Chapter One

NISHNAABEG[1] RESURGENCE: STORIES FROM WITHIN

On June 21, 2009, a community procession of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg[2] dancers, artists, singers, drummers, community leaders, Elders, families and children walked down the main street of Nogojiwanong.[3] With our traditional and contemporary performers gently dancing on the back of our Mikinaag,[4] we wove our way through the city streets, streets where we had all indirectly, or directly, experienced the violence of colonialism, dispossession and desperation at one time or another. Our drummers provided the heartbeat; our singers provided the prayers. Settler-Canadians poked their heads out of office buildings and stared at us from the sidelines. "Indians. What did they want now? What did they want this time?" But that day, we didn't have any *want*. We were not seeking recognition or asking for rights. We were not trying to fit into Canada. We were celebrating our nation on our lands in the spirit of joy, exuberance and individual expression.

Our allies lined the streets offering smiles and encouraging shouts of approval. Flanked by huge, colourful puppets and a flock of sparkling bineshiinyag[5] made by local children, the procession was both strikingly disarming and deeply political at the same time. This was not a protest. This was not a demonstration. This was a quiet, collective act of resurgence. It was a mobilization and it was political because it was a reminder. It was a reminder that although we are collectively unseen in the city of Peterborough, when we come together with one mind and one heart we can transform our land and our city into a decolonized space and a place of resurgence, even if it is only for a brief amount of time. It was a reminder of everything good about

our traditions, our culture, our songs, dances and performances. It was a celebration of our resistance, a celebration that after everything, we are still here. It was an insertion of Nishnaabeg presence.

As I walked down the main street of the place where I live with my family, I felt a mixture of strong emotions. As I saw my Haudenosaunee and Cree colleagues from the university walking with us, I felt a deepened sense of solidarity. This was a time in my life I felt most connected to my community. But I was also afraid. I was afraid of the response of the non-Natives in my community. I was afraid they would throw things at us, that there would be confrontations, that there would be violence. I was afraid that my kids, having only known joy and beautiful things from their culture, would suddenly have their bubble burst and they would see the violent assault my generation of Indigenous assumes as normal.

The idea of a celebratory community procession is incredible to my eighty-something Nokomis.[6] Growing up on the reserve, and then living in Peterborough, the idea of "Indians" marching down the main street in a celebratory fashion seems fantastical to her at best. She can't believe that her great grandchildren feel proud, that in her words, "It is OK for them to be Indian." And in many ways, that was the point of the procession. The Nishnaabeg have been collectively dispossessed of our national territory; we are an occupied nation. Individually, we have been physically beaten, arrested, apprehended, interned in jails, sanitariums, residential or day schools and foster care. We have endured racist remarks when shopping or seeking healthcare and education within the city. We have stories of being driven to the outskirts of our city by police and bar owners and dropped off to walk back to our reserves. But that day we turned inward to celebrate our presence and to build our resurgence as a community.

For me, it was a beautiful day. I've never walked in solidarity with all of our Nishnaabeg families before, regardless of our individual political orientation. I've never had the opportunity to celebrate our survival, our continuance, our resurgence: all of the best parts of us. For an hour that day, we collectively transformed the streets of Peterborough back into Nogojiwanong, and forward into Nogojiwanong. For an hour that day, we created a space and a place where the impacts of

colonialism were lessened, where we could feel what it feels like to be part of a united, healthy community, where our children could glimpse our beautiful visions for their future.

The procession made its way to the shores of Zaagigaans,[7] where we held a Powwow and artistic festival. The cycle of our Grand Entry into the streets of Peterborough was repeated as our Elders and dancers danced their way around the cedar arbor, and we started over once again. Together, we transformed National Aboriginal Day into something about resurgence for our community, instead of a shallow multicultural education day for Canadians to feel less guilty about their continued occupation of our lands. For me, our procession was a political act. We built a day where we put the health of our nation first. We strengthened our culture. We strengthened our relationships with each other and with Nogojiwanong.

