

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

EXPLORING LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS
OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

BY

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Dedication

With love and appreciation, I dedicate this dissertation to my parents and to my husband. Mom, you filled our home with books and encouraged my love of reading from a very young age. All those bedtime stories lit a spark that eventually ignited into a lifelong love of learning. Dad, your unwavering belief in my abilities has been a constant source of strength. Thank you for being my most vocal fan. Finally, thank you Chris for your unflinching encouragement and patience. I am so grateful to you for supporting me as I slowly accomplished this major life goal. No more degrees now, I promise... well maybe just one more?!

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Abstract

This study investigates learners' perceptions of Open Educational Resource-enabled pedagogy (OER-EP) by leveraging an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology with an *Etuaptmumk* epistemological framing which integrates Anishinaabe and Western perspectives into the analysis of learners' perceptions of OER-EP. One research question guided the inquiry:

How do students enrolled in a college Truth and Reconciliation course experience the creation of a renewable assignment?

Seven postsecondary students who completed a Truth and Reconciliation in Canada course and who participated in the OER-EP final project provided study data in the form of semi-structured interviews. An *Etuaptmumk* approach to the analysis of study data brought forward *maang*, the loon, as a pivotal helper whose teachings allow for a deeper appreciation of the potential impact of OER-EP when coupled with social justice aims. Study results highlight the personal meanings that participants associated with the experience of participating in OER-EP, considerations of the needs of an imagined audience, nuanced decision-making associated with licensing and anonymity, and considerations for educators and learners who may engage in OER-EP. These results contribute to the extant open education literature and may inform pedagogical approaches, institutional supports, and ongoing research into learners' experiences of open pedagogical practices generally and OER-EP specifically.

Keywords: learners' experience, open educational resources, OER-enabled pedagogy, Etuaptmumk, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, maang

Table of Contents

Approval of Dissertation	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	x
List of Figures and Illustrations	xi
List of Abbreviations	xii
 Chapter One: Introduction to the Study	 1
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	3
The OER-EP Assignment	3
Research Question	5
Significance of the Study	6
Personal Significance	6
Spiritual Significance	8
Professional Significance	9
Definition of Terms	11
Open Educational Resources (OER)	11
Table 1	12
Creative Commons Licenses	14
5R Permissions	15
Open Educational Practices / Open Pedagogy	16
OER-Enabled Pedagogy (OER-EP) / Renewable Assignments	17
Table 2	18
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	18
Etuaptmumk / Two-Eyed Seeing	19
Organization of the Study	20
Summary	21
 Chapter Two: Review of Literature	 22
Introduction	22
Constructionism	25
Constructionism in Indigenous Knowledge Traditions	26
Constructionism in Western Education	30
Constructivism	32
Constructivism and Indigenous Pedagogies	35
Examples of Indigenous Constructivism	37
Figure 1	40
Viewing OER through <i>Etuaptmumk</i> Eyes	41

Open Educational Resources: A Common Starting Point	41
The Ontario OER Landscape	43
OER and the Indigenization Continuum	44
The Ongoing Unsettling of Open Licensing	51
Viewing OER-EP through <i>Etuaptmumk</i> Eyes	55
OER-EP Supporting the Truth Phase of Truth and Reconciliation	57
Emerging Research on OER-EP	59
Summary	61
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	63
Introduction.....	63
Philosophical Considerations.....	63
Idiographic Position.....	63
Phenomenological Orientation	65
Hermeneutics.....	69
The Hermeneutic Circle and the Double Hermeneutic.....	70
Mnaadendiwin.....	71
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	72
Description and Characteristics.....	72
Role of the Researcher	74
Participants.....	78
Recruitment Strategy	79
Study Setting	80
Data Collection	80
Analysis	82
Figure 2.....	82
Validating the Study.....	87
Credibility	87
Transferability.....	89
Dependability	90
Confirmability	90
Limitations.....	91
Summary	92
Chapter Four: Findings.....	93
Introduction.....	93
Table 3.....	93
Participant Information.....	93
Table 4	94
Brianna.....	95
Star	95
Tendai	96
Simon.....	96
Britney.....	97

