feelings about their lives in the community. While they were satisfied with their lives, there were certainly challenges for them. They said the community was small and everyone knew each other. Youth had an elevated knowledge about their identities and issues that affected them directly such as the MMIWG inquiry, the TRC, The Indian Act, The Robinson Treaty, and the Syrian Refugee Crises.

Youth explained that there were some difficulties for them in the community. Substance abuse, dropping out of school, suicide, and lack of employment were significant challenges in the lives of youth. In addition, elders were not mentoring youth because there was a lack of connection between them. Youth were unhappy about off-reserve members voting in their band elections because they were unaware of the conditions in their community. Youth were also critical of leadership claiming that they were representing youth interests.

These are all the negative impacts and consequences of colonialism on WRFN youth's political behaviour. The traditional values and systems have been deeply impacted by the arrival and imposition of European settle political thought and institutions. For instance, in traditional societies youth were reliant and interdependent on other generations for guidance and mentoring. This form of political socialization was lost in the community due to residential schools and the sixties scoop. Some elders are no longer able to provide traditional knowledge and guidance to youth. In addition, traditional economies that allowed individuals to be self-reliant and independent were displaced with capitalism and cash-economies. This has resulted in mass poverty, unemployment and dependency of First Nations on the federal government. In an attempt to rectify past mistakes, the federal government has offered self-determination through the colonial-municipal model making First Nations similar to municipal governments in Canada. Yet, this system is neither predicated on Anishinaabe or Ojibway political traditions nor able to provide the type of direct-democracy that this community requires. Youth are left without adequate representation and continue to feel excluded. As a result, little has changed since the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996*.

Despite all this, youth continue to be politically involved in WRFN. They utilize diverse political methods to seek empowerment and opportunities. Their political behaviour is exceptional and dissimilar to their Canadian counterparts. They consider voting important, but are more interested community-based efforts and direct-action. In a small community like WRFN youth do not have the privilege to politically absent. The Band Council controls many of the resources and political participation can be the difference between who survives and who does not.

Policy Recommendations

The WRFN Band Council asked for policy recommendation on empowering youth in the community. These are some practical policy recommendations that have emanated from youth and elders. These recommendations are not intended to challenge and criticize current policies. In fact, community leaders including the youth workers are working tirelessly to provide the best

environment for youth. These solutions are intended to restore the balance between youth and other community members.

There are five identifiable policy issues or challenges for youth in the community:

1. Boredom: lack of entertainment, activities and programs for older youth cohorts.
2. Opportunities: lack of political and employment opportunities for youth.
3. Relationship with Elders: disconnect between youth and elders.
4. Negative stereotypes: certain youth are perceived negatively.
5. Nepotism and Fairness: certain youth receive access to more resources due to familial relations.

Policy Solutions by Youth and Elders

Immediate actions can be taken to make life in the community more enjoyable for the youth. The youth said that there was no place to work out or a gym. There is a small gym in the community with workout equipment, but it is not open. The community leaders can open that facility and use the opportunity to employ several youth to work there. There are many facilities in the community like the street hockey rink and other sports fields, but there is no programming. The community can hire a volunteer recreation coordinator that can create and manage different sports activities like drop-in hockey and pick-up basketball. Young people in the community also raised concerns about the slow Internet. The elementary school on the reserve has access to high speed Internet and there should be an avenue to tap into that resource and provide high speed Internet for everyone.

The young people in the community have argued that there are not enough opportunities for them in the community. The policy recommendation proposed here is the creation of the Youth Council. The objective will be to have a representative of the youth council sit in meetings held by the Band Council and report on issues that affect the youth. The hope is that young people's voices and concerns will be represented to the community leaders. It will also be a practical way for the young people to participate in the political process. Funding can also be set aside for the youth council to create programs and services such as movie nights and excursions to nearby towns for shopping and fun.

Programming can be created to connect the young people and the elders in the community (Gabel, Pace and Ryan 2016). This can be easily resolved by bringing the two groups together for some fun activities in the Youth and Elders Centre. Many programs already exist in the centre, but there is nothing that brings the two groups together. Elders need to have an important role in the lives of young people in the community because some of them may have went through many of the hardships that the youth are currently experiencing. They will also be able to pass on their political knowledge to the youth.