Nishnaabe Elder Edna Manitowabi says that one of the reasons our cultures and ways of life are important is that our culture brings our hearts great joy. Our culture is beautiful and loving, and it nurtures our hearts and minds in a way that enables us to not just cope, but to live. We always *feel* good after being out in the bush, or after ceremony. I thought of this that day as I walked. I thought of the word *e-yaa'oyaanh*, which means who I am, the way I am living or becoming, my identity.[8] In order to have a positive identity we have to be living in ways that illuminate that identity, and that propel us towards mino bimaadiziwin, the good life.[9]

Gaawiin Nda-gajsii, We Are Not Shameful

For most of the day, I thought about my Ancestors. I thought of the seeds they had planted so long ago to ensure that we were all there on that day in June, walking down our street together. And if I am honest, I also thought of the shame that I carry inside of me from the legacy of colonial abuse, the unspoken shame we carry collectively as Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg. It is shame that is rooted in the humiliation that colonialism has heaped on our peoples for hundreds of years and is now carried within our bodies, minds and our hearts. It is shame that our ancestors—our families—did not rally hard enough against the

colonial regime. It is shame that we were tricked into surrendering our life, land and sustenance during the Williams Treaty process. It is shame that makes us think that our leaders and Elders did not do the best they could. To me, this colonial shame felt like not only a tremendous burden to carry, but it also felt displaced. We are not shameful people. We have done nothing wrong. I began to realize that shame can only take hold when we are disconnected from the stories of resistance within our own families and communities. I placed that shame as an insidious and infectious part of the cognitive imperialism that was aimed at convincing us that we were a weak and defeated people, and that there was no point in resisting or resurging. I became interested in finding those stories of resistance and telling them so that our next generation would know.

I was recently in the community of Kahnesatà:ke for the twentieth anniversary commemoration of the "Oka Crisis." The day was intensely emotional as community members shared their memories and trauma of the crisis and its aftermath. At one point during the day, Ellen Gabriel, who had been the spokesperson for the People of the Pines during the summer of 1990, stood up and simply said, "We have nothing to be ashamed of. We have done nothing wrong." Her statement echoed through the crowd of mostly community members; there was not a dry eye in the room. I echo Ellen's words. We have nothing to be ashamed of, and we have done nothing wrong.

Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg territory is located along the north shore of Lake Ontario, or Chi'Nbiish,[10] from Niagara Falls to Gananoque. Our old people referred to our nation as Kina Gchi Nishnaabeg-ogaming: *Kina* meaning all; *Gchi* for big; and *ogamig* meaning the place of, where we live, where we make our living, the place that was given to us.[11] Our oral tradition tells of a beautiful territory covered with mature stands of white pine with trunks spanning seven feet and towering 200 feet overhead. The land was easy to travel through, with pine needles and a sparse understory as a result of a white pine canopy. There was a tall grass prairie where Peterborough stands today—a prairie that the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg maintained with controlled burns.[12] It's hard for me to imagine a land like that today, with south-eastern Ontario farmland spanning out in all directions.

For my ancestors, the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg, our self-determination and sovereignty as part of the Nishnaabeg nation was relatively intact between 1700–1783.[13] Over the next forty years we were forced to survive an intense, violent assault on our lands and our peoples. By 1763, the British Crown no longer needed us as allies; soon loyalists streamed into our territory and began occupying Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg lands. Over the next fifty years, our people survived pandemics, violence and assault, unjust treaty negotiations, occupation of our lands, and a forced relocation—which, for some of us, resulted in a small and insufficient reserve at Alderville, a Methodist mission. Eventually our system of governance was replaced by a colonial administration, as the planned assimilation strategy moved into full swing. By 1822—when many Nishnaabeg in the north and the west were still living as they always had—we were facing the complete political, cultural and social collapse of everything we had ever known.

My ancestors resisted and survived what must have seemed like an apocalyptic reality of occupation and subjugation in a context where they had few choices. They resisted by simply surviving and being alive. They resisted by holding onto their stories They resisted by taking the seeds of our culture and political systems and packing them away, so that one day another generation of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg might be able to plant them. I am sure of their resistance, because I am here today, living as a contemporary Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg woman. I am the evidence. Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg people are the evidence. Now, nearly two hundred years after surviving an attempted political and cultural genocide, it is the responsibility of my generation to plant and nurture those seeds and to make our Ancestors proud.

Shame traps us individually and collectively into the victimry of the colonial assault, and travels through the generations, accumulating and manifesting itself in new and more insidious ways in each re-generation. The cycles of shame we are cognitively locked into is in part perpetuated and maintained by western theoretical constructions of "resistance," "mobilization" and "social movements," by defining what is and is not considered. Through the lens of colonial thought and cognitive imperialism, we are often unable to *see* our Ancestors. We are unable to *see* their philosophies and their strategies of mobilization

and the complexities of their plan for resurgence. When resistance is defined solely as large-scale political mobilization, we miss much of what has kept our languages, cultures, and systems of governance alive. We have those things today because our Ancestors often acted within the family unit to physically survive, to pass on what they could to their children, to occupy and use our lands as we always had. This, in and of itself, tells me a lot about how to build Indigenous renaissance and resurgence.

