Zeziikizit Kchinchinaabe

A Relational Understanding of Anishinaabemowin History

by

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ABSTRACT

Relationships are the heart of Anishinaabeg culture and language. This research proposes understanding Anishinaabemowin, the language of Ojibwe, Ottawa, and Potawatomi peoples, as a living, historical, and spiritual member of the cultural community. As a community member, the language is the Oldest Elder. This understanding provides a relational lens through which one can understand language history from an Indigenous perspective. Recent scholarship on Indigenous languages often focuses on the boarding school experiences or shapes the narrative in terms of language loss. A relational understanding explores the language in terms of connections. This dissertation argues that the strength of language programs is dependent on the strength of reciprocal relationships between the individuals and institutions involved. This research examines the history of Anishinaabemowin classes and programs at three higher educational institutions: Bemidji State University, University of Michigan, and Central Michigan University. At each institution, the advocates and allies of Oldest Elder fought and struggled to carve space for American Indian people and the language. Key relationships between advocates and allies in the American Indian and academic communities found ways to bring Oldest Elder into the classroom. When the relationships were healthy, Oldest Elder thrived, but when the relationships shifted or weakened, so did Oldest Elder's presence. This dissertation offers a construct for understanding Indigenous language efforts that can be utilized by others engaged in language revitalization. The narrative of Oldest Elder shifts the conversation from one of loss to one of possibilities and responsibilities.

Dedicated to my parents, Randy and Sherry Mead

For their unwavering faith and support.

And to Indinawemaaganag, my relations.

They are the reason I am here today.

And in memory of my grandparents:
Betty Gayle Barker, Thomas Barker, Mary Lou Mead and Herbert Mead

You all would have got such a kick out of this.

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PREFACE

I was recently talking with Mondageesokwe, a friend and language teacher, about Oldest Elder and the dissertation. We were talking about language classes and how we each came to where we are today. When I mentioned how fortunate I was to meet and work with people along the way, she responded by saying

> I look at it like this. We're all sitting in a circle of life and we all come into the circle with certain gifts we are given by our creator. Each of us has gifts in our baskets. As we go through life and interact with each other, our baskets are filled with the gifts shared by others and experiences we have. Then it is our job to share those gifts. We put those bits of knowledge in other peoples' baskets. We are all teachers and students on this journey in life. The elders have the fullest baskets. The longest time spent filling them, so they have the most to give. But, each of us can still learn new things. There are always new things to learn. You learned from every event and experience right along with us. We learned from each other. It's those experiences with others that help fill our baskets.[1]

I owe my basket of knowledge to the many friends, teachers, and mentors I have learned from over the years. Every interaction and experience contributed to my basket and this dissertation is an attempt to share what I have learned with others.

My relationships and experiences that shaped this dissertation span several years. In 2002, I made a trip to the Athabaskan village in Minto, Alaska. From that experience, I chose to attend Central Michigan University for its proximity to the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and its course offerings in Ojibwemowin. Between 2003 and 2008, I completed a B.A. and M.A. at CMU with coursework in Anthropology, History, and American Indian Studies. I enrolled in available Ojibwe language courses, took additional classes through independent studies and attended language circles in the surrounding community. I absorbed the information presented to me and consistently engaged in self-reflection and analysis with each experience. These years involved

[1] Mondageesokwe "Melanie Sunstorm Fish," interview by author, telephone, March 1, 2013.

challenging introspection and self-evaluation of my identity, relationships with others, and responsibilities as an ally.

My interpersonal connections came from an act of serendipity. One of the few Native American staff members invited me to the North American Indigenous Student Organization meeting during my first year. Through NAISO, I started meeting more people, attending more events, and becoming involved in the American Indian community. My relationships within the Native American community developed over time and by referral from friends and colleagues. Together, we learned, grew, and supported each other. The American Indian presence at CMU was and continues to be a small community. As a group, we planned events for NAISO, served on the pow wow planning committee, and hosted impromptu language circles by gathering for lunch in the union or just spending time together. Between 2003 and 2005, I was also asked to serve on several university committees. Through these opportunities, I witnessed the behind the scenes politics of the nickname and American Indian concerns at the university.

The central thread throughout my years at CMU, was the relationships I formed with individuals and the experiences I shared with them. My internship at the Ziibiwing Center for Anishinaabe Lifeways involved a summer solstice ceremony at the Sanilac Petroglyphs where Helen Roy shared Anishinaabemowin with people and women washed the stones with branches of cedar and water carried by the men from the local river in copper buckets. Experiences like this and simpler ones like making tobacco ties with other NAISO members for the pow wow or meeting up for lunch and speaking in the language shaped my understanding and relationship with Oldest Elder.

We supported and challenged each other and continue to do so to this day. Many of us took language classes together or attended cultural events that incorporated the language. As we learned and practiced together we also faced the frustration and confusion language learners encounter together. When the issues and complications surround dialects, writing systems, and phrasing one instructor used versus another, we found comfort in the fact that they are all correct. This realization was sometimes a struggle to reach but ultimately, we realized what mattered was that we kept learning and practicing the language. These experiences and shared struggles formed my understanding and connection with Oldest Elder that I examine in this work.

I came to Arizona State University to pursue my Ph.D. in American Indian history because I wanted to work with Dr. Donald Fixico.[2] Being away from Michigan and the Midwest was extremely challenging for multiple reasons. The environment and weather were dramatically different. I missed the low hanging and deep blue skies full of clouds that felt made me feel like I was cuddled under a soft blanket. Besides my own struggles to adapt to the new environment, being away from the Midwest months on end, made maintaining my language skills difficult. Thankfully, friends helped me practice the language over the phone, via Facebook, virtual classrooms and in emails. To fulfill my language requirement, I translated an Ojibwe text. I also incorporated the language in my everyday habits by placing Ojibwe labels around my home or whispering words to myself throughout the day.

When I was able to return home, I travelled back to Central Michigan University to visit with friends and language teachers and to other schools to speak with their

[2] Donald Fixico, "Ethics and Responsibilities in Writing American Indian History," *American Indian Quarterly* vol. 20, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 29-39.

language instructors. Those visits were always too brief but they refueled my drive to continue with the work. I broadened my academic training with courses in linguistics, linguistic anthropology and American Indian education, environmental history, borderlands, and gendered colonization. Throughout my years, I kept returning to the language, the challenges we had faced while at school, and the centrality of relationships in the process. Scholarship on Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous scholarship influenced my desire to fuse Anishinaabeg understandings of the language with a western academic undertaking.

I began conducting formal interviews with language learners and teachers on my trips home. We talked about the language and their experiences learning and sharing Anishinaabemowin, especially in colleges and universities. I asked what they wanted someone to write about and what they thought would be helpful to the community. Their responses shaped my focus and work. The concept of Oldest Elder developed from these conversations. The phrase was new but the ideas were old and taken from the experiences others and myself have had with the language. People find comfort in the language the same way they might in the arms or words of a grandmother or elder. The language is made from the words of every ancestor that spoke before us. It is the oldest elder.

Responses to the phrase "Oldest Elder" have been overwhelmingly positive. People have expressed "this is my truth" and commented that their non-Native students might better understand an Anishinaabeg viewpoint of the language from the work. The purpose of this work is to give back to the community and anyone who seeks a relationship with the language. As language learners, my friends and I had our own

reasons and motivations for coming to the language but we shared similar struggles and conflicts. Many of these conflicts resulted from people's inability to understand the language and its life from a relational point of view. This dissertation explores the history of Anishinaabemowin at three educational institutions because their language histories illustrate many of the struggles Oldest Elder has survived in higher educational institutions. As a historian, I am interested in change over time, but as a linguistic anthropologist, I am concerned about the relationships surrounding languages and the social context in which Oldest Elder lives. As an Indigenist scholar, I am interested in writing from what Dr. Donald Fixico calls the third dimension of a natural democracy paradigm.

Writing in a way that communicates Indigenous understandings of the world in western forms and words is a challenging endeavor. It was a struggle I wrestled with throughout the entire process. I knew Oldest Elder existed because I could feel her when I spoke the language with friends and on my own. I could hear her when I listened to elders and language learners talking about their experiences. It was challenging to write about something you feel and experience but cannot quantify. She is always there but is hard to pin down and place draw boundaries around. Her possibilities are not something to be contained. I wrestled with the gender of Oldest Elder, how to convey her animacy and the depth of her relationships in creation, and how to quote individuals without acknowledging our relationships. In Anishinaabemowin, the words for relationships are formed depending on the individuals' connections with each other: your father's sister is nizigos (my aunt) and your mother's sister is ninoshenh (my aunt). Both words are translated into English as "my aunt" but more information is embedded in the words.

Referring to the individuals in a formal manner was uncomfortable because it took away the relationships I have built with each person over the years. My relationships with many of the individuals included in this work span several years and are dear to me. They are what made this dissertation possible.

For many scholars, the concept of Oldest Elder as a living animate being is an uncomfortable premise. Oldest Elder is a small step towards the third dimension and I hope that this work serves as new type of history. It is almost a biography of Oldest Elder and her life in these different locations. Her experiences are omnipresent and exist on multiple planes of experience. Confining her to paper was a difficult and challenging process. Every explanation felt like an attempt to commit her to a particular form. The reality is that Oldest Elder is fluid and always changing. In a single instance, the threads of her web spiral outward in a multitude of directions. I tried to convey her complexity as best I could all the while knowing that the best way an individual can understand Oldest Elder is to experience her for themselves by engaging with the language, attending community events, and building experiences. Oldest Elder is best understood when you join the circle and open your basket so that knowledge can be shared with others.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In August every year, college and university campuses across the United States teem with new and returning students. Excitement fills the air and campuses buzz with energy as professors prepare their syllabi and students select their courses. As they flip through academic bulletins or search course offerings on educational websites, some come across language classes. More often than not, they see Spanish and French offered, perhaps Chinese, and maybe even German. At select institutions, they might also find a course for a language that has been present in the Great Lakes area for hundreds of years. Some might be drawn to it out of curiosity. They may not recognize the name but a quick Google search informs them that it is a Native American language. The course might be listed as a foreign language or count for foreign language credits but it is more localized and domestic than any other language courses offered. The students would not likely know that the language is etched in the landscape and in the communities of people still living on Turtle Island. The whispers of Anishinaabemowin in the winds and waters of the land may be unfamiliar to them but something draws them to the course. For various reasons, they enroll and a relationship begins with Anishinaabemowin, the language of Oldest Elder.

Oldest Elder is the animate manifestation of Anishinaabemowin. Anishinaabemowin is often referred to as Ojibwe, Ojibwa, Chippewa, Ottawa, Odawa, Potawatomi, Pottawatomie, and many other variations of these words. For the people who speak Anishinaabemowin, Oldest Elder is the language of the people and s/he is a fluid animate being that lives in the relationships between those individuals and

communities that engage in the language, culture, history, and spirituality of the Anishinaabeg. The phrase "Oldest Elder" is not generally used in conversations but speakers and learners discuss "the language" in a manner that reflects their understanding of the language as an animate being or entity.

This study is a historical examination of Oldest Elder's life at three prominent universities and their Anishinaabemowin programs. The chapters explore the historical development of the language classes and programs but through the lens of relationality and Oldest Elder. Throughout the chapters, I refer to Oldest Elder as both male and female. Using the personal pronouns *him* or *her* reflects the living entity that Oldest Elder is and transitions the fluidity of *his* and *her* being. S*/he* relates with all of those who seek a relationship with *her/him* in a manner that best fits the individual. At different times in individuals' lives, they might relate to the language in a male, female, or two-spirit form. Oldest Elder shifts to meet the needs of the people and those of the speaker *s/he* is engaging with at the time. In chapters two, six, and seven, I refer to Oldest Elder with female pronouns. In chapters four and five, *he* is male. I do this to illustrate the fluidity of his/her gender. For those individuals who find this concept of the language as a living being disconcerting, I suggest conceptualizing the language as a grandparent.

This past year, my last grandparent walked on into the spirit world. Despite her physical departure, I still feel her presence with me when I remember memories from the past or utter a phrase she was fond of saying. At that moment, I think of her and feel her with me. When I return home, I feel her presence on our family farm. I sense her when I walk along the paths along the fields and am comforted by her. She, one of my elders, is

connected to memories of the past and stories that others have shared with me about her. My grandmother connects me to the history of my relations and the experiences of my ancestors. In the present, her wisdom guides me as I experience her whispered advice and counsel. She is a part of me and a critical influence in my relationships between people, places, and the past.

Anishinaabemowin is an elder to the Anishinaabeg people just like my grandmothers and grandfathers are elders to me. *S/he* is called Oldest Elder because s/*he* has been present since the language was gifted to the people and lives through all the speakers of the past, present, and future. *S/he* is an Indigenous voice that has remained with the people as long as the words are spoken and the songs are sung. Like the air we breathe and the wind we feel, s/*he* is felt and brings life to those who build relationships with *him/her*.

Oldest Elder is manifested through the ethos of language, which cannot be separated from other elements of Anishinaabeg life: kinship, community, culture, spirituality, history, and relationships. There is a spiritual bond emotional dimension to Oldest Elder that permeates Anishinaabeg individuals and their communities. *His/Her* relationship with people connects all elements of Anishinaabeg life together in a spoken web of relationships. *S/he* is a presence felt by those who have a linguistic relationship with *him/her*. Understanding Anishinaabemowin as Oldest Elder changes the narrative of Anishinaabemowin language programs. The story expands and recognizes the Anishinaabeg perspective of Oldest Elder as a proactive force who is present, watching and waiting for others to recognize and form a relationship with *him/her*. The creation of

these programs did more than simply add new courses to university offerings. They carved out safe linguistic space and built living, animate relationships with Oldest Elder.

From an Indigenous community perspective, the linguistic framework of Oldest Elder is necessary to fully understand these programs because Anishinaabemowin is animate. Anishinaabemowin is an animate verb-based language and Anishinaabeg epistemology understands the world in terms of relationships. This understanding of the language is also present in Indigenous communities around the world. Anishinaabe Oldest Elder's homeland is in the upper Midwest and Great Lakes regions dating back hundreds of years. Seeing language struggles in an animate manner better reflects Indigenous understandings, which have been sorely lacking in the historical literature.

If the concept of Oldest Elder is helpful in understanding Anishinaabemowin revitalization struggles, it is potentially helpful for understanding other language struggles. In chapter two, the dimensions of Oldest Elder are explored further. Ultimately, *s/he* connects to and manifests a *Mino Maadiziwin*. *Mino Bimaadiziwin* is an Ojibwe phrase that translates to "my good life" or one might use *Mino-Pimaadiziwin* meaning "good life continues" and they are an ethos for the Anishinaabeg that requires balancing the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional elements of life. A part of walking the good path is understanding the animate beings that surround us and our responsibilities to them. This dissertation is part of my effort to live a *Mino Maadiziwin.*

A brief additional note on terminology is required at this point. Throughout the chapters, Anishinaabemowin is periodically used and noted by the italicized text. Personal pronouns referring to Oldest Elder are also italicized. The gender of Oldest Elder changes between the chapters to reflect the spiritual ability of the grandfather and

grandmother to provide cultural and communal understanding among people. The identifiers Native American, Native, American Indian, Indian, and Indigenous are all used interchangeably throughout the chapters. The opinions and preferences on how to identify the first peoples of Turtle Island change with each individual and community. Whenever possible, I use the terminology that people use towards themselves in respect of their self-determination. Elsewhere, I use the terminology that best suits the discussion at that time and place. The power of language is evident in the seemingly simple issue of words and reality of its inherent complexities.

When discussing or referencing the language, I use the term Anishinaabemowin unless it is important to note how the university labeled their course. As the language programs evolved, the manner in which they discussed the language also developed. Chippewa courses became Ojibwe classes. Some institutions label the language as Ojibwa or Ojibwe. I use the term Anishinaabemowin because it transcends the dialect debates that often dissect and separate people's understandings of the language. Anishinaabemowin reflects the belief that Oldest Elder does not care what your accent or dialect is as long as you learn the language and communicate with *her/him* through the language.

Today, scholars who work with language recognize that it is a central element of the human experience. Language is often a defining cultural characteristic of groups and is immensely powerful. A language offers insight into a particular epistemological understanding of the world. It can influence our thoughts and understandings of the world around us and explain how we fit into our communities. Our sense of self and our

relationships with others can be informed by language. We are influenced by it and we negotiate relationships through the language.

In the fields of linguistics and linguistic anthropology, the wonder and potential that a language holds is immeasurable. Scholars working with Indigenous languages are particularly aware of the knowledge embedded within the language and the expansive complexities contained in them and their existence. Individuals involved in language revitalization often discuss the power of knowing their language and its vast connections to other areas of life: spirituality, identity, history, culture, and knowledge. Historians, however, have largely glossed over the role of Indigenous languages in the past. A few scholars have incorporated language elements into their work but these intuitive individuals are sparse in the entirety of the historical field. At this date, I am not aware of a graduate program in history that requires students working on Native American or Indigenous history to have competency in the Indigenous language of their historical focus.

Some scholars will argue that the opportunities to learn Indigenous languages are not available. Others claim that since the historical records are more often than not written in European languages that it is not necessary to learn Indigenous languages. Usually, there is not a prohibition of students doing their language competencies in Indigenous languages but the responsibility to gain approval, support and orchestrate the process generally falls to the student. There has been some recent success in gaining recognition of Indigenous languages and its importance in academic training. In 2010, Alfred Metallic defended his Ph.D. dissertation in his Indigenous language Mi'gmaw.

The dissertation was also written in the language.[3] York University became the first Canadian postsecondary institution to allow a language other than English or French in graduate work when he defended.

These steps are encouraging and one can only anticipate that more scholars and programs will be supportive of similar incorporation of Indigenous languages in academia. At the same time, there needs to be more incorporation of Indigenous languages in Indigenous history. Since the 1970s, there has been an awakening in the discipline to be more aware of "othering" and seeking to incorporate Native American perspective, voices, and understanding. These efforts are positive steps in the right direction. I contend that the next step is to incorporate Indigenous languages not only in the texts but also in scholarly analysis. There is a vast difference between understanding an Indigenous perspective through English and understanding an Indigenous perspective through its Indigenous language.

Accomplishing this task will be arduous, complex and a process of personal growth. I find comfort in attempting to live a *Mino Maadiziwin*, healthy way or good way of life. The journey of *Mino Maadiziwin* is individual and collective. Every individual is on their own journey full of challenges and joys. Living the good and healthy life requires balancing one's relationships with different beings, the world around oneself and physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of life. The community is intricately connected to a person's *Mino Maadiziwin*. They provide counsel, encouragement, support, knowledge, and guidance.

[3] Sandra McLean, "PhD Student Defends Thesis in Mi'gmaw Language, a York First," *YFile*, November 24, 2010, http://www.yorku.ca/yfile/archive/index.asp?Article=15936 (accessed December 12, 2013).

This dissertation is an innovative attempt to bring Anishinaabemowin into the conversation and to refocus history in relational terms. The potential for understanding history through a language lens, as I am suggesting, is new conceptual ground with socio-cultural linguistic potential that has largely been neglected and ignored by historians. What I am advocating is the creation and production of language histories, especially when it comes to Indigenous history. Linguistic anthropologists have produced works most similar to the idea of languages histories I am suggesting, but the discipline of history needs to embrace and produce language histories as well.

This dissertation is an ethnographic history of Anishinaabemowin language course offerings and programs at three higher educational institutions: Bemidji State University, University of Michigan, and Central Michigan University. At the center of this dissertation is the conceptual framework of Oldest Elder, which will be defined and examined further in chapter two. Oldest Elder is a construct used to help non-Native people understand how Native people think about the language. While Oldest Elder is not a historical actor the way historians normally conceptualize individuals, the understanding of Oldest Elder by those working with the language played a significant role in the development of the programs. The chapters and case studies are written with Oldest Elder as an active agent because that is how individuals in the community understood and continue to understand the language. The Oldest Elder framework situates these language programs in relational terms whereby their success and challenges are largely determined by the quality of the relationships between the different individuals and groups involved. Throughout the history of these programs, issues of power, representation, and the influences of allegiances are important influences that shift

and shape relationships with Oldest Elder. I choose to examine these institutions because of their notoriety in Anishinaabemowin language circles and because of their long histories with the Anishinaabeg.

Bemidji State University was the first university to offer classes in Anishinaabemowin in 1969. The University of Michigan developed a strong language program with multiple fluent speakers and a cohort of students despite troubling relationships between the university and American Indians. Central Michigan University has established a formal relationship with the neighboring Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe because of the university's history and continued use of an American Indian mascot and nickname, the "Chippewas." However, their relationship with Oldest Elder, from the university's perspective, is dependent on the nickname. In reality, Oldest Elder's presence on campus has existed independent of the nickname and stems from his/her relationship with advocates and allies. Each program and university has faced issues shared by others engaged in institutional language revitalization efforts. By shifting the conversation from language loss to relationships and reciprocity, perhaps there can be clearer communication in such future programs. Perhaps individuals searching for a relationship with Oldest Elder can understand the language through *him/her* and find comfort in that connection. *S/he* could potentially help them to continue learning Anishinaabemowin.

The historical significance of this dissertation is that it offers a fresh conceptual framework for thinking about language, but it can also be applied to thinking about American Indian history in general. Oldest Elder is a framework more in line with an Indigenous paradigm of history. This dissertation contributes to existing literature on the

impact of American Indian boarding schools and the language struggles that American Indian peoples have been engaged in for generations. The chapters examine traditionally western institutions and the creation of linguistically shared space where Oldest Elder has always stood but was unrecognized by the academic mainstream. The different case studies connect the histories of contested space, border communities, educational relationships, representation of American Indians, and the different ways that relationships between American Indians and non-Indians have been negotiated in public institutions over time.

This dissertation is built upon a combination of scholarship with as many varied connections as Oldest Elder has to different areas of life. The scholarship includes works from the fields of history, linguistic anthropology, and American Indian or Indigenous studies. While originating from different disciplines, the relevant scholarship shares an interest in issues of indigeneity and the role that language plays in the past and the present for Indigenous peoples. The most influential works in this dissertation incorporate the language, center the research on relationships, and embrace the complexities of Indigenous research. Language influences worldview, understanding, and culture. Incorporating language as an important force in the past provides greater illumination on how American Indian and non-Indian relationships were negotiated or conceptualized.

Historical works such as James Merrell's *Into the American Woods: Negotiations on the Pennsylvania Frontier*, offer examples of how language can be a focus in a historical narrative. His work examines the "go-betweens" on the Pennsylvania frontier and addresses questions of language acquisition by translators, the negotiation of

"friendships" between individuals and groups and provides an example of how influential language and relationships have been in the history of American Indian and white relationships. In 2007, Theresa M. Schenck's *William W. Warren: The Life, Letters and Time of an Ojibwe Leader* provided a biography of William Warren, an Ojibwe interpreter. Her work provides insight into the history and lives of Anishinaabeg translators, incorporating an awareness of language in people's lives. Michael David McNally's work *Ojibwe Singers: Hymns, Grief, and a Native Culture in Motion* examines the translation of religious hymns into Anishinaabemowin and the intersection between spirituality, music, and language. Most of the academic works that incorporate Anishinaabemowin in their works and analysis are cross-disciplinary in nature.

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in Anishinaabeg historical figures and their writings in Anishinaabemowin in particular. New editions and edited collections of the writings of Simon Pokagon and Jane Johnston Schoolcraft were published in 2008 and 2011.[4] Historians, literary scholars, and those involved in American Indian studies have re-examined their works. Historian Theodore Karamanski examined and reproduced Andrew Blackbird's *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan*. In the past twenty years, interest in these historical figures has increased and the role of language has increasingly been discussed.

Today, there are few historians who are centralizing Anishinaabemowin in their work. In 2006, Heidi Bohaker wrote a promising article in the *William and Mary Quarterly* entitled ""Nindoodemag": The Significance of Algonquian Kinship Networks

[4] Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft,* Edited by Robert Dale Parker, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.)

in the Eastern Great Lakes Region, 1600-1701." In her article, she examines the "inscribed images of icons and symbols on sacred scrolls, treaty documents, ceremonial and everyday objects."[5] She argues that the limitations many historians face while working on Anishinaabeg history "can be more clearly illuminated when scholars become familiar with Anishinaabe communicative practices."[6] Her article encourages and supports the use of Anishinaabeg oral tradition, language, and cultural constructs understood through communicative practices to better understanding Anishinaabeg history.

The closest works that consider the history of educational policies and Anishinaabemowin in the twentieth and twenty-first century are the works on the boarding school movements. In regards to federal Indian educational policies, David Wallace Adams' *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience*, Myriam Vuckovic's *Voices from Haskell: Indian Studies Between Two Worlds, 1884-1928*, K. Tsianina Lomawaima's *They Called it Prairie Light: the Story of Chilocco Indian School*, and Lomawaima and Teresa McCarty's *"To Remain an Indian": Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education* provide an understanding of the boarding school experience in all its complexities. Brenda Child's *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families: 1900-1940*, Adam Fortunate Eagle's *Pipestone: My Life in an Indian Boarding School* and Basil H. Johnston's *Indian School Days* provide Anishinaabeg experiences, both positive and negative, in Canadian and American boarding schools. Teresa McCarty's *Language Planning and Policy in*

[5] Heidi Bohaker, '"Nindoodemag": The Significance of Algonquian Kinship Networks in Eastern Great Lakes Region, 1600-1701," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2006): 30.

[6] Ibid.

Native America: History, Theory, Praxis offers a historical overview of the policies and practices towards Indigenous languages in the United States.

Linguistics and Linguistic Anthropologists have had substantial influence on this work as well. Roger Spielman's *'You're So Fat!': Exploring Ojibwe Discourse* draws upon conversation analysis and linguistic discourse analysis to explore Anishinaabeg ways of thinking and doing. His focus on the interactions of language-use and the connections between language and people partners with the idea of Oldest Elder well. Keith Basso's work with the Western Apache on place-making, language, and stories helps reinforce the importance of relationships between people, place, and language.[7] His work was groundbreaking in 1996 and helps scholars navigate and articulate these linguistic but also human connections. K. David Harrison's work, *When Languages Die*, draws attention to the types of knowledge found in Indigenous languages around the world. These similar areas of knowledge are embedded in Anishinaabemowin and the wisdom of Oldest Elder.

The incorporation and presence of Indigenous language in historical works is still developing in today's academic literature. Anthropologists, literary scholars, and linguistic anthropologists are leading the way in this regard. The closest works that resemble this dissertation are found in the works in these fields. In 2006, Melissa A. Rinehart wrote her dissertation, *Miami Indian Language Shift and Recovery Volume 1*, in partial fulfillment for her Doctorate of Philosophy in the Department of Anthropology at Michigan State University. Her research follows a trajectory similar to that of this

[7] Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

dissertation by exploring the historical language shifts of the Miami community and examining the forces behind the changes. She explores Miami language shifts from pre-history to current day revitalization efforts. She concludes that while many societal forces impacted language survival in the community, the responsibility also lies with individual Miami people. The language shift, she writes, "was both intentional and conditional."[8]

Barbara Meek's work, *We Are Our Language: An Ethnography of Language Revitalization in a Northern Athabaskan Community*, explores efforts to revitalize the Kaska language in the Yukon Territory of Canada. She offers a framework of sociolinguistic disjuncture through which one may study language revitalization. In her work, she considers the colonial history of language but then examines the interplay between language ideologies, identity, and "the multivalent ways in which endangered languages are being performed, contextualized, and imagined."[9] Mindy Morgan's work with the Fort Belknap Indian Community examines Indigenous language literacy and how the changes in a community are sometimes caused by the way in which a language is used, such as the production and use of English-language documents within a reservation system.[10] Morgan's ethnohistorical scholarship is another similar example of language history, like this dissertation.

[8] Melissa A. Rinehart, "Miami Indian Language Shift and Recovery" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2006), 4-5.

[9] Barbara Meek, *We Are Our Language: An Ethnography of Language Revitalization in a Northern Athabaskan Community* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 2012), xxii.

[10] Mindy J. Morgan, *The Bearer of This Letter: Language Ideologies, Literacy Practices, and the Fort Belknap Indian Community* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 10.

The theoretical underpinnings of this dissertation are built upon conversations of power, "othering," cultural understanding, and the relationships between language and worldview. The history of European and American conceptualization and treatment of Indigenous languages is one of power struggles and "othering." The French theorist Michel Foucault, addressed issues of power, knowledge, and discourse in his scholarship. His work emphasized the role that power relations have in all social interactions, including the creation, maintenance, and reproduction of discourse.[11] The creation of Indigenous language programs in traditionally western institutions upsets the historically unequal power relationships between educational institutions and Indigenous peoples. These programs also fracture the hold on linguistic space previously dominated by European-based languages. Attempts to create and build these language programs are efforts to redistribute the linguistic space within higher educational institutions, renegotiate power relations between western and Indigenous knowledge, and recognize the uniqueness of indigenous languages without "othering" Indigenous peoples.

Edward Said is one of the most prominent scholars to address the issue of "othering." He argued that the Western world had, through discourse, conceptualized and created two worlds and through this dichotomy, they came to understand the orient as something separate, different and alien from their own world.[12] Historian Robert Berkhofer Jr. examined this process of "othering" in the field of American Indian history in his 1978 work, *White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian From Columbus*

[11] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1973).; Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge: The Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1972).

[12] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

to the Present. Subsequent scholars such as Philip Deloria, Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, and others have explored the ways in which imagined "Indian-ness" has been appropriated and used in media, political demonstrations, and social groups such as fraternal organizations and honorary societies.[13]

Quite often these representations of American Indian people have been constructed through discourses of racial superiority and otherness. Anthropologists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf most notably communicated to the world the idea that languages help shape the way an individual understands and perceives their reality. In 1929, Sapir wrote that

> It is an illusion to think that we can understand the significant outlines of a culture through sheer observation and without the guide of the linguistic symbolism which makes these outlines significant and intelligible to society…Language is a guide to 'social reality'…The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group.[14]

Scholars intensely argue over the degree to which a language influences one's worldview, but they generally agree that there is an influence and relationship between the languages one speaks and one's worldview. To understand different cultural perspectives, language must be part of the conversation.

This auto-ethnohistorical study incorporates language into the historical narrative of Anishinaabemowin language programs through the framework of Oldest Elder. In many ways, this research began before I was consciously aware of the project. As a non-Native individual studying history and anthropology, my initial approach to

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[13] Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

[14] Edward Sapir, "The Status of Linguistics as a Science," *Language* 5, no. 4 (December 1929): 209.

Anishinaabeg culture followed a more standard ethnographical approach where one tries to maintain a degree of objectivity. As I developed my relationship with the language and the community, this objectivity was replaced with connections built on shared experiences as a fellow second language learner. This dissertation is an auto-ethnographic work in that I explore my own relationships and experiences within the history of Anishinaabemowin language programs and struggles. I examine how my own experiences and relationships with the individuals involved are impacted by these histories and how they play a part in the continued development of the programs. A growing number of scholars, such as Malinda Maynor Lowery, are producing auto-ethnographies and drawing upon Critical Indigenous Research Methodologies (CIRM).

Professor of Indigenous Education and Justice, Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, and others have published extensively on the reclamation of scholarship by Indigenous scholars. CIRM resists the western positivist understanding of the world and embraces "multisensory listening" which has been central to Indigenous knowledge, ways of learning and conducting research for centuries. Multisensory listening involves the ears, the eyes, the nose, and the gut. Brayboy explains "we listen to our gut…we listen to what the old mountains and the wily coyotes care to share with us."[15] Understanding Oldest Elder and his/her history in these educational institutions requires multisensory research and awareness. In an effort to draw upon CIRM in this work, I have focused this research more on "doing right" than "being right."[16] A central aspect of CIRM is

[15] Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy et al., "Reclaiming Scholarship: Critical Indigenous Research Methodologies," in *Qualitative Research: An Introduction to Methods and Designs*, eds. Stephen D. Lapan, MaryLynn T. Quartaroli, and Frances Julia Riemer (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 440.

[16] Ibid., 448.

grounding one's research in the community and structuring the research around the process to "understand the complexity, resilience, contradiction, and self-determination of these communities" and "driven by a desire to serve community interests (as defined by the communities themselves)."[17]

An Indigenous research methodology, CIRM, is a lived ideology and identity. Indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson explains that one's belief in reality, thoughts on that reality, application of those thoughts and set of morals—"ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology—go together to make a research paradigm."[18] Relationships are at the heart of an Indigenous research methodology; everything is relational. A researcher with an Indigenous research paradigm respects "all forms of life as being related and interconnected" and conducts "all actions and interactions in a spirit of kindness and honesty; compassion."[19] The search for knowledge is experiential and relational since knowledge is not an entity to be obtained but rather a shared experience with one's relations and community.

Researchers living an Indigenous methodology situate themselves in their research. Kathy Absolon and Cam Willet explain that, "one of the most fundamental principles of Aboriginal research methodology is the necessity for the researcher to locate himself or herself." [20] They argue that "the only thing we can write about with authority

[17] Ibid., 430.

[18] Shawn Wilson, "What is an Indigenous Research Methodology?" *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 25, no. 2 (2001): 175.

[19] Shawn Wilson, "What is an Indigenist Research Paradigm?" *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 30, no 2 (2007): 195. In 2004, the International Indigenous Graduate Institute wrote the Proposal to Host Universities. Shawn Wilson adapted a list from this document and the writings of other Indigenous scholars which outlines the principles of an Indigenist research methodology

is our experiences and ourselves."[21] In situating oneself in the research and the research process, one also contemplates one's relationships with their community, their relatives, and home space.

My approach to knowledge follows what K. Laiana Wong calls a serendipity method of research.[22] In this approach, the researchers engage

> the phenomenological world and recognize, in that experience, answers to questions previously unformulated in any formal way…. recognition of answers among the body of one's experience, with or without being guided there by previously formulated questions, represents a more passive endeavor thereby removing the responsibility from the researcher for engaging in active efforts to make a 'discovery.' In the serendipity approach, the agency must be assigned to the knowledge itself. It is the knowledge that is responsible for revealing itself to the researcher. This is not luck nor is it a less rigorous approach. The researcher must work to be in a position to receive the knowledge at the point of revelation.[23]

Taking a serendipitous approach to research requires an acknowledgement that, as the researcher, one learns what one is exposed to and not what one wishes to learn. Knowledge reveals itself to a specific person in a specific time and a specific place. Following a holistic methodology means doing more than incorporating Indigenous perspectives into one's research. A holistic methodology requires listening with more than your ears and seeing with more than your eyes.

The works of Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Shawn Wilson, Jo-Ann Archibald, Julie Cruikshank, Barbara Meek and Keith Basso heavily influenced my methodology as I

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[20] Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett, "Putting Ourselves Forward: Location in Aboriginal Research," in *Research as Resistance*, eds. Leslie Brown and Susan Strega (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2005), 97.

[21] Ibid.

[22] K. Laiana Wong, "Hawaiian Methodologies of Indirection: Pointless vs. Pointless," in *Critical Qualitative Research in Second Language Studies: Agency and Advocacy*, ed. Kathryn Anne Davis (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2011), 151-170.

[23] Ibid., 166.

worked on this dissertation. Recent scholarship that incorporates Anishinaabemowin and the knowledge embedded in the language was exceptionally helpful. Kathleen Absolon (Minogiizhigokwe)'s *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know* provided an example of the diversity of Indigenous methodologies embedded in the language and how an Anishinaabe methodology can shape one's scholarship. These scholars and others engaged in similar works are making strides to decolonize and reclaim academic scholarship for Indigenous peoples. The narratives of Anishinaabemowin language programs at higher educational institutions are narratives of decolonization efforts. CIRM, by being situated in Indigenous communities and Indigenous worldviews, is inherently anticolonial and seeks to contribute to academic scholarship but also create space for Indigenous ways of knowing. These language classes sought similar ends by making room for an Indigenous language in western institutions.

This ethnohistorical study uses oral histories, university records, archival materials, and newspapers to demonstrate that the successes and challenges of Anishinaabemowin language programs are largely influenced by the nature and quality of relationships present at the institutions. These sources also illuminate the absence or presence of opportunities for connections to be made with Oldest Elder. For this study, I conducted over twenty-three formal interviews with members of the different academic and Anishinaabemowin communities. This number does not reflect the additional time spent with community members at gatherings, functions, and social events.

All of the individuals that I interviewed have some kind of a relationship to the language programs examined in this dissertation. This study is about relationships between individuals, communities, and the language and how each person has a

connection with Oldest Elder and others. Future developments of this research may include the voices of more individuals involved in these connections. There are speakers, teachers, and learners that could not be reached or interviewed during this stage that could add new insights, perspectives, and accounts of the development of these language programs in future research.

The selection of individuals for interviews formed in a serendipitous manner. Many of the initial interviews were conducted with individuals with whom I already had an existing relationship. Interviewees recommended many of the other individuals involved in this research and, as anyone who has worked in Native communities knows, relationships and connections are key in the community. In addition to the formal interviews conducted with individuals, informal gatherings, language circles, and conversations also informed this research, my knowledge of the language, and the concept of Oldest Elder. These informal interactions gave me courage to continue doing the research and support for the concept of Oldest Elder. All interviewees were asked for permission to record their interviews and provided consent for the use of their name or pseudonym in the research. Most interviews were conducted in person at a location of the interviewees' preference. A few select interviews were conducted over the phone when it was impossible to meet in person.

All together, the interviews I conducted totaled over thirty hours of audio interviews. The audio files and the transcriptions of the interviews are in my possession. The interviews with fluent first language Anishinaabemowin speakers are especially helpful in articulating the concept of Oldest Elder and making the connections between the language and life. While the interviews included in this research do not represent all

the members in the Anishinaabeg community, they reveal how relationships played and continue to play a central role in Anishinaabemowin revitalization efforts, especially at higher educational institutions.

In addition to interviews, I also drew upon archival documents and materials at each of the universities: Bemidji State University, University of Michigan, and Central Michigan University. At each university, I examined the department, college, and university documents available that might include information on the formation of the courses, the relationship with Anishinaabeg people, and the general tenor of relationships on the campus with Indigenous peoples. Sometimes these were institutional documents, such as those of the academic senate, and other times they were personal papers of administrators. Because many of these documents offered the dates of course approvals or petitions for adoption but lacked personal reflections on the courses, I also turned to the institution's student newspapers. These news articles revealed a sense of the relationships present on campus during particular incidents and student understandings about Anishinaabeg topics. Individuals and interviewees at the different institutions sometimes provided me with additional documents not housed in the university archives. As an Indigenist ethnohistory, this dissertation works to bring the voices of the community and the documents of the institutions together to tell a narrative of the relationships at play in the development of Anishinaabemowin language programs.

The organization of this dissertation familiarizes the reader with the framework of Oldest Elder and then proceeds to examine the language programs as individual case studies. The first chapter outlines the framework of Oldest Elder and addresses the historical relationships that Oldest Elder has endured with non-speakers and community

members. The chapter considers the connections between Anishinaabemowin and the worldview of the language. It argues that the language is a living entity with spiritual, historical, emotional, and cultural elements, similar to that of an elder in the Native community. Central to Oldest Elder is the idea of relationality and emphasis on relationships between individuals, individuals and the community as a whole, and relationships between individuals and the language itself. Successful programs are those that make room for and connections with Oldest Elder on multiple levels.

The first case study is the language program at Bemidji State University in Bemidji, Minnesota. Located in the middle of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, and White Earth Band of Ojibwe, Bemidji State University was the first higher educational institution to offer Ojibwe language courses in the United States. The courses began with adjunct classes in 1969. Today, BSU offers courses in Ojibwe culture, language, and oral literature. There are majors and minors in Ojibwe and students can earn a certificate in instruction of Ojibwe. *Oshkaabewis Native Journal*, the only academic journal of the Ojibwe language, started in 1979 at BSU and is housed and published by the university. Recently, the businesses in the town of Bemidji have partnered with the university by posting signs for products, restrooms, parking spots, and others in English and Ojibwe. This fusion of Ojibwe and English in common everyday places has gained national attention. Despite the conflicted and tense relationships that persist in the area between Native and non-Native peoples, allies in the community, and university have worked with speakers and those interested in the language to create a space for Oldest Elder. The degree of support from allies has helped negotiate and support these relationships to build the program at BSU.

The second case study at University of Michigan spans two chapters: three and four. Chapter three examines the early forces and relationships leading up to the hiring of a fluent language speaker. The tense relationship between minority students, including Native American students, and the university plays a central role in this portion of the narrative. One can imagine Oldest Elder listening, waiting, and watching the political conversations at the university during these years. Chapter four examines the creation, development, and evolution of the language program. At this point, relationships with Oldest Elder are officially developing on campus and between individuals. Those relationships would strengthen and then weaken, only to be strengthened again.

Prior to the spring of 2013, the University of Michigan had developed a reputation in the language community for being one of the leading Anishinaabemowin programs. They had two fluent language speakers and a second language learner faculty member working together to create standardized curriculum. As active members of the local communities, students in their courses were forming relationships with Oldest Elder through the language and the culture. S/*he* found academic space at the university during these years and developed a strong presence. Today, one fluent speaker remains at the university. Chapter four examines the history of the University of Michigan's Anishinaabemowin language program waxing and waning depending on the relationships in the program and in the university.

The fifth chapter and sixth chapters look at another program located in Michigan: Central Michigan University. CMU's "unique relationship" with the neighboring Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and its historical use of the nickname and mascot "Chippewas" presents an interesting case study. Throughout the university's

controversial relationship over the nickname and partnership with the tribe, Oldest Elder has been overshadowed and under-supported. The first chapter examines the evolving relationship between the university and tribe over the mascot and nickname.

Chapter six explores the unending work of a small Native American community at the university and their allies have labored to find space for Oldest Elder. They face a constant struggle. The university and nickname review committees' arguments that the nickname is the force behind Native American programming at CMU falls flat because Native people and non-Native allies worked to educate the community before the nickname took center stage at the university. While their language program began as an attempt to provide bilingual/bicultural training to educators, it has recently been reduced from a minor to a certification program within the university system.[24] The relationships with Oldest Elder on paper do not match the day-to-day relationships or lack thereof at the university. The relationships they do develop are created by the dedication and efforts her kin invest in the community despite the university's history.

The concluding chapter examines the intricate connections between the three universities examined, the individuals involved in their language programs, and the connections between people mentioned in this dissertation that extend beyond their associated academic community. An examination of personal relationships with Oldest Elder and Anishinaabemowin reveals the central force that relationships hold in people's personal journeys. As individuals struggled and worked to foster a relationship with Oldest Elder at these institutions, they were often connected to the language through

[24] Other programs were also altered to become part of the certificate program in Cultural and Global Studies. The certificates available are in African and African Diaspora Studies, American Indian Studies, Cultural Competency, East Asian Studies, European Studies, Latin American and Latino Studies, and Middle East and Islamic Studies.

personal relationships, encouraged by community members, and motivated by a drive to connect with their Anishinaabeg identity and their people's past. They were driven to forge connections with Oldest Elder. These language programs are critical and serve an important purpose but the real force is Oldest Elder's life and *s/he* lives among the people.

The significance of this dissertation is that it demonstrates the critical importance of understanding language revitalization in terms of relationships and of conceptualizing the language as a living being. It emphasizes the historical and present day importance of alliances and partnerships between communities, educational institutions, and academics in the struggle to create shared linguistic and indigenous spaces. The successful inclusion and unification between Anishinaabeg relational understandings and participation within educational spaces allows these programs to succeed in offering these language opportunities. I suggest that the concept of the Oldest Elder might help those interested in Anishinaabemowin as they work to learn and use the language. Like my grandmother, Oldest Elder remains present among Anishinaabeg peoples whenever Anishinaabemowin is spoken and the people can feel *his/her* presence.

CHAPTER 2

ZEZIIKIZIT KCHINCHINAABE AND RELATIONALITY

It is Thursday night and I am headed to the Nokomis Center in Okemos, Michigan. Michigan State University is just down the road in East Lansing. Each week the center hosts a language table open to any interested individuals and Oldest Elder is always present at these gatherings. A group of elders, primarily from the East Lansing area, but also from around the state, regularly gather to practice, share, and teach their first language with others. Many of the elders originally come from Wikwemikong on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. Wikwemikong is an unceded reserve and for many of these elders, Anishinaabemowin is their first language.

I use the cultural term Anishinaabemowin because it transcends the dialect debate between Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Odawa, and others.[25] Anishinaabemowin translates into English as the sounds the good people make; it is the language of the people. According to a December 2011 Census Report on Native North American languages spoken at home between 2006-2010, Ojibwa is among the top ten languages reported with an estimated 8,371 speakers.[26] Whether the census separated Odawa, Potawatomi, and Ojibwe/Ojibwa is unclear. The numbers of speakers in Michigan and Minnesota are much more disheartening. Unofficial estimates by community members suggest there are fewer than 1,000 speakers of Anishinaabemowin in Minnesota and even fewer in Michigan with less than one hundred. What is known is that these numbers are declining each year and the

[25] Many indigenous communities often find themselves engaged in "dialect debates" when they engage in language revitalization. Issues of which dialect to teach and learn, who to learn from, and trying to establish the revitalization in a larger academic discourse often pulls apart the community. Individuals feel torn between wanting to learn the "right" dialect instead of focusing on learning a dialect.

[26] Julie Stevens and Tiffany Julian, "Native North American Languages Spoken at Home in the United States and Puerto Rico: 2006-2010," *US Census Bureau*, December 2011.

language is threatened. It is imperative that new generations build relationships with the language. The presence of Oldest Elder is dependent on the maintenance and continued formation of relationships between speakers and the language. These relationships are the responsible for increasing Oldest Elder's presence and strength. While the Anishinaabeg Oldest Elder is better off than some other languages, its presence is still endangered. Anishinaabemowin classes and language circles seek to build new relationships and rekindle and nurture existing ones.

As I pull into a small parking lot, I see some elders walking towards the brightly painted building. It is a decent size building with an entry way and two large rooms on either side. Visitors walk into the building and are surrounded by written resources on American Indian people and gift shop items. As I park my car and start to walk towards the building, I might greet another attendee with *Aniin, Aniish inaa* (Hi, how are you)? Depending on how early we all are, people are usually talking, catching up on the latest news, and joking with each other in small groups while waiting for the doors to be opened. Sometimes, after a good rain comes through the area, we might even run from our cars to the building to escape the mosquitos. We would laugh and tease each other when *zagime* (mosquitos) swarm some individuals more than others.

Once inside, the language circle is usually in one of the large rooms. People bring snacks and there is coffee or tea available. Over the course of an hour or two, the elders and fluent speakers lead the group over new words, phrases, and ways to speak the language. When a word arises that an elder disagrees with or feels has been mistranslated, the group of speakers in the room begin discussing the word or concept together in the language. It is a wonderful experience to listen and observe as they

remember stories where the word would apply and dissect how people would say it back home. To reach an agreement on a particular word or phrase, they draw on their own experiences, memories, and understanding of the words and share them with the entire table. More often than not, these conversations are marked with jokes, laughter, stories, and additional knowledge of when a person uses one word over another for a different situation. The entire language table gathering is generally filled with laughter, teasing, stories, and explanations as we learn and share the language. As we go around the table, taking turns speaking the words out loud, there is a feeling of camaraderie and happiness that comes over the group. You know that through the language everyone is connecting with Oldest Elder and s/*he* is present in the room. When the language table concludes and people start to leave the building together, it is not uncommon to hear someone express that they *really needed this tonight*, how good it feels to be there, and how it heals the soul.

Whether attending a formal language table gathering, a small circle of language learners or a group of friends who practice together for the fun of it, similar sentiments are present. Practicing and learning the language brings a kind of peace to people, rekindles the soul, and renews connections between peoples, cultures, communities, and identities. It is a medicine for the soul in the same way that a hug from a grandparent or guidance from an elder might be soothing. Over the years that I have been engaged in learning Anishinaabemowin and working with other individuals seeking a relationship with the language, I have come to recognize Anishinaabemowin through an Indigenous perspective as an Oldest Elder and language learning as the development of relationships. The connections and relationships between language, culture, history, kinship, and

worldview are the heart of Oldest Elder. Before language revitalization programs can be examined through an understanding of Oldest Elder, these connections and relationships require examination. This chapter explores the different facets of Oldest Elder and how *s/he* shapes the relationships Anishinaabeg peoples have with the language. Central to this undertaking is viewing language and *his/her* history relationally.

While the term relationality appears simple enough, it is a complex and unique epistemological understanding of oneself and the surrounding world. Research and scholarship on language has historically been conducted in the Western tradition where the responsibility of knowledge rests on the individual researcher. The individual seeks out knowledge, acquires it, and then possesses it. Knowledge becomes a "thing" that can be possessed, owned, and controlled. An Indigenous paradigm approaches research from the standpoint that knowledge is its own being.

Knowledge is always shared because it is not a "thing" that exists but rather wisdom shared in relationships. Wisdom comes to a person because it was shared with them and they in turn, have a responsibility to share that knowledge with others. Receiving knowledge also means accepting the responsibility to honor the giver of knowledge, the knowledge itself, and to give back to others with the knowledge. In an Indigenous paradigm, knowledge does not exist outside of relationships because nothing exists outside of relationships.[27] Relational knowledge means understanding sees the world in terms of relationships, reciprocity, inter-dependence, and inter-relatedness. It goes beyond the idea that people are connected and related. It is knowing oneself as a

[27] Wilson, "Indigenous Research Methodology," 177.

synthesis of life and seeing and experiencing the world as living embodiment of these interdependencies and connections.

One's very identity is composed of relationships. Indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson explains this understanding: "Rather than viewing ourselves as being *in* relationship with other people or things, we *are* the relationships that we hold and are part of."[28] Instead of seeing people as something separate from oneself, one understands others by the connections between oneself and that person. The focus and process of research changes from an individual process to a lived, embodied, and internalized understanding of the world and the knowledge in it as relationships.

Dr. Brian Yazzie Burkhart, professor of American Indian Studies at California State University, Northridge, explores the differences between American Indian philosophy and traditional western philosophy in his works. He provides one of the clearest distinctions between the two philosophies by examining Descartes's statement Cogito, Ergo Sum, I think therefore I am. Native philosophy, he explains, is based on the principle "We are therefore I am."[29] It is through the collective relationships that one exists. The primacy of the individual in a relational philosophy is negated by the fact that the individual only exists because of the relationships and existence of others. "I must account for all that I see, but also all that you see and all that has been seen by others," Burkhart explains.[30] Relational knowledge and worldview sees the connections rather

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[28] Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Black Point: Fernwood Publishers, 2008), 80.

[29] Brian Yazzie Burkhart, "What Coyote and Thales Can Teach Us: An Outline of American Indian Epistemology," in *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*. Ed. Anne Waters (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), 25.

[30] Ibid., 25-26.

than the divide. When it comes to searching for knowledge or truth, instead of looking outward as an external entity, "reality is in the relationship that one has with the truth. Thus an object or thing is not as important as one's relationships to it…reality is relationships or sets of relationships."[31] A relational understanding is based on the principles of inter-relatedness, inter-existence, and experiential embodied knowledge.

Burkhart calls experiential embodied knowledge the "principle of meaning-making of the world. There is no world, no truth, without meaning and value, and meaning and value arise in the intersection between us and all that is around us," he writes.[32] It is through one's actions that significance is made and found. The actions are small and large, internal and external. Even in the act of asking a question, meaning and solution are more likely to be found in the question, the motivations, and the relationship between the asker and the question than in some external body of knowledge.[33] A relational philosophy requires self-reflection, self-awareness, and lived application of relationality. One must acknowledge, understand, and reciprocate with all of one's relations.

Historically, academic scholarship has been based in the western academic tradition. It is only in recent years that scholars have been able to introduce and recognize Oldest Elder and the importance of relationality in the field of academia. The ivory tower has long been guarded by the western tradition with the intent to prevent Oldest Elder's presence. Recently, small spaces are being made for *his/her* presence in

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[31] Wilson, *Research is Ceremony,* 73.

[32] Burkhart, "What Coyote and Thales Can Teach Us," 16-17.

[33] Ibid., 17.

Indigenous studies and in language revitalization programs. Other fields of inquiry such as science, medicine, education, and philosophy are also starting to increase their awareness and acknowledgement of relationality. Individual scholars are forming relationships with Oldest Elder and making space at the table for relationally based knowledge. This is significant progress for re-establishing relational knowledge as a methodology and decolonizing research. However, owning and living a relational worldview is what makes those beliefs and understandings real.[34]

Relationality and relationships with Oldest Elder are not ideas one acknowledges in their formal work and then forgets when one goes home. These relationships form the core of a person's approach to the world around them and are lived relationships. Cora Weber-Pillwax, in discussing Indigenous research, explains that one has to integrate "our own ways of being and knowing and doing" into daily practices because "it is we who give it life."[35] Weber-Pillwax addresses the issue of using Indigenous methodologies in research primarily by Indigenous scholars. However, the principle holds true about a general relational worldview as well. It is by living the worldview that it exists. There are certain populations, most often Indigenous, that have a historical relationship with relational worldviews and elements of their language, culture, and identity are understood through relationships. Oldest Elder is present in these connections through language, culture and, community practices.

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[34] Wilson, "Indigenous Research Methodology," 178.

[35] Cora Weber-Pillwax, "What is an Indigenous Research?" *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 25, no. 2 (2001): 169.

A relational understanding is not limited to one particular group, race, culture, or population of people. Whether it is applied while conducting research or in the everyday tasks of life, a person can broaden their scope of the world and reconfigure their thought patterns to adopt a relational worldview. The process of gaining a greater awareness and new ways of thinking, viewing and, experiencing the world is not easy. It involves a significant amount of introspection and putting oneself outside of one's comfort zone. There is generally a period of romanticizing and stereotyping that occurs when one first starts venturing into an effort to understand another culture. However, if one continues to engage in self-reflection, recognizing and, dismantling elements of one's romanticism and misconceptions of another culture, a greater awareness can emerge.[36] It is the intentions and actions of a person that influence their relationships and worldview. A relational worldview requires that the individual be accountable to all of one's relations and reflect on the multitude of relationships that one has.

For many Indigenous peoples, relationality includes the ancestors and future generations. Indigenous people, like the Anishinaabeg, have a historically compounded relationship with language that includes attempts by European peoples attempting to eradicate their culture and language through "civilization" efforts of missionaries, boarding schools, and legal policies. Language ideologies and policies towards Indigenous languages, including Anishinaabemowin, have had a tremendous impact on communities and individual's abilities to maintain a relationship with their Oldest Elder. James Merrell's work *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania*

[36] Wilson, "Indigenist Research Paradigm," 194. It is the choice that a researcher makes on whether to follow an Indigenist paradigm or a western paradigm that determines their relationships, not their biological or ethnic/racial identity.

Frontier provides an excellent example of the unequal power dynamics between indigenous and European languages during the Colonial period of American history. Social elites and politicians regarded individuals who served as go-betweens between Colonial forces and American Indian counterparts with mistrust and some measure of distain for their association with Indigenous peoples.[37] The acquisition of American Indian languages generally required a considerable amount of time spent with fluent speakers. A translator's obtained proficiency in an Indigenous language by living with speakers and forming relationships with community members. Society understood these behaviors to be unbecoming for colonists and especially for gentlemen.[38]

In Anishinaabeg country, translators, and go-betweens were often traders or children of French traders and Anishinaabe *Ikweg* (women). Relationships with Oldest Elder persisted over time as Anishinaabeg people selectively adapted to the evolving political dynamics in the Great Lakes region. For example, when patrilineal-based clan membership was not available due to interracial relationships, children of these relationships maintained their connections with Oldest Elder through matrilineal clans. These children potentially worked as go-betweens and were often exposed to multiple languages. Despite these efforts, non-Native political and religious leaders of the time understood that tolerance and use of Indigenous languages was merely a means to an end.

American Indian languages, both spoken and written, were intricately tied to the colonial agenda of dispossessing American Indian peoples of their land and to religious conversion. Missionaries and translators learned American Indian languages as long as it

[37] James Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 32.

[38] Ibid., 54- 105.

was necessary but with the understanding that it enabled them to achieve their goals. Frederic Baraga's 1852 *Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language* is one of the fundamental dictionaries produced by missionaries on Anishinaabemowin. Baraga, like other priests, acquired Anishinaabemowin so that he could preach to Anishinaabeg peoples without the need of a translator. The creation of Indigenous writing systems, grammars, and dictionaries served to translate religious texts for the purpose of conversion. After the establishment of the United States of America, federal Indian policies formally linked the ideas of progress and civilization with education and the English language.

During the 1800s, federal legislation such as the 1819 Civilization Fund Act and the 1887 General Allotment Act included measures focused on Indian education. Early education efforts took the form of missionary day schools. In 1879, the establishment of the Carlisle school ushered in a period of boarding school education that would have a cataclysmic impact on the relationship between speakers and their Oldest Elder. Within twenty years after Carlisle opened its doors, twenty-five residential schools were established and functioning across the United States.[39] While missionaries had turned to American Indian languages in their attempt to convert children, new educators, supported by federal policies, sought to eradicate American Indian languages from generations of children. They recognized the power of Oldest Elder and *her* relationships with Indian peoples. By stripping children of that relationship and connection with Oldest Elder, they hoped to dismantle the children's identities and replace them with Euro-American culture.