Sarah	97
Jessica	98
This Learning is Meaningful.....	98
1a. This Learning is Meaningful to Me	99
1b. This Learning Is Meaningful for Me	102
1c. This Learning is Meaningful for Others.....	104
I Have Something I Can Offer.....	107
2a. I Design for My Audience	107
2b. I Recognize the Importance of Peer-to-Peer Learning.....	112
I Make Careful Decisions that Support my Goals	116
3a. My Licensing Decisions are Rooted in Respect	116
3b. My Choices Related to Anonymity are Personal and Contextual	120
My Experiences May Guide You	122
4a. I Have Recommendations to Share with Educators	122
4b. I Have Recommendations to Share with Learners	128
Summary	131
 Chapter Five: Discussion	 133
Introduction.....	133
Continuing the <i>Etuaptmumk</i> Interpretation	133
An Introduction to <i>Maang</i>	136
Figure 3.....	137
This Learning is Meaningful.....	139
<i>Ojiig'anung</i> and its Relationship to Meaning	139
Figure 4.....	140
Figure 5.....	141
Social Justice as <i>Ojiig'anung</i>	142
I Have Something I Can Offer.....	145
Maang Dodem and Justice	146
Figure 6.....	146
Honouring Self, Honouring Others	147
Mnaadendiwin and Accessibility.....	148
Peer-to-Peer Learning.....	150
I Make Careful Decisions That Support my Goals	152
The Legend of the Shut-Eye Dance	153
Figure 7.....	154
My Experiences May Guide You	157
Picking up the <i>Maang</i> Drum	159
Figure 8.....	161
Summary	162
 Chapter Six: Conclusion.....	 163
Introduction.....	163
Summary of the Study	165

Table 3	166
Implications for Practice.....	167
Open Licensing, Plagiarism Instruction, and the Gen-AI Disruption	167
Accessibility of Learner-Generated Content.....	170
Challenges Associated with Technology.....	172
Questions Requiring Further Research	174
Avoiding Openness Essentialism	175
Longitudinal Analyses of Perceptions of OER-EP	176
Efficacy of Learner-Generated Content.....	176
Gratitude.....	177
References.....	179
Appendix A: Student-Facing Assignment Description	204
Appendix B: Participant Consent Form	210
Appendix C: Interview Guide.....	213
Appendix D: Concept Maps.....	214
Appendix E: Certification of Ethical Approval – Athabasca University.....	221
Appendix F: Certification of Ethical Approval - Cambrian College.....	222
Appendix G: Certification of Ethical Approval (Renewals) – Athabasca University	223

List of Tables

Table 1 Definitional Variances of OER.....	12
Table 2 Criteria Distinguishing Different Kinds of Assignments.....	18
Table 3 Group Experiential Themes.....	93, 166
Table 4 Overview of Renewable Assignments Created by Study Participants.....	94

List of Figures and Illustrations

Figure 1 Currie & Kaminski's (2017) First Nations Experiential Learning Cycle.....	40
Figure 2 Overview of Idiographic Analytic Processes.....	82
Figure 3 Preparing for Cross-Case Analysis.....	137
Figure 4 Ojibwe <i>Maang</i> (Loon) Constellation.....	140
Figure 5 Ojibwe Star Map with <i>Maang</i> (Loon) Constellation in Centre.....	141
Figure 6 Anishinaabe <i>Dodemag</i>	146
Figure 7 Weesakayjac Entices the Birds to Dance the Shut-Eye Dance.....	154
Figure 8 Community Hand Drum Featuring <i>Maang</i>	161

