

Beyond the Gate at Aazhoodena:  
Connecting the Past to the Future

by

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## Abstract

This thesis will examine the life of a First Nation family living in the community of Stony Point (Aazhoodena) <sup>1</sup>– the site of several major confrontations between the members of Stony Point and the Canadian and Provincial governments. In the case of Stony Point, little has been written beyond the chronicles of the standoff of Ipperwash Provincial Park in 1995. However, the story of Stony Point began long before the standoff and continues to present day.

Building from practices relating to culture, identity and tradition used throughout the community's history, my thesis will examine how the practices of the Kewageshig family at Stony Point has led to a resurgence in the community. Throughout this examination, I will consider some of the possible reasons why this community has survived the relentless legal and environmental pressure<sup>2</sup> applied by both governments and non-Indigenous communities to remove the members of Stony Point from their land. My intent is to explore how the crises experienced by this community were pivotal in the creation of the community as it exists today and have allowed a space for members of Stony Point to redefine - on their own terms - what is possible for the future of the community.

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<sup>1</sup> While I primarily use Aazhoodena as the Indigenous name for this land, the land is also known as Stony Point and during World War II, Camp Ipperwash.

<sup>2</sup> The environmental impact of the having the land occupied by DND for training practices during the war had resulted in asbestos filled barracks and unexploded ordines buried throughout the property.



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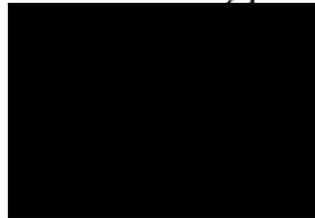
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### **Gizhe Manidoo**

*I'iw nama'ewinan, maaba asemaa, miinwaa n'ode'winaanin gda-bagidinimaagom*

(We offer our prayers, tobacco and our hearts.)

*Miigwech gda-igom n'mishomissinaanig miinwa n'ookomisinaanig jiinaago gaa-  
iyyaajig, noongom e-iyaaajig miinwaa waabang ge-iyaaajig.*

(Thank you for the Grandfathers and Grandmothers of yesterday, today and tomorrow.)

*Miigwech manidoog iyyaajig noodinong, iyyaajig nibiing, iyyaajig shkodeng miinwa  
iyyaajig akiing.*

(Thank you spirits of the winds, water, fire and earth.)

*Miigwech manidoog iyyaajig giowedinong, waabanong, zhaawanong miinwa  
epangishimok.*

(Thank you spirits of the north, east, south and west.)

*Daga bi-wiidokawishinaang wii mino bimaadiziyaang.*

(Please help us to live a good life.)

*Ahow!<sup>3</sup>*

To acknowledge those that have contributed in my completion of this thesis requires me to acknowledge those past and present and future who have led me to this path.

I would like to begin by acknowledging and thanking the Anishnaabe and Objibway peoples past, present and future and, in particular the Kewageshig family - Martin, Joanne, Jesse, Carmen, Alicia and Randall and Noreen - for assisting me in this work. I am enormously lucky to call you family and, more so,

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Ojibwe.net

to have you as teachers as I walk my own path of reconciliation. I offer my most humble gratitude for you telling your stories to me, recognizing some were difficult to tell. Your truth-telling, your strength of character and your family resolve will always be an inspiration to me.

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## CHAPTER ONE - PREFACE

I have always been fascinated by how my life path has led me to a specific decision or place. The path that led me to conduct this research was not accidental. I acknowledge my own life experiences have brought me to this moment in time and are very likely the reasons why I have chosen Indigenous studies and the specific focus of the thesis, which was to work with the Kewageshig family living at Aazhoodena.

When I was a young child, I spent six years living in a remote Inuit community in the Northwest Territories. As a child, it was hard to see how the beautiful culture in which I was immersed was different from my own. Children can be blind to issues like racism and difference. However, as I got older I noticed how some of my school friends were treated differently than others. I remember the day when my mother's best friend in the community tragically lost her son to suicide. At the time, I didn't fully understand the 'why' behind what was happening, but I recognized something was wrong. Later, ironically and tragically, this same community of Inuvik would finally close one of the last residential schools in Canada - the same residential school that the son of my mom's best friend had attended.

My family eventually left the North to live in an urban setting. My time in the North had left an indelible mark on me, although at the time, I was too young to realize it. However, as I matured, I began to think more about my experience in the North, and I started questioning the status quo – seeking justification for

why one person would be treated so differently than another. I spent some of my teenage years in North Bay and it was there I was first introduced to the Nipissing First Nation and the Anishinaabe culture. In 1994, I met the man who would become my husband. His sister was an activist and became very involved in the protests stemming from the Ipperwash crisis. It was during these protests she met her future husband Martin Kewageshig, and it became much clearer to me around that time that what was happening to Indigenous peoples in Canada was not being accurately articulated in the media. The racism that sat quietly, but purposefully, in the shadows, was not out in the open for all of Canada to see. This was amplified by the Ipperwash standoff where one story was being told outside the gate and the real story remained inside the gate. The real truth was hidden behind Aazhoodena's barrier. I was amazed – and angry.

A little over five years after the standoff at Ipperwash in 1995, I accepted a federal government job working at what was then called Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. A part of me thought this would be my opportunity to influence policy, to change the thinking, to help move the yardsticks. I was hopeful. Twenty years later, I continue to work with Indigenous policy matters in government, but I have evolved from a new and hopeful public servant, to one who understands more fully the enormity of the challenges of moving the yardsticks. Changing policy of any kind is not easy, and in an environment steeped in systemic racism and ill-informed government policy decisions, it sometimes seems impossible.

Today, Martin and Joanne Kewageshig are happily married with four kids and living at Aazhoodena, behind the gate that has become the symbol of the Ipperwash crisis. It is not happenstance that the gate at Aazhoodena proves to be a dichotomous symbol of crisis and protection in this thesis. In many ways it is at the gate of Aazhoodena where this story really began. The gate and the lives that live behind it are hidden examples of many of the concepts included in Indigenous research including, but not limited to, decolonization, resurgence, and identity. Our families discuss, unfiltered, the important issues of colonization and refusal which continue to impact and inform Indigenous peoples and inform their discourses, their realities and their way of being. From a personal perspective, I continue to learn about the history of the land and its inhabitants from the stories that Martin shares which describe the past as it was once known to the ancestors at Aazhoodena. These stories are rich in history, while also fraught with trauma and strife. Yet, I also feel the emotion and the pride, and I am captivated in their telling. His stories are a powerful and important and I am honoured to share them here.

Around the time that Martin and Joanne were thinking about how they might document their family history, I was seeking out a Master's research project that would contribute a positive narrative of Indigenous "survivance". I was tired of the negative interpretations of Indigenous history or stories from a colonizer position. According to Gerald Vizenor

*Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry. Survivance means the right of succession or reversion of an estate, and in that sense, the estate of native*

*survivancy. It is more than mere survival – it is a way of life that nourishes Indigenous ways of knowing (39).*

That said, I was reticent to tell the story of Martin and Joanne, as I recognized immediately the challenge of researching family members. I wasn't sure I could critically analyze anything and worried how bias may impact my work. Furthermore, I was also equally concerned with my own ability to tell the Kewageshig's story in a manner that honoured and respected what they were seeking to accomplish. To be asked to chronicle a story that is not your own is an incredible honour, but also a daunting task.

The sharing and the telling of stories is deeply personal and requires an immense amount of trust. When Martin and Joanne trusted me as caretaker of the collection of stories they would eventually tell me, I accepted the role with humility and, frankly, a bit of fear. Thus, the primary purpose of this thesis is not to support future Indigenous research, it is to convey a story - the Kewageshig story. It is their story to use and, hopefully to build upon with more life stories. Certainly, there are many lessons we can take from the experiences of the Kewageshig family, but this document represents my brief role as caretaker and custodian. By way of its completion, I humbly return these stories to their rightful place – into the hands and hearts of the Kewageshig family. My sincere hope for this thesis is that you will come to know and appreciate the Kewageshig family the way that I do – not defined by what they have overcome but respected for who they are and the enormous contributions they have made to their family and their community.

## CHAPTER TWO – AN INTRODUCTION TO AAZHOODENA

### 2.0 Introduction

My professional life for the past twenty years has provided me the privilege of visiting many Indigenous communities across the country. I have witnessed both great community innovation, as well as tragedy and frustration. Recently, “reconciliation” as a concept and a practice has been both normalized in Canadian vocabulary and contested. It is a word often used to suggest a rebirth of a relationship founded on broken promises and trauma. In the report *Practicing Reconciliation – a collaborative study of Aboriginal art, resistance and cultural politics: A report commissioned by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools* the authors problematize the definition of reconciliation as follows:

*The act of reconciliation is itself deeply complicated, and that success should not be measured by achieving a putative reconciliation but by movement toward these lofty goals. Indeed, it could be proposed that full reconciliation is both mercurial and impossible, and that the efforts of theorists, artists, Survivors, and the various publics engaged in this difficult process are best focused on working collaboratively for better understanding of our histories, our traumas and ourselves. (Dewar et al. 7)*

Similarly, “decolonization” is another concept that has experienced a growing acceptance. It is a concept that, in my own opinion, implies a cleansing of the colonizer from the Indigenous landscape. “Conciliation”, however, has been defined by David Garneau (2015) as “the action of bringing into harmony”. He further distinguishes reconciliation and conciliation in the following manner:

*It is an extrajudicial process that is a “conversion of a state of hostility or distrust” ... a “peaceable or friendly union.” The word calls to mind the meeting of two previously separate parties. Applied to the Canadian situation, it allows the picturing of First Nations and Inuit people having an independent existence prior to contact. “Reconciliation” is a synonym with a difference. Reconciliation refers to the repair of a previously existing harmonious relationship. This word choice imposes the fiction that equanimity is the status quo between Aboriginal people and Canada. Initial conciliation was tragically disrupted and will be painfully restored through the current process. (35)*

This thesis demonstrates my attempt to critically examine decolonization within the context of the daily lives of the Kewageshig family at Aazhoodena. Aazhoodena (Stony Point First Nation) is located in southern Ontario along the shores of Lake Huron, 35 kilometres from Sarnia, Ontario, near the Michigan border. Today, it has a population of approximately 50 people. Initially, I intended to use decolonization as the main metric, that is, to qualitatively measure how certain cultural practices support decolonization at Aazhoodena; however, based on the variety of definitions and what I experienced and learned during my fieldwork, I recognized that decolonization as a concept and as the basis for an analytical framework is a flawed approach. It is a term employed primarily by settlers attempting to undo wrongs of the past while continuing to bolster their colonial institutions. Furthermore, for the Kewageshig family, decolonization was not an accurate descriptor for what they were experiencing at Aazhoodena. Based on my research, this thesis seeks to challenge some of the terminology often used when talking about the “undoing” of colonization and will propose that what is really happening with the Kewageshig family at

Aazhoodena was borne from a politics of refusal that has led to the resurgence of the culture and living on the land.

In considering these concepts, the thesis explores some of the reasons Aazhoodena has survived the relentless legal and environmental pressure<sup>4</sup> applied by both governments and non-Indigenous communities to remove the members of Stony Point from their land. This chapter introduces the reader to the topic of colonial refusal and resurgence building from practices relating to culture, identity and tradition used throughout the community's history; identifies the research problem; describes the research purpose and objectives; briefly describes the methodology; and, concludes with an outline of the thesis.

## 2.1 Defining Decolonization

I went into this research planning to explore the concept of “decolonization”, and it has proven challenging to unravel. This is not necessarily due to any personal disbelief in the aspirational importance of the concept. Rather, there appears to be no uniform definition of “decolonization” in theory or practice. The readings I completed helped me write my initial research proposal, prepare an interview guide and expand my knowledge on the research of decolonization. However, it is not my intent to use my findings to support the theories explored within this thesis. Instead, where appropriate, I will highlight these theories when it is helpful to bolster my findings.

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<sup>4</sup> The environmental impact of the having the land occupied by DND for training practices during the war had resulted in asbestos filled barracks and unexploded ordnance buried throughout the property.