[39] Brenda Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1998), 6.

Different forms of punishment for speaking one's mother tongue are well documented in the literature. Generations of children who attended boarding schools lost or faced strained relationships with their community, culture, and language because of their experiences. Often absent from their home communities for years at a time, especially during their critical formative years, children often returned home unable to communicate in their mother tongues. They missed the opportunity to continue developing relationships with family and community members and partake in cultural and spiritual activities. Their relationships with their Oldest Elders were shriveled and in some cases destroyed. The disjuncture for the parents and community members also impacted their relationships with Oldest Elder. The loss of generations meant that elders were unable to pass their knowledge to the younger generations. Today, the aftershock of the boarding school experience continues in the communities. During several of my interviews and interactions within language circles, elders told stories of parents choosing not to teach their children the language in order to protect them. Generation after generation, the trauma of losing the relationship with Oldest Elder was transferred to the next generation. The formal and informal policies regarding American Indian languages continue to have a detrimental impact on the relationships with Oldest Elder.

Relational understandings of language recognize the role socialization plays in language acquisition and how history of linguistic genocide has impacted Indigenous languages. These different and varied experiences shaped and continue to shape the relationships individuals, families, and communities have with languages. The emotional damage of losing Oldest Elder reverberates in the communities. Since knowledge is

embodied and experiential, the younger generation's experience with Oldest Elder is shaped and influenced by the experiences of older community members.

In addition to having a shared history and relationship with languages, connections between Oldest Elder and the individual are bound within the language. Languages are imbued with the philosophy and worldview of the speaker by semantics and grammatical categories. The language(s) that one speaks and understands helps shape how one understands the world. This is not to say that one must be fluent in another language to see another worldview, rather that the blueprints for worldviews are found in languages. It is no coincidence then that populations, often Indigenous, who see the world in terms of relationality also have languages that support this worldview.

In languages, accumulated knowledge is embedded into the words, phrases, and very construction of the language. The languages look at existence subjectively and in relationship to oneself and one's relationships.[40] The way that the language conceptualizes and transmits information and knowledge reveals its relational orientation. Some scholars, such as Robert Leavitt, argue that this is the most important difference between euro-western and Indigenous languages. Leavitt and multiple first language speakers that I worked with have provided examples of this difference. They explain that in English, speakers separate aspects of objects from the actual object. The size, color, texture, or shape of an object is a separate element of the object and understood as an abstract construction. In Indigenous languages, the properties of an object are perceived by the speaker and incorporated into the identification of an object. Words describe the objects by incorporating information about the object's function, movement, shape,

[40] Willie Ermine, "Aboriginal Epistemology," in *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, eds. Marie Battiste and Jean Barman (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), 104.

nature, and other facets. In Malisett, Leavitt explains "speakers do not ordinarily talk about shapes in isolation from the natural and manufactured objects around them."[41] A word for an object incorporates descriptions into the name.

The logic and organizational reasoning of a language reflects and interconnects with the speaker's culture and worldview. Leavitt argues that "speakers of North American Native Languages do not necessarily organize reasoning according to a linear sequence of cause-and effect, or axioms-theorems-corollaries, as do speakers of European languages" and one can see this in the language.[42] To emphasize the importance of relationships in Indigenous languages, Shawn Wilson shares an interaction he had with his father about the Cree word for couch and how it means "someplace where you sit…Rather than call it a sofa, rather than calling it an object, you name it through your relationship to it," he explained.[43] It all goes back to connections and the connecting space between elements.

An Anishinaabeg worldview and the Anishinaabeg language are relational as well. There are spiritual, historical, cultural, and linguistic aspects to an Anishinaabeg relational understanding of language. All of these aspects are intimately connected to each other in shaping a relational worldview. Recent scholarship on Anishinaabeg subjects has increasingly addressed the centrality of relationships in Anishinaabeg studies. A growing number of scholars across a variety of disciplines are reconnecting

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[41] Robert Leavitt, "Language and Cultural Content in Native Education," in *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, ed. Marie Battiste and Jean Barman (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), 129-130.

[42] Ibid., 131.

[43] Wilson, "Indigenous Research Methodology," 177.

with Oldest Elder and incorporating the language into their personal and professional work. They are incorporating the language in their work and recognizing the power that relationships have in language, knowledge, and stories. The relationships between them all are, as Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair explains, "strands that connect Anishinaabeg with everything around us across space, time and geography."[44] Stories and the language are gifts that ancestors used to build relationships with the world around them with the knowledge that they were also building relationships with the future generations through Oldest Elder.[45]

Anishinaabemowin is intricately connected to Anishinaabeg stories. Embedded within words and the language are stories and gateways to understanding the world. The essence of the language is a reverential and spiritual element. One story of how the language came to the people involves the Manitous.[46] Basil Johnston explains that the Anishinaabeg are the "off-spring of manitous, best translated as the 'mysteries.'"[47] For the Anishinaabeg, Johnston argues, it is common for one's mind and spirit to "enter the world of spirits and manitous who reside in the skies and to find therewith inspiration."[48] Johnston's account of the language coming to the people begins with a young man whose

[44] Jill Doerfler, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Bagijige: Making an Offering," in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories*, eds. Jill Doerfler, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013), xxiii.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Many people refer to these strong and power spirits as Manitous but more recently people use the spelling Minido. Alphonse Pitawanakwat shared with me that Minido is the more common way to spell the word today.

[47] Basil Johnston, *Th!nk Indian: Languages Are Beyond Price* (Wiarton: Kegedonce Press, 2011), 7.

[48] Ibid., 11.

"spirit was taken into the skies, directly to the abode of the Autissokaunuk (Muses), the patrons of music and of echoes and of prophecies."[49] There he sang a chant in the language of the manitous and they sang for him too since they had summoned him to their home in the sky and in doing so gave him their language. "They then returned him to earth," Johnston writes.[50] "As the manitous, for that is what the Autissokaunuk are," he continues, "summoned him to their presence, so the young man could, with the language conferred upon him, summon the manitous for their help and guidance on behalf of the people."[51] Thus, a reciprocal relationship between the spirits and the people was formed with the language.

Anishinaabemowin, as a language gifted to the people by spiritual powers, is a link between the spiritual world and everyday world. Native peoples have tried to explain and defend their unique relationship with the world that is separate from European American's experiences for thousands of years. They have given speeches, written books, and sought to live their lives on other own terms. From Seneca leader Sagoyewatha's (Red Jacket's) speeches concerning self-determination to the individual Anishinaabeg grandparent speaking to their children, this sentiment has been repeated throughout history: the Creator gave Indigenous people their own understanding of the world and this understanding is embedded in the language. Examples of this belief still remain today among Anishinaabemowin speakers.

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[49] Ibid. In conversations with elder and fluent speaker Alphonse Pitawanakwat, he explained that Autissokaunuk translates to the Manitous in the heaven or in the sky. In talking about them, one would call the beings Aansokaanag.

[50] Ibid., 12.

[51] Ibid.

Niibaa-giishig-ibah (Sleeping Sky or Evening Sky), also known as Archie Mosay-ibah (1901-1996) from the St. Croix community, did not attend school past second grade. His parents, instead, kept him at home and taught him the "art and rituals of traditional Indian religious leadership."[52] Anishinaabemowin was his first language and the only language he knew until he was a teenager. In all of his spiritual endeavors, he only used Anishinaabemowin, and believed that '"The spirit doesn't understand me when I use English.'"[53] This is a belief that is commonly spoken of as a motivating factor for people learning the language and among speakers. Larry Smallwood, a language speaker and teacher from Mille Lacs, explained during an interview, "People don't realize that our language has a spiritual purpose. We need that language for our ceremonies. When we go to the Spirit World, we need that language to be understood by the Creator."[54] There is a spiritual relationship between the language, the speaker, and the manitous.

Among individuals, language use during an introduction also establishes a relationship between individuals and situates them within a linguistic and cultural context. At meetings, gatherings, and cultural events, it is common protocol to give an introduction of oneself, preferably in Anishinaabemowin. Individuals state one's name, clan, and home in Ojibwe, English, or both depending on the speaker's preference and knowledge of the language. The order of information sometimes changes, depending on the event and people present, but the same critical information is shared. One's clan identification is important because it situates an individual into the kin-based social and

[52] Anton Treuer Ed., *Living Our Language: Ojibwe Tales and Oral Histories* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001), 19.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ermine, "Aboriginal Epistemology," 4.; Robert DesJarlait, "Reclaiming the Language: Native American Preservation Efforts in Minnesota," *The Circle*, September 30, 2000.

political system at large and into a context shared with others at the event.[55] The clan system predates the establishment of today's tribal governments and reservations. For many peoples, one's clan is a stronger identification of oneself than a geographical location or tribal label.[56] If an individual lives primarily off of the reservation or away from their home base, they usually give the reservation where their family is from or where they are enrolled members.

By introducing themselves in this manner, the participants are brought into a shared experience of language revitalization that acknowledges their role and place within that context through relationships of kinship, location, and knowledge of the language. Chad Uran, an anthropologist and White Earth Anishinaabe scholar, explains that this process "creates a conceptual, emotional, and physical place for participants to learn and grow through language and social interaction" and the language serves as an access point between the individuals and Anishinaabeg worldview.[57] How one introduces oneself to another brings the relational focus to the community, the connections between people, and the shared experience of engaging with the language, and invites Oldest Elder into the experience of each individual and the group as a whole.

There are community-based relationships with the language but also more immediate relationships within family units. During a conversation together, first language Ojibwe speaker and teacher Howard Kimewon shared that there are certain terms in Ojibwe that are predominantly used among family members and are more about

[55] Chad Uran, "From Internalized Oppression to Internalized Sovereignty: Ojibwemowin Performance and Political Consciousness," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 46.

[56] Niigaanwewiidan "Joshua Hudson," interview by author, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, July 25, 2013.

[57] Uran, "Internalized Oppression to Internalized Sovereignty," 46- 48.

the people involved and the relationships between those people than the subject being spoken of:

> The way I was raised was [by family]. I was taught by my grandmother, my grandfather, my mother, my dad, and my brothers. They'd build a house or something. They'd build a chickencoop [and] they'd say ka-mazoowiikaanaa. Ka-mazoowiikaanaa maanda zhiitoowing. Ka-mazoowiikaanaa maanda zhiitoowing. We're gonna work together and do this. Ahi Kanaadamaadimi. Kanaadamaadimi is just an everyday word. In family you use those words. The strength of the word is gonna bring strength to what you do. When you say Ka-mazoowiikaanaa, its just another way of saying we'll put strength in what were doing. We'll put all our muscle together when we're doing this that way we'll get it done. All these little words you come to, you see everyday words that you'll never find in your dictionary. There are certain terms you use only in the family.[58]

How one says or phrases an expression or thought in Ojibwe is determined by oneself, to whom one is speaking, and the context and relationship between all parties involved. For families and communities, shared experiences, knowledge, and interactions become apparent in the language. Dialect differences, for example, are results of different historical events within particular areas and populations. Potawatomi has different but understandable words borrowed from neighboring communities such as the Sauk (Sac), Meskwaki (Fox), and Menominee. Communities that lived around areas of heavy migration learned and incorporated new terms. Words in Ojibwe and Odawa are different because of nasal accents and the use or disuse of vowels in particular words,

[58] Howard Kimewon, interview by author, Ann Arbor, Michigan, January 3, 2010.; Other speakers might say the same concept with a slightly different word. Alphonse Pitawanakwat would use the word ka-mazookaanaa to mean the same concept of putting family strength together to do something. Zhiitoowing, he explains, means "building, constructing or making" and ka-naadamaadimi means "we will help each other."

but a person with a solid foundation in one way of speaking can generally recognize the words being used after a period of adjustment.[59]

During an interview, Howard Kimewon shared that "The language is no struggle for me, I live it seven days a week."[60] When telling me a story about an administrator who asked how many hours he was spending in the language at other programs, he said

> So I told him, I said: 'I live the language 365 days a year, 7 days a week.' Whatever I think is all in the language. When I wake up in the morning, my mind is always in the language. I don't have to make no worksheets. When I dream at night, my dreams come in the language. I told him everything. There's nothing to hide. So he asked me how many hours I spend over there, so I told him how many hours I spend in the language in my mind. Everything I do is in the language.[61]

Oldest Elder and *his/her* understanding are embedded in the language for fluent speakers and new language learners alike. When one breaks down the meaning of the words in Anishinaabemowin, there is a greater meaning and action behind them. First language speaker, renowned educator, and Anishinaabe elder Basil Johnston explains that in Ojibwe, "all words have three levels of meaning; there is the surface meaning that everyone instantly understands. Beneath this meaning is a more fundamental meaning derived from the prefixes and their combinations with other terms. Underlying both is the philosophical meaning."[62]

During a conversation with two elders and fluent Anishinaabemowin speakers, James Fox and Alphonse Pitawanakwat, we discussed number of examples where the

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[59] Alphonse Pitawanakwat, interview by author, East Lansing, Michigan, January 1, 2010.

[60] Howard Kimewon, interview by author, Ann Arbor, Michigan, January 3, 2010.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Johnston, *Th!nk Indian,* 77-78.

language has these meanings and underlying contexts. James Fox explained that words are

> Description. The words, every word in the Anishinaabe language, you're describing everything. When you say the words, whatever your writing, you're saying, you're describing it. All details. It's not just the words. That's the way. For a little example, you know how Aaniin started? *Hello. Aaniin. It's me. Aaniin.* Ya know somebody walking way over there, towards the dark and you don't know [them], *'Ah-Niin' its me!* That guy [is] approaching your camp. He says it's me because if he doesn't express himself, you don't know who it is. So they change it to Aaniin. Everything is described.[63]

As our conversation continued, they continued to provide examples of how names for things break down into descriptions of what they do, of their nature or how they connect to a story about them. The word for bear, *mkwa*, is about the track marks that bears leave behind. "*Meedwin* is rattlesnake. The sound maker. Because it makes a sound with its tail. *Giigoong*, because in the water…like *gogii*…diving. So everything's described," Fox shared.[64] Pitawanakwat elaborated that *giigoong* and *gogii* have a relationship based on the act of diving: it is "that thing that dives in the water. The thing that keeps diving."[65] We also discussed animals not native to North America such as a kangaroo, guinea pig, and others and how one talks about them in the language.

For fun, we played around with possible ways of describing these animals and often ended up laughing at the different combinations and possibilities. For example, Fox and Pitawanakwat explained the name for monkey: "*Daamaakamezhig*. The bug picker. The head bug picker. Everything you're saying," they told me, "is description.

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[63] James Fox, interview by author, East Lansing, Michigan, January 1, 2010.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Alphonse Pitawanakwat, interview by author, East Lansing, Michigan, January 1, 2010.

So that's what they call *Daamaakamezhig*. Monkey. It describes what it does."[66] Basil Johnston gives more examples in his speeches and published works on the depth of description in the language. The word for old man, for instance, *akiwaehnzee* is comprised of *aki*, meaning "land, earth, soil, ground, continent, as it forms the core, the muscle, the fiber of other words…. "Aki" or earth combined with "waehnzee" meaning leaning or upon, bending toward, relying on, produces the concept of an old man bending ever closer to the earth which describes one of the results of aging."[67] Johnston also gives readers examples of the three layers of meaning in Ojibwe words.

The word, *w'daeb-awae means* "he or she is telling the truth, is correct, is right."[68] The expression has a much deeper and more philosophical meaning as well. The expression, he explains

> is not merely an affirmation of a speaker's veracity. It is as well a philosophical proposition that in saying a speaker casts his words and his voice as far as his perception and his vocabulary will enable him or her, it is a denial that there is such a thing as absolute truth; that the best and the most the speaker can achieve, and a listener expect, is the highest degree of accuracy….that one expression, 'w'daeb-awae,' sets the limits to a single statement, as well as setting limits to truth and the scope and exercise of speech.[69]

Words like *w'daeb-awae*, *akiwaehnzee*, *daamaakamezhig*, *meedwin*, and others find their words and meaning from their use in a context and in relationship with each other and parts of themselves. Johnston writes "words take on new dimensions only in conjunction and by union with other words. A word may indeed have its own meaning,

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[66] James Fox and Alphonse Pitawanakwat, interview by author, East Lansing, Michigan, January 1, 2010.

[67] Johnston, *Th!nk Indian*, 31.

[68] Ibid., 78.

[69] Ibid.

gender, habit, mood, voice, sound, and exist along, but it is only in relation with other words that it can acquire greater sense and impart sense to other words."[70] It is the relationship between the words that creates new words and new expressions and understandings. These two elements support each other's existence and a relational understand of language recognizes, respects, and lives within this relationship. Anishinaabe words do not exist outside of relationships.

An example of living a relational understanding of Anishinaabemowin might be as simple as knowing that "native place names are not just sounds; they are full of meaning to the speakers of the language."[71] When looking at a map of the Great Lakes, Anishinaabemowin place names are spread out across the map. The names are sometimes Anglicized, but one can still see Oldest Elder in the words. Lakes and towns with the name "Manitou" dot the maps and stand out to an Anishinaabemowin speaker. People with some knowledge of the common translation might know that the place has something to do with spirits. Do they know how that place became associated with the spirits and mysteries? Do they see the deeper meaning and the historical origins of common day words like Mississippi and Chicago and the numerous others? Can they recognize the presence of Oldest Elder? Cities, communities, and places known on maps by English names often have Anishinaabeg names as well that are full of description and meaning. Ultimately, as Basil Johnston reminds his readers, "The end of language is to glean some understanding of the transcendental, the world, life, being, human nature, laws, physical and human-inspired" whether it be in place names, phrases or the stories

[70] Ibid., 39.

[71] Ibid., 51.

embedded in words.[72] When linguists begin addressing this understanding of the transcendental, the conversation turns to discussions of animacy versus inanimacy in the language.

Roger Spielmann, a second language learner of Anishinaabemowin and a professor of Native Studies, explains, "the verb is the heart of the Ojibwe language and how it is put together in the language is extremely complex."[73] In Anishinaabemowin, there are four categories of verbs. They

> are based on whether the subject or object is animate (that is, considered to be a living entity in the culture) or inanimate (that is, considered to be in some sense non-living), and whether the construction of the sentence is transitive (where there is a subject and an object) or intransitive (where there is a subject but no object).[74]

What English speakers might view as inanimate, a car for example, might be considered animate in Anishinaabemowin. "This, he explains, "expresses the traditional Ojibwe view of person-objects which are other-than-human but which have the same ontological status—that is, the same qualities as beings."[75]

A rock is another common example of an inanimate object in English but a living animate being in Anishinaabemowin. "The distinction," Spielmann explains, "between what is animate and what is inanimate is not always clear to the non-speaker and relates to a distinctly Ojibwe way of perceiving the world."[76] Speakers of Anishinaabemowin focus on the fluidity and relatedness between the person speaking and their relationships

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[72] Ibid., 43-44.

[73] Roger Spielmann, *'You're So Fat!': Exploring Ojibwe Discourse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 46.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

with the subject. One speaker may identify an entity as being animate and in another conversation identify it as inanimate depending on the contexts of the conversation and the intentions of the speaker.

Some speakers and teachers of the language argue that the linguistic discussions should be more focused on the relationships between the speaker and the entity than a classification of the noun or verb. The linguistic discussions are focused so intently on the rules of the language that they sometimes miss the fluidity that arises from Oldest Elder's relationships. During a group conversation with language student Stacie Sheldon and language instructors Howard Kimewon and Margaret Noodin, the topic of animate and inanimate words came up. Sheldon offered a story to explain the difference. "Three elders could be sitting down," she said, "and they would see a fawn. And they would all, depending on the mood they are in and who they are, they would all talk about that fawn in a different way."[77] The emphasis is less on the entity, the fawn, and more on how the speaker experiences a relationship with the particular fawn. Instead of focusing on the two entities, the speaker and the fawn, the focus is on the space and connections between them. Oldest Elder is manifested in these relationships and the manner in which a speaker relates with the language.

Margaret Noodin also explained that "most fluent speakers would tell you that it's not animate or inanimate."[78] For "most really, really fluent people, because they'll use different ways, it depends on their relationship to that object in their particular discourse. It is a discourse choice made by the speaker at the time" based on their relationship to the

[77] Stacie Sheldon, interview by author, Ann Arbor, Michigan, January 3, 2010.

[78] Margaret (Noori) Noodin, interview by author, Ann Arbor, Michigan, January 3, 2010.

subject.[79] For Howard Kimewon, the terms animate and inanimate are not true representations of possibilities in the language. "In my world," he said, "there is no animate and inanimate. People just bring that along. I could make anything alive…It's how you talk about it…You could make anything alive in the language."[80] Rupert Ross explains the centrality of connections in Anishinaabeg culture when he reflects on what he learned while speaking with Indigenous communities on justice. "They describe their 'verb-world' as one where each person's primary focus is not on each separate thing," he writes, "but on all the movements and relationships between things."[81] The "focus is on the many processes in which we all participate, at every instant in everyday."[82]

Through the language the relationship with Oldest Elder becomes stronger and relationality is practiced more intensely. It is helpful to think of Oldest Elder in terms of an extended family network. There is a shared history and shared cultural elements within a family, even if the relatives are distantly related. They are still related and connected. If one chooses, the individuals can strengthen that relationship with distant relatives in the same way they can develop and strengthen their relationship with Oldest Elder.

Who or what is this Oldest Elder? The Oldest Elder, Anishinaabemowin, is a living ally. S/*he* is an elder and evolving spiritual force. *S/he* is connected to Anishinaabeg people through language speakers, language learners and through a shared

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Howard Kimewon, interview by author, Ann Arbor, Michigan, January 3, 2010.

[81] Rupert Ross, *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2006), 239.

[82] Ibid.

history of the language. Even individuals, who have lost their connection to the language, can rekindle that relationship by finding Oldest Elder through the language and kinship connections with speakers of the past and present.

The Oldest Elder is a living entity. At language circles and language immersion camps when participants introduce themselves in the language and establish "a conceptual, emotional, and physical place for participants to learn and grow" they are also "caring" for the language.[83] Caring for the language, according to Chad Uran, is also "caring for the Ojibwe culture, history, people, land and nation" and is an act of sovereignty.[84] At these events and gatherings, he argues, "the overarching goal is for each participant to enter into a personal relationship with the living ally of Ojibwe sovereignty and revitalization—Ojibwemowin."[85] Taking care of the language and recognizing the life that is in the language is nothing new for members of the language community. Individuals engaged in language revitalization struggles and the general study of languages are familiar with the expression "the languages are dying." We speak of language death because we recognize the intimate relationship between speakers and the life force of a language.

Oldest Elder is in many ways, a spiritual ally for speakers as they navigate today's predominately English and western world. As a gift from the manitous, the language is a spiritual element connects the language to the greater mysteries in the Anishinaabeg universe. Oldest Elder is one of these mysteries that is both the language and a spiritual

[83] Uran, "Internalized Oppression to Internalized Sovereignty," 48.

[84] Ibid., 53.

[85] Ibid., 57.

entity. They are one and the same. Ceremonies and religious acts are communicated in the language because Anishinaabemowin is the language of the spirits as well as the people. The word itself, Anishinaabemowin, is an act of being, of speaking the language of the people. The language exists because of speakers and those who care for the language. When people who are striving to learn the language, talk about their experiences and the reasons for learning the language, an awakening often occurs. People become more connected to their identity, their history, and sense of self through the language. It is like going home to visit one's grandparents and feeling that sense of being in the right place, of being connected and present.

Second language learner and Anishinaabemowin teacher, Mondageesokwe explained the importance of the connections to me in one of our conversations: "All that we are as Anishinaabeg people is held within our language. To not have our language, is to lose our identity, our history, our worldview and ways of knowing."[86] When asked what learning the language meant to her, she replied, "It is my birthright. To be able to think in Anishinaabemowin is to think and see the world in a non-western way. It is a victory against the genocide of our people to pick up that language and culture and carry it and pass it on to the next generation. We as a people have survived."[87] In multiple interviews, people expressed that the language helps them feel complete as an individual. The language helps them know who they are and serves as a healing tool for the individual and larger community. Second language learner Josh Hudson shared that

[86] Mondageesokwe "Melanie Sunstorm Fish," correspondence with author, April 13, 2010.

[87] Ibid.

> It is a healing process. You're healing those old wounds. It's healing for the community, for me and my family and my friends to learn the language. It's healing for everyone involved in the community…Oldest Elder is medicine. You carry the medicine with you wherever you go, just as you carry the language with you. Language is a form of medicine. Language is powerful. It's living. It's a being. Speaking the language is putting good into the world.[88]

The elders especially enjoy seeing the younger ones learning the language and forming another relationship with Oldest Elder.

Elders have a unique and special role in Indigenous and Anishinaabeg communities. They are knowledge keepers, storytellers, and historians of their communities. In that the same way, Anishinaabemowin is the Oldest Elder because the language has been part of the Anishinaabeg people since their beginning. Oldest Elder has accumulated vast amounts of knowledge about life and embodies this knowledge in words, phrases, and stories. Oldest Elder has survived thousands of years of history and that history is embodied within the language. As new knowledge and words are embedded within the language and knowledge of Oldest Elder, Oldest Elder adapts and evolves with the people. This ability to survive is one of Oldest Elder's strengths that enable disconnected people to return to the language.

The same way that a grandparent loves children as they change and grow, so too is Oldest Elder there for speakers regardless of the different dialects and accents they might have. Regardless of starting point of the relationship, whether someone has a long history with the language, is a new language learner, or is non-ethnically Anishinaabeg, Oldest Elder is welcoming to those seeking a connection. In many communities, speakers and learners are torn apart by the arguments surrounding the "correct" dialect for that community or cultural group. These debates and divides can tear communities,

[88] Niigaanwewiidan "Joshua Hudson," interview by author, April 10, 2010.

language programs, and people apart. New language learners can get caught up in the debates to the point that they lose the momentum to learn the language. Basil Johnston's response to the dialect debate and struggles surrounding dialects is that there is no word in the language to convey dialect. Instead, according to his friends and elders he spoke with, people used to say '"pekaun igoh pongee,' or 'just a little different' in describing those differences in accent and in usage…these differences in dialect did not matter enough to our ancestors to prejudice their talking to one another."[89]

Oldest Elder has many purposes. For some individuals, it might be a helpful way to understand relationality and a relational view of the language. Others might take comfort in the idea of the language being an elder that they can turn to and know they are always welcome and wanted in the language. Some individuals might disagree with the idea of Oldest Elder. If it helps individuals in some way then that is the best one can hope for because each individual has their own relationship with language. Each person is on their own journey of living a *Mino Maadiziwin* and discovering her or her own relationships. For the purposes of this dissertation, Oldest Elder helps reframe the discussion of language revitalization in educational programs from one of a lost skill or tool of communication to damaged relationships.

The creation of Anishinaabemowin classes and programs in higher educational institutions is an act of repairing those relationships. The creation and presence of the courses can help heal the relationship between Oldest Elder and the long history of linguistic colonization and oppression by the federal government and educational institutions. The creation of the programs is in many ways a creation of safe linguistic

[89] Johnston, *Th!nk Indian,* 26.

space for Oldest Elder. It brings *him/her* into a space that has historically sought to eradicate *his/her* very existence. The students taking the classes, learning the language, and interacting with the instructors are introduced to Oldest Elder and can begin building a relationship with *him/her*. They are able to start repairing the trauma previous generations of speakers and their descendants faced. Non-Anishinaabeg students can also build a relationship with Oldest Elder and help repair the same strained relationships in an earnest effort to learn and engage the language.

Despite the vast potential for healing and strengthening relationships, the evolution and struggles for creating and maintaining Ojibwe language programs at higher educational institutions are ones of evolving relationships. The health of the programs and their relationships with Oldest Elder are significantly impacted by the health of the relationships between faculty and administrators, the university and the surrounding American Indian community, and between individuals directly involved in the programs. Relationships are central to the narrative of language programs and by examining their history through the ethos of Oldest Elder; the narrative becomes more holistic and follows an Anishinaabeg understanding. It is the relationships at work, past, and present, that shape the success and challenges of Anishinaabemowin programs at higher educational institutions.

CHAPTER 3

ONDAMANOKIIWAG: BEMIDJI STATE UNIVERSITY

In Northern Minnesota, three significant reservations, White Earth, Red Lake, and Leech Lake, surround the small college town of Bemidji. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Bemidji City has a population size of 13,431 people and 1,523 of those individuals identify as American Indian and/or Alaskan Native.[90] Bemidji is a border town but is not a typical one. The community faces the classic struggles that have become all too familiar with border towns: racial tension, discrimination, and fear. However, in the past few years a small number of townspeople have partnered with language teachers at Bemidji State University to make space for Oldest Elder in the community. Their efforts are connected to Anishinaabemowin language revitalization and present an example of collaborative success. The university is also know for being the first higher educational institution to offer Ojibwe language classes in the United States.[91] Oldest Elder's recent activities in Bemidji are connected to a long history of American Indian and white relationships in the state.

The landscape of Minnesota is marked by the history of the Dakota Wars. In Mankato, Minnesota, the largest mass hanging in the United States occurred in 1862. On December 26, thirty-eight Dakota men were killed.[92] The state is also the birthplace of

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[90] *U.S. Census, 2010: Minnesota, Bemidji City* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010). Accessed July 15, 2013, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml#none

[91] The University of Minnesota offered regular Anishinaabemowin language courses in the same year but their fall semester started after Bemidji State University.

[92] Gary C. Anderson, Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862 (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988.) Anderson's works on the Dakota Wars offer a strong starting point for understanding the historical strife between American Indian and Native peoples in Minnesota. Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors: The Dakota Commemorative*

the American Indian Movement during the Civil Rights era. In 1968, a group of young American Indians met in a Minneapolis church basement on Plymouth Avenue to address the needs of their community and ways they might address them.[93] Starting in the 1980s, Northern Minnesota became the center of numerous treaty rights struggles over land and resources, including the Walleye Wars.[94]

Indian Country in general has had a long, tense, and strained relationship with border towns near reservations and Bemidji is a border town next to three reservations. As David Treuer describes it, "Bemidji still has a 'circle the wagons' kind of feel to it."[95] Some Non-Indian individuals maintain and perpetuate a fear of American Indian peoples and the stereotypical image and narrative of Indian uprisings against settlers. During my fieldwork in Bemidji, concerned white citizens warned me about traveling on the reservations. Interviewees recalled growing up with the fear that American Indian peoples from the surrounding tribes might come into Bemidji and attack people. The level of fear, mistrust, and history of abuse runs deep in the community, despite the positive measures with Anishinaabemowin in the area. One need only drive down through the town to witness the strong presence of stereotypes still alive in the area.

Marches of the 21st Century (St. Paul: Living Justice Press, 2006). This source offers a glimpse into the ways that the events surrounding the Dakota Wars are embodied and remembered by the American Indian community to this present day.

[93] Dennis Banks, *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the Rise of the American Indian Movement* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).; Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement From Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: New Press, 1996).

[94] Larry Nesper, *The Walleye War: The Struggle for Ojibwe Spearfishing and Treaty Rights* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002). Nespers work frames the struggle over treaty rights in an Anishinaabeg understanding of responsibilities and reciprocity. His coverage of the activism and threatening responses by non-Native community members highlights the tense and strained nature of the struggle.

[95] David Treuer, *Rez Life: An Indian's Journey Through Reservation Life* (New York: Grove Press, 2012), 138.

In the historic center of Bemidji are two giant statues. On one side of the street, next to the town's visitor center, is a statue of the folktale characters Paul Bunyan and Babe, the blue ox. Across the street, Morrell's Chippewa Trading Post displays an enormous iron statue of an Indian man easily eight feet tall. He is shirtless and wears buckskin pants. With his hair in two long braids, he holds one arm out in the stereotypically classic "How" position. Down the road and on the Library Park trail, is another American Indian form: a small statue of Chief Bemidji. The wooden statue is sixty years old and was carved by Eric Boe, a retired lumberjack.[96] In September 2013, the Bemidji City Council voted to replace the statue with a life-sized bronze sculpture on a platform that will have him overlooking Lake Bemidji.[97] The real name of Chief Bemidji was "Shay-Now-Ish-Kung."[98] He was born around 1833 and lived in the Leech Lake and Cass Lake areas. Today, he is remembered as the first permanent settler of Bemidji and the leader that European explorers and settlers acknowledged as the leader of the local Indigenous peoples living around Lake Bemidji. The two statues, illustrate the conflicts within Bemidji. On one hand, community leaders and members are taking positive steps to recognize American Indian culture and people but remnants of racism and ill feelings continue to survive.

Recent developments in Bemidji have sought to lessen the racial tensions between the white locals and Indigenous communities but a noticeable degree of paranoia,

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[96] Bethany Wesley, "Bemidji City Council Approves New Chief Bemidji Statue," *Bemidji Pioneer*, September 3, 2013, accessed December 10, 2013, http://www.bemidjipioneer.com/content/bemidji-city-council-approves-new-chief-bemidji-statue-plans.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Beltrami Country Historical Society, *The Bemidji Area: Looking Back – 1895 to 1940* (Vancouver: Pediment Publishers, 2004), 107.

uneasiness, and indifference are easily apparent in everyday conversations with people. A chance conversation with a man during my fieldwork illuminated how uncomfortable some individuals remain when it comes to American Indian and white interactions. After explaining my reason for visiting the area and my research, this man shared a story of his American Indian friend speaking Anishinaabemowin when they went hunting together. His story, however, was immediately followed with a warning to be careful visiting the reservations, especially after sundown.

Despite my assurances that I would be perfectly fine, He stressed the fact that as a white woman, I was especially vulnerable and emphasized that this warning came from the Indian community itself. I could not help but be struck by the rhetorical similarities to "sundown towns" and the irony of his concern for my safety today. In working with elders from various communities, I have heard numerous accounts of Indian peoples being harassed by police officers and outsiders who come onto the reservations. They share stories of women being sexually assaulted by individuals driving through the reservation looking for Indian women. The recent Walking With Our Sisters campaign has brought attention to the 600 or more Indian women who have been murdered or gone missing in the United States and Canada since the early 1990s. Despite my assurances that I would be perfectly fine, this man proceeded to support his concern with accounts from friends of friends having warned him of the same thing. While a considerable amount of fear and mistrust exists within the white population of Bemidji, the American Indian communities have experienced the greater discrimination, violence, and mistreatment for generations.

In the 1960s, the frustrations from the oppression of American Indian people combined with the activism of the American Indian Movement in Minnesota. A particularly powerful moment of activism in Bemidji occurred in 1966. On October 25, a radio announcer for KBUN read an editorial he wrote about life on the Red Lake Reservation. David Treuer quotes non-Native announcer Robert Kohl:

> The scene is typical of many a welfare home…dirt and filth, cats and dogs and flies, lots of kids…some retarded, some with emotional problems of a serious nature, but more in proportion than any families off the reservation…human irresponsibility at its zenith and it staggers the imagination to discover that we are trying to help these people with welfare money…[99]

Later in Kohl's speech, he describes the children as "offspring" with "tortured and twisted minds" because of their home environment."[100] Kohl's rhetoric is almost drawn from the same racist and despicable discourse reformers and politicians used around the turn of the century. He concluded that American Indian peoples were

> so low on the human scale that it is doubtful they will ever climb upward. Their satisfaction level is so low that it corresponds to that of the most primitive of the earth's animals…food, comfort, and a place to reproduce…those are the three…and with our welfare dollars we provide a little food in the belly, some kind of primitive shelter, and a place to reproduce, and this is all that is wanted, all that is needed, all that is desired. [101]

Beyond vehemently speaking about the perceived conditions of the reservation, his opinion of the people, and their mental facilities, he proceeded to suggest that the welfare laws be re-written. He suggested that they, non-Indians, should "only help those who are salvageable."[102] To help these people was to lower one's sight. "Perhaps," he

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[99] David Treuer, *Rez Life*, 139.

[100] Ibid., 140.

[101] Ibid., 139-140.

[102] Ibid.

suggested, "we should have let nature take her course, let disease and malnutrition disrupt the reproductive process and weed out those at the very bottom of the heap."[103] Ultimately, Kohl brought the conversation to back to the issue of the white man's burden as Christians and global citizens.

> Is it really Christian, really human, to meddle with lives so primitive and basic? And what's the alternative? Spend thirty or forty thousand dollars per child to remove him from the element, education him, only to look back and see the child population gaining on you through irresponsible procreation? Is it any less heartless to sacrifice physically and mentally healthy young men in Vietnam or Korea to make the world safe for our political philosophy than it is to sacrifice these hopelessly morally and mentally indigent for our economic philosophy?[104]

Blinded by his assumption of superiority and the degradation of Indian people, Kohl had assumed that Indian people would not be listening to the radio or read the newspaper that had published his editorial. Bemidji business leaders soon learned that Indian people were active readers of the newspapers and listeners to the radio. The broadcast was recorded and played at a Red Lake Tribal Council meeting the day it aired. The tribal council, led by Roger Jourdain, unanimously "decided to boycott businesses in the Bemidji area until Kohl was fired, and until the radio station broadcast a public apology. Leech Lake and White Earth reservations joined the boycott the following day."[105]

Reactions to the boycott by Bemidji residents were somewhat mixed. Claims that the town would be "cleaner" without the Indians were met with others praising the Tribal

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[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid., 141.

Councils' actions.[106] The boycott began to impact the city because "no Indians spent any of their money in Bemidji. No one bought groceries, clothes or equipment…Tribal government office on all three reservations refused to buy office supplies and business equipment."[107] The tribal governments threatened to withdraw all tribal funds, close to two million dollars, invested in Bemidji's banks. Roger Jourdain, a former boarding school student at Flandreau, wrote to numerous political figures calling for support. "Within two weeks," Truer recounts, "the radio announcer was fired and a public apology was made in print and over the air, and with it came the promise of fifty jobs for Indians in Bemidji. At that point no visible Indians (but a few invisible ones—Indians who were mixed enough to pass as white) worked in town."[108] Today, the boycott remains an event in Bemidji's memory and its impact no doubt played a part in altering some of the attitudes in the community. It was a catalyst for small measures of change and made the businesses and community leaders realize the economic impact the Indian communities had. The fact that the Bemidji of today has gained national attention for its Ojibwe Signage Project and Bemidji State University has become a leading resource for Anishinaabeg language is a positive example of perseverance and successful negotiations of different worldviews that began after the boycott. Increased respect, shared linguistic space, and new relationships with Oldest Elder are recent developments from the collaborative efforts in Bemidji with the language program.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

The creation and development of the Anishinaabemowin language program came from the collaboration and struggle of many individuals across many years. The exact origins of the program are debated amongst the different departments of the university. The earliest documented indication of a university interest in meeting the needs of the Native community is found in the Annual Report for 1960-61 and repeated in the annual reports of 1962-63 and 1964-65. In the first report, a recommendation was made that "consideration should be given to a program of attracting Indian graduates of Red Lake and other high schools. Because the reservation is so near and the transition to college relatively easy, B.S.C. should become a center for the training of this minority group."[109] In the early 1960s, Oldest Elder was largely absent at the university. *She* lived in the Anishinaabeg communities where speakers shared the language and cultural knowledge with others. *She* was present as prayers were whispered to greet the dawn and parents said goodnight to their children.

According to Vice President for Student Affairs Roger B. Ludeman and Kent Smith's 1983 proposal, *Bemidji State University and The American Indian: A Preliminary Proposal on the Role of BSU in Meeting the Educational Needs of the Indian Community*, the idea of an Indian Studies Program emerged from an early symposium on the "Chippewa Indian in Minnesota."[110] The exact date of the symposium remains unclear but student and faculty attendees began discussing the need for a program at the

[109] Philip R. Sauer to Judy McDonald, October 5, 1987, Box 2-4, College of Arts and Sciences, Bemidji State University Archives, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[110] Roger Ludeman and Kent A. Smith, Bemidji State University and The American Indian: A Preliminary Proposal on the Role of BSU in Meeting the Educational Needs of the Indian Community, April 1983, Box 2-4, College of Arts and Sciences, Bemidji State University Archives, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

gathering.[111] On May 29, 1969, the state college board approved an American Indian Studies program at BSU. This formal measure began the process of inviting Oldest Elder to campus.[112] The start-up years were rocky and initially disappointing in the lack of students. The first advisor and director of the program was Assistant Professor Alan Brew from the Anthropology Department.[113] Part of the program involved the creation of an Indian Museum on campus. Between 1969 and 1970, the program "acquired a large collection of historic Indian artifacts from Lanham's Chippewa Trading Post in Grand Rapids."[114] The materials served as a basis for the "Indian Museum" which opened in the fall of 1970. [115]

During the first year of the center, there were no student advisees but the creators and supporters of the program were hopeful, and interested parties began working on the possibility of including Anishinaabemowin language courses.[116] The following year, Dr. L. J. Dowining, the Head of the Division of Behavioral Science wrote that the Indian Studies center should become a separate administrative unit from the Anthropology Department. A considerable amount of American Indian Studies programs start in or linked to Anthropology departments. The early support for establishing the center and

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[111] Ibid.

[112] Vice President For Academic Affairs, Annual Report 1969-1970, Annual Report From the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Bemidji State University Archives, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[113] Bemidji State University, *Undergraduate Bulletin, 1970-1972 Vol. 29, N. 2* (Bemidji: Bemidji State University, April 1970), 128.

[114] Vice President For Academic Affairs, Annual Report 1969-1970, Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.

program on its own demonstrates a degree of commitment and respect that administrators had for the program. Oldest Elder needed *her* own space to breathe and expand amongst the students, while continuing to build relationships with others and the administration recognized this fact.

Downing also stressed the need for the center to be reorganized and expanded to include Indian personnel. "A person of Indian descent must be found to serve as Director of the Indian Studies Center. Given the current socio-political atmosphere of Indian-white relationships, the Center cannot function as a viable entity with a white director," Downing argued.[117] Brew agreed that "The Indian's quest for control of their own destinies, necessitates this change."[118] These non-Native allies recognized the need for Oldest Elder to be connected to American Indian leadership at the university. *Her* growth depended on forming strong relationships with educational leaders who could connect with *her* and serve as a leader to the students.

The students worked during the 1970-71 school year to bring attention and awareness of Oldest Elder, Indian culture, to campus through the activities of the Amerind Club. The student organization hosted an Indian Week with American Indian related events. Alan Brew continued to work with campus programs on developing opportunities for the Indian Studies Program. Students and non-Native Brew worked to bring Oldest Elder into the lives of the academic community at BSU. Like the previous year, there were no official Indian Studies program students in the second year of the

[117] Vice President For Academic Affairs, Annual Report 1970-1971, Annual Report[s] From the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Bemidji State University Archives, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[118] Annual Report Indian Studies Center 1970-1971, Box Indian Studies MISC Current Indian Radio, Indian Studies, Bemidji State University Archives, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

program but ten students were taking the classes.[119] It was not until 1972 that an Indian Studies minor was established at BSU and an American Indian Director was hired. The first official Director for the Indian Studies Program was Gerald Vizenor, an Anishinaabe man and enrolled member the White Earth Reservation. Vizenor's presence increased the visibility of Oldest Elder on campus and he advocated for *her* inclusion in new university spaces.

During the fall of 1972, Vizenor "proposed the establishment of an Indian Studies Center on the campus. John Glas authorized the use of a building located by the college. The director formed a non-profit corporation to administer programs in the Indian Studies Center which was opened in October and officially named the Oshki Anishinabe Family Center."[120] The center was located at 1206 Birchmont Drive and was leased by BSU.[121] Oldest Elder officially had a home space at Bemidji State University where *she* could meet with students, provide them comfort and guidance and connect with community members. The director of center hired a couple to live at the center and work as resident managers. They oversaw "special social, cultural and educational programs" held "during the academic year including non-credit courses in leather tanning and beadwork."[122] At these events, one can imagine Oldest Elder rejoicing with the shared knowledge, culture, and supportive relationships being built.

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[119] Vice President for Academic Affairs, Annual Report 1970-1971, Ibid.

[120] Annual Report- Indian Studies Center 1972-73, Box Indian Studies Misc. Current Indian Radio, Indian Studies, Bemidji State University Archives, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[121] Naomi Lyons and Diane Brown, "Center Serves Anishinabe Student Needs," *Northern Student*, January 25, 1973.

[122] Annual Report- Indian Studies Center 1972-73, Ibid.

At the grand opening and dedication of the Oshki Anishinabe Family Center, Earl Nyholm conducted a tobacco ceremony. Selam Ross told stories and George Aubid Senior shared songs with the individuals present. Through these activities and conversations in the language Oldest Elder attended the event as well and was most likely felt by those present as individuals shared the language and culture. Through the use of the language, the strength of Oldest Elder was renewed. Over the course of the semester, the Council of Indian Students, Ojibwemowin Club, and beadwork classes met at the center. The house was filled with Oldest Elder's presence as Earl Nyholm, one of the early language instructors, "held an evening Deer Tanning Class…in the 'old traditional ways.'"[123] The center was a resource for visiting students and families looking at the university and a place where Indigenous students could study, convene, and feel at home. In a January 25, 1973 *Northern Student* article Vizenor explained the religious and educational commitments of the center: "to strengthen cultural diversity and Anishinaabe identity and to demonstrate the positive energy of Anishinabe family life among the people."[124] Oldest Elder was central to the existence of the center, for the comfort, safety, knowledge, and soothing relationships *She* brought. Students, community members, and faculty appreciated the presence of Oldest Elder.

The climate on campus for Indigenous students was not the most comfortable. In the spring of 1973, the university suspended an American Indian freshman honor student, Diane Brown, for refusing to live in the residential hall as required by the State College system. On April 11, thirty students and Director Vizenor met with President R.D.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Lyons and Brown, "Center Serves Anishinabe Student Needs."

Decker to address the situation of "white racism and cultural and social insensitivity" they faced in the dormitories.[125] Oldest Elder had a home at the center but was not as welcome in the dormitories or interactions with non-Native students. The American Indian students presented President Decker with three demands: reinstatement of Brown as a student, no requirement of Indian students to live in the dormitories and to "establish an all-Indian-faculty-student conduct and appeals committee to review cases involving Indian students."[126] Gerald Vizenor presented President Decker with a statement supporting the students' concerns. The statement, titled "Dormitory Rules Injustice Protest," argued "No student should be required to pay to live in residence halls where they are exposed to racism or discrimination. Indian students who have been forced to live on-campus have protested the undesirable conditions and quality of life in the resident halls."'[127] The School College Board required students to live on campus in the dormitories. The SCB had a forty-year bond agreement between the state legislatures because they had funded the building of the dormitories.

President Decker recommended the students appear before the SCB and he reportedly offered to support the students' request at the SCB meeting. He also suggested the creation of a special dormitory wing for American Indian students, but the idea was never developed. Brown was also allowed to attend classes, and the idea of a conduct and appeals committee was sanctioned. While the dormitory conflict was not resolved in the favor of the students, the support of Oldest Elder and strengthening of

[125] Roger Bouen, "Indians: Change Dorm Rule," *Northern Student*, April 12, 1973.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid.

relationships between American Indian students, faculty, and staff allowed them to present a united front on the issue. The backlash against American Indian students necessitated that they find encouragement in each other.

A glimpse at the editorials and letters section of the student newspaper, *The Northern Student*, offers a view of racial tensions and feelings on BSU's campus at this time. A Polish student, C. Prentkowski, submitted his view in a letter titled "One of the Smitten Minorities." He argued "It is too easy to be the object of excessive kindness. Patronization runs rampant in the residence halls…I know well the sweet smiles and condescending manners of the WASPs…"[128] He concluded, "I too am a member of a persecuted minority…The Indian students have taught us that anything is possible through coercion."[129] Another student, Sue Lapham, critiqued the coverage of the issue by the student newspaper. She argued that the American Indian side was played down "to the extent that the white community may believe that the Indians think they are better than anyone else and therefore exempt to any rule that presently exists on campus."[130] Her intentions appear positive but are laced with the ideologies of western cultural superiority and stereotypical understandings of Native peoples. "The Indian is used to two things," she wrote,

> leading a very calm and unhurried existence and knowing that the white community could care less about the other side of the tracks…Let's make sure that now that we have started to share each others culture that we do everything we can to attract the Indian student and keep him here long enough to equip him with the necessary tools to help in education on the reservations.[131]

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[128] C. Prentkowski, " One of the Smitten Minorities," *Northern Student*, April 17, 1973.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Sue Lapham, "Indian Confrontation was Played Down," *Northern Student*, April 26, 1973.

[131] Ibid.

Another student, Dan Collier, wrote to the newspaper about his own persecution for being overweight. Student Cy Howard argued that the American Indian students simply needed to accept the treatment. "Discrimination cannot be suppressed," he argued, "No one is excused from racism, cultural and social injustices in any area…This is something we, as a society, have to live with and sooner we learn this the better."[132] A group of twelve students even banded together and submitted a letter mocking the demands of the American Indian students. In the letter, they called for equal requirements for "Black, Oriental, and Caucasian minorities…If a minority group wants a separate dormitory wing," they wrote, "do they also want a separate rest room, a separate food service, and a separate Union? Why not a separate college also?"[133]

The backlash against the American Indian students' complaints was also a backlash against Oldest Elder. Students drew support from their community and cultural connections through *her* during their struggle. The American Indian students and Oldest Elder were not completely alone. The allies may have been fewer in number but they were there. On May 10, 1973, two letters appeared in the student paper. The first came from Kevin Hart, the President of the Council of Indian Students at BSU. He responded to the May 1 letter entitled "Demands From Others Oppressed." "The humor of the letter, or so intended," he wrote, "fails to tickle."[134] He then submitted four bulleted points that argued

cynicism and sarcasm have always been a weapon of those who wish to remain

[132] Cy Howard, "Discrimination Must be Tolerated," *Northern Student*, May 1, 1973.

[133] Judy Brandt et. al., "More Demands from Others Oppressed," *Northern Student*, May 1, 1973.

[134] Kevin Hart, "Indian Student Responds to Group Letter," *Northern Student*, May 10, 1973.

> insensitive to a different culture or social and ethnic group…Ignorance is quite often a breeding ground for the hate, animosity and catatonia shown in the letter...We feel we have some legitimate demands; we were not being cynical nor sarcastic; we cannot continue to be 'good Indians,' for as you know the definition of a 'good Indian' is a dead one.[135]

In the same issue of *The Northern Student*, a BSU student Marion McDonald wrote a supporting editorial. "The 'white backlash' in response to the question of Indian dorm residence," she argued, "reveals quite clearly the depths of racism among white 'liberals' at BSC."[136] In response to the call for a "Caucasian Studies Center," she pointed to the fact that "one already exists. Are not the courses offered in history, political science, English, modern languages…devoted almost entirely to 'Caucasian studies'? Indeed, this entire institution, and thousands like it throughout the country, might aptly be titled 'Caucasian Studies Centers."'[137] Two weeks later, another ally wrote to the newspaper and apologized for the white backlash as well.[138] The debate over the American Indian concerns continued on campus and in the student paper. Submissions dissected the complaints and the validity of the American Indian students' concerns. The American Indian community at BSU continued to build and develop their relationships with Oldest Elder throughout this process.

In the following school year, 1973-1974, Gerald Vizenor took a leave of absence to attend Harvard University on a Bush Foundation Fellowship but did not return. He resigned from his position at BSU on March 1, 1974. Donald F. Bibeau stepped into the

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[135] Ibid.

[136] Marion McDonald, "White Backlash Illustrates Racism," *Northern Student*, May 10, 1973.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Mathew Mitch, Letter to Editor "Sorry About Insensitive Responses," *Northern Student*, May 22, 1973.

position as Director of the Indian Studies Program during Vizenor's leave and officially assumed the position after his resignation.[139] Vizenor's time as the director was short but active. In many ways, he helped launch the program, created an official space for students and Oldest Elder to gather. He certainly increased the awareness of American Indian concerns on campus by supporting the students. During his directorship, the first regular classes of Ojibwe language became part of the university course offerings. Oldest Elder expanded from individual relationships and gatherings at the Oshki Anishinaabe Center into the classrooms of the university. While Vizenor and the students were championing Oldest Elder, other allies and fluent speakers were working to make space for *her* in the curriculum.

The Anishinaabemowin language classes started at BSU as part of the Special Services Program. These courses were intended for non-traditional students and occurred outside of the regular course offerings. Selam Ross-ibah, a first language speaker and community elder, was the first language instructor at BSU and began teaching the classes in 1971.[140] Ross's first language was Anishinaabemowin and he spent a considerable portion of his life involved with religious service and sharing Anishinaabe culture. He served in missionary work for thirteen years, as the Pastor of the Cass Lake Church for four years and was an "Indian evangelist" for seventeen years. He also worked as the

[139] Annual Report Indian Studies Program 1973-1974, Box Indian Studies Misc. Current Indian Radio, Indian Studies, Bemidji State Archives, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[140] Irvin M.A. Rotto to Linda Baer, January 31, 1992, Box Indian Studies Misc. Current Indian Radio, Indian Studies, Bemidji State Archives, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.; In Anishinaabeg culture, after a person has walked on, passed away, ibah or ba is placed after their name.

Principle of the MoKaham Indian Bible School for four years and "served as a senior language instructor in two summer Ojibwe language camps."[141]

As the American Indian Studies program started to develop, student interest in the language classes drew the attention of administrative allies. In the fall of 1971, Mr. Myron Swanson, the Head of the Division of Humanities, wrote to Dr. Richard Beitzel, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, about the demand by students for Anishinaabemowin classes. "I thought I should call to your attention," he wrote, "to the fact that the first year course in Chippewa funded through Special Services is filled and that Special Services will not take any students who fail to qualify for their program. We now have documented over twenty requests from students who would like to take Chippewa, many of them non-Indian."[142]

A few weeks later, Beitzel responded to Swanson and supported the addition of the language classes. "I am most interested," he wrote, "in the possibility of adding regular (non special services) Chippewa to the curriculum and suggest that you carefully explore the possibility of organizing a section winter quarter."[143] Other faculty members and administrators also recommended that the classes be offered as regular courses and stressed their addition to the Indian Studies Minor.[144] Prior to these discussions, the

[141] Minnesota State College System New Academic Program Proposal, Box Indian Studies Misc. Current Indian Radio, Indian Studies, Bemidji State University Archives, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[142] Myron Swanson to Richard E. Beitzel, September 2, 1971, Box Department of Modern Languages Past, Foreign Languages Minutes, 1968-1985, Bemidji State Archive, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[143] Myron Swanson to Richard E. Beitzel, September 20, 1971, Box Department of Modern Languages Past, Foreign Languages Minutes, 1968-1985 Bemidji State Archive, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[144] Vice President for Academic Affairs, Annual Report 1970-1971, Ibid.

Department of Foreign Languages was already preparing for the creation of Anishinaabemowin language classes.

As early as 1970, they expressed the need to change their name to the Department of Modern Languages and Literature. "The addition of Chippewa, a Native American language, makes the name Foreign Languages obsolete," Swanson wrote to Beitzel.[145] The department ultimately changed its name to the Department of Modern Languages. This proactive and supportive action on behalf of the department suggests the presence of strong allies amongst the department faculty. Many present day universities still house indigenous languages in Departments of Foreign Languages or cease to acknowledge the languages at all. The degree to which these allies had personal relationships with Oldest Elder remains unclear in the historical record. If their actions were any indication, it appears that they recognized the validity of Oldest Elder and the importance of respecting *her* alongside the Oldest Elders of Europe. With administrative support, the process to formally create courses where Oldest Elder could meet with students began.

In November 1970, a proposal for new three sequence, four hours per quarter, undergraduate courses in "Chippewa" were sent to the curriculum committee for approval. The funding for the courses was provided by the Special Services project. "Upon its success," the Department of Foreign Languages hoped, "it should also immediately become the core of the Indian Studies minor."[146] The purpose of the courses was "to provide the Indian student with an area of immediate relevance, and in this way

[145] Myron Swanson to Richard Beitzel, November 30, 1970, Box Department of Modern Languages Past, Foreign Languages Minutes, 1968-1985, Bemidji State University Archive, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[146] Richard Beitzel to Myron Swanson, December 9, 1970, author's personal collection, Mankato, Minnesota.

to show some small measure of sensitivity to our immediate environment."[147] They acknowledged that Oldest Elder lived in Northern Minnesota and that the university should acknowledge *her* presence and the needs of the Anishinaabeg communities.