List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIDA	Artificial Intelligence and Data Act
CC	Creative Commons
Gen-AI	Generative Artificial Intelligence
GET	Group Experiential Themes
GO-GN	Global OER Graduate Network
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
IRSSA	Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement
OEP	Open Educational Practices
OER	Open Educational Resources
OER-EP	Open Educational Resources Enabled Pedagogy
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The open education movement is premised upon the assumption that everyone should have access to effective educational experiences and resources. Proponents of open education often aim to democratize access to knowledge through the provision of freely accessible and openly licensed teaching, learning, and research materials, commonly referred to as Open Educational Resources or (OER). While OER enable access to learning materials without the cost barriers often associated with commercially produced resources, meeting the access-oriented aims of the open education movement, as the field matures, practitioners who advocate for the creation and adoption of OER are also shifting their pedagogies to take advantage of the pedagogical possibilities enabled by OER (DeBarger & Casserly, 2021, para 1). For example, an educator who has adopted an open textbook may decide to collaborate with students to generate context-specific examples that can be incorporated into a revised version of the textbook, invite students to remix existing OER to include public-facing annotations within the digital margins of the OER, or collaborate with students to create and redistribute their own unique OER. These strategies, broadly referred to as Open Educational Practices (OEP), extend the possibilities of OER to encourage participation, collaboration, and knowledge creation.

As adoption of OER and incorporation of OEP grow within secondary and postsecondary contexts, empirical research into the impacts of these practices also continues to increase (Anderson & Cuttler, 2020; Farrow et al., 2015; Hodgkinson-Williams, 2018; Murphy, 2013; Pitt, 2015). This study builds on the emergent research

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

within the field of open education to explore college learners' perspectives on and experiences with OER-enabled pedagogy (OER-EP), a narrowly bounded form of OEP that invites learners to create and openly share their coursework with others, such that their course outputs hold value beyond the original classroom context (Wiley & Hilton, 2018).

OER-EP, rather than more expansive OEP frameworks and practices, is explored in this study, as the term is at once unambiguous, yet also assumption-laden. The specificity of the term OER-EP allows for an interpretation of learners' perceptions of a specific type of open practice, while the assumptions contained within the definition of OER-EP invite critical analysis of the biases that inform the approach. For example, openness determinism and the tensions that exist between Western and Anishinaabe understandings of knowledge and who "owns" knowledge are expanded upon and explored in Chapter Two: Review of Literature, Chapter Five: Discussion, and Chapter Six: Conclusion.

Through the study, the terms *OER-EP* and *renewable assignments* used interchangeably. Both terms describe educational activities where students create shareable, enduring artifacts of learning that contribute to a broader learning community (Elder, 2019). This study explores in detail how learners within a specific educational context interpret the invitation to create openly licensed, public-facing learning materials; their perspectives on the experience of generating potentially public-facing learning materials; and the thinking that informs their decision-making processes related to open licensing and public sharing. These insights add an important idiographic dimension to the existing literature on OER-EP.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed by this study is the lack of empirical research regarding learners' experiences and perceptions of OER-EP (Hilton et al., 2019; Tillinghast, 2020). Open education researchers have underscored the need for more close-up studies in which a single example of OER-EP is narrowly defined and investigated (Cronin, 2018; Hilton, personal communication, October 8, 2019; Paskevicius & Irvine, 2019; Wiley & Hilton, 2018). Ideally, such studies will include learners' perspectives in order to ascertain if OER-EP leads to beneficial results related to core and concomitant learning outcomes, learner motivation, creativity, satisfaction, and the like, without creating unintended and unperceived barriers to participation. Further, Hilton et al. (2019) call for additional research focussing "on a limited set of pedagogies (preferably one instantiation of open pedagogy)" to help grow the corpus of knowledge related to open pedagogical practices (p. 283). Consequently, this research project investigates learners' perceptions of one specific renewable assignment, and therefore, one specific example of OER-EP.

The OER-EP Assignment

Study participants experienced and shared their perspectives on a particular OER-EP assignment that was included as a capstone project in an asynchronous online course that I design and facilitate, titled *Truth and Reconciliation* (see Appendix A for the full assignment description). Students enrolled in diploma programs at Ontario colleges must complete a minimum of three General Education courses intended to enhance their self-understanding, critical thinking, and social awareness (Ontario, n.d). *Truth and Reconciliation* is a General Education course option available to learners

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

enrolled in many diploma and certificate-level programs. Students who enrolled in the course brought their unique perspectives, backgrounds, professional interests, lived experiences, and learning goals to the online learning community.