A Flourishment of the Indigenous Inside

Social movement theory is one of the primary academic sites of theorizing political mobilization. There are few comprehensive critiques of social movement theory by Indigenous Peoples, yet it is telling that few Indigenous scholars use this approach to explain Indigenous resistance and mobilization.[14] Social movement theory is, for the most part, inadequate in explaining the forces that generate and propel Indigenous resistance and resurgence because it is rooted in western knowledge and a western worldview, ignoring Indigenous political culture and theory. Social movement theory also ignores the historical context of Indigenous resistance—spanning over 400 years for some Indigenous nations—by disregarding differences in political organization, governance and political cultures between Canadian and Indigenous societies. At their core, Indigenous political movements contest the very foundation of the Canadian state in its current expression, while most theories of group politics and social movements take the state for granted.[15] Defining and analyzing Indigenous resurgence from a social movement perspective erroneously concludes that there has not yet been an Indigenous social movement in Canada,[16] a conclusion that flies in the face of 400 years of Indigenous resistance. We have been resisting colonial imposition for four centuries. I think our communities know something about organizing, mobilizing and strategizing. I think our communities know quite a lot about *living* through the most grievous of circumstances.

Although I have been thinking about resistance for my entire adult life, it was not until I read Taiaiake Alfred's *Peace, Power and*

Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto and then *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, that I began to think about resurgence. Alfred's seminal works immediately spoke to my *(o)debwewin*, literally the sound my heart makes,[17] or "truth," because at the core of his work, he challenges us to reclaim the *Indigenous* contexts (knowledge, interpretations, values, ethics, processes) for our political cultures. In doing so, he refocuses our work from trying to transform the colonial outside into a flourishment of the *Indigenous* inside. We need to rebuild our culturally inherent philosophical contexts for governance, education, healthcare, and economy. We need to be able to articulate in a clear manner our visions for the future, for living as *Indigenous Peoples* in contemporary times. To do so, we need to engage in *Indigenous* processes, since according to our traditions, the processes of engagement highly influence the outcome of the engagement itself. We need to do this on our own terms, without the sanction, permission or engagement of the state, western theory or the opinions of Canadians. In essence, we need to not just figure out who we are; we need to re-establish the processes by which we live who we are within the current context we find ourselves. We do not need funding to do this. We do not need a friendly colonial political climate to do this. We do not need opportunity to do this. We need our Elders, our languages, and our lands, along with vision, intent, commitment, community and ultimately, action. We must move ourselves beyond resistance and survival, to flourishment and mino bimaadiziwin.[18] If this approach does nothing else to shift the current state of affairs—and I believe it will—it will ground our peoples in their own cultures and teachings that provide the ultimate antidote to colonialism, which I believe is what Indigenous intellectuals and theorists[19] have been encouraging us to do all along. In this book, I am interested in exploring these transformative contexts from within my own Nishnaabeg culture. Transforming ourselves, our communities and our nations is ultimately the first step in transforming our relationship with the state.

Building diverse, nation-culture-based resurgences means significantly re-investing in our own ways of being: regenerating our political and intellectual traditions; articulating and living our legal systems; language learning; ceremonial and spiritual pursuits; creating and

using our artistic and performance-based traditions. All of these require us—as individuals and collectives—to diagnose, interrogate and eviscerate the insidious nature of conquest, empire, and imperial thought in every aspect of our lives. It requires us to reclaim the very best practices of our traditional cultures, knowledge systems and lifeways in the dynamic, fluid, compassionate, respectful context within which they were originally generated. A critical level of anti-colonial interrogation is required in order for us to be able to see the extraordinarily political nature of Nishnaabeg thought.

Ethically, it is my emphatic belief that the land, reflected in Nishnaabeg thought and philosophy, compels us towards resurgence in virtually every aspect. Walking through the bush last spring with my children, the visual landscape reminded me of this. We saw Lady Slippers, and I was reminded of our name for the flower and the story that goes with it,[20] and then moss, and then butterflies.[21] Then we saw a woodpecker[22] and I thought of a similar story. Finally, we walked through a birch stand and I thought of Nanabush, Niimkiig and birch bark.[23] Our Nishnaabeg landscape flourishes with our stories of resistance and resurgence, yet through colonial eyes, the stories are interpreted as quaint anecdotes with "rules" of engagement and consequence. Interpreted within our cultural web of non-authoritarian leadership, non-hierarchical ways of being, non-interference and non-essentialism,[24] the stories explain the resistance of my Ancestors and the seeds of resurgence they so carefully saved and planted. So I could then assume my responsibility as a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg to care take of their garden, eventually passing those responsibilities on to my grandchildren. This is the purpose of this book.