In 1971, they expanded their aspirations by proposing the creation a series of Intermediate level courses of Chippewa. In the following year, a series of advanced courses was also submitted for curriculum committee approval. In the fall of 1972, Mr. Earl Nyholm, joined Mr. Ross-ibah as a language instructor at the university.[148] Nyholm was a bilingual speaker of English and Ojibwe and was heavily involved with language efforts in the local communities and organizations across the state. Individuals and communities sought his advice and assistance when seeking a relationship with Oldest Elder. He brought an educational background in art, community work, knowledge of the language and another relationship with Oldest Elder to the program.

The next step in the development of the language courses and the Indian Studies program was to create a language minor. They had established the Indian Studies minor and the Indian Studies program but needed a minor that was specifically about Oldest Elder. The secretary of the curriculum committee, Mr. John Arneson, expressed his support for this next step in a memo to Mr. Swanson on May 30, 1972. "I believe that it is essential," he wrote, "for us to establish at least a minor in Chippewa language if we are to have an Indian Studies Program. Area studies programs without the languages of

[147] R. F. Krummel to Curriculum Committee, November 23, 1970, author's personal collection, Mankato, Minnesota.

[148] Linda Baer to Irvin M. A. Rotto, January 31, 1992, Box Indian Studies Misc Current Indian Radio, Indian Studies, Bemidji State University Archive, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

concern at their center are at best shallow."[149] Arneson recognized that the health of the Indian Studies program required a language component but also the fact that the language courses offered a great deal of depth. In language classes, students connect with Anishinaabeg culture, history, spirituality, and epistemology in a way that topic courses cannot replicate. It is through relationships with Oldest Elder that individuals find a deep connection to Anishinaabeg worldview. Following the addition of the Chippewa language courses to the university course offerings, the enrollment in the Indian studies program greatly increased along with the support for the courses and the program at the university.[150]

By the fall of 1974, a proposal to establish a minor in Ojibwe for Bachelor of Arts and Bachelors of Science degrees, with teacher certifications, was working its way through the Minnesota state educational system. The proposal passed through the Department of Modern Languages, the Division of Humanities, College Curriculum Committee, College Senate, and Teacher Education Council by the end of that year.[151] During the spring of 1975, the proposal went to the State College Board and the State Department of Education for Certification for approval. The proposal offers a glimpse of why its supporters believed an Anishinaabemowin language minor was needed at the university. It also displays some of the negotiations and ideas its supporters faced in the process. "The program," it read, "is for Indian as well as non-Indian students…Bemidji

[149] John Arneson to Myron Swanson, May 30, 1972, author's personal collection, Mankato, Minnesota.

[150] Annual Report Indian Studies Program 1971-72, Box Indian Studies Misc Current Indian Radio, Indian Studies, Bemidji State Archives, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[151] 1974 Proposal for Ojibwe Minor to the State College Board and State Department of Education, Box Indian Studies Misc. Current Indian Radio, Indian Studies, Bemidji State University Archive, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

State College is within thirty miles of three of the main Ojibwe reservations in Minnesota…Ojibwe is the native language of most of the Indian people of northern Minnesota."[152]

The proposal stressed the need for individuals going into fields of social work and teaching to have a background in Ojibwe and "social understanding."[153] The authors of the proposal recognized the intricate connections that language brings when trying to understand another culture. They recognized their responsibility to the surrounding American Indian populations and the need for the courses. The needs of the language community at large were also addressed. "A uniformity of orthography and other written material" was also needed, they argued. [154] University officials recognized the needs of the language community and were responsive to some concerns over terminology in the proposal. When Nyholm informed Dr. Richard Beitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs, that the term Native American was offensive to Canadian Anishinaabe people. They used the suggested neutral term Indian instead.[155]

The need for language teachers capable of carrying Oldest Elder into classrooms and communities was a primary concern. "The Ojibwe language minor," the proposal argued, "would lend strong support towards this end in the proper education of those

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Richard E. Beitzel to Myron R. Swanson, March 26, 1975, author's personal collection, Mankato, Minnesota.

preparing to teach Ojibwe."[156] At numerous points in the proposal, the need for language teachers was emphasized and the potential to address the rising concerns of Ojibwe people about their language and culture was mentioned. The drive and demand for language classes in schools and communities existed at the time but the curriculum materials and certified teachers were absent or severely lacking. The desire for relationships with Oldest Elder was there but the means to build and share those relationships was needed in the university.

To support their proposal, they referenced the opinion of Foreign Language Coordinator in the Minnesota State Department of Education, Percy Fearing, and his support for building the certification program. "He also expresses confidence," they wrote,

> that Bemidji State College is the best place for the establishment of such a college program because of the large number of students already enrolled in the college and in Ojibwe language classes, because of the college's commitment to an Indian studies program, because of the staff at the college, and not least because of the location of the college and the area it services.[157]

The demand for Ojibwe courses had remained constant for the past four years and would grow, they argued, as American Indian student enrollment increased. The proposal also outlined the Native and non-Native community involvement and support for the minor. Mr. Earl Nyholm and Mr. Selam Ross-ibah had already worked on creating educational materials for the Ojibwe language. When Nyholm's work caught the attention of Mr. Percy Fearing, he supported the proposal and creation of the program.

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[156] 1974 Proposal for Ojibwe Minor to the State College Board and State Department of Education, Ibid.

[157] Ibid.

The support of non-Native allies, like Fearing, was important in getting the proposal approved. The support of the surrounding American Indian communities was even more important because that is where Oldest Elder lived. The proposal outlined the interest and investment of the surrounding communities. "Tribal Council leaders of the area expect programs such as this to be developed and implemented to keep up with the increase in Indian student enrollment they have vigorously promoted," it read.[158] The writers of the proposal acknowledged this expectation by the community but also pro-actively addressed possible criticisms people might have, most likely based on stereotypical understandings of American Indian people. In answering a question on the relationship between the proposed program and existing ones at the college, they reassured the non-Native readers that

> The program has been committed to extensive work in the area as well as the promotion of a sound education for Indian students on campus. Students have not been lured into an ethnic wilderness—courses are related directly to the fundamental needs of individual identity and social fulfillment. Most Indian students take regular college majors with the Indian Studies program…The languages stand as the core of the Indian Studies Program and probably the most important key to human understanding of the cultural identity of the Indian people.[159]

The proposal's assurance that students are not being "lured into an ethnic wilderness" rings of noble savage rhetoric. Their insistence that "courses are related directly to the fundamental needs of individual identity and social fulfillment" is counter-intuitive to the relational nature of Anishinaabemowin and Anishinaabeg culture.[160] The

[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid.

[160] Ibid.

central element of Oldest Elder is her relationships and the understanding that an individual exists only because of her connections and interdependency with others. It is difficult to ascertain how much of this statement is pandering to the concerns of those reviewing the proposal or accurately reflects the beliefs of administrators and faculty members. Given the American Indian activism occurring in the nation at this time, perhaps this section was meant to reassure the reviewers that the courses would not be training grounds for activists seeking to overthrow American society or culture. On one hand, the proposal reassures that this is not the case and on the other its listed program objectives articulate support for Indian identity and the value of Indian cultures and communities.

The listed program objectives begin with the preparation of Ojibwe language teachers and the preservation of Ojibwe language and culture. It concludes with the objective of serving the "unique needs of the students of the Midwest area" and "the needs of Indian reservations and communities of the Ojibwe nation."[161] The objectives listed in the middle indicate support for Indian culture and identity on its own terms: "3. To stimulate a renaissance of Indianism. 4. To give the Ojibwe Language its rightful place as a valid tool of communication with other Modern Languages."[162] While the proposal reassured reviewers that students would retain their individuality, it also reflects an acknowledgement that relationships with Oldest Elder and inherently social.

Forming relationships with *her* is a resurgence of Anishinaabeg culture that had historically been oppressed. To form a relationship with *her* is to engage in an act of

[161] Ibid.

[162] Ibid.

rebellion against white American society. The individuals involved in writing the proposal knew the language was a living entity and the potential connections and relationships the minor would bring to Bemidji State University students. The program, they argued, is innovative because Ojibwe Language study was "relatively new and unexplored" and "Only a few miles from Bemidji State College are a 'living language laboratory' and islands of culture."[163] They wrote on behalf of Oldest Elder in an attempt to continue developing her formal position at the university.

In the 1974-75 semesters, thirty-eight to fifty-one students enrolled in Elementary Ojibwe courses and four students enrolled in Advanced Ojibwe.[164] On October 10, 1975, the Minnesota Department of Education approved an Ojibwe Language Minor at Bemidji State College.[165] Oldest Elder was officially a minor that students could take to fulfill their educational requirements. As students enrolled in the courses, the language program expanded its activities. During the mid to late 1970s, a great deal of academic work and publications were produced out of Bemidji State's language program. Earl Nyholm served as the co-editor of *Anishinaabe Giigidowin*, "a bi-lingual quarterly for teachers of Ojibwe/Potatwatomie" starting in 1975-76.[166]

Anishinaabe Giigidowin was a community effort. The publication was produced through a partnership between the Indian Studies program at Bemidji State, the Native

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Irvin M. A. Rotto to Linda Baer, January 31, 1992, Box Indian Studies Misc. Current Indian Radio, Indian Studies, Bemidji State University Archives, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[166] Earl R. Nyholm, Program Planning and Review Document for Ojibwe Program, December 19, 1980, Box 3/5, Academic Affairs, Bemidji State Archives, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

American Studies program at Northland College in Wisconsin, the Native American Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and for a time, Lakehead University. These institutional sponsors rotated the responsibility of publishing the newsletter between each other. Originally, the publication was a product of the Wisconsin Native American Languages Project (WNALP) of the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. When the WNALP ended, John Nichols and Earl Nyholm edited the newsletter together. Between 1976 and 1981, over twenty issues appeared, each one sharing teaching methods, stories, knowledge about the language, and happenings in different language communities across the states.[167] The students at Bemidji State also created their own publications.

The Council of Indian Students produced a newsletter and in 1974 the Indian Studies Program began the publication *Oshkawebis* meaning "Messenger of the People."[168] The first volume and issue of Oshkawebis included information on the Council of Indian Students, a report on the first Ojibwe Civilization Canoe Trip from the previous summer, features on Ojibwe art and activities, essays, and spring course offerings. Within its first pages, a greeting to the readers explained that "the purpose *Oshkawebis* (messenger or courier of the people) is to provide information about BSC's Indian Studies Program, Indian students, and educational programs, projects and activities to the general public" and will work to "get the word out on Indian matters."[169] The first editorial in the issue was written by Donald Bibeau and questioned "the role of

[167] John Nichols to Kent (Smith?), March 6, 1982, Box 1981-82 #2, Indian Studies, Bemidji State Archives, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[168] Indian Studies Program Bemidji State College, *Oshkabewis Vol.1 No. 1*, (Bemidji: Bemidji State University, 1974), 1.

[169] Ibid.

Indian Studies Programs in Minnesota's university and college systems" given the needs of tribal communities.

He especially emphasized the need for American Indian students to be prepared "to assume responsible positions in all programs, projects and agencies effecting Indian people."[170] Today, *Oshkawebis* is an American Indian academic journal published twice a year along with audio CD's. The submissions today are largely written bilingually in English and Ojibwe. Recent efforts have resulted in the digitization of the materials and they are now available on the BSU American Indian Resource Center's website. The incorporation of Anishinaabemowin in these publications reflects the ongoing relationships that the language instructors and learners were building with Oldest Elder. They sought to share her with others through these publications and support existing relationships across the state.

In 1978, Earl Nyholm also helped produce a 16mm color documentary in the Ojibwe language titled *Wiigwaasijiimaan*.[171] In 1979, the Minnesota Archeological Society published Earl Nyholm's work *Ojibwewi-Ikidowinan: An Ojibwe Word Resource Book*. The publication was a product of Nyholm's knowledge but also his involvement in the language community. It is considered a class language text among today's language learners. He worked to share the language with his students but also to share Oldest Elder with a larger audience. His work preserved some of Oldest Elder in documents that were accessible to a variety of people. He adamantly supported *her*

[170] Ibid.

[171] Earl R. Nyholm, Program Planning and Review Document for Ojibwe Program, Ibid.

presence in the university and the respect that *she* deserved as a mother tongue of the Anishinaabeg.

In 1980, Nyholm wrote a report on the Ojibwe language program. He stressed the importance of the language being in the university system. "One key factor from my personal perspective as an Indian person and teacher," he wrote, "is the inclusion of this Indigenous language in the University as recognition of an ancient language and its rightful place in the heritage of this country. For the Ojibwe student it illustrates that his culture has worth in the eyes of all."[172] Despite the successes of the program, Nyholm argued for additional developments. "Bemidji State University has the rare opportunity of being an Ojibwe Language Center," he wrote. [173] They had made great strides but still had room for improvement: "It has the geographical location, the resource people, but not enough is being done in this direction."[174] When questioned about the implications of removing the program, Nyholm responded that

> It would clearly demonstrate to the Indian people that institutions of higher learning are not committed to northern Minnesota's largest minority. It might trigger political implications…The Program functions as a tool for retrieving and preserving an indigenous language that the Educational System and Federal and Local Governments once sought to destroy for 100 years plus. It would tend to reinforce some stereotyping that Indian values have no place in American society other than as museum relics of a bygone era.[175]

The Ojibwe minor and American Indian Studies program were a symbolized acknowledgement, demonstration of respect and opportunity for cross cultural experiences and communication in the Bemidji area. The language courses were much

[172] Ibid.

[173] Ibid.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid.

more than they appeared. They had social, spiritual, communal, historical, and epistemological implications for the communities involved. The students, instructors, and allies in administration recognized the importance of the classes and academic programs. They knew that more than just language learning was occurring. Oldest Elder was securely present at the university after hundreds of years of oppression by higher educational institutions like Bemidji State University.

Earl Nyholm and Selam Ross-ibah were critical to the success of the program. Nyholm and Ross taught the Anishinaabemowin courses, developed educational materials, and actively brought Oldest Elder into Bemidji State University. They helped students meet and form relationships with her in the formal classroom and through activities and gatherings at the Oshki Anishinaabe Center. Through their publications and activities in media, they introduced Oldest Elder to others searching to make a connection or reconnect with the language. In 1978, the program shifted with the retirement of Selam Ross-ibah. A part-time language instructor, Ms. Alice Boyd, temporarily joined the department but her position was not renewed in 1981. Nyholm continued teaching the language courses and in order to maintain the Ojibwe minor, he typically taught an overload of courses.[176] Between 1975 and 1980, enrollment in 300 level language classes reached as high as sixty-eight students. As many as seventeen students enrolled in 400 level courses at the university.

The early years of the American Indian Program and Ojibwe language opportunities were met with enthusiasm and support from the some of the students, administration, and community. As the program established itself, however, some of the

[176] Irvin M. A. Rotto to Linda Baer, January 31, 1992, Ibid.

momentum declined. From 1978 until 1982, the overall number of fulltime American Indian students at BSU declined. A report by Roger Ludeman, the Vice President for Student Affairs, and Kent Smith, the Director of Indian Studies noted these declining numbers:

> Entering class size has dropped from a high of 46 in 1977 to a low of 28 in 1979 and 1982. Figures on retention of Indian students after one year of attendance have also decreased from a high of 50% for the class of 1978 to a low of 28% for the class of 1981. The decline in recruitment and retention of Indian students also parallels the reduction in staff available to work with Indian students.[177]

In addition to a reduction of staff, the issue of a space for students to gather became a serious concern for the American Indians still on campus.

During the 1970s, the Oshki Anishinabe Family Center went through a series of challenges and growing pains. Initially, the establishment of the center was a shared space in the educational community where American Indian students came together for social, cultural, and community support. The administrative support of the house signaled a degree of respect and recognition for the unique needs of the American Indian community and the importance of Oldest Elder outside of the classroom. Events such as Halloween parties for children were hosted at the center and local church donations often helped fund such opportunities. Non-credit courses in tanning and beadwork, language circles and special social, cultural, and educational programs also took place at the center. In the 1975-76 school year, the center served as housing for Indian Week guests and as a gathering location for the week's events. A pipestone craft shop was available at the

[177] Roger Ludeman and Kent A. Smith, Bemidji State University and The American Indian: A Preliminary Proposal on the Role of BSU in Meeting the Educational Needs of the Indian Community, Ibid.

center for students to make pipes. The Council of Indian Students gathered at the center for their general meetings and their drum club.

The house filled an important need for American Indian students to have a safe, welcoming, and supportive place to continue developing their relationships with each other and Oldest Elder. During the 1975-1976 school year, however, tensions arose between the students involved in the Council of Indian Students organization and the Indian Studies Office staff over the use, purpose, and rules of the center. To address the tension, a center advisory board developed. One of the issues addressed by the advisory board was meeting the needs of Native students with dependent children by creating a child day care service at the center.[178] Another suggestion was the creation of an Indian radio station. It is unclear from the historical records if the day care and radio project came to fruition. Adding to the discussion and tensions surrounding the center was the issue of its upkeep. By the early 1980s, the Oshki Anishinabe Center was in dire need of maintenance and financial support.

At the request of university President Gillett, Jon B. Blessing, AISP Director Kent Smith, and Bert Clark met in 1982 to review the conditions of the Oshki Anishinabe Family Center. Their initial report on November 24, 1982 revealed some serious concerns with the building. Jon Blessing reported to the president that

> The facility does not meet fire code. Lack of fire exists, old wiring, inoperant (sic) fire detecting devices, improper insulation and more, were noted…Health codes are not being met. The plumbing (including lead joints) and sewage system are inadequate and do not meet code…Extensive structural repair is needed. The facility is in need of a new roof, eaves and overhangs are sagging, windows and doors need to be repaired, glass needs to be replaced, new insulation in the

[178] Raymond Carlson and L. Jack Downing to R. Decker and Carl Long, January 25, 1977, Box Indian Studies 1980-81, Indian Studies, Bemidji State University Archive, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

> attic…should be installed, doors need to be redesigned to swing outward (for fire code), walls should be repaired and painted, and more.[179]

He recommended that the facility "be shut down for public use immediately."[180] The facility was closed during the winter quarter of 1982-1983. Students continued their interactions at other locations or maintained their relationship with Oldest Elder personally. Fortunately, President Gillett committed some of his discretionary funds to address plumbing and electrical issues and for some cosmetic improvements.[181] On March 30, 1983, the center reopened for use by students, community groups, and the Council of Indian Students. The Council of Indian Students hosted a potluck to mark the occasion and hoped to start an Indian Studies Program radio station that would broadcast to the three local reservations. Despite the revamping of the center, the mid-1980s was a period of small growths and major challenges for the American Indian Studies Program.

Students continued to host and sponsor activities and events. Newly formed committees and internal supportive programs addressed American Indian concerns. In 1983, an Indian Student Services Program was created at the university. The following year, an American Indian Advisory Council was also formed at the university by individuals invested in support Oldest Elder's presence. The Council of Indian Students continued to host annual Indian Week Celebrations and an annual pow wow. Despite the financial support given to update the Oshki Anishinabe Center however, by 1988, administrators were commenting on "the dilapidated Anishinabe House" and the "plight"

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[179] Jon B. Blessing to Ted Gillett, November 24, 1982, Box 1982-83 # 2, Indian Studies, Bemidji State University Archive, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[180] Ibid.

[181] The Council of Indian Students to Friends, March 23, 1983, Box 1982-83 # 2, Indian Studies, Bemidji State University Archive, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

of American Indians on Bemidji's campus. They stressed the need for faculty to be sensitive to the situation.[182] At this point, the future of the center and one of Oldest Elder's homes was uncertain.

The story of how the idea for a new Indian Center came about and its road to becoming reality depends on whom you ask. Don Day, an enrolled member of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and member of the Marten Clan, currently serves as the President of the Leech Lake Tribal College. In 1983, he began working at Bemidji State University as the Indian Student Services Director. As the advisor to the Council of Indian Students, he remembers the dismal conditions of the center in the 1980s. "I remember, he shared "we used to have this little four bedroom house in the corner of the parking lot. It was terribly run down, the roof leaked, all the windows were broken, the heat went out sometimes, it was not good."[183] The horrible conditions did not keep Oldest Elder from the people but it made it difficult for students and community members to focus on their relationship with *her*.

In 1987, after leaving a meeting with the Council of Indian Students, Dr. Day met a couple of friends for dinner in Bemidji and voiced his frustration with the situation:

> I said ya know, I think I'm gonna ask President Gillett…I'm gonna meet with him and see if he'll give me permission to talk to Red Lake, White Earth and Leech Lake. The three surrounding reservations. [To see] If they can all give me money so I can put new windows and a new roof and some new stuff into that house because it's awful. [184]

[182] Development of an Indian Center at Bemidji State University, May 4, 1988, Box 2-4, College of Arts and Sciences, Bemidji State University Archive, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota.

[183] Don Day, interview by author, December 3, 2013.

[184] Ibid.

His dinner companions agreed and encouraged him to talk to the president of the university. On the next day, he met with the president who responded to the request positively. "He got really excited about that," Day recalls, "so he literally put a committee together of the five people that I had dinner with that night. [We] were all Indians and then about five other people from campus [were on the committee] including a couple students."[185] When the committee first met, they discussed the possibility of building a new house for $100,000 instead of doing $50,000 worth of renovations. It was a better financial investment, they thought, to build a better building for an additional cost. At subsequent meetings, their aspirations for a center grew.

> It went up to 200,000. We met again, it was 250,000. And so then, after about the fourth meeting, it was a 500,000 dollar house and it was going to be a big round building. So we stopped right there and we gave it to the advancement director at the time…[186]

For the next few years, the University President and Vice President for Development, David Tiffany, headed the fundraising initiative.[187]

On March 29, 1989, *The Northern Student* published an article announcing the possibility of a new Indian Center at BSU and some of the fundraising activities that had begun the process. The reaction from students was similar to how students reacted in the 1970s when American Indian students raised issues with the dormitory requirements. A week after the article on the center was published, Christopher Pendergrass, the managing editor of *The Northern Student*, published an article entitled "Who's Going to Pay in the

[185] Ibid.

[186] Ibid.

[187] Larry Adams, "Indian Student Center a Possibility at BSU," *Northern Student*, March 29, 1989.

End?"[188] His article challenged the idea of spending the estimated 2.3 million dollars on the Native American students. "Why spend $2,374,930 on 195 students?" he wrote. [189] Unable to understand that the center and Oldest Elder who lives at the center was available to all students, he wrote: "Sure, I understand that Native American students have special needs that the center may provide for but $2, 374,930 for 195 students?"[190] He also challenged the suggested locations and other elements of the proposed center including a museum. "Why the museum? I understand that the Indian people are very proud of their past and understandably so…If all of us were to dwell on the laurels of our ancestors we would never more forward," he concluded.[191] He clearly lacked a relational understanding and could not comprehend why American Indian people would desire to keep their past in their present.

Coming from a western perspective, he did not understand that the past lives in the present for American Indian people. He only understood people in terms of individuality and not collective existence. Pendergrass did not see that the money was being spent on the American Indian students but also on the American Indian ancestors of the past, present and future. The investment in the center could potential heal some of the wounds educational institutions historically inflicted on Indian peoples. The money would enable Oldest Elder to remain a strong presence on the campus and connect with all who visited the center. Pendergrass' disagreements with the financial allocations for

[188] Christopher Pendergrass, "Who's Going to Pay in the End?" *Northern Student*, April 5, 1989.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Ibid.

the center were not the only instance of strife surrounding American Indian issues in the 1980s and early 1990s.

American Indian students were also voicing concerns and actively negotiating the university space. They protested the treatment of American Indian peoples by faculty and staff and challenged how information on American Indian peoples was presented in classrooms. On January 8, 1991, a group of "about 30 students marched through the Union…carrying signs that said, "Educate the educators," and "Racist remarks stop now."[192] American Indian BSU graduate student, Renee Senogles, filed an official complaint against Professor Brew on June 19, 1990 for his alleged racist remarks during a cultural anthropology lecture on American Indian spiritual practioners. [193]

> According to Senogles…Professor Alan Brew said, 'In a controlled study, American Indian shamans were shown to be paranoid-schizophrenic, with split personalities, were disassociative and just plain weird. And the reason why shamanism tends to run in families is, face it, if you grow up in a house full of weirdos chances are you will be a weirdo yourself.'[194]

While Brew had been an advocate for Oldest Elder and courses that brought *her* into university classrooms, he offended American Indian students with his statement about spiritual leaders. A series of written responses occurred after the incident. In a November letter, Brew wrote, "I deeply regret that Ms. Senogles was upset by my statements, not only as this affected her personally, but as a reflection upon Indian people. As an anthropologist/archaeologist, I have devoted my career and my life to

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[192] Delaine VanderTuin, "Indian Students Protest Alleged Racism," *Northern Student*, January 9, 1991.

[193] Ibid.

[194] Ibid.

combating racism and ethnocentrism."[195] Despite this incident, Brew was an ally within the university and had supported the original creation of an Indian Studies program. The fallout from the event raised concerns about the general policies and procedures at the university for addressing similar issues of racism.

The event became a springboard for revising the grievance policy at the university. The Council of Indian Students demanded an apology from Brew and for the grievance polices to be revised at the University. Senogles claimed that the university grievance procedures were burdensome to go through and unproductive at addressing issues. To handle the emerging conflict, John Tuttle from the Minnesota Department of Human Rights mediated between the Bemidji State University and student representatives over the course of two days in fourteen or fifteen-hour meetings.[196] Ultimately, the university created a committee to oversee and revise its grievance procedures as a result of the incident.

Indian and non-Indian students also worked together to share information about Native people, Native culture and to foster conversations amongst their peers. On August 10, 1990, Bemidji State University was awarded a 100,000 Cultural Diversity Initiative Grant from the Ford Foundation to hold cultural awareness seminars for faculty and students to improve their interactions with diversity in the classroom.[197] Smaller miniature grants were also dispersed among the faculty who applied for project money. One such project occurred in the student newspaper, *The Northern Student*.

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[195] Ibid.

[196] Allen Undem, "Racial Mediation May Result in New Grievance Procedures," *Northern Student*, January 16, 1991.

[197] Dennis Renowski, "$100,000 Gift Ford Foundation Grants BSU Funds for Cultural Diversity," *Northern Student*, October 17, 1990.

From October to December in 1991, *The Northern Student* ran a special section entitled "Visions and Voices." Under this title, the newspaper explained the special series: "This new section of *The Northern Student* is an attempt to engage the BSU community in a discussion on Native American issues, particularly as they affect our campus."[198] The visions and voices section was co-sponsored with the Council of Indian students and funded by the Ford Foundation grant. The series addressed topics such as "What's an Indian?" and the life of Red Lake High School junior, Megan Hart, in an article titled "Living Two Worlds."[199] Issues of the series also explored the history of the local area, treaty rights, and the story of Chief Bemidji. Some editions included editorials titled "the Way it Was" and on the other page one titled "The Way it IS."[200] The presence of American Indian issues and topics dramatically increased in the 1990s most likely connected to the approaching anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival.

During the 1991 and 1992 issues of *The Northern Student*, a great deal of conversation took place regarding Indian peoples. Some of the articles concerned issues such as the Brave's tomahawk chop or critiques of films, such as the *Last of the Mohicans*. Other articles addressed the anniversary of Columbus's arrival in America. American Indian students wrote articles, staged protests, and carried out public demonstrations during these years. One potent protest was a public march titled The Legacy of Columbus: A Walk of Mourning and Hope. During these conversations, students invoked Oldest Elder and found empowerment to speak out about American

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[198] "Visions and Voices," *Northern Student*, October 23, 1991.

[199] Megan Hart, "Living Two Lives," *Northern Student*, October 23, 1991.

[200] "What's An Indian," *Northern Student*, October 23, 1991.

Indian issues and concerns. *She* offered them support and purpose as they engaged in cross-cultural exchanges about the past and present. At the same time, American Indian faculty, staff, and administrative allies continued to work on financing an Indian Center.

During the early 1990s, Don Day took over the capital campaign for the Indian Center. In three to four years, Day and others were able to raise around 300,000 dollars and began the process to build the house. They planned for a round house with seven offices, a main gathering area, and a kitchen.[201] On September 29, 1993, they held an official groundbreaking.[202] Day recalls that there "must have been 200 people…legislators were there, the Lakota people came down gave us a pipe for it to hold and use."[203] It is easy to imagine Lakota and Anishinaabeg Oldest Elders celebrating with the people at the groundbreaking as the people spoke in the language.

After the groundbreaking, Day left BSU and went to pursue his doctorate at the University of North Dakota. During his absence, the house was put on hold because at the ground breaking Senator Roger Mole spoke to Day about the possibility of doing even more with the center. Day replied to the Senator that of course they could do better "but this is what we can for 300,000."[204] Through collaboration and pooling of funds, the possibilities for the center grew. Day recalls that

> They allocated us a million dollars…the State of Minnesota to Bemidji State. And then [the] Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe was getting a million dollars. I think it was from the State to build an interpretative center on the reservation someplace but the tribe didn't go through with it. So after about a year or so, the tribe said

[201] Don Day, December 3, 2013, Ibid.

[202] *Native Americans Into Medicine*, by Bemidji State University Indian Student Service (Bemidji: Bemidji State University, Winter 1993-94), 1.

[203] Don Day, December 3, 2013, Ibid.

[204] Ibid.

> ya know Bemidji's trying to build an Indian Center. Why don't you just transfer that money to them? So the state of Minnesota did. They gave Bemidji State that million dollars too. So all of a sudden, they had 2.3 million [dollars]. So they started ground breaking on the building they have now. It was almost a 3 million dollar building.[205]

On October 4, 2003, the American Indian Resource Center was officially dedicated at Bemidji State University. The building is 10,667 square feet and includes offices for the center's staff, faculty in Indian Studies and Ojibwe language. There are classrooms, a kitchen, meeting rooms, study cubicles, exhibit areas, and a gathering place. The Great Hall, as the gathering place is referred to, is an oval shaped room with over 2,500 square feet and a fireplace. BSU's magazine, Horizons, ran a special insert on the opening of the AIRC entitled *Catching A Dream.* It read: "Those who worked on the Center realize the amount of dialog, discussion, and commitment needed to move the idea into a plan and then to reality. It took commitment from the University, state government, tribal leaders and American Indian graduates."[206]

What made the AIRC possible were the relationships formed between American Indian people and allies within the university and state government. The relationships span decades of efforts to respect, establish, and protect the presence of Oldest Elder at Bemidji State University. Building a new American Indian Resource Center met the needs of BSU students but also the needs of the local and surrounding communities. It is a welcoming home space for Oldest Elder to work with students.

Addressing the purpose of the center, University President, Dr. Jon E. Quistgaard, wrote "It will be more than a place where classes are held, counseling takes place, and

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[205] Ibid.

[206] Bemidji State University, Special Insert "American Indian Resource Center: Catching a Dream," *Horizons* (Bemidji: Bemidji State University, 2013).

students meet. The walls of the Center will not be barricades, isolating students or separating cultures. Instead, the facility will be a vehicle to remove barriers and present students, faculty, staff and the public with new opportunities for learning, interaction ad engagement."[207] Today, the center is alive and well. Classes are held in the building, events and gatherings occur under its roof. Conversations continue about one day offering language emersion day care for students with children. The struggles of Bemidji's early adventures with Anishinaabemowin continue into the present but the successes continue as well. As long as healthy relationships are maintained between individuals, Oldest Elder, and the educational institution, the center will succeed.

Starting December 2012, Anton Treuer, an enrolled member of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, became the director of the American Indian Resource Center. Treuer worked at Bemidji State University between 1991 and 1993 in Indian Student Services as a Counselor. In 2000, he returned to Bemidji State University and worked as a professor of Ojibwe, earning tenure in 2004. Over the past twenty years or more, he has become one of the foremost scholars and language sources on Anishinaabemowin. He hopes to continue building the program and center at Bemidji State. At the same time, he continues to be an active member of the language community through educational projects and community activities. Oldest Elder continues to thrive at BSU in the Ojibwe language classes through speakers and learners of Anishinaabemowin. *She* is present at the numerous community events and activities hosted by the center. *She* is also alive in the larger community through collaborative efforts. One of the most visible recent collaborative projects in Bemidji has been an Ojibwe language signage project. It began

[207] Ibid.

in June 2009, when members of Bemidji's Shared Vision developed an idea to address the racial tensions between Native and non-Native people in the community.

Bemidji has had a race relations council since the mid to late 1960s. The protest of the Bemidji area in 1966 was a catalyst for drawing attention to the racial issues in Bemidji and discussion ways to address them. According to Treuer, "I think that was a wakeup call for the town. Joe Lukin, he implemented the town's first affirmative action employment policy and that was immediately after and in direct response to that. So I think that was the beginning of a wakeup call. There has been a lot of work around race in this town; there's been a race relations task force that has been doing a lot of work for a long time."[208] The issues of race relations, employment practices, and diversity have been subjects of interest for university student surveys and various community forums over the years.

In the early 2000s, two community leadership organizations, the Bemidji Area Race Relations Council and Bemidji Leads, formed an offshoot organization known as Shared Vision. The purpose of Shared Vision is "to be a catalyst that encourages community members to work together to expand social, economic, educational, and leadership opportunities for people of all races."[209] Their goals are particularly "aimed at developing good cultural understanding and acceptance among American Indians…and ensuring strong representation of American Indians in all aspects of community life."[210] Funded by three foundations, the three surrounding tribal councils, and additional

[208] Anton Treuer, interview by author, Bemidji, Minnesota, December 4, 2012.

[209] Ela Rausch, Greg Owen, and Nicole MartinRogers, *Bemidji Area Study on Race Relations: An Exploration of Current Race Relations Between American Indian and White Residents*, (St. Paul: Wilder Research, February 2009), 1-2.

[210] Ibid.

commissions, businesses, and organizations, Shared Vision contracted with Wilder Research in July 2008 to "assess Bemidji area residents' perceptions of community race relations, experience with racial discrimination, and satisfaction with person and community life."[211] They wanted to gather data on the racial climate in the community.

The results of the survey illustrate different perceptions of race relationships between the white and Native communities. When asked about the overall perception of race relations in the Bemidji area, only twenty percent of white respondents reported poor relations. The majority of white participants selected fair. The majority of American Indian participants both in the Bemidji area and on nearby reservations, however, reported that race relations were "poor."[212] When asked about personal experiences of being discriminated against because of their race, seventy-seven percent of American Indian respondents on nearby reservations responded that they experience discrimination several times or a very regular basis.[213] Fifty-six percent of American Indians living in Bemidji area also selected several times or a very regular basis. Only fourteen percent of white respondents selected on a very regular basis or several times.[214] The final report on the survey includes a sampling of participant comments.

One American Indian Participant shared that "Being a Native American is hard in Bemidji because some of the residents and shop owners are uneducated and scared of Native Americans. I have personally seen both the good and the bad."[215] A white

[211] Ibid., 2.

[212] Ibid., 14.

[213] Ibid., 22.

[214] Ibid.

participant shared that when they moved to Bemidji in 2001, they were "shocked at the level of racism between Whites and Natives and how open and accepted that racism is."[216] A number of comments in final report are from white participants claiming that Native Americans "play the race card," get stopped by law enforcement because "the vast majority of them are probably doing something wrong at the time" and make claims of reverse discrimination against white community members. [217] The survey revealed what I discovered in my interviews as well: fear of American Indians based on lack of information and stereotypes and continued tensions between the communities.

The results of the Shared Vision survey indicated "about 30 percent of Bemidji residents (both American Indians and Whites) and 45 percent of American Indians living on nearby reservations are dissatisfied with the current state of race relations in the Bemidji area."[218] While the percentage of individuals satisfied with current race relations is disturbing, nine out of ten participants also indicated an interest in getting to know people from other cultural and racial groups. Out of this survey and its results, Shared Vision formed teams to address four key areas: education and training, economic development and entrepreneurial activity, cultural knowledge and understanding, and leadership and civic engagement. In 2009, Shared Vision member, Michael Meuers came up with an idea to raise awareness of Native American languages and to try and create a safer and welcoming space in the city of Bemidji for American Indian people.

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[215] Ibid., 14.

[216] Ibid.

[217] Ibid.

[218] Ibid., 40.

He wanted to put signs up in Anishinaabemowin in everyday locations where people would experience the language and become more familiar with Oldest Elder.

Meuers' inspiration to create Ojibwe signage for local businesses came from two experiences. The first was a year he spent in Hawaii "courtesy of the United States Army. The language and culture in Hawaii is very much a part of everyday life," he explained.[219] "Everybody uses the words *aloha, mahalo, malihini, kāne* and *wāhine* on the bathroom doors. This made him wonder, "why not that here, ya know?"[220] The second experience was in response to the school shooting on March 21, 2005 at Red Lake High School on the Red Lake reservation. Ten people were killed and seven injured in the incident. A day after the shooting, Meuers visited the Bemidji city manager and suggested a simple symbolic act of solidarity. "My wife was on the city council at the time," Meuers explains.[221] The city manager "had a Red Lake flag he'd been given on his shelf. I said, *you oughta fly that flag at half-mast for a day or two* and he did for a week. It took no effort, didn't cost a thing…I never heard such positive comments from Red Lake people about Bemidji…They usually don't have much good to say about Bemidji…but this symbol said *we are crying with you over your babies*."[222] The response to the flag flying at half-mast showed the potential positive work that symbolic action might be able to accomplish in Bemidji.

During a Shared Vision's committee meeting in downtown Bemidji's Cabin Coffeehouse, Meuers got the ball rolling on the project. "I was saying for weeks that this

[219] Michael Meuers, interview by author, Bemidji, Minnesota, December 3, 2012.

[220] Ibid.

[221] Ibid.

[222] Ibid.

could work," Meuers explains, "and we were sitting back here one day. They [other committee members] weren't jumping on board. So I got up and I talked to her [Noemi's] daughter."[223] Noemi Aylesworth, the owner of Cabin Coffeehouse and Café, was out of the state at the time but Meuers asked her daughter, who was working there, if they might consider putting up some Ojibwe signs. Aylesworth remembers,

> So when I got back, I met with him and I thought, *yeah I wonder why people haven't done this before…it was so obvious*…So I put it [an Anishinaabe sign] on my front door and from there I ended up putting it on the doors of the restrooms. And then I ended up making table tents and then I added some of the language to the menu…I just thought it was a cool idea. It's just a welcoming. It shows respect. I never thought it would get this kind of attention. We had re-done the storefront so I went back to the sign guy and said I want this [Anishinaabe words] added. Can you do that? And then I had a special sign made to put on the bathrooms. I didn't think about the cost, it's just a respectful thing to do and I don't mind that. [224]

Meuers and Rachelle Houle, another committee member, were not even aware that Aylesworth had put up the signage on her doors until a few days later. After they learned the signs were up, they started walking up and down the street talking to different businesses asking if people would be interested in putting up Ojibwe words. Their goal was to get twenty businesses with signs. Today, there are over one hundred and fifty businesses in the Bemidji area with Ojibwe signage. "And everybody's doing it differently in different ways and with different signs," Houle shared, "so it's unique to each business what they want to do"[225]

The local food co-op has fruits and vegetables labeled with Ojibwe words and different stores have words for their merchandise or services. The fun examples Meuers,

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[223] Ibid.

[224] Noemi Aylesworth, interview by author, Bemidji, Minnesota, December 3, 2012.

[225] Rachelle Houle, interview by author, Bemidji, Minnesota, December 3, 2013.

Houle, and Aylesworth like to share are businesses that needed words for washing machines or computer repair. When a business had a word that needed to be translated, Meuers and Houle contacted Treuer at BSU. As the list of businesses with Ojibwe signage grew, the concept and project expanded into other areas of the Bemidji community. The presence of Oldest Elder and the welcoming of *her* into the different community spaces increased with each new sign. *Her* presence expanded with each new word and each new person who read them. When individuals attempted to speak the words, they communed with Oldest Elder and invoked *her* into that moment and space.

The idea spread from local businesses to large institutions in the area. The Sandford Center Arena and Events Center placed *Boozhoo* (Hello) and *Miigwech* (Thank you) on their doors coming in and out of the center. They also posted signage on their twelve pairs of restrooms and the parking lot designations. Each parking area displays an image of an animal and their corresponding Ojibwe names. One can image how joyous Oldest Elder and other ancestors must be when little children and their families come to the center and ask their parents to park by the *Maengun* (wolf). The Sandford Bemidji Medical Center has posted bilingual signage throughout its facility as well, including bilingual directories for different medical offices. The City of Bemidji, Bemidji State Park, Itasca State Park, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation and Department of Natural Resources are also participating in the signage effort.[226] Educational institutions at multiple levels have taken bold steps in incorporating Ojibwe words and signage in their community.

[226] ICTM Staff, "Bemidji's Ojibwe Language Project Seeking Permanence," *Indian Country Today Media Network*, July, 28, 2011, accessed December 15, 2012, http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/article/bemidji%25e2%2580%2599s-ojibwe-language-project-seeking-permanence-44719.

Northwest Technical College and Bemidji State University adopted Ojibwe signage at their institution. Bemidji State also put up signs in multiple languages across their campus. In the context of centuries of assimilation efforts directed at Native American peoples to give up their language and culture, these signage efforts and symbolic acts of linguistic recognition and validation are remarkable. In addition to the higher educational community, the Bemidji Independent School District 31 has also joined in the effort. Principles from the high school, middle school, six elementary schools, and four additional schools committed to implementing Ojibwe signs in their buildings. The challenge was how to secure the funding to create the signs.[227]

Meuers and Houle began calling individuals and business owners in the community requesting donations for creating the signs and started looking for foundational support or available grants. Together, Meuers and Houle were able to raise approximately 1,000 dollars through donations. Anton Treuer donated 1,000 dollars of personal grant money he had received to the project as well. The project was originally estimated to be a 10,000 to 12,000 dollar project and they were still well below that amount of funds.

At this point, the Bemidji Middle School and Lincoln Elementary School had already posted some Ojibwe signage in their buildings but ten other schools were still in need of permanent signs. Luckily, "The high school said, we can do this in our shop class. We can buy the raw materials…for all the schools and save a lot of money," Meuers explains.[228] By involving the students, "the kids had some ownership in it and it

[227] Ibid.

[228] Michael Meuers, December 3, 2012, Ibid.

brought the cost way down."[229] Through a combination of donations, teamwork, and pulling together existing resources, the signage was created and implemented across the district in 2012.

Some of the schools have gone a step further with incorporating the language. Bemidji High School offers two levels of Ojibwe language classes as part of their world languages program. Lincoln Elementary School has started incorporating the language into weekly announcements. Kathy VanWert is the principle at Lincoln Elementary and shared that

> this last year, we had decided we wanted to take another step with the Ojibwe language. And one of our teachers is American Indian, Anishinaabe I believe, she could get access to the pronunciations of the words in our building, which are very long. We were talking about it at our site team [meeting]. We had decided that we were going to start with more general language: saying hello, listen, and be quiet and some general words. Then we'll expand into the bigger words that we see within the building and our hope is to have the teachers say, "we're going to the, Ojibwe word for gym, and then go there." And then more kids will start to hear it.[230]

A first grade teacher at the school, Diana Kingbird, opens P.A. announcements with *Boozhoo*, teaches a few words in Ojibwe, and sometimes a lesson on the word. The lessons are also placed on the school's website. The language portion of the announcement is played twice a week at the beginning of the school day and the general daily announcements begin with *Boozhoo*. "So when I'm out there [in the school] and she opens up *Boozhoo* and the kids say *Boozhoo*, it is incredible to hear, it really is," VanWert shares. [231] While students in the school do not currently use the language for

[229] Ibid.

[230] Kathy VanWert, interview by author, Bemidji, Minnesota, December 6, 2012.

[231] Ibid.

day-to-day activities, VanWert believes the students are picking it up and at the very least, becoming interested in the language.

"They look forward to it," she explains.[232] "I was in a fifth grade classroom and we thought it was Ojibwe day and it didn't come. And so [students were asking] *What happened? What happened to the Ojibwe lesson?* So they look forward to it."[233] For Meuers, the important part about the signage in the schools is that it creates an opportunity for generations of people to learn about and become exposed to the language.

> If we can get Ojibwe signage in every school system, in every school in the Bemidji school system, at some point everybody passes through a school. Everybody passes through a school at some point, for some reason. Plus the fact that you got these kids. It's a conversation starter for both. Indian kids and white kids can be looking at this door…you've got these kids both trying to learn this [language] and it's a conversation starter. It brings Indians and non-Indians together.[234]

When asked about the reaction from parents and teachers, VanWert explained that it had overwhelmingly been a positive experience. "When we first put up the signs," she shared, "I got one telephone call from the community, a parent. *Why are you doing this?* [They asked] and so I explained why I thought it was important that we do it: because it's part of the whole culture of Bemidji. A large portion of our students are identified American Indian students. I don't know how many are not identified, and we need to make everybody feel comfortable here."[235] During our conversation, she emphasized the

[232] Ibid.

[233] Ibid.

[234] Meuers, December 3, 2012, Ibid.

[235] VanWert, December 6, 2012, Ibid.

point that "whatever you can do to promote positive race relations, is what you need to do."[236]

For Aylesworth, the experience of putting Ojibwe signs in her coffeehouse has also been positive. When she goes to the dentist office or around town she sees the language. Patrons of her establishment read the table tents and try to sound out the words. With each attempt to speak the language, Oldest Elder is brought into that moment with those people. She even has to replace the table tents because people often take them home with them. "I have had tourists from Canada and a lady visiting from France that have asked for the table tents. So they do disappear. So I have to make [more of] them. Some ask, some just disappear, but that's okay," she says.[237] Like VanWert's experience, Aylesworth has "only had one person say *well if you're going to have it in Ojibwe, then you need it in German and you need it in French and you need it in all the other languages that there are…*"[238] Her response to this individual was "well I don't want to do that. I just want to do the local language because we are located between three reservations."[239]

Meuers and Houle have had similar discussions with community members. Rachelle explains "We have some people who aren't [supportive], who are resistant. We've had some people that just don't understand why we're doing it and they'll say *well if we're going to do that, why not do Spanish.*"[240] When asked why they do not have

[236] Ibid.

[237] Aylesworth, December 3, 2012, Ibid.

[238] Ibid.

[239] Ibid.

Spanish or German or Norwegian, Meuers and Houle try to explain that those are imported languages. "Even English is an imported language in Northern Minnesota. This [Anishinaabemowin] is the indigenous language," they explain.[241] Or they tell the person "It's because of the region that we live in. This is the native language. It's about respect."[242] Despite their attempts to explain the importance and reasoning, "some people just didn't get it."[243]

Besides challenging why Ojibwe was being prioritized, the other criticism raised is that people only want Indian money and that it is a disingenuous economic move on behalf of businesses. When asked about this criticism, Treuer responded with "So what, maybe initially that was part of it. Some people just want to be appealing to all of their clientele and it's [a] business decisions, but I think there are also a lot of non-Native people who want to reach out and put a friendly face on their relationship with Native people."[244] People in general, Treuer explained, are not aware of how to go about making race relations better, even if they are aware of systematic privilege. It is a heavy question to ponder: "How do you atone for the sin of your ancestors?"[245] A good amount of people feel that it is an impossible task so they "just go home and try to be

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[240] Houle, December 3, 2012, Ibid.

[241] Meuers, December 3, 2012, Ibid.

[242] Houle, December 3, 2012, Ibid.

[243] Meuers, December 3, 2012, Ibid.

[244] Anton Treuer, December 4, 2012, Ibid.

[245] Ibid.

good people. [They] love up their own kids and focus on their nuclear family and leave the big problems to somebody else."[246]

The power in the signage project is that it equips people with a way to reach out and they feel like they can make a difference. It familiarizes people with Anishinaabemowin, peaks their interest. It creates linguistic space for Oldest Elder and demystifies Anishinaabemowin for people who might otherwise have never experienced the language. The subtle strength of what Noemi did is that "she wasn't out there rattling cages and being active about things. But when presented with a way to pretty painlessly make some small differences and then get some positive attention and feedback from that and even have it positively impact her business…WIN…and so lots of people have [put up signs] too."[247] The movement caught on as more and more people became supportive of the idea and the possibilities it might bring about. Even Treuer who is engaged in language efforts and supporting change through the American Indian Resource Center was surprised by the places into which Anishinaabemowin has found its way. Recently, he shared an unusual experience while buying new tires for his car.

> I was just in there buying car tires and my white mechanic of the past thirty years says: *Ahaw miigwetch. Gigawaabamin menawaa.* And I was like, huh? And he just picked that stuff off the website and what not…it was a small effort and it didn't fix any of the big issues but it creates safe space where you can talk about the big issues.[248]

The spread of Anishinaabemowin signage and the attention the effort drew also fostered new opportunities for public discussions and cross-cultural understanding. On

[246] Ibid.

[247] Ibid.

[248] Ibid.

September 24, 2009, Noemi opened the Cabin Coffeehouse and hosted an event titled "Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians but Were Afraid to Ask." Bemidji community members, Indian and non-Indian, were welcome and could ask questions. Don Day, the director of the American Indian Resource Center at the time, and Anton Treuer, who was an Ojibwe language professor then, fielded questions from the audience. Recalling the evening, Aylesworth remembers,

> It packed the room. There was standing room only back here. And he [Treuer] gave a presentation and just talked about Native American culture and some racial issues. It was good and I think there should be more community engagement that way, because what is fear? Fear is the unknown and if people don't understand another culture they're fearful.[249]

There has certainly been a great deal of fear in Bemidji between Native Americans and white community members. Meuers, Houle, Aylesworth, Day, Treuer, and VanWert can all recall instances of racism and fear between Native Americans and Non-Native people in the community. Native American people face prejudice, discrimination, and threats of violence. Non-Native community members have narratives of Indian rebellions and stereotypes of violence about American Indian peoples told to them from a young age and repeated in popular culture and media.

When a relative came to stay with Aylesworth years before the signage project, the relative asked Aylesworth to sleep with her in the room. The relative was afraid, Aylesworth explained. The relative said she was afraid "*because there's Indians that live here…Well, I don't know, I've heard things.*"[250] The socialization of fear in the non-Indian community often starts in childhood with stereotypical images of the noble savage

[249] Aylesworth, December 3, 2012, Ibid.

[250] Ibid.

from films and media. Rumors, urban legends, and family members' actions, reactions, and stories also instill the fear. For Houle, she remembers walking down the street with her grandmother and an American Indian man passing them. Her grandmother became nervous and apprehensive. For her it was "a passed down fear" and came from multiple sources. Growing up Houle heard

> lots of stories of don't drive through Red Lake. If your car were to break down…I've been told stories of people having been driving through there but having a man lying in the middle of the road. So you stop your car and then all these other people jump out. I've heard lots of stories of scary things happening. In the 70s, I heard Red Lake was declaring war on Bemidji [during the Boycott of Bemidji]. I was waiting for them to come marching down our streets and burn our houses down. I was scared to death. I was scared they were going to come and kill us all because there were rumors.[251]

The fear of driving on the reservations still can be heard in Bemidji. For American Indian community members, they too have a history of fear when it comes to townspeople and experiencing racism and discrimination. The stories and memories of damaging experiences are not far from present day memory. In the 1980s, about forty miles north of Bemidji there was a restaurant called Club 46. Meuers recalled "they had an indoor bathroom and Indians would come in from Red Lake and they wanted to use the bathroom. Instead of letting them go inside to use the bathroom, which was in the other room, they'd tell them, they'd send them out to the outhouse."[252] Speaking with Native American community members growing up in the surrounding area in the 1950s,

[251] Houle, December 3, 2012, Ibid.

[252] Meuers, December 3, 2012, Ibid.

people remember being chased out of businesses and seeing signs posted that read "No Indians Allowed."[253]

Like Houle, Principle Kathy VanWert grew up in Bemidji and remembers hearing a similar warning about driving through the reservations.

> When I was in high school, people we're saying just drive through the reservation, talking about Leech Lake. Drive through as fast as you can because you don't want to break down there. Well, when I was working at Leech Lake and up at Red Lake, I thought I'd rather break down here because I know somebody's going to help me. I know somebody's going to help me. I don't have that confidence if I drive to the cities. I just don't.[254]

Experiences between cultures and breaking down those walls of fear and apprehension are some of the Ojibwe Language Projects goals. Despite some resistance by people, Houle expressed that she "was very surprised at the acceptance of it. How many people were willing to do it. Very few [people] have said no."[255] The positive stories and experiences with the signage project have far outweighed the negative. It can be as simple as when Don Day went to the Cabin Coffeehouse and "this Indian woman came up with her daughter. They were holding hands and they walked in and that little girl said mommy look, it says *boozhoo*."[256] And they walked inside. The positivity of Oldest Elder touches people when young cashiers at the local Target greet Ojibwe customers with *Boozhoo* and thank them with *Miigwetch* or end their exchange with *giga-waabamin menawaa*. It shocks people and starts new conversations between cultures. The healing power of Oldest Elder touches the lives of those who experience

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[253] Tom Robertson, "Bemidji Businesses Including Ojibwe in Signs," *MPR News*, August 5, 2009, accessed December 10, 2012, http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2009/08/05/ojibwe-signs.

[254] VanWert, December 3, 2012, Ibid.

[255] Houle, December 3, 2012, Ibid.

[256] Don Day, December 3, 2013, Ibid.

the language. These simple actions are starting to create safe space for Oldest elder to connect with people and have a presence in the larger non-Native Bemidji community.

Cross-cultural alliances, strong leadership, and a willingness to work for positive change have been critical to the success of the Ojibwe signage project. As Don Day explained in these race relations organizations non-Indian peoples are "stepping up to the plate, saying this isn't right. We've got to be more inclusive. Include everybody."[257] It was helpful to have non-Native allies suggesting Ojibwe signage and connecting to non-Native business owners. Just as non-Native allies were crucial for the creation and development of the language program at Bemidji State University. Treuer explains,

> If a native guy is knocking on some shop owner's door, saying *hey how come your signs aren't up in Ojibwe*? They'll be like, *I don't know. Come back later [and] look for the manager* and nothing happens. But, if there's a non-Native guy there saying *hey ya know 50% of your business is Native. You want to find a safe, painless way to reach out to them? Here you go. Here it is for you all translated, ready to go and most of the other businesses in town have already done it. You should get on board*. There are parts for everyone to play. If I tried to do what Michael Meuers was doing, opening all of those doors, I wouldn't be quite as far because it helped having a non-Native face on the outreach effort for some people…[258]

The signage "doesn't fix the big issues," Treuer points out, "but it creates safe space where you can talk about them."[259] When speaking with Houle about the success and impact of the Ojibwe signage project, she shared that

> For me, the biggest thing is I didn't realize the implications of this. I really just thought of it as signs and that'd be cool. But it [has] become so much bigger than just signs. As we heard little stories, my eyes were opened to *wow this is really big*. Okay, this is much more. This is a small thing we did here, but it's having

[257] Ibid.

[258] Anton Treuer, December 4, 2012, Ibid.

[259] Ibid.

> huge implications. It's bringing the two cultures together, very slowly. I'm not saying Bemidji's great or everything's fixed. That's not true, but because Bemidji is showing an openness to that culture and language, things are warming up. You can just feel it. It's gonna be slow. Change is slow but this was a starting point to something big.[260]

The town of Bemidji, Minnesota has received a substantial amount of media coverage regarding the Ojibwe Signage Project and the activities of Anton Treuer and the American Indian Resource Center in their language efforts. Bemidji State University has become a place for people to learn about Anishinaabemowin and Native American history and issues. There is still a great deal of work to be done in helping Native and non-Native people build cultural bridges and creating and maintaining equal space for Ojibwe people, culture, and language. The story of Bemidji and the creation, development, and progress of the American Indian studies and Ojibwe language program is an example of success. It is a story of success in negotiating space within a western educational system and the potential results strong Indian leadership and collaboration with non-Indian allies can have in institutions and communities. It is a story of individuals, groups, communities, education, and tribal activism working toward making a place that values and respects Anishinaabeg culture, history, and language. People are still working to this end and will have to continue to do so.

The history of this struggle is also one of Oldest Elder gaining a stronger presence in Bemidji and moving among Northern Minnesota in the reservations and the border town of Bemidji. The visible population of Native Americans and the activism of 1966 alerted the non-Native Bemidji to the economic force tribal peoples had. It helped shift some of the power dynamics in the community. Bemidji State University recognized the

[260] Houle, December 3, 2012, Ibid.

potential population of Native American students that it could tap into and faculty members and administrators saw the validity in creating an American Indian Studies program and Ojibwe language courses. Allies with the educational community and larger regional area helped by supporting initiatives, programs, and opening doors for projects such as the Ojibwe signage. Each of these steps brought Oldest Elder into the conversation, invited the language into the daily lives of citizens, students, teachers, and administrators. Relationships between individuals and the language were formed from causal encounters to lifelong intimate relationships. Each interaction between the language and a person built a stronger foundation for Oldest Elders' presence in the community, which continues to grow with each *Boozhoo* and *Miigwetch* spoken.