Community leaders and youth can work together on advancing a strategy that improves the image of all the youth in the community. Certain youth that are coping with difficulties can be asked if they require help. There can be a hotline or anonymous website that connects individuals that require help with organizations. More funding can be set aside that involves better promotion and marketing of current events and programs.

Youth in this study expressed dissatisfaction with nepotism and favouritism in the community. Certain youth because of their families received access to more resources and opportunities. Community leaders can make more of an effort to ensure that youth are all treated

equally and that there is a fair process in allocating resources. Corruption can become a systemic problem and lead to lengthy conflicts and fraction between community members.

Areas for Future Research

This case study presents the first comprehensive assessment and analysis of the social and political behaviour of First Nations youth in their reserve. However, this research has been very limited with its extent because of funding and time. There are numerous opportunities for future research in this area. With the appropriate resources and funding, this research can be expanded to include other communities that are similar or different to WRFN. Conversations with youth and elders from other communities will show whether the behaviour of youth in WRFN is exceptional or ordinary.

More First Nations people live now in urban centres than on reserves. Volunteering extensively with urban Indigenous organizations showed that these youth face a whole set of unique challenges and barriers to political participation. This study can be broadened comparatively to include the experience and voices of urban First Nations youth. This will allow us make conclusions on whether the experiences of youth that live in communities vary versus those that live in urban centres.

Finally, band election participation rates revealed some interesting results in WRFN. Unlike many other First Nations this community participated more electorally in federal and provincial elections than their band elections. Band electoral participation rates were very high until elections held after 1999. As the Corbiere decision allowed First Nations band members that lived off the reserve to vote in band elections the number of eligible voters increased significantly. This caused the band electoral participation rates to drop in this community. It would be interesting to see whether this trend is unique or common nowadays. Also, many community members expressed their dissatisfaction with allowing off reserve members to vote in band elections because they were not informed about the local conditions. There is space to assess whether the Corbiere decision has led to contention between on reserve and off reserve band members.

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Appendix 1: The political engagement of youth in the Whitefish River First Nation community

<div align="center">

Research Agreement

July 23, 2015

</div>

Theo Nazary of McMaster University agrees to conduct research in Whitefish River First Nation with the following understandings:

1. The purpose of this research project, as discussed with and understood in the community of Whitefish River First Nation, is for Theo Nazary to conduct research on the political engagement of youth between the ages of 16 and 24 in the community.

2. The scope of this research project (that is, what issue, events or activities are to be involved, and the degree of participation by community residents), as discussed with and understood in this community is:

   A. To conduct interviews and one focus group with youth in the community and find out about their experiences, aspirations, concerns, understanding and engagement with politics within the community and beyond.

   B. To use the principles of Community-Based Participatory Research in partnering with the Whitefish River First Nation band council and ensuring that the research is directly beneficial to the community and is a priority area

   C. To communicate to the Whitefish River First Nation band council when data collection is complete and have discussions about the preliminary results

   D. To communicate findings of the research in an oral presentation to community members and also share all reports and publications related to the research, including the final thesis.

3. The methods to be used, as agreed by the researchers and the community, are: individual face-to-face interviews with youth and then one focus group if necessary.

4. Community training and participation, as agreed, are to include:

   The Community-Based Participatory aspect of this agreement entails the following understanding between Theo Nazary and the Whitefish River First Nation community:

   A. The specific topic of the research is youth engagement between the ages of 16 to 24 in the community.

   B. The Whitefish River First Nation band council has the opportunity to review and make suggestions on the research design at any point in time in the research process including in the planning, development and dissemination stages.

C. The Whitefish River First Nation has the option to interpret the results and make suggestions about the findings of the project, which will be included in any publications and reports.

D. The Whitefish First Nation has shared ownership of the data that is collected from this research project and can keep it for their records for any amount of time it wants. The only concession will be that Theo Nazary will remove all the participants' names and use pseudonyms in the digital data that he provides for Whitefish River First Nation to protect the integrity of the ethics process in the research project.