Many researchers working within Indigenous studies paradigms contemplate the themes of recognition, decolonization, refusal and resurgence within their respective positions. In fact, it is difficult to explore Indigenous studies without including these primary themes. However, the researchers whose work I have chosen to highlight provide somewhat divergent, but complementary, perspectives on the importance of refusal and resurgence. Through the course of my work, refusal as another key concept, became more central to my findings as discussed further below.

Leanne Simpson (2014) supports the idea that decolonization is a perspective that is both individual and evolutionary and one that is achieved through story-telling. Further, she notes that decolonization begins with, and is defined by, the individual who can express, through his or her own life experience and boundaries, what decolonization means to them (58). Thus, from Simpson's perspective, the examination of stories can be a compass by which the path to decolonization is found (35). While this may be valid for some, the examination of stories can also uncover paths to recognition and resurgence.

Recognition is a central concept when exploring themes such as resurgence and refusal. Charles Taylor (1994) and Glen Coulthard (2014), the latter in part as a response to Taylor, present divergent arguments on recognition and other ways of discussing resistance to colonization. I will use these theories as a guide to better understand my findings, citing them, as appropriate. For Coulthard (2014), the word recognition carries a depth of

meaning for Indigenous people. It is not simply the recognition of existence, but rather it is the meaning around what recognition stands for in its application – how is recognition displayed through culture and values? In *Red Skin, White Masks*, Coulthard (2014) cites Nancy Fraser and characterizes recognition as “institutionalized patterns of value’ that affect one’s ability to participate as a peer in social life” (150). In considering this statement, one must be aware of the elements at play that impact recognition. Coulthard (2014) is considering recognition as an issue of status, which inevitably lends itself to the issue of power. It is possible these elements are the central pieces to recognition, but as I will show later, what is happening at Aazhoodena is more related to a politics of refusal.

The concept of refusal is a powerful one and helps describe the response to colonialism. Audra Simpson (2014) expands on the concept of refusal noting the following:

*Refusal is deployed neither as a negation of the need for dialogue nor a withdrawal from the need to counter colonialism, but a refusal to be drawn into politics that enable colonialism, a strong assertion of sovereignty and the terms of dialogue itself. It is a: political and ethical stance that stands in stark contrast to the desire to have one’s distinctiveness as a culture, as a people, recognised. Refusal comes with the requirement of having one’s political sovereignty acknowledged and upheld, and raises the question of legitimacy for those who are usually in the position of recognising: What is their authority to do so? Where does it come from? Who are they to do so? (11)*

According to Patricia Burke Wood and David A. Rossiter (2017), refusal can be found in a variety of Indigenous scholarship. They state, for example, that

*Thomas King (1990) has argued for a refusal of applying the 'post-colonial' frame to Native creative writers, because of the way in which it was predicated on a historical chronology that is Eurocentric and oblivious to Native ontological frameworks. Rather than viewing "tribal literatures [as] some branch waiting to be grafted onto the main trunk," Craig Womack has similarly argued that these literatures "are the canon," and there are thus, "two separate canons'. Womack is explicit that he is not writing "in a rejectionist mode," (4) but rather emulating the "Red Sticks," an early 19th-century Creek anticolonial movement, and thus "working from within the nation, rather than looking toward the outside...". Peter Cole refused Western writing genres to generate a free-verse scholarly narrative, framed as a canoe journey, whose discourse adopts Aboriginal orality and storytelling traditions. Taiaiake Alfred has documented, and contributed to, a resurgence in Native political nationalism (echoed in Womack's literary nationalism), where Native societies are "re-examining the roots of their own Native political institutions and the canon of Native political thought" and "do not take the present internal-colonial system as their reference point". (166)*

Taylor (1994) argues that one's identity is "shaped by recognition or its absence". His argument suggests this shaping of identity is a fundamental element of recognition and, therefore, the absence of recognition becomes the loss of identity. This in turn, leads to a core inability to practice reconciliation. He notes that non-recognition or misrecognition is harmful and can be a form of "oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being."

Taylor's position contrasts that of Coulthard. This is particularly evident in Coulthard's connection between identity and recognition where he notes one must consider different modes of expression used to define oneself – i.e. the "*dialogical character*" and the interaction between "misrecognition" and the impact on power. (137) Based on Taylor's premise, I will consider whether

it is decolonization occurring at Stony Point and if it is an accurate representation of Taylor's proposal on the politics of difference.

From the perspective of the Kewageshig family at Aazhoodena there is little reason to consider the relation between Indigenous politics or liberal democratic theory. They do not view their practices as being informed by decolonization theory, though they do practice Indigenous storytelling, which is itself a form of Indigenous theory. To that end, the Kewageshig family and their daily practices support Coulthard's argument of "misrecognition", as well as Taylor's concept of "institutional patterns of value", suggesting that it is possible both theories are applicable within the context of this research.

## **2.2 Focus of Research**

As mentioned in the preface, I have had a personal connection to Aazhoodena for over twenty years, and I have family members that continue to live in this community. By exploring some of their experiences, this thesis critically examines the meaning of decolonization. The community of Stony Point (Aazhoodena) is the site of a several major confrontations between the members of Stony Point and the federal and provincial governments. In the case of Stony Point, little has been written beyond the chronicles of the standoff at Ipperwash Provincial Park in 1995. I wanted to add a more positive narrative to the information that is available. The story of Stony Point began long before World War II and long before the settling of Canada. This thesis examines experiences of the Kewageshig family that relate to culture, identity and tradition that were also used throughout the community's history.

My intent is to show how the crises experienced by this community were pivotal in the creation of the community as it exists today and has allowed a space for the Kewageshig family at Stony Point to move forward and redefine - on their own terms - what is possible for the future of the community.

When considering the history and circumstances of Stony Point, how the community continues to thrive despite innumerable roadblocks (both literal and figurative) is remarkable. The history of Aazhoodena (Stony Point) is an illustration of how recognition can intersect with decolonization, particularly when considering flashpoints of the past and how these have impacted those living in the community today. My research primarily focuses on the time between World War II, starting with April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1942, when the Department of National Defence expropriated the land of the Stony Point First Nation to establish a military training camp, and the present day. While the circumstances of the war did not lend itself to any sympathy for the over one hundred people that lived there at that time, to the people of Stony Point it was an enormous upheaval causing long-term social and economic impacts. In the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' (1996), the following statement was included, which helps illustrate not only the impact of war, but the importance of land to the people of Kettle and Stony Point:

*Many other bands were pressured into long-term leases or outright sale, but the residents of Kettle and Stony Point had to submit to expropriation, and the provisions to negotiate for a return of their land – which was presumably needed for “efficient prosecution of the war” – were not acted upon after the war. The government invested great energy in*

*acquiring such land, but it ignored or minimized its obligations after the war. Perhaps the government never understood the profound importance of land to Canada's Aboriginal people and what recognition of their service would have meant to them. (Roos, 98)*

Similarly, the death of Dudley George on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1995, marked a second flashpoint for Stony Point First Nation. The scandal of Ipperwash, culminating with the death of George at the hands of the Ontario Provincial Police, represented the final tragedy that reinvigorated the movement by the people of Stony to reclaim their traditional territory. These events are woven into the complexity of each element that has informed this community's identity - loss of land base, loss of education, loss of culture, loss of autonomy. Thus, understanding the events from the past to present of Stony Point, help illustrate how the land is not only the provider for future generations, but a link to the cultural practices that have taken place over thousands of years.

As previously noted, there are differing perspectives on decolonization and other ways of talking about resistance to colonization. My research focuses on how the Kewageshig family lives at Stony Point and questions whether what is really happening is, in fact, 'decolonization' in any definable way and whether that is even the appropriate lens through which to characterize what is happening there. I examine the confluence of recognition of rights, decolonization, and resurgence, and explore how these three themes may be said to have been used to define this community over the past century, and this family today. Specifically, I examine some of the reasons why the Kewageshig

family chooses to remain active on the land, despite ignorant attitudes and the environmental challenges they have endured, and I will propose that this desire to stay is due to the politics of refusal rather than a conscious desire for decolonization. In addition, I will discuss how the Kewageshig family has taken a politics of refusal approach to their way of life at Aazhoodena and by doing so, have created a space for resurgence at Aazhoodena that has not be available for decades. I further explain the concept of refusal in section 2.6 “Literature Review”.

### **2.3 Research Purpose and Objectives**

As previously noted, this thesis critically examines the concept of decolonization as it relates to the Kewageshig family at Stony Point. I will be applying some definitions of decolonization by way of critical comparison, but I will not be employing a single definition of this concept. Instead, I will discuss some of the reasons why, based on my research, I discovered this terminology to be based on colonial views and, given the relentless legal and environmental pressure applied by both governments and non-Indigenous people and communities to remove the members of Stony Point from their land, the term inaccurately describes what is actually taking place at Aazhoodena. At the outset of my research, the main objective of the research was three-fold:

- 1.0 Use examples of decolonization practices at Stony Point First Nation to develop a empirical definition of decolonization;

2.0 Examine how decolonization intersects with resurgence; and,

3.0 Explore ideological differences between theory and practice regarding the concept of decolonization.

After completing my initial research and fieldwork, my objectives evolved to include the following:

- Critically examine the use of decolonization as a term, and
- Consider the concept of a politics of refusal and how that has allowed a resurgence for the Kewageshig family.

I am not particularly surprised that my fieldwork resulted in the need to shift the objectives of my research and, in fact, that supports my choice of using an ethnographic/Indigenist approach as it has allowed Martin and Joanne to direct the narrative data that I have collected.

## **2.4 Research Methodology**

According to Creswell and Poth (2017), the researcher can be considered the lens through which data is interpreted (7). As such, there is always an ever-present danger of bias. The primary participants in my research include members of my family:

- Martin Kewageshig (brother-in-law);
- Joanne Kewageshig (sister-in-law);
- Jesse Kewageshig (nephew);
- Carmen Kewageshig (nephew);
- Alicia Kewageshig (niece); and,

- Randall Kewageshig (nephew).

Because of my relationship with the participants and personal knowledge of the community, its members and history, it is necessary to note some of the ethical implications that exist with ethnographic research.

I have had relationship with the Kewageshig family for over twenty years. Having a trusting relationship with family members can certainly be considered advantageous, particularly when they are the subjects of the research. There is no awkwardness between us and we've enjoyed conversing about some challenging issues faced by our respective communities. Coupled with my own personal and professional experience living and working in Indigenous communities, it would be reasonable to argue that my own embodied knowledge would be of great benefit to my research. However, that trust and experience do not protect me from what I believe to be the biggest challenge – I am studying an Indigenous family and I am not Indigenous myself. In fact, I've always been very suspicious and, to a certain extent, disapproving of non-Indigenous researchers who undertake Indigenist research. I questioned what I could bring to the research that would inform further work and, therefore, I needed to explore the difference between Indigenous and Indigenist research methodologies.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2001) states: "Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of methodology" (35). According to Karen Martin (2003), Indigenous research is characterized by recognition of Indigenous worldviews, knowledge, and realities

as distinctive and vital to existence and survival. It emphasizes the social, historical and political contexts which shape Indigenous experiences, lives, positions and futures and privileges the Indigenous voices, peoples and lands by identifying and addressing issues of importance to Indigenous people and their communities. By comparison, an “Indigenist” approach supports the complexity that is associated with explicating ontological, epistemological, and axiological concepts that may be foreign to Western scholarly convention (211).

According to Verna Kirkness (1999), some of the most compelling problems confronting Indigenous researchers have to do with the lack of respect for Indigenous peoples and who they are, not just as individuals, but as a people. Historically, there has been a lack of relevance for alternate worldviews in educational curricula and a failure to acknowledge the agency of Indigenous peoples to participate and include themselves within the educational structures. Likewise, the idea of reciprocity, both in knowledge and in relationships, would help Indigenous people to exercise responsibility over their own lives and those of their people and communities (256). With this context in mind, I have taken an Indigenist approach to my research, recognizing that I am merely a conduit for telling the story of the Kewageshigs at Stony Point and, therefore, I did not use this relationship for extractivist purposes. Rather, I return to the origin of this exercise where Martin and Joanne sought someone to document their family story, and I am deeply respectful of the trust placed in me to articulate this story for them and, indeed, by them. When we discussed writing this story, we agreed that this would not be for the purposes of publishing and sharing beyond the

family. Whatever recordings and notes I made were ultimately theirs. Therefore, the final resting place for this thesis will be in the hands of the Kewageshig family.