The *Truth and Reconciliation* course invited learners to engage in a sustained, critical examination of the myriad harms caused by Canada's residential school system specifically, and by Canada's settler colonial policies and practices generally. The students and I spent approximately ten weeks learning about Canada's overt attempts to sever Indigenous children's connections to family, community, land, culture, and language in order to assimilate them into Euro-Canadian culture. We listened to residential school Survivor stories; we investigated important concepts such as intergenerational trauma, the Doctrine of Discovery, and cultural genocide.

I endeavour to teach the course in a way that acknowledges my settler positionality and the unearned privileges this affords me, while also honouring my Algonquin Anishinaabe ancestry and knowledge traditions by centering relationality; embracing complexity and plurality; acknowledging that learning is experienced holistically; incorporating *Anishinaabemowin* language into the course experience; and by storying our learning. As we come to know each other and share our perspectives and experiences, many students describe profound shock and sadness at Canada's historical and contemporary treatment of Indigenous persons; many ask why they are first encountering this important learning in their postsecondary curricula as an optional General Education course.

After investigating the concept of reconciliation, the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), and the TRC's 94 Calls to Action, I invited

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

learners to submit their capstone projects to a public-facing website that we collectively decided to name *Nàbowàdjige: Our Calls to Action*¹. *Nàbowàdjige* is an Algonquin Anishinaabe word that means to examine closely, “to look at carefully so as to understand the meaning” (Omàmiwininì Pimàdjowin, n.d.). I designed this capstone project to assist students in bringing their academic learning out into the world, to provide an entry-point into a space and way of being that Candace Brunette-Debassige (*Wabun Geezis*) describes as “living decolonization rather than simply talking about it within the confines of a Western academic institution” (p. 207). This invitation for students to publicly share the outputs of their learning meets Wiley and Hilton’s (2018) description of OER-EP, which I expand on in the Definition of Terms section of this chapter.

Research Question

This study adopted a qualitative, interpretative framing and a phenomenological approach to the analysis of participants’ accounts of their subjective experiences, focussing on the meanings that participants ascribed to their participation in completing the OER-EP assignment. Further, the study investigated the various decision-making processes that participants engaged in related to the creation of the OER-EP assignment, such as selecting the degree of anonymity associated with their public-facing outputs and how they wished to license their work.

Worthington (n.d.) contends that “a phenomenological study should have a strong central phenomenological question, one rooted in affective, emotional, and intense

¹ <https://nabowadjige.home.blog/>

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

human experience” (p. 2). Therefore, this inquiry process anchored to the following central and guiding phenomenologically-oriented research question:

How do college students enrolled in a Truth and Reconciliation course experience the creation of a renewable assignment?

This guiding question was addressed through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach to the examination of the personal lived experiences and sensemaking processes shared by study participants, supported by an *Etuaptmumk* epistemological framing that considered both Anishinaabe and Western ways of knowing. This commitment to *Etuaptmumk* allowed me to consider the guiding research question from multiple perspectives, revealing complexities, contradictions, and hegemonic assumptions that I might have otherwise overlooked. *Etuaptmumk* is further discussed in Chapter Two.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significance on several levels, described in the following subsections.

Personal Significance

I am a learner who believes strongly in the value of higher education and academic scholarship. Despite minimal family history of engagement in postsecondary education, I am currently completing my fifth degree and fifteenth year of higher education. In my time enrolled in formal higher education courses and programs, only once have I been asked to create a course assignment that would hold value and significance beyond the scope of my individual learning. This invitation came from Dr. Catharine Dishke Hondzel as she facilitated a master's-level course in *Adult Education*

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Theory and Practice at Western University in Ontario, Canada. She invited each of the students enrolled in the course to produce a chapter in a textbook that she would edit and publish on an independent publishing platform. The resulting collection, titled *Diverse Perspectives on Adult Education and Lifelong Learning* (2013), was my first experience with a renewable written assignment. While Dr. Dishke Hondzel did not frame her invitation using the language of open pedagogy, did not involve contributors in licensing decisions, and opted ultimately to publish the text utilizing an All Rights Reserved license, this invitation nonetheless allowed me to experience first-hand the impacts that writing for a broader audience as a component of my coursework had on my motivation, attention to detail, and authorial voice. Though this example does not serve as a perfect example of OER-EP, as a learner, I felt the impact.