E. To create a steering committee that consists of one Whitefish River First Nation band council member and one elder. The steering committee will act as the advisory committee on behalf of the research project to the community and other stakeholders. The Whitefish River First Nation band council and the steering committee will provide ongoing support to Theo Nazary and help in the facilitation of the research including in the recruitment of individuals.

F. Theo Nazary will adhere to the seven-godfather teachings including wisdom, love, honesty, humility, bravery, respect and truth in conducting and communicating this research.

G. Each participant will receive $25.00 CAD compensation that Theo Nazary will provide. The participants will receive the compensation even if they withdraw from the study.

5. Information collected is to be shared, distributed, and stored in these agreed ways:

   The data that is collected will remain confidential and anonymous. The researcher will use pseudonyms in all publications and reports, including the final thesis. The data will be provided in digital format to the Whitefish River First Nation band council who will then presume ownership of the data and has the freedom to do what it wishes with it. Theo Nazary will keep the data for research purposes for 4 years. He will store the data in digital format on his computer's hard drive that is password protected, in a password protected folder. Anyone wishing to use the data has to receive permission from Theo Nazary or the Whitefish River First Nation band council.

6. The learning for this thesis project will come from listening to and interacting with youth in the community. Theo Nazary will work closely with the youth and ensure that they are respected and all the ethical protocols in the McMaster Research Ethics Board and the Manitoulin Anishinaabek Research Review Committee applications are followed throughout the entire research project.

7. Informed consent of individual participants is to be obtained in these agreed ways:

   An individual consent form and letter of information will be provided to the participants

and will be ready at their arrival to the interview and focus group sites. Theo Nazary will explain the purpose of the story and proceed once each participant has understood and signed the consent forms. The participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time until January 31, 2015 to ensure ongoing consent. The reason that withdrawal cannot be granted after this date is because Theo Nazary will need an appropriate amount of time to write his thesis paper.

8. The names of participants are to be protected in these agreed ways:

As indicated on the consent form, the interviews will remain confidential and anonymous. Whitefish River First Nation and Theo Nazary will comply with the ethics procedures and guarantee that the names of all participants are protected. Theo Nazary will use pseudonyms in his findings to address individual participants. The name of the community will appear in the research findings, results, publications and reports due to the nature of the research.

Before distribution of the final report, or any publication or contact with the media, the community will be consulted once again as to whether the community agrees to share this data in that particular way.

Funding, benefits and commitments

Funding

This project has not received funding and the costs incurred will be placed on Theo Nazary.

Benefits

Scientific presentations in peer-reviewed publications and conferences will be made. The final report will be reviewed by the Whitefish River First Nation band council, community members and steering committee prior to publication. Scientific presentations and communication of results with any stakeholder or media will only occur after the discussion of the preliminary results.

The benefits likely to be gained by the community through this research project are:

- Educational
- Informational
- Political

Commitments

The community's commitment to the researchers is to:

- Guide the project through ongoing engagement in Community-Based Participatory Research principles
- Provide advise in the research process through the Steering Committee and the Whitefish River First Nation band council

- Keep informed about the progress of the project, and help in leading the project toward meaningful results.
- Help in the recruitment of participants for the research

The researchers' main commitment to the community is to:

- Inform the community about the progress of the project in a clear, specific, and timely manner.
- Act as a resource to the community on nutrition-related questions.
- Provide the youth with a voice to express their political participation and ensure that the research is presented in an unbiased and professional manner
- Be available to the Whitefish River First Nation band council, Steering Committee, community members and participants at any time for correspondence
- Ensure that the research is in the community's best interest and has a direct benefit for the participants and community

The researchers agree to interrupt the research project in the following circumstances:

- If community leaders decide to withdraw their participation.
- If the researchers believe that the project will no-longer benefit the community.