CHAPTER 4

CHIPIITENIM DEBENDAGOZIJIG: UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

While traveling around the Ann Arbor area or walking on the University of Michigan's campus, you might see someone wearing a shirt that subtly draws your attention. At first glance, you can tell it is a University of Michigan t-shirt. It is dark blue with a large gold "M" centered on the chest. At second glance, however, you might notice some writing you may or may not be able to make out. The front reads *Izhaadaa Giizhigowaande* (Let's Go Blue) and on the back, it reads *Chipiitenim Debendagozijig* (Respect the Locals). In that moment you read the words and try to sound them out, you connect with Oldest Elder. Through the language, you are also connected in the same moment, to the historical relationship between the Anishinaabeg and the university. These shirts articulate pride in being a part of the University of Michigan but also suggest the need for awareness of the historical and present day contributions the Anishinaabe people make to the university. The shirts carry Oldest Elder with them wherever they go and help form new relationships between *him* and others when people ask about the language.

In recent years, the University of Michigan's Anishinaabemowin program has been recognized by the Anishinaabeg community as one of the best programs to learn Anishinaabemowin. The cohesion between elders and language instructors as they collaborated with university programming and community outreach has stood out as an example for other smaller language programs to emulate. Through the efforts and activities of the elders and speakers, students in the program experienced Anishinaabeg culture and history. They were able to apply this knowledge in classroom projects,

community gatherings, and the academic community. Oldest Elder flourished at University of Michigan and the Ann Arbor area with the official gatherings, informal language circles, drum groups, and the physical speaking of Anishinaabemowin.

At the beginning of this research project, the program at University of Michigan was the strongest it had ever been. The language courses had high enrollments to the point that students often had to wait a semester to enroll in the courses. In the past year, the program has taken a dramatic turn. Today, only one of the three language teachers remains at the university and the future of their position is uncertain. Oldest Elder's journey at the University of Michigan has been a struggle and series of successes only to be challenged by instabilities within the university. The process for carving space for him, receiving recognition and respect, and negotiating relationships between the university, faculty, and the student organization Michigamua has been a long difficult struggle.

Prior to the creation of Anishinaabemowin courses, the university and the American Indian community had an estranged relationship. The relationship after the creation of the course was still strained but a formal relationship existed. The formative years of the 1960s and 1970s were marked by tensions, struggles, activism, and misunderstandings. Issues surrounding Michigamua, physical space, and recognition for American Indian students, respectful representation in course offerings and curriculum, and museum collections of ancestors became forums where the relationship between the university and American Indian peoples was addressed. The issues were not isolated problems but rather intimately connected to Oldest Elder and how *he* was treated at the

university. The university's efforts for cross-cultural communication and understanding barely existed and usually resulted from public pressure.

Substantial changes were rarely made or enforced. The small number of non-Native allies during the early years of the program helped negotiate space for Oldest Elder and convinced other members of the university community that *his* presence was absolutely necessary. The strong notable language program of the past few years was only possible because of the developments in the 1970s and the people's determination to champion Oldest Elder at the university. The story of the language program is divided into chapters. This chapter examines the foundational years before and during the creation of the courses. This critical historical context of the relationships between the university and American Indian peoples helps explain the backdrop of the revitalization efforts.

Oldest Elder was certainly in the Ann Arbor community long before the creation of the university. *He* resides with the people, language, and culture. Wherever they are and whenever they keep their relationships with *him*, *he* is present. Within the university structures and physical space, however, American Indian peoples were historically unwelcome and ignored. Conversations on diversity and inclusion left out American Indian peoples. The living American Indian people were not even on the radar for most administrators, faculty, and staff at the university.

The educational and linguistic space of the university was not a safe or encouraging place for Oldest Elder, especially in the years leading up to the 1970s. The public and private activities of the Michigamua student organization on campus, for example, openly and actively mocked, disrespected, trivialized, and reduced *him* to a

commodity for the pleasure of the university's "elite" students. Their harassment and attacks on *him* were done in the name of supporting the university. The university as an institution and active supportive alumni who held powerful positions of authority at the university supported the organization. The road to carving out a niche for Oldest Elder and students to build a relationship with *him* was a long and arduous process marked by consistent student and community activism and limited, but important internal support from non-Native allies.

The University of Michigan is nationally known for its history of student activism, especially student anti-war activities and the Black Action Movement (BAM) that effectively closed the campus in March 1970.[261] People are generally familiar with the movement to increase the enrollment of Black students and services and financial assistance for them: the birth of affirmative action. Most people are unaware of the fact that other minority students attended the university and engaged in their own struggles for recognition, respect, and a place at the table. American Indian attendance numbers were not nearly as high as the African American population in the 1970s, but they were often participating in the same protests and addressing similar issues of representation, recognition, and respect on their own.

The struggles at the University of Michigan over American Indian issues were not isolated incidents restricted to the university or Ann Arbor community. The larger American Indian community was aware of the treatment towards and lack of support for American Indian students. News in Indian country travels fast and Oldest Elder connects

[261] Wilfred B. Shaw, Ed. The University of Michigan, An Encyclopedic Survey (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Digital Library Production Service, 2000). This source offers detailed information, especially in the chapter titled "The Fleming Years" where the Black Action Movement and other instances of student activism are explored.

people across great distances. The American Indian community spoke for Oldest Elder and the American Indian peoples.

A month after the conclusion of the BAM protests and negotiations with the university Regents, John Winchester, a member of the State Commission on Indian Affairs, "submitted to the University administration a list of recommendations for raising the enrollment of American Indians as well as the amount of financial aid and supportive services for Indians admitted to the University."[262] Winchester presented the recommendations to Stephen Spurr, the Vice President and Dean of the Graduate School, on April 3, 1970. He recommended fifty full scholarships for American Indian students and the hiring American Indian staff to recruit Indian students. He also recommended establishing an American Indian Studies Institute at the university that would be supported by and connected to multiple departments.

A motivating force behind these recommendations was the responsibilities stemming from a treaty. The university, he argued, needed to recognize the Treaty of Fort Meigs and its connections to the university and Native people.[263] Tracts of land designated in the Treaty of Detroit were later granted "to the rector of the Catholic church of St. Anne of Detroit" for the purpose of future education for their children.[264] The rector was the founder and first vice president for the college. When the lands were sold, they benefited the University of Michigan.[265] From the beginning, the university had a

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[262] Marion Selz, "Indian Enrollment Aid Requested," *Michigan Daily*, April 15, 1970.

[263] Ibid.

[264] Charles Joseph Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1904-1979), 150. accessed December 15, 2011, http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/wya0145.htm.

relationship with Oldest Elder through a treaty based relationship and the agreement to educate American Indian people.

The university newspaper, *The Michigan Daily*, covered the submitted report and concerns of American Indian people: "Winchester relates his current appeal for increased enrollment of American Indian students to the recent dispute over black enrollment at the university. 'The Black Action Movement (BAM) has made the University aware that it is not adequately educating the black minority of this state,' he said. 'But during the entire BAM confrontation, the Michigan Indian was not mentioned.'"[266] While members of the American Indian community were aware of American Indian participation and concerns on campus and of Oldest Elder, the university was largely unaware or uninterested. The vice president responded to Winchester's requests stating that the university would expand scholarships to Indian students if more Indians wished to enroll.

While leaders in the larger American Indian community, like Winchester, raised awareness of American Indian concerns at the university, American Indian students were also organizing themselves to address their own issues on campus. As a group of approximately twenty students, the formed a constitution with the goals to advance American Indians economically, socially, and culturally through education, disseminate information to the public to dispel erroneous images and understandings of American Indians from movies and television, and to promote fellowship among American Indians.

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[265] Howard Kimewon, Alphonse Pitawanakwat, Margaret Noodin, "The University of Michigan and Native Americans," Noongwa e-Anishinaabegmjig, accessed January 12, 2012, http://www.umich.edu/~ojibwe/lessons/semester-one/introduction2/.

[266] Selz, "Indian Enrollment Aid Requested."

They sought a revival of Oldest Elder and to correct misunderstandings of *him* that the larger general population believed.

In the early 1970s, the relationship between the University of Michigan and the area's Native community, including its students, was a strained relationship based on Native attempts to gain recognition and resources or services from the university. Their efforts were met with token attention and superficial support or dismissal. The struggle was one to be seen, heard, and have their concerns taken seriously. There was a dire need to address the state of American Indian students and the life of Oldest Elder on campus. Individuals, small groups, and organizations brought issues of concern from the Native American community to the attention of the university repeatedly during these years but were met, time and time again, with resistance and disregard.

The individuals pushing for reforms found strength in their relationships with Oldest Elder. They continually campaigned for Oldest Elder to be recognized and for *his* presence in the language, culture, and people to be incorporated into the classroom. The conversations and activism did not directly identify *him* but *he* was there in the concerns of the people. *He* was present in the prayers of the people and their conversations about the needed changes at the university. The attempts to foster a relationship between the university and the American Indian community were often dismissed unless sufficient pressure was placed upon the university. It is because of the activism during the early 1970s, that Oldest Elder was invited to campus.

The conflicts and relationship between Indian peoples and the University of Michigan stretches back much farther than the 1970s. However, the relationships that ultimately led to the creation of the Ojibwe language program and the invitation of Oldest

Elder on campus were greatly affected by the events of the early 1970s. In August 1971, an Anishinaabe University of Michigan graduate student, Paul Johnson, filed a suit against the university Regents. The suit claimed "the University owes the Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potowatomy Indians money and increased educational opportunities to compensate for the land those tribes gave to establish the University under the Ft. Meigs Treaty of 1817."[267] Drawing on the historical relationship between the university and Anishinaabeg peoples, Johnson sought to increase opportunities for American Indian students on campus and bring Oldest Elder into the community as well. One generally thinks of Oldest Elder in quiet spaces or perhaps a classroom setting but *he* is also present in courtrooms and lawsuits.

Over the course of several months, the suit stalled while the university questioned and interrogated Johnson on his validity "as a true Indian representative."[268] At one meeting, twenty-two individuals questioned Johnson about his genealogy. They asked whether he attended tribal meetings and whether the tribal government(s) had authorized his actions as a representative.[269] The university officials sought a fracture in Johnson's relationship with Oldest Elder, believing it would damage the validity of his case. While his suit specifically addressed the issue of funds being directed towards educational needs, Johnson also called for "an increase in Indian admissions and culture courses at the University. "[270] A strong presence of Oldest Elder requires more individuals that have relationships with *him*. A strong base of American Indian peoples creates a

[267] Marcia Zoslaw, "Indian Teach-In Set; Confrontation Likely," *Michigan Daily*, April 11, 1972.

[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid.

[270] Marcia Zoslaw, "Indian Voices," *Michigan Daily*, September 7, 1972.

community and fosters the sharing of cultural knowledge between people, thereby creating new relationships with Oldest Elder.

In response to the suit, the university sought to transfer the case from state to federal court jurisdiction. Paul Johnson filed a default against the university and declared that it had not yet adequately responded to the suit.[271] The newspaper covering the situation reported that "while there are over 22,000 Indians in the state," Johnson had pointed out the "'under-representation' of only 30 Indian students at the University."[272] When Johnson filed the lawsuit in August 1971, less than twenty Native American students attended the university.[273] His campaign to address American Indian concerns on campus extended beyond numbers of enrolled students and courses offered. He attempted to draw the university's attention to its lack of a relationship with American Indian people. His struggle would span several years and involve multiple generations of students at the university.

Paul Johnson and his supporters from the academic and larger community attended university events, Regents' meetings and public gatherings where they spoke out about the unfulfilled Fort Meigs Treaty obligations and the unmet needs of Native students. One such event occurred in April of 1972. University President Robben Fleming invited a group of university staff members to attend a symposium to "enhance their understanding of the American Indian."[274] Paul Johnson planned to attend the event

[271] Marcia Zoslaw, "Indians Call Michigamua Racist," *Michigan Daily*, May 10, 1972.

[272] Zoslaw, "Indian Voices."

[273] Mary Long, "Indians Sue Regents Over Land Contract," *Michigan Daily*, April 6, 1974.

[274] Zoslaw, "Indian Teach-In Set."

and "confront the board with demands for increased educational opportunities."[275] While the symposium was a step towards understanding, it bore little fruit without university commitment. The struggle to form a relationship between the university and the American Indian community continued and the Fort Meigs Treaty was a central issue of contention.

During a campus event in February 1975, Johnson emphasized the uniqueness of the Native American concerns and the suit. "We are not like other minorities," he said, "We do not ask for our civil rights but for our treaty and our human rights."[276] During this time, university students organized a "Committee to Uphold the Fort Meigs Treaty."[277] Individual students, student organizations, and Native Ann Arbor community leaders and organizations all addressed the issue of the Fort Meigs Treaty with the administration though multiple forums. In 1975, the University Native American Advocate, Kevin Hart, spoke at an event saying, "Native American students are optimistic about the case." However, he emphasized the fact that students felt that "the University is cold and unresponsive to Native Americans. It is geared specifically for white middle-class intellectuals."[278]

University officials were not interested in Oldest Elder or meeting the needs of their American Indian students. American Indian students knew the university was apathetic and increased their pressure for change. They did not shy away from calling the university out for their apathy. In a Native American Student Organization flyer, they

[275] Ibid.

[276] Sue Wilhelm, "AIM Representative Speaks on Campus," *Michigan Daily*, February 5, 1975.

[277] Ibid.

[278] Ibid.

articulated the frustrations American Indian people had with the university and the long struggle they were fighting. The flyer also articulates some of the critical issues they continuously addressed with the administration.

Headed in large font with "Treaty of Fort Meigs," the document provided a brief description of the treaty and focused on the obligations of article sixteen. It stated, "In 1934, the Department of the Interior directed the University of Michigan to set up scholarships for Native students because of the Treaty of Fort Meigs."[279] The flyer claimed that the scholarships were never advertised and Native students were not actively recruited. "Between 1934 and 1969," it read, "less than five scholarships were given to Native students. More students have received them since, but the figures are kept from us as 'classified.'"[280] They articulated the tense and strained relationships between the Native American university students and the University of Michigan when they wrote, "The attitudes of these administrators is chincy at best, and could even be considered racist."[281]

Specifically addressing University of Michigan students, they asked, "Is it an accident that you learn nothing about us" and do not understand how many native people were sacrificed "so that you could live in the 'Home of the Free.'"[282] In the flyer and during the conversations, speeches, and encounters with university officials, the issues may have been singularly addressed but from the perspective of the Native American

[279] Native American Student Association Flyer, ca1975 FImu/F41, Vertical File, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[280] Ibid.

[281] Ibid.

[282] Ibid.

community they were all related. At the heart of the problem was the university's inability to recognize and respect American Indian people and especially Oldest Elder. Tied together, these issues were connected to a lack of understanding Oldest Elder in all *his* forms amongst American Indian peoples and recognizing the peoples at a fundamental level. American Indian peoples' desire for Oldest Elder on campus fueled their efforts in bringing change to the campus and each new generation of students took up the same effort to make space for *him*.

With regard to the lawsuit, the university continued attempting to transfer the jurisdiction of the case and both parties were engaged in multiple hearings.[283] Johnson repeatedly pointed out to the university and media the absence of Native American representation at the university. With over 22,000 American Indians in the State of Michigan at the time, there were approximately thirty at the university in 1972.[284] The struggle was also about the general treatment of American Indian culture by the university. In April 1974, Johnson articulated the connections between the obligations of the Fort Meigs Treaty and the problem of the university's museum possessing Anishinaabeg remains. Remains, he argued, that should be returned to Anishinaabeg peoples.[285] University possession of ancestral remains has been an issue of contention between the university and American Indian community for decades. It is an issue that continues to be addressed to this day.

[283] Zoslaw, "Indians Call Michigamua Racist."

[284] Zoslaw, "Indian Voices."

[285] Long, "Indians Sue Regents."

Starting in early 1973, thirty or more members of the Ann Arbor American Indians Unlimited organization and local Native American supporters spoke to the university regents and requested the return of a skeleton in the possession of the university. The bones were excavated in 1957 from a mound and estimated to be 250-400 years old. The university loaned the skeleton to the Fort Wayne Museum in Detroit. In 1971, Native American voices successfully pressured the university to bring the skeleton back to the university.[286] Roslyn McCoy, an American Indians Unlimited member, spoke to the regents saying '"I feel that I don't have to beg or plead with you to give us back what you have taken from us'…in a shaky voice, close to tears. 'We ask now that you return what is ours and never again commit this humiliation upon our forefathers and therefore upon us,' she said…'it steals dignity from our ancestors.'"[287]

Frederick Boyd, the Community Relations Chairman of the Detroit North American Indian Association, stressed that there was nothing left to do to the remains. "Your people have dared to molest our dead…How would you like it if we dug up your great-great-grandfather?"[288] Despite the expressed concerns from the Native American community, Allan Smith, the Vice President for Academic Affairs at the university, felt "the Indian skeletal remains should be retained for scientific research and not display purposes."[289] The university representatives could not understand or did not admit to understanding the relational nature of Anishinaabeg and American Indian culture. They

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[286] Sue Stephenson, "Indians Ask Regents to Return Ancestral Skeleton for Burial," *Michigan Daily*, February 16, 1973.

[287] Ibid.

[288] Ibid.

[289] Ibid.

did not recognize the interrelatedness of Oldest Elder, ancestors, culture, spirituality, and life.

After a week and a half of inaction on the part of the Regents, Native community members scheduled a meeting with the university's acting President Allan Smith. One protesting woman was quoted saying '"All we get is meetings. We don't get any answers—or any bones."'[290] A group of approximately seventy-six Native American protestors attended the meeting and then led a procession to the Museum of Anthropology where they chanted for approximately two hours. Television crews covered the event and protest, much to the displeasure of the acting university President Smith. His public response to the event was that the possession of the remains was lawful and that the protest was an unfortunate "TV spectacle."[291]

For the American Indian community members, the legality of the possession was not the critical issue. The relationship between the remains, the community, and the university was the concern. Roslyn McCay, Ann Arbor American Indians Unlimited member and previous spokesperson at the meeting with the regents, was quoted at the protest saying "The crime is on you…you've taken the remains of the (Indian) body from the earth without regards to Indian tradition…You totally disregard and make a mockery of Indian tradition."[292] While the university officials wished that the protestors had not "staged such a publicity stunt," they promised to submit a report to the university

[290] Sue Stephenson, "Demonstrating Indians Demand Possession of Skeletal Remains," *Michigan Daily*, February 27, 1973.

[291] Ibid.

[292] Ibid.

Regents.[293] In the meantime, city police officers sat outside the museum.[294] While the protestors were largely members of Ann Arbor American Indians Unlimited, a great number of them were also members of the newly founded NASA, Native American Student Association, which had a membership of approximately forty students in March 1973.[295] The documentation of the campus reaction to the protest was somewhat limited with few responses in the campus newspaper.

One unnamed student did submit a sympathetic and supportive editorial for *Michigan Daily,* dated February 28, 1973.

> It is disgusting that institutions such as the University can frustrate people to such an extent that they feel compelled to dramatically get their point across by means of a staged protest. Why does the University find it so difficult to return the ancestral skeletal remains to the Indians? Perhaps even more basically, it's a matter of people gaining an understanding of other people's beliefs and traditions and then honoring those beliefs and traditions which the University has failed to do.[296]

After nearly a month of debate, university officials surrendered the "Fort Wayne Skeleton" to the State Commission on Indian Affairs in mid-March. The skeleton was then properly buried according to NASA members. The director and curator of the Museum of Anthropology, James Griffin, estimated that the skeleton was actually 1,000 to 2,500 years old and Acting President Allan Smith made the point that "we do not rob

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[293] Ibid.

[294] Sue Stephenson, "Local Indians Support South Dakota Take-Over," *Michigan Daily*, March 1, 1973.

[295] Ibid.

[296] "Indians Protest to Deaf Ears," (author unknown) *Michigan Daily*, February 28, 1973.

graves."[297] Despite the successful repatriation of the "Fort Wayne Skeleton," the remaining 200-300 ancestral remains still in the university's possession remained unresolved for the Indian community.[298]

The Native community was much more concerned about its relationship to their ancestors and the relationship between the university and Native community than the legality of the university's possession. On March 19, Linda Morseau had written an article in the *Ann Arbor News* titled "A Message from the Dead." In her letter she wrote,

> "You have taken my land and my freedom. You have tried to take my religion, my language and culture; must you, even after death try to take my spirit?...Haven't you done enough to me while I was alive? Must you still make me suffer?...I am tired and I long to go home to be with my people. I long for my spirit to be set free. I have paid a price to a society I did not even owe, and now I long for rest."[299]

The issue of repatriating the skeleton was not limited to the present or the specifics of that particular skeleton. The history and collective past was alive and present in the conversation and struggle for native peoples. The lack of respect, recognition, and safe space for Oldest Elder at the University of Michigan was more than problematic as long as Anishinaabeg students remained enrolled. There was a need to address the lack of relationships holistically. University administrators and faculty did not understand this need and saw the issues as singular concerns.

When interviewed about the repatriation of the skeleton, The Great Lakes Museum Curator, Ed Wilmsen, recognized the emotional nature of the issue. "It's the

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[297] Sue Stephenson, "University Returns the 'Fort Wayne Skeleton' to Indians," *Michigan Daily*, March 14, 1973.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Sue Stephenson, "Making Amends with Native Americans," *Michigan Daily*, March 22, 1973.

emotional issues that people grab hold of…even if they don't understand them," he explained. "The Indians simply want to be full-scale citizens…they do not want to be homogenized in the process…having their burials uncovered and displayed as Indians, leaves the Indians with a feeling of disenfranchisement." Wilmsen, while acknowledging the emotional aspect of the issue, did not place any fault or blame on individuals or groups for the vast amount of Native American skeletons and "artifacts" in American museum holdings.

He argued that the claims of racial discrimination did not "hold any water" and scientists were not actively bigoted in their handling of remains.[300] This struggle between local Native Americans and the university over their skeletal collections would not be the last. This issue continued to be discussed, debated, and negotiated repeatedly in various forms over the years and activists continue to address it with the university today. At the heart of the controversy is the lack of respect for American Indian people, culture, ancestors and relationships: Oldest Elder, for *he* is all these things.

When the university began to actively address American Indian concerns by creating a committee on Indian Affairs, a suggestion to add the curator of the Museum of Anthropology to the committee was declined. A hand written note on a memo concerning the committee read, "Indian Affairs Committee negative to suggestion Anthro Dept. (esp. Museum of Anthro) controls some Indian bones, which the Indians want returned to graves."[301] To a degree, the university was starting to consider American Indian input or at the very least trying to avoid confrontations. Another source of conflict

[300] Ibid.

[301] Charles Witke to Marvin Felheim, February 14, 1973, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

between the university, American Indian students, and community members during the early 1970s was the presence and activities of the secret student organization Michigamua.

Michigamua was originally formed by a group of junior students from the engineering and literary colleges at the University of Michigan in 1902. The initial group known as "the Hot Air Club" was replaced by a group of friends and students who chose to shape their emerging social club around the idea of an Indian tribe, which they named Michigamua. Their tribal song included phrases such as "Michigamua Braves we are…We hunt the bear and the jag-u-ar…We are a very powerful clan, Out Wigwams are in Michigan…We whoop and raise the Braves' scalp-lock…And cut it off with our Tomahawk…Got heap Squaw but no Papoose."[302]

The officers of the organization were known as Sachem (President), Sagamore (Vice President), Wiskinki of the Bellowing Bear (Secretary) and Keeper of the Wampum (Treasurer).[303] Other members of the "tribe" gave brothers "Indian names" which were then voted on and approved by the members. The names were chosen to emphasize characteristics of the person but also be "Indian." What resulted were names such as Young Man of Many Squaws or Fire Water Copley, Leather Face Durant, Heap Big Joke Killiam, Minnehaha Magoffin, Squaw Teaser Schmid"[304] Their organization documents and rituals "played Indian" with stereotypical and racist language, metaphors,

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[302] Michigamua Society, Photocopy of *Michigamua: The Founding of Michigamua*, Second Edition 1958 Reprint, FImu/F41, Vertical File, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[303] Ibid.

[304] Ibid.

and imagery. For instance, an undated invitation letter to join the Tribe of Michigamua read

> Heap Much Paleface Now! The Sachem and the Fighting Braves have sat in council. They have chosen you from among the palefaces who are as the leaves of the trees, to perpetuate the Noble Tribe of MICHIGAMUA…Paleface on Tuesday, at 5 booms 10 ticks by heap big campus clock assemble with the palefaces who will join you in the land of the Indians at Tappan Oak with your face toward its bark. Then will the Battle Chief and his braves hit the trail. Wait their coming with fortitude that make um for good Indian. No TALK OF THIS TO ANYONE THE TRIBE HAS SPOKEN. Call Medicine Man at _____ by 1 boom and tell um you receive this birchbark.[305]

Privately, Michigamua members mocked Oldest Elder with their stereotypical language and actions. Publically, they ridiculed Oldest Elder with similar discourse and activities based upon racist and disrespectful imagery and discourse. Inductions into the organization were semi-public affairs and in April of 1972 the university newspaper covered an initiation of new members, who most likely received a similar invitation, if not the one quoted above. The *Michigan Daily* reported "20 juniors stood bowed in a line and allowed themselves to be doused with red brick dust. The new "redskins" were then duly initiated into the Michigamua honorary society."[306] Students then listened as "war whoops resounded of the walls of the Grad Library."[307] Indigenous Scholar Patrick Russell LeBeau's examination of Michigamua explores how the appropriation of an Indian warrior guise and activities "act out the American historical drama in all of its complicated acts of possession and appropriation."[308] "Roping Day," which students

[305] Michigamua Society, Invitation, FImu/F41, Vertical File, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[306] Rona Solvith, "Letter to the Daily," *Michigan Daily*, May 11, 1972.

[307] Ibid.

witnessed in April 1972, was a "compilation of Michigamua rituals, ceremonies, and traditions" that reenacted "the conquest of America, the taking of Indian land, and the replacement of Michigan's original inhabitants with a newly ordained and sanctioned male elite."[309]

Michigamua markers were strewn across the university's campus in the 1970s. "At the university recreation area, a fire pit plaque marked their traditional campgrounds. Nearby, a Michigamua totem pole, presented in commemoration of the fiftieth return of the tribe of 1907, stood to remind everyone of the lore and traditions of this special university club," LeBeau explains.[310] Another plaque at the north end of the Michigan Union marked the Michigamua Plaza and "on the University Diag, a tomahawk plaque marks the site of Roping Day. Nearby, the Tappan Oak has years of red brick dust from the initiation ceremony embedded within its old bark."[311]

The initiation ceremony involved initiates being tapped and told to stand by the Tappan Oak near the Graduate Library, as seen by the invitation notice. The phrase roping "refers to the ceremonial trying of the initiates to the symbolic oak, followed by a ritualized hazing of the tapped individuals. For example, initiates are stripped of their cloths and painted with red brick dust. After they are given "Indian" names, they smoke the Michigamua peace pipe and listen to the words of the Michigamua elders who share

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[308] Patrick Russell LeBeau, " The Fighting Braves of Michigamua: Adopting the Visage of American Indian Warriors in the Halls of Academia," *Team Spirits: The Native American Mascots Controversy*, ed. C. Richard King and Charles Fruehling Springwood (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2001), 111.

[309] Ibid.

[310] Ibid., 113.

[311] Ibid.

the lore of the tribe."[312] The actions and activities of Michigamua were not especially hidden from the public eye. They advertised themselves in the *Michigan Daily*, conducted their "Roping Day" ceremonies in public, and "their annual 'bar crawls,' 'bear feasts' at Raderick Farms, dances, 'pound um' tables (parties in the Wigwam, located in the tower of the Michigan Union, after university athletic games), and public tapping created many opportunities for detection."[313] The organization enjoyed free use of space in the Union tower.

After the "Roping Day" of 1972, Graduate Student and leader of Ann Arbor American Indians Unlimited, Victoria Barner, filed a complaint with the Michigan Civil Rights Commission for "the alleged violation of 'Permitting ridicule of culture'" by Michigamua.[314] She stated that "Michigamua 'holds initiation 'rites' on campus in public each spring which are demeaning and insulting to the Indian culture and heritage. I believe the university has violated my rights and those of other American Indians by permitting our culture to be distorted and ridiculed because of our race and national origin.'"[315] Calling "the symbolic recognition 'insulting,'" Barner posed the question "What if they were taking some other type of nationality and caricaturing them?" and stressed the fact that Michigamua represents the extremely limited attention paid to Indians on campus.[316] She also pointed out that "the University has no Indian studies and

[312] Ibid., 114.

[313] Ibid., 118.

[314] Ibid.

[315] Ibid., 118-119.

[316] Zoslaw, "Indians Call Michigamua Racist."

no Indian counseling or recruiting."[317] Michigamua advisor, university housing director and Michigamua alumni, John "Drooping Feathers" Feldkamp argued the purpose of impersonating Indians was '"not to degrade them but to honor the Indian tradition of the area."'[318] A number of powerful university administrators were alumni and supporters of Michigamua. They largely dismissed concerns and complaints against the organization and supported the continued mockery and dehumanization of American Indian peoples and Oldest Elder.

At least one sympathetic and supportive student wrote in to the *Michigan Daily* about the 1972 Michigamua incident and complaint. "I think that it is time for the "tribe" (as it is called) to change in a very major way," they wrote, "that is, by eliminating its mock-Indian ceremonies. IT IS TIME that the noted members of Michigamua extend "recognition" to a minority group which has suffered enough since white men arrived on this continent. The Indians do not need to have insult added to injury."[319] The university voluntarily settled the complaint in a March 27, 1973 letter. The statement encouraged "Michigamua to eliminate 'all public actions' in exchange for the Civil Rights Commission not finding the university engaged in any unlawful discrimination."[320] This was not the end of the challenges to Michigamua or the championing of Oldest Elder.

In 1976, two students, Amy Blumenthal and Anita Tanay, filed a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. They claimed that the university's relationship with the organization violated Title IX. The

[317] Ibid.

[318] Zoslaw, "Indians Call Michigamua Racist."; LeBeau, 120.

[319] Solvith, "Letter to the Daily."

[320] LeBeau, 119.

organization was accused of "continued ridicule of culture, violation of the March 27, 1973 agreement, and discrimination against women."[321] The organization also "received preferential treatment: free rent for their Wigwam, use of Raderick Farms, use of a university-owned golf course, and "deals" on tickets for athletic events."[322] That same year another complaint was filed against the university for violating Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. At the time, and for many years to come, many of the leaders at the university were alumni of Michigamua.

In 1976, the university housing director, John "Drooping Feathers" Feldkamp, the vice president for student services, Henry Johnson, and the university President "Robben "Silver Feathers" Fleming, worked to defend the allegations brought against the student organization. [323] Small actions, such as establishing sister organizations, were taken to address the sex discrimination allegations but the demeaning activities of the organization against American Indian peoples continued. In the 1980s and 2000s, dramatic action was taken to address the continued presence and university support of the organization.

When the Black Action Movement gained the attention of the university and the country, one of the points they called for was an increase in university infrastructure to recruit and support Black and Chicano students through support staff and academic programming. Native Americans were largely left out of those negotiations but in the early 1970s, as the decade pressed on, the Native students and community members began pushing for educational support and opportunities as well. Increasing the presence

[321] Ibid.

[322] Ibid.

[323] Ibid.

of American Indian peoples on campus and educational opportunities could recognize the presence of Oldest Elder as well. Protests and additional complaints were raised on the issue of meeting the needs of Indian students with a Native American recruiter, counselor, and/or advocate.

In April of 1972, university officials, including university President Robben Fleming and Admissions Officer Larry Martin, organized a symposium of university staff members to "enhance their understanding of the American Indian."[324] The event was created to engage in "preliminary" discussions "over increasing educational opportunities for American Indians at the University and throughout the state…'The road is now open for greater communication,' said Larry Martin."[325] Topics of discussion at the symposium included the possibility of an American Indian Studies program, Indian support staff positions, and the lawsuit filed by Paul Johnson in 1971. At the time of the meeting, a full-time position as an Indian recruiter was reportedly open at the university but Martin claimed that 'it's hard to find a qualified person to fill it and someone who would be willing to make a long term commitment."[326] Speakers at the symposium, such as Paul Johnson, brought demands for "increased educational opportunities for Indians—as outlined in a suit he filed nearly a year ago against the Regents."[327]

Native American leader, Edward Benton forcefully spoke at the event addressing the "white man's educational system" and said "We will not send missionaries out to

[324] Zoslaw, "Indian Teach-In Set."

[325] Zoslaw, "Aid for Indians Sought."

[326] Ibid.

[327] Zoslaw, "Indian Teach-In Set."

your country, we will not force you to believe as we do, we will not throw bombs into Sunday schools," as he explained the increased militancy by Native peoples against "second class citizenship."[328] Speakers like Edward Benton articulated the attacks on Oldest Elder, as connections between assimilation efforts in the past and the present. After the symposium, "University administrators credited the open forum with 'commencing dialogue' between the University and the Indians" but the Indian community was less impressed.[329] Paul Johnson commented on the event a month later saying "as far as I can see they're not going to do anything until they have to and only the suit will force them to do that."[330] American Indian members continued to place pressure upon the university.

On May 19, 1972, members of American Indians Unlimited, Inc. attended a meeting of the Regents of the University of Michigan. They spoke to the room and submitted a document to the regents that called for immediate action. "We, the Native Americans of this community and this University," it read, "demand the University of Michigan, as one of the country's leading Universities, make it's commitment NOW to the Original People of this Land."[331] They demanded the university hire an Indian Recruiter and Counselor. They wanted Native American course offerings in Art, Music, and Literature and for the university to "offer Native American History, before and after

[328] Zoslaw, "Aid for Indians Sought."

[329] Zoslaw, "Indian Voices."

[330] Zoslaw, "Indian Voices."

[331] Members of American Indians Unlimited, Inc. to The Regents of the University of Michigan, May 19, 1972, Box 216, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

the coming of the White man, told truthfully and without censorship."[332] The manner that history was being taught, they said, "succeeds only in perpetuating the arrogant racist attitudes which make of your children sub-humans, capable of participating in another Mai Lai or Wounded Knee massacre."[333] A "widespread lack of sensitivity towards "Indians" and lack of cooperation on the part of non-"Indian" controlled educational institutions" prevented the sharing of Original People's cultural heritage and the presence of Oldest Elder.[334] The relationship between the university and American Indian peoples was, from their perspective, a negative and nonreciprocal one.

A month later, university President Fleming wrote a letter, dated June 20, 1972, to Mrs. Lois Dintsch in response to the communication she had addressed to the Board of Regents at the May meeting. He reported that Mr. George Goodman, the Assistant Director of Admissions would advertise and interview for a position that would involve recruitment of American Indian students. He wrote that he would "ask Associate Vice-President John Romani to include provision for dealing with the needs of American Indian students" but that such a position would not be full-time or stand-alone.[335]

Additionally, he designated the responsibilities of creating a course in Native American history and assessing the availability of course relating to American Indian cultural topics to other departments and colleges in the university. He concluded his letter expressing "we are sympathetic to the problems you raise in your communication."

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[332] Ibid.

[333] Ibid.

[334] Ibid.

[335] President Robben Fleming to Mrs. Lois Dintsch, June 20, 1972, Box 216, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[336] Despite limited finances, "within our capabilities," he wrote, "we do wish to be as responsive as possible to the educational needs of the American Indian." [337] He ended his letter by encouraging Dintsch to "pursue individual questions with the individuals mentioned above."[338]

Despite the President's letter, the Ann Arbor American Indians Unlimited launched a petition drive in May "requesting an Indian recruiter, counselor and Indian studies at the University" that they would present to the university Regents in June.[339] In their flyer, they wrote that there were only fifteen to twenty Native American students at the University of Michigan the previous semester. In capitalized text and under a double underlined header of "The University of Michigan has:" they wrote "NO NATIVE AMERICAN RECRUITER, NO NATIVE AMERICAN COUNSELOR, NO NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES IN EITHER ART, MUSIC, HISTORY, OR LITERATURE, NO PLAQUE OR SIGN COMMEMORATING THE GIFT OF LAND GIVEN BY THE THREE TRIBES."[340] Their final words on the flyer optimized the struggle Native organizations and students were facing at the university. "We have often had your sympathy," they wrote, "We now need your help!"[341]

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[336] Ibid.

[337] Ibid.

[338] Ibid.

[339] Jan Benedetti, "'U' Asked for Indian Counseling," *Michigan Daily*, June 2, 1972.

[340] American Indians Unlimited, Petition Flyer, May 1972, Box 216, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[341] Ibid.

Approximately more than two thousand signatures were gathered from the Native community within and outside of the university.[342] The American Indians Unlimited Organization of Ann Arbor continued to put pressure on the university to meet the demands they had made. The President's limited solutions were not unified institutionally supported policies. They largely depended on actions taken by individual departments and individuals. Whether intentional or not, the President's measures of addressing the American Indian concerns went largely unanswered. Oldest Elder and American Indian peoples received lip service but little action on the hand of the university.

In the fall of 1972, American Indians Unlimited requested a response directly from the History department about integrating more courses on Native American History. On October 20, 1972, Professor Joseph Jorgensen of the Department of Anthropology and Associate Professor Robert Sklar of the Department of History wrote to university President Fleming expressing the fact that the demands of the organization were not individually based on a particular class or subject. "It became clear to us," they wrote, "that the request made by the American Indians Unlimited went far beyond the concerns of a single department. The subject concerns anthropology, political science, American culture, education, social work and other fields."[343] Small beginnings within the university were developing among potential allies as they started understanding the interrelatedness of the situation and concerns.

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[342] Benedetti, "'U' Asked for Indian Counseling."

[343] Joseph Jorgensen to Robben W. Fleming, October 20, 1972, Box 216, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

To some degree, university officials, administrators, and key faculty members began to understand that the complaints, demands, and protests by the Native students, organization, and larger community were connected to each other. They were interwoven together into an unhealthy relationship that needed to be healed as a whole. Unfortunately, they were unequipped to address the concerns in a manner other than through piecemeal steps and measures. The continued pressure and negative press motivated the university to make small concessions and steps towards recognizing Native American concerns and creating space within the university for Native peoples and Oldest Elder.

In August of 1972, Anthony Genia approached George Goodman, Director of the university's Opportunity Program about working in the Admissions Office as a Native American recruitment officer. The Admissions Office and the Office of Special Projects eventually hired him on a part-time basis. Through that position, he was able to create and build a Native American recruitment and support services program. Genia's first task was to establish credibility of the university's commitment to Native Americans. To accomplish this, he traveled across the state to ceremonies and community events with a university van filled with movie and sound equipment. He also worked to publicize the university through announcements in Native American newsletters, funding agencies, and in high schools with large Native enrollments. In the course of the year he worked in this position, Native enrollment went from "nine "identifiable" students in 1971-72 to over forty by winter term 1973."[344]

[344] Anthony L. Genia to George Goodman, August 20, 1973, Box 227, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

During that year, he helped establish Native American Awareness Week, NASA (Native American Student Association) and a work-study program for Native students. Students in the work-study program produced a newsletter, the *Native American Advocate,* and "assisted the Admissions Office with recruitment and cultural awareness activities."[345] The first edition of the *Native American Advocate* was published on November 7, 1972 and was intended to be a monthly newsletter that would "serve as the primary means of communication between the Native American students and the university community and other Native American student groups."[346]

When Genia left the part-time position to more fully pursue his doctoral studies, he wrote a letter to Director Goodman:

> I feel that we have made tremendous progress during then past year developing the Native American Program. There still exists, however, many institutional barriers to recruitment of American Indian students. Many departmental admissions officers exhibit covert racial discrimination through perpetuation of damaging stereotypes, (e.g. "Indians are particularly suited for the Natural Resources type of program"); turn off prospective students by too strict adherence to submission deadlines and forms…and place too much reliance on culturally biased test scores as indicators of an applicant's potential success.[347]

The presence of ethnic recruiters complicated relationships and made departments compete against each other. Some, he wrote, even "exhibit reverse racial discrimination against members of "other" minority groups" and other admission staff think they do not need to be concerned with minority student admissions.[348] When the first Native American Advocate also left his appointment, he too expressed similar concerns about

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[345] Ibid.

[346] University of Michigan Native American Student Association, *Native American Advocate, Vol. 1, No. 1* (November 1972), p.1, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[347] Anthony L. Genia to George Goodman, August 20, 1973, Ibid.

[348] Ibid.

the university's relationship with Native peoples. A relationship existed but it was superficial and one fraught with miscommunication and misunderstandings.

Starting on November 1, 1972, Charles "Moose" Pamp served as the Native American Advocate within the Office of Special Services.[349] At the time of his appointment, he served as the "executive director of the Great Lakes Indian Youth Alliance and" was "on the national board of the National Indian Youth Council."[350] He had also served as an advisor to the Governor's Office and several federal agencies. During Pamp's years at the University of Michigan as the Native American Advocate, a great deal of activism continued on the campus. The university also took small steps towards meeting the requests of the Indian community.

The university hired Genia and Pamp, albeit part-time, and the potential for an increased presence of Oldest Elder was a possibility. The Native American Student Association was formed again at the university and the first university of Michigan Pow Wow was held in the Union Ballroom on March 31, 1973.[351] Various minorities student groups, African-American, Chicano, and others continued to push for university recognition and acknowledgement. On January 17, 1973, the Program for Educational and Social Change hosted its second debate entitled "The University and Minority Students."[352] At the event, three white male university representatives met with an

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[349] Moose Pamp to Elizabeth Davenport, April 8, 1974, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[350] University of Michigan Native American Student Association, *Native American Advocate, Vol. 1, No. 1*, Ibid.

[351] Ibid.

[352] Penny Blank, '"U' Attacked in Debate on Minority Students," *Michigan Daily*, January 18, 1973.

audience of approximately seventy people, the majority being minorities, who raised a number of issues and concerns voiced by the minority community including Native Americans, Chicanos, Gay Liberationists, Blacks, and Women, as they were then identified.[353]

During the debate, "A need was expressed for courses within the university dealing with minorities as functioning human beings in the society. The university was blamed for not aiding them with proper attention, time, space and funding in their attempts to protect the ideals of their cultures and destroy stereotypes."[354] Moose Pamp accused the university of "being set up and operated to serve upper-class and middleclass whites."[355] He stated '"In anthropology classes they still study us like animals; the only course in our culture available is a course we started by ourselves this term."[356] American Indian students, staff, and supporters had started carving small spaces for Oldest Elder but the university was not specifically supporting *his* presence.

The minority community saw the debate as an attempt by the university to "appease their desire to be heard" instead of "a serious attempt at wholesome dialogue."[357] The lack of a reciprocal relationship and resistance on behalf of the university to meet the demands of minority groups had left a significant of doubt as to the university's sincerity. The efforts made by the university appeared to lack depth and

[353] Ibid.

[354] Ibid.

[355] Ibid.

[356] Ibid.

[357] Ibid.

genuine effort to reach across the table. For some, it seemed that drastic actions such as taking over an office or making demonstrations and threats was necessary to get people to try and understand.[358]

On May 17, 1973, three major minority groups "roundly and bitterly attacked" the findings of a minority student survey's findings that the university had failed to achieve the 10 percent Black enrollment it had promised to meet in 1970.[359] During a Regents' public comments session, Black, Chicano, and Native American representatives attacked the survey and its results. Anthony Genia, representing the Native American Student Association "called the minority survey 'completely erroneous with respect to its report on American Indian enrollment.' Genia called for more recruiting of Native American faculty and staff, and attacked administrators of minority programs for what he considered a degree of insensitivity to American Indian students' needs."[360] By 1973, the University of Michigan had established an Afro-Studies Center and a Woman's Studies program but only one course was connected to Native American culture. These conversations continued as the years progressed.

In early 1974, the minority advocates from the Office of Special Services and Programs helped organize the Third World People's Solidarity Conference.[361] Black activist Angela Davis headlined the conference, speaking at Hill Auditorium and calling

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[358] Ibid.

[359] David Burhenn, "Minority Groups Protest Findings of 'U' Survey," *Michigan Daily*, May 18, 1973.

[360] Ibid.

[361] "Advocates Counsel Minorities," (author unknown) *Michigan Daily*, September 5, 1974.

for "unity—in struggle."[362] Following Davis, Clyde Bellecourt, an Anishinaabe leader of the American Indian Movement, spoke to the audience. The next day, a mass rally of approximately two hundred people was held on the Diag in support of Wounded Knee and Anishinaabeg leaders Clyde Bellecourt, Moose Pamp, and Eddie Benton all spoke to the crowd.[363] Bellecourt reminded the crowd "The power of student demonstrations to play a very practical role in defending political activists and influencing the ideas of the American people should not be underestimated, especially at this time."[364] They continued to play a role in forcing changes, however small, at the University of Michigan in regards to its relationship with Native peoples.

On April 19, 1974, Moose Pamp resigned from his position as the Native American Advocate.[365] In an April 8 letter to the Elizabeth Davenport, Director of OSSP, he wrote the following:

> Since I began working here November 1, 1972, I was charged with trying to expand this office to a full-time position by my constituents. I have received a lot of moral support from various members of the University community, which has amounted to nothing more than verbal accolades...The duties and responsibilities of this office are continually expanding, yet the appointment and salary remain constant…I hope that the programs on campus continue to expand. To achieve this, it is my feeling that any future applicants for this position should have an activist background since a lot of struggle is involved in getting the University to recognize the unique background and needs of Native American students.[366]

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[362] Paul Terwilliger and David Stoll, "Angela Davis Calls for Unity in Fighting 'Renewed Racism,'" *Michigan Daily*, February 23, 1974.

[363] Paul Terwilliger, "Bellacourt, Others Speak at Wounded Knee Rally," *Michigan Daily*, February 24, 1974.

[364] Mark Leitson and Attica Brigade, "Letters: Insuring Justice for AIM," *Michigan Daily*, February 23, 1974.

[365] Moose Pamp to Elizabeth Davenport, April 8, 1974, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[366] Ibid.

Native American faculty and staff continued to work as activists within the University of Michigan. The university also made small steps towards meeting the demands and needs of the Native American community, if only in creating initiatives to begin to understand the demands and needs. By January 10, 1973, a Committee on American Indian Studies was formed within the university. The charge of the committee was the

1. Assessment of American Indian Programs elsewhere

2. Identification of needs on this campus, with special reference to the question of whether or not a center should be established,

3. Coordination of effective recruitment of qualified American Indians here as LS & A and other students.

3. Identification of resources on this campus

5. Highlighting of financial resources open to American Indians

6. Coordination with Federal Office of Indian Affairs, Washington, and State Bureau of Indian Affairs, Lansing

7. Effect liaison with American Indians Unlimited, Incorporated, Intertribal Council, tribal chairmen, and other representative groups, to assess needs and resources.

8. To recommend specific courses to LS & A Committee on Curriculum should need for these be demonstrated, and to implement a program of student should one seem desirable, either a degree program or an array of courses.[367]

The committee was reminded that the college would review the possibility of supporting programs but that LS & A Dean, Frank Rhodes, hoped "to work sympathetically and

[367] Frank H. T. Rhodes to Frances E. Svensson, January 10, 1973, Box 3, Program in American Culture, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

constructively in providing what facilities we can in this important area."[368] Any programs of Native American interested would be housed in the American Culture Program.

Early on in the meetings of the committee, Native Professor Frances Svensson, who taught philosophy of social science and classical theory, "expressed concern that the University's concept of equity may not necessarily be the same concept held by Native Americans. She stated that we cannot receive equity until we have representation on policy-making boards."[369] The committee did agree to support the return of Native American skeletons in the university's possession.[370] In late February to early March, word spread that Kenneth Hill in the Linguistics Department was working with Mr. Irving McCue, a first language speaker of Ojibwe, and was interested in developing a course in Ojibwe for fall 1973.[371] Hill was quickly brought onto the committee.[372] That fall, the University of Michigan offered its first course on the Ojibwe language with Mr. Irving Hap McCue as its "informant" and Oldest Elder was officially brought onto

[368] Ibid.

[369] University of Michigan Native American Studies Committee, Minutes of Native American Studies Committee, February 28, 1973, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.; Karen Koyanagi, "Heritage Leads to Critique of Western Thought," *Ann Arbor News*, September 30, 1974.

[370] University of Michigan Native American Studies Committee, Minutes of Native American Studies Committee, February 28, 1973, Ibid.

[371] University of Michigan Native American Studies Committee, Minutes of Native American Studies Committee, February 21, 1973, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[372] University of Michigan Native American Studies Committee, Minutes of Native American Studies Committee, March 13,1973, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

campus. McCue was also brought onto the Committee on Native American Studies along with LS & A student James Concannon.[373]

The efforts of the committee on Native American Affairs involved supporting measures and programs and advocating for the university meeting the needs of the Native Students. Committee members and allies started working from inside the university to recognize Oldest Elder, communicate about *him* and make space for *him* within the university. In the fall of 1973, the Native American Advocate remained a part-time position, both in salary and duties. Chairman of the Committee, Professor Marvin Felheim wrote to the Director of the Office of Special Services and Programs, Elizabeth Davenport. "I cannot too strongly urge that this position be made full time even though I know that funds are limited," he wrote.[374] "This seems to me not only important but necessary in view of the fact that the university is committed to these students and that they represent a very special need (and their feelings that they should be on a par with other minority groups)."[375] Members on the committee and Native American students and community members continued to pressure the university to meet the needs of the students. Despite the successful incorporation of Mr. McCue into a course, the relationships with Oldest Elder were in desperate need of institutional support and linguistic space.

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[373] Marvin Felheim to Edward Dougherty, September 21, 1973, Box 3, Program in American Culture, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[374] Marvin Felheim to Elizabeth Davenport, October 30, 1973, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[375] Ibid.

In the fall of 1974, Felheim wrote to the Vice President Frank Rhodes and expressed one of the committee's concerns that "despite the University's many assurances of support for Indian students," he wrote, "we have at present no specific course in the curriculum taught by an Indian and designed primarily for an Indian clientele" because of funding limitations and department structures.[376] Students continued to advocate for changes at the university concerning academic programs, faculty, and support services. They continued to push for physical, educational, and linguistic space. On May 15, 1975 at a meeting of the university's Board of Regents, two Native American groups called for the creation of a Native American Studies program.

Former student Roz McCoy "declared 'you are insensitive to the fact that we are another nation, another culture' and 'the University is a white institution teaching non-white people how to be white.'"[377] Protestors called for an "attitudinal change" and "the Administration was asked to take a 'positive stand in the change of attitudes of Professors."[378] One protestor, James Pego, read a list of eight demands to the Regents "including requests for Native American staff members in Admissions, Financial Aid and Housing, as well as a Native American cultural center and a hiring committee compose of Native American staff members, Native American students, and Native Americans from the community."[379] The issue of the Fort Meigs treaty was also kept alive by student protests and speeches.

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[376] Marvin Felheim to Frank Rhodes, October 7, 1974, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[377] George Lobsenz, "Native Americans Seek Changes," *Michigan Daily*, May 16, 1975.

[378] Ibid.

[379] Ibid.

A month before the regents' meeting in the first week of February, a week of Indian-related events was held at the university, including the university pow wow. Bob Yellow Bird and Regina Brave Dixon of the Wounded Knee Legal Defense-Offense Committee spoke on the connections between Wounded Knee and the Fort Meigs Treaty during the week's activities. They held a panel discussion at the Law School during the week as well.[380] On February 18, 1975, a group of minority students, including American Indian students, took over the Administration building on campus. The crowd of two hundred and fifty people swelled to over five hundred individuals rallying on the Regent's plaza by that evening. Representing Black, Chicano, Asian American, and Native American student groups, representatives of the Third World Coalition Council presented President Fleming with six specific demands and additional ones to be negotiated.

One of their demands was the "Establishment of a full time Native-American advocate with pay equal to the amount of work done."[381] While most of the demands addressed concerns of the Black community, the final negotiated demand was "that the percentage of Mexican-Americans, Native-Americans, and Asian-Americans at the University be increased to their corresponding percentage in the U.S. population."[382] The sixty-hour long occupation of the Administration Building ended on February 20 at 4:00 pm after the university President promised to try and alleviate the problems of minority

[380] Russell Bellant, "Indians Rally for Week-Long Program," *Michigan Daily*, February 2, 1975.

[381] Rob Meachum and David Weinberg, "250 Ask 'U' to Meet BAM Goals," *Michigan Daily*, February 19, 1975.

[382] Ibid.

students.[383] Once again, activism and occupation drew the attention of university administrators to minority concerns. When attempts to address concerns at Regent's meetings and through general correspondence failed, public demonstrations appeared to earn attention if not action.

In June, the Native students and community protested again but this time they occupied the lawn outside of university President Fleming's house. On June 19, the day the President hosted a dinner for the Regents and several administrators, approximately thirty NASA members and their families erected a teepee on the lawn. "The teepee, designated 'the Native American Cultural Center,'" reportedly, "brought surprised stares and smiles from the guests as they walked up to the house."[384] Sally Fleming, the President's wife "cautiously said: 'It (the teepee) is quite attractive. It will be something exciting for the Regents to be confronted with."'[385] Fleming refused to meet with the students in the teepee and the occupiers refused to send representatives to meet with President Fleming. Instead, they scheduled a meeting for the following day. [386]

The motivation behind the occupation concerned the issue of creating a Native American Cultural Center or house for the students. The American Indian students believed that Oldest Elder needed a space for language groups, cultural events, and gatherings of Anishinaabeg peoples. Working within the system and also through extra-

[383] Rob Meachum, "Talks on Demands to Continue Monday," *Michigan Daily*, February 21, 1975.

[384] Tim Schick, "Native American Students Occupy Fleming's Lawn," *Michigan Daily*, June 20, 1975.

[385] Ibid.

[386] Ibid.

legal means, the Native American students and community members had brought the need for a Native American center to the university and Board of Regents multiple times. Immediately prior to the occupation and erecting of the teepee, community member Barbara Smith "addressed the regents during the public comment portion of the regent's meeting. She blasted the university, saying it had not kept a promise made in February to establish a cultural center for Native American students on campus."[387]

Smith conveyed the frustration of Native students to the room by stating Native Americans '"exist on more than one plane of life"' and stressed that the cultural center "is very vital to us and is more than just a hang-out.'"[388] She argued "there was deliberate malice on the part of some administrators…'It seems like you are playing games with us,' she said. 'Like you are laughing at us. If you are not then you have problems with your organization."'[389] President Fleming responded with the claim that the accusations were inaccurate and that the Regent's meeting was not the place to continue the discussion.[390] The struggle for a Native American center had been on going and full of miscommunication and failed promises. A proposal submitted to the Office of Housing, dated February 18, 1975, from the Native American Student Association outlined the history of the struggle for a Native American center:

> On the morning of February 18, 1975, during discussions with Native Americans, Black, Chicano, and Asian-American representatives, Mr. John Feldcamp made a verbal commitment to the Native American Advocate to establish a Native American Cultural Center by saying it was only necessary for the Advocate to select an available house as a site for this center. Following this discussion, it was

[387] "Native Americans Criticize Regents," (author unknown) *Ann Arbor News*, June 20, 1975.

[388] Ibid.

[389] Ibid.

[390] Ibid.

> determined that such a house, on 1322 Wilmont Avenue, would become vacant within the next few weeks and an agreement was made between the Native American Advocate and the Housing Office to reserve this address for use as a Native American Cultural Center. This Center will be used as half-time offices for the Native American Advocate, the Native American Opportunity Program Counselor, and the Native American Admissions Counselor. With the Center as a gathering place for Native American students, we hope to solve many of the problems which the Native American students currently encounter at the University because of inherent socio-cultural differences which inhibit our students' work and life style at the University of Michigan. We, the Native American Student Association, propose that the house, on 1322 Wilmont Avenue, be designated as the Native American Cultural Center with rental contract of one dollar/year. We agree to sign a one-year lease with a renewal offer to be approved annually by the Native American Student Association.[391]

Feldkamp denied the claim and argued "at no point was any promise made."[392] At one point, establishing a cultural center on Wilmot Street was discussed but the house was later deemed "inadequate and unsafe."[393] In light of the fact that another suitable option would not become available until the following winter in 1976, the university suggested that Native Students find temporary space in the Trotter House by sharing space in the Black Cultural Center. NASA Member Barbra Smith explained NASA's frustrations with this suggestion because the Trotter house '"is too small for the group there now."'[394] University officials were frustrated that there was not a greater understanding of the amount of time obtaining a location would take and Native students

[391] The Native American Student Association to The University of Michigan Office of Housing, February 18, 1975, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[392] "American Indian Center Demanded of U," newspaper article, no author, no date, Box 1, Native American Studies Program Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[393] Tim Schick, "American Indian Group Ends Protest," *Michigan Daily*, June 21, 1975.

[394] Ibid.

and community members were frustrated at the delays and red tape that was stalling developments.