I mentioned in my introduction that after doing a preliminary literature review, I had compiled a set of interview questions. In part, this was to satisfy the requirement of the Ethics Board process and, in part, I needed a guideline for the discussion. Even though I was looking at one family – a family I know very well – I ran the risk of losing the focus of what I was there to research and I required a tool to distinguish me as a researcher. The challenge, I came to discover, was that all my questions centred around the theme of decolonization. Thus, I began the interview process by asking some of the historical questions regarding how they arrived at Aazhoodena and some of the family background stories and as we talked the conversation moved from history to present day. We travelled the land stopping at a certain inland lake or by the firing range and Martin would tell a story. I found that it was more important to allow him the space to tell his story, and if I thought of a question at the end of the story, he would answer. This informality reduced the stress for both of us, but I think it also allowed the space for new themes to comfortably emerge (e.g. politics of refusal and resurgence). As such, when I reviewed my notations from each of these stories, decolonization became decreasingly prevalent as a theme.

I have noted that the development of my interview guide was to satisfy the Carleton University Research Ethics Board - A, and I would like to take some time to expand on the experience of ethics in an Indigenous context.

According to Charles Menzies (2001), when it comes to the design and implementation of Indigenous research, the question of what constitutes 'appropriate' is determined by the protocols and ethics of the communities or individuals being researched, especially when it concerns matters of cross-cultural research. Thus, a fundamental principle of Indigenous research is our accountability towards those with, for, and on whom we are conducting the research. However, Indigenous researchers, indeed all researchers, have a responsibility to be accurate and truthful in recording the data related to their research while also being mindful of their actions and responsibilities toward others. In short, the ethical considerations in an Indigenous context are complex and vary widely depending on the research being undertaken and there is plenty that can be learned from moving through the ethics process (20).

Canada's Tri-Council Policy Statement: *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* explicitly states, in Chapter 9: *Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples of Canada*, that:

*community describes a collectivity with shared identity or interests, that has the capacity to act or express itself as a collective. In this Policy, a community may include members from multiple cultural groups. A community may be territorial, organizational or a community of interest... "Communities of interest" may be formed by individuals or organizations who come together for a common purpose or undertaking, such as a commitment to conserving a First Nations language. Communities of interest are informal communities whose boundaries and leadership may be fluid and less well defined. They may exist temporarily or over the long term, within or outside of territorial or organizational communities.*  
(Pre.ethics.gc.ca)

This quote helps illustrate there are many ways to define a community of interest and therefore, instituting boundaries for its definition and using those boundaries as a guide is not necessarily helpful.

In preparing my research proposal for approval by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board - A, I considered what I believed to be the greatest challenge – research of a family member. I would discover, however, that this would not be the primary risk as declared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board - A. Instead, the committee had greater concern with the fact that it was research of an Indigenous family. The first question I was asked was not how I would separate a personal relationship from a research relationship, rather, it was whether I had gained the approval of my research from the community's Chief or Band Council. My own professional experience working for twenty years in Indigenous policy immediately made me critical. There are over 600 First Nation communities in Canada, each with their own stories and their own governance. Many are mired in political battles between the provincial or federal governments or even other nations. Approval by a Chief or Band Council is not a catch-all for approving research and is certainly not required by a family who is having someone research their own history. But, to ask the question illustrates the work that is still required by institutions who are unfamiliar, or I would argue, uncomfortable with the practices of individual communities. I will raise this again in my conclusion and recommendations in the last chapter.

I considered the 'natural' settings located at Aazhoodena as my primary source of data and I described a "culture and way of life from the point of view of

its participants” (Poth and Creswell, 2017). My research was carried out with sensitivity to the community of Aazhoodena and the Kewageshig family’s day-to-day practices occurring on the land, by maintaining my role as observer and not as an active family participant. My goals are to (1) describe the Kewageshig family’s intersection with the community; (2) discuss the history of how the Kewageshig family came to live at Aazhoodena; and, (3) propose what can be learned from their experiences.

My personal connection to the community and Kewageshig family allows me to take an Indigenist approach to my research. It is my intent is to produce a narrative that is a true reflection of the practices and intentions of the Kewageshig family members that remain at Stony Point and articulate how these practices go beyond any definition of decolonization or reconciliation. Rather, any practices undertaken by the Kewageshig family are their own way of expressing a resurgence of cultural traditions and practices on their land. To help guide my fieldwork and collection of stories, I considered *Indigenous Storywork* by Jo-Ann Archibald (2008). She notes that: “experiential stories reinforce the need for story-work principles in order for one to use First Nations stories effectively” and identifies seven principles for story-work: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy (83). These principles were applied as I prepared my research questions, interacted with the family, and drafted this thesis.

The primary methods I have used to investigate and collect information includes but is not limited to field observation and audio recordings of

conversations with community members at Stony Point. During my field work, I stayed with my family living at Stony Point and participated in their regular daily routines. The information used for my research was collected from conversations throughout this stay, through observations and through subsequent conversations. Most of the community members at Stony Point are First Nation and the pre-existing vulnerabilities associated with this group are primarily situated around concerns with non-Indigenous research. Those who agreed to participate in the study were family members and the information being collected through observation and conversation is qualitative in nature. The use of ideas expressed during my fieldwork is intended to be an accurate representation of how the research unfolded. Thus, I made an effort to avoid paraphrasing in order to help ensure that the intended idea is not misrepresented, while at the same time allowing it to be understood by others less familiar. I worked with the participants to validate the ideas articulated in the thesis.

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

In *Mohawk Interruptus*, Audra Simpson suggests that to “write about sovereignty is to think very seriously about needs and that, basically, involves an ethnographic calculus of what you need to know and what I refuse to write”. It is for this reason that I will be using an ethnographic approach to my research with some situations relying on a naturalist perspective. Naturalism proposes that, as far as possible, the social world should be studied in its ‘natural’ state, undisturbed by the researcher (72). However, there are many criticisms against

using a naturalist approach. Notably, Roy Bhaskar (1998) states that: “ontological, epistemological and relational considerations all place limits on the possibility of naturalism (or rather, qualify the form it must take); and that these considerations all carry methodological import.” (178) Certainly, this is true and, indeed, the decision to apply a naturalist perspective was taken with these limitations in mind. I would argue that ethnographic research relies on the researcher’s ability to understand when best to consider using a naturalist approach to ensure that the researcher does not influence what is happening around them.

The word recognition carries a deep meaning for Indigenous people. It is not simply the recognition of existence, but rather it is the meaning around what recognition stands for in its application. That is, how does one show recognition through culture and values? For the purposes of this paper, I will argue that recognition and resurgence are mutually supportive concepts that - collectively - provide a compelling theoretical foundation for describing, through story-telling, how Aazhoodena has not only survived years of colonial challenges, but how the community is using recognition and resurgence to thrive and advance today. I also employ the key concept of refusal as discussed further in the next section.

## **2.6 Literature Review**

In reviewing academic literature and other multi-media sources, it is clear the term “recognition” can be defined in different ways and, as a result, it has been used to fit within the constraints of a number of arguments within a variety

of Indigenous research projects. Glen Coulthard (2014) and Dale Turner (2006), each argue that the future of recognition of Indigenous people in Canada cannot be dictated, nor prescribed, by any provincial or federal government as to do so, would enable continued dispossession. Certainly, based on the content of their books, it would seem that each Coulthard (2014) and Turner (2006) would agree and arguably this is the case for the community of Stony Point. The ideas articulated by these authors and others will be used to help answer how the community of Stony Point is living decolonization and how this will aid the survival of its traditions and cultural practices in the future.

In *This is not a Peace Pipe*, Turner's (2006) main argument on recognition links to power and status. Turner argues that colonialism and, more broadly, the relationship with colonial powers, functions because it excludes the perspectives of Indigenous peoples from the discourse that "gives their rights content" (Turner, 2006). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples states that mutual recognition "calls on non-Aboriginal Canadians to recognize that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants and caretakers of this land and have distinctive rights and responsibilities that flow from that status" (Turner, 2006). Further, the report identified three major facets of mutual recognition: equality, co-existence, and self-government. (48). Turner (2006) states: "the process of critically undermining colonialism and returning Aboriginal voices to their rightful place in the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state is what I refer to as Aboriginal participation" (85). Turner includes the Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969 –

what is commonly referred to as the White Paper. While the Statement itself is lengthy, it provides a guide for how the Government of Canada interpreted their role and position fifty years ago. An excerpt from the Statement reads:

*To be an Indian is to lack power – the power to act as owner of your lands, the power to spend your own money and, too often, the power to change your own condition....obviously the course of history must be changed...The Government believes that its policies must lead to the full, free and non-discriminatory participation of the Indian people in Canadian society. Such a goal requires a break with the past. It requires that the Indian people's roles of dependence be replaced by a role of equal status, opportunity and responsibility, a role they can share with all other Canadians... (Turner, 2006, Appendix)*

This text helps further clarify the Government of Canada's perspective on the relationship with First Nations almost a half-century ago and the Government's proposition for change. The full statement is both hopeful in its direction, but colonial in the manner in which it articulates how progress could be achieved. This excerpt reinforces the impact of historical events on Indigenous peoples and their cultures. Perhaps most telling is the last sentence: "...a role of equal status, opportunity and responsibility, a role they can share with all other Canadians." (Turner, 167). This statement is exactly what Turner (2006) and Coulthard (2014) argue is a systemic problem relating to status and power, but also the way colonialist thinking attempted to "fix" the problem.

Charles Taylor, in "The Politics of Recognition" (1994) argues "misrecognition" results in a harm that "can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being". He further describes

two changes that have helped the concepts of “identity” and “recognition” to evolve. He states: “The discourse of recognition has become familiar to us on three levels: First, in the intimate sphere, where we understand the formation of identity and the self as taking place in a continuing dialogue and struggle with significant others. And then, second, in the public sphere, where a politics of equal recognition has come to play a bigger...role” (55). Third, these spheres contribute to the collapse of social hierarchies, which, in turn, help to cultivate a sense of honour within Indigenous communities. Understanding there are intimate and public spheres that inform identity is central to understanding how misrecognition leads to oppression in Indigenous communities.

Taylor (1994) also argues “authenticity changes how “identity” and “recognition” are distinguished from one another. He notes everyone should be recognized for their difference, but makes one important distinction: “With the politics of equal dignity, what is established is meant to be universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities; with the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual group, their distinctness from everyone else. The idea is that it is precisely this distinctness that has been ignored, glossed over, assimilated to the dominant or majority identity. And this assimilation is the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity.” (25).

Taylor’s argument is compelling and, when applied to the history and story of Aazhoodena, one can appreciate how those at Aazhoodena are misrecognized. For example, in the context of Aazhoodena, one could suggest

that the government's appropriation of the land during the war was – in their own mind – more honourable than ensuring the members of the Stony Point were not impacted. The deep attachment to the land is underscored throughout discussions of Indigenous cultures. The World Bank (2005) suggests one of the key characteristics of Indigenous people is “collective attachment to geographically distinct habitats or ancestral territories”. This is further supported by Ken Coates, who notes that some commonalities are “small size, attachment to the land, value system and culture rooted in the environment, commitment to a sustainable lifestyle, mobility, and cultural conservatism” (Peters and Andersen, 2014). In the article “Indigenous Peoples and the ‘Politics of Recognition””, Coulthard cites Frantz Fanon’s work in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) where he suggests that “those of us struggling against colonialism must ‘turn away’ from the assimilative lure of the politics of recognition and begin to direct our struggles toward our own on-the-ground strategies of freedom”. This description by Fanon was likely a response to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and his work on the phenomenology of spirit. Hegel stated the “spirit is known as self-consciousness and to this self-consciousness it is immediately revealed, for Spirit is this self-consciousness itself. The divine nature is the same as the human, and it is this unity that is beheld.” (336). Later, I will describe how Martin and Joanne’s individual spirits are rejecting the politics of recognition in favour of a politics of refusal.