Appendix 2: Letter to WRFN Band Council

McMaster University

| Department of Political Science | 1280 Main Street West Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8S 4M4 | Phone 905-525-9140 Ext. 24741 Fax 905-527-3071 Email polisci@mcmaster.ca http://www.socsci.mcmaster.ca/~polisci |

Dear Band Council Members,

I am writing this letter to express my interest in conducting research in your community. This research will be for an MA thesis in Political Science at McMaster University. I would like to examine orientations toward political participation among youth between the ages of 18 to 24 in your community. More specifically, I will ask what contributes to youth political participation in elections at all level and whether they are more confident in activities outside of the electoral process such as social movements like Idle No More.

I am interested in working with Whitefish River First Nation because of the higher than average participation rates in band council elections. I had the opportunity to visit your community in March 2015, when I came as part of Dr. Chelsea Gabel's research on the Impact of Digital Technology on First Nations Participation and Governance. During that visit, I conducted a survey on the community's voting experience on the Matrimonial Real Property (MRP) Law referendum. I worked alongside several community members, including a number of youth, who expressed interest in my proposed research. I would like to undertake my research in collaboration with youth in your community and continue to build upon the relationships that were initiated in my previous visit. Whitefish River First Nation is an ideal community for my research because of the active band council and its efforts in providing opportunities for youth engagement.

As part of my thesis work, I am committed to community-based participatory research (CBPR) and Aboriginal research principles. This means that the band council and community will have an important role in the design, planning, implementation and dissemination of the research. The research will comply with the Manitoulin Anishinaabek Research Review Committee (MARRC), the McMaster Research Ethics Board (MREB) and the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples. It is my hope that the research will have a direct benefit for Whitefish River First Nation by identifying to what extent the youth are involved politically and what can be done to either uphold or strengthen their participation in order for them to have their voices heard.

This research work is particularly important at this time because of the leadership that youth displayed with Idle No More. Aboriginal youth are the fastest growing demographic and as they become more active in their communities and beyond, it is important that we all join them on their journey. I am writing this letter to request the support of Band Council, as it is a necessary step in the ethics approval process. I look forward to your response and thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Theo Nazary, BA
McMaster University,

Appendix 3: MAARC Seven Grandfather Teachings Section

Respectful of the Seven Grandfather Teachings

44. How will the Seven Grandfather Teachings be respected throughout the entire research process?

The spirit of the seven-grandfather teachings will guide every facet of this research project. This research project is designed on a Community-Based Participatory Framework, wherein the community is always involved in the research process. This research will follow the protocols of the Tri-Council Policy Statement II Chapter 9 on Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples of Canada and respect Aboriginal customs and culture in the Manitoulin area. Although the seven-grandfather teachings are interconnected, below are some specific examples of how they will be used in this research:

Respect:
1. I will ensure all participants know the outcome of the study,
2. I will ensure all participants are informed about what is done with the data,
3. I will spend time and appreciates participants' knowledge and shared information
4. I will make the interviews comfortable and ask questions that the participants understand,
5. I will explain that this project is collaboration between the community and the researcher,
6. I will approach individuals appropriately, and,
7. I will avoid intrusive or sensitive questions and researcher will ensure that participants are given enough time to respond to the questions

Wisdom:
1. Participants do not have to answer any questions they do not want to; silence is an adequate and welcome response,
2. Youth are respected for their wisdom and experiences, and,
3. I understand the dynamics of the interviews and can differentiate between sarcasm and humour

Love:
1. I will be kind to all participants and throughout the entire research process,
2. I will ensure that the participants are safe and receive benefit by participating in this research, and think about the future generations and how they will receive benefit,
3. I will ensure the research is beneficial to Whitefish River First Nation, and,
4. Diversity is appreciated and respected in the community, including diversity of experiences

Honesty:
1. Trust is built and maintained throughout the research project,
2. Honesty is maintained at all times between the researcher and the participants,
3. Results and interviews are true to the words of the participants, and,