President Fleming expressed his annoyance by saying, "I really don't know what they want at this point. They spoke before the Regents and we prepared a full response…"'[395] Smith claimed that the university had "been playing games and laughing at us' since February when they began the effort to acquire a cultural center."[396] Other NASA students were also displeased with the university and its response time to Native issues. Vicky Barner was quoted saying "'The University teaches a lot of useless things. It doesn't teach how to survive. The University is part of the white culture.'"[397] Mike Dasher stated "'I have sisters and cousins who would never think of coming here (to the University)."' [398] After a thirty-six hour vigil, the protestors removed their teepee but gave no comment on why the occupation ended. They had met inside the teepee with Vice President for Student Affairs, Henry Johnson, for almost two hours and tried to reach a compromise.[399] Frustrations continued on campus between all those involved.

Professor Felheim also sensed the frustrations, and recognized that the needs Native Americans were expressing were real and began to see the power dynamics working against those initiatives. On May 6, Felheim wrote a letter to W. L. Cash, Jr. supporting the need for an American Indian Cultural Center and outlined the reasons it

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[395] Ibid.

[396] Schick, "Native American Students Occupy Fleming's Lawn."

[397] Tim Schick, "Native Americans End Protest on Fleming's Lawn," *Michigan Daily*, June 21, 1975.

[398] Ibid.

[399] Schick, "American Indian Group Ends Protest."

was needed. He explained that a place was needed to hold classes like the Ojibwa language class and non-credit courses, exhibits, and library materials could be housed there as well. The center, he argued, would be a place for community events and participation and "a place where, possibly, some students could be accommodated with much needed temporary living space; Indian students and their families are very much in need of arrangements of this sort."[400] Felheim also began to recognize that these Native American issues and struggles could not be understood in a piecemeal fashion but were rather part of a larger relationship between the students, Oldest Elder, and the university. He may not have had a relationship with Oldest Elder himself or fully understood *him* but he did see the relatedness of the issues.

On February 27, he wrote a letter to Vice President for Student Services, Henry Johnson, and copied the letter to university President Robben Fleming and Vice President Frank H.R. Rhodes.[401] "I have reached the point where I honestly believe that our Indian minority group is suffering from a kind of discriminatory factor, not only from the large white community within the University, but from other larger racial and ethnic groups as well," he wrote.[402] He advocated that the Native American advocate position be full time and have the backing of the university. His letter addressed the needs for the center, how sharing the Trotter house was not an appropriate solution and called out the hypocrisy of the treatment towards Native Americans on campus.

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[400] Marvin Felheim to W.L.Cash, May 6, 1975, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[401] Marvin Felheim to Henry Johnson, February 27, 1975, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[402] Ibid.

> The need for a center for the activities; I realize that in some quarters the Trotter House is regarded as a multi-ethnic center but I would like to remind you that just as Blacks did not feel comfortable in areas where they were officially regarded as equals but outnumbered by whites so the Indians have the same feeling about the Trotter House. It is utterly essential that some center, which will allow them to have their own type of community existence be made available. I ask this not only in the name of humanity and dignity but also in sheer energy terms; we spend much time, effort and money recruiting students and then lose them because we have inadequate supportive services…We have no Indians in administrative positions on this campus…Commitments of the kind I have suggested in the above paragraphs cost the University very little in terms of cash outlay but they are symbolic in every sense of the term. And in a year when the University is stressing ethical values to fail to implement these needs is I think to suggest a less than full-fledged commitment to promises, both legal and moral.[403]

At the end of May, Marvin Felheim stepped down as Chairman of the University's Committee on Native American Affairs but continued as the Director of the Program in American Culture until 1978. In a letter to Vice President Frank H. T. Rhodes, dated May 23, 1975, he wrote "I leave this position with sincere concern for the Native American students whose needs have not been particularly well articulated and certainly have not been generously implemented by the University."[404] Extra courses on Native American topics, while being offered, were being taught as overloads and were not regularly scheduled.

He also expressed frustration about an American Indian Center. "The acquiring of a center," he wrote, "has been raised with the proper authorities but nothing seems to get done."[405] The supportive services were complicated because Chicano and Black

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[403] Ibid.

[404] Marvin Felheim to Frank H.T. Rhodes and B.E. Frye, May 23, 1975, Box 3, Program in American Culture, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[405] Ibid.

individuals who did not understand the needs of Native Americans handled the Office of Economic Opportunity.

> The problems of the Indian Advocate, the Indian Admissions Officer and the Indian Academic Counselor are extremely difficult because each office is inadequately funded, and working conditions and attitudes toward work on the part of Indians and on the part of University bureaucrats differ markedly. I believe, strongly, that some policy decisions in these areas must be made and directives issued by the appropriate administrative officers; without such decisions, day-by-day operations are constantly in a state of friction and difficulties continue to arise…Finally, strong administration support must be given to the appointment of qualified Native Americans to teach at the University.[406]

Administrative support was something that the early Native American Advocates, Counselors, and Admissions officers found lacking at the university. Like Pamp noted in his resignation letter, there were often verbal accolades but little concrete support given to Native American concerns and initiatives. In the case of the Native American Admissions Officer Steve Crow, there were not even token accolades.

On March 27, 1975, the Director of Admissions, Cliff Sjogren, sent a letter to Crow about his job performance during the past six months. A portion of his letter read

> Generally, I have been disappointed by your unwillingness to assume your share of office responsibilities. Further, there has been a demonstrated lack of knowledge of the practices and policies of this office. Finally, I feel that you have failed to establish the necessary positive personal relationships with professional and support staff members which could strengthen your overall effectiveness as a contributing member of the staff.[407]

The letter then identified a number of areas of concern, the first being an accountability of time. Sjogren wrote that Crow arrived late, failed to leave notes on the

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[406] Ibid.

[407] Steve Crow to Cliff Sjogren, March 27, 1975, Box 3, Program in American Culture, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

front desk calendar when he was not in the office and unavailability for various appointments, meetings, or front desk duty. He accused him of failing to submit reports, making mistakes because he was unfamiliar with the practices of the office, and not informing the office of his progress or plans. The last three points of criticism are of a more personal nature. Sjogren criticized Crow for not cooperating with the Assistant Director of Admissions and that "this reluctance has negatively affected our ability to coordinate efforts to recruit and serve minority students."[408] He suggested "your effectiveness in carrying out your responsibilities would improve if you had made a greater effort to relate positively to Admissions Office staff members."[409] A particularly interesting criticism he had of Crow was that he "exercised poor judgment by discussing sensitive office issues with your friends and associates outside of the office before exploring various alternatives internally. This has resulted in incidents that were embarrassing to the Admissions staff."[410]

In the concluding paragraphs of his letter, Sjogren expressed that other staff members had the same concerns to varying degrees and that job performance "significantly influences decisions regarding promotion, salary, and permission to participate in professional development activities."[411] He reminded Crow that on several occasions, these issues were verbally discussed with him and "failure to carry out your

[408] Ibid.

[409] Ibid.

[410] Ibid.

[411] Ibid.

responsibilities can result in a period of mandatory lay off without pay or discharge."[412] He concluded his letter with "It is our sincere hope that such drastic actions are not necessary."[413] The letter to Crow was quite harsh and hinted at the friction between Crow and the rest of the Admissions office. Crow's response to Sjogren affirmed the strained relationship and possible source of the conflicts.

Crow began his letter, dated April 9, 1975, by addressing the central issue head-on.

> I hope I was not hired for token, but as your demands and threats tangle us into an impasse, I begin to wonder. This is not an issue of someone maliciously or intentionally violating policies, procedures, rules and regulations for the ephemeral thrill or satisfaction of being different, difficult or troublesome, but someone with other cultural and spiritual beliefs and ways of working who has tried to gather understanding and cooperation in making a few obvious, necessary changes which would not only benefit Indian people, but all those who attend and work at this university.[414]

Crow identified the source of the misunderstandings as the cultural difference between them. He straightforwardly asserted that the Admissions office had not made an effort to engage in cross-cultural understanding.

> I put it in writing. My people come first. In your world of working, policies and procedures often come before many people, and more than once you have personally asked me to divide my beliefs and place the welfare of this office above the cultural and educational welfare of Indian people…Indeed, your memorandum is spoken like a final attempt to compromise me into a corner, asking me again to relinquish my beliefs and, working in your way, think in your way, behave in your way and accept aspirations and realities which are not my own and do not represent the realities and aspirations of Indians who wish to work

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[412] Ibid.

[413] Ibid.

[414] Steve Crow to Cliff Sjogren, April 9, 1975, Box 3, Program in American Culture, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

> as students, faculty or staff at this university. We have much to offer and much to give, but you have not come to meet us half way.[415]

Six months earlier, Crow helped produce a university brochure aimed at potential Native American students. Part of the brochure read:

> We are seriously interested in continuing our work because we believe we can change the attitudes and actions of those who misunderstand or knowingly suppress our people. We wish to change the hopelessness which has surrounded American Indians for centuries by moving toward the freedom of though and way of life our people deserve in America. [416]

Crow referenced this brochure to illustrate its hypocrisy in the context of the strained relationship between him and the Admissions Office personal and staff. "In six months," he wrote, "I have not asked too much, and surely, nothing more than non-Indian people have already achieved at this university."[417] Many of his requests, he wrote, were denied and thus forced him to say no to Native American students and other efforts on campus for Native peoples. "I was left with no other alternative," he concluded. [418] Crow pointed out to Sjogren that

> We can fight paper and political battles all day, but until we put our hearts together we shall remain embattled, deadlocked, and at this very time, lose our chance to provide the things Indian people need and deserve from this office. It is not easy to write this. I did not ask nor plan for this to happen….Right now, the decisions you make, I make, the attitudes you have developed about the work Indian people are trying to do here, will have a decisive and lasting affect, not only on Indians now and in the time to come, but upon every other cultural group at the University of Michigan. [419]

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[415] Ibid.

[416] Ibid.

[417] Ibid.

[418] Ibid.

[419] Ibid.

As far as Sjogren's criticisms of Crows work and his failures, Crow wrote, "I deny the charge of incompetence and ignorance made about my work. Point by point, your memorandum is unjust, unfair and untruthful…I have nothing to regret."[420] In his report the month before, he wrote "'It is truly unfair at this point for us to assume that we are doing everything possible for Native Americans because in rationale and reality, we are partially committed.'"[421] The university's support of Oldest Elder was on paper through the hiring of staff and a language informant but lacked sincere committed support in day-to-day engagements. Ultimately, in Crow's opinion, "any Indian working in this office, under present circumstances, would in turn be only partially committed to the overall work being done here, especially when the overall work is not the best that can be done for all people."[422] He concluded his letter with "For all my relations" and sent copies to the Affirmative Action Office, NASA, and the Native American Affairs Committee.[423]

These two letters reveal the strained engagement many Native people and university officials were engaged in during the early 1970s. A lack of cross-cultural communication and understanding, tokenism, and unfair expectations were problematic for a number of minority groups seeking to make inroads into the university and hoping to carve out space for recognition, equality, and opportunity. For American Indian students, community members, and allies, the lack of understanding of Oldest Elder by the university administration was one of the largest challenges. Despite these frictions

[420] Ibid.

[421] Ibid.

[422] Ibid.

[423] Ibid.

and conflicts, some faculty and administrators were attempting to work together to bring more educational opportunities to University of Michigan in regards to Native American courses and involving Native American individuals and the community. Against this backdrop of Michigamua, university possession of American Indian remains, and hostile and/or token treatment towards American Indian spokespeople, the beginnings of an Ojibwe language program emerged. Oldest Elder found a space on the university's campus as long as American Indian advocates and allies connected with him through the language, culture, and people. The struggle continued but Oldest Elder's presence was reclaimed in his original homeland and he formed new relationships with students, faculty, and community members.

CHAPTER 5

NGII-MAZOOKAANAA: UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

By 1973, the university received a substantial amount of pressure from the Native American community on a number of issues and was battling bad press coverage from the lawsuit. Administrators and officials looked for ways to appease the protestors and reduce the tensions between people, if only to reduce the negative media. Small numbers of allies within the university started advocating for American Indian interests and communicating the holistic and relational nature of Oldest Elder. The creation of an Ojibwe language course and space for Oldest Elder at the university were the result of American Indian activism, unrest at the university that resulted in bad press, and support from university allies. For Richard Rhodes, a young graduate student at the time, "The upside" of the lawsuit "was [that] it was sufficiently embarrassing that the University of Michigan was willing to make a gesture and the gesture was a Dean calling the Linguistics Department and asking if anyone worked on Indian languages. It just so happened that Ken Hill had worked on Native languages. He knew what was going on and I happened to be looking for a project."[424]

Richard Rhodes eventually worked with Irving "Hap" McCue-ibah as an instructor for Ojibwe language courses at the University of Michigan and began to create space for Oldest Elder at the university. In the larger context, the University of Michigan was a guest in the homeland of Oldest Elder and the university was just starting to have an awareness of this fact. The damaging relationship between the university and the American Indian community became healthier with the creation of the classes and

[424] Richard Rhodes, interview by author, May 20, 2013.

eventual development of the program. When the relationship soured or lacked reciprocity by the university, the program diminished along with Oldest Elder's official presence. Administrative changes, shifting power dynamics and the continued support of the university for the racist society Michigamua were a few of the challenges to building and strengthening the university's relationship with American Indian peoples and Oldest Elder. The allies and individuals involved in the program were critical in keeping a relationship alive, even in its weakest points, by supporting the language courses as a valuable part of the curriculum.

The Ojibwe courses began in 1970-1971, when linguistics professor Kenneth Hill offered a field methods course at the University of Michigan and worked with Ojibwe fluent speaker, Irving "Hap" McCue-ibah as the informant for the class. This course was the beginning of incorporating of Oldest Elder into the university. His presence was brought into the classroom through the language, culture, and lived relationship with Hap McCue-ibah at the university. Richard Rhodes, a student of Hill's soon became involved as well. After the yearlong methods course ended, Rhodes recalls

> [Ken] Hill handed me the notes and said, "You need to do more work [on this]." So I spent at least one evening a week at Hap's house. I did what linguists do: ask the person [words] and they translate. You ask for different [verb] forms so you know how the verb forms work. [Hap] was just the consultant. He knew the language but he couldn't say things analytically about it. The linguist brings to the table the skills to work out the rules for how to put words together to make a coherent sentence. We take the examples and analyze the parts and then put them back together again.[425]

For a considerable part of 1971 and 1972, Rhodes and McCue worked together on the language and began putting the course together with the Ken Hill's occasional help. Rhodes combined his notes from his early work with McCue with Hill's records and

[425] Rhodes, May 20, 2013.

began shaping them into classroom materials. At the same time, Hill was involved on the administration side trying to get the course approved and made available to students. He joined the Committee on Native American Studies and began working towards having a class specifically on the Ojibwe language with a teaching fellow and American Indian informant to run the class.[426] Professor Felheim, Chairman of the Committee on American Indian Studies, also began researching and requesting advice from other Ojibwe language programs in the country.

He contacted the University of Minnesota and became aware of Earl Nyholm's work at Bemidji State University. In his letter to Professor Roger Buffalo Head, Chairman of Indian Studies Department at the University of Minnesota, Felheim wrote "We are just beginning a program here of Indian studies and we desperately need some advice and help."[427] Felheim's primary concern was over Richard Rhodes' appointment as the assistant for the proposed Ojibwe course. "The Indians on our committee," Felheim wrote, "object to the appointment of a white to assist; hence I am writing to ask whether you have any Indian graduate students who would be qualified and interested in applying to Michigan for an assistantship in teaching Chippewa."[428] The initial relationship that formed this course was critical to for a future positive relationship between the university and American Indian community. With such a long strenuous

[426] University of Michigan Native American Studies Committee, Minutes of Native American Studies Committee, March 13, 1973, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[427] Marvin Felheim to Roger Buffalo Head, April 2, 1973, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[428] Ibid.

history of unmet requests and disappointing empty promises, there was a degree of pressure placed on the success of the course addressing this past.

University of Minnesota Assistant Professor Timothy Dunnigan wrote back to Felheim on April 19 explaining that their language teachers had always been Native speakers but that he had himself been hired to help train the teachers and assist in writing the curriculum. While he expressed an interest in helping find a suitable American Indian student for the project and supported the effort for getting Native people involved, he also addressed the issue of dialect differences between Minnesota dialect and Eastern Ojibwa.[429] Despite some community member's trepidations about a non-Indian assistant, the language class began in the fall of 1973 with doctoral candidate Richard Rhodes teaching the course and Irving "Hap" McCue-ibah as the informant. For his work as the informant, McCue was paid $400.00 a semester.[430]

From the beginning, the Anishinaabemowin classes were about relationships: between the university and the American Indian community and between individuals and the language, Oldest Elder. When McCue and Rhodes began the Anishinaabemowin classes, the Native community was invested and present. The format of the class, according to Rhodes, was that he would put the lesson plans together and McCue would execute them. Rhodes recalls "by the fourth year or so, I was sufficiently fluent that [Hap] and I could talk and I could be a contributing speaker. But early on, it really was

[429] Timothy Dunning to Marvin Felheim, April 19, 1973, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[430] Kenneth Hill to Marvin Felheim, March 19, 1973, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

all Hap for obvious reasons."[431] Navajo Mathematics Professor, Tom Storer-ibah, was also an active member in the Ann Arbor Native American community during this time and was the principal faculty spokesman for Native Americans at the university. During the early years of the Ojibwa language program, Storer unofficially attended the class and as Rhodes remembers " [he] became the real watcher. He made sure that I did the right thing."[432] Members of the local Native American community also attended the classes. They sat in on the classes and observed. Rhodes recalls "there were people sitting in the back of the room who were interested, community members. They wanted to see that the right thing was being done."[433] The class was not just about the language being taught but also about the connections between the language, culture, American Indian community, and the historically strained relationships between American Indians and educational institutions, specifically the University of Michigan. At the heart of it all was relationships and connections between people and Oldest Elder.

The class was organized in a fashion that supported the Native students and was conducive for learning the language. The students needed to be able to apply what they learned back on the reservations and in the community. Rhodes recalls "we did this interesting thing. It was cyclical. We had all three years in the same classroom."[434] They stacked the responsibilities for each year to the point that "the third years were supposed to be the people who you could send off" to the communities to speak."[435] The

[431] Rhodes, May 20, 2013.

[432] Ibid.

[433] Ibid.

[434] Ibid.

guiding thought behind the stacking of courses was to prepare the students, Rhodes recalls.

> There were a couple [students] who really succeeded – who went off and learned. But the idea was to make people sufficiently fluent so that they could actually go to the rez and do something – or at least eavesdrop, even if they couldn't really converse right. The danger…is, as soon as somebody loses you [in conversation] then they flip over into English. So it was more important that people had enough skills to eavesdrop and maybe say a few things every now and then ... just to get useful exposure to the language.[436]

The Anishinaabemowin course was more than just a simple language course. "We were really after bigger fish," Rhodes explained.[437] As instructors, they "wanted to generate people that knew enough to go and function on the rez" and everything they did was done with that purpose.[438]

McCue and Rhodes also emphasized speaking over writing the language. They did not allow people to write down material until their third year. Rhodes remembers that they told them "If you're going to go to the rez, you can't be [dependent] on paper. You can't be looking at your cheat sheet. You have to know the stuff and you have to have it down pat."[439] In the classroom, McCue and Rhodes carved out a safe space and community for Native students.

> When you walked into the classroom, it was Indian rules. If you screwed up in some way they'd laugh you into the ground. There were people who actually had a really hard time with it. [But] if somebody was hurting one day and it was all hands on deck. [We'd] gather around and support this person. We'd drop the lesson. When you walked in, it was like you were on a little piece of the rez, and

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[435] Ibid.

[436] Ibid.

[437] Ibid.

[438] Ibid.

[439] Ibid.

> people behaved that way. We used shame and ridicule, the kinds of things that happen all the time [on the rez], so a lot of people signed up for the class early on just because it was a piece of home, because they walked in and they were no longer really at the university. The word got around pretty quick that it was a safe place to be.[440]

McCue and Rhodes worked to make the atmosphere in the classroom one that was a safe place for students to be Native. The classroom was a space that students and community members could connect with Oldest Elder and understand *him* through language, culture, and relationships.

Rhodes involvement with the Ojibwe language was serendipitous. After a year of graduate school at Michigan State University, Rhodes's deferment was revoked and he was drafted and sent to Vietnam. Because of his background in linguistics, he was sent to Vietnamese language school and then worked as an interpreter with an airborne unit. When the opportunity to get out of the service early by being accepted into graduate school arose, Rhodes applied to schools with Asian language programs. He was discharged on New Years Eve in 1970 and that fall, August 1971, he came to the University of Michigan. When he arrived, he discovered that the one major Asian language they did not teach was Vietnamese. Looking for something to study, he pursued his interest in phonology and began working with Kenneth Hill. Through Hill, he was introduced to McCue and began working with him Anishinaabemowin.

[440] Ibid. In Anishinaabeg culture, humor is a commonly used tool to address uncomfortable topics and situations. It is also employed to provide individuals with guidance and correction. Rhodes' reference to "shame and ridicule" being used in the classroom points to the practice of using humor as a teaching method. In many Native cultures, teasing and humor directed at particular individuals is used to build cohesiveness, community and establish a shared cultural understanding.

During the first semester of offering the classes, an event happened that shifted the relationship between Rhodes and McCue. "I started off, sort of this fresh faced kid, I knew all this linguistics," Rhodes remembers.

> [Ojibwe is] a really complicated language. Any given verb can have 4,000 or so forms. You have to figure out how to spoon feed a few forms at a time. I was writing out these paradigm charts and Hap finally just said, "That's not going to work." and he did something that got my attention. We actually got into a public fight in the middle of a class. But afterwards, when I went home and thought about it, I realized he was right. Then I knew I needed to apologize. Tom Storer, took me out to lunch and we talked about it, and I explained to Tom that I really felt that Hap was right and I was really sorry and I wanted to apologize to him. Well, we were on state street — half of the stores aren't there anymore — we were eating lunch at a place more or less kitty-corner from Angel Hall, and there was a drug store on the university side further down near where the theater is. We were walking on down on the way to class, and Tom says, "Go into the store and buy a package of Benson and Hedges 100s." And I said, "Well, okay." And I went in the store and bought a package. He said, "When Hap comes in, just put it on the table and don't say anything." Basically from that point on Hap and I became close friends, because he realized that I was willing to listen to him in the first place. And I was willing to admit that I was wrong, when I was wrong. And that I was willing to do so on his terms not mine. That's when I started listening very, very carefully to what he said, because he had an enormous amount of wisdom about how to do this. And how to do it in an Indian way, how to bring a piece of the rez into the classroom."[441]

McCue and Rhodes, through cross-cultural exchange and forgiveness, formed a stronger working relationship that enabled them to continue to build and develop the Ojibwe language classes at the University of Michigan. They were able to bring Oldest Elder into the classroom. The relationship with the community, in regards to those community members overseeing and sitting in on the language classes, also developed. In January 1975, Rhodes contacted Felheim inquiring if a second year of Ojibwe might be offered since students wanted to use it for meeting their language requirements. In his letter he wrote "I feel that the response of the local Native American community has

[441] Ibid.

improved to the point that such an expansion is feasibly in terms of the outside support necessary to make such a venture successful. As a point of information, nine students are currently enrolled, and one is in the process of adding, making ten total."[442] Students found a home away from home in the course and community members eventually felt comfortable enough with Rhodes' working relationship with McCue.

Within the infrastructure of the University of Michigan, administrators, faculty, and staff members continued to forge and maintain a relationship between Native American concerns and needs and the university. Non-Native allies within the university advocated for the continued development of the language courses and its importance and respectability. When Professor Felheim stepped down from chairing the university's Committee on Native American Affairs, he wrote to Associate Dean B. E. Frye urging him to see the value and importance of the Ojibwe language class.

> We currently offer a course in the Ojibwa language, taught by a teaching fellow in Linguistics with the assistance of a local Chippewa informant. This course is, I believe, vitally important to any ongoing program in Native American Studies. It serves only a small group (7-10) of undergraduate students, but it is attended by members of the local Indian community and thus serves a broad cultural, as well as linguistics, need. It is true that by University statistics the course is not large but its value cannot be measured in standard bureaucratic terms of number of students enrolled.[443]

Other faculty and administrators, however, did not find the same amount of value in the courses as Professor Felheim. They did not attack the courses outright but used the procedures and policies at the university to tangle Oldest Elder up in red tape. As higher

[442] Richard Rhodes to Marvin Felheim, January 24, 1975, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[443] Marvin Felheim to Frank H.T. Rhodes, May 23, 1975, Box 3, Program in American Culture, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

level and additional course offerings of Ojibwe went to the curriculum committee and obtained approval, the question of whether the courses would satisfy the language requirement for the College of Literature, Sciences and the Arts (LS & A) became an issue of contestation. Those against Ojibwe meeting the foreign language requirement argued that there was a literature problem with the language. In an August 11, 1975 letter to Professor William Gedney, the Chairman of the Department of Linguistics, LS & A Administrative Assistant Joan K. Woodward wrote that they had discussed the problem which "concerns the expectation that a language, in order to be applicable for fulfillment of the language requirement, must have a significant body of written literature with which students can familiarize themselves during their several terms of study. As far as we could determine, no substantial body of literature exists in Ojibwa."[444] Students could continue to take the Ojibwa courses but were to be advised it would not fulfill the language requirements.

The following spring, February 1976, Rhodes and Hill wrote a letter to the Dean of LS &A and sent it to his administrative assistant. They appealed the decision of the curriculum committee and referenced the LS & A's bulletin description of the objectives for the language courses that did meet the foreign language requirement. The same requirements of developing "the essential skills of speaking, understanding, and reading the language as preparation for its use in professional and civic affairs, and to provide a

[444] Joan Woodward to William Gedney, August 11, 1975, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

general view of the culture of the people whose native language it is," they argued, were being met in the Ojibwa language courses.[445] In addition, they contended

> the effective use of Ojibwa requires a basic cultural readjustment on the part of language learners that is much more extensive than that for any Western language. And as for purely linguistic skills, Ojibwa (or for that matter any other Native American language) has such different organizing principles from English that, by comparison, difference among European languages look minor…As for the point raised in your letter of August 11, 1975, regarding the existence of a body of literature, not only are there upwards of 60,000 speakers of Ojibwa in the U.S. and Canada who maintain a vast and lively oral tradition, but a sizeable and growing volume of that body of literature is available on tape…there are in addition other repositories, e.g. the University of Toronto….More significantly, Ojibwa literature is still being produced, unlike the literature of ancient languages which do fulfill the requirement. (The corpus of currently available literature (even if we consider only that in print) in Ojibwa is larger, for example, than the total corpus of Biblical Hebrew, which is acceptable in fulfillment of the requirement.) [446]

The academic LS & A bulletins for 1971 through 1977 did not list Ojibwa as a language qualified to meet the foreign language requirement. The language was not listed as a qualifying sequence until 1978-1979. By failing to formally acknowledge Oldest Elder's presence at the university, university officials passively resisted *him*. Allies who recognized Oldest Elder's importance continued to advocate for *him* but were outnumbered and misunderstood by other non-Native members in the academic community. People resisted acknowledging Oldest Elder and forming a relationship with *him*. A relational worldview is often a foreign concept for those immersed in the western institution of academia.

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[445] Richard Rhodes and Kenneth Hill to Joan K. Woodward and Curriculum Committee, February 11, 1976, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[446] Ibid.

In addition to the foreign language requirement, the Anishinaabemowin classes also faced the common struggles most departments and programs face in universities: funding. In the fall of 1978, Associate Dean Robert Holbrook wrote to Professor Ken Hill, Chairman of the Department of Linguistics, about the status of the language classes: "We will do everything we can to continue to support the program at its current level, in terms of courses offered, subject to an annual review."[447] The biggest hurdle, from a university standpoint, was justifying the expense of the courses with such small enrollment numbers. Associate Dean Holbrook explained "Enrollment in the courses is not high, and has been falling. For this reason we are likely to find it increasingly difficult to justify funding for the program on the usual basis, and it may become necessary for us to seek external funds."[448] The conversation of financial support continued into following semesters.

In 1979, Vice President Harold Shapiro put additional funds into the college to specifically help continue the Ojibwa classes.[449] However, the university continued to feel pressure from the local Native American community to make the classes a permanent part of the course offerings. There was a need to solidify Oldest Elder's place at the university and the community continuously reminded the university of its relational responsibilities. In the spring of 1979, Dean Bill Frye wrote to Associate Dean Robert

[447] Robert Holbrook to Kenneth Hill, November 21, 1978, Box 287, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[448] Ibid.

[449] Robert Holbrook to Richard Rhodes, May 31, 1979, Box 287, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Holbrook on the matter, pointing out that funding the Ojibwe classes was more than a matter of crunching the numbers.

> We feel a rather strong institutional obligation to give assurances that Ojibway will continue to be taught, even though the enrollments are never likely to be very large. I believe there is a sort of social responsibility for the American Indian students that should be met, and I also think there is a potential political problem if we back off from this. In that sense, this is not just a College problem, but a University problem, and it was because of this that I thought it appropriate to approach the Vice-President or the President for their viewpoints and assistance…I think our commitment is already a reasonable one given the special nature of the Program and the relatively low enrollments, and I am absolutely positive that the Executive Committee of the College would not agree to generate a full, permanent line for this purpose in the face of other competing needs.[450]

While members of the Native American community continued to negotiate their relationship with the university as a whole, allies of varying degrees were also negotiating for a relationship within the internal structures of the university. They often articulated the importance of the program but were confronted with others within the system that did not see the value of the courses in the same way.

When students became aware of the possibility of the classes not being continued, they submitted letters to Dean Marzolf. On March 27, 1979, University of Michigan student, Doug Beasley, wrote

> The Ojibwa language class is once again in danger of being cut. We must not let this happen; these classes are too important. The University has a responsibility to keep these kind (sic) of classes available to its students and also to make the students aware that they are being offered. The University also has a responsibility to present and potential minority students to continue to provide classes of interest and relevance to lifestyles other than the predominant one.[451]

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[450] Bill Frye to Robert Holbrook, May 14, 1979, Box 287, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[451] Doug Beasley to Marion Marzolf, March 27, 1979, Box 3, Program in American Culture, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

University student Katherine Nichols found the threat of removing the Ojibwa language and Native American literature courses "overwhelming" in light of feeling that the university was already "very limited in the course selections pertaining to American Indians" despite having extended itself to "include numerous other cultures and ethnic groups."[452] Graduate students, University Alumni, and undergraduates all wrote letters of support for keeping the courses and addressed the situation with an understanding of reciprocal responsibilities. They wrote about the general ignorance of individuals at the university on Native American subjects and how the courses were life-changing opportunities for people to learn. They also emphasized the responsibilities of the university when it came to American Indian people and subjects.

A third year student, who signed their letter with his or her student number, wrote against the rationale of cutting the courses because of low enrollment. "I think that this problem of enrollment is the fault of the University to advertise these classes," he wrote. "I, luckily, stumbled across American Studies 498, only to find the phrase 'Open to Senior Concentrators only.' It is for this reason that many students do not pursue the course any further…I would hope that the university would add courses in these areas rather than cut them."[453] Other students argued that it would be unfair to stop offering the courses when they were halfway towards completing their language requirement in Anishinaabemowin. The instability of the Anishinaabemowin courses in the university

[452] Katherine Nichols to Marion Marzolf, April 2, 1979, Box 3, Program in American Culture, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[453] Student to Marion Marzolf, April 2, 1979, Box 3, Program in American Culture, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

was also due, in part, to the general instability within university policies and departmental changes.

During the early 1980s, policy changes made it increasingly difficult to continue offering minority focused courses. Offering these courses had been a consistent struggle for the American Studies Program in particular since it housed the vast majority of the classes. In 1977, the Program in American Culture Director, Marvin Felheim, had just returned from the hospital to find that his request for assistance from the CRLT (Center for Research Learning and Teaching) staff and advisory committee had been declined. His response illustrates the frustration and desperation that internal allies sometimes felt as they too fought to carve space inside the university for acceptance and equal standing towards minority students and issues. He began his letter by acknowledging his disappointment, bitterness, and desperation. While the University, he wrote, had made "longstanding commitments to minority students" through the University President and Regents, none of the commitments beyond those made to the African American students had been honored.[454] "What has happened," he explained, "is that the rest of the great "unwashed" have been dumped into the American Studies Program, a program which, as you may or may not know, receives no funds at all from any University source nor have we been able to tap resources from outside the University."[455] He concluded his letter with an honest and frank expression of his desperation.

> Lest I lose at this point all sense of dignity, I will close this letter with an expression of such deep regret and such deep disappointment that I find no way of maintaining, in any even minor way the University's commitment to these

[454] Marvin Felheim to Wilbert J. McKeachie, January 6, 1977, Box 269, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[455] Ibid.

> students that I feel beyond hopelessness. I simply don't know where to turn nor do I know what to do about the needed resources.[456]

In order to meet the financial cost of offering a course, the Program in American culture often resorted to using funds from the teaching assistant budget and/or paying advanced graduate students to teach courses. In the 1980s, the College Executive Committee ruled that graduate students could not teach courses above the 300 level. The financial support system for Oldest Elder was effectively cut at the knees. Standard funding was unavailable and now the other option for funding the courses was also eliminated. Programs and departments across the university began eliminating their lecturer positions and either releasing individuals or moving those they believed could obtain tenure into tenure track positions.[457] For programs like American Culture, this put a strain on an already taut situation of funding the minority focused courses. In addition, administrative changes also threatened the survival of the Anishinaabemowin courses and by extension the survival of Oldest Elder's place at the university. While the pressure of the American Indian community had earned the attention some university administrators, others failed to recognize Oldest Elder and *his* importance at the university.

In 1981, the College of Literature, Science, and Arts hired a new Dean, Peter Steiner, and went through a period of economic insecurity. Native American Studies Committee, faculty, and students were concerned that the college might not continue its commitment to the Anishinaabemowin program. On October 10, 1981, a group of

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[456] Ibid.

[457] Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. to Jay Robinson, February 1, 1980, Box 294, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

individuals met with Dean Steiner to discuss their concerns.[458] Additional conversations were held, officially and unofficially, during this period. As the administrators rotated and moved within the university, it shifted the foundation of the Anishinaabemowin classes and the work McCue and Rhodes were doing with the language. There was a constant renegotiation of the relationship between allies within the university and other university faculty and administrators. In the process, the relationships between the university and Native American community members were once again negotiated. While most negotiations took place behind closed doors, a few key individuals, such as McCue and Storer were involved in renegotiating both relationships. They often resorted to creative solutions and shuffling to keep a place for Oldest Elder.

During the first half the of the 1980s, keeping the class going with Rhodes and McCue as the instructor and informant required a bit of a juggling act. In addition to teaching the Anishinaabemowin course, Rhodes also taught an American Studies 460 course on Algonquian culture. The course was designed to provide students with an exposure to "the history, culture, lifestyle (both ancient and modern), and thought of the various Algonquian peoples."[459] Rhodes' appointment was often split between the Linguistics Department and American Culture with the possibility of changes if the

[458] Richard Rhodes to Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., December 3, 1981, Box 5, Program in American Culture, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[459] *Newsletter* No. 16 by University of Michigan Program in American Culture (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, November 1981), 2.

number of students in the Ojibwa courses dropped too low. Between 1981 and 1983, there were approximately twenty-one students enrolled in the Ojibwa courses.[460]

In the final few years of McCue and Rhodes working together, there were a number of changes occurring at the University of Michigan. On January 1, 1983, Rhodes was reclassified from a lecturer to an Assistant Professor of Linguistics.[461] Soon after this transition, the Department of Linguistics was dismantled and became a program. In the fall of 1985, Rhodes' appointment was moved to the Program in American Culture.[462] In 1986, the Anishinaabemowin courses were also officially transferred from Linguistics to the Program in American Culture. By this time, the relationship between McCue and Rhodes was well established and McCue had gained considerable experience as an instructor. However, in the university's eyes, Hap was still an "Indian informant."

When Rhodes was going to miss at least two classes one semester, he wrote to the Director of the American Culture program about McCue covering the classes. "He is completely competent to do so," he wrote, "in spite of the way the university classifies him, having worked with me for ten years now."[463] During the 1985-1986 school year, the university was forced to trust in McCue's capabilities because Rhodes left for the University of California, Berkeley to teach for the year. The prospect of Rhodes being

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[460] Author unknown, Handwritten Notes from "Meeting American Native Studies," November 21, 1983, Box 338, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

[461] William Zimmerman to Eric Rabkin, December 23, 1982, Box 287, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[462] *Newsletter* No. 75 by University of Michigan Program in American Culture (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, August 1985), 3.

[463] Richard Rhodes to Jim McIntosh, August 20, 1985, Box 5, Program in American Culture, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

offered a tenure track position were not promising at the University of Michigan for a number of reasons, including the instability of infrastructure and university finances. When he was later offered a tenure-track opportunity at Berkeley, he seized the opportunity.[464] In between Rhode's absence and his official resignation at the University of Michigan, administrators prepared for multiple scenarios. Once again, relationships were renegotiated and Oldest Elder's position was uncertain. The absence of Rhodes weakened the strength of the program and the hard fought recognition of the courses' contributions and importance.

In a letter to Dr. Susan Lipschutz, the Assistant to the President, Associate Dean Jack Meiland explained their solution for Rhodes's absence. "We have authorized the appointment of a temporary instructor to teach intermediate Ojibwa, he wrote.[465] Without Rhodes, however, he was not confident that McCue would continue teaching the courses; in fact, they prepared to cancel them. He explained that the temporary instructor "will help students already in the 'pipeline' to use this language to complete the College's foreign language requirement. By not offering beginning Ojibwa this year, we leave open the option of discontinuing the teaching of Ojibwa should Professor Rhodes decide not to return to Michigan or should he not receive tenure."[466] While the university was strategically preparing itself for the possibility of not continuing the language courses and terminating its relationship with Oldest Elder, the students and Native American community chose to show their appreciation for the courses being taught at the

[464] Rhodes Interview, May 20, 2013.

[465] Jack Meiland to Susan Lipschutz, August 14, 1986, Box 346, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[466] Ibid.

university. To demonstrate their appreciation for the relationships being built with the language courses, they gifted university officials and Hap McCue-ibah.

On April 3, 1986, Cheryl Animkiwaam-Peck, President of the Native American Student Association and Chairman of the Anishinaabe of Ann Arbor, Inc., invited Dean Steiner to attend an awards presentation and ceremony. In her letter, Animkiwaa-Peck explained the reasoning for the awards:

> The 1985-1986 academic year is the twelfth year that the Ojibwa language and culture has been taught in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts at The University of Michigan. This program has been very important to the native peoples of Michigan as a way of preserving their heritage, educating their children, and bringing their culture to others as well as maintaining close ties to the University. To show their appreciate for the Ojibwa class, the Council of Three Fires, the ancient affiliation of Michigan Indians, will present awards to President Harold T. Shapiro, Vice President and Provost Billy E. Frye, and Instructor Hap McCue…[467]

Central to Anishinaabeg culture is the idea of reciprocal relationships. The award ceremony was an act of reciprocity and appreciation for incorporating Oldest Elder into the university. They held the award ceremony in President Shapiro's office with "Chief Little Elk" giving the invocation and representing the Chippewa and Ojibwa fire.[468] Frank Bush represented the Potawatomi nation and Bill Church, Executive Director of the Michigan Commission on Indian Affairs, represented the Ottawa people. The ceremony was followed by a reception in the university union, which was open to the

[467] Cheryl Animikwaam-Peck to Peter O. Steiner, April 3, 1986, Box 341, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[468] Ibid.

public.[469] It is unclear whether the individuals involved in the ceremony were aware that university administrators were considering canceling the courses.

Just seven months following the award ceremony, negotiations continued over whether or not the university was committed to keeping the Ojibwe classes going in the event that Rhodes did not return to the university. In a letter dated October 3, 1986, the Director of the Program in American Culture, James McIntosh, inquired to his dean about the exact commitments the university may or may not have made in regards to the Ojibwa language and culture classes. "We would also like to know if the University has made any formal or informal commitments to the Indian community to teach Algonquian language and culture. I have heard rumors of such a commitment but have no definite information on it. For what it's worth, I myself would like to see the teaching of Ojibwa continue at Michigan whether or not Professor Rhodes remains here," he wrote.[470] Dean Steiner replied a few days later stating

> I am not a party to, nor aware of, <u>any</u> formal or informal commitments to teach (or not to teach) any native American language or culture. I do not believe such a commitment would be made without the Dean's knowledge and consent. The question, if I am Dean, will be decided on the merits, that is in terms of the student demand, the research and teaching interests of the faculty, and the alternative demands on resources.[471]

Once again, the question of commitment for the courses came back to enrollment and resources. In a letter from Richard Rhodes to Director James McIntosh on October 21, 1986, Rhodes officially resigned his position at the University of Michigan effective

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[469] Ibid.

[470] James McIntosh to Peter Steiner, October 3, 1986, Box 346, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[471] Peter Steiner to James McIntosh, October 7, 1986, Box 346, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

July 1, 1987. With the opportunity at the University of California, Berkeley and the "difficulties inherent in a tenure review" at the University of Michigan, Rhodes left the university.[472] A shift in power dynamics and institutional leadership threatened the relationships built between people and Oldest Elder.

In the course of the fifteen or so years McCue and Rhodes worked together at the university, a great deal of work, both community based and academically oriented, was accomplished. With the help of Reta Sands, Hap McCue-ibah and other fluent speakers, Rhodes wrote and published the *Eastern Ojibwa-Chippewa-Ottawa Dictionary*. Rhodes obtained a $100,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities which allowed him to obtain "some technology that was pretty slick for the time" and allowed for the publication of the dictionary.[473] In the larger Native Community, Sands and McCue connected Rhodes into the larger language circles. In the 1980s, a survival school was established in the Ann Arbor area and McCue helped in those efforts. A few times, Rhodes also went with McCue to outside events but Rhodes felt the atmosphere was not always welcoming to outsiders.

The relationships between the early 1970s and mid 1980s were a tangled web of cross-cultural misfires, power plays, and struggles. Out of the social movements of the 1960s and the American Indian Movement, Native students and community members put pressure on the university to recognize the unique position, needs, and responsibilities towards the Native American community. They used formal policies and procedures, open forums, lawsuits, and protests to bring the university to action and accountability.

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[472] Richard Rhodes to James McIntosh, October 21, 1986, Box 5, Program in American Culture, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[473] Rhodes, May 20, 2013.

Key individuals within the university, Native and non-Native, were brought together and worked to make inroads into the infrastructure and system of the University of Michigan.

Fortunately, the university continued to hire McCue as an instructor for the Anishinaabemowin classes after Rhodes left. Perhaps a sufficient number of Native and non-Native allies were able to convince key administrators of Oldest Elder's value or perhaps the university did not want additional negative media attention. The historical record remains unclear on the exact manner in which the courses were able to survive. What is clear to the Anishinaabeg community is that Oldest Elder as a force was present at the university in the years leading up to this juncture and *he* survived the transitional years until additional instructors once again joined the classroom.

From 1986 until 2005, McCue taught the Anishinaabemowin classes on his own. He was a unique person who gave himself freely to the language and the community. McCue was "born February 5, 1933 on Curve Lake First nations Reserve in Ontario, Canada…He was a full-blood Ojibwe and he spoke the language fluently. Many other speakers of Ojibwe commented on the beauty of his speaking ability, describing his speech in the Ojibwe languages as 'sounding like a song.'"[474] While a young student attending school, McCue had been beaten for speaking Anishinaabemowin on school grounds. Rhodes recalls McCue's anger about his experiences in school. "When the school mistress retired they gave her this big party," Rhodes remembers, "he was so mad. He said, "That woman. She beat us for when we spoke our language."'[475] McCue went from being physically punished for speaking his mother tongue, to teaching it in one of

[474] Margaret (Noori) Noodin, Hap McCue Obituary, Margaret (Noori) Noodin's personal papers, copy in author's possession.

[475] Rhodes, May 20, 2013.

the United States' top universities. The evolution of Oldest Elder came a long way and created multiple relationships with generations of people at the University of Michigan.

During McCue's years as the sole language instructor, the relationship between the university and the Native community continued to be strained and negotiated. Oldest Elder, is present in all areas of Anishinaabeg life, though *he* is more easily identified in the language. Oldest Elder is intimately connected to other areas of Anishinaabeg culture as well. When Anishinaabeg culture is disrespected and mocked, Oldest Elder is mistreated. Two areas of contention in the 1980s were the annual university pow wow and the university's relationship with Michigamua. In 1982, the Ann Arbor Pow Wow was brought under the university's umbrella, largely because of financial desperation.[476] The NASA students and Ann Arbor Indian community worked together to host the annual pow wow at the university.

Around 1987, Mike Dashner was hired as a Native American representative in the Office of Minority Student Services. "With his hiring," Music Historian Tara Browner asserts, "the region's Indian community lost control of its pow wow, and the Native American Student Association became sponsors in name only."[477] Browner began working on a musical ethnography of the Ann Arbor, Michigan pow wow in 1989 and was involved with the event by serving in multiple roles. The pow wow, she explains, is a result of "the pressures placed upon a community-based event by a large university that

[476] Tara Browner, *Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-Wow* (Urbana: University of Chicago, 2002), 40.

[477] Ibid.

intends to portray itself as supporting the Native American community."[478] Even before the hiring of Dashner, the relationship between NASA and the university was strained in regards to the pow wow. In 1982, Larry Balber, the Native American Representative in the Minority Student Services, requested funds from LS & A and was met with the following response from Dean Steiner.

"I find that the College provided 100 in 1980, and 150 in 1979, but apparently nothing in 1981. I am unable to determine what the College's interest in the pow wow is, and do not believe we could make any significant contribution," he wrote. "I see no point in a token contribution. I urge you to find funding elsewhere."[479] In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Ann Arbor Pow Wow effectively became a public relations forum for the university. With the strained and largely negative relationship between Michigamua and the American Indian students, the pow wow was an opportunity for the university to market itself as understanding and supporting American Indian peoples. The day-to-day struggles to protect Oldest Elder, however, continued and were intertwined together. McCue, American Indian students and staff, members of the surrounding American Indian community worked to preserve Oldest Elder's presence at the university and *his* dignity, negotiating the pow wow, Michigamua, and the language courses.

Faculty and administrative allies continued to advocate for maintaining the Ojibwa classes as they were continually on tenuous grounds. On March 10, 1987, Director McIntosh again wrote to Dean Steiner as to why Ojibwa should be taught at the university. He argued that while all languages are important, "the languages of primitive

[478] Ibid., 36.

[479] Peter Steiner to Larry Balber, March 18, 1982, Box 327, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

peoples are especially precious in our age, worth preserving and studying all the more because they are vulnerable to the onslaughts of modernity."[480] He argued that, in regards to Anishinaabemowin classes,

> the university has performed a valuable service in keeping it in the curriculum as a subject for study. As a result, interest in Ojibwe is alive here, and I would hate to see it abandoned…At the same time, it's unrealistic to expect that the university could find a regular faculty member with broad interests who could teach Ojibwe and also pass peer review.[481]

Whether his use of the word "primitive" reflected his personal views on Ojibwa, was simply a reflection of the language at the time, or was an attempt to illicit some romantic response out of Dean Steiner to support the language courses remains unclear. Regardless, the courses did continue and McCue kept the same format of stacking classes the same way he had with Rhodes. The description of the courses clearly emphasized the style of the courses:

> These Ojibwa language courses are designed to give conversational and cultural skills necessary to enable students to use Ojibwa in real life situations. The teaching methods are entirely inductive, and the role of writing is downplayed. There is considerable emphasis on teaching culturally appropriate behavior and the simple conversational patterns of greets, leave takings, introductions, table talk, etc.[482]

The second and third year students were expected to meet higher expectations and complete more advanced work than the first year students. The critical examination of the course and hesitation to accept its format on par with other university courses continued as the years passed.

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[480] James McIntosh to Peter Steiner, March 10, 1987, Box 346, College of Literature, Science and Arts, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[481] Ibid.

[482] *Newsletter* No. 87 by University of Michigan Program in American Culture (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, November 1989), 2.

Beginning in 1987, the question of whether or not the courses could fulfill the college's language requirements once again became an issue. In 1987, the college was informed that Anishinaabemowin courses could not be used to satisfy the foreign language requirement. Director McIntosh asked for an official statement from the college to that effect since it had been fulfilling the requirement since 1975 after the first debate on the same subject. In October 1987, the College's Curriculum Committee examined the question of Ojibwa meeting the requirements. Committee members discussed the possibility of dropping the language and others suggested pulling the minutes from the 1970s debate of this very same issue. They proposed adding a note to the *Bulletin* stating that a four-course sequence of Anishinaabemowin could not be guaranteed. The university's commitment to Oldest Elder was not something they could not guarantee. The committee decided to table the motion until the Program in American Culture had time to respond to the investigation. By January 1988, the College Executive Committee approved the College Curriculum Committee's decision to notify students, via the *Bulletin*, that while Ojibwa would continue to fulfill the language requirements, a four-course sequence in Ojibwa could not be guaranteed.[483] The course's permanency and Oldest Elders' remained uncertain.

In the spring of 1989, another issue arose with the Ojibwe language courses and the foreign language requirements: students abusing the system. Of the nine students enrolled in the 323 level Ojibwa course at the time, seven had completed fewer than three terms. Two of the students had applied to graduate with Ojibwa as their foreign

[483] Linda (Eggert?) to Jim (McIntosh?), April 28, 1989, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

language. One student had successfully graduated the previous year with only one term of Ojibwa.[484] When Helen Crafton, the Director of Academic Actions, learned of this fact, she called for a curriculum committee review of the four courses in Ojibwa (322, 323, 422, 423) to determine if they should meet the language requirement and if the committee concluded that they did, the Senior Auditors and Records Office would have to certify that the students had met the requirements.[485]

The Dean of the College then wrote the Director of the Program of American Culture in which he informed the director he was requesting a review of the Ojibwa curriculum and that the use of Ojibwa to meet the foreign language requirements should be suspended. Pending the review, any student enrolling in Ojibwe, he argued, should be "explicitly warned that there is no assurance that Ojibwa will be accepted to meet the foreign language requirement hereafter."[486] He also asked that no students be allowed to enroll in the 323, 422, or 423 courses unless they had completed 222, 223, 322 or had the written permission from the dean.[487] He concluded his letter with the statement that "if there are any students now in the program who have been promised otherwise, we need to have a list of who they are and what they have been promised. It seems clear that this matter merits your direct oversight and should not be left to the discretion of the instructor(s) in the course(s)."[488] The university had historically hesitated to trust that a

[484] Ibid.

[485] Helen Crafton to Jack Meiland, April 23, 1989, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[486] Peter Steiner to James McIntosh, April 26, 1989, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[487] Ibid.

non-academic American Indian individual could successfully teach courses on his own. These sentiments are also apparent in the memos between administrators on this incident as well and without a doubt colored the conversations and handling of the issue.

In a letter back to Dean Steiner, McIntosh informed him that he had closed the upper level courses and students would have to obtain permission and provide evidence that they had taken at least three terms. He then defended the classroom format, explaining why the courses were taught in an unconventional format where the "students meet together as a community."[489]

> Professor Richard Rhodes together with the current instructor, Irving McCue, devised such an arrangement for the class partly to imitate a learning experience in Algonquian cultural life…I have great confidence in the integrity and pedagogical skill of Mr. McCue. His course evaluations are extremely impressive. I believe he has helped in a significant way to preserve Ojibwa as a language.[490]

Despite his support for the class format and confidence in the instructors, he also expressed concern that it may need modification. "I believe this format has its own merit and justification," he wrote. [491] McIntosh balanced his position as a non-Native academic and an ally of Oldest Elder throughout in the process. He defended the courses but also responded to the criticisms. "Since I think Ojibwa has a place in the college curriculum,"

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[488] Ibid.

[489] James McIntosh to Peter Steiner, May 3, 1989, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[490] Ibid.

[491] Ibid.

he wrote, "I am reviewing it carefully so that it works more effectively as a system of instruction."[492]

Over the course of the fall of 1989 and the spring of 1990, the Curriculum Committee reviewed the Ojibwa course offerings. At their November 28 meeting, they discussed the need to examine the syllabus, that it might be unfair to students already in the Ojibwa sequence who were not properly warned of its unreliable status, and the lack of "competency-based examinations by which to test students wishing to register for fourth term Ojibwa."[493] They motioned to have Director James McIntosh invited to the meeting the following week. "He will be invited to bring the instructor of the course with him and asked to bring copies of correspondence with students," the minutes read.[494]

Since the course's inception, in many of the memos and documents concerning the Anishinaabemowin classes, only the non-Native allies used McCue's name. Other administrators and university faculty referred to him as "the instructor," "the informant," "the Indian," or even "our Indians." These examples illustrate the absence of a respectful relationship between many of the university members and Oldest Elder and American Indian peoples. The fact that they could not or would not address a highly respected elder who had invested years of his life in the preservation of the language and enrichment of the university through the language by his name illustrates the elitism Oldest Elder faced and continues to face to this day.

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[492] Ibid.

[493] University of Michigan College of Literature, Science and Arts, LS & A Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes, November 28, 1989, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

[494] Ibid.

Following the committee's meeting, a new meeting was scheduled for the following day, December 5, with Dr. McIntosh and Dr. Storer. McCue's attendance was not required or requested. Instead, it was suggested that it might be a good idea for McCue to attend if he wanted to be there, as if he were not critical to the courses or an authority on them.[495] At the meeting between the Curriculum Committee and McIntosh, Storer and McCue, they discussed with the committee "how the courses function, who takes them, how the level of competence is determined, some of the history of Ojibwa at the UM, the possibility for the development of grading criteria, as well as enrollment difficulties and abuses."[496] They also discussed guidelines and competency testing. By the end of the meeting, they agreed "students would be notified in writing that Ojibwa may not always be available and therefore may not be acceptable to satisfy the foreign language requirement."[497] The Curriculum Committee "members openly acknowledged the tensions that exist between university practice and this non-traditional situation. They expressed the feeling that it is important to try to create some mechanism by which the uniqueness of Ojibwa can be allowed and the needs of the university satisfied."[498] A December 11, 1989 letter from Director McIntosh informed students of the new changes in the process for enrolling in the upper level Ojibwe courses. He also wrote that "We encourage you to take Ojibwa for its own sake, but we cannot assure you that it will

[495] Linda (Eggert?) to Jim (McIntosh?), November 29, 1989, Ibid.

[496] University of Michigan College of Literature, Science and Arts, LS & A Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes, December 5, 1989, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[497] Ibid.

[498] Ibid.

satisfy the requirement."[499] The letter clearly conveyed the fact that these changes were a result of Dean Steiner's directions and that the curriculum committee and McCue, Storer and McIntosh were working to find a common understanding. [500]

The curriculum committee even went so far as to create a subcommittee that met with McIntosh, McCue, and Storer individually and with some of the language students. The subcommittee included Classical Studies Professor Ruth Scodel, Historical Linguist and Professor, Steven Dworkin, and student Mathew Fox.[501] The subcommittee's report to the curriculum committee explained that the courses were taught differently with an emphasis on "oral mastery of the language" and that the written language was not included until the second year."[502] They acknowledged that the motivation behind this set-up was "partly at the wish of the tribal elders, who see writing as a very poor supplement for the spoken word."[503] Despite these positive and supportive comments, the committee remained concerned about potential abuses. "Student comment on the course has been very favorable," they wrote.[504] However,

> The system is obviously open to abuse, however, by students looking for an easy way to fulfill the language requirement and others just looking for an easy course. The grades, which were very high in earlier years, were more rigorous in the fall

[499] James McIntosh to Students in Ojibwe, December 11, 1989, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[500] Ibid.

[501] University of Michigan College of Literature, Science and Arts, LS & A Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes, April 24, 1990, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[502] University of Michigan College of Literature, Science and Arts, Curriculum Sub-Committee, Report to Curriculum Committee on Ojibway, undated, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[503] Ibid.

[504] Ibid.

semester. PE students did not dominate enrollments and were generally not doing particularly well.[505]

Other students commented that they learned a great deal of Anishinaabeg culture from the class and some praised McCue's approach because it allowed them to "speak and understand the language idiomatically."[506] The emotional ethos and importance of Oldest Elder was present in the student's relationships with the language and the course. The subcommittee may not have understood Oldest Elder but ultimately they did "not recommend dropping the course or forcing radical changes in its nature. It has clear value as it is," they wrote.[507] They did recommend, however, trying to obtain funds to teach the class in two sections, require practice sessions for the first year students, and possibly require students to use the language lab to listen to tapes McCue had previously made.[508] On April 24, 1990, after listening to Professor Scodel present the subcommittee's report, the curriculum committee "voted to support the continued teaching of Ojibwa (including its use to meet the foreign language requirement) on one condition: that permission of instructor be made a prerequisite for enrollment for each term after the first."[509] They also agreed to and reproduced the same recommendations that the subcommittee had made.

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[505] Ibid.

[506] Ibid.

[507] Ibid.

[508] Ibid.