While it is my firm belief that there is much work to be done within our nations in terms of building resurgence—both political and cultural—within a nation-based framework, I don't believe this is *all* we need to do. According to our Seven Fires Prophecy, much work needs to be done to decolonize the state, Indigenous-state relations and Canada in order for the Eighth Fire to be lit.[25] At this point, to me, it seems rather futile to be engaged in scholarly and political processes, trying to shift these relationships when there is no evidence there exists the political will to do so on the part of the Canadian state.

There is no opportunity; and putting our energies into demanding that the state recognize us seems depressing, futile and a waste of energy, given the condition of our communities. I also believe Nishnaabeg philosophy propels us to focus on ourselves in terms of transformation. However, I do not wish to criticize the work of Indigenous academics who chose to engage, interrogate and struggle with the dominant white paper liberalism that plagues Indigenous-state relations in Canada. The seminal works of many of my colleagues are at their core aimed at decolonizing the Canadian state, political systems and legal system in order to demand political relationships based on recognized Indigenous nations and alternatives to rights-based approaches. While this body of work searches for solutions within federalism that do not subsume Indigenous self-determination, agency and sovereignty, there is also important work to be done within our nations. This is the work that is the focus of this book, because these are the things that I am constantly thinking about, talking about, and asking Elders about. My approach to this work is not rooted solely in the intellectual; it is rooted in my spiritual and emotional life, as well as my body; and it is explored through my Nishnaabeg name, my clan, my Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg roots and my own individual being. It is not better or worse than any other Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg's contribution. It is simply a reflection of my own current ideas and thinking and is not meant to reflect the views of my broader nation, or to be comprehensive in any manner.

In my own life, I have been taught by a handful of Elders that embody Nishnaabeg thought in a way that I worry we are losing. These Elders are fluent language speakers. They embody gentleness and kindness. And what struck me immediately—and continues to do so twenty years later—is that they rejected rigidity and fundamentalism as colonial thinking. Their ways of being in the world and their interpretations of our teachings were reflective of a philosophical state, a set of values and ethics and a way of being in the world where they didn't feel the need to employ exclusionary practices, authoritarian power and hierarchy. They "protected" their interpretations by embodying them and by living them. They "resisted" colonialism by living within Nishnaabeg contexts. When I moved back into

the southeastern regions of my territory, I was immediately struck by moralistic judgment, rules to constrict and control social behaviours within my community, and a more formalized hierarchy to restrict access to knowledge, which to me is reminiscent of colonial thought and religious fundamentalism.[26] This was not my understanding or interpretation of my own cultural teachings. I was taught that individual Nishnaabe had the responsibility of interpreting the teachings for themselves within a broader shared collective set of values that placed great importance on self-actualization, the suspension of judgment, fluidity, emergence, careful deliberation and an embodied respect for diversity.

There exists very little in the academic literature conceptualizing and exploring resistance and resurgence from within Indigenous thought.[27] 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. Nishnaabeg thought was designed and conceptualized to perpetuate the holistic well being of Nishnaabeg people through a series of cultural and political manifestations, including government, education, and restorative justice that promoted mino bimaadiziwin. Our ways of being promoted the good life or continuous rebirth at every turn: in the face of political unrest, "natural disasters" and even genocide. Nishnaabeg thought provides us with the impetus, the ethical responsibility, the strategies and the plan of action for resurgence. We have a responsibility to the coming generations to maintain that resurgence in the midst of an all-out colonial attack and in the more insidious decentralized post-colonial-colonialism.[28] Nishnaabeg thought was not meant to promote assimilation or normalization within a colonial context. It was not meant to be reduced and relegated to a decorative window dressing in western scholarship.