I appreciate the learning value inherent to conventional academic writing assignments. However, when I reflect on the many research papers I have submitted to professors who offered a final grade and brief evaluative commentary at most, I cannot help but feel that opportunities for broader sharing have been lost. At this point in my academic journey, I feel empowered to make decisions about open sharing on my own. I no longer depend upon invitations from course professors, as these invitations remain quite infrequent. The openness that I have incorporated into my learning activities, such as publicly blogging about the doctoral journey, creating a public-facing digital portfolio, participating in open peer-review, and engaging in several open online communities of practice, has increased my comfort with and therefore my tendency toward openly sharing the artifacts of my learning. This personal shift in my approach to learning and

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

sharing knowledge has also influenced the pedagogical decisions I make when designing and supporting learning opportunities for college students.

Spiritual Significance

Early in the Doctorate of Distance Education program, my great-grandmother, Beatrice Ann Hall-Ba, known to our family as “Nanny,” passed away near her childhood home in what is now known as Deep River, Ontario. A Catholic priest presided over the service, and she was laid to rest in the Deep River Community Cemetery. As I sat through the Catholic mass, I mourned my Nanny as well as the lack of Algonquin culture reflected in the proceedings.

My Nanny was an Algonquin Anishinaabekwe, the daughter of David Boniface Adams and Mary Adams (née Dole), Algonquin Anishinaabeg who spoke their language, knew their culture, and raised their ten children on the land, nestled within a small community of fellow Algonquins who settled on the shores of the *Kitchissippi*, the Ottawa River. In just one generation, almost all those cultural connections were severed due to forced assimilation and Canadian settler colonial violence. Nanny didn't speak *Anishinaabemowin* beyond a few choice words that she reserved for persons who misbehaved or upset her. She raised her children to favour Euro-Canadian culture and worldview, yet she chastised them if she sensed shame in their Algonquin heritage. Nanny rarely spoke of her teachings and didn't engage with her Algonquin community beyond her friends and family - or so we thought.

As my mother and grandmother were sorting through Nanny's belongings, they stumbled upon her band membership card. There it was, tucked in the bottom of her sock drawer, proclaiming her a member of the Greater Golden Lake First Nation, “a

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Non-Status Algonquin First Nation Community comprised mainly of members from the Pembroke and Petawawa area and the surrounding Ottawa Valley” (Mielke, n.d., para. 1). None of us was aware that this card existed, as none of us had helped her acquire it. I visited the Algonquins of Greater Golden Lake website and found Nanny’s name listed on the home page. It was profoundly moving to see her name listed there. Perhaps she hadn’t fully turned away from her Algonquin roots after all. Perhaps I shouldn’t either.

This moment launched me into a journey of discovery, or perhaps a journey of recovery. I’m working my way back to the Sacred Fire, back to the Red Road and the cultural practices, traditional language, spiritual teachings, and communities of my Algonquin ancestors. I set off on a journey home, with my mother, grandmother, knowledge keepers and Elders - indeed all of my relations - supporting and guiding me. As such, this study holds deep spiritual significance as it represents healing through learning and sharing. This study honours my Nanny and her many fascinating secrets, and represents some of what my mother, grandmother, and I have come to know about our Algonquin culture, along with the subsequent and ongoing shifts in our ways of knowing, being, and doing in the world.