[509] University of Michigan College of Literature, Science and Arts, LS & A Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes, April 24, 1990, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The process for enrolling in the language classes changed but the classes remained. McCue continued to bring Oldest Elder into the classroom and offer a slice of home for many of the students. His guidance in the language and day-to-day life was instrumental in the success of American Indian students at the university. While continuing to educate the students, he also pursued additional education himself. In 1994, he completed his first year in the Native Language Teacher Certification Program at Lakehead University.[510] In the mid 1990s, the courses grew into a program at the university. In 1994, Native American Studies formed within the Program of American Culture with a single budgeted faculty member.[511] McCue continued to teach Anishinaabemowin courses, study traditional navigation techniques, and present his work at conferences on the language. Oldest Elder thrived in the classroom, in the relationships between McCue and the students, and in the larger American Indian community. The new policies on enrollment for Anishinaabemowin increased student's desire to register for the courses.

By the end of the 1990s, students wanting to take Ojibwa classes beyond the first year had to attend the first class of the semester and meet with McCue individually. McCue then created a list of students that he granted an override for which allowed them to get into the course.[512] Getting into the first term course was also somewhat restricted. Only five open elections into the course were allowed. Beyond those five, McCue would

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[510] George Sanchez to Lester P. Monts, September 13, 1994, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[511] *Newsletter* No. 102 by University of Michigan Program in American Culture (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Fall 1997), 2.

[512] Linda Eggert to Alan Wald, November 29, 2000, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

meet with the students at the first class and similarly produce a list of students to be granted overrides into the course.[513] A sentence warning students that a full sequence of Ojibwe course offerings was not guaranteed by the university remained in the descriptions of the language courses. Even in 1999, the need to keep meticulous records on students' enrollment in the language courses and the awareness that Academic Advising was monitoring the program was still fresh in people's minds.[514]

At the same time that the Ojibwe language courses struggled to survive in the academic environment, clashes between American Indian students and members of the surrounding American Indian community occurred with the university and the student organization, Michigamua. These clashes connected the pow wow, Michigamua, and the American Indian Advocates at the university together in a struggle once again over the disrespect of Oldest Elder. In 1994, Mike Dashner "received a 'lateral transfer'" from the Office of Minority Student Services to another University position and was no longer at the university by 1997.[515] His work on the university pow wow had controversial implications for the American Indian community according to Tara Browner. In the wake of his transfer, the university hired a recent graduate from the School of Engineering, Shannon Martin, first as a temporary replacement. In 1996, they made her position as Native American Representative in the Office for Minority Student Services permanent.[516] Under her direction, the dynamic of the pow wow returned to a more

[513] Linda Eggert to Adam Finkel, November 29, 2000, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[514] Linda Eggert to Dolly A Tua-Burgos, March 1, 1999, Box 1, Native American Studies Program, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[515] Browner, 45.

student and community driven event, instead of a public relations forum for the university.[517] Her time in the position was also marked by a clash in the relationship between American Indian students, American Indian community members, and the university via the student organization Michigamua.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Michigamua had brought into its fold several Black, Hispanic, and Jewish male members. These individuals were often presented as spokesmen for the organization when it was criticized on its racist activities. In the late 1970s, NASA members became more aware of the organization it's organizational records preserved in the Bentley Historical Library at the university. Patrick Russell LeBeau writes that the "Native American student (and community) response to the Michigamuas has been perennial and vocal. Each generation of NASA has challenged the university to abolish Michigamua's university status and to eliminate all reference to Native American cultures."[518] One of the challenges to gaining support against the continuation of Michigamua was acquiring proof and support considering the secrecy of the society and large number of powerful alumni, many of which held positions of power at the university.

In October 1988, an opportunity opened for NASA to challenge the organization with support from outside of the university. The Michigan Department of Civil Rights published the *Report on the Use of Nicknames, Logos and Mascots Depicting Native American People in Michigan Education Institutions*. If stereotyping continued at the

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[516] Ibid.

[517] Ibid.

[518] LeBeau, 118.

identified schools, after one year of educating the organization as to the negative impact of stereotypes, students could file a complaint that the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act was being violated. [519] In an effort to avoid a lawsuit, "the Michigamua sachem and a member of Michigamua's Old Braves Council signed an agreement with the Native American student complainant, the chair of the University of Michigan's Minority Affairs Commission, and the student discrimination policy administrator" in 1989 agreeing to drop all Native American inspired symbolism, rhetoric, and practices.[520]

Despite the signed agreement, reports, and documents indicated that the organization continued to practice some of their rituals. Between 1994 and 1997, NASA and Michigamua engaged in multiple negotiations. Michigamua presented NASA with handouts to demonstrate the changes that had occurred in the organization: changing classes from "tribes" to "prides" and leadership positions to names of alumni. Between the late spring and fall of 1997, the two organizations met three times.[521] By 1998, NASA members were given access to the Michigamua's meeting room on the seventh floor of Union, previously called the Wigwam. Several campus landmarks were removed including the fire pit plaque at the university recreation area, the tomahawk plaque, and the totem pole at the university Diag. Some "Indian inspired" drums and other items were deposited in the Bentley Historical Library or given to NASA. The whereabouts of

[519] Ibid., 121.

[520] Ibid., 123.

[521] Ibid., 124.

other items, such as the pipe, are unknown and the Michigamua Fighting Wolves (Formerly Braves) claimed no knowledge about them.[522]

In early February 2000, the case of Michigamua and its relationship with American Indian students (and larger community) drew national media attention. On February 4, members of the Students of Color Coalition had held a press conference in the Mosher-Jordon Residence Hall and then delivered a fourteen-point petition signed by more than four hundred and fifty students to fifteen university offices. The petition demanded that the university commit, in writing, to goals of supporting minorities on campus. Included in the petition was a request for the university to "'sever all affiliation with and subsidy of the secret society' because of its 'offensive and culturally destructive appropriation of Native American Culture.'"[523] This act of protest sought to protect the honor of Oldest Elder and put an end to the mockery of *him* at the university.

On February 6, 2000, a group of student members from the Students of Color Coalition occupied the tower of the Michigan Union and the three rooms of the secret campus societies, including Michigamua's "Wigwam." Reportedly, after nine hours of occupying the room, eight students hung Native American artifacts discovered in the Michigamua's room out of the window while thirty students outside of the union chanted "Down with Michigamua."[524] Inside the Michigamua room (also referred to as the Wigwam), students found pipes, a traditional cradleboard, headdresses, statues, and

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[522] Ibid.

[523] Tiffany Maggard, "Michigamua Office Taken Over by Upset Protestors," *Michigan Daily*, April 15, 2002, reprint from February 7, 2000.

[524] Ibid.

evidence of members acting out American Indian inspired activities.[525] For thirty-seven days, the Students of Color Coalition occupied the Union Tower.

On March 13, student occupiers left the tower with boxes of Native American artifacts. Over "150 students and community members crowded the stairwell and hallways of the fourth floor of the Michigan Union" that day and watched as students officially vacated the building.[526] Outside of the union, the occupiers were greeted by a "massive crowd" and drumming.[527] Kevin Jones, an SCC member, explained that for the students, the driving force of the SCC decisions to vacate was the community. "The same spirit that induced us to occupy this space was the same spirit that told us to come down from it," he said "and that was our communities. It is important that we go back to the communities where we belong so that this experience can be shared outside of the (tower) walls."[528] Ultimately, the struggle was best expressed by SCC spokesman Joe Reilly who said "it's not about the tower it's not about 37 days. It's about a lifetime."[529] The struggle with Michigamua was a struggle to protect and defend Oldest Elder.

During the occupation, Shannon Martin spent her days working on the annual pow wow and her evenings as an intermediary between SCC and the university administration. Backlash from the occupation hit other members of the American Indian community. In reaction to the occupation, "Michigamua's allies in student government blocked any more than token funding for the pow wow. Rent for the Crisler Arena,

[525] Ibid.; Browner, 45-46.

[526] Maggard and Gold, "Senior Tower Societies Protested."

[527] Ibid.

[528] Ibid.

[529] Ibid.

controlled by the university's athletic programs, suddenly jumped to $6,000 per day."[530] The pow wow was able to persevere despite the financial upsets but it return it also became a more politicized event. Tara Browner recalls that "speakers denounced Michigamua and their perceptions of the university's inaction; a protest march was held after the Friday dance session, with marchers converging on university president Lee Bollinger's home."[531] Native supporters and allies also experienced a backlash by the university for their support or perceived support of the occupation.

The fall following the occupation, the University American Indian Advocate, Shannon Martin was suspended without pay or benefits and later fired by a certified letter in January 2001.[532] University officials accused her and charged her with misdemeanor embezzlement. When the Ann Arbor police searched her apartment, they confiscated four Pendleton blankets, one of which was her grandmother's funeral blanket and another from a Midewiwin lodge ceremony.[533] Some of the charges brought against Martin were for expenses involved with the repatriation of the objects taken from Michigamua during the occupation.[534] Martin was ultimately acquitted of the charges in September 2001 and many individuals in the community feel that the entire event was related to her activities with the Michigamua struggle. Relationships between the university and American Indian leaders are often tense, strained, and tenuous depending on the positions of the

[530] Browner, 46.

[531] Ibid.

[532] Kristen Beaumont and Jacquelyn Nixon, "Fired Employee Plans Discrimination Suit," *Michigan Daily*, September 26, 2001.

[533] Browner, 144.

[534] Ibid.

American Indian individuals, whether they pose a challenge or not to the existing status quo.

In the wake of the occupation and pow wow, the continued pressure on the university resulted in some positive steps forward. The university convened a panel to examine some of the issues and concerns raised by SCC, although American Indian community members expressed disappointment at the results. The University discontinued the practice of granting special use of the tower space was discontinued for the Michigamua, Phoenix, and Vulcan societies.[535] In 2000, the university severed its formal relationship with the organization and the group relocated off campus.[536]

During the 2000s, other student organizations on campus also renegotiated their relationship with the organization. They began expelling members or withdrawing from councils when individuals were part of the organization.[537] The pressure against Michigamua continued in 2004 when a coalition of multicultural student groups formed Student Voices in Action to protest the presence of Michigamua being listed as an honorary society on transcripts.[538] That same year, students protested the financial cuts to the annual pow wow budget and failure to meet the needs of American Indian students.[539] Discussion of the organization took public form in the spring of 2005 when

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[535] Ibid., 46.

[536] Elizabeth Kassab, "The Tower Takeover: One Year Later," *Michigan Daily*, February 15, 2001.

[537] Gabe Nelson, "Michigamua Members Ousted From Groups," *Michigan Daily*, January 25, 2006.; Victoria Edwards, "Student Groups Blast Michigamua," *Michigan Daily*, April 6, 2005.

[538] Edwards, "Student Groups Blast Michigamua."

[539] Aymay Jean, "Students Protest Service Cuts at Regents Meeting," *Michigan Daily*, March 19, 2004.

NASA and Lambda Theta Phi sponsored a film and panel event named "Michigamua Exposed."[540] The university also faced a lawsuit for their lack of supervision over the organization's adherence to the 1989 agreement.[541] In 2007, Michigamua finally changed their name to the Order of Angell, after their founder and former university President James Angell. The following year they became a university sanctioned student group and publically listed their membership roster.[542]

Despite the more recent changes within the organization and the acts of solidarity by other student organizations, the struggle with Michigamua remains shadowed for American Indian people. The historically determined support by the university and the assertive leaders and alumni with connections within the university has tainted the university's relationship with the American Indian communities and Oldest Elder. While Oldest Elder gained a stronger presence in the subsequent years and Michigamua, as the original organization, was removed from campus, the relationship remains tense and conflicted. The Anishinaabemowin classes are small amount of medicine trying to heal a persistently infected relationship.

Against this backdrop, the most recent chapter of the Anishinaabemowin language program at the University of Michigan has made tremendous progress and yet struggled against similar lingering challenges of funding, unequal relationships, and unstable support from the university. The program has made huge gains in the development of Ojibwe curriculum, media incorporation, and application of the language

[540] Edwards, "Student Groups Blast Michigamua."

[541] Gabe Nelson, "Alum Slaps 'U' with Lawsuit," *Michigan Daily*, February 14, 2006.

[542] Jessica Vosgerchian, "After Seven Years, Group Recognized by 'U' Once Again," *Michigan Daily*, April 8, 2007.

in ways that benefited the larger Native community. This period was marked by history repeating itself with unstable relationships within the university, shifting power players and relationships or lack thereof between administrators, faculty, and Oldest Elder.

In the fall of 2005, Professor Philip Deloria hired Margaret Noodin "on a part-time basis to explore ways to enhance and update the curriculum" in the Ojibwe language classes.[543] Noodin came to the University of Michigan with an educational background in creative writing, linguistics and a 2001 doctorate in English from the University of Minnesota. She also brought with her personal connections to Anishinaabeg culture and language as a "second language speaker affiliated with the Grand Portage Band of Chippewa Indians and Metis community of Quebec."[544] Together, she and McCue taught the Anishinaabemowin classes for two and a half years.

In the winter (spring semester) of 2007, fluent and first language speaker Howard Kimewon started visiting McCue and Noodin's classes.[545] Kimewon recalls "I was asked to do a presentation. I went over there to do a presentation one day and that's how I came to know her (Margaret Noodin) and met her and got involved with the language."[546] Kimewon is a first language speaker from Wikwemikong and was in his 50s at the time he became involved with the program. In the fall of 2007, "McCue, Kimewon and Noori

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[543] Margaret (Noori) Noodin, "Ojibwe (Anishinaabemowin) Language Instruction at the University of Michigan, Margaret (Noori) Noodin's personal papers, copy in author's possession.

[544] Margaret (Noori) Noodin, "Ezhi-waanimazinbiiganankewag: The Way They Write Circular Images" (paper presented at the 41st Algonquian Language Conference Montreal, October 29-November 1, 2009), 2. Margaret (Noori) Noodin's personal papers, copy in author's possession.

[545] Noodin, "Ojibwe (Anishinaabemowin) Language Instruction at the University of Michigan, Ibid.

[546] Howard Kimewon, interview by author, May 24, 2013.

taught the courses as a team. *Gii maawi kinomaagewaa*. (They taught together)."[547] Together in one class, they taught approximately sixty to seventy students.[548] Howard recalls that when he started working as a visiting lecturer, they worked on language and focused on developing curriculum materials.

The following spring, Howard was hired as a Lecturer I and the three of them continued to teach as a team. McCue and Howard provided the language and their knowledge as fluent speakers. Noodin brought her training in linguistics and cultural experience to the table. At this point in time, the enrollment in the courses had become quite high and they attempted to keep a "25 to 1 ratio of students to teachers."[549] They also began developing a website to support the class along with other course materials. McCue, Kimewon, and Noodin began giving "more rigorous exams with expectations of higher level proficiency than previous classes."[550] The presence and relationships with Oldest Elder blossomed with multiple fluent speakers and the multifaceted incorporation of the language at the university and in the larger Ann Arbor community.

In the middle of the semester, on March 3, 2008, Irving "Hap" McCue-ibah walked on.[551] In emails and news articles, students, friends, and colleagues expressed their sorrow at losing him. When the announcement was sent to the Native American

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[547] Noodin, "Ojibwe (Anishinaabemowin) Language Instruction at the University of Michigan, Ibid.

[548] Kimewon, May 24, 2013.

[549] Noodin, "Ojibwe (Anishinaabemowin) Language Instruction at the University of Michigan, Ibid.

[550] Ibid.

[551] In Anishinaabeg culture, it is common to use the phrase "walked on" instead of passed away or died.

Studies and American Culture community, it read "He taught in our program for some thirty years, but he was much more than a teacher. He marked our program in many ways, some ceremonial, some by virtue of his quiet, soft, yet forceful presence."[552] McCue was well known throughout the Native American community and had spent the last thirty-five years working as an instructor at the University of Michigan.

He had graduated from the Lakehead University Language Instructor Program and had participated the Canoe Crossings Cultural and Education Exchange Program, traveling to Guam and Hawai'i.[553] In 2008, he had been invited to be an Elder in Residence by Stanford University but was unable to experience the honor.[554] Students were especially touched by McCue's presence and work at the university. Many students said, "they would not have completed their degrees at Michigan if it had not been for either being in his Ojibwe classes or talking privately with him…'Being around Hap was like coming home.'"[555] His obituary described him as a

> gifted storyteller and he could make his experiences come alive for others…His gentleness, warmth, genuineness, and caring about his students and colleagues both in the group and individual time with him touched the lives of many people…He was a man who was genuinely interest in everyone's stores and well-being. He would take the time to really listen to and speak with anyone he met.[556]

The university and the local community lost a pillar of the language program that day in March. Despite the loss, Kimewon and Noodin continued to teach the language

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[552] Margaret (Noori) Noodin, Personal Communications, Margaret (Noori) Noodin's personal papers, copy in author's possession.

[553] Ibid.

[554] Noodin, Hap McCue Obituary, Ibid.

[555] Ibid.

[556] Ibid.

classes, build the curriculum and connect with the local community. By the fall of 2008, Noodin and Kimewon had started spitting the classes into two sections: a first year class and a second year class. They also started limiting the classes to twenty-five students.[557] In the following year, Noodin and Kimewon each taught one first year course and team taught the second year class. Kimewon recalls that the football players in their classes and hockey players were using it on the field and ice. "It was kinda fun to hear them talk in the hallways," he told me.[558]

During this time, Kimewon and Noodin were constantly working on building and developing the language program at the University of Michigan. They continued to build the website materials and hosted community classes in the evening at someone's home or at the university. Despite the fact that Kimewon was a lecturer, he remembers "we used to work seven days a week and we did all that in our own spare time."[559] For a time, they also taught an Anishinaabemowin course at Eastern Michigan University. "I think that we picked up really good students at Eastern," Kimewon shared, "they were really into the language. After awhile, they were doing it on their own."[560] On community nights, people brought food and they had a large blackboard that they would use to write words that people who attended wanted to know. They translated songs and posted them on the website. During one visit with Noodin, I got to witness a pair of little girls singing the song *Head and Shoulders* with her in the language. They recorded the song and it is now

[557] Kimewon, May 24, 2013.

[558] Ibid.

[559] Ibid.

[560] Ibid.

available on their website *Noongwa e-Anishinaabemjig (People Who Speak Anishinaabemowin Today)* at http://www.umich.edu/~ojibwe/.

Together Kimewon and Noodin published reading and teaching materials in Anishinaabemowin, presented at conferences, hosted cross-cultural events, guest speakers, and traditional knowledge workshops and collaborated with Ann Arbor's famous Zingerman's Roadhouse for special traditional food events. Early in their teaching partnership with McCue, all three of them had agreed to "write everything…We all agreed to write the full standard version of as many words as possible because these letters often 'reappear' when words are combined and conjugated, or when a student meets other speakers," Noodin explained.[561] Taking "the generic proficiency models provided the American Council of Foreign Language Teachers (ACTFL)," Noodin and Kimewon developed a curriculum with measurable levels of language proficiency.[562] The different levels included not only learning the language but also acquiring the ability to communicate, understanding the culture of the language, the connections and knowledge contained within the language, the ability to compare across different languages, and gain insight into different understandings of the world.[563]

To support and continue the development of the language program, the Program in American Culture and the Department of Linguistics "received funding from the CRLT Whitaker Fund, Global Intercultural Experience for Undergraduates, LSA

[561] Noori, "Ezhi-waanimazinbiiganankewag: The Way They Write Circular Images," 2.

[562] Ibid., 3.

[563] Ibid., 5-6.

Technology and the CENTER for World Performance Studies."[564] In 2011, they hosted the 43rd Algonquian Linguistics Conference. Noodin and Kimewon encouraged and aided their students in completing significant projects in Anishinaabemowin including the creation of games, YouTube videos in the language, an Ojibwe dog-training guide, and many others. The students are very proud of their work in the language and being a part of the language community. University of Michigan students sometimes send in pictures of where they have traveled while wearing their Izhaadaa Giizhigowaande t-shirts and these are posted on the program's website as well. Each year, students from the program traveled to the Anishinaabemowin Teg conference to present their work or conduct research.[565]

In 2010, Alphonse Pitawanakwat joined the team at the university. In 2006, Pitawanakwat and Kimewon had worked together at the Nokomis Center in Okemos, Michigan. Together, they taught an eight-week class and then Pitawanakwat also taught a class set up by the Nokomis Center in a local middle school. The Nokomis Center has worked with multiple fluent and second language speakers including Noodin, Kimewon, and Pitawanakwat. Both Kimewon and Pitawanakwat come from the same reserve at Wikwemikong but they grew up in different villages. In 2008, Pitawanakwat began working towards a Lakehead University's Native Language Teacher's Certification.

Together, Kimewon, Pitawanakwat, and Noodin worked together on the Ojibwe language classes, curriculum, and community outreach. Even though Kimewon and

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[564] Noodin, "Ojibwe (Anishinaabemowin) Language Instruction at the University of Michigan," Ibid.

[565] Ibid.

Pitawanakwat had their own classes, they would attend each other's classes as well. "We worked together on the classes. We didn't have to do that but we did, just to show the students that it's a spoken language. To show them people talking together in the language," Pitawanakwat recalls.[566] They lived their relationships with Oldest Elder and brought them into the classroom so that students could also form similar relationships with *him*.

Pitawanakwat, Noodin, and Kimewon all went out of their way to help students form a relationship with the language and with Anishinaabeg culture. When talking with Alphonse, he shared that he tells his students, "Go on guys, don't be afraid to say something. Just go ahead, even if it's wrong. We're doing something here. If you need help, talk to me. I'll give you help."[567] Noodin continued to help build the curriculum in the program and worked with students on their projects, research, and helped develop materials to be put on the website. Stacie Sheldon, a friend of Noodin's and a language learner, built and maintains the website for the program. Together, they all posted translations, sources, songs, and a variety of other educational materials for those interested in learning more about the language.

Kimewon started a non-credit, volunteer-based class on birchbark. "The students came in. I wasn't getting paid for it. The students weren't paying for it. But I think they were surprised what could be done with birchbark," Kimewon explained.[568] He would take the students out to pick the birchbark and when he was questioned by an

[566] Alphonse Pitawanakwat, interview by author, May 5, 2013.

[567] Pitawanakwat, May 5, 2013.

[568] Kimewon, May 24, 2013.

administrator about the students learning the language while working with the birchbark wood, Kimewon responded: "I use the language while I'm peeling birchbark from trees. I use language while picking up the birchbark. Every time we did something, we did it in the language. It's the culture. It's how we learn."[569] Attempting to measure and quantify how much work Kimewon, Pitawanakwat and Noodin did to establish, build, and develop the language program at the University of Michigan is impossible to measure. What is certain is that they dramatically increased the presence of Oldest Elder at the university. They carved out new spaces for more relationships with language, culture, and academia. They fused a relational and linear understanding of the world in an academic setting and created a unique program and home for Oldest Elder.

Writing that all three individuals are heavily involved in language revitalization or establishing and developing the language program at the University of Michigan would fall far short from reality. Even today, if there is a language circle, conference, gathering, or group of interested people working on the language, one of these three individuals is most likely involved. They travel all across the state, to other states, and into Canada to work with other speakers, teachers, and language learners. They have relationships with the language itself by using it in daily life, teaching their children, speaking with the friends, and putting words of wisdom written in Ojibwe on their Facebook statuses. They have relationships with people in the Native community, which involve the language: language circles, language camps, official conferences, helping other scholars with the language, helping people who email or Facebook or call them for help with translations or guidance on the language. They are present at ceremonies, at community events and

[569] Ibid.

are there for their students, both Native and non-Native. Despite all the work that they did at the university and the overwhelmingly positive response from the American Indian community members, the university chose to dissolve its relationship with Oldest Elder almost entirely.

In spring 2013, both Kimewon and Pitawanakwat were notified that their contracts as lecturers would not be renewed. The university had cancelled the third level language class for the spring semester, which alerted them that something was changing in the program. In little over a month after word reached the larger native community, a job position was made available on the University of Michigan's Human Resources website. The Department of American Culture and Native American Studies Program invited applications for "a full time Lecturer III position in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe Language) to begin September 1, 2013."[570] There was no mention of having worked with Native communities or having cultural knowledge for the position. "All specialists in the Anishinaabemowin who have academic expertise in linguistics, literature, or related fields are invited to apply," it read.[571] Applicants were informed that "excellence in teaching and instructional service will be the principle criteria used to select the successful candidate" and that they should outline their "experience with the language and their skills in curricular development" in their letter of application.[572] A masters degree was also required prior to employment. The university held interviews that spring

[570] University of Michigan, "Job Summary," author's personal collection, Mankato, Minnesota.

[571] Ibid.

[572] University of Michigan Program in American Culture, "Job Openings," accessed May 10, 2013, http://www.lsa.umich.edu/ac/people/jobopenings

and the following fall semester interviews but did not hire a new lecturer. As of spring 2014, they have not filled the position.

The exact causes and steps taken in deciding to not renew the contracts of the fluent elders goes back to the foundation of the University of Michigan's long history with Indian people: relationships. The history of the Ojibwe language program is composed of many layers of relationships. One relationship has been that of the university with the larger Indian community in Michigan and specifically Ann Arbor. Within the university, there are also relationships between individual faculty members, between those not directly involved with the language program and those who are, and those not involved but who have influence and power to shape the program. In the past, five or more years, relationships on all of these levels have shifted. Interpersonal relationships have changed by some growing stronger, weakening, or evolving into different types of relationships. The administration of the program has changed with new faculty members and new ideas about dialect, teaching methods, direction, and communication styles being put forth. Speakers, learners, and those who have no desire to work with Oldest Elder all have had different understandings of the language, language revitalization, the role of the program and its instructors, and what the relationship to the university, the community, and the learners should be at the University of Michigan.

The issues with the student organization, Michigamua and with university holdings of Native American ancestors continues into the twenty-first century. They were fought with both with physical protests and university polices and paperwork. As recent as 2012, holdings of human remains and objects at the University of Michigan

have been repatriated to Michigan tribes.[573] The student organization, Michigamua, was finally forced to change the "native" elements of its organization and their special privileges and relationship with the university were dissolved in 2000. The Treaty of Fort Meigs is an issue still alive at the university and in the community. In 2002, a plaque was placed on campus commemorating the treaty.[574] The issues of the 1970s continue into the present day. Even those that may be "settled," are still alive in the memories, emotions, and relationships between Native peoples and the University of Michigan. When word of the fluent teachers' contracts not being renewed reached the Native community, it was no surprise to see online postings in reference to the failure of the university to live up to its responsibilities to the community. Some posts even referenced the Fort Meigs Treaty.

The story of the program at the University of Michigan is like a rollercoaster ride. Native Americans and their limited allies fought and struggled to make inroads and reach the top by creating a living program. As quickly as they reached this point of strength and vitality, the foundation shifted and the climb begins once again to secure Oldest Elder's place. Native American individuals and their allies had to work to create a safe place to bring Oldest Elder into the university and foster relationships with others. During the time when McCue and Rhodes worked together, they attempted to create the classes and keep the program going. Administrative allies fought with memos, meetings,

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[573] "The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan to Repatriate Ancestral Human Remains From the Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology and University of Michigan," Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways of Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan press release, October 5, 2012, on the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan's website, http://www.sagchip.org/publicrelations/2012/2012-101512-Repatriation.pdf , accessed June 23, 2013.

[574] Kimewon, Pitawanakwat, and Noodin, "The University of Michigan and Native Americans," Ibid.

and letters to fund the classes and keep a degree of equality with other languages so that students could take the courses for their foreign language requirement. When the changes and instability within the university and Linguistics Department made it impossible for Rhodes to obtain tenure, he left the university for a position in California. Kenneth Hill, an administrative ally, also left the university not long after Rhodes. According to those who knew him personally, McCue felt abandoned by those who left the university. The potential for building upon what McCue, Rhodes, and Hill started was limited for over a decade.

Since 2005, McCue, Noodin, Kimewon, and Pitawanakwat once again built up the program at the University of Michigan. They developed a curriculum, evaluation standards and a program that had students presenting their work at Anishinaabemowin conference, engaging the larger Native and non-Native community in learning Anishinaabeg culture and language and drew national attention for their efforts. By most academic standards, they had established a reputable, impressive, and successful program where students were succeeding by Anishinaabeg and western standards. People knew that if you wanted to learn Anishinaabemowin at college, one of, if not the, best place to attend was the University of Michigan. Having two fluent elders from the same home community, speaking the same dialect, paired with a linguist and second language learner, was a unique opportunity in Michigan and one that provided a solid foundation in the language. However, similar to events in the 1980s, shifts within the university have rocked the foundation of the program to the point that the university is now dismantling the program. They are most likely attempting to bring someone from Minnesota, despite the dialect difference.

During an interview in the spring of 2013, Howard Kimewon shared that he would be teaching a second year course in the fall for the university. "I can't walk away from my students right now," Kimewon explained, " because they're my students. I taught them the first year. At least I can finish the second year out and feel good about my students and about myself."[575] For him, the concern was that a new instructor, especially one with the western dialect, would mean starting the students back at square one in the language. At the 2013 university pow wow, the Native American students honored Pitawanakwat and Kimewon for their service and contributions. The changes in the language program were a common topic discussed at the gathering. At the end of the year banquet, two students also surprised the teachers with a presentation. "Two of my students," Kimewon shared, "They wrote a page each in the language and they read it at the graduation. That was unexpected. It almost made me cry."[576] The reaction and changes at the University of Michigan reverberated throughout Anishinaabeg country when word spread that the speaker's contracts were not being renewed. It awakened the ill feelings that had been starting to heal.

Today, the language program at the University of Michigan is dramatically different from what it was two or three years ago. Howard Kimewon did not return to teach at the University of Michigan in the fall of 2013. Margaret Noodin (previously Noori) left the University of Michigan and is now an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She continues her work with the language and provides educational materials and resources on the language through Ojibwe.net. Staci

[575] Kimewon, May 24, 2013.

[576] Ibid.

Sheldon continues to manage the materials on this site. Alphonse Pitawanakwat is the one elder and teacher remaining at the university. In the fall 2013 semester, he taught approximately twenty-nine second year students. He currently teaches approximately twenty-six students in the next sequential course.

The university is allowing students to finish their courses in the language but is not encouraging the enrollment of new students. It is unclear if language classes will be offered again in fall 2014. The vibrant community that existed at the University of Michigan has dimmed in the absence of multiple speakers. Pitawanakwat continues to support his students and participate in community events as much as possible. This summer he will continue working the University of Michigan's Camp KinoMaage program. Through the Center for Educational Outreach, Native American middle school students experience a weeklong residential science and culture program at the University of Michigan Biological Station. Pitawanakwat works with the students in the language and teaches them multiple ways that Oldest Elder exists in the world.

Today, Oldest Elder hangs on at the university through the teachers, students, cultural events and in the Ojibwe language courses still being offered. *His* presence continues regardless of the official status of university courses as long as individuals maintain a relationship with *him*. Even if one student whispers words of Anishinaabemowin to himself while walking across campus, Oldest Elder is invoked and present. *He* always returns when a relationship is formed, supported, and maintained. Whether the university as an institution is committed to keeping their relationship with Oldest Elder remains to be seen.

CHAPTER 6

GWIIAWAABAMAAWAAN: CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Oldest Elder lives in the language, community, and relationships between the people and their culture. In Mid-Michigan, *she* lives in the revitalization efforts of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and the Central Michigan University students, faculty and staff also working with the Anishinaabemowin. Like Oldest Elder's experience at the University of Michigan, *her* presence at Central Michigan University has not always been welcomed and for many years *she* survived mockery and insults in the form of a mascot and nickname. Over the years, advocates and allies struggled for equality, respect, recognition, and linguistic space on behalf of Oldest Elder.

While gains have been made, *her* relatives continue to champion *her* presence at the university today. At the heart of Oldest Elder's presence at Central Michigan University are the relationships between the university, the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, and the university's use of an "Indian" mascot and nickname. These relationships set the background and context of the struggle that language activists and allies engage in at the university. The relationships are often split, selectively maintained, negotiated, and strained. *Her* relationship with the university and general student population today is still troubled by the continued presence of the "Chippewa" nickname. However, those individuals in a relationship with Oldest Elder continue to work at creating safe spaces for *her* presence and increasing the number of relationships *she* has with others.

Approximately one hour north of Michigan's capitol city is the town of Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. Central Michigan University and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe are located there. The American Indian community has been present in the area

long before the university or the town of Mt. Pleasant existed. The Treaty of Detroit established the Isabella Reservation in 1855.[577] The Anishinaabeg community selected six townships of land in Isabella County. However, due to an onslaught by lumbermen, railroad builders, politicians and squatters, the Treaty of Saginaw negotiated the reservation boundaries again in 1864.[578] Today, the border of the reservation runs along the northeast portion of Central Michigan University's campus. In today's conversations about the nickname or tribe, it is common to hear individuals and university officials reference a "special relationship" existing between the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and the university.

The university is not the only educational institution to have had a "special" relationship with the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. Missionary and government taught schools were a presence in the tribal community for decades. In 1893, the Mt. Pleasant Indian School opened in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. During its years of operation from 1893 until 1933, hundreds of Anishinaabeg children were enrolled at the school.[579] The experiences and memories of the Mt. Pleasant Boarding School and other Indian boarding schools across the country are often a combination of positive and negative feelings. The acculturation process was often frightening and difficult. Students learned to adjust to the discipline, routine, and rigors of the military styled school life or

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[577] Charles Joseph Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1904-1979), 733-735. accessed December 15, 2011, http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/chi0733.htm.

[578] Charles Joseph Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1904-1979), 868-871. accessed December 15, 2011, http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/chi0868.htm.

[579] Charmaine M. Benz and R. Todd Williamson, Eds. *Diba Jimooyung: Telling Our Story* (Mt. Pleasant: Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan and Ziibiwing Cultural Society, 2005).

struggled to cope. Children were sometimes prohibited to see their family members or return home for years at a time.

The underlying goal of boarding schools was to educate "Indianness" out of the children by eliminating their Native language, religions, and cultural practices. By replacing their culture with white American practices and ideologies, it was thought that they would assimilate into white society. Severing the children's ties with Oldest Elder had a devastating impact on Oldest Elder's ability to remain active in Anishinaabeg communities. Community members and individuals involved with this research have shared stories of their grandparents and great-grandparents attending the Mt. Pleasant Indian school and not being allowed to return home, even for their parent or grandparent's funerals. Other accounts from former students include the fact that they were able to obtain an education through the school, which enabled them to better negotiate with outsiders on behalf of their community.

For some students, the boarding schools were an opportunity for advancement in education and trade skills and possibly better access to food and housing. Boarding schools were also opportunities to get away from the ridicule and discrimination they faced from white students in public schools. The impact of the Mt. Pleasant Indian School and others on indigenous languages was cataclysmic. The link between educational institutions as sites of linguistic colonialism is well established in the narratives of indigenous language revitalization. The boarding school experience is remembered and marked by mixed emotions; degrees of trauma and the scars it left on the relationship between Anishinaabeg peoples and Oldest Elder. American Indian people continue to address the negativity of boarding schools today.

On April 25, 2011, the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan "officially accepted a deed for the sum of $1.00 from the State of Michigan for 8 acres of land that includes 6 historic buildings of the former Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School and the Mission Creek Cemetery."[580] On June 6, 2011, the tribe collaborated with Central Michigan University, the local newspaper, *The Morning Sun*, and the Isabella County Transportation Commission to hold a day of "Honoring, Healing & remembering" at the boarding school properties. [581] This annual event occurs every year on the anniversary of the boarding school ceasing operations on June 6, 1934. Former students, their descendants, and members from the surrounding community are invited to attend the event where participants acknowledge and remember those children who have walked on.[582] Attendees listen to guest speakers and participate or observe the healing of the Jingle dress dance at the school grounds.[583] Today's language revitalization efforts and the history of Oldest Elder at CMU are situated in this narrative and relationships between educational institutions and Anishinaabemowin.

The city of Mount Pleasant has a total population of 26, 016 people according to the 2010 US Census report.[584] Of that population, 87.6 percent identified as white and

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[580] Tribal Resolution 11-088 Proclamation, June 1, 2011, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, accessed June 15, 2013, http://www.sagchip.org/council/events/2011/MIIBSProclamation.pdf.

[581] Ibid.

[582] "Walked on" is a phrase commonly used by Anishinaabeg people to convey that someone has passed away.

[583] Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, '"Honoring, Healing and Remembering' Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School," Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan's Public Relations Department, accessed June 13, 2013, http://www.sagchip.org/miibs/HHR2013.pdf

[584] *U.S. Census, 2010: Michigan, Mt. Pleasant City*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010. Accessed July 15, 2013, http://www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=26:2656020; *U.S. Census,* 2008-2012 American Community Survey: Mt. Pleasant City, Michigan, Washington:

only part of one racial category. Two percent identified as members of one race, Native American.[585] Despite the neighboring reservation, the community remains strongly white. For many college students attending Central Michigan University, there is great deal of confusion surrounding the relationships between the university, the City of Mt. Pleasant, and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. They might see the markers indicating the historic borders of the reservation but have little awareness of when they have actually crossed onto the reservation. The sites of the casino, tribal buildings, and the Ziibiwing Center are usually the largest indicators to the students that they are physically in the community. As students of Central Michigan University, however, they automatically enter into a relationship with the tribe because of the university's nickname: "Chippewas." Despite this immediate linguistic connection, for both students and community members, the relationship if often misunderstood, vague, unclear, and confusing. To understand the murkiness of these connections today, one must consider the history of these relationships in the past and how they have evolved over time. Oldest Elder has participated in these struggles, waiting to be recognized, respected, and invited to join the community at Central Michigan University.

The Anishinaabemowin efforts at Central Michigan University are often overshadowed by the nickname controversy. The university frames conversations about American Indian people and their relationship with American Indian people through the

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Government Printing Office, 2010, accessed July 15, 2013, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

[585] *U.S. Census, 2010: Michigan, Mt. Pleasant City*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010. Accessed July 15, 2013, http://www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=26:2656020.; *U.S. Census*, 2008-2012 American Community Survey: Mt. Pleasant City, Michigan, Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010, Accessed July 15, 2013, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

"special relationship" with the tribe. This "special relationship" is built upon the continuation of the nickname instead of a genuine respect for Oldest Elder and Anishinaabeg people. American Indians within the university and their non-Native allies struggle to forge and negotiate positive relationships that promote understanding and exchange. They work to expand the offerings on Native American subjects and foster cross-cultural understanding. It is often a struggle against the current but people continue to try and carve out linguistic space for Oldest Elder. In the early years of the university, student teachers at the school were involved with the Mt. Pleasant Industrial School and had a relationship with American Indian peoples through that interaction. However, the formal beginning of Central Michigan University's relationship with Anishinaabe people, culture, and language began with a change of the university mascot in the 1940s. The relationship was not a positive one for Oldest Elder and it was a relationship built around an imagined idea of "being Indian" instead of a culturally situated and respectful understanding of Anishinaabeg culture.

In 1942, Central Michigan University replaced their bearcat mascot with the "Chippewas." The use of "Chippewas" and references to Indian mascots were present in university culture prior to the 1940s however. At least one instance of an Indian mascot is present in the 1924 university newspaper when a student tried to rally support for a November 22, 1924 football game against Alma College. The author called for "anyone in this noble institution" who considered themselves "of the specie of the genius homo, if there is anyone who considers going one step further and will say he is a he-homo, let

him show it…"[586] The author called for people to come show their support at the game and hoped the game would be won by those carrying "that old pig skin but not without the presence of our Indian mascot, Flinging Bull, in the stands. (Who is it? It may be you.)"[587] It is unclear whether students had adopted an unofficial Indian mascot or not at this point.

A few years after the university officially adopted the "Chippewas" name, a call went out for a new physical mascot or symbol to match the nickname and represent the athletic teams. "Got an Indian in Your Attic? —Call Finch!," was printed in a *Central Michigan Life* article on July 31, 1946.[588] The athletic department put out a "frantic call" saying "Wanted: One wooden Indian!"[589] They had been searching for a mascot or symbol since the nickname was changed but were now pressed to find one for the approaching 20th university homecoming celebration. "The need for the 'Big Chief' has become vital," they explained.[590] Ron Finch, football coach and head of the physical education department said "If anyone can tell us where an Indian can be secured, the information will be deeply appreciated.'"[591] The search, as far as available documents indicate, was unsuccessful.

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[586] "Big Plans Are Being Made for Homecoming: Alma Game Looms Up in The Near Future—Unprecedented Crowd Expected," (author unknown) *Central Michigan Life*, Nov 12, 1924.

[587] Ibid.

[588] "Got an Indian in Your Attic?—Call Finch!" (author unknown) *Central Michigan Life*, July 31, 1946.

[589] Ibid.

[590] Ibid.

[591] Ibid.

The arguments during this time for why the university adopted the mascot professed that "It held more meaning in the territory where the college is located. The Chippewas once occupied most of the land in central and northern portions of the Lower Peninsula. A Chippewa reservation is located near Mt. Pleasant, and the Chippewa River flows through the city only a few blocks from campus."[592] American Indians and allies would face these same arguments in later years when they challenged the use of the nickname and mascot. The students and Athletic Departments' continued searching for their "wooden Indian," but would not acquire one until the mid 1950s.

In October 1953, the "wooden Indian" mascot became a matter of interest for the student senate. The school newspaper covered the developments of the wooden Indian mission and asked students "How would you like to meet a ten foot Indian in Warriner Hall or somewhere on the campus? Not a real Indian, but a hand-carved, wooden Chippewa to be used as a mascot, symbol, and perhaps a tradition for Central."[593] Together with funding from the Associated Women Students, Men's Union, and Student Senate, they hired "an old Indian wood carver from St. Ignace, Mich (sic)" to carve the statue for $250 dollars.[594] Alpha Phi Omega offered to build a glass-encased cabinet to house the statue and help finance the project.[595]

Eventually, they obtained their "wooden indian." The 1954 yearbook reported on the development by writing "Central Michigan bought a cross-eyed Indian statue for a

[592] Ibid.

[593] Ruth Fliegel, "Student Senate Meeting," *Central Michigan Life*, October 9, 1953.

[594] Ibid.

[595] Ibid.

mascot."[596] The students' discussions surrounding the desired statue indicated the degree to which they lacked any form of a relationship with actual American Indian people or Oldest Elder. They discussed American Indian people as things and objects with little awareness of lived Indian experiences or their continued existence. Even the discussion of not having a "real Indian" illuminates the underlying thought that "real Indians" would be out of place at the university. Students were uncomfortable with "real Indians" but quite familiar with their image in sports and university memorabilia such as the yearbook.

The Chippewa was published between 1919 and 2002, except for 1971 and 1994. The rhetoric of the nickname is prevalent in the yearbook. In the 1946 volume, a page entitled "Heap Big Chiefs" is partnered next to a cartoon of a professor and female student both adorned with single feathers on their heads. The caption below the title reads

> The Redman is called the Vanishing American, but not our Chippewas…every year the tribe increases…the braves and maidens may leave the reservation…but the chiefs and the medicine men still teach the Chippewa legends to the new papooses.[597]

As early as 1948, the yearbooks document the campus practice of the calling the shared dinning area in the union "the reservation."[598] They contain references to students making trips to "the reservation" dining and socializing area, and how patronizing the University Center was a highlight of student life. Ironically, in the 1962 issue of the

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[596] Central Michigan University, *The Chippewa* (Mt. Pleasant: Central Michigan University, 1954), 121.

[597] Central Michigan University, *The Chippewa* (Mt. Pleasant: Central Michigan University, 1946), 14-15.

[598] Central Michigan University, *The Chippewa* (Mt. Pleasant: Central Michigan University, 1948), 130.

yearbook, it read, "The Reservation is the favorite campus grill and gathering place. Here students solve world problems, philosophize, catch up on the latest rumor, glance at an assignment before class, and 'deal."'[599] Realistically, given the lack of awareness about Indians, students were not considering world problems of Indigenous peoples or philosophizing on the damaging efforts of Indian mascots, colonization or efforts to destroy Oldest Elder in the union. The implications and consequences of referring to a dinning commons, as the reservation, probably never crossed their minds. *The Chippewa* yearbooks also included varying degrees of "Indian" imagery such as spears and feathers in their publications. In the case of the 1954 yearbook, the cover is adorned with a drawing of an "Indian" man with braided hair and a single feather. In the 1940s and 1950s, Oldest Elder was not present at the University. *She* was ignored at best and mocked and degraded at worst.

In addition to the wooden statue, students also had a personified mascot who wore a costume. In a photograph of Jim Strohmer's days as the Chippewa mascot in the 1950s, he wore a headdress, chest panel and breach clout over leggings and a shirt. In front of a bonfire, Strohmer posed with eight women dressed as "Indian maidens" kneeling in a row on either side of him. The women are on their knees with their arms folded on each other in front of their chests in a "tigerlilly" stance. They all wore a headband with a single feather upon their heads, beaded necklaces around their necks, and fringed costume dresses cinched with a belt.[600] Despite the many supporters and devotees of the mascot,

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[599] Central Michigan University, *The Chippewa* (Mt. Pleasant: Central Michigan University, 1962), 7.

[600] Kimberly Kozian, "Chippewas Play Without Indian Mascot at Games," *Central Michigan Life*, October 16, 1987.

others were not impressed. While American Indian students were almost non-existent at the university, they were certainly aware of the university's actions and treatment of Oldest Elder.

Particular cities or communities do not bind the Anishinaabeg community. Anishinaabeg country spans across the Great Lakes and people are aware of happenings across different communities. They are all connected through kinship, language, and culture, and personified in Oldest Elder. These connections span the centuries. In the 1970s, individuals began vocalizing their opposition to the mascot and nickname. Opposition came from local individuals but also neighboring people who were affected by the issue.

On January 18, 1971, *Central Michigan Life* published a letter to the editor from an East Lansing (presumably Michigan State) graduate student named Beth Shapiro in a section titled "As Others See It."[601] Having attended a MSU vs. CMU basketball game in December, Shapiro witnessed the CMU human mascot's performance. She wrote that despite the arguments that a Chippewa mascot was appropriate, "this is just another example of blatant racism."[602] She compared the use of the nickname to CMU being the "niggers" and performing in blackface.[603] Shapiro described the scene at the basketball game in her letter: "The mascot was a white male supposedly dressed up as a Chippewa, complete with a full headdress…To make matters worse, the mascot got out onto the court and made a complete mockery out of Chippewa tradition by jokingly prancing

[601] Beth Shapiro, Letter to Editor, *Central Michigan Life*, January 18, 1971.

[602] Ibid.

[603] Ibid.

around to a "tom-tom" drum."[604] The issue and problems with the nickname, she argued, extended beyond the mascot's performance to the relationship between the university and the local Indigenous community:

> CMU has contributed very little to bettering the conditions of the Chippewas that live so nearby. The Isabella Reservation is almost completely ignored by the CMU community, except for the nickname, mascot and name of the grill in the student union – The Reservation…Only two Indian students attend CMU today. The racism is so blatant, and yet ignored by so many.[605]

A little less than a month later, *Central Michigan Life* published a response from MSU graduate student Jim Hand originally printed in the MSU's *State News*. He sarcastically attacked Shapiro's letter by writing "One of our sisters-for-equality-in-America" had opened his eyes and "thank goodness for graduate students, who have the time to ferret out and point out the inequalities of our society."[606] He mockingly suggested that the Purdue Boiler-Makers and Nebraska Corn-Huskers should also be changed because of their "crime against humanity."[607] Supporters' use of extreme examples, disrespectful humor and mocking the mascot issue continued to present itself in various editorials, letters to the editors, and hostile responses to criticisms of the mascot, logos, and nicknames only increased over the years. The vehemence of their words increased as the challenges to the nickname grew. During the 1970s, the presence of Indigenous issues and students captured national attention with the American Indian Movement. As a result, there was a silent increase in awareness of American Indian

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[604] Ibid.

[605] Ibid.

[606] Jim Hand, Letter to Editor "Indian Question," *Central Michigan Life*, February 1, 1971.

[607] Ibid.

peoples and issues on Central Michigan University's campus. Small spaces for Oldest Elder were beginning to crack open.

Student organizations such as the Real Indians at CMU and the American Indian Movement sponsored meetings of interest for students and participated in campus events. In October 1973, the University Program Board brought Anishinaabe AIM leader Dennis Banks to campus as a guest speaker. Addressing an audience of 1,000 students in Warriner Auditorium, Banks spoke about the American Indian Movement and Wounded Knee.[608] Earlier that year, the Program Board sponsored a showing of the movie, *Billy Jack*, on campus. In the film, the part Navajo hero, Billy Jack, serves justice with the use of martial arts. The development of courses with Native American subjects also began in the 1970s at CMU and across the nation at several universities and colleges. Slowly, with each additional American Indian student attending the university and an increased awareness of American Indian issues, Oldest Elder's presence increased.

In 1973, the English department at CMU offered a mini-session course on American Indian Literature. *Central Michigan Life* covered the new opportunity and interviewed Professor Richard Dr. Selter who was teaching the class. It was an attempt, he explained, to

> present the contemporary situation of Indians through studying realistic fiction of the Native American…a particular effort will be made to understand the American Indian as an alienated minority in his internal reality as he confronts or withdrawals from the majority of society.[609]

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[608] Pat Mroczek, "Bank Speaks to a Crowd of 1,000: AIM's Objective Calls for Abolishing Indian Affairs," *Central Michigan Life*, October 22, 1973.

[609] "Indian Lit Course Offers Poetry, Folktale, Legend," (author unknown) *Central Michigan Life*, March 23, 1973.

At the time of Professor Selter's course, the discourse around Native American peoples was still focused on the dichotomy between western society and Native society and culture.

The 1970s also witnessed the last performances of a human "Chippewa" mascot for Central Michigan University. The last student to perform as the "Chippewa" mascot was Chris Kjolhede who graduated in 1971.[610] Chris was the son of Ted Kjolhede who worked as a basketball coach from 1956-1971 and as the Athletic Director from 1972-1984.[611] Chris's father maintained that "The students wanted a mascot they envisioned was fierce and brave…the Chippewa Indian, native to this area, fit the bill."[612] His son, he claimed, "went out to the reservation and got instructions on how to do the dances…He had no complaints from the native Americas" but he was met "with opposition from civil rights activists and Chris Kjolhede decided his Indian act wasn't worth the trouble."[613] In 1987, both former Athletic Director Kjolhede and active Director Walt Schneider made the argument that "the native Americans are proud people" and they did not appreciate being impersonated and found it degrading to them."[614]

While the phrase "proud people" is a common argument used to either support why Indian mascots should be or to rationalize why American Indians criticize

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[610] Kozian, "Chippewas Play Without Indian Mascot at Games."

[611] Ibid.

[612] Jeff Mondak, Letter to Editor "Chippewa: University Mascot," *Central Michigan Life*, August 25, 1986.

[613] Ibid.

[614] Kozian, "Chippewas Play Without Indian Mascot at Games."

nicknames and mascots, the retirement of a human mascot shifted the relationship with Oldest Elder. The movement away from a human mascot was a step in the right direction but it did not change the relationship enough. Other forms of the mascot continued to challenge the possibility of Oldest Elder being respected and recognized on campus. The university still supported the mascot and while small positive steps happened, the overall atmosphere was still unwelcoming to American Indian people. CMU fans were determined to keep their mascot alive, regardless of its treatment of Oldest Elder.

In 1980, the "old wooden Indian" resurfaced. After it was purchased in the 1950s, the statue was displayed outside of Finch Fieldhouse and later moved inside the building and placed on a platform. Reflecting on the heyday of its popularity, Superintendent of the Grounds, George Stansberry, recalled "It was a hot item in its day. Ferris, Northern and other CMU rivals used to steal it and then we'd get it back."[615] Eldon Love, a CMU custodian and supervisor for close to thirty years remembered "Eastern Michigan University used to do all kinds of things to it, especially for Homecoming games."[616] CMU students also abused the statue. While it was housed in Finch Fieldhouse, students used the statue as an archery target. Those present during that time remember it being a "touchy situation."[617] By 1973, the statue was taken down and stored in the basement of Grawn Hall. By 1980, the statue was largely forgotten until it was rediscovered. The statue became a topic of interest again, particularly with university students.

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[615] Phyllis C. Jennings, "Chippewa Mascot to Meet its End," *Central Michigan Life*, October 31, 1980.

[616] Ibid.

[617] Ibid.

After learning of the statue and its location, a group of students stole it from Grawn Hall. Mark Uhig, a sophomore involved in the heist spent about three days "sprucing up" the statue with new coats of varnish and paint.[618] They displayed him in Merrill Hall where Uhig was a council member. Shortly thereafter, a group known as the Broadmoar Four stole the statue again and took him to a football game. In defense of the student's actions, a fellow student wrote a letter of support to the editor of *Central Michigan Life* and argued that the students "were sparking student interest and spirit by reviving the old relic."[619] They claimed that people at the game "were glad to see that old tradition starting again."[620] This student and others made a call for the Indian statue to be placed in the University Center for everyone to "enjoy."[621] Instead, the statue was removed and placed in the custodian's room in Merrill Hall.

In 1981, the statue moved to the Student Foundation. They displayed it in the office for a time but then moved it to storage in the barn behind the Rose building. In 1985, The Office of Student Life brought the statue back into public light by using it on their float for that year's homecoming parade along with a replica of the Bearcat mascot. Hogan, a Student Foundation recruiter interviewed for a *Central Michigan Life* article about the float, said they hoped to "preserve him and maybe display him in the

[618] "Student Handcarves Indian," (author unknown) *Central Michigan Life*, May 1, 1981.

[619] Barb Daniels, Letter to Editor "Mascot," *Central Michigan Life*, November 21, 1980.

[620] Ibid.

[621] Ibid.

Reservation" after the parade.[622] What happened to the wooden statue after the float remains unclear in the historical record.[623]

However, by the mid-late 1980s the discussion surrounding the nickname, mascot and symbolism became a frequent issue of contention on campus. At the same time, the university began offering Anishinaabemowin language courses and began incorporating Native issues and course offerings in the university. Allies and American Indian activists campaigned for increased awareness of Indian concerns. Calls for the incorporation of Oldest Elder in larger American society and educational institutions began the conversation and process of carving out space for *her*.

Between 1988 and 1992, there numerous developments and activity on the university level concerning the nickname and mascot issue. This was a time period of heated discussions, potential for change, and renegotiation of relationships. These negotiations formed the basis for the "special relationship" between the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and the university that people reference today. At the same time, the relationship between students, community members, and allies within the university largely remained strained, limited, and complicated. Champions of Oldest Elder sought to end the mockery and disrespect towards *her* and to create a safe space to bring *her* into the educational community. Allies outside of the local community provided the catalyst for these conversations.

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[622] "Wood-carved Indian to Appear on Student Foundation Float," (author unknown) *Central Michigan Life*, October 25, 1985.

[623] During my early years at Central Michigan University between 2003 and 2006, an off-campus business that produced CMU sportswear displayed a wooden "Indian" statue. Perhaps, it was the very same statue.

In 1988, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission produced a report on the use of Indian logos, mascots, and nicknames by fifty-nine high schools and three colleges in Michigan. They recommended that schools discontinue their use of Native American imagery and establish committees to discuss the report. Before the report was released, the university community was already discussing the possible findings and ramifications for the nickname at Central Michigan University. In an interview on the upcoming report, the Secretary to the Board of Trustees claimed the university's office of media relations conducted a study on the mascot fifteen years earlier and as a result, the logo and image was altered. "We made it historically accurate and dignified—I think we've been very sensitive with the use of it," he stated.[624] "I personally wish we'd never been saddled with that name," he confessed.[625] "To some extent you can look at it as honoring the Chippewa Indians but its open to so much mischief and misuse and insensitivity," he concluded.[626] The university had suspended the use of human mascots by this time but still used a caricature "Indian head" image and a spear and feather with the nickname. In the fall of 1988, several university groups and people sent petitions to the university President Edward B. Jakubauskas to change the nickname and logos.

The Multicultural Programming Center and Multicultural Advisory Council were both vocal supporters of changing the nickname.[627] The Student Government

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[624] Margaret Wolfgang, "Name Change? Chippewa Chief Says CMU's Use of Indian as a Mascot is Not Offensive," *Central Michigan Life*, October 12, 1988.

[625] Ibid.

[626] Ibid.

[627] "SGA to Discuss Mascot at Meeting," (author unknown) *Central Michigan Life*, October 17, 1988.