Aanji Maajitaawin,[29] the Art of Starting Over

I am writing this at a time when Canada is busy talking about "reconciliation" at every turn, while at the same time using the *Indian Act* to enforce a band council "government" against the will of the

Algonquins of Barriere Lake. "Reconciliation" is being promoted by the federal government as a "new" way for Canada to relate to Indigenous Peoples, and it isn't just government officials that are promoting the idea. I have heard heads of universities talk about reconciliation; I have read journalist's op-ed pieces; I have heard mayors talk about reconciliation as they open local Aboriginal events. But the idea of reconciliation is not new. Indigenous Peoples attempted to reconcile our differences in countless treaty negotiations, which categorically have not produced the kinds of relationships Indigenous Peoples intended. I wonder how we can reconcile when the majority of Canadians do not understand the historic or contemporary injustice of dispossession and occupation, particularly when the state has expressed its unwillingness to make any adjustments to the unjust relationship. Haudenosaunee scholar and orator Dan Longboat recently reminded me of this, when he said that treaties are not just for governments, they are for the citizens as well.[30] The people also have to act in a manner that is consistent with the relationships set out in the treaty negotiation process. If Canadians do not fully understand and embody the idea of reconciliation, is this a step forward? It reminds me of an abusive relationship where one person is being abused physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally. She wants out of the relationship, but instead of supporting her, we are all gathered around the abuser, because he wants to "reconcile." But he doesn't want to take responsibility. He doesn't want to change. In fact, all through the process he continues to physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally abuse his partner. He just wants to say sorry so he can feel less guilty about his behaviour. He just wants to adjust the ways he is abusing; he doesn't want to stop the abuse. Collectively, what are the implications of participating in reconciliation processes when there is an overwhelming body of evidence that in action, the Canadian state does not want to take responsibility and stop the abuse? What are the consequences for Indigenous Peoples of participating in a process that attempts to absolve Canada of past wrong doings, while they continue to engage with our nations in a less than honourable way?

Those that chose to participate in reconciliation processes do so believing that participation could potentially bring more positive

change than non-participation. They may be right. But our eyes need to be wide open if we are entering this process. As reconciliation has become institutionalized,[31] I worry our participation will benefit the state in an asymmetrical fashion, by attempting to neutralize the legitimacy of Indigenous resistance. If reconciliation is focused only on residential schools rather than the broader set of relationships that generated policies, legislation and practices aimed at assimilation and political genocide, then there is a risk that reconciliation will "level the playing field" in the eyes of Canadians. In the eyes of liberalism, the historical "wrong" has now been "righted" and further transformation is not needed, since the historic situation has been remedied. I worry the historical context for contemporary Indigenous-state contention becomes co-opted in this model, because the perception of most Canadians is that post-reconciliation, Indigenous Peoples no longer have a legitimate source of contention.[32] I also worry that institutionalization of a narrowly defined "reconciliation" subjugates treaty and nation-based participation by locking our Elders—the ones that suffered the most directly at the hands of the residential school system—in a position of victimhood. Of course, they are anything but victims. They are our strongest visionaries and they inspire us to vision alternative futures. Are we participating in a process that allows the state to co-opt the individual and collective pain and suffering of our people, while also criminalizing the inter-generational impacts of residential schools and ignoring the larger neo-assimilation project to which our children are now subjected?

For reconciliation to be meaningful to Indigenous Peoples and for it to be a decolonizing force, it must be interpreted broadly. To me, reconciliation must be grounded in cultural generation and political resurgence. It must support Indigenous nations in regenerating our languages, our oral cultures, our traditions of governance and everything else residential schools attacked and attempted to obliterate.[33] Reconciliation must move beyond individual abuse to come to mean a collective re-balancing of the playing field. This idea is captured in the Nishnaabeg concept *Aanji Maajitaawin*: to start over, the art of starting over, to regenerate. Reconciliation is a process of regeneration that will take many years to accomplish. We have to regenerate

our languages so we have communities of fluent speakers. We have to regenerate the conditions that produce leaders and political systems based on our collective Nishnaabeg values, political processes and philosophies. Canada must engage in a decolonization project and a re-education project that would enable its government and its citizens to engage with Indigenous Peoples in a just and honourable way in the future.

From a Nishnaabeg theoretical and legal perspective, regeneration or restoration is at the core of re-balancing relationships. Nishnaabeg legal systems are, at their core, restorative. Restorative processes rely upon the abuser taking full responsibility for his/her actions in a collective setting, amongst the person s/he violated, and amongst the people both the perpetrator and the survivor hold responsibilities to—be that their extended family, clan, or community. In the case of state-perpetuated residential schools, the tables would be turned in a Nishnaabeg legal system. The survivors would have agency, decision-making power, and the power to decide restorative measures. In the case of the Community Holistic Circles of Healing in Hollow Water First Nation,[34] the abuser must take responsibility for his or her actions and is required to sit in a circle of community Elders, the extended family of the survivor, and his or her extended family (who are there to support him or her through this process. Everyone participating in the circle has a chance to speak or to share their thoughts, feelings and perspectives. The survivor has the choice to share whatever he or she feels most appropriate. Imagine government officials, church officials, nuns, priests and teachers from a particular residential school in a circle with the people that had survived their sexual, physical, emotional and spiritual abuse. This is a fundamentally different power relationship between perpetrators of violence and survivors of that violence, where the abusers must face the full impact of their actions. Reconciliation then becomes a process embodied by both the survivor and the perpetrator. And part of restoration means that the community maintains the authority to make that individual accountable for future wrongs. The interrogation is focused on the perpetrator of the violence, not on the survivors. The responsibility and the authority for restoration are in the agency of the survivors, not the perpetrators