Professional Significance

I began to engage with open education in the early years of my teaching career, though I refrained from incorporating open educational practices into my pedagogy until I had secured a full-time, permanent college-level teaching position in 2017. Once I had secured permanent employment status, I began asking myself how I might teach my courses in a manner that aligns more closely to my personal values and ethos as an educator and as someone who feels a strong connection to Algonquin Anishinaabe

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

teaching and learning practices. I began moving away from a behaviourist, transmission-oriented pedagogical approach to one that empowers learners to become co-creators of knowledge, to take personal ownership of their learning goals, and to have the autonomy to make choices in terms of how they prefer to communicate their learning.

While engagement with OER and open education is limited at my institution, I have had several opportunities to engage in meaningful professional development opportunities externally. For example, my studies as a Doctor of Distance Education student at Athabasca University, an Open Education Fellowship opportunity provided by eCampus Ontario, an Open Education Research Fellowship awarded to me by the OpenEd Group, and my membership and engagement with the Global OER Graduate Network (GO-GN) have exposed me to various aspects of open education and open educational practices.

I have incorporated a variety of pedagogical practices which some would label open into both my face-to-face and asynchronous online courses (Bali et al., 2020; Hegarty, 2015; Nascimbeni & Burgos, 2016). For example, I've started to incorporate renewable assignments as capstone projects in several of my English Communications and General Education courses. I've communicated these invitations toward openness carefully, with intentionality, and with the assistance of critical feedback from and ongoing dialogue with learners. My experiences with inviting learners to engage in OER-EP through the creation of renewable assignments have been, on the whole, quite positive. I feel more like a collaborator than I do an evaluator, the work that students produce tends to be far more interesting to read than traditional academic assignments,

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

and I'm capitalizing upon my existing digital literacies as I support learners in the creation of media-rich, openly licensed learning materials.

I would like to continue to explore OER-EP in my own teaching practice, and to share my experiences with my faculty colleagues, but I want to do so in a conscientious manner that aligns with Anishinaabe values. I hope that by exploring learners' perceptions of OER-EP within my specific context, I will gain a better understanding and appreciation of their unique experiences. These findings will inform my future course designs and facilitation strategies, particularly with respect to learner-generated OER within the *Truth and Reconciliation* course; and they will inform my professional discourse related to OER-EP within and outside of my institution.

Definition of Terms

The following terminology is essential to an understanding of this study and will therefore be described in the following sections: open educational resources (OER), Creative Commons licenses, 5R permissions, open educational practices (OEP) / open pedagogy, OER-enabled pedagogy (OER-EP) / renewable assignments, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, and Etuaptmumk / Two-Eyed Seeing.

Open Educational Resources (OER)

OER are freely accessible and openly licensed teaching, learning, and research materials. Definitions of Open Educational Resources (OER) contain several important nuances and meanings, which have evolved since the term was first adopted at a (2002) UNESCO Forum on Open Courseware (Bliss & Smith, 2017). Creative Commons (2020) released the following table comparing various definitions of OER:

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Table 1

Definitional Variances of OER

	Open Copyright License Required	Right of Access, Adaptation, and Republication	Non-discriminatory (rights given to everyone, everywhere)	Does not limit use or form (does not include NonCommercial limitations)
Hewlett Foundation	✓	✓	✓	✓
OECD		✓		
UNESCO	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cape Town Declaration	✓	✓	✓	
Wikieducator OER Handbook		✓	✓	✓
OER Commons		✓	✓	✓

Of note are the discrepancies between open copyright licensing requirements, and variances in the inclusion of works licensed with non-commercial restrictions.

UNESCO's (2002) definition of OER includes "any type of educational materials that are in the public domain or introduced with an open license [...] [ranging] from textbooks to curricula, syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, tests, projects, audio, video and animation" (as cited in Moist, 2017, para. 1). UNESCO's more recent (2019) definition reads as follows:

Open Educational Resources (OER) are learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution by others. (pp. 2-3)

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Both definitions incorporate public domain or open licensing as criteria for OER.

However, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Wikieducator OER Handbook, and OER Commons definitions take a more moderate stance on the inclusion of open licensing, listing open licensing as a possibility, but not a precondition, of OER (OECD, 2015; OER Commons, n.d., Wikieducator, 2010).