Association became active in the discussion and considered their roll in examining the mascot issue. A particularly strong ally for changing the nickname was the Religion Department. They unanimously adopted a resolution to stop using the "Chippewa" as a mascot.[628] In September, a President's Advisory Group on Issues of Multicultural Diversity was formed and included "three officials— Interim Provost Nancy Belck, Affirmative Action Officer Marshall Rose and James Hill, Vice President for Student Affairs."[629] In 1988, the President's Advisory Group charged a Multicultural Diversity Task Force "Evaluate the programs and services that currently exist to promote multicultural diversity on campus" and make recommendations to the president on how existing and new resources could "promote more effectively multicultural diversity."[630]

In the task force's December report to the president, they submitted a list of 18 "critical" recommendations.[631] Many of the recommendations focused on student recruitment, scholarships, and increasing multicultural content in curriculum and courses. One of their critical recommendations was to "Replace CMU's existing mascot/logo/symbol with one more appropriate to an institution committed to multicultural diversity."[632] In their secondary list of recommendations, they emphasized the need to "have direct, on-going contact with local Chippewa Tribal Council. Attend

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[628] Karen Britton, "SGA to Investigate Changing CMU's Mascot," *Central Michigan Life*, October 19, 1988.

[629] Ibid.

[630] CMU Multicultural Diversity Task Force, Report to the President, December 16, 1988, Diversity Folder 1, CMU Vertical File, Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

[631] Ibid.

[632] Ibid.

their meetings to develop a relationship."[633] They stressed the importance of Native representation and considerations along with other minority groups through university committees and administrative offices. The relationship and environment for diversity issues and topics was in need of improvement according to the committee. Recruitment and admission of a culturally diverse student body "will not take place until the atmosphere on campus is perceived to be supportive and encouraging of diversity," they argued.[634]

Another area in need of improvement was student media. The task force proposed that all members of student media should be required to annually attend "sensitivity training on diversity issues," *Central Michigan Life* should have a diversity column, and sponsored programs should be advertised through multiple avenues.[635] These recommendations and suggestions added to the growing conversation about changing the atmosphere on campus, changing the nickname, and increasing diversity. Their report was one example of the many documents and conversations that addressed the same issues and made the same suggestions. The individuals involved in these committees recognized that the problem was not a single issue but rather connected into the general lack of positive relationships between the university and diverse populations. A month before the task force submitted its recommendations to the university president; a new committee was formed to specifically address the nickname, mascot, and logo controversy.

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[633] Ibid.

[634] Ibid.

[635] Ibid.

The Central Michigan University Presidential Advisory Committee To Examine The Use of the "Chippewas" as the University Symbol was charged to "examine the use of the "Chippewas" as the University symbol, to report back recommendations on the continuance, discontinuance, or modification in the use of the "Chippewas" as the university symbol."[636] The committee consisted of thirteen members. Arnold Sowmick, a representative for the Chief of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, was the only clearly identified representative of the local American Indian community. Two alumni members, two Student Government Association representatives, and four faculty members elected by the academic senate and administrators or directors of the university programs formed the remainder of the committee. Delbert Ringquist, Chairperson of the Academic Senate, served as the chair. Beginning with their first meeting on November 11, 1988, they met a total of eight times and were able to reach a unanimous agreement on fifteen recommendations.

The committee suggested a number of measures to educate students, faculty, and staff on Native American (particularly Chippewa) cultures through programming, publications, and required sensitivity trainings. One recommendation specifically sought to reach incoming students. "During freshman orientation, or at a similar time," they wrote, "a one-hour program should be presented familiarizing students with the cultures and traditions of Native Americans. Preferably, this sensitivity session would be

[636] Central Michigan University Presidential Advisory Committee To Examine the Use of the "Chippewas" as the University Symbol, "Report to President Edward B. Jakubauskas, March 1, 1989, Diversity Folder 1, CMU Vertical File, Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

presented by Native Americans."[637] The committee also made a series of recommendations regarding the logo and mascot. They recommended that "No Native American mascots should be used under any circumstances" and "the Native American profile presently used by the university should be abandoned" along with the removal of the spear and eagle feather in the block "C" symbol and inappropriate use of music with Native American rhythms. [638]

Despite the activism and increased cultural awareness in American society, the facility in the University Center was still named the "Reservation" in 1989 and the committee recommended that it should be abandoned as well.[639] They argued, "there should be a reasonable amount of time allowed (but it should be as soon as possible) to phase out the Native American logos and symbols."[640] Their final recommendation was to establish a committee no later than April 30, 1989 to "monitor the implementation of these recommendations and report on an annual basis to the President" and "make additional recommendations on the Native American issues in general and on the relationship between the university and the Saginaw-Chippewa and other Native American groups in the state."[641] One concern presented directly to the committee by an American Indian individual was the possibility of backlash against students and community members for any changes. The committee recommended that the public be

[637] Ibid.

[638] Ibid.

[639] Ibid.

[640] Ibid.

[641] Ibid.

informed that Native Americans were not to blame for the initiatives.[642] While the committee was able to reach a unanimous agreement on these recommendations, they were unable to reach an agreement on whether to continue or discontinue the use of the name "Chippewa" as the university symbol. They could recognize and agree that language was powerful and the university needed to educate their students and monitor how American Indian people were treated but could not agree that the nickname was also in need of removal.

The committee submitted two options for addressing the "Chippewa" name. The first option was to discontinue the use of the symbols and nickname. Six committee members supported this option including the Directors of the Multicultural Center and Affirmative Action, the Representative for the Provost and VP for Student Affairs and the Chair Elect of the Academic Senate. These committee members argued "the same logic that leads the committee to conclude that CMU must eliminate the aforementioned visual representations is the same logic that requires us to stop using the "Chippewa" name."[643] They argued that the "continued use of the name "Chippewa" would promote negative stereotypes about American Indians" and would "be harmful to the self-esteem and image of our Native American students and will subvert our current diversity efforts."[644] These individuals recognized Oldest Elder and understood the relational nature of the situation. The nickname, logo, and mascot issue was not an isolated problem. They recognized its ramifications and larger meaning to Anishinaabe people.

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[642] Ibid.

[643] Ibid.

[644] Ibid.

To support their argument, they pointed out the fact that students, like the rest of society, had been exposed to negative representations of American Indians and the continued association of the name with athletics would perpetuate these representations. They recognized that Oldest Elder could not be respected as long as the nickname remained in place. These issues were holistic and interrelated. Total control and policing of how the name is interpreted and used is also an impossible task, they argued. Central Michigan University, they claimed,

> should initiate positive programs with regard to American Indians in general and the Saginaw Chippewas in particular because these programs are educationally sound and because of CMU's proximity to the Saginaw Chippewa reservation. There is no need for CMU to continue to employ the "Chippewa" name in order to be able to implement such positive programs…To argue that CMU should retain the name in order to implement and sustain these programs is to hold Native American students at CMU hostage. It is a kind of blackmail.[645]

When Native students spoke to the committee, the majority "told the committee unequivocally that they want to see the university stop its appropriation of the "Chippewa" name."[646] The committee may not have identified Oldest Elder in their arguments but when they wrote that Native American students were held hostage by the nickname, they were inadvertently discussing Oldest Elder as well since *she* lives in the people. The perpetuation of the nickname in order to keep American Indian programming is taking the language hostage.

In addition to these arguments, this fraction of the committee also pointed to the fact that there might be repercussions from the Michigan Civil Rights Commission if the nickname remained. CMU's position as an educational leader, they argued, would be

[645] Ibid.

[646] Ibid.

undermined by the continued use of the name. One complication that this faction had to address in their argument was the recent indirect but also formal approval of the nickname by the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe.

On November 7, 1988, the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribal Council voted to not recommend that CMU change its nickname. It was not an official endorsement of the nickname but rather a statement that they were not requesting it be discontinued. Three members were out of town and absent for the vote. The remaining council members voted 6-2 to remain unopposed to the nickname. The resolution stated "The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan has no objections to the continued use of the nickname "Chippewas" by Central Michigan University."[647] They did, however, request that the university "review the use of mascots, logos or signs, which when associated with the name "Chippewa" would promote a stereotypical, derogator or racist view of Native Americans, with the need to end such usage."[648] The resolution concluded that the tribe "will cooperate with the University in promoting proper use of the name "Chippewa…"[649] The two members who voted to oppose the nickname expressed that it was not just CMU community members who misuse the nickname and that "the nickname makes it difficult for Native Americans to improve self-esteem and self-image. It's a very sensitive issue."[650] The fraction of the university committee opposed to the

[647] Tribal Resolution 89-007 Proclamation, November 7, 1988, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, author's personal collection, Mankato, Minnesota.

[648] Ibid.

[649] Ibid.

[650] Bryan G. Laviolette, "Tribal Council Not Opposed to Logo: Says No Problems with Use of 'Chippewa,'" *Central Michigan Life*, November 9, 1988.

nickname acknowledged that some members of the local community did not object to the nickname but stressed the fact that it was offensive to others in the region and was connected to the discourse about American Indians in general. For the pro-nickname faction of the committee, the tribe's decision worked in their favor.

The committee members in support of continuing the use of the "Chippewas" as the university symbol consisted of thirteen members, including the representative of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, Arnold Sowmick. They argued that "without continued use of the "Chippewa" name…we are concerned that the University commitment to these programs would lag as time passes."[651] University support, they argued, would only continue because of the "obligations it has through the use of the "Chippewa" nickname."[652] In their eyes, Oldest Elder's presence at the university would only be possible if the university was allowed to continue using *her* name in vain and disrespecting *her* and *her* people. "The greatest good," they argued would be served for the "greatest number of people" by keeping the nickname.[653] Their second argument concerned the fact that people were attached to the nickname and changing it would result in anger and consternation. Thirdly, they argued that there might be resentment towards the Saginaw Chippewa tribal members if the name was dropped. Not only was Oldest Elder a captive but also changing the nickname meant a threat against the people.

They maintained the ultimate problem was the ignorance of Native American culture and not malicious intent. They argued that before the nickname should be

[651] Central Michigan University Presidential Advisory Committee To Examine the Use of the "Chippewas" as the University Symbol, "Report to President Edward B. Jakubauskas, March 1, 1989, Ibid.

[652] Ibid.

[653] Ibid.

removed, a "concerted attempt should be made at education and sensitivity…We feel that the recommendations of the committee would go far in eliminating most of the abuse."[654] The committee members, because they lacked a relationship with Oldest Elder, could not understand that the nickname by its very nature was abusive. They recognized that preventing misuse of the nickname, as they understood it, would remain a problem but did not comprehend the hypocrisy in this logic. Using the argument that "nothing is without risk" they argued that the nickname's continuance and "proper use" by CMU might result in improved use by others.[655] They wrote in their report that the use of the nickname by CMU was "enlightened" and could "play a small part in developing an understanding of Native American people."[656] Oldest Elder has historically faced the same philosophies and arguments throughout time as non-Native policies have been forced on Anishinaabeg peoples. Even those individuals on the border of understanding, had a difficult time connecting with Oldest Elder. If only they had met *her* through the language beforehand.

The chair of the committee, Delbert Ringquist, submitted a personal letter with the committee's proposal. He wrote that he "eventually came to agree tentatively with the recommendation to continue the use of "Chippewas"" but felt there must be a moral justification that "<u>any</u> use of "Chippewas" <u>must</u> truly serve to honor the Chippewa tribe."[657] Despite his endorsement to continue the use of the nickname, Ringquist did

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[654] Ibid.

[655] Ibid.

[656] Ibid.

[657] Delbert Ringquist to Edward B. Jakubauskas, March 1, 1989, Diversity Folder 1, CMU Vertical File, Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

argue that dishonorable usage would be a reason to eliminate the nickname. "If that occurs in any patterned way or if there are many abuses, the university should then reconsider…" he concluded.[658] The report then went to President Jakubauskas for review.

On March 16, 1989, President Jakubauskas issued a statement that the fifteen recommendations unanimously agreed upon by the advisory committee would be implemented. Additionally, the president announced that the nickname would be retained without the use of the Native American profile image, the spear point or feather in the block letter C for three years.[659] The president also listed ten conditions for the continued use of "Chippewas" by CMU. The conditions required the sanction of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Council, increased materials and educational programming for students on Native American cultures and traditions, sensitivity training for staff of student media, discontinued use of mascots and inappropriate music, investigating the possibility for licensing CMU names and symbols, and the formation of a committee to "monitor implementation of the recommendations and to report annually to the president."[660] Three committees were created after the president's announcement.

A Chippewa Education Committee, chaired by Anthropology Professor Alice Littlefield, was created and charged with recommending programs and initiatives to address recruitment, retention, and educational outreach. A second committee, the

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[658] Ibid.

[659] Central Michigan University, CMU To Retain Chippewa Name For Trial Period Press Release, March 16, 1989, author's personal collection, Mankato, Minnesota.

[660] Advisory Committee to Examine the Use of the "Chippewas" as the University Symbol, "Report of the Presidential Advisory Committee to Examine the Use of the "Chippewas" as the University Symbol," June 8, 1992, Diversity Folder 1, CMU Vertical File, Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

Symbol Advisory Committee, was created to "prevent abuse and misuses of 'Chippewa' as a symbol of the university and associated activities."[661] Chaired by the Vice President for Student Affairs, James Hill, the Symbol Advisory committee met eleven times during the first year and submitted a written report. In the second year of the trial period, they met occasionally and gave a verbal report to the president but then became inactive.[662]

In the third year of the trial period, the president formed a third committee, the Presidential Advisory Committee to Examine the Use of the "Chippewas" as the University Symbol, with the charge of examining the symbol's use and reporting to "the President recommendations on the continuance, discontinuance or modification" of the symbol.[663] The committee met every week beginning on March 11, 1992 until its final report on June 8, 1992, just short of four months. They incorporated and analyzed the reports from the previous two committees and other unofficial questionnaires, surveys, and sources of information about programming and media coverage.

In the final report to the president on June 8, the Presidential Advisory committee was divided on the question of whether to retain the nickname or not. They, like the previous Presidential Advisory Committee, presented the options to keep or discontinue the usage with full arguments supporting each option. Their final report summarized the findings of the education report and the fact that "there was little commitment to implementing the recommendations" of that committee.[664] The recommendations put forth by the committee were either ignored or received limited action. The one instance

[661] Ibid.

[662] Ibid.

[663] Ibid.

[664] Ibid.

of success was on two additional curricular recommendations to create a Native American Studies minor and include Ojibwa language courses in the University Program and Humanities area requirements for BA and BS degrees.[665] It was out of the nickname trial period and this intense period that Oldest Elder found a small space in the university to connect with students. In the scheme of the nickname controversy, *her* small success is overshadowed by the continuation of an abusive relationship with the university. The report on the Symbol Advisory Committee's progress was somewhat more positive.

The committee monitored the removal of the Indian head profile, spear, and feather from many campus locations. By the end of the second year, "tom-tom" beats and "American Indian" music were eliminated from the CMU marching and pep band performances. The spear and feather were removed from the set of Herb Deromedi's television football program and "the "Reservation" dining hall in Bovee University Center was renamed."[666] These small measures were positive steps in creating safer space for Oldest Elder. The committee also reached out to the surrounding community to make it safer and more welcoming for *her*.

They sent letters to local businesses asking that they discontinue the use of the logos. Despite these letters and personal follow-ups, five establishments, which did "considerable business with CMU," still continued to use the symbols. In their oral report, the committee argued that continued use of the "Chippewa" name would require coordinated efforts to monitor its usage and educate others but, they concluded, "there

[665] Ibid.

[666] Ibid.

currently is not the institutional commitment to do this."[667] For many individuals, the three-year review period was full of conflict and controversy. Opponents of the nickname witnessed the continued mockery of Oldest Elder and those supporting the nickname saw the incidents as isolated cases.

After the president's announcement of discontinuing the use of the logos, establishments such as the bookstore ran advertisements that read "20% off All CMU Indian Head Mascot Items. One of a kind Historical Collectables. END OF ERA"[668] The process of removing the logos was slow moving for some groups. In the fall of 1990, the director of the Multicultural Center, Ulana Klymyshyn, reported that "Meijers is selling sweats with inappropriate CMU logos on it: C & O sportswear has someone dressed up as an Indian out front; The SBX sells something with an inappropriate logo on it."'[669] By December 1990, the Student Activity Center and Rose arena were reported to still display the logo on its floor.[670] The other related symbols connected to the nickname, such as the music used for sporting events and the marching band were abolished but not without some resistance and lingering remnants.

The music was changed but the school fight song, "The Fighting Chippewa," remained. Today, it is more commonly known as the CMU Fight Song. The lyrics, however, reveal its continued connections to the mascot and nickname: "Chippewa,

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[667] Ibid.

[668] CMU Bookstore, "20% Off All CMU Indian Head Mascot Items," *Central Michigan Life,* April 3, 1989.

[669] Steven Poniatowski, "Incident Follows Nearly 2 Years of Trying to End Negative Images," *Central Michigan Life*, November 14, 1990.

[670] Deanna Hayes, Laura Porter, and Cathy Richardson, Letter to Editor, *Central Michigan Life*, December 5, 1990.

we're proud of that nickname."[671] Another song performed by the Chippewa Marching Band is "Hail Chippewa!" The lyrics read "We salute you, warriors brave and true…"[672] At the time of the changes, the community feelings were best expressed by Jack Saunders, the director of the marching band: "Our addition to the building of excitement and enthusiasm is somewhat limited…We can't do the things to fire up the team like we used to."[673] Many felt that creating space for and respecting Oldest Elder somehow detracted from their ability to have fun. During the fall of 1990, an incident with student band members represented and manifested the concern anti-nickname committee members had expressed.

On November 10, a group of student band members attended a CMU football game in Athens, Ohio.[674] The students wore mock feathers, headdresses, and war paint. Vice President for Student Affairs and chairman of the Symbol Advisory committee witnessed the students dress and actions at the game. "I was as close as 10 feet from the students as they went through what appeared to be as a war ritual," Hill said.[675] In his mind, "It left the impression their actions were more related to the old custom of war dances."[676] When Hill returned to campus, he wrote a letter to Provost Robert Fanke.

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[671] Nancy Salla, '"Blood-pumping' Music: School Fight Song Remains the Same Despite Chippewa Logo Controversy," *Central Michigan Life*, October 20, 1989.

[672] Ibid.

[673] Karen Emerson, "Chippewa Pride Remains: Despite Lacking a Mascot, Students Can Still Get Spirit for Homecoming," *Central Michigan Life*, October 20, 1989.

[674] Jillian Bogater, "17 Suspended from Band After Indian Masquerade: Face paint, War Dance Has Officials Upset," *Central Michigan Life*, November 14, 1990.

[675] Ibid.

[676] Ibid.

"Persons with Marching Chip jackets were decorated in cheap imitations of Indian headdresses and the use of cosmetic makeup to reflect so-called war paint was evident," he wrote. "Their mockery of a war dance around the goal post in sight of thousands should have been embarrassing to them; it certainly was to me,"' he concluded.[677]

Edward Kvet, the Music Department Chair, suspended seventeen CMU students from the marching band for their participation at the game. Kvet recognized that the situation was inexcusable: "This is something that happens all the time and it just can't be tolerated."[678] When *Central Michigan Life* anonymously interviewed some of the band students involved, they claimed, "their main intention was to show school spirit…No one took anything really serious. Everyone thought it was a joke, even though they were asked not to do it a couple times during the past couple seasons."[679] From the students' point of view, they "were participating in a traditional march they do after every game. The tradition involves walking around a tree and then singing CMU's fight song."[680] *Central Michigan Life* published a photograph of the students wearing the fake headdress and war paint and ran several letters to the editors as the situation unfolded. For individuals with relationships with Oldest Elder, the mockery of *her* by students once again, despite increased educational efforts, reconfirmed the need to do away with the nickname. Those without a relationship with *her* saw the punishment and reaction as unjust and placed the blame back on the university for not sufficiently educating people.

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[677] Jilliam Bogater, "Band Members Back in Ranks: 10 of 17 Punished Students Reinstated to Marching Chips," *Central Michigan Life*, November 26, 1990.

[678] Bogater, "17 Suspended from Band After Indian Masquerade."

[679] Ibid.

[680] Ibid.

They ignored the fact that the band members had acknowledged they had been told not to engage in such behavior.

Sharon Stevenson, a parent of one of the involved students and an Assistant Professor of Music at CMU, became a representative in the media for the students involved. After the students were banned from the band, they attempted to obtain a restraining order from Isabella Country Circuit Court Judge Paul F. O'Connell to allow them back in but their request was denied. By having been suspended, the students had lost the opportunity to travel with the rest of the band to the California Raisin Bowl in Fresno, CA. The students then "filed suit against CMU, the Board of Trustees, President Edward B. Jakubauskas, Kvet and Hill."[681] On November 21, ten of the seventeen originally suspended students were reinstated with full privileges as before. At a formal hearing, Kvet decided that there was not enough evidence to keep the students suspended.[682] While Hill's support of Oldest Elder in an attempt to follow through with university policy was admirable, the university cracked under the potential threat of a lawsuit. Their dedication to Oldest Elder was limited. After the event the responsible students wrote a letter addressing their actions:

> The headdress and face paint were not meant to be offensive. Regrettably, this decision was made in poor judgment. Those students had no intention of degrading or offending Native Americans…The attire was word to show school spirit, and none of those present felt their actions would have lasting repercussions of this magnitude. Negative attitudes are formed by ignorance; we intend to change them first-hand. We realize that our actions were intolerable and we are truly sorry.[683]

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[681] Bogater, "Band Members Back in Ranks."

[682] Ibid.

[683] Ibid.

Stevenson also wrote a letter to *Central Michigan Life* on the issue. She emphasized the fact that the students went as individuals and that the face paint was "typical of the type worn by fans at many college and professional sporting events…the headdresses were not sacred Chippewa headgear, but cheap bands bought at Toys' R Us. They are the most unfortunate part of the whole affair and were in poor taste."[684] She also argued that "we cannot condemn the young people" since people insist on making money on other's sacred symbols and "since our universities insist on using the names of various Native American peoples to aggrandize their own sports teams."[685]

The university administrators made an effort to educate the involved band members on Anishinaabe culture after the incident. They participated in a "traditional feast" held by the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe for children from their Niibing program. The children had grown the vegetables used in the feast and helped prepare the food. One wonders how Oldest Elder felt with the students attending a feast meant for the little ones and turning a good celebratory moment of *her* relationship with the young ones into an educational lesson for those who insisted on mocking *her* and reducing Anishinaabeg culture to a stereotype. Perhaps *she*, in her resilient and wise way, hoped that they might start to understand *her* because of the event.

The band students' actions were one instance of multiple examples where students, staff, faculty, and CMU community members continued to dishonor Oldest Elder. A Native CMU student, Yvonne Moore, told *Central Michigan Life* "It is not right

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[684] Sharon Stevenson, Letter to the Editor "Band Members Being Used as Scapegoats," *Central Michigan Life*, November 26, 1990.

[685] Ibid.

to have a wife of an assistant coach to make war whoops during a game. That is wrong."[686] Other instances of students and fans acting in disrespectful manners were noted by the administration. Some students continued to do tomahawk chops and resisted accepting the changing standards of acceptable behavior.

Throughout the three-year trial period, individuals and groups submitted letters to the editor of *Central Michigan Life* on the nickname issue. Multiple letters conveyed the idea that the loss of the mascot had somehow injured non-Native students and their school spirit. Those who supported the nickname were oblivious to the damage done to Oldest Elder. They had no awareness or understanding of American Indian peoples, their culture, past and spirituality or perhaps did but did not care. In November 1991, John Bieretto, a CMU Junior, wrote a letter entitled "Our Pride Drained, Spirit Broken." He wrote that he was proud to attend CMU until the mascot controversy, not because he became aware of its negative impact but because he had

> witnessed the administration change our symbolism" and then the band member controversy, now the "infamous "chop". (sic) Through all of these changes and problems, the administration wonders where has the spirit gone…now, after all the controversy, because of all the changes, those of the administration have drained our pride and broken our spirit. We no longer can openly support our team without facing the label of "degrader of Indian." We are told we are misrepresenting the Indian and insulting them with our childish actions. I submit this. We are trying to show the Indian people that we take great pride in their being our mascot and we are not trying to portray them as savages or violent people. We only wish to portray them as a people who deserve to have a team named after them because of their undying spirit and their infinite pride in their heritage.[687]

[686] Poniatowski, "Incident Follows Nearly 2 Years of Trying to End Negative Images."

[687] John Biretto, Letter to Editor "Our Pride is Drained, Spirit Broken," *Central Michigan Life*, November 11, 1991.

Students argued that the controversy was silly or overblown. They complained that it was hypocritical to punish the band students when the logo was still on the scoreboard and basketball court at the university.[688] Two senior students and football players, Joe Connolly and Chris Thompson, called the university's decision to punish the "football team's most loyal fans…pathetic."[689] "OK," they wrote, "so they were yelling, screaming and having fun, but isn't that what attending college football games is all about?...As members of the football team, we greatly appreciate the faithful and genuine support the CMU band has given us."[690] These two men were more focused on the fact that the dreams of the band members were destroyed by their punishment than the damage that such activities have on American Indian peoples and Oldest Elder. In 1992, Basketball Junior Dennis Kann argued that if the nickname were changed, "you wouldn't have the same drive" to play during the game.[691] Mocking and degrading Oldest Elder was what gave him his drive to win.

Multiple letters concerned the band student incident. Many argued that Hill had misunderstood the ceremony he had witnessed. It was not a war dance, they claimed. It was a tree ceremony and "one of the oldest existing traditions in CMU's marching band,"

[688] Deanna Hayes, Laura Porter, and Cathy Richardson, Letter to Editor, *Central Michigan Life,* December 5, 1990.

[689] Joe Connolly and Chris Thompson, Letter to Editor, *Central Michigan Life,* November 14, 1990.

[690] Ibid.

[691] Rick Lubbers, "Many Athletes, Officials Say Keep It," *Central Michigan Life,* April 20, 1992.

a student argued.[692] In a very sarcastic and disrespectful letter addressed to Hill, Mary Clark wrote

> After every home game (or away_ if there are members present) the marching band circles a tree and sings the fight song if we win, the alma mater if we lose. The band even has its own tree with a plaque describing the ceremony outside Rose…The ceremony has nothing to do with Indians. It has to do with the marching band.[693]

These letters completely ignored the possibility that the "ceremony" might have originated or been connected to the mascot and Native American imagery so long embedded in CMU Marching Band culture. A CMU alumni band member even wrote to the newspaper claiming that the university had infringed student's rights to wear what they want.[694] While some students and members of the academic community voiced opposition to punishing the students, others expressed dismay at the incident and its evidence of the continued disrespect caused by the nickname.

Immediately following the incident, *Central Michigan Life* quoted members of AISO, American Indian Student Organization about the students' actions. Julie Allen was quoted saying "I was shocked to see those students on the front page. It was a slap in the face for all Native Americans."[695] Yvonne Moore explained, "It's obvious that there is a problem on campus, especially in sports, band and cheerleading."[696] Faculty

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[692] Mary Clark, Letter to Editor "Officials Should Get the Facts Before Reacting," *Central Michigan Life*, November 26, 1990.

[693] Ibid.

[694] Douglas Storbeck, Letter to Editor "Official Now Aware of Band's Traditions," *Central Michigan Life*, November 30, 1990.

[695] Julie Allen, "American Indian Student Organization Comment," *Central Michigan Life*, November 14, 1990.

[696] Yvonne Moore, "American Indian Student Organization Comment," *Central Michigan Life*, November 14, 1990.

members also voiced their reactions to the event. William Reader, an Associate Professor of Religion, wrote an open letter to the *Central Michigan Life* editor and president of the university expressing that he was

> appalled to see the picture printed on the front page of CM Life (Monday, Nov. 12, 1990) apparently without any embarrassment…once again has been misappropriated in the dubious service of boosterism for CMU football. Worse, the picture reinforces the denigrating racial stereotype of the aggressive, warlike Indian, which CMU HAD CLAIMED TO OPPOSE DESPITE ITS UNWILLINGNESS TO RELINQUISH THE NAME CHIPPEWAS FOR ITS ATHLETIC TEAMS.[697]

Other letters requested that the nickname be removed. Austen Brauker, a Mount Pleasant Junior wrote to the editor saying

> You have displayed great ignorance in your stance on retaining the name of the tribe of people, a group of living human beings, as a mascot for this school. This is humiliating. This is degrading….Please do not continue to insult my family in this way. Please stop insulting the Ojibwe nation. Your justification for retaining this "nick name" are weak and hollow…Do not patronize Indian people.[698]

Another letter by Mary Knust, presumably American Indian, made a personal plea for change.

> I don't want to be anyone's mascot. It's not an honor or ever will be an honor to be a mascot for any team…I don't go around doing the tomahawk chop or wear some fake Indian headdress with make-up on my face. All that has a meaning when you go to a pow-wow and see the Indian dancers with the feathers, make-up, etc. It's sacred. Tell me, what is so sacred when CMU students bounce around and try to dance and look like Native Americans?[699]

In a section titled OUR VIEW, *Central Michigan Life*, as a university publication, revealed the opinions of their editors. They recognized that the actions of the band members were wrong but argued the university had gone too far by suspending them.

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[697] William Reader, Letter to Editor "Open Letter to President Edward B. Jakubauskas," *Central Michigan Life*, November 14, 1990.

[698] Austen Brauker, Letter to Editor, *Central Michigan Life*, November 4, 1991.

[699] Mary Kunst, Letter to Editor "Chippewa Culture is Sacred, Proud," *Central Michigan Life*, November 25, 1991.

They shifted the focus of the conversation to the lack of education the students had received as to why their actions were inappropriate. "The football game in Athens," they suggested, "was just an example of the types of incidents that happen at CMU every day—but go unnoticed because they are not in the public's eyes."[700] Removing the logo, they argued, would just prove that the university is full of insensitive people and is "unable to culturally educate its community."[701] Instead of seeing the incident as proof that the nickname needs to be removed, they suggested "Officials should view Saturday's incident as a bump in the road to cultural sensitivity, not as a reason to punish students who used bad judgment."[702] Another editorial suggested all band members should attend training and that educational programs should be used instead of punishments. Ironically, *Central Michigan Life* was one student organization that had historically been a site of cultural insensitivity to ethnic and cultural groups on campus including American Indian people.

On March 16, 1988, *Central Michigan Life* published an article titled "Tourterer: CMU's Kinkade Loves Inflicting Pain." Author Todd Schulz reported on a recent wrestling match and wrote "If Chippewa wrestler Carleton Kinkade, could have been a real-life Indian, he would have taken great pleasure in collecting enemy scalps…and then drinking the blood."[703] He went on to explain, "Like any great warrior, Kinkade uses his ferociousness and persistence to wear an opponent down and then closes in for the

[700] "Our View Heavy Handed: Officials Should Use Education as Means of Erasing Stereotypes, Not Punishment," (*CMLife* Editors?) *Central Michigan Life*, November 14, 1990.

[701] Ibid.

[702] Ibid.

[703] Todd Schulz, "Tourturer: CMU's Kinkade Loves Inflicting Pain," *Central Michigan Life*, March 16, 1988.

kill."[704] To play on a quote by Kinkade being lucky, he ended his article by asking " Maybe Sitting Bull got "lucky" at the Little Big Horn too, right?"[705]

This article appeared just a few weeks after *Central Michigan Life* had issued an editorial apology for not editing racially slanted information. Multiple letters to the editor appeared in *Central Michigan Life* in response to the wrestling article and many of them connected this occurrence to the presence of the logo, symbols and nickname used by the university. Martha Lodgson, an Associate Professor of Political Science wrote "The "real life" Indians I know are not blood-thirsty savages who enjoy torturing others…the use of the "savage indian" metaphor is only encouraged by the official adoption of nicknames of sports teams such as the Redskins, Warriors and, in this case, Chippewas. Isn't it time we changed the name."[706] Affirmative Action Officer Marshall Rose wrote "It is mind-boggling that any sensitive editors would not have been outraged by the pejorative and demeaning references to American Indians" and "egregious racist language."[707] The language, he argued, promotes "the offensive image of the wild savage Indian that "real-life Indians" have rightfully condemned."[708] Just a few pages over from the article in question, *Central Michigan Life* also published an article on the noted Cherokee Principle Chief Wilma Mankiller who visited the campus. Rose asserted that they obviously did not attend the event and "they give little consideration to how it

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[704] Ibid.

[705] Ibid.

[706] Martha G. Logsdon, Letter to Editor "Negative Stereotyping in Article is Quite Offensive," *Central Michigan Life*, March 18, 1988.

[707] Marshall Rose, Letter to Editor, *Central Michigan Life*, March 18, 1988.

[708] Ibid.

impacts local Native Americans, CMU's Indian students and faculty and staff."[709] The fundamental issue in the article, according to Rose, was "CMU's appropriation of the "Chippewas" as a nickname and mascot…Until we address this issue, as other have, the CMU community should be prepared to read editorial apologies in CM LIFE."[710] For Doris Meyer, a Mt. Pleasant Graduate Student, ""It was infuriating to read it. The lasting feeling is one of sadness that there is so little understanding."[711]

Despite the requirement by President Jakubauskas for student media to have sensitivity training, *Central Michigan Life* continued to fall far from standards of equality and understanding towards Native American people and issues. At the end of the trial period but before the final decision was made by the university president, *Central Michigan Life* ran a multiple page special section titled "Question of Respect" on April 20, 1992. Across several pages, the articles examined how Florida State, Miami University, and Eastern Michigan University handled the controversies over the American Indian names, monikers, mascots, and logos used at their institutions. The articles emphasized, "close ties" between schools and Indian communities to "foster respect and education." There was no representation of opposition. The coverage of Eastern Michigan's end to using the Hurons as its moniker emphasized tensions running high and the continued support for the moniker despite official policy changes. David Trout Staddon, Special Assistant to the Dean of Extended Learning, responded to the

[709] Ibid.

[710] Ibid.

[711] Doris Meyer, Letter to Editor, *Central Michigan Life*, March 18, 1988.

article and wrote that they were "one-sided and one-dimensional."[712] One of the articles, he pointed out, "characterized advocates of change as malcontents who are against "apple pie and even motherhood'…The whole special section is biased and inflammatory, especially while the logo issue is currently being deliberated at CMU."[713] Their lack of equal representation to the arguments was one of many ways the media influenced some of the discussions surrounding the nickname controversy and Native American subjects in general. The newspaper restricted printed support for Oldest Elder. It emphasized examples of how other universities had disrespected and commodified other Oldest Elders of different Native languages.

As the end of the trial period neared, voices of support and opposition continued to be expressed. Professor Alice Littlefield of the Anthropology Department and chair of the Education Committee on the nickname wrote to *Central Michigan Life* on the issue. She pointed out that stereotypical depictions had not been prevented during the trial period and that Vice President Hill had been attacked with verbal abuse and threatened with lawsuits for trying to enforce "proper" use of the nickname and prevent insulting behaviors. "Students," she wrote, "continue to justify negative portrayals of native people by saying that they were just having fun, or that they don't think its negative even if Indians say it is, or that Team Spirit (the god of football) made them do it, or that CMU and other schools have been doing this for so long that it must be OK, or that this issue is

[712] David Trout Staddon, Letter to Editor "Special Section Examining Mascot Issue One-Sided," *Central Michigan Life*, April 27, 1992.

[713] Ibid.

trivial compared to (fill in your favorite cause)."[714] It is time, she concluded, that a new committee was formed and the university pick a new nickname before the centennial year.

In addition to the debates and voices of support or opposition surrounding the nickname, a change in university leadership also occurred towards the end of the trial period. President Jakubauskas left the university and Leonard E. Plachta served as the interim president. In January 1992, the Affirmative Action Council drafted a resolution urging Plachta to take final action on the nickname and the Academic Senate voted 50-1 to adopt their resolution.[715] Plachta formed a final Presidential Committee to Examine the Use of the "Chippewas" as the University Symbol on February 26, 1992 and received their final report on June 8, 1992.[716]

In their final report, the nineteen-member committee, like 1989 committee, offered two opinions on what to do with the nickname.[717] The nickname supporters began their report by outlining their key understandings of the issue. They emphasized that "A University nickname does not need to be reflected in symbols and pictures in order for fans to have something to rally around" and that the controversy had been wrongly shaped as a "mascot issue."[718] They claimed it was not a mascot issue and it

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[714] Alice Littlefield, Letter to Editor "New Name Needed for CMU Teams," *Central Michigan Life*, November 11, 1991.

[715] Rochelle Reneker, "Final Nickname Decision in Sight," *Central Michigan Life*, April 20, 1992.

[716] Ibid.

[717] Ibid.

[718] Advisory Committee to Examine the Use of the "Chippewas" as the University Symbol, "Report of the Presidential Advisory Committee to Examine the Use of the "Chippewas" as the University Symbol," June 8, 1992, Ibid.

was misleading to refer to it as such. While the committee did agree that terms such as "Braves" and "Redskins" were negative, they argued that "there is nothing inherently racist or demeaning in using the name of an ethnic group…racial and stereotypical issues arise only in the way in which ethnic names are used...The use of Native American nicknames is a neutral matter until some action based on the use of those names takes place."[719] They dismissed the incident where fifty CMU students had performed the "tomahawk chop" at a nationally televised football game and emphasized that *only* fifty students performed the action out of the 50,000 that attended home games across the semester. Because "there was no efforts to educate CMU majority students about Native American culture" in the past, according to the committee, they found the new educational efforts a "great success" and emphasized the educational materials and opportunities.[720]

They also stressed the fifty-year relationship that the nickname had with the university and its importance and "special meaning" to members of the academic community. "It only retained the Chippewa name in a single effort to retain some measure of the University's traditions while not offending most Native Americans," they wrote.[721] They stressed the importance of retaining " a measure of faith" with those whom desired the nickname. The most "persistent critics were largely non-Native Americans on the campus" during the trial period according to their report.[722] They did

[719] Ibid.

[720] Ibid.

[721] Ibid.

[722] Ibid.

not understand that people regardless of race or ethnicity, can form a relationship with Oldest Elder as they seek a respectful and reciprocal relationship.

The pro-nickname committee members argued that the nickname could "help extinguish pre-existing stereotypes in people" and be "used with honor and respect."[723] Like the early supporters in 1989, they too lacked a relationship with Oldest Elder and failed to realize that the nickname was inherently disrespectful and directly associated with stereotypical understandings of American Indians. The incidents where people acted dishonorably and were disrespectful or engaged in racist behavior were "isolated" incidents and "hardly proof of failure," they argued.[724]

To illustrate their point they offered the fact that CMU classrooms did not require a one hundred percent for a passing grade and therefore the incidents did not prove a failure of the test period. By their analogy, however, as long as students behaved fifty-percent of the time without racist and disrespectful behavior, the experiment would still be a success. By keeping the name, they argued, it presented "the University community with opportunities to develop understanding of Native American culture, to develop better relationships with the Native American community, and to create positive national exposure on occasion for the Chippewa name."[725] To change the nickname, they argued would "lead to far more abuses here of Native American images."[726] Their interest in developing a better understanding of American Indian people involved taking Oldest

[723] Ibid.

[724] Ibid.

[725] Ibid.

[726] Ibid.

Elder hostage, threatening *her* if *she* did not cooperate, and claiming that *her* coerced cooperation was proof of an exemplary "special relationship."

Another consequence of the nickname being dropped, according to nickname supporters, was the possible dissolution of the "special reason why CMU should be involved with Native Americans any more than it is with other minority groups."[727] Only under the incentive of keeping the nickname, they reasoned, would the university be interested in forming a relationship with Oldest Elder, even superficially. While Native American opinions and considerations "should be considered," they concluded that "the decision regarding the nickname at CMU should rest squarely on CMU's shoulders and that the division the nickname creates amongst Native American people is "the most disturbing" aspect of the controversy.[728] The committee concluded their discussion of relevant issues with the point that if the university community was unable to use the name with dignity, it should be dropped. However, isolated examples of misuse were not, in their estimation, sufficient proof that it should not continue.

Their final recommendations were to keep the "Chippewas" nickname under certain conditions and to work with Native American artists to create a symbol appropriate for the university. The university, they recommended, should work with the Saginaw Chippewa Indian tribe to create educational programs "of educational assistance to Native Americans" that "utilize existing expertise of CMU personnel" and would be financed by the university.[729] While the committee found that educational efforts had

[727] Ibid.

[728] Ibid.

[729] Ibid.

been promising, they called for a re-evaluation of "its existing on-campus educational efforts to sensitize its students, faculty and staff" and emphasized the fact that "the greatest failure of CMU during the trial period now concluding was its failure to follow through on suggestions of its own educational committee."[730] A commitment from the administration, the argued, must be made and the 1989 report and recommendations should remain in effect.

The proposal to adopt an alternative nickname addressed the same or similar issues as the committee for its retention but understood them differently. They identified ten facts to consider including the fact that Native Americans are "singled out as the only racial or ethnic group to persistently be used as athletic nicknames."[731] Positive and negative stereotypes, they noted, are damaging and the first nickname review committee had unanimously agreed upon this fact. The committees established to monitor the nickname and recommended educational efforts both reported the trial period as being unsuccessful due to a lack of institutional commitment, financial support, and effort. Unlike the pro-nickname's committee's arguments, those arguing to adopt a new nickname argued that CMU already offered educational programs on various ethnic and racial groups without using them as nicknames and that "educational programs for and about Native Americans will continue regardless of what CMU's nickname is."[732] They addressed several areas of concern in their portion of the report including how the nickname perpetuates the stereotyping of Native Americans.

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[730] Ibid.

[731] Ibid.

[732] Ibid.

They referenced the Civil Rights Commission report on *The Use of Nicknames, Logos and Mascots Depicting Native American People in Michigan Educational Institutions* and the 1989 report by the first Advisory Committee, which had acknowledged the impact of positive and negative stereotypes. They quoted the report saying "Even positive stereotyping of Native Americans as 'brave', 'wise', etc., places unneeded expectations on modern Native American people.""[733] Whether or not Native Americans held a consensus on the nickname issue, they argued, many Native Americans, including members of the American Indian Student Organization on campus and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, were offended and had been hurt by its continued presence. The nickname challenged the possibility and survival of Oldest Elder on the campus. In a second section of their report, they evaluated the trial period of the nickname by examining the ten conditions for its continued usage created by President Jakubauskas in 1989.

The first condition, that the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe should sanction usage of the nickname, was not achieved by 1992. A week after the tribal council's decision not to oppose the nickname, they sent a letter acknowledging that there was not consensus on the usage of the nickname. In their opinion, the trial period offered an opportunity for the tribe and university to forge a working relationship. The conditions concerning educational materials were minimally met.

Minimal support was given for educational programs, materials were developed and distributed but most students remained unaware of them and sensitivity training for student media appeared to have a limited impact. The proposal stressed that if CMU

[733] Ibid.

could not use or control the use of the nickname during the trial period "a time when we are all on our best behavior—we believe the possibility of ever doing so is very unlikely."[734] They also countered the idea that the nickname educates people. "If we want to educate our students about Native Americans," they wrote, "then we should use our libraries, courses and programs."[735] By keeping the nickname, CMU was failing as an educational leader and perpetuating inappropriate stereotypes. After addressing the need to listen to those from the Native American community who had voiced their opposition, those who pay the price for keeping the nickname, the fact that the current situation was unworkable and that the time for change was at hand, the faction of the committee recommended that a new nickname be adopted within the 1992-1993 year and be fully implemented by fall 1993. Together, the committee submitted their recommendations to President Plachta and waited for his response.

In the middle of November 1992, President Plachta presented his recommendations to the University Board of Trustees. The majority of the nickname committee had recommended eliminating the Chippewa name, he informed his audience. "I realize that with either recommendation—to keep or replace the Chippewa name – I will please some and disappoint others," he said.[736] "My goal today is to bring this issue to conclusion, begin putting it behind us, and get about our business…My recommendation: Keep the Chippewa name."[737] President Plachta then proceed to

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[734] Ibid.

[735] Ibid.

[736] Leonard Plachta, Statement on the Chippewa Name, author's personal collection, Mankato, Minnesota.

[737] Ibid.

reiterate the points put forth by the faction of the advisory committee in their report: a baptismal understanding of the word Chippewa, the emphasis on how the word is used, the fact that the name is not a mascot, and that it is cherished by alumni and friends. With his recommendation, President Plachta also emphasized the need to work closely with the local Native American community and that the University had fallen short in the past. Educational assistance, services to Native Americans, educational efforts to "sensitize its students, faculty and staff to Native American traditions and culture," efforts to "regularly display exhibits relating to Native American culture and sponsor other related cultural programs all require improvement" he said.[738] A new symbol needed to be developed with Native American artists and the university needed to broaden its use of the name to something more than athletic teams. "Perhaps," he suggested, "applying the Chippewa name to a campus facility."[739]

Following Plachta's presentation, the five Board of Trustees members unanimously voted to retain the nickname. Three board members were absent from the meeting and did not vote.[740] It was in this context of the "Chippewas" nickname debates, struggles, trials, and contestation that the educational programming, including the Ojibwe language courses, developed, and was recognized at the university. Out of this context, Oldest Elder worked *her* way onto CMU's campus with the help of advocates and allies. The number of *her* supporters was and is, to this day, small. *She* is there nonetheless and individuals are always working to form connections with her and community members.

[738] Ibid.

[739] Ibid.

[740] Brian D. Bell, "Nickname Wins Approval 5-0: Board of Trustees Unanimously Approve Moniker," *Central Michigan Life*, September 21, 1992.

CHAPTER 7

AABIDANKIIWAG: CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Despite nickname supporters' claims that it was the nickname that encouraged educational programming, it already existed on the campus prior to 1989. Native American student organizations such as The Real Indians at CMU and the American Indian Movement sponsored meetings and participated in university events. Ulana Klymyshyn was "appointed as CMU's first Multicultural Programming Director on September 8, 1987" and the idea of a Multicultural Programing Advisory Council was suggested then as well.[741] The goal of the Multicultural Programing Center was to "develop programs, activities, and events that will increase this campus community's awareness of and sensitivity to cultural diversity."[742] Guest speakers such as Dennis Banks and Cherokee Principle Chief Wilma Mankiller were invited to campus and sponsored by the University Program Board, the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, the Multicultural Programing Center, the King/Chavez/Parks Program and others. Media events such as the play Hiawatha and a showing of *Billy Jack* were brought to campus.

In the second half of the 1980s and before the nickname became a central controversy on the university's radar, Ojibwe classes were offered at the university. They were not offered because of the nickname, but rather because allies and American Indian people had a desire to connect teachers with Oldest Elder so that they could bring

[741] Letter to Francis Molson from unknown author, October 30, 1987, Box 6, CMU Academic Senate Organizational Records, 1978-2005, Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

[742] Ibid.

her back to Anishinaabeg communities. Oldest Elder existed before the nickname and continues to exist despite her harassment. *She* overcomes the challenges and conflict the nickname presents through *her* relationships with individual advocates, allies, and new language learners.

In 1985, Howard Webkamigad, originally from Manitoulin Island, Ontario, joined Central Michigan University as a visiting instructor. As part of a state supported program, the Martin Luther King Jr./Caesar Chavez/Rosa Parks Initiative, Webkamigad was awarded the King Chavez Parks visiting professor appointment and worked in Teacher Education and Professional Development.[743] The state legislature appropriated $20,680 of funds and the university matched them in order to bring him to campus.[744] In the spring of 1987, Webkamigad taught an ELE/SED 508A course as an Anishinaabemowin workshop on the foundations of the Anishinaabe language.[745] Together with department member Barbara Kirk, Webkamigad directed an Ojibwe Bilingual Bicultural Teacher Training Program. They brought Oldest Elder officially to campus and made a space for *her* to form and build relationships with others.

They funded the program through a Title VII grant by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs.[746] In January 1987, the program had approximately twenty students enrolled and experiencing the language.[747] For Barbara

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[743] Chris Murray, "State Program Doctoral Student Fellowship Package," *Central Michigan Life*, October 16, 1987.

[744] Ibid.

[745] Mary Francis, "On The Reservation," *Central Michigan Life*, February 27, 1987.

[746] Maureen Camling, "Program Teaches Ojibwe Language," *Central Michigan Life*, January 15, 1987.

Kirk, the purpose of the program was "to educate potential teachers in the history, culture and language of the Ojibwe people so they can help the educational achievements of these people."[748] Within this process, students also learned the relational nature of Anishinaabemowin, culture, and history for Anishinaabe peoples. In addition to the courses, Kirk was also involved in American Indian youth programming that built bridges between communities and the university. In the summer of 1987, Kirk directed an Ojibwe Oral Traditions Workshop at Central Michigan University with the help of Alice Littlefield, Joan Memering, Howard Webkamigad, Wilma Henry, and Gordon Henry, the Education Director at the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Center.

The workshop was a Martin Luther King/Rosa Parks College Day Program for the youth of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. Students from seventh through eleventh grade participated in the six-day resident experience. They conducted interviews with people about Native American language, culture, and history and began exploring their college opportunities. Part of the goal for the workshop was for students to familiarize themselves with college opportunities and be able to see themselves earning a college education. It also helped demonstrate that Oldest Elder could exist at the university despite the long conflicted history between Anishinaabeg culture and higher educational institutions.

At the end of the program, the students wrote reflections on their experiences and interviews and published them together in a booklet titled *Anishinabe (The People) Speak.* They also held a banquet to celebrate the overall experience with their family

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[747] Ibid.

[748] Ibid.

members. American Indian leaders and allies led these efforts and programs on campus and in the larger local community to foster connections and in so doing foster relationships with Oldest Elder. In 1988, another Ojibwe workshop occurred at CMU emphasizing language and culture through demonstrations and crafts.[749] These faculty and students forged and developed space for and relationships with Oldest Elder before the 1989 mascot controversy ever took center stage in people's minds.

Over the course of the fall 1987 and spring 1988 semesters, individuals worked to create a Bilingual/Bicultural Education minor in Ojibwe and to officially create specific Ojibwe language courses at the university. After revisions in November and December of 1987, a minor in Bilingual Bicultural Education Ojibwe minor was created. With a collection of multidisciplinary courses, the goal of the minor was to "prepare the student to teach children of Ojibwe heritage."[750] To complete the program, a student had to "demonstrate by examination of Ojibwe language oral and written competencies at the minimal level of a college minor."[751]

When the minor was first included in the 1988 Bulletin, Ojibwe language courses were not part of the required courses. However, several other courses existed at that time that addressed American Indian subjects: ANT 365 Contemporary Native Americans, ANT 320 Indians of North America, ENG 328 Literature of North American Indians, HST 323 Indians of North America. They also succeeded in adding ELE/SED 516

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[749] "Minority Workshops Offer Experience," (author unknown) *Central Michigan Life*, June 6, 1988.

[750] Teacher Preparation Council, Meeting Minutes, December 17, 1987, Box 6, CMU Academic Senate Organizational Records, 1978-2005, Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

[751] Ibid.

Teaching Native American History and Culture to teach students "Native American History from a Native American perspective" and so that they could learn "Methods of integrating Native American information into classroom instruction."[752] While not listed as part of the minor, the Ojibwe language courses did exist in the bulletin. They were originally listed as 300 and 400 level courses but were later changed to 100/200 levels. Eventually, they formed a critical element of the minor's courses.

The Anishinaabemowin course offerings began with two sections of Elementary Ojibwe focused on "basic language skills" and the "introduction of the culture of the Ojibwe people."[753] The first of two Intermediate Ojibwe sections focused on reviewing Ojibwe grammar and continued development of one's language skills and understanding of Ojibwe culture. The second section was "designed for those who wish to continue the study of the Ojibwe language" with an emphasis on the written language."[754] Howard Webkamigad taught ELE/SED 508 Education Workshops on the language, courses focused on Ojibwe language translation and teaching Native American history from 1986 until the fall semester of 1990.

In the summers, he taught special topics courses in the language. In the summer of 1988, Webkamigad taught a six credit hour course from June 27 till July 29. This Ojibwe Language Institute was intended "for Ojibwe language students to give them an opportunity to increase their knowledge of the Ojibwe language" by having "the

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[752] Central Michigan Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Meeting Minutes, December 16, 1987, Box 6, CMU Academic Senate Organizational Records, 1978-2005, Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

[753] Central Michigan University, *1988-89 Bulletin* (Mt. Pleasant: Central Michigan University, 1988), 215.

[754] Ibid., 263.

opportunity to use the language and hear it on a daily basis."[755] In the summer of 1989, he offered a special topics course on Advanced Ojibwe for students to improve their reading, writing, and comprehension skills in Ojibwe. Despite the efforts of Kirk and Webkamigad and the development of these courses and minors, their efforts were not guaranteed support at the university. The continued presence of Oldest Elder was uncertain and tenuous without committed funding and institutional support.

During the 1989-1990 academic year, the initial grant that had funded the Ojibwe language efforts at CMU expired and the language courses became financially threatened. The smaller enrollment number was an obstacle in gaining institutional support. In the spring of 1990, Webkamigad had five students officially enrolled in his language class, which combined beginning and intermediate Ojibwe students. The American Indian Student Organization, which had been reformed on campus in 1988, began pressuring the administration to keep the courses.

Julie Allen, an AISO student member, was quoted in a *Central Michigan Life* article stating: "AISO has drafted a letter several suggestions and alternatives to eliminating the Ojibwe courses. Incorporation into the department of foreign languages, literatures and cultures could make the class more accessible to students and useable as University Program credit."[756] Students were concerned that Oldest Elder was not being incorporated into the university structure. She also suggested turning the Bilingual/Bicultural Education minor into an American Indian studies minor so that more

[755] Central Michigan University, *Course Schedule* (Mt. Pleasant: Central Michigan University, 1988).

[756] Kristine L. Renaud, "CMU May Cancel Fall Ojibwe Classes if Interest is Too Low," *Central Michigan Life*, February 14, 1990.

students would take the course might help. Perhaps, they wondered, if the minor could be more readily accessible to students, Oldest Elder would be able to reach more people and remain a permanent part of the campus.

As with everything else in a relational world, the issue of the Anishinaabemowin classes and the general relationship between the university and American Indian people were related in the eyes of American Indian people. The American Indian students saw the threat of the Ojibwe classes as connected to the nickname and mascot issue. "We feel," they said, "that by even considering eliminating the courses, CMU is not keeping up its end of the bargain."[757] Loss of the courses and the mascot were both connected to Oldest Elder and *her* relationship with community members and lack of a relationship with the university.

Yvonne Moore, another AISO member and member of the Multicultural Advisory Council, wrote to *Central Michigan Life* on the importance of keeping the classes. To communicate her point, she invoked the relationship between the University and the "Chippewa" people. "The land the University occupies was a gift from the Ojibwe people for education," she explained.[758] The fact that the program might disappear to lacking funds was, in her opinion, "a sad reflection on the University's commitment to cultural awareness" and "indicates an atmosphere that does not welcome American Indians."[759] She countered the issue of low enrollments by pointing out that "Small numbers do not show a lack of interest; rather they indicate there are so few of us to learn

[757] Ibid.

[758] Yvonne Moore, Letter to Editor "CMU Should Keep Ojibwe Program Alive," *Central Michigan Life*, April 16, 1990.

[759] Ibid.

the language and teach the next generation."[760] Ultimately, she contextualized the course and its survival in terms of CMU's relationship with American Indian people inseparable from the use of the Chippewa nickname:

> CMU, the only University in the state with a reserve as a part of its community, can either be a leader and support American Indians as they seek to regain portions of their culture, or it can pass this opportunity and make a statement that CMU does not want AMERICAN Indians and other cultures here…Let me remind you that this University has a responsibility to keep the Ojibwe language program and create an American Indian minor…You have used the Chippewa name for nearly 50 years…It takes commitment and sacrifice to promote a healthy change. Change is not easy, but we all need to change and an opportunity to grow.[761]

Students coming into the fall 1990 semester almost faced a semester with no Anishinaabemowin course offerings. Howard Webkamigad no longer taught at CMU by that time. Fortunately, Don Abel, an instructor at Bay Mills College in Brimley became the next language instructor at the university. Abel earned his teaching certification from Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario and taught the class on Saturdays for six-hours. The class was offered through the Extended Degree Programs office.

Originally, the course had been cancelled before Abel agreed to teach. While students and community members had advocated the continuation of the Ojibwe language courses, some were less than pleased with the new classroom format. Julie Allen, the president of AISO, wrote a letter to Charles Eizzler, the director of Bilingual/Bicultural Teacher Education expressing her dissatisfaction with the set up and length of the class and lack of access to the instructor. She challenged the university's commitment to the language program. On record, Abel taught the Ojibwe language

[760] Ibid.

[761] Ibid.

courses until the fall of 1992, possibly the spring of 1993, and participated in Native American events on campus as a presenter or guest speaker.

During the nickname trial period, 1989-1992, Kirk, Abel, and American Indian students continued working to build opportunities for educational courses, programs, and opportunities about Native American issues and topics. A Native American Studies minor was created and it required six hours of Ojibwe language as part of its required courses.[762] The language courses offered a specialized place for Oldest Elder. The openness of the minor, unbound by a particular degree or department, presented the possibility that more students would find the courses. In 1993, the minor's name was changed to American Indian Studies minor because American Indian students and faculty members preferred it that way.[763] Students and faculty continued to plan opportunities for Oldest Elder to interact with the academic community. Native American Awareness Week events and exhibits occurred on campus offering opportunities for people to experience Native American art, food, dance, and storytelling.[764] Some of the events also coincided with CMU's annual pow wow beginning in the spring of 1989.