4. I will ensure that participants feel part of the study and are empowered through the project

<u>Humility:</u>
1. I will clear all preconceived expectations and ideas prior to conducting research,
2. I will make no judgment on participants and the community ever,
3. I will stay away from intrusive questions and approaches subjects in non-threating ways,
4. I will ensure that interviews are at a safe and appropriate time and location, and,
5. I understand that this researcher and participants are in a mutual relationship, whereby participants share their experiences and knowledge and the researcher must at all times be thankful for their relationship

<u>Truth:</u>
1. I understand that the participants are sharing deeply personal information and they must be respected, and,
2. When the final results are available, the right action is taken to rectify any problems or challenges that youth face in the community

<u>Bravery:</u>
1. I appreciate the bravery of the participants for letting a stranger into their lives and sharing their experiences
2. I appreciate the courage that participants exemplify when they speak their minds and then stand by the information that they have given, and,
3. I will keep my courage to ensure that the research is completed in a respectful and meaningful manner, with all the seven grandfather teachings respected and kept in mind at all times,

Appendix 4: Letter of Information and Consent Form

DATE:

LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT

The Political Engagement of Youth in Whitefish River First Nation

Applicant:

Student Investigator	Supervisor
Theo Nazary	Dr. Karen Bird
Department of Political Science	Department of Political Science
McMaster University	McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada	Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(647) 226-8927	(905) 525-9140 ext. 23701
E-mail: nazary@mcmaster.ca	E-mail: kbird@mcmaster.ca

Purpose of the Study
This study is about the political experience of youth in Whitefish River First Nation. I'm conducting this as part of research for my Master's Thesis at McMaster University's Department of political science in Hamilton, Ontario. I'm working under the supervision of Dr. Karen Bird of McMaster's department of political science.

What will happen during the study?
I am inviting you to participate in a 1 hour and 20 minutes Discussion Circle at the Youth & Elder Centre for High School youth on December 16, 2015 at 9 am at the Band Administration office or at 4:30 pm at the Youth & Elders Centre after the pizza party. Another Sharing Circle will be held with youth that are at the post-secondary level, taking time off from their studies, or working, which will be on December 28, 2015 at 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm at the Youth & Elders Centre. During the Discussion Circles, you will be asked about 10 questions on your political experiences in the community, with Idle No More and voting. I will take handwritten notes to record your answers and use an audio recorder to make sure that I don't miss anything you say. Food and refreshments will be provided at all events. Participants may be contacted for follow up interviews over Skype or phone.

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts
You should be aware that there are social and psychological risks when taking part in this study such as feeling uncomfortable, ashamed or embarrassed about your political experiences. You may not want to share your experiences with others. You may feel intimidated by other participants who are louder and more active. Keep in mind that the Discussion Circles are an open and safe space, and there are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in learning about your experiences as a group. There is risk that members of your community can learn that you are participating in this study and may ask you questions about it. The Whitefish River First Nation will own the final summarized data, which will not contain anyone's name or information. You can withdraw from this study at any time and leave the discussion circles, or pass on any questions you want.

A research steering committee has been created to help you with any concerns or questions. The committee is made up of people from your own community including an elder, council member and youth. You have the option of contacting any research steering committee members if you have any questions or concerns. The committee members have signed an oath of confidentiality and will not share any of your concerns with any one else.

Confidentiality
I will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of your participation. I will not use your name or any identifying information in any data, reports or publications.

I am asking that all participants respect one another's privacy by keeping what is shared in the circles secret. There is a risk that some things may be shared to people outside of the study and what you say can be traced back to you. You should remember to share only information in the discussion circles that you feel comfortable other people knowing about including the Whitefish River First Nation Band Council.

Potential Benefits
▪ Reduce the negative stereotypes towards Indigenous youth in the community and outside
▪ Provide a voice for the youth to share their political experiences in the community
▪ Empower the youth by allowing them to see common goals and objectives within and outside of their communities
▪ Break down barriers between the youth and other community members

Payment or Reimbursement
Participants will receive food and refreshments at the discussion circles. Youth that participate in the discussion circles will receive monetary compensation, after they sign an honorarium form for $25.00 CAD. The youth that fill out the questionnaire will not receive compensation, however, they will be given a presentation about political engagement of Indigenous Youth during the pizza party on December 16 at 4:30 pm at the Youth & Elders Centre.