In her book *Mohawk Interruptus*, Audra Simpson addresses the specific refusal of many Kahnawa:ke Mohawk to claim Canadian or United States

citizenship; in other words, they “simply refuse to stop being themselves” (2).

For Simpson, “the labor of principle and sovereignty...begins with refusal” (22).

This is deeper than mere co-existence of Indigenous peoples with settlers. She writes,

*acceptance of the dispossession of your lands, of internalizing and believing things that have been taught about you to you: that you are a savage, that your language is incoherent, that you are less than white people.... To accept these conditions is an impossible project for some Indigenous people, ...because it is politically untenable and thus normatively should be refused. (22)*

As Burke-Woods and Rossiter (2017) indicate in their paper the “Politics of Refusal”, the commonly asserted role of caretaker derives from the territorial claim; it is not the justification for the claim (175).

Loss of culture and loss of language leads to the loss of self-identity, which, in turn, leads to poor self-esteem in individuals. The upheaval of being removed from Stony Point to Kettle Point greatly contributed to the loss of a cohesive community. At a time when residential schools were stripping First Nations peoples of their culture and language, churches in the communities also played an important role in ensuring that First Nation peoples were converted into Christian faith. Those who resisted were termed as pagans and heathens, humiliated often by the same First Nations people who were themselves converted. Parents, whose first language was Ojibway, allowed their children to be educated in English because they had “no choice and no voice” in their children’s education. First Nations traditions were no longer exercised daily or

even on special occasions.<sup>5</sup> Based on my field research and my literature review, I believe what is taking place at Aazhoodena is a politics of refusal that has led the Kewageshig family to experience a resurgence of cultural traditions and practices defined in a way that works best for them.

## **2.7 Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis is organized into six chapters. Following this chapter, Chapter Three discusses a variety of literature central to the project and proposed methodology. Chapter Four examines what practices of resurgence and refusal have accomplished at Aazhoodena. Chapter Five describes how the Kewageshig family is using their connection to the land for their own resurgence from the colonial experiences of the past (and present). Finally, Chapter Six provides a conclusion to the thesis by providing some reflections on the research, as well as offering suggestions regarding opportunities for future research that considers decolonization practices in other Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

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<sup>5</sup> The History of Stony Point First Nation: Aazhoodena

## **CHAPTER THREE – THE SETTLER IMPACT ON AAZHOODENA**

### **3.0 Introduction**

There is a rich and valued history of the Anishnaabe people of Aazhoodena. To fully appreciate the resurgence that has taken hold in the community, it is vitally important to acknowledge the challenging history, both positive and negative, which has impacted its identity and the recognition beyond the Aazhoodena gate. The history of the people of Aazhoodena reaches back thousands of years. As noted by Peter Edwards (2003), the people of Kettle and Stony Point have lived and died in the area along Lake Huron for over ten thousand years. They collected flint and obsidian for arrowheads, tomahawks and knives that came through the granite along the shoreline of Lake Huron. The community was peaceful and even the early Jesuit priests noted the “strong affection within families, especially toward children.” (54).

### **3.1 Eighteenth Century Treaty Surrenders**

Changes in the community started in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when the relationship between First Nations peoples and the settlers were primarily based on commercial and military needs (History of Treaty Making in Canada, INAC). The outbreak of the American War of Independence and the recognition of the United States in 1783 had severe impacts upon the relationship between the British Crown and its First Nation allies. The loss of American colonies brought

some 30,000 United Empire Loyalist refugees to the remaining British colonies in North America.

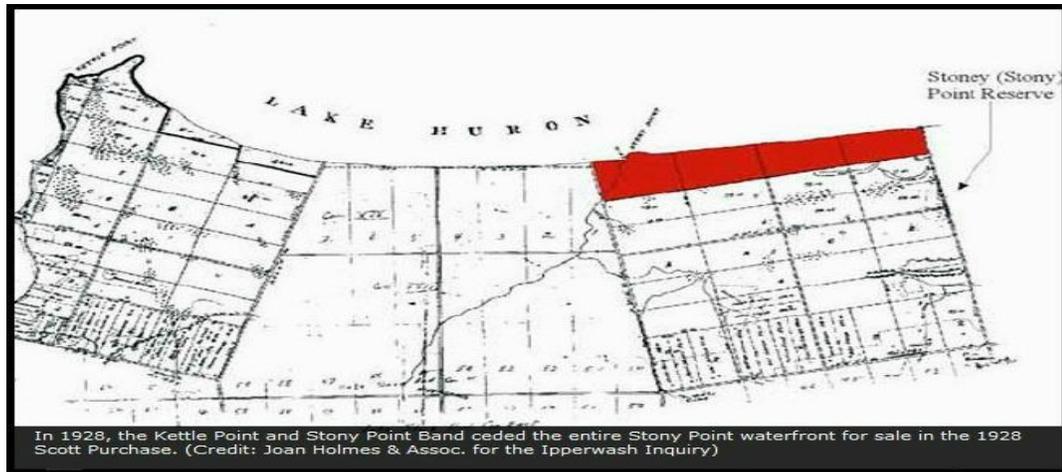


Figure 1  
Source: Joan Holmes and Associates for the Ipperwash Inquiry.

A powerful block of people called upon colonial administrators for land. First Nations people who had fought alongside the British were also dispossessed by the war (Treaty Making in Canada, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC]). Subsequently, a series of land surrender treaties were negotiated by officials of the Indian Department with the different Ojibway or Anishnabek peoples inhabiting the lands along the St. Lawrence River and around the Great Lakes. These treaties were agreements for relatively small parcels of land with individual First Nation groups.

In less than 50 years after the first land surrenders brought settlers to Upper Canada, the non-Indigenous population outnumbered First Nations people in the Great Lakes basin. As more colonists arrived, the number of land treaties increased to allow land for settler farms. In all, approximately 35 land surrenders treaties were concluded and covered all the lands of Upper Canada.

As land became increasingly coveted, settlers began to pressure and push for those lands held by First Nations peoples. A number of these land treaties had proven to be problematic because of poor descriptions, missing signatures and confusion of boundary lines (Roos, 93).

Land surrender treaties concluded in 1862. As settlement lands were filled, attention turned to northern areas where minerals had been discovered along the shores of Lake Superior and Lake Huron. Two treaties –Robinson-Huron and Robinson-Superior – were negotiated with the various Ojibway peoples inhabiting the area these ceded First Nations lands and rights to the Crown in exchange for reserves, annuities and a continued right to hunt and fish on unoccupied Crown lands (Roos, 98).

The establishment of Canada in 1867 was a defining moment in Canada's relationship with First Nation peoples. Section 91(24) of the *British North America Act* confirmed the federal government as being responsible for "Indians and Lands reserved for Indians". For First Nation peoples, this changed the interpretation of the relationship with the colonial authorities – and not in a good way. Through the federal Department of Indian Affairs, the Dominion of Canada developed national policies that would affect all First Nation peoples and set more local policies in a national context. Between 1868 and 1876, the government solidified, through the *Indian Act*, its intent to assimilate and apply racist policies to the very people with whom they had signed treaties that promised partnership and resource sharing. The *Indian Act* would control and

influence almost every aspect of daily life for Indigenous peoples in Canada (Roos, 98).

The *Indian Act* allowed for the surveying, subdividing, lease and sale of land, and classified Reserves into forty-acre plots to facilitate farming. The *Act* established land management based on a European model of distribution and land use. However, by 1910, with increasing immigration these lands were considered more valuable than once thought. Thus, in order to support the increasing demand for land, the Government department known as Indian Affairs<sup>6</sup> ordered local Indian Agents to identify any land that was considered excess, non-agricultural, or unprofitable for a band. Bands sometimes resisted parting with this Indian Agent-identified land, so Indian Affairs introduced expropriation powers to force sales. The public interest in these lands necessitated expanded legislative privileges and helped facilitate the surrender and expropriation of additional lands using threats and bribery as Indigenous control over land became a barrier to economic development for the government (Roos, 1998).

For Stony Point, agriculture was not considered to be viable, but interest in the land remained. As a result, the Indian Agent<sup>7</sup> proposed a long-term lease with white settlers. This lease was developed in the absence of the band exercising its legislative power over how the land is used. In fact, James Johnson, the Chief of the Sarnia, Kettle and Stony Point First Nation from 1899 to 1907 (Lambton County Archives – footnote 35), stated

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<sup>6</sup> Indian Affairs is presently Crown - Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

<sup>7</sup> An Indian Agent was historically responsible for carrying out government policy on reserves.

*...it seems to me and other residents of these Reserves, that in no possible way could a person be properly compensated for the loss of his home...I fear that if an allotment is insisted upon, following the lines of the Survey, trouble will be unavoidable, as the Indians feel very keenly that they are being unjustly treated. (National Archives of Canada).*

This statement would prove prophetic over the course of the next century.

### **3.2 World War II Appropriation**

Notwithstanding the larger impacts of the Crown - Indigenous relationship experienced by all First Nations communities, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1942,<sup>8</sup> was another key flashpoint for the community of Stony Point. It was on that day that the Department of National Defence used the War Measures Act to appropriate the land of the Stony Point Reserve to establish a military training camp, subsequently named Camp Ipperwash. Prior to the appropriation, a band surrender vote (held March 31, 1942) on the subject of giving up Stony Point lands was turned down by a majority of band members in a vote of 59 - 13.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, the residents were relocated to nearby Kettle Point with the promise that Stony Point (Aazhoodena) would be returned to them once World War II was over. Over the years, there were various attempts to reclaim the territory lost by the appropriation of 1942.

With the forced relocation from Stony Point to Kettle Point in 1942, the land base for Stony Point citizens ceased to exist. Those who were relocated depended significantly on the generosity of landowners at Kettle Point for

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<sup>8</sup> Dividing lines Documentary, Fanshawe College, London, Ontario, August 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Dividing lines Documentary, Fanshawe College, London, Ontario, August 1994.

parcels of property that were made available to them, but like other First Nations communities, availability of housing and land were insufficient to meet the needs of a growing population, resulting in urbanization that forced many young people to relocate to nearby towns and cities (Roos, 56). At the time, the citizens of Stony Point thought that once the war ended, their ancestral land would be returned, and they would move back and continue to live peacefully<sup>10</sup>. While the circumstances of war did not lend themselves to any sympathy for the one hundred people who lived there, to the people of Stony Point, it was an enormous upheaval causing long-term social and economic impacts.

The war was an easy rationale for the Government to expropriate the land and seek the surrender of its inhabitants. Not surprisingly, the band opposed the surrender of its land for three main reasons: (1) to safeguard for future generations; (2) there was over 4000 acres of non-Indigenous land available five kilometres east of Stony Point; and, (3) some members did not support the proposed purchase price of \$50,000 because it was felt it was well below market value (Roos, 112).

According to Indigenous teachings, the land has always been deemed not only the provider for future generations, but a link to the cultural practices that have taken place over thousands of years. In *The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996), the following statement was

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<sup>10</sup> The History of Stony Point First Nation: Aazhoodena

included, which helps illustrate not only the impact of war, but the importance of land to the people of Kettle and Stony Point:

*Many other bands were pressured into long-term leases or outright sale, but the residents of Kettle and Stony Point had to submit to expropriation, and the provisions to negotiate for a return of their land – which was presumably needed for “efficient prosecution of the war” – were not acted upon after the war. The government invested great energy in acquiring such land, but it ignored or minimized its obligations after the war. Perhaps the government never understood the profound importance of land to Canada’s Aboriginal peoples and what recognition of their service would have meant to them. (Roos, 1998).*

In the case of Stony Point First Nation, little has been written since the nineteenth century, save for those articles and stories that illustrated community members negatively, like the story of the standoff at Ipperwash Provincial Park in 1995. However, the history of Stony Point is rich and the stories that continue to be told today by its remaining members highlight the deep connection to the land and the Elders that live there.