Co-sponsored by the American Indian Student Organization, the first pow wow was "organized in less than 6 months" but had "more than 500 participants and 5,000

[762] Central Michigan Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Meeting Minutes, November 17, 1993, Box 8, CMU Academic Senate Organizational Records, 1978-2005, Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

[763] Central Michigan University, Course Alteration Application for Native American Studies Minor, October 15, 1993, Box 8, Academic Senate Organizational Records 1978-2005, Bentley Historical Library, Central Michigan University.

[764] Jeffrey Johnston, "Besides Art, American Indian Exhibit Offers Food, Dance, Storytelling," *Central Michigan Life*, November 14, 1990.

spectators from the University and surrounding area."[765] At the 1990 pow wow, Bill Miller, a Native American performing artist, gave a presentation to "approximately 130 junior high and high school students from five Michigan school districts" and then they all attended the pow wow.[766] Between 1989 and 1990, the pow wow experienced a great deal of growth, but was then followed by a few years of declining attendance and participation. The language program and American Indian Studies program faced similar challenges of momentum and university support after the nickname trial period ended. During the review of the nickname, individuals such as university student Renee Clare used the activities and opportunities to support the nickname's use. The university, she argued, "offers classes in Ojibwe so that we can be allowed to help understand these people."[767] Ironically, the hard fought right for Oldest Elder to be present on campus was used to argue for the continued mockery of *her* at sporting and university events.

While the supporters of the nickname argued that its continued presence was what ensured and motivated the university to offer programs on Native Americans, an examination of the history of such programs suggests a different narrative. The few Native American members of the academic community worked with university allies and others in the surrounding Native community to forge positive relationships. They worked to create a Bilingual/Bicultural Teachers training program in Ojibwe and to bring guest speakers, media and events and programming to the campus. Despite the limited support

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[765] D. Michael Heaney, "Big Beginning: Central's First Powwow Turns Out to Be 'a Thousand Times Better Than Expected,'" *Central Michigan Life,* April 3, 1989.

[766] Kristine L. Renaud, "Native American Artist Gives Concert Thursday," *Central Michigan Life,* March 28, 1990.

[767] Renee Alyce Clare, Letter to Editor "How is the CMU Mascot Degrading?" *Central Michigan Life,* November 11, 1991.

from the university, even during the trial period, these people and their allies worked together for the betterment of the Native and non-Native American community on relevant topics and issues. Despite the university's decision to retain the nickname, the pro-change faction of the 1992 committee spoke true when they wrote:

> Adopting a new nickname will not diminish the motivation of those who work to provide educational access for Native American students and programs on American Indians at CMU, because all of these faculty and staff are strong supporters of adopting a new nickname. During the trial period they were virtually the only ones fulfilling the educational conditions for keeping the Chippewa nickname.[768]

Those individuals, who supported Oldest Elder, did so before the nickname controversy and continued to do so afterward. For the remainder of the 1990s, the same advocates and allies continued to carry the heavy load of working for American Indian students at Central Michigan University and provided American Indian representation and programming opportunities. Allies for multicultural understanding and American Indian issues, such as Ulana Klymyshyn and Dr. Alice Littlefield among others, continued to work for diversity improvements in university curriculum and on campus. Beginning during the three-year nickname trial period, directors of CMU's American Indian Programs became campus advocates and centrally involved in American Indian interests. They championed Oldest Elder as much as possible through events, presentations, and university publications despite being able to directly rebuff the nickname.

[768] Advisory Committee to Examine the Use of the "Chippewas" as the University Symbol, "Report of the Presidential Advisory Committee to Examine the Use of the "Chippewas" as the University Symbol," June 8, 1992, Ibid.

The first director, David T. Staddon, worked to produce the early educational booklet, *American Indians: Past and Present*, used by the university to educate the community about American Indian peoples. Summer programs with a focus on Ojibwe culture and language, similar to the one started by Kirk, continued for high school students.[769] Art exhibits were held at the university and guest speakers such as Oneida, Mohawk, and Cree comedian Charlie Hill were brought to campus.[770] Between 1994 and 1998, CMU and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe co-sponsored an annual CMU Native American Student Conference.[771] In the fall, Native American Heritage Month became a significant time period for American Indian related activities and programming. In the spring, activities occurred in the weeks leading up to or during the university sponsored pow wow. At many educational programs, language revitalization was and continues to be a topic of interest and usually integrated into the presentations. The centrality of language in culture ensures its continued presence in any educational programming on American Indian culture. Oldest Elder is manifested in culture, language, and the community. Wherever American Indian people or American Indian issues are addressed, *she* is also present. In addition to programming, the Ojibwe language courses continued despite the consistent funding concerns and unstable institutional support for the program.

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[769] Christine Welch, "Workshops Prepare Minority Students for College, Careers," *Central Michigan Life*, June 22, 1994.

[770] Liz A. Wishaw, "Oneida Comedian Uses Comedy to Make Social Commentary," *Central Michigan Life*, November 15, 1995.

[771] *CMLife* Staff, "Knowledge of Language, Culture will be Stressed at Native American Conference," *Central Michigan Life*, February 25, 1998.

After Howard Webkamigad began the language courses and Ojibwe teacher program, Don Abel took over the courses for a few semesters. Following Abel, Helen Roy became the new language instructor in 1993. Like Howard Webkamigad, Helen also came from Manitoulin Island in Ontario. As a tribal member of the Wikwemikong First Nations Band, Roy had maintained Ojibwe as her first language. Over the next four to five years, Roy offered Ojibwe 101 and 102 courses with the occasional 201 intermediate courses. Around the spring of 1998, Dr. Benjamin Ramirez-shkwegnaabi joined Central Michigan University in the History Department and taught courses on American Indian history. He had earned his M.A. from the University of Michigan in American Culture in 1980 and brought his experiences from that institution with him. He also brought his personal connections with the local Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and his experience directing the American Indian Center at St. Cloud University in Minnesota to the university. Soon after his arrival at CMU, he became the instructor for the Ojibwe courses and the advisor for the American Indian Studies Minor. He continues to teach the Ojibwe language courses today. Occasionally, Julie Whitepigeon, a language educator at the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, has taught a class for Ramirez-shkwegnaabi.

During their years of teaching at CMU, Webkamigad, Abel, Roy and Ramirez-shkwegnaabi all served as spokespeople for special events, conferences, panels, summer camps and as Native American representatives in the academic community. The Ojibwe language instructors and the directors of Native American programs are the “go to” individuals at the university for any subject that includes American Indians. They are often burdened, as the “token” American Indian representatives, with an overloaded of

requests to serve on academic committees, panels, host events, and other commitments. Despite these facts, the individuals in these two positions have been instrumental in the educational efforts on campus, in the community and in supporting the continued presence of Oldest Elder. After the 1992 nickname decision, the responsibility for monitoring the usage of the nickname became a responsibility of the Native American Programs office.

The Director of Native American Programs and the Ojibwe language instructor have historically advised the North American Indigenous Student Organization (NAISO). This single organization has historically been heavily involved in the programming activities on campus concerning American Indian issues. In recent years, they have often suggested particular guest speakers or forums to be held on campus. Many of these events have occurred around the same time as continued controversies regarding the nickname and its usage. Like the pro-name change fraction suggested, the nickname issue is something that continues to cause conflict and controversy at Central Michigan University.

Despite the 1992 decision, mixed feelings about the nickname and relationship between CMU and American Indian peoples persist. Several faculty members and groups were articulately vocal about their disappointment in President Plachta's decision. The Religion Faculty wrote a letter to *Central Michigan Life* stating that its continued use is a "remnant of ethnocentric triumphalism" and that "If this decision indicates a direction for CMU in it second century, it is a step beyond unintentional racism toward

blatant hypocrisy."[772] Two years after the decision, AISO organized a debate for Native American Heritage Month between the Vice President for University Relations, Russ Herron, and John Bailey, "a Native American employee for the Michigan Department of Commerce in Traverse City and member of the Grand Traverse Chippewa Tribe."[773] During the event, several audience members pointed out that stereotyping was still present at CMU football games. "One person complained the CMU marching band tried to start the "tomahawk chop" in a recent game" and Herron responded that those incidents could be reported to the Office of Student Life but could not be stopped because of First Amendment rights.[774] This argument, that incidents can be reported but the first amendment rights prevent the university from taking action, is still used today. It frees the university from any responsibility for the use or misuse of the nickname and funnel criticism into a process of reporting that has little options for actual action. In addition to the continued contestation of how the nickname is used on campus, CMU faces challenges off campus as well.

In 1994, the University of Iowa decided not to participate in any athletics with schools having Native American nicknames and as a result there was a possibility that they would refuse to play CMU's teams. The school ultimately decided to play CMU to fulfill its contract.[775] Student reactions to other schools' decisions to drop their

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[772] CMU Religion Department, Letter to Editor "Religion Faculty Aghast at Plachta's Moniker Support," *Central Michigan Life*, November 21, 1992.

[773] Heather Needham, "Chippewa Nickname Issue Ranges from 'Offensive' to 'Historical' in Discussion," *Central Michigan Life*, November 9, 1994.

[774] Ibid.

[775] Jill Behnke, "Sowmick: Meeting at Iowa to Discuss Nickname 'Positive,'" *Central Michigan Life*, September 7, 1994.

associations with American Indian mascots, nicknames, and logos were often sarcastic and insulting. One student article by Life Sports Writer Doug Fisher called such schools "gutless," jumping "on the bandwagon of political correctness," and complained that he did not understand "why a few people have to ruin a good thing for so many."[776] When Fisher retired the sports column two years later, he predicted that "The CMU Board of Trustees gives in to Martin Reinhardt, director of Native American Programs, and others' demands to change the Chippewas' nickname to "Poker Chips."[777] Joseph Sowmick responded to the column emphasizing the disservice the article did to the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Community and the positive contributes they make.[778] While the majority of media surrounding the nickname portrayed its use as positive and part of the "unique or special" relationship with the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, others often felt confined by the relationship and torn by its dynamic. University employees' support for Oldest Elder and the removal of the nickname was often constrained by subtle and direct pressure to support the university above all else.

In December 1999, Martin Reinhardt wrote a guest column for *Central Michigan Life*. He wrote as both an alumni member of CMU and as a former Director of Native American Programs. In 1995, he had worked as a graduate assistant in NAP under the direction of David Staddon. The following year he interviewed for the directorship of Native American Programs and remembers "President Leonard Plachta requested that I

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[776] Doug Fisher, "Miami University Drops Nickname," *Central Michigan Life,* November 27, 1996.

[777] Doug Fisher, "Hit and Run: Taking a Shot at the News," *Central Michigan Life,* April 29, 1998.

[778] Joseph V. Sowmick, Letter to Editor "Column Response," *Central Michigan Life,* May 4, 1998.

not address the media with my personal views on the nickname issue."[779] While he did not criticize the nickname at first, he began to channel his criticisms through unofficial channels and eventually became openly critical of its continued use in 1997. Reinhardt left the university in 1998 "for several reasons, which included the university's continued misuse" of his "people's cultural group name."[780] In his article, he encouraged the university to change the name and for individuals to step up and help that process. Other former directors of Native American programs have faced similar pressures to resist criticizing the nickname or the nature of the "relationship" between the university and the local tribe. In many ways, the "relationship" holds Native American students, faculty members, and Oldest Elder hostage.

Over the past thirteen years, students have sought to challenge the nickname or at the very least bring attention to the negative implications of its usage. In 2000, the Diversity Issues Committee of the Student Government Association hosted a forum on changing the nickname and the SGA and Residence Hall Assembly passed resolutions addressing the issue.[781] The SGA then passed a resolution asking the administration to re-evaluate the nickname. The Academic senate supported the SGA at a mid-march meeting but at their April 11 meeting President Plachta made it clear that he did not support the re-evaluation.[782] In the following fall semester, the SGA hosted another open

[779] Martin Reinhardt, "Former Employee Encourages Change of Nickname," *Central Michigan Life*, December 8, 1999.

[780] Ibid.

[781] Kim Tanner, "Student Government Association Changes Requirements for Representatives," *Central Michigan Life*, February 2, 2000; Jeremy Stephens, "Chippewa Nickname Should Stay," *Central Michigan Life*, February 11, 2000.

[782] David M. Bossick, "Native Americans Discuss Nickname," *Central Michigan Life*, April 19, 2000.

forum titled "Chippewa Nickname Forum" with a panel of faculty, staff, community members, and students including Todd Williamson, the adviser for Native American Programs, and Lisa Tiger, the Director of Native American programs.[783]

Over the next two years, the nickname issue was discussed in the context of the candidates for the Institutional Diversity Associate Vice President position visited campus. The nickname was also addressed at events such as the 2002 art exhibit on mascot and logo stereotypes from the Ziibiwing Cultural Center and Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe installed in the university library. Despite the president's hopes that his proclamation had ended the discussion of the nickname, its continued presence chaffed American Indian students, staff, faculty, and their allies. In 2003 and 2004, incidents surrounding the nickname increased and so did activism against it.

On October 11 and October 18, 2003 freshman student, Jared Parko attended the CMU football games dressed in a fake headdress, war paint, and a chest plate that he made with macaroni. When CMU Junior Ryan Hathaway witnessed the costume at the game, he approached Assistant Athletics Director of Marketing Nick Williams and asked that something be done. Williams then spoke to Director of Student Life Tony Voisin who said there was nothing the university could do. Parko stopped dressing in his costume after the incident received considerable media attention and "said he meant no disrespect to American Indians and he fully supports diversity."[784] The incident and the subsequent discussions and coverage of the event were significant but consisted of the same conversations held ten years earlier in similar debates. A month later, Native

[783] "Forum Discusses Issues with CMU Nickname," *Central Michigan Life*, November 13, 2000.

[784] "Code Allows Chippewa Costume," (author unknown) *Central Michigan Life*, November 3, 2003.

American activist and scholar Ward Churchill contributed to the conversation when he spoke as a guest speaker for Native American Heritage month.

Following Churchill's presentation, a student group called "Change the Name" was formed on campus with the hopes of changing the nickname. The students gained support and worked to educate the campus community with fliers. In the spring semester, the Women's Studies Governance issued public support for the student group.[785] The struggle to educate the university community and address the nickname issue is a struggle that groups continue to address today. Every two years or so, there seems to be a significant event of abuse that throws another log on the fire of the nickname issue. Through all of these events, the small number of active students, faculty, staff, and administrators that support Oldest Elder strive to re-educate the new cohorts of students coming into the university. The same conversations take place, reiterating the same issues with the hope that people might finally start to listen.

In 2003, a student dressed in the fake headdress, war paint, and a chest plate. Four years later on October 7, 2007, a Native American Indian Student Organization meeting was finishing in the multicultural center when a flier was slid under the center's door. The inflammatory fliers made claims that Native Americans were uncivilized, scalped people, and were responsible for spreading syphilis in the new world.[786] They were also distributed in Anspach Hall where the most supportive departments, professors, and classes on Native American issues were held. NAISO members responded by

[785] "Women's Studies Governance Council: Revise the Nickname," (author unknown) *Central Michigan Life*, February 23, 2004.

[786] "Flier Criticizes Native Americans," (author unknown) *Central Michigan Life*, October 24, 2007.

holding a forum on stereotyping in the University Center Rotunda. They invited Anishinaabe elder Sonny Smart for Native American Heritage month and he held two educational training seminars, including one for faculty and staff.

Smaller events and incidents of disrespect have also occurred in individual classrooms, residence halls and on campus but they failed to receive the same degree of media attention as the two previous incidents. The most recent incident to draw public attention occurred in the fall of 2009 when the Department of Student Media and the CMU Bookstore promoted an advertisement campaign: "Most Spirited Chippewa Fan Contest." On September 16 and 18, *Central Michigan Life* published a black and white advertisement with students cheering and wearing foam fingers. Around September 21, the newspaper printed a new advertisement that featured a screaming female fan with a fist raised, wild teased hair, and red face paint with a white line across her eyes. The ad read

> If you think you are the most loyal soldier in the Maroon Platoon, stop by the Central Michigan Life tent at Tailgating on Saturday. We will take your picture and enter you into our weekly "MOST SPIRITED CHIPPEWA FAN" Contest. CM Life editors will post the images after each home game and then invite CM LIFE readers and CMU fans to go online at cm-life.com and vote for their choice of the most spirited fan. The readers choice favorite each week will be featured in CM Life and on our website, and will win $100 plus and IPOD Nano, compliments of CMU Bookstore.[787]

In larger print underneath, the ad read "So get dressed up, painted up and put your spirit on…and we'll see you at tailgating on Saturday!"[788] Several members of the academic community, including faculty, administration, staff, and students, quickly

[787] "Are You the Most Spirited Chippewa Fan," (author unknown) Central Michigan Life, September 23, 2009.

[788] Ibid.

became aware of the disrespectful imagery and problematic nature of the contest. Several complaints were brought to the attention of the Native American Programs office. Soon after the appearance of the ad, five students filed a complaint with the Affirmative Action Office against the Student Media Department and the CMU Bookstore.

In the process of investigating the complaint, the Affirmative Action office extended invitations to the respondents, *Central Michigan Life* Staff, and other concerned university committee members. The invitations and complaint were ignored or they were met with denial that misuse had occurred and denial or deflection of responsibility to other staff members and offices on campus. Several attempts to communicate between the invested parties often resulted in inaccurate and curt responses from the accused or they failed to attend the meetings. Ultimately, the Affirmative Action office recommended that the university and respondent's departments purchase space in *Central Michigan Life* to issue a retraction and an apology and that the respondents should experience training on cultural competency and diversity. To date, an apology has not been issued.

NAISO, Native American Programs, and other supportive allies for diversity on campus have consistently held forums, presentations, programs, cultural events, and other opportunities to educate peoples on Native American peoples and cultures. In response to the "Most Spirited Fan Contest," NAISO and Native American Programs quickly sponsored a forum on the nickname and what it means to American Indian students on campus. They were able to gather sufficient funds to invite Charlene Teters and Anishinaabe elder Eddie Benton Banai to join a panel with other CMU faculty and

students.[789] A *Central Michigan Life* news article covering the event, once again, received heated comments and debate from supporters and opponents of the nickname. The comments on the online edition are especially potent. Many commenters referenced the "special relationship" between the local tribe and the university. Others referenced the multiple previous incidents that have happened on campus.

In 2004-2005, the EA Sports' video game NCAA Football 2005 featured a fan "dressed in a headdress and face paint. He cheers when CMU makes a big play."[790] In the spring of 2005, the National Collegiate Athletic Association required thirty-one schools, including Central Michigan University, to explain the necessity of their use of Native American mascots, logos, and nicknames. To address the NCAA sanction and file their report by May 1, the university formed a "Chippewa Name Steering Committee." On August 5, 2005, "the NCAA ruled that CMU, along with seventeen other institutions with American Indian nicknames, were "hostile or abusive."'[791] CMU appealed the ruling and the ban was lifted by the end of the month. The steering committee consisted of ten individuals, including myself. The committee was heavily represented by the Athletics Department and they strongly influenced the report in such a way that it portrayed the nickname in a positive manner. Criticism and dissent was dismissed by committee members and left out of the report. Around the same time, the university president revived a committee from the past, and I was asked to serve as a student representative.

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[789] Niigaanwewiidan "Joshua Hudson," July 25, 2013.

[790] "CMU Mascot," (author unknown) *Central Michigan Life*, October 27, 2004.

[791] "NCAA Poses Restrictions on American Indian Nicknames, Images," (author unknown) *Central Michigan Life*, August 10, 2005.

In 2004, President Michael Rao revived the seven member President's Advisory Committee on Native American Issues a year before the NCAA sanctions. During this time, the Native American Programs office was not operational. The university was looking for a new director and but the office had a severely reduced budget. In the summer of 2003, the Native American Program's budget of $118,000 had been reduced to $67,000. The office experienced a forty-three percent budget cut.[792] The President's Advisory council met both at Central Michigan University and at the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Offices. I remember the meetings as being particularly frustrating because the voiced concerns were often around institutional support for American Indian Students and programs.

A key document that has complicated any criticism of the nickname and the relationship between the university and American Indian people is a 2002 Saginaw Chippewa Indian tribal resolution signed on June 25, 2002 by the chief of the tribe at that time, Marnard Kahgegab, Jr. and the university president Michael Rao. The resolution resolved that the tribe and university would "continue to strengthen their cogent relationship" and that "this mutual relationship is evident in the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Council continuing its support of Central Michigan University's "Chippewas" nickname."[793]

The university has focused on the "special relationship" with the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe to maintain its use of the nickname. The nickname incidents

[792] "Rao Reforms Advisory Committee," (author unknown) *Central Michigan Life*, March 5, 2004.

[793] Maynard Kahgegab, Jr. of The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and Michael Rao of Central Michigan University, "The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and Central Michigan University: Committed to Honor, Dignity, and Respect" Resolution, June 25, 2002, author's personal collection, Mankato, Minnesota.

often draw the most concern and attention. Many of these events address the connection between language and culture but quite often the nickname issue overshadows that conversation. While the historic agreements concerning the "special relationship" often center on the role of educating people about "Chippewa" culture and educating the academic community, the institutional support is not always present beyond the sports programs, Native American Heritage Month, the CMU Pow Wow and the Native American Advancement Scholarship. The scholarship is funded by the Native American Endowment, which is "made up of money received from licensing fees for CMU products."[794] The position of Director of Native American Programs has largely been a revolving door, with individuals only staying a year to a few years; the current Director is Colleen Green.

Each of the directors and former directors that I have had the privilege of working with at Central Michigan University have accomplished a tremendous amount of work for the Native American students and general academic community. The Director of Native American Programs and the Ojibwe language instructor have historically and continue to this day to serve as the first contacts on Native American Issues and concerns at the university. For many students, the only way they became familiar with the American Indian Studies program and Ojibwe language courses is through NAISO, the Native American Programs Director or by talking with Ramirez-shkwegnaabi.

The Native American Indian Studies program and Ojibwe language courses are not linked with a particular department, other than to the history department because of Ramirez-shkwegnaabi's position there. Students looking to meet their foreign language

[794] Central Michigan University American Indian Programs, *American Indians: Past and Present* (Mt. Pleasant: Central Michigan University, ca1991), 16.

requirement would not find Ojibwe listed with Spanish and French. The classes themselves are taught differently than the typical four day a week foreign language classes.

For a number of years, the Ojibwe language classes have been offered as one day, three hour classes. Having taken multiple Ojibwe language courses at Central Michigan University with Dr. Ramirez-shkwegnaabi, I noticed a trend among other students in the class. A significant number of students enroll in the classes with the preconceived notion that an American Indian language should be easier to learn than other languages. Their understanding of the language is largely influenced by stereotypical images of American Indians as dumb, incapable, and slow. A smaller number of students enroll because they want to connect with their own culture and language. They are looking for a connection to Oldest Elder in the university setting and they usually find *her* there. The language classes are also where American Indian students connect into a community. Like the courses at Bemidji State University and the University of Michigan, a piece of home is often found among fellow students reaching out for Oldest Elder. Sometimes, American Indian students and those learning the language return to an occasional class just to hear the language and reconnect.

In this context, Oldest Elder lives at Central Michigan University. There are relationships with Oldest Elder and the students in the language courses, NAISO, and others involved in learning the language. Key faculty members and administrators work to build a relationship with Oldest Elder through the programming and their individual relationships with members in the surrounding American Indian community. While the university has its "special relationship" with the nickname and speaks about its

educational initiatives, in some ways, it has failed to cultivate a “special relationship” with Oldest Elder. The language program that began as a bilingual/bicultural teacher-training program and then as part of the American Indian Studies minor was altered last year. The Bilingual/Bicultural minor was removed and the American Indian Studies minor became an eighteen-credit certificate that offers the Elementary Ojibwe courses as elective credits. One hopes that the courses will continue and perhaps by becoming a certificate program grouped with other area certificates in the Global Citizenship Focus, more students will become aware of the courses and begin forging a relationship with Oldest Elder. Perhaps this will help shift some of the focus from the “special relationship” built upon the desire to keep the nickname to building a relationship between people and Oldest Elder.

CHAPTER 8

KWIIJIGAABIWIITAADIMI: LIVING THE LANGUAGE

In Anishinaabemowin, everything is centered on relationships and connections between entities. The Anishinaabeg world invokes an intricate web of connections between people, places, stories, beings, and the universe around us. Oldest Elder is that web. Quite often, the discussions surrounding Native American languages, especially by the general media, are shaped by discourses of loss and singular battles of oppression and resistance. These single stories fail to notice the intricacies of the relationships at work in American Indian languages and their lives. Studying American Indian language programs at colleges and universities offers a unique opportunity to examine Oldest Elder's life and relationships in a focused context.

His/Her life at these institutions is a story of relationships between fluent speakers, second language learners, students, academics, administrators, and staff, the educational institution and the larger American Indian community. While the chapters in this dissertation focused on the relationships and historical development of Ojibwe language programs at particular academic institutions, the connections and relationships between the people and communities involved reach far beyond these localized areas and are much more intricately connected to each other. Anishinaabeg people were aware of Oldest Elders' efforts across Indian Country. People communicated with each other, collaborated, and supported the struggles they all engaged in to bring *her/him* into these educational spaces. It is the personal connections that made these programs possible and it is the personal connections that made this research a reality.

Many of the individuals included in this work are people I met over several years of personal growth and discover. A significant number of my relationships with people began at Central Michigan University during my years as an undergraduate student. I arrived at CMU after the nickname controversy was addressed but I had the pleasure of meeting and interacting with many of the individuals involved in the struggle. I had the pleasure of taking courses with Dr. Alice Littlefield and Dr. Robert Newby, two advocates for changing the nickname during the review period. I also took a course with Lisa Tiger, a former director of Native American Programs, and Dr. Delbert Ringquist who supported the nickname with reservations. I worked with Ulana Klymyshyn on the Academic Senate's Diversity Committee for multiple years and had frequent conversations with her in the Multicultural Center.

As a student, I was actively involved in the Native American Indigenous Student Organization. Over the course of my time at CMU, I worked with three Directors of Native American Programs: Matthew VanAlstine, Michaelina "Micky" Magnuson and Colleen Green. My relationships with Green and Hudson began as fellow students and members of NAISO. It was because of relationships and connections that Green came to CMU as a student and became connected into NAISO. A colleague that she worked with on the reservation told her to contact the Director of Native American Programs, Matt VanAlstine, because he was her nephew. Through NAISO and the relationships I built with people at CMU, I also became friends with the community at the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe.

As part of my Master's degree coursework, I completed a summer volunteer internship at the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe's Ziibiwing Center for Anishinaabe

Culture and Lifeways. Through their language table and the internship, I became connected with Shannon Martin and Julie Whitepigeon. Today, Shannon Martin is the Director of the Ziibiwing Center and has collaborated with Central Michigan University on several projects. She helped orchestrate the repatriation of ancestral remains that were in the possession of Central Michigan University and the University of Michigan among others. When the Athletics Department suggested the installation of American Indian artwork at Rose Arena, Martin and Green worked together with other members of the university and tribal community to develop several visual media and art displays highlighting the relationship between the university and Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe.

I first met Julie Whitepigeon through the Anishinaabemowin language table at the Ziibiwing Center. Today, she teaches at the tribe's Sassiwaans Immersion School and occasionally teaches an introductory language course at CMU. I am always pleasantly surprised when I discover new connections between people that I had not considered before. During a conversation with Whitepigeon, I discovered that she attended Western Michigan University a number of years ago and knew my advisor, Dr. Donald Fixico, when he was at WMU. She also took language classes with Helen Roy who taught there at the time. Helen Roy taught Anishinaabemowin at Central Michigan University and at the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. Joshua Hudson, a fellow student from CMU, also took language lessons from Helen Roy when he attended the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe's Ogima-Montessouri school as a child.

Many of the relationships built during my years at Central Michigan University also connect to the stories of University of Michigan. Shannon Martin worked at the University of Michigan and negotiated the occupation of Michigamua's room in the

student union and helped organize the university pow wow. Dr. Ramirez-shkwegnaabi, my first Anishinaabemowin language instructor at Central Michigan University, was a student at the University of Michigan and a graduate of the American Studies program at the same time that Hap McCue-ibah was teaching the Ojibwe language courses. When my doctoral research first began to take shape, Micky Magnuson, a former Director of American Indian Programs at CMU, recommended that I speak with Mike Zimmerman Jr., a member of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi. As a tribal member herself, she served on tribal council.

Zimmerman had attended Eastern Michigan University where he met Noodin and Kimewon and began to develop a strong relationship with Oldest Elder. Through that experience, he became involved with the language work happening at the University of Michigan. Through Mike, I was introduced to Noodin, Kimewon, and Pitawanakwat. He also helped me connect with James Fox, another fluent speaker in the Lansing, Michigan. Fox and several other speakers came to Lansing as young men to work in the automotive industry and today they form a language community in the area.

When I accepted the Pre-Doctorate Fellowship at Michigan State University for the 2012-2013 year, I was able to meet more fluent speakers through a local language table at the Nokomis Center in Okemos, Michigan. Fox, Pitawanakwat, Kimewon, and anyone interested in learning the language come together on Thursday evenings to practice, teach, and speak Anishinaabemowin. Other language instructors such as the instructor at the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribal College, George Roy, attend the group. Most of these fluent speakers and individuals are involved with language efforts at colleges and universities. They also participate in gatherings and language camps and

conferences. They are part of the larger language community that includes Anton Treuer and Henry Giniwigiishig Flocken from Bemidji State University. A critical conference that many of these speakers attend is the Anishinaabemowin Teg Conference. Many of them hold leadership positions on language conferences and councils.

During my time at Michigan State University, I was able to meet Helen Roy who currently teaches Anishinaabemowin language classes at the university. Many of the people involved in this research have connections to Roy through her classes or the language community. Like Josh Hudson and Julie Whitepigeon, Adam Havaild also learned Anishinaabemowin from her. Havaild is a graduate student in Anthropology at Michigan State University whom I had the pleasure of working with during my time there. He often attended the language table at the Nokomis Center as well. Interestingly, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, he attended Central Michigan University and was present during the nickname trial period and the phasing away from the logos and images. He is quoted in some of the *Central Michigan Life* articles from that time as a Native American student representative. These are just a few of the many connections between individuals working on sharing, building, and maintaining a relationship with Oldest Elder across these academic communities.

The connections with Oldest Elder are also relationships one's culture, identity, and past. It is a communal relationship with individual connections that crisscross communities. For some individuals, the Ojibwe language courses and programs extend opportunities to meet Oldest Elder and forge those relationships. The classes can be a starting point and catalyst for deepening the relationship.

For Colleen Green, her relationship with Oldest Elder began to develop and grow stronger when she left home and began working for the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. As a child, she grew up disconnected from her Native American community. A non-Native family had adopted her mom. As an adult, she was not able to teach her children Anishinaabemowin or Anishinaabeg culture. Growing up, the only American Indians Green knew were her siblings and her mother. Recalling her childhood, Green shared that

> I was the darkest person in my school. I was in white wonderland. I was up in Evert, Reed City. So I graduated from Evert high school. And I would talk to my sister and I said ya know, "I felt like I am [the] last of Mohicans." And she just started busting up laughing because I was never around Natives. The only person that was Native that looked like me was my mom. That was it.[795]

It was after she left home that she began exploring, learning, and connecting with Oldest Elder through Anishinaabeg culture. When she took a job at the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe's bingo hall, she became connected into the community through co-workers and start asking questions. Her co-workers and supervisors were Anishinaabeg and tribal members. Through them, she became connected into the Native community at Central Michigan University. She continues to build and develop her relationships with the communities and the language. Today, she is an enrolled member of Little River Band but has connections to Grand Traverse Bay tribe as well. In the summers, she attends her tribe's language camp with Kenny Pheasant, Helen Roy, and Isadore Toulouse. As the Director of Native American Programs, she works to continue offering the North American Indigenous Summer Enrichment Camp in the summers at the university, the annual spring pow wow, and a host of events for Native American

[795] Colleen Green, interview by author, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, July 25, 2013.

Heritage month among others. Green's collaboration with Oldest Elder is not just about her individual personal relationship but also about helping others discover and build their relationships *her/him*.

Through the summer camps with high school students and advising college students at the university, she encourages students to enroll in the language classes, attend cultural events, and discover relationships with the language. She also continues to deepen her relationship with Oldest Elder through events and opportunities in the community such as language camps, ceremonies, special events, and everyday gatherings and conversations with others. For her, having a kindred relationship with Oldest Elder is also about passing on the relationships and knowledge. She explains: "I also make sure that my children know about their history and their heritage."[796] Forging these relationships and learning about being Anishinaabeg is not just a matter of memorizing the language or learning particular elements of material or performing culture. For Green, it is also about breaking the hold that the past sometimes has on Anishinaabeg peoples. As she tells it, she is "just trying to break it. Break with what's going on with the past. Breaking the cycles. That's been rough and then teaching yourself again and then trying to teach your children as well."[797] One of the sources of strength during that process is the community, those relationships with other people, ancestors, culture, and Anishinaabeg identity.

The shared past and present experiences within the Anishinaabeg community help unify and support individuals. "Its not just the language," Green explains,

[796] Ibid.

[797] Ibid.

> it's the community and the support behind it. Because you have to feel that you're connected to the community before you can learn that language. Because doing it on your own, you can't learn the language on your own. You have to have somebody with you. You have to have a community with you, to help walk you through it. I think that there are a lot of different facets that have to come together just to revitalize the language and keep the language living. It just goes hand in hand. There's no separation, but there's a lot of components as play.[798]

For Green, her relationship with Oldest Elder has been impacted by the broader history of colonialism and adoption of Native children by non-Native parents. However, her relationship is also established in her extended relational space she made with Anishinaabeg members of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, the American Indian community at CMU, and her own tribal community. She has forged her relationships and continues to develop them as she also helps others form connections with Oldest Elder. The community has been a central and developmental force in shaping her relationship with Oldest Elder. Josh Hudson, one of Green's students at CMU, has also continued to develop his relationship in part through the connections and opportunities at CMU and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe.

In some ways, Josh's story comes full circle in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. His paternal great-grandparents both attended the Mt. Pleasant Indian Boarding School when they were young. Afterwards, they returned to their community, Bay Mills, but later came back to Mt. Pleasant and walked on. When Hudson asked his grandmother about his great-grandparents and whether they spoke the language, she told him "they would speak to each other only when they didn't want their children to understand what they were saying. She said that my great-grandmother always told my great-grandfather to not to teach the kids anything. She said 'they don't need to know that, they're better off not

[798] Ibid.

knowing that' and would say, 'don't teach them that Edmund!"'[799] Many years later, when Hudson's grandmother was going through some of her belongings, "she found a birchbark envelope with birch bark paper in it [that] my great-grandmother had made for her. She wrote her a letter all on birchbark and it had language on it. She had phonetically spelled the words. Just random things. Like different things for the weather or how you're feeling. Just things like that."[800] When his grandmother was in her late fifties, she enrolled in the language institute at Bay Mills Community College and Hudson attended the class with her and experienced a language immersion classroom.

As a youth, Hudson was exposed to the language in smaller amounts through cultural events, traveling back to the Bay Mills community and formal events such as the annual Career Expo. When he attended pre-kindergarten and kindergarten at Ogima-Montessouri school, he learned Anishinaabemowin from Helen Roy and remembers singing songs in the language. It was not until middle school and high school that he began to individually learn the language through dictionaries and attending more cultural events. When he attended Central Michigan University, he took his first "formal" language courses with Ramirez- shkwegnaabi.[801] One of the forces encouraging Josh to form a relationship with Oldest Elder was other community members. Individuals like Elisa Owl and Donnie Dowd, a Midewiwin leader, encouraged Josh to remember who he was, an Anishinaabe. While it was a positive step for him to go to college and do well academically, they told him, he needed to remember who he was and where his

[799] Niigaanwewiidan "Joshua Hudson," July 25, 2013.

[800] Ibid.

[801] Ibid.

community existed. The relationship with Oldest Elder is a kindred relationship with community members from multiple communities and the ancestors of past.

Hudson explains the connections with language and Oldest Elder through his experience with mental health work on the reservation. Many of the issues he has witnessed and worked with go back to the hurt and pain carried by individuals and the community. "There's so much hurt that's there," Hudson shared.[802] However, he pointed out that it does not always go back to boarding schools. "It varies for every person, there's no one single stimulus for the cause of all problems," he said. [803] In Hudson's experience, the process of unpacking one's stories is where healing occurs and the language is part of that process.

> It's all about unpacking your own stories and how you're living through them today. That's why, in my eyes, reconnecting with the language gives me a stronger sense of identity and a stronger sense of feeling good about myself. It warms your heart when you hear the language. It makes you feel good about yourself when you're speaking it. Even if I'm just repeating words or you know a random word will pop in my head every once in awhile. I'll just say it all the time, ya know like whisper it to myself. It's part of unpacking things that have happened to me because the boarding schools are directly in my past." [804]

Hudson continues to work in the mental health field and Green works as the Director of Native American Programs where they continue to build and develop their relationships with Oldest Elder. For Mondageesokwe, a former CMU student, NAISO member, and language teacher herself, she learned the language through numerous teachers and different mediums of instruction.

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[802] Ibid.

[803] Ibid.

[804] Ibid.

In Mondageesokwe's family, her great-aunt knew some of the language from her great-grandfather. Her family members often told Anishinaabeg stories but they did not situate them as cultural stories. Mondageesokwe recalls, "I grew up knowing Nanaboozho stories but without using the name Nanaboozhoo."[805] She recognized the language and some words when attending pow wows but she actively learned the language during her teenage years when her maternal grandmother bought Kenny Pheasant's cassette tapes of the language. "It was before he was all professional like he is now," she remembers.[806] "They were just copied off. Slammed into a little folder thing, with a cassette tape he did at home and with a little sticker on it that said Kenny Pheasant."[807] She also learned some of the language from her Wapole cousins that she calls Aunt Carol and Uncle John. Learning the language during her formative years and early adulthood was largely from the cassette tapes, attending ceremonies, pow wows, and meeting other speakers.

When the internet became available, she became connected into a language society page on yahoo.com. It was there that she interacted with Howard Webkamigad, the first CMU language instructor, and other language speakers and teachers. Her "formal" education in the language began in 2002 when she took a course with Brian Cobiere in Traverse City through the Grand Traverse Band. Soon after that experience, she also took Anishinaabemowin at Central Michigan University with Ramirez-shkwegnaabi. During her time in the Mt. Pleasant area, Mondageesokwe also

[805] Mondageesokwe "Melanie Sunstorm Fish," interview by author, Belding, Michigan, June 18, 2013.

[806] Ibid.

[807] Ibid.

participated in the women's circle at the tribe's Seventh Generation, the language table at the Ziibiwing Center and learned from numerous teachers at different events and gatherings: Kim Wensaut, Julie Whitepigeon, Bea Calwell-ibah, Howard Webkamigad, Helen Roy, George Roy, Howard Kimewon, Margaret Noodin, and others.[808] Mondageesokwe's relationships with language teachers are also through family relations, clans and her membership in the Snowbirds women's drum group. Whitepigeon and Mondageesokwe are both members of the Snowbirds and familial cousins.

She formed a relationship with the language through official courses but ultimately made long lasting connections to Oldest Elder through interpersonal relationships, relationships with communities, spirituality, and identity. "I feel like this," Mondageesokwe explained:

> I've learned from everybody. I've had so many teachers and then when I talk to people they're like "you talk funny"…I said that's cuz it's not standardized and I've had teachers from all over the place. It's all mixed up. Who gives a shit. It's all in Anishinaabemowin. You understand. They understand what you're saying. They're just saying it's not from here. What's important is what are you doing with your life? How are you acting with other people? Are you acting in an honorable way? What is it that you are doing? How is it connected to other things? That's what is important in Anishinaabemowin. That's the difference of seeing it. [809]

For a time, Mondageesokwe worked to help others with the language in the Mt. Pleasant area. She worked on grant-funded projects to do Ojibwe translations and educator curriculum on the language that later transitioned into the Sasiwaans Immersion school Whitepigeon works at today. Having relocated southwest of Mt. Pleasant, Mondageesokwe works as a language instructor for at Montcalm Community College

[808] Ibid.

[809] Ibid.

teaching community education classes on the language. In the fall of 2002, she taught a class of two students for the college and did a one time lecture on Black Ash baskets. She has since taught two additional language classes for the college. One of her students was the father of a student taking the language courses at the University of Michigan. "I started with the language when I was teaching my family and stuff," she explains. [810]

> I was teaching my mom and my sister and when I'd see my great-aunt or talked to her on the phone, I would tell her new words and stuff. And then, I was translating songs for the Snowbirds, words for them and names for them and stuff like that. And then, the language tables online. I started to know enough to be able help other students and that's how I look at it still. Even if I was fluent, it's about helping other people. The more people that speak, I don't care if they know just Boozhoo, at least they know a word. It's another word of Anishinaabemowin being spoken out in the world. [811]

In recent years, Ojibwe classes, educational materials, and language efforts have continued to grow and develop. When I attended Central Michigan University in the mid 2000s, the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe had a language table at the Ziibiwing Center and Julie Whitepigeon was their language specialist. Today, Whitepigeon works at the Sassiwans Immersion Pre-School alongside fluent speakers and classroom teachers working with seventy students attending Pre-K classes. They also offer an immersion kindergarten class at the Saginaw Chippewa Academy. All of their immersion classes incorporate cultural knowledge in their curriculum alongside the language.

For Whitepigeon, her connection with the language and Oldest Elder was also impacted by the historical relationships of the past. Her mother was born in Penkaaning on the coast of Lake Huron but when her mother's parents died, when she was about four years old, she and her siblings were split up and sent to foster homes. Whitepigeon's

[810] Ibid.

[811] Ibid.

mother only spoke Anishinaabemowin until she was disconnected from her family and sent to Flandreau Indian School in South Dakota where she learned English. As a young woman, Whitepigeon's mother became isolated but, as Julie explains it, "she didn't know her people, she didn't know her family."[812] By chance, Julie's paternal grandmother met Julie's mother when she was working in hotel kitchen and introduced her to her family and son, whom she eventually married.

As a child, Whitepigeon grew up hearing Anishinaabemowin. Her paternal grandmother spoke some of the language and her dad did "a little bit," but not fluently.[813] As her mother became immersed in the Potawatomi and Ottawa community of Southwest Michigan, she renewed her relationship with Oldest Elder once again. Julie recalls hearing the language as a child

> Here and there. There were words that we used that I didn't know were Indian words. I thought they were words for everything, just everyday words. I didn't really know till I was maybe twelve that some of the words we used were not English. We just did it. But mostly it [our language] was English. Helen Roy calls it Ojiglish when you mix English and you kinda put them together or make sentences out of stuff and we would do that…[814]

Having parents who were both community activists and strong supporters of education as teachers, they instilled in Whitepigeon a drive for education and a pride in being Anishinaabeg. In her early teens, she combined education and her culture by taking language classes with Eli Thomas. Julie's father was the Director of the Grand Rapids Inter-Tribal Council at the time and Eli Thomas, the last hereditary Chief of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe, would come to the Grand Rapids ITC and teach

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[812] Julie Whitepigeon, interview by author, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, July 25, 2013.

[813] Ibid.

[814] Ibid.

Anishinaabemowin. Over the years, Whitepigeon has taken multiple Anishinaabemowin courses from different instructors wherever and whenever they were being offered.

In the 1990s, she took classes with Helen Roy at Western Michigan University. She also took classes with Howard Webkamigad when he taught at Kellogg Community College in Battle Creek, Michigan. When she relocated to Sault Saint Marie, Michigan, she volunteered with the Baawaating singers and enrolled in the Bay Mills Native Language Teachers Institute. While working on completing the institute, Whitepigeon and her family relocated to Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. She continued her studies and completed the program through the immersion weekend sessions.

When she worked at the Ziibiwing Center, she worked with the tribe's Anishinaabe Language Revitalization Committee and the community's last fluent speaker Bea Calwell-ibah. Her decision to enroll in the Language Teacher's Institute came in part from the encouragement of a friend, Adrian Shipman, who was coordinating the language efforts in St. Saint Marie. Whitepigeon remembers

> So I signed up for the language institute and at that point it was like a turning point in my life. Where this was what I was going to do for me. I [would] work and I do other things but I was going to commit to the language. And I did and it's been really good. So I did the three years there. And I really liked that a lot. We moved in the mean time, from Sault Saint Marie down here for work and I continued to go to the language institute in the summer. And that was part of my stipulation of accepting the position here. [I thought] "I got to do this." And it was kinda tough sometimes. It was hard. I continued to go to the weekend emersions. [I] had to do four weekends throughout wintertime, fall, winter and then do the six weeks in the summer and it was awesome. I just loved that time in my life. [815]

Today, she continues learning from the fluent speakers at Sassiwans and she studies the language with learning aids, everyday conversations, and whatever

[815] Ibid.

opportunities Oldest Elder presents. "It's definitely a personal journey and it takes commitment," she explains. [816]

> I'm going. I go to the language lunch every week that Isabelle puts on for the community and go to activities as often as I can. [I] go to the feasts. At the pow wows, I always listen real closely when they pray in the language and I understand! And I didn't understand before as well. Now I do. So it's nice. [817]

She is currently teaching Ojibwe at Central Michigan University while Dr. Ramirez-shkwegnaabi is on medical leave. Her children have grown up listening to the language and praying in Anishinaabemowin. The language, family, community, and personal development are all intertwined. Oldest Elder is all of these things. Whether it is working with the little ones in the immersion program, teaching at the university, helping support her children and grandchildren during ceremonies and life milestones, the language is there and "a gift for everybody. It seems to be an individual journey," Julie says. [818]

> Yeah it's a career. But it's also life. [A] life project. I knew that this was going to be my path. Going into the Midewiwin and that I needed the language because it all takes place in the language. And I want to participate and I want to learn and I've got responsibilities. I feel I've got limited time to learn everything I want to learn. I got a late start. I feel like I was a late bloomer. I need about twenty more years. I've got a lot of time to learn and now is the time where I feel like I'm starting to be able to have enough to give back. Quality stuff to give back.[819]

Green, Hudson, Mondageesokwe, Whitepigeon all have relationships with Oldest Elder and share the desire to give back in one way or another. They share a similar history of colonialism and its impact on people's relationships with Oldest Elder whether

[816] Ibid.

[817] Ibid.

[818] Ibid.

[819] Ibid.

it is boarding schools, adoption out of the community or other ramifications from the disruption of that harmonious relationship. They also share the desire to reconnect, rebuild, and develop that relationship for themselves and to help others forge that relationship. Initially, they connected with Oldest Elder through social relationships with other people, with community, identity, culture, spirituality, and the past. A deeper connection with Oldest Elder is a relationship with all of these elements simultaneously on an individual and collective level. To fully understand Anishinaabemowin and its revitalization in general, requires situating oneself to understand and see the language through the eyes of Oldest Elder. A holistic approach, while more complex, sometimes contradictory and intertwined, gets one to the heart of the process: relationships and relational understanding that creates its own mentality and indigenous reality.

On a larger level, language programs at higher educational institutions involve these same concerns, connections, and relationships. The relationships vary depending on the particular individuals and communities involved but their success and challenges are dependent on the relationships at work in the programs. Language instructors have varying degrees of relational understanding with Oldest Elder. Some instructors are first language fluent speakers and others are second language learners. Both groups of speakers continue to nurture their relationships with the language when they speak and teach. Faculty and administrators have varying degrees of awareness, respect, and support for Oldest Elder in academia. Some students see the language as just a language and apply stereotypes that they have about American Indian people to Anishinaabemowin. Other students desire a relationship with Oldest Elder and take advantage of every opportunity to connect intimately with *him/her*.

This dissertation examined the relationships at work in three different academic institutions: Bemidji State University, University of Michigan, and Central Michigan University. Critical to their development and success or struggles were similar issues of funding, staff and faculty, student interest, and institutional support. Beneath these shared issues, however, is the labyrinth of elemental connections among individuals, groups, and communities across levels of power and influence. These foundational relationships, like every other facet of life, evolved with the amount of reciprocity exchanged and the amount of effort invested in nurturing the relationships with Oldest Elder and each other.

At Bemidji State University, a language program and American Indian Resource Center have thrived despite the fact that it is positioned in a town and area of historical conflict and tension between American Indian peoples and non-Native people. Key figures within the academic institution and state government supported American Indian initiatives on campus. Local allies reached out and formed relationships with the AIRC and Anton Treuer to negotiate linguistic space for Oldest Elder. Business owners and local companies incorporated Oldest Elder into the signage of their businesses. Local schools brought Anishinaabemowin into their buildings, announcements, and classrooms. Indian-white relationships in Bemidji are far from perfect but Oldest Elder has a presence in the community because of mutual respect between speakers, learners, and allies.

In Ann Arbor, Michigan, activism and allies were central to the creation of an Ojibwe language program at University of Michigan. Limited allies in faculty, graduate students, and administrators made the creation of the program possible when student activism had pushed the administration to a place of negotiation. When relationships

waned or became strained, the program was weakened or reduced. The over arching relationship between the university and the American Indian community remained tense because of the continued presence and support of Michigamua. Shifts in relationships within the program and university structures surrounding altered the nature of the program itself. The history of the program has repeated itself as it evolved through two waves of development and descent. One can only hope it will strengthen once more.

At Central Michigan University, a small number of dedicated speakers and learners work to keep the relationship with Oldest Elder alive and to help foster individuals to form new relationships. The university and Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe claim a formal "special relationship" because of the university's use of the "Chippewas" nickname. This "special relationship" often overshadows Oldest Elder or ignores what having a relationship with Oldest Elder really means. Having a reciprocal relationship with Oldest Elder would require a renegotiation of the current public relations "relationship" for one built on mutual respect, awareness, and equality. Those who continue to form, build, and nurture relationships with Oldest Elder continue the work they have been doing long before the official "special relationship" with the neighboring tribe. Native and non-Native allies continue to try and protect Oldest Elder, ensure *her/his* continued presence at the university and do the best they can with the resources they have available. While the university may have a legal relationship through agreements and proclamations with the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, the Anishinaabeg language community continues to hope that a reciprocal and institutionally supported relationship with Oldest Elder may some day develop.

Central Michigan University, University of Michigan, and Bemidji State University share a narrative of struggle and the survival and resistance of Anishinaabeg culture and Anishinaabemowin. In many ways, the stories of these programs are not so dissimilar to other Indigenous struggles regarding treaty rights, natural resources, religious freedom, and general recognition and respect. At these institutions, members and allies of the American Indian communities worked to communicate their worldview and understanding to non-Native individuals. They fought to create shared understandings and space for the recognition, respect, and value of Native cultures and lifeways. For individuals working on fostering their own relationships with Oldest Elder or community members interested in creating an Indigenous language program at an educational institution, the story of these programs offer some important insights.

At each institution, activism was a central component for starting conversations, bringing attention to American Indian issues and concerns, and placing pressure on the university to meet the needs of Native American students and their responsibilities as educational institutions. Sometimes the protests occur by faculty, staff, and students such as Central Michigan University's period of nickname evaluation. In other cases, the activism comes more strongly from the surrounding communities like the boycott of Bemidji by the surrounding tribal communities. Other places might find more effective activism by joining the local American Indian community with the campus community like University of Michigan's early activism. Sometimes the activism ebbs and flows depending on the issue at hand and other factors at work in that particular context. When University of Michigan students took over the Union, it was largely a student led protest. In each example, however, individuals involved in the protest were connected to the

larger American Indian community and at different points in time, drew upon those connections.

Different forms and combinations of activism at these institutions brought media attention to American Indian issues and concerns. Sometimes they drew national media attention. The spotlight often placed increasing pressure on university officials to address issues they would rather ignore and find new avenues, such as language courses, to alleviate some of the pressure. In many case, they drew enough attention and fostered opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges and conversations, that they shifted the cultural understanding enough to make positive change possible. In Bemidji, the boycott brought the first concentrated effort to hire Native American people by the town's businesses and a greater awareness of interdependency between Bemidji and the reservations. Another example is the changing treatment and perception of Michigamua by other student organizations and leaders in response to the increased activism and education about the group made possible by student activism.

A second factor shared by all three narratives is the importance of non-Native allies within the institutions. These allies often come from a variety of backgrounds and positions within the educational structure. Allies are often, but not always, found among members of other minority groups or within fields of study pertaining to diverse cultures. Allies can provide hope in that cross-cultural communication and exchange can happen. Sometimes, they can even surprise you, as in the case of the faculty members in Bemidji's Department of Modern Languages who worked to change their department name before Ojibwe courses were even offered. The help of allies is sometimes overt and in other cases it might take the subtle form of passing conversation. In either form,

the presence and support of allies within the institutions was helpful in navigating issues of funding, bureaucracy within the institution, and adding strength to the struggles. Allies helped the program at the University of Michigan address the language requirement controversy and in creating the American Indian Resource Center at Bemidji State University. Allies across the campus at Central Michigan University spoke out against the mascot and nickname and in some cases were met with verbal attacks and lawsuits for their solidarity with anti-mascot peoples. While allies are not the central players in this narrative, their participation and help in the struggle, is something that requires acknowledgement. For those engaged in language revitalization work today, these narratives illustrate the potential and positive effect relationships with allies can have in aiding the struggle.

A third insight these case studies provide is that the struggle to decolonize academia, even in small amounts, is a long journey full of high and low points. In some situations, the programs make experience cycles of development and decline like the University of Michigan. Other programs may encounter limited growth maintained by the sheer determination of a few key individuals. The degree and support of allies, administrators, and community individuals may all wax and wane as people transfer to different departments or move away from the university. These relationships are what supports and feeds the possibility for change in Western institutions. However, as these relationships shift, as all relationships can and often do, new relationships must be formed to continue creating and maintaining space for Oldest Elder. Relationships with the language are built by individuals but also must be built for the long haul. The work of creating Indigenous space in Western institutions requires persistence and

perseverance. Thankfully, encouragement and strength are available in the language by connecting with Oldest Elder when one's motivation and energy is depleted. *She* offers a connection to those who have struggled before for the language and those who will continue the struggle in the future.

At the heart of the three language programs and the efforts of the individuals involved are different types of relationships with Oldest Elder and all its facets. The narrative of the programs' evolution offers insights for those engaged in language struggles. Their narrative and the framework applied in this dissertation also offer the construct of Oldest Elder. The context of Oldest Elder helps scholars interested in American Indian History, Linguistic Anthropology and language studies conceptualize the narrative in living terms, as an interplay between animate beings including the language as an active agent. The narrative is more than the mastery or loss of a word or phrase but of a spiritual, historical, communal force, a worldview, and an elder. Putting relationships at the center of the narrative presents a more holistic account of how these programs and Anishinaabemowin revitalization occurs over time.

Future research on similar language programs, such as the Ojibwe language program at the University of Minnesota or Northern Michigan University, could contribute to this ongoing subject. The relationships built, nurtured, and developed over the course of this author's work and her personal relationship with Oldest Elder will also continue to grow. New relationships will be formed, current ones will continue to evolve and strengthen, and Oldest Elder will live on as long as people speak to *her/him*. It is my hope that those individuals searching for a relationship with Oldest Elder will take comfort from this work. Oldest Elder is always available to those who seek a relationship

with the language. It is a total relationship that gives as much as is given, if not more, and can bring peace, warmth, and positivity to one's life. It connects you to an entire network of the past and the present through a special language based communion. The relationships involved in the process can shift and change but they are there to be had. Oldest Elder is present wherever the language is and can return as long as the language remains.

As the language table gathering came to a close at the Nokomis Center, people began packing up their notes and belongings. We moved the chairs and tables back to their places and chatted with each other about upcoming events like sugar bush or other community gatherings. We walked out into the night air and headed to our cars talking about words we had learned, mutual friends or when we would see each other next. As we said our goodbyes, we concluded our conversations with the word *baamaapii*. As I got inside my car and pulled out of the parking lot, I thought to myself how fitting the word *baamaapii* was in that moment. The word is a temporal adverb that translates to the idea of later, after a while, or eventually. When used as a salutation, it expresses the idea that you will see each other again after some time, even in the spiritual world. The fluidity of the word and its temporal ambiguity but certainty that something will happen in the future expresses the relationships at the language table.

The individuals are connected with each other through their shared experiences at the gathering. They are also connected with the Oldest Elder as they learn, practice, and speak the language. Oldest Elder connects with speakers of the past, present, and future through the language in those moments. *He/she* lives simultaneously in the past, present, and future. As we speak *baamaapii* to each other, there is a promise being made. This is

a dedicated promise that kindred relationships will thrive, even if they take awhile to flourish. As I pull out onto the road, I catch myself smiling and feeling refreshed, energized, and healed a bit from the every day wounds of a stressful western society. Like my grandmother, Oldest Elder is always present with the language and I find great comfort with her.

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