Additional discrepancies between the various definitions of OER emerge due to the Creative Commons *Non-Commercial (NC)* clause, which allows “reusers to distribute, adapt, and build upon the materials in any medium or format for noncommercial purposes only” (Creative Commons, n.d.-b, para 5). The non-commercial restriction has been controversial and contested within the open education community, due in large part to a lack of case law establishing a clear interpretation of the clause (OER Africa, 2020). To add clarity to the scope of noncommercial use, Creative Commons released survey results exploring interpretations of internet users regarding the meaning of the words *commercial* and *noncommercial* in the context of content found online (Creative Commons, 2014). While the study findings provide a starting point for future research, Creative Commons warns that “the results of the study are not intended to serve as CC’s official interpretation of what is and is not commercial use under our licenses” (2014, para. 160). Moral and technical debates regarding the legitimacy and appropriate application of the noncommercial clause within certain Creative Commons licenses continues and is reflected in the variance between definitions of OER (Wiley, 2010). As the field matures, debates regarding what does and does not constitute OER continues.

Creative Commons Licenses

Creative Commons is a “non-profit organization that works to increase the amount of creativity (cultural, educational, and scientific content) available in ‘the commons’ — the body of work that is available to the public for free and legal sharing, use, repurposing, and remixing” (Creative Commons, n.d.-d, para. 1). While historically *the commons* has referred to “a broad set of resources, natural and cultural, that are shared by many people” (IASC, 2020), within the context of open education *the commons* tends to refer to the distributed global repository of openly licensed resources, which includes literature, multimedia, scientific research, and software (Creative Commons, n.d.).

The Creative Commons licenses enable knowledge creators to access and utilize a free, standardized set of licenses to help grow *the commons* in ways that do not require content adopters and adapters to request explicit permission each time a work is accessed or modified (Creative Commons, n.d.). There are currently six types of Creative Commons licenses that knowledge creators may choose from, along with two public domain tools. Knowledge creators can select which of the licenses is most appropriate and most aligned with their particular publishing strategies, from the most permissive *CC0 - No Rights Reserved* license, to the more commonly utilized *CC BY* license, which grants “unrestricted, irrevocable, royalty-free, worldwide, indefinite rights to use the work in any way, by any user and for any purpose,” as long as the original authors or authors are attributed for creating the original work; to the most restrictive *CC BY-NC-ND* license, which restricts the right to modify and commercialize the work (Wikimedia, 2023).

5R Permissions

The Creative Commons licenses enable some or all of the *5R permissions*, often referred to simply as the *5Rs*. This framework, established by David Wiley in 2007, was originally proposed as the *4R permissions*, and was intended to help users conceptualize the various activities enabled by the explicit permissions inherent to most open licenses. The framework first included the following:

- Reuse – Permission to use the work verbatim, exactly as it was found,
- Rework – Permission to alter or transform the work so that it better meets the users' needs,
- Remix – Permission to combine the (verbatim or altered) work with other works to better suit users' needs,
- Redistribute – Permission to share the verbatim work, the reworked work, or the remixed work with others (Wiley, 2007).

In 2014, in response to publishers' leasing of commercial content to end-users for short periods of time in an effort to decrease costs while simultaneously increasing control over end-users' engagement with commercial content, a practice that Wiley describes as an "attack on personal property" and a "disappearing ink" phenomenon, a fifth *R* was introduced to the framework (para. 4). The fifth *R* grants users the right to "Retain - the right to make, own, and control copies of the content" (Wiley, 2014, para. 11). Wiley has expressed dismay at the absence of end-users' rights to retain OER in the current UNESCO definition, a definition which is intended to set a global standard for OER policies and frameworks (Wiley, 2019). Wiley responded with the ALMS Framework, intended to "provide a way of thinking about those technical choices and

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

understanding the degree to which they enable or impede a user's ability to engage in the 5R activities permitted by open licenses" (Wiley, n.d.) The ALMS framework considers how readily open content can be edited, revised, and remixed