themselves. The authority to hold the state accountable then rests with Indigenous nations, not the liberal state.[35]

Restorative models work in Nishnaabeg communities because ethically taking responsibility for one's actions is paramount in the healing or restoration process; as well, the purpose of these models in the long term is the rehabilitation and restoration of all of those individuals back into mino bimaadiziwin. These models put the hens in charge of the hen house and the fox under interrogation. If it is truly time to talk "reconciliation," then how we reconcile is critically important. I can see no evidence whatsoever that there exists a political will on the part of the state to do anything other than neutralize Indigenous resistance, so as to not impinge upon the convenience of the settler-Canadians. The only way to not be co-opted is to use our own legal and political processes to bring about justice.

In the words of Dene scholar Glen Coulthard, our culturally inherent political theory provides Indigenous Peoples with mechanisms for "critically revaluating, reconstructing and redeploying culture and tradition in ways that seek to prefigure, alongside those with similar ethical commitments, a radical alternative to the structural and psycho-affective facets of colonial domination."[36] Our liberatory and inherent theories of resurgence also do not tell us to persistently search through the web of colonial traps for settler political recognition and to gleefully accept white paper liberalism designed to redistribute resources and rights, placating the guilt of settler Canadians and neutralizing Indigenous resistance. Our inherent theories of resurgence are transformative and revolutionary. They are meant to propel and maintain social, cultural and political transformative movement through the worst forms of political genocide; and I think it is important to understand them as such.

While there are Indigenous scholars, leaders and activists engaged in broadening the state's conceptualization of reconciliation in order to re-align it with the political goals of Indigenous Peoples, again, I worry about emphasis. This cannot become the bulk of our work or take up the bulk of our resources. Perhaps good things will come out of this process, particularly for residential school survivors. Perhaps our communities will be able to use something from this "reconciliation

process" to meet some of their goals, but we need to enter into this carefully and with critical eyes that are guided by the whole picture.

What follows in this book is the beginning of an exploration of the theoretical foundations of resurgence and regeneration from within Nishnaabeg political and intellectual traditions. I have been careful throughout this chapter and the book to not define "resurgence." It is my hope that readers will take the concepts and ideas presented in this book, return to their own communities, teachings, languages and Elders or Knowledge Holders and to engage in a process where they figure out what "resurgence" means to them, and to their collective communities. This book is what resurgence means to me, at this point in my life. And while this is a personal process, I believe it is also important to collectivize these discussions and processes. In sharing my thoughts on this, my hope is that readers will take what is useful to them and illuminate it in their lives and their work, while leaving the parts that they disagree with to die within the pages of the book. I know my thinking on this will change, because the process I am engaged with is transformative. As my language skills increase, so will my thinking. As I move through different stages in my life, so will my thinking.

In our ceremonies, we have a beautiful and sacred Nishnaabeg song, commonly referred to as our Prophecy Song. My understanding is that the Prophecy Song is very, very ancient.[37] The grammatical structure is such that it is the voices and words of our Ancestors as the beginning of the Seven Fires Prophecy, singing encouragement to the coming generations who are responsible for building a Nishnaabeg resurgence in the Seventh Fire. The song is an incredible gift from my Ancestors. It is a song of resistance and resurgence; and when we sing it, its haunting melody fills our hearts with hope, with love, with beauty and thanksgiving. It is a single song that has the power to liberate us from shame. Aambe Maajaadaa![38]