Voluntary participation
▪ Your participation in this study is voluntary.
▪ You can decide to stop at any time, even partway through the interview for whatever reason, or up until approximately *February 28, 2015*
▪ If you decide to stop participating, there will be no consequences to you.
▪ If you decide to stop we will ask you how you would like us to handle the data collected up to that point.
▪ This could include returning it to you, destroying it or using the data collected up to that point.
▪ If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

Information about the Study Results
Results will be shared with the community in a presentation at the Youth & Elders Centre next summer. There will be an additional presentations of the results made to the Whitefish River First Nation Band Council. The community will be provided with a short summary of the key findings. This study will lead to a thesis, which will be titled *The Political Engagement of Youth in Whitefish River First Nation*.

Questions about the Study
If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact Theo Nazary at: nazary@mcmaster.ca or (647) 226-8927

This study has received ethics clearance by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board (MREB) and the Manitoulin Anishinaabek Research Review Committee (MAARC). If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

MREB	MAARC
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142	Telephone: (705) 368-2182 ext. 201
1280 Main St. W. Hamilton, ON ON	Postal Bag 2002, Hwy 540, Little Current,
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca	lenora.mayers@noojmowin-teg.ca

CONSENT

Please complete this page, sign it and give it to Theo Nazary, the student researcher of the study.

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Theo Nazary, of McMaster University, and I understand:

- It is my choice to take part in this research study.
- If I take part, I do not have to participate in all components of the project or answer all the questions in the interviews and sharing circles.
- If I take part, the focus group and interview will be audio-recorded
- After I start the focus group and interview, I can decide to stop.
- Project/Research information will be combined into a community report and will also be used for research and publication purposes. I will have the right to view and comment on this material before publication.
- My name will not be included in any reports or academic publications.

I _____ agree to be interviewed for this research study.

_____
Sign in ink

_____
Date:

Summary of Study Findings:
All participants will receive the final summaries and findings. Please provide your contact information, unless you would rather not receive the final results.
(if yes, give contact information below)

I can be contacted at:
Postal address:
Telephone number:
Email address:
Skype ID:
Facebook:

Appendix 5: Background Information Sheet

<div style="border:1px solid black; background:#e0e0e0; text-align:center; padding:1em;">

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS SHEET

</div>

DISCUSSION CIRCLE BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET

INSTRUCTIONS: Please fill in this that will provide us with some basic background information about you.

1. I'm a (Check one):
    [ ] Male
    [ ] Female

2. I'm (Check one):
    [ ] 16   [ ] 19   [ ] 23
    [ ] 17   [ ] 20   [ ] 24
    [ ] 18   [ ] 21   [ ] 25

3. I'm (Check one):
    [ ] living on reserve
    [ ] living off-reserve

4.   What is the highest level of schooling for you (Check one):

    [ ] Elementary School
    [ ] High School
    [ ] College, University or Equivalent
    [ ] Graduate School or Equivalent

5.   If you do not go to school, what do you do (Check one):

    [ ] Working or Employed
    [ ] Stay at home Parent
    [ ] Taking time off

6.   What do you consider as your main identity (Check One)?

    [ ] Canadian Citizen
    [ ] Member of WRFN
    [ ] Ojibway or Anishinaabe

Please turn over this brief information sheet and leave it on the table when you leave. Thanks.

Appendix 6: Participant Receipt and Honorarium

Receipt for Honorarium

<u>Project Title</u>: The Politcal Engagement of Youth in Whitefish River FN

<u>Researcher</u>:

Theo Nazary, Master of Arts Candidate, Department of Political Science, McMaster University (647-226-8927)
McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

<u>Funded by</u>: Researcher and Supervising Committee

Discussion Circle location: _____

I received the sum of CAD $ 25 (cash) from _____
<div align="right">(print the name of focus group facilitator)</div>
for participating in the aforementioned research project.

Signature of participant: _____

Signature of researcher/interviewer: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 7: Poster for Youth in Community

Appendix 8: Poster for Elders