Michael Asch, in *On Being Here To Stay* (2014), asks: “What, beyond the fact that we have the numbers and the power to insist on it, authorizes our being here to stay?” (76) Like, him I concur that it is not right to move onto lands that belong to others without their express permission. This has occurred many times in Canada and colonial history then spends much time and effort in revising stories in an effort to justify this assertion of power. It is with this history in mind, based deeply in the concepts of recognition and

resurgence, that preserving the experiences and oral history of the Kewageshig family at Aazhoodena are so important.

## CHAPTER FOUR – THE LIVING STORY OF AAZHOODENA

### 4.0 Introduction

Reserve creation in southwestern Ontario took place after the War of 1812. Around 1818, more than 2 million acres located east of the St Clair River and southern Lake Huron, and known as the “Huron Tract,” became the subject of treaty discussions with Chippewa chiefs and other Indian leaders in the area. They requested reserves at several locations including Kettle Point and Stony Point. A provisional agreement formalized the discussions in 1825. After the necessary surveys, Treaty 29, dated July 10, 1827, finally established reserves at Kettle Point, Stony Point, Sarnia, and Walpole Island for the Chippewas of Sarnia Band (Augustine, Bellegarde, 2).

For many Canadians Ipperwash or Camp Ipperwash conjures memories of the standoff between the Ontario Provincial Police, the Ontario provincial government, and the members of the Stony Point First Nation community who were reclaiming their land at Stony Point. This standoff ultimately ended with the tragic and unnecessary death of Dudley George. However, depending on who is remembering these events, the standoff can be viewed as one of violent encounters and exchanges or peaceful resistance. But, one commonality that ties the story together is the series of historical events that led to demand for recognition, some of which were detailed in the previous chapter. As far back as the early 1800s, Chief Wawanosh, who represented the Chippewas of southwestern Ontario, had to deal with the issue of “white squatters” living on

their land. The Kettle and Stony Point reserves, then known as the St. Clair Reserve and Sauble Reserve, were allotted 25,000 acres from His Majesty King George IV. (Edwards, 2003). In compensation, the First Nations peoples living on that land received the promise that the Crown committed itself to pay “the sum of one thousand and one hundred pounds of lawful money of Upper Canada in goods at the prices in goods usually paid for the time being for such goods in the city of Montreal, in the Province of Lower Canada; provided always.”(251).

In the podcast “The Secret Life of Canada” episode “The Secret Life of Ipperwash,” the historical details of the dispossession of the land at Aazhoodena are explored. Treaty 29, the treaty signed by the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point, is described by the Indian Agent at the time of surrender as nothing but “white drifting sand, being worthless, for agricultural purposes,” was surrendered for sale to a purchaser who intended to develop a clubhouse and summer cottages. That was the eventual result, and today the land in question is held by a number of owners, none of whom are members of the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation (1).

Regardless, Aazhoodena has a long and storied history and the Kewageshig family who remain today are not there by accident. Using Leanne Simpson’s argument of resurgence, what is well-illustrated throughout the Stony Point history is how story-telling within the Indigenous context is the “ontological context from within which we can interpret other stories, teachings and experiences” (L. Simpson, 2011). During my field work, a member of the Stony

Point community, Joanne Kewageshig, described to me the story of her husband's family. Her story helps illustrate why the community remains committed to their land

*My husband, Martin Kewageshig, first came to Stony Point (AKA Aazhoodena, AKA Ipperwash) over 20 years ago when his grandmother, Pearl George, asked him to help her move back home to Stony Point. She wanted her farm back- a farm she and her young children had been forcibly removed from in 1942 to make way for the building of Canadian Forces Base Ipperwash. Pearl wanted her family land back; she wanted gardens again, fruit orchards and children running and laughing on the land.*

*In the early years of moving back home to Stony Point, the people lived on the firing ranges of CFB Ipperwash (Aazhoodena), enduring and holding their ground through military harassment, local media racism and misunderstanding and discrimination from the surrounding communities. They also held ground without hydro, without proper homes, through winters on the ranges, holding the land when most thought they would give in. But the Stony Point People have a strong connection to land and this is what pulled them through the challenges.*

*The people of Stony Point- the Aazhoonedaang Enjiibajig- got by through a combination of small family garden plots, harvesting from the land and selling the fruits of their labour and crafts made from the land. They worked in conjunction with local farmers, for example, renting out pasture land. That is exactly what has been recreated here!*

*The families who live here at Stony Point still live in army barracks, some older than others. My husband first came here because his grandma asked for his help. As we have raised the next generation here, we have raised the children with a connection to the land. They have learned to hunt and fish here, to garden and grow medicines at home, to harvest food and*

*medicine from the bush for family and community use. Our daily life changes with the changing of the seasons, and our family life is in every way tied to the land here.*

#### 4.1 Resurgence and Story-telling

The term “Indigenous” is, itself, a non-Indigenous, colonial creation, which is often used to apply a blanket identity to individual, unique communities. In *The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism* (2012), Donna Patrick suggests understanding the “narrative elements of Indigeneity, which include (1) an ‘unsolicited encounter’ where Indigenous subjects are on the ‘receiving end of an encounter they did not seek’; (2) ‘dispossession’, through conquest or settler colonialism, which involves losing control of one’s land base and thus the need to sell one’s labour; (3) ‘perdurance’, the continuation of a self-identifying collectivity through relations of exploitation, which is necessary to justify the distinct, non-equivalent group; (4) ‘proselytization’, crucial to an ongoing ‘asymmetrical engagement’; and, (5) ‘unpayable debt, which unfolds in the relationships embodied in Indigeneity.” These elements of “indigeneity” are often illustrated within a story-telling context.

Coulthard (2014) considers the perspective of Gerald Taiaiake Alfred who argues that Indigenous movements do not seek recognition and self-determination “through the creation of a new state. Instead, they do so through the achievement of a cultural sovereignty and a political relationship based on group autonomy reflected in formal self-government relationships (Coulthard, 2014). Sometimes the strategy of fighting for autonomy is siding with

government rather than against it, and by choosing between independence and autonomy there needs to be some way of avoiding marginalization in the greater society. However, the argument for cultural sovereignty is formed out of the establishment of identity.

Leanne Simpson (2011) links resurgence to regeneration as discussed by Taiiike Alfred who notes a “need of regenerating our people so that we can support traditional government models” (67). Michael Elliott (2018) argues that “Indigenous resurgence centres on three contentions: (1) that colonialism is an active structure of domination premised, at base, on Indigenous elimination; (2) that the prevailing normative-discursive environment continues to reflect this imperative; and (3) that Indigenous peoples must therefore turn away from this hostile environment and pursue independent programmes of social and cultural rejuvenation. The principal movement advocated under the resurgence paradigm thus appears as one of disengagement with the settler order (114).

Simpson’s *Dancing on our Turtle’s Back* describes a personal journey and discussion on the Anishnaabe resurgence and story-telling. In it, she uses the Nishnaabeg context to explore the themes of decolonization, resurgence, resistance, leadership and the importance of story-telling. Simpson argues for the revitalization of Indigenous teachings and the reconceptualization of community. Simpson further expresses how story-telling is de-colonizing through “Creation Stories”. What Simpson suggest is that “culture”, in whatever manner one chooses to define it, does not properly or effectively encapsulate the depth and breadth of what decolonization means. Instead, she underscores

the value and meaning that oral histories and story-telling not only bring to decolonization, but to resurgence and perdurance. What is further intriguing about Simpson's positioning of resurgence in the Indigenous context is the role of women as leaders, storytellers, and parents (75).

Simpson's argues that "residential schools, the colonial child welfare system, dominant interpretations of Christianity and mandatory colonial schooling have not allowed for our parenting styles to evolve to meet the needs of modern Indigenous communities; similarly, mainstream parenting styles are not enough to create leaders and citizens grounded in Indigenous culture and political traditions that are able to confront and lead people through the many facets of colonialism" (Simpson, 2011). Instead, communities need to look at modern practices that support Indigenous culture and these practices must be developed by Indigenous communities, rather than the traditional colonial perspective of developing practices found in settler culture and adapted for Indigenous communities. This proves relevant when considering the story of the Kewageshig family, as described by Joanne Kewageshig (2018):

*Outsiders look at the run-down army barracks here and wonder why anyone would want to live like this or raise kids here. They see poverty, they see ugliness. They see people to look down on. For us, living at Stony Point has never been about money or about a big settlement; it is about respect for the land and a way of life. It is about sovereignty. We have undertaken many projects- our gardens, the sugar bush, teaching the kids to hunt, even our chickens- and always given back to the community. These are all projects we have done with our own resources, both because we want to and as part of making the community strong. We are a grassroots family and we always try to lend a hand to those in need.*

*The people here started with nothing and worked hard for every inch, using their 'Indianness' to overcome obstacles. We do not expect handouts, and have always given back to the community and beyond what we harvest from the land. We work hard with respect for the land but we are far from a comfortable, middle class family.*

*Everything our family does - our daily life and sustenance; our gardens and what we create from them, is completely tied to our life at Stony Point and so it is certainly something worth putting resources into. Up and moving at a moment's notice isn't really an option, though in time, it's true, change will come. (Joanne Kewageshig, 2018)*

This statement helps illustrate several key elements that impact reconciliation and cultural practices, notably how one is perceived relative to what is occurring beyond what is visible from "outside the gate". Outside perception of the story of the Kewageshigs feeds the colonial value structure that has burdened the community for so long. The Kewageshigs have made a conscious choice to ignore the false story being told on their behalf and, instead, through action they are slowly and purposefully amplifying their decolonization practices and their truth.

#### **4.2 Decolonization through Storytelling**

Through Simpson's personal articulation of her journey, the concept has become much clearer and it is possible to interpret her perspective as individual and evolutionary and one that is achieved through story-telling. That is, decolonization begins and is defined by the individual who can express through

their own life experience and boundaries what decolonizing means to them. Thus, there is, in fact, no universal definition. In particular, she notes: "...much work needs to be done to decolonize the state, Indigenous-state relations and Canada in order for the Eighth Fire to be lit" (78). However, she goes on to note: "My perspective throughout this book is that the process of resurgence must be Indigenous at its core in order to reclaim and re-politicize the context and the nature of Nishnaabeg thought." Thus, story-telling becomes the central focus of Simpson's thesis.

When considering the history and circumstances of Stony Point story-telling on how the community continues to thrive despite innumerable roadblocks remains vibrant. For many Indigenous people "the Rez" identifies who they are culturally (65). So, what happens when the label is removed? Does it impede identity and community practices? Aazhoodena is an interesting illustration of moving beyond reserve existence. According to Roos (89), the land at Stony Point "cradled the spirit of the community". She cites Lisa Valentine's (1995) argument that for the Ojibway peoples', "identity is intrinsically associated with the land" and that "the concept of Nation is framed in terms of a land base, in terms of traditional regional or areal affiliations, and in terms of land usage."

What Joanne Kewageshig described in her earlier quote is the perdurance of the community throughout the years, as well as a desire for a resurgence of the life that existed prior to the war-time expropriation. This statement illustrates, and perhaps foreshadows, that small, yet meaningful

changes continue to take place at Aazhoodena and, in many respects, these changes have shifted the landscape and the future for its inhabitants. In fact, Joanne's description of her family's connection to the land is a continuance of those of her husband's Elders. In a 2005 interview with Elizabeth Isaacs (cousin to Martin Kewageshig) for a family history document entitled: "*Aazhoodena: The History of Stony Point First Nation - A Project of the Aazhoodena and George Family Group for the Ipperwash Inquiry*" (2006), Elizabeth recounts her own story on how she connected with the land.

*Elizabeth (Lizzy Isaacs lives on Walpole Island where she has lived most of her life. Elizabeth was born September 11, 1919 and has no birth certificate; she does have a baptismal certificate which her daughter keeps for safe-keeping. Elizabeth doesn't recall much about the period in time when the people from Stony Point were relocated to Kettle Point, just that their houses were being uprooted and moved there. She always looked forward to going to the camp meetings with her parents and enjoyed listening to the singing. She widowed but lives close to her family and is active in her community. She is a fluent Ojibwe speaker and enjoys working on projects that involve her Native language. Currently, she is working with the Walpole Island research/resource centre translating.*

This connection to the land is not exclusive to Aazhoodena. In fact, it is a distinct nexus that has been realized in many other communities as well. For example, Weiss (2015) provides an excellent illustration of how attachment to land and the governance over it empowers identity and culture within the Haida Gwaii community. He states:

*The Council of the Haida Nation emerged in its contemporary form...out of the promise to take care*

*of Haida Gwaii, the traditional territory and ancestral home of the Haida Nation, and its concomitant efforts to position itself as capable of fulfilling that promise in relation to Canadian settler society and Haida people alike. The events surrounding the Athlii Gwaii blockade thus stand as a moment of what Hannah Arendt referred to as “foundation,” in which the CHN cohered itself as a quasi-nation-state analogous to Canada itself. Indeed, the profound significance of these events to the CHN is reinforced by the fact that the “Lyell Island Song,” the very same that was sung by those young canoe paddlers at the raising of the Legacy Pole, has also been adopted as CHN’s national anthem...the Athlii Gwaii blockade [is a] Arendtian moment of foundation for the CHN, one that continues to authorize its jurisdiction into the present day. (Weiss, Chapter 5)*

For the Haida Gwaii people, there is a desire to protect their culture while recognizing the future can play an impactful role. In many respects, this desire to protect the culture is what Martin and Joanne are trying to do as well. Previously, Joanne Kewageshig was quoted about how outsiders look at the barracks and the property at Aazhoodena. Outsiders have yelled from beyond the gate accusing those who live there to be “squatters” or questioning why they would stay. Part of their colonial refusal is their refusal to recognize themselves as squatters on their own land.

### **4.3 Governance and Self-determination**

How governance is established in the treaty context is integral to recognition. In Canada, there is the “inherent right” to self-government. The premise of the inherent right is that Canada’s Indigenous peoples have “the right to govern themselves in relation to matters that are internal to their communities,

integral to their unique cultures, identities, traditions, languages and institutions, and with respect to their special relationship to their land and their resources” (Abele and Prince, 2006).

Aazhoodena succumbed to colonial pressures and land surrender treaties resulting in unkept promises and lost land rights. The Stony Point land surrender of 1928 raised a red flag in Indian Affairs. According to Roos (74) “The internal arguments over hereditary rights, treaty rights and who actually held legitimate power over land affairs, created deep schisms within the two communities.” According to Martin Kewageshig, this is a quiet rift that remains to this day as the identification of leadership over Stony Point First Nation is contentious. Stony Point and Kettle Point have been distinct communities for many years and it was colonial structures or events that necessitated that the communities merge (e.g. during the appropriation of land in World War II). However, the merger introduced an unwritten hierarchy within the communities that has never been agreeably resolved by the communities themselves. The Kewageshig family have chosen to keep the internal politics from defining how they live, but they are aware and conscious of its impact on how they live.

Turner (35) notes that Indigenous peoples in Canada have tried for more than five hundred years to make colonial governments recognize the legitimacy of Indigenous forms of political sovereignty. He further underscores the necessity for culture to be an integral component to the debate of sovereignty, and governance more generally. Turner explores Will Kymlicka’s work relating to culture in *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* where Kymlicka notes that

cultural membership is a necessity to ensuring the “integrity of the plurality of cultures from which individuals make their choices” (48). Turner also suggests the minority status of Aboriginal peoples assumes that they were previously self-governing or sovereign in the past.

The arguments presented by Turner are also underscored by Coulthard (65), where Coulthard suggests the *Supreme Court of Canada* has refused recognition of Aboriginal peoples’ “equality and self-determining status”. He further notes that “though the courts have secured an unprecedented degree of protection for certain ‘cultural’ practices within the state, they have nonetheless repeatedly refused to challenge the racist origin of Canada’s assumed sovereign authority over Indigenous peoples and their territories” (25). In Canada, the treaty process is really the only binding example that helps illustrate Coulthard’s position.

Treaties have historically been the manner used by government to create a legally binding agreement between an Indigenous community and the State. By contrast, First Nation communities have often interpreted treaties as a way of defining their culture using language non-Indigenous people could better understand. This dual-purpose agreement inevitably lends itself to misinterpretation. Treaties, by their nature, have several deficiencies and cannot fully address the needs of two cultures; therefore, they cannot properly represent the full suite of elements required to bring a relationship between the Crown and First Nations communities to the level of partnership. Most researchers argue (Murphy, 2008) that the treaty system in Canada is not

working for the people who signed on as partners. There are a considerable number of challenges within the Indigenous communities of Canada that impact governance, sovereignty and more importantly, identity. Paul Nadasdy (2003) notes the difficulty in translating beliefs of First Nations people into a form that is easily understood by non-Indigenous people. He notes the difficulty comes from the necessity to compartmentalize and distill these beliefs and practices into a management process.

Michael A. Murphy (1995) notes the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended having seats in the House of Commons set aside with the aim of ensuring those representatives of Treaty nations and of the broader Aboriginal communities had voices in the House of Commons. The Commission proposed a method whereby there would be one representative for every Aboriginal nation in Canada and would have powers that went beyond consultation or advice. Like most of the Commission's 440 recommendations, this was not considered by Parliament as a viable option. The reasons the Crown chose not to accept this recommendation are difficult to articulate, though, as much research suggests the desire to exclude Indigenous people from the European-dominated political processes is likely politically motivated. However, the challenge in considering treaty as a method to build social cohesion is the sheer number and diversity of Indigenous communities that exist in Canada.

It is not simply an issue of politics of the Crown. There are sweeping differences amongst Canadian Indigenous communities, but as Coulthard

argues, colonial power will only recognize the collective rights and identities of Indigenous peoples insofar as recognition does not question the legal, political and economic framework of the colonial relationship (25). Coulthard, in this instance, raises an important element of the broader question of identity in that it is neither a question of history, nor is it simply a desire for recognition or tradition. Rather, the complex weave of recognition into the broader legal and political landscapes makes the context overwhelming.

It becomes enormously difficult to adequately or accurately reflect the needs, culture and perspectives of one community solely within the context of a single treaty. In addition, with many communities who have not signed a treaty, it is necessary to look beyond legal agreements and protest movements by considering other ways of protecting culture and identity that will carry communities into the future. To that end, Indigenous tradition and culture have been difficult concepts to grasp for decades for many non-Indigenous peoples.

## CHAPTER FIVE – TOWARDS THE FUTURE, GROUNDED IN THE PAST

### 5.0 Purposeful Protection

As previously noted, Aazhoodena is a compelling example of what it means to move beyond a reserve existence. In contrast to the past First Nation population which would have totalled in the hundreds today, there are only approximately 50 people who remain at Aazhoodena. Since the Kewageshigs arrived back in the community, they have seen the numbers slowly decline. For the most part, Aazhoodena members are deeply connected to their ancestral land and each family acknowledges their ancestors who lived there prior to World War II. However, according to Martin, some younger people have come from other communities as “warriors”, with no familial ties to the land. These new warriors come and go, but Martin does not see a similarity between his warrior past and those that have come to the community and taken on that title. In speaking with him, he recognizes why the younger generation feel the need to identify as warriors, but he remains cautious in defining these newcomers to the community in this manner. For Martin, the term warrior has a deep meaning that to him is not about violence. It is based in protection. He feels the necessity for being an “active” warrior has shifted to be a caretaker of the land. He notes his “warrior brothers” who participated in the reclamation of the land in 1994 and 1995 understood they were doing it for and on behalf of their Elders. These protests were deeply rooted in familial ties.

To the outsider, Aazhoodena is an unassuming plot of land on the shores of Lake Huron, the perimeter surrounded by a short, barbed wire fence. There are, however, visual cues that provide passers-by with snapshots of a past mired in conflict, juxtaposed against an unseen but deeply cultural life in the present. Individuals are not easily granted access to the land beyond the front gate without knowing someone who lives at Aazhoodena. This may seem a passive protest of sorts, but as Martin Kewageshig notes, the gate is not a barrier that symbolizes protest, rather he considers it purposeful for protection from those that have brought conflict to this land for so many years. More specifically, he notes:

*Living here is not about a land claim. It is about repossession of our land that was taken away. We want to make community from the land we live on. The story of the colonizer is always a lie, told to convey a story about a fictional past. (Martin Kewageshig, 2018)*

It is reasonable, therefore, to argue that while the gate is a relic of the past, installed by the “colonizer”, it now stands as a potential opening to the future. Its primary purpose is to keep the outside from getting in, but now it takes on the role of guardian of the land and the community that lives inside its steel barriers. From Martin’s perspective, the guardianship of the land is the responsibility of all who choose to live at Aazhoodena. In fact, Martin makes a key distinction between a land claim and his peoples’ appropriated land, believing strongly that there is no reason to make a claim over land that history has proven to belong to them. Arguably, this can be considered an illustration of

Nadasdy's (2004) argument regarding sovereignty which describes sovereignty as "a set of assumptions about the nature of space, time, knowledge, and sociality that is intimately bound up with the state form – or risk not being heard at all. The result is a process of state formation that is transforming in profound ways Indigenous peoples' ways of thinking, acting, and being in the world." (4) This is particularly evident as the Kewageshig family take hold of their future of cultural transformation.



Picture 2: First gate of Aazhoodena

Martin Kewageshig has a strong and deep family connection to the land of Aazhoodena. His family and ancestors have lived on this land for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Martin and Joanne Kewageshig moved back to Aazhoodena in 2003 to establish their permanent residence with their first child, Jesse. They were both active in the protests to return the land to the families whose ancestors maintained it, with the intention to live respectfully on the land and to provide traditional teachings to their children of the Kewageshig family. Both Martin and Joanne Kewageshig have shown

commitment and purpose, honouring daily the land that provides for them and their children. Martin and Joanne's family have expanded to four children - Jesse, now 18 years old, who arrived with his parents in 2003; Carmen, aged 16; Alicia aged 15; and, Randall aged 8, who were all born at the family home at Aazhoodena. Martin, who is a loving father to his children, is now a leader and an Elder in the community, and he is often looked to for guidance and support. While Martin's mother, Noreen Kewageshig, is no longer able to live full-time in the family home, she still finds calmness walking through the woods and connecting with the sacred land at Aazhoodena. In many ways, it is her story, and that of her ancestors, that led Martin and Joanne to live here with their children. This is further elaborated in the following quote from a relative of Martin and his mother, Noreen documented by Clifford George in his oral history (Dividing Lines Documentary, 1994):

*We lived just not too far where I'm today here, [Stony Point] actually my mother's land is a place where I had last here, so we were very poor, and ah, but we managed, we were self-sufficient here, self-supporting completely, because at that time there was no welfare, no nothing like that here, so we used our initiatives, and what facilities we had mostly from this land here. We had everything good here, you know, good relationship, good relationship with the next reserve...my grandmother owned a great big farm, a very successful farm here, at one time, right where, right where the camp is situated, now that, now that was all a big farm...and all, we want our land back.*

In many ways the quote from Clifford George foreshadows the quotes from Martin and Joanne Kewageshig. All have acknowledged the

land they once had and that the community that existed at Aazhoodena thrived, but each also recognizes and marks their sovereign rights to the land.



Picture 3: Martin Kewageshig at the original gate at Aazhoodena

The size and diversity of the Aazhoodena land is difficult to describe. Bordering Lake Huron, the hundreds of inland lakes and waterways are its life blood. Joanne has heard stories from elders that wild rice was once farmed and harvested, and the reeds used for basket-weaving. She works hard to identify and replant many of the Indigenous plants that once thrived, all in an effort to reconcile the present with the past. She takes school children and others who are interested in learning more about the Indigenous plants that grow at Aazhoodena, through the forests and trails, underscoring the resurgence that is taking place there and how nature is so

intimately connected to it. This effort to bring outsiders in and to reintroduce the people to a community that was forced to lay dormant for so long is important to Martin and Joanne. In part it is to show others the value of the traditional territory and the importance of land to the revitalization of cultural and spiritual ceremonies. These practices are critical for resurgence.



Picture 4: Martin Kewageshig and Noreen Kewageshig at Aazhoodena

As we made our way across the many acres of land, the military structures visually competed with the structures and natural landscape of Aazhoodena. Old abandoned houses and campsites that once brought families to the land for hunting and gathering now sit empty and rotting in an overgrown wooded area. Two Sherman tanks are half buried and hidden in

the bushes just beyond the barracks. In years past, the Kewageshig children used the tanks like a backyard play structure.



Picture 5:: Remains of original campsite from the occupation



Picture 6: Remains of firing range from World War II training camp

The barracks and supporting buildings are permanent structural reminders of the appropriation of 1942. One can imagine the once lively, active military community that occupied this land. Each of the barracks, which seventy years ago held platoons of soldiers, now house single families. They are modest, and each barrack now shows the individual preferences of the family that resides within rather than resembling a military structure. The Kewageshig family live in the barrack previously occupied by the Commanding Officer. It is the largest of the houses and contains the most beautiful stone fireplace. Inside Joanne keeps one side of the barracks to maintain her vibrant and thriving herbal business where she is able to use a small kitchen for the remedies she makes from the plants she harvests and from other plants foraged. It would have been impossible to imagine the success of this resurgence when the land was an active militarized zone.

One key challenge to integrate Indigenous culture into mainstream education is finding a balance between the culture and the ongoing pressure to align it with mainstream education. The children have all attended a school in the nearby town of Forest and they play hockey at the local arena. The challenges of racism, stereotypes and colonialism persist in these environments. The growing desire to integrate Indigenous education into mainstream classrooms may have certain unanticipated consequences which can threaten a resurgence of culture in many communities that have been impacted by colonial conflicts. As Scheurich and Young (1997) suggest, “epistemological racism” must be considered when developing integration initiatives. The Kewageshig

family has acknowledged the challenge with the education system and they continue to work to bring back many of the cultural practices that have struggled to survive (10).

Hunting and fishing have always played a major part in the sustenance of the people at Stony Point. Before the war, men worked on cutting firewood while others would go hunting for the family's meat. It was also common for the women to hand make herring nets for spring fishing. At times, they would also use spears; spearing techniques were adjusted for winter whereby a wooden lure was carved to resemble a small fish, and then fastened to fishing lines, which were bobbed up and down through the opening of the ice. When a lake trout came up after the wooden lure, it was speared, and the head of the fish was sometimes used for making soups and chowder while the rest was fried or baked for dinner. These practices have been passed down through the generations, and the land at Aazhoodena continues to offer many gifts to help the Kewageshig family thrive and survive; one gift that Martin and Joanne have committed to passing down to their children is the active participation in hunting and harvesting of deer meat. What the land offers to the Kewageshigs through the harvesting and preserving of vegetables and meat is another illustration of the resurgence that is taking place at Aazhoodena. It shows the land the respect it deserves by using every part of the animal or vegetable available. For example, they use deer hides and feathers for drums and pow-wow regalia and freeze meat for stews. The food they grow and hunt makes up approximately 25 per cent of the food they eat. In addition, they trade maple syrup for fish, and

use medicines grown in the garden.



Picture 7: Kewageshig children harvesting deer meat



Picture 8: Deer hide after harvesting meat.

## 5.1 Reconciling Conflict

There are constant reminders of the conflict this land and its people have experienced, from the gravestones that mark a final resting place for Dudley George, to a firing range that is riddled with bullets from World War II rifles, to broken down Sherman tanks that peek out from behind the overgrowth of inland bushes. These are physical reminders that have triggered feelings of loss, anger, frustration and sadness for Joanne and Martin Kewageshig.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, protests for the return of the Stony Point First Nation demanded the return of the land. With the death of Dudley George, Martin's cousin, in October of 1990, the drive to have the land returned was re-enforced when he was interred in the Stony Point cemetery. He was the first to be buried there since before the appropriation of 1942. George had been one of the strongest supporters of the repatriation of the land that had been promised by the federal government in 1942.



Picture 9: Memorial gravesite of Dudley George



Picture 10: Martin, Joanne and Randall Kewageshig

During our tour of the land, Martin talked about having to respond to questions about why he chooses to remain. He did not offer a direct or simple answer - likely because there is not one answer and he does not he feel a need

to justify his family's presence on his ancestral land. As we sat in his kitchen, Martin talked of the protests and challenges his family endured. He spoke at length of his elders from Aazhoodena. Martin states:

*My people lived here prior to the expropriation. They talked about protests, but they tried to resolve problems without violence. After Dudley died, there was a lot of tactics used to keep us off the land. The police would pull people over and have a lot of checkpoints. On May 8th, 1993, the "war" ended, and the elders arrived to take back their territory and we did it in a peaceful way. Carl George cut the chain. I remember it was the first time I heard powwow music. The elders drove through first. It is something you only feel once in a lifetime. For people that were so dispossessed it was amazing to see how happy they were after all those years.*

In contrast, Joanne Kewageshig offers her perspective, recognizing her identity as a "white settler":

*These are controversies which tear people apart. And I'm not even talking about considering if white or non-native people are members of Indigenous communities. As a white settler here, it is not my place to get into the arguments of which Indigenous people have the right to live here or decide what to do with the territories. I live here because I live with my family who ancestrally have the right to be here. My husband's grandmother (Pearl George) was a 'landowner' here in 1942 when the people were removed. The current colonial system of Indian Affairs, recognized reserves and the requirement of individual Indigenous people to have official (federally recognized) membership in one band only facilitates colonial control of Indigenous people and who they define as members of communities.*

*I'm talking about how Indigenous people fight amongst themselves about who is a member here and who isn't; who has a right to this service and who doesn't. So I try my best to stay out of all that, though you better believe as a member of a family living at*

*Stony Point whose family members are all registered with a different reserve (Saugeen) this deeply impacts my life and the certainty with which we feel we can live here without being challenged in our right to do so. That's not to say that we live in fear. We don't. But, the reality that controversy is ever-present and a challenge to our right to be here affects the decisions we make.*

*I focus my energy on the positive things - gardening, seed-keeping, honouring the very many gifts that the land here at Stony Point - Aazhoodena - has to offer. A lot of people from all of the various communities in the area do not fully know what it is this land offers. My husband's grandma used to tell him that everything you need to live, everything you need to feed, clothe and shelter yourself can be found here, in the bush, in nature. It's not just a vacant chunk of land that can be developed in any way we please. That's one way of looking at it. Another way is to see that the land, lived with respectfully is LIFE. This is what I try to live, to demonstrate. (Joanne Kewageshig, 2018)*

The way those living at Aazhoodena choose to resolve issues is informal. The internal and external relationships that impact Aazhoodena continue today. Externally, there remains a lack of trust in the authorities, such as the police, who are no longer welcome inside the gate. Further, the relationship with the federal and provincial governments is also mired in mistrust. According to Martin, the provincial government and, by extension, the federal government have chosen to recognize the Kettle Point First Nation Chief and Council as having authority for decision making. This has resulted in false promises and changing timelines relating to recognition of who has sovereignty over the land and when and how the cleanup of the land will be resolved. It has also resulted in a frayed relationship with Kettle Point First Nation. Now, as the Department of National Defence mobilizes to clean up the land it left so many years ago, the

people of Stony Point are left with mixed emotions. Martin says he is satisfied that the cleanup will happen, and he hopes it will help bring the land back to its full potential that was realized so long ago. However, he is reticent that with the process of cleaning up the land, as with the prospect of its remediation, the necessity to move will become a reality. Martin and Joanne are unsure of what they will do if that time comes, but, for now, they watch closely how the work will progress.

## CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION

### 6.0 Introduction

Stony Point (Aazhoodena) has a complex history that has profoundly influenced those who have a familial connection to the land. As Roos (1998) notes, it is possible to argue that Stony Point was “simply the wrong place at the wrong time”. In fact, many other communities across the country have had similar challenges, but few have had to endure the need to peacefully occupy the land that has always been theirs. Perhaps the most recent example that mirrors the Aazhoodena (Ipperwash) experience is Unist’ot’en. In every example the main issues are recognition, refusal, and resurgence. The Unist’ot’en camp was a site of Wet’suwe’ten resurgence that enunciated a distinct paradigm for the conduct of lawful relations. The camp reasserted Witsuwit’en territorial authority. According to McCreary and Turner (2019), the name Unist’ot’en refers to the people of the headwaters and captures the connection between C’ilhts’ëkhyu and their territories. They state:

The camp created a space for community members to reflect on the trauma of colonization and reconnect to sustainable modes of living on Talbìts Kwah territory. Building new networks of solidarity, the Unist’ot’en camp grew alongside an expanding infrastructure of resistance that brought activists to the camp for training and support work, while taking stories from the camp to disseminate its example more broadly. The centrality of Witsuwit’en law to the Unist’ot’en camp became paradigmatic for a larger movement, encouraging both greater respect for Indigenous legal orders and a proliferation of Indigenous jurisdictional challenges to the state of extraction.

It would not be unreasonable to argue that appropriation of Indigenous lands for natural resources is the modern-day equivalent to what was experienced at Aazhoodena.

As previously noted, Taylor (1994) suggests that we do not develop our identities in “isolation”. Instead, he believes they are formed through “complex relations of recognition with others”. However, though he describes these relations as complex, the argument oversimplifies the individual experiences and nuances from family to family and community to community. There have been countless examples of how the Crown has suppressed Indigenous rights through land claims. Individually, the themes of identity, resurgence, and refusal are enormous; collectively they are inextricably linked. What is obvious is the continual need to emphasize the importance, rather than the definition, of identity within Indigenous cultures. The mere effort to define a culture is colonial in nature. The emphasis now must be on respecting differences both within one community and between individuals, regardless of where one is geographically located. For Indigenous peoples in Canada, the fabric of many communities is frayed and torn as a result of decades of colonialist decision-making and power. By comparison, perhaps it is possible to consider how the Haida Gwaii community has evolved to protect the future of not only their land, but their people. The Haida Gwaii Land Use Vision states:

*Our physical and spiritual relationship with the lands and waters of Haida Gwaii, our history of co-existence with all living things over many thousands of years is what makes up Haida culture. Yah’guudang — our respect for all living things — celebrates the ways our lives and spirits are intertwined and honors the*

*responsibility we hold to future generations.*

*Haida Gwaii Yah'guudang is about respect and responsibility, about knowing our place in the web of life, and how the fate of our culture runs parallel with the fate of the ocean, sky and forest people. (Council of the Haida Nation 2004:3) (Weiss, 56).*

As noted by Weiss (2015), this excerpt from the Council of the Haida Nation's constitution provides "the authorizing temporality upon which the Council of the Haida Nation draws: the present that preserves the past for the future". While the Haida Gwaii community is a great example of what is possible, I would argue that it is not what is possible for all Indigenous communities in Canada. As Peters and Andersen note, the story of migration between communities and urban centres is becoming increasingly prevalent. Thus, the manner in which a community's culture and, more individually, one's attachment to their culture can be connected to the past and represented in the future is where the challenge remains (165).

The Indigenous population has been studied extensively and despite some policy changes, the barriers and challenges remain. It is not simply a question of funding, nor is it the establishment of a treaty or another type of agreement. It is valuing the importance of traditional knowledge and using culture as a method to strengthen and build a community. What is clear is that there is an opportunity burgeoning both for government and for Indigenous communities to change the dialogue from one of colonialism and power to one of collective growth. Nadasdy (73), Coulthard (45), and Turner (84) articulate arguments that require Indigenous communities to affect the change they are

seeking and to remove the reliance on government to change the way it imposes itself and Eurocentric perspectives on a community's ability to overcome historical experiences. Sahlins states "more or less self-conscious fabrication of culture in response to impervious outside 'pressures' is a normal process" that questions how people can respond to external circumstances other than by devising their own heritage, acting according to their own categories, logics, understandings." As a result, "cultural continuity thus appears in and as the mode of cultural change. The innovations follow logically...from the people's own principles of existence." (Peters and Andersen, 25).

Martin and Joanne Kewageshig are putting these arguments into practice. They did not require the opinions and research of academics. They are employing resurgence in a manner that is rooted in the practices of Martin's ancestors. This is the heart of the story. The Kewageshigs are, with intention and determination, breaking the temporary colonial foundation that was built at Aazhoodena during the War. They are not looking to theorists to guide them. They are simply working from the teachings that have been passed down through oral histories, using the land for what it offers to them by way of food, but nurturing the land by protecting and reintroducing the ancient medicines that grow and thrive there.

## **6.1 Unifying Forces**

As Roos (85) clearly explains, the Stony Point community suffered greatly from the expropriation of the Reserve and relocation to Kettle Point in 1942. Like

Joanne and Martin Kewageshig, each family can tell a story about their experience with the community and they remain bonded by their unity to their Elders, as well as to their children's future. The land is what connects this community not only to its history, but to its future, making Aazhoodena a model for broader resurgence practices. Joanne and Martin have grown a small business that is founded in Indigenous herbal practices using the land and native plants that grow at Aazhoodena. They have committed to rejuvenating the ancient practices of Martin's Elders and to provide education to local schools and business. They practice a commitment that Martin's Elders made so many years ago - the peaceful stewardship of the land they occupy. Their hope is that those who seek to judge their presence on the land learn why they continue to live and thrive at Aazhoodena. With purpose, they seek to unify themselves with the land on which they live.



Picture 11: Joanne Kewageshig in her herbal garden

The portrayal of the bonds of unity is described in the following passage:

*Although united by bond of totemic relationships, similar in outlook and understanding, speaking one common language, and observing one tradition, the Anishnabeg were diverse and autonomous.*

*Perhaps distances may have precluded political and economic unity, but the sense of independence and individual freedom was, it was suggested, too deeply entrenched in the Anishinabeg character to encourage submission to a central government, adherence to one set of laws as required by political and economic union. Nor did they feel that one community ought to submerge its well-being or commit its destiny to another. (Johnston, 1976)*



Picture 12: Martin Kewageshig at powwow

For the Kewageshigs, the notion of unity is inwardly and outwardly applied. In part, through their daily practices, they are unifying their family and their community, by bringing back teachings that had long been left behind. This unification is also seen outwardly as they slowly introduce white settlers to their land and demonstrate its importance to the Kewageshig family.



Picture 13: Randall Kewageshig tapping maple trees at Aazhoodena

Advancing decolonization practices also means the possibility of transforming youth from disengaged to engaged in activities ranging from volunteering to protest. This was highlighted in both Coulthard (2014) and Peters and Andersen (2014). Research suggests that youth are less likely to follow politics; less politically knowledgeable; and, more likely to believe interest groups are more effective than political parties for bringing about change (Llewellyn et.al. 2010). Generally, youth do have the “aptitude” for social change. It is without question that change is what is required in Indigenous communities and it will be youth that drive any movement. Thus, “teaching” children to be socially cohesive in an environment that appreciates culture and

tradition will ideally allow the individual voices to become the collective. As cited by Llewellyn et.al. (2010): “The skills and dispositions necessary for effective democracy can really only be learned by practicing them. This is the most important challenge facing schools in this area. It is also the most difficult.” The importance of the practice of engagement is reinforced in the quote below by Joanne Kewageshig. She describes not only the challenge, as articulated, but the promise for possibility as well.

*No matter what is eventually done with the land, my family can still make choices about how to live here for now. I don't think this entitles me to anything. It's simply been an honour to be able to live here, experience the territories in the way we do and learn what I have learned. Do we stay or do we go. That is not my question to answer. I am here now and try to make a positive contribution that can be beneficial for all people concerned. The skills I have acquired here at Stony Point are portable. I can take them with me. It's not a protest, it's not a land claim.*

*It's a land reoccupation. Same here at Stony Point, at least that's what Martin Kewageshig says. Places like Unist'ot'en, Aazhoodena (Stony Point) and the many other places where Indigenous people have reoccupied the land, even temporarily, will always be not only misunderstood, but deliberately portrayed in a negative way.*

*It's pretty cool to read about all the things that people at Unisto'ot'en have managed to create, build and reweave in their time on the land so far, all without government funding, I imagine. Its a testament to the resilience, strength and indianuity of the people, and of the strength that can be draw from the land. Its no small thing to maintain that space and hold off Canada, multinational corporations and elected council. It can be done and has been done. But the cost is very high, and I'm not talking about dollars and cents.*

*There is a place here in southern Ontario where similar circumstances exist, the place and the people similarly portrayed in a negative manner. And many people feed into the negativity narrative.*

*Imagine what good things could manifest, if people could work together respectfully, as sovereign people, to honour the land and nurture and tend the gifts the land has to offer. Imagine how we could sustain ourselves collectively in the devastating future that is to come if we start now.*

## **6.2 Findings**

There are many questions relating to decolonization, the politics of refusal, identity and resurgence that can be explored when considering the lives of the Kewageshig family. Fundamentally, it comes down to who has the rights and control over land and, further, how a family or community can experience resurgence. Indigenous teachings would say that no one person owns the land. We are all simply caretakers or custodians. However, the imposition of colonial law to control how the land is taken away, redistributed and used does not respect the traditional practices and beliefs of Indigenous peoples or reconciliation more broadly. Thus, future research must consider examples like the Kewageshigs and how they work every day to unravel the wrongs that have been done by colonialism; they have systematically created a culturally rich resurgence in a community that has been underestimated and undervalued for decades. Through my studies and fieldwork, there are four main findings that I have taken from my research:

### 1. The Ribbon of Story-telling

I've sat in the Kewageshig kitchen at Stony Point (it is funny how stories get told in the kitchen). While Martin and Joanne talked to me, I watched my niece sewing her brother's ribbon shirt. It struck me that the sewing of ribbons and the telling of stories are connected. The oral histories of Aazhoodena get challenged often and those like the Kewageshigs are left defending not only their land and their choice to live there, but their stories as well.

### 2. Misinterpretation of definitions

I believe the primary challenge of "decolonization" or "reconciliation" is the language. They are relatively modern terms in Indigenous research, but they lack precision that recognizes the unique circumstances of differing Indigenous communities. My research on the definition of decolonization found the term implies an undoing of colonizing practices and, similarly the term reconciliation implies a redoing of a relationship that was born out of colonizing practices.

Tuwahi-Smith argues

*the methodologies and methods of research, the theories that inform them, the questions which they generate and the writing styles they employ all become significant acts which need to be considered carefully and critically before being applied. In other words, they need to be 'decolonized'. Decolonization, however, does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather it is about centering our concerns and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes. (25)*

This quote exposes the importance and necessity for awareness with determining the lens through which one views their research. Though I ultimately concluded in my work that decolonization was not the primary

observation (where resurgence and refusal were more apt descriptions of what I observed), it is not to say it was absent from my research. Instead, I would suggest that I considered the history of Aazhoodena from a decolonization perspective.

### 3. Conflicts trigger resurgence

What was clear from my research is that Aazhoodena has had plenty of practice at managing conflicts and the community members have always protested peacefully. By making these almost imperceptible shifts, it allowed the community to recalibrate and continue to define its history, in its own way, how to move forward. Martin and Joanne are refusing to be defined by others and, instead, have taken the stories of Dan's ancestors to reinvigorate the ancient practices.

### 4. Personal Persistence

In reviewing the history of Aazhoodena and understanding the present situation of the Kewageshig family, Martin and Joanne have invested a considerable amount of personal sacrifice and persistence to reviving ancient practices. There is nothing that would suggest these choices are meant as a passive protest and refusal to leave the land. By settler standards, the life at Aazhoodena is hard. The Kewageshigs work with the land, growing much of their fruits and vegetables, hunting deer and fishing from the inland lakes. They live quietly and without a desire to be noticed. However, they are persevering with the intention of resurgence, of bringing forward the past to carry forward into the future. This is the intention that Martin's elders valued as well.

### 6.3 Recommendations

Though it was my intent at the outset to have the outcome of this research be for the sole use of the Kewageshig family, in reviewing the narrative data from my field work, as well as the findings I articulated earlier, I believe there are some recommendations that have emerged that may be helpful to those exploring similar research.

First, from my perspective, I believe it is essential to differentiate between Nation stories and family stories. As my thesis has articulated, the community of Aazhoodena has a long and storied history that has informed how its members have chosen to live on (or leave) the land. There is a tendency to build academic research from Nation stories. In the case of Aazhoodena, any available information stems primarily from conflict stories. From my experience with the Kewageshig family, listening to their family stories allowed me to gain a deeper understanding about what I was studying and, more importantly, the lens through which I was examining their lives. I believe that initially I made the focus of my research too broad and made an inaccurate assumption that what I expected to see was decolonization. However, I think it necessary to critically consider the language that is used to define Indigenous peoples, families and communities. Going forward, I believe it is essential to distinguish between the nation story and the family story. Undoubtedly, they are inextricably linked, and while the past informs the present, it does not define it.

Second, including a critical analysis of the Indigenous histories being studied is important context to determining the ‘why’ or ‘how’ questions the researcher is seeking to answer. Furthermore, historical context helps recognize the oral histories that are often hidden from sight when undertaking Indigenous research. It is impossible to understand and research today without understanding the past. When I think back to my time in Inuvik and, indeed, my own academic career, I can see that much of what I was taught regarding the history of Indigenous peoples was written by or interpreted from a colonial perspective. So many of the older historical documents do not accurately describe the overt racism that has taken place for Indigenous peoples. However, despite this biased perspective, these documents do inform the present, and in an effort to correct the record of the past, it is important to critically review them as part of the research.

Third, as I discussed in my preface, I entered into this research thinking that decolonization was not only the most appropriate word to describe what was happening at Aazhoodean, it was indeed what I thought I had been witnessing at Aazhoodena all these years. I did not intend for my research to be redirected to the politics of refusal and resurgence, dismissing decolonization as the focus. The words, themes and concepts often used in Indigenous research are not always borne from the best places. I think research that explores the origin of words that have been created to move forward such as “decolonize” and “reconcile” need to be critically studied. Are these the best words? Are these the best terms and/or do they adequately articulate cultural awareness?

Finally, Indigenous studies are relatively unique compared to other academic research areas. The subject area is enormously complicated, and complex given it encompasses three different Indigenous groups, including 633 First Nations influenced by contrasting geographical circumstances. To that end, there should be different considerations applied depending on whether the researcher is Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Academic institutions should also review the ethics review process and the suite of questions asked of researchers who are embarking on an Indigenous research project. This will allow for greater understanding of the circumstances of the Indigenous context being studied, whether it is a community, family, nation, or concept upon which the research is focused. To apply a “one size fits all” approach is not only dangerous, it is disrespectful to this field of study, which is non-linear, textured, layered and is founded in distinct traditional practices.

#### **6.4 Concluding Thoughts**

The Kewageshigs’ choice to live at Aazhoodena is one that was intentional when they arrived 17 years ago, and that intention continues today. Their four children have learned traditional practices that are not taught in a mainstream school and they can navigate the vast acres of land that they have traversed from the time they could walk. Their presence is not a political statement. That said, politicians can learn from this family and their experiences. Perhaps it is possible that future tendencies to apply colonial practices will be rethought because of families like the Kewageshigs. It is out of a personal desire

to live with the strength of character that allowed Martin's elders to persevere during incredible personal sacrifice. The Kewageshig story at Aazhoodena is not necessarily unique. However, the Kewageshig family is an example of what it means to look beyond first impressions and stereotypes and moreover, they are incredible models of First Nation resurgence.



Picture 14: The Kewageshig Family at powwow

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