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1 *Nishnaabeg* is translated as "the people" and refers to Ojibwe, Odawa (Ottawa), Potawatomi, Michi Saagiig (Mississauga), Saulteaux, Chippewa and Omámíwinini (Algonquin) people. Nishnaabeg people are also known as Nishinaabeg, Anishinaabeg, Anishinaabek, and Anishinabek, reflecting different spelling systems and differing dialects. I have used many Nishnaabemowin (Ojibwe language) words throughout this book, and I have used the dialects of

the people who taught me the words. The words I learned from Doug Williams are in the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg or eastern Ontario dialect. Shirley Williams and Isadore Toulouse speak Odawa or the central/Manitoulin dialect. There are also a few words in the northwestern dialect. I am a language learner, not a fluent speaker, and any mistakes are my own. I have, however, tried to check each word that is unfamiliar to me with an Elder who is a fluent language speaker to ensure that I am using the word correctly, even if the word is coming from a reputable dictionary. In Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg contexts, I have tried to use our spelling—Nishnaabe or Nishnaabeg (plural), when referring to the work of other writers from the northwest parts of our territory. I have used the spelling they use in their work. Because there are too many examples of academics who are not fluent speakers using Nishnaabemowin words incorrectly, I have referenced all but the most common Nishnaabemowin words in the text.

2 *Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg* means the Nishnaabeg people who live or dwell at the mouth of a large river. Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg Elder Doug Williams explained to me that this is the way his Elders referred to themselves. Peterborough, ON, October 26, 2010. This is similar to Basil Johnston's Mizhi-zaugeek, *Anishinaubae Thesaurus*, Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, MI, 2006, 14. Michi Saagiig or "Mizhi-zaugeek" people live at the eastern doorway of the Nishnaabeg nation, located in what is now known as eastern Ontario. According to Doug Williams, the word "Mississauga" is an anglicized version of Michi Saagiig or Mizhi-zaugeek.

3 *Nogojiwanong* is the Michi Saagiig name for Peterborough, Ontario, and means "the place at the end of the rapids." It is commonly used amongst Nishnaabeg people in Peterborough.

4 Turtle.

5 Birds.

6 Grandmother.

7 This is the name for Little Lake and it means "little lake." I learned this word from Doug Williams. Waawshkigaamagki (Curve Lake First Nation), July 15, 2010. Shirley Williams showed me how to spell it. Peterborough, ON, September 20, 2010.

8 To me this word means that in order to have a Nishnaabeg identity, one must live that identity in all of its many and beautiful diverse forms. The spelling and full meaning of this word was taught to me by Shirley Williams. Peterborough, ON, September 19, 2010.

9 The art of living the good life. Winona LaDuke also translates mino bimaadiziwin to mean "continuous rebirth." Scott Lyons writes that we should use the bimadizi form of the word to keep with the verb-based traditions of the language. Language expert Shirley Williams translates *bimadizi* to mean he/she is living, and *bimaadiziwin* as an abstract noun meaning "the art of living life." Peterborough, ON, September 12, 2010. As a concept, mino bimaadiziwin is commonly used in Nishnaabeg teachings. I worry though that it is becoming almost an overused and over simplified concept in Nishnaabeg scholarship

particularly amongst non-speakers and cultural beginners (Christine Sy also brought up this point in previous drafts). While I still find mino bimaadiziwin to be an important concept, I use it while keeping these observations in mind.

10 *Chi'Nbiish*, literally "big water," is the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg name for Lake Ontario, according to Doug Williams. Peterborough, ON, November 30, 2010.

11 Doug Williams. Peterborough, ON, November 30, 2010. I specifically asked Doug if there was a term our ancestors used to refer to their "nation," and this was his response. My interest in this came out of a conversation with Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair that took place in November 2010.

12 Doug Williams, Keynote Speaker. Peterborough Race Relations Committee, Dreams of Beans Coffee House, Peterborough, ON, November 18, 2010.

13 Brian Osborne and Michael Ripmeester, "The Mississaugas Between Two Worlds: Strategic Adjustments to Changing Landscapes of Power," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 1997, XVII(2): 259–291.

14 Kiera L. Ladner, "*Aysaka'paykinit*: Contesting the Rope Around the Nations' Neck," in Miriam Smith, ed., *Group Politics and Social Movements in Canada*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, ON, 2008, 244.

15 Kiera L. Ladner, "*Aysaka'paykinit*: Contesting the Rope Around the Nations' Neck," in Miriam Smith, ed., *Group Politics and Social Movements in Canada*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, ON, 2008, 228.

16 Rima Wilkes, "The Protest Actions of Indigenous Peoples: A Canadian-U.S. Comparison of Social Movement Emergence," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 2007, 50(4): 510–525.

17 Jim Dumont, Nishnaabeg Elder. Explained in a workshop as part of his presentation at the Elders' Conference, Trent University, Peterborough, ON, February 20, 2010.

18 Mino bimaadiziwin is a phrase that is used to denote "living the good life" or "the art of living the good life." Winona LaDuke translates the term as "continuous rebirth," (Winona LaDuke, *Our Relations: Struggles for Land and Life*, South End Press, Cambridge, MA, 1994, 4, 132), so it means living life in a way that promotes rebirth, renewal, reciprocity and respect. It is my understanding that although there are many ways to live the good life and that within Nishnaabeg contexts, there is no dichotomy between the "good life" and the "bad life," rather living in a good way is an ongoing process. This will become clear later in the book.

19 By here I mean Elders, Faith-Keepers, Clan-Mothers, traditional leaders, Grandmothers, Grandfathers, language-keepers and Knowledge-Holders, not western-trained academics, and I specifically mean those Elders, Faith-Keepers, Clan-Mothers, traditional leaders, Grandmothers, Grandfathers, language-keepers and Knowledge Holders that are able to interpret our teachings through the language in a way that embodies their Nishnaabeg essence, rather than in a way that locks us into a fundamentalist preservation framework.

20 For a written version of this story, see Lise Lunge-Larsen and Margi Preus, *The Legend of the Lady Slipper*, Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

21 One version of this story exists in "The First Butterflies" in *Tales the Elders Told: Ojibway Legends* by Basil Johnston, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto ON, 1983, 12–17; another exists in John Borrows' *Drawing Out Law: A Spirit's Guide*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, ON, 2010, 14–16.

22 Basil Johnston, "The Woodpecker" in *The Bear-Walker and Other Stories*, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, ON, 1983, 49–55.

23 *Niimkiig* means thunderbirds. For a version of this story see Wendy Makoons Geniusz's "Nenabozho and the Animkikiig" in *Our Knowledge is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabeg Teachings*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse NY, 2009, 136–140.

24 Kiera Ladner, "Women and Blackfoot Nationalism," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 2000, 35(2): 35–61; Rupert Ross, *Dancing with a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality*, Reed Books Canada, Markham, ON, 1992, 11–38, 116–125; and Emma LaRoque, "Métis and Feminist" in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, Joyce Green, ed., Fernwood Publishing, Halifax, NS, 2007, 63.

25 For a broader discussion, see Leanne Simpson, "Oshkimaadiziig, the New People," in Leanne Simpson, ed., *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*, Arbeiter Ring Publishing, Winnipeg, MB, 2008, 13–21.

26 This exists in all parts of the territory; this is just how I came to understand it. Compare this section with Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, ON, 2005, 197-8. I have also discussed my observations with Doug Williams, which he felt were consistent with Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg interpretations. Waawshkigaamagki (Curve Lake First Nation), July 15, 2010.

27 Leanne Simpson, "Oshkimaadiziig, the New People," in Leanne Simpson, ed., *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*, Arbeiter Ring Publishing, Winnipeg, MB, 2008, 13–21. Alfred explores these concepts within Haudenosaunee thought in Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, ON, 2005.

28 Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, ON, 2005, 58.

29 *Aanji maajitaawin* means to start over, the art of starting over, or regeneration. Shirley Williams, Peterborough, ON, September 19, 2010.

30 Haudenosaunee scholar Roronhiakewen Dan Longboat, Peterborough, ON, September 9, 2010.

31 I recognize that this discussion is delicate in that I do not want to offend or disregard the experiences, thoughts and perspectives of residential school survivors, nor is it my intent to criticize my colleagues who are working with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. My intent here is to examine the wider political forces shaping this process of reconciliation.

32 I wrote this while listening to (and was influenced by) Fiona MacDonald's oral presentation, *Democratic Multinationalism: A Political Approach to Indigenous-State Relations in Canada*, Canadian Political Science Association Annual Meeting, June 3, Concordia University, Montreal, QC.

33 This idea came out of a discussion with Kiera Ladner on August 15, 2010.

34 A description of Hollow Water First Nation's Community Holistic Circle Healing is available at <www.iirp.org/article_detail.php?article_id=NDc0>. I have worked with the community of Hollow Water since 1997 and have witnessed several CHCH circles.

35 I recognize here that survivors may not want to face their abusers in this fashion. My point here is to bring attention to the shift in power and emphasis in Indigenous restorative processes.

36 Glen S. Coulthard, "Subjects of Empire," *Contemporary Political Theory*, 2007 (6): 437–460.

37 My understanding is my own interpretation of the teachings of Edna Manitowabi who initially shared the song with me, and explained its meaning. Stoney Lake, ON, December 14, 2010.

38 The first line of the song is "Aambe Maajaadaa!," literally "Come On! Let's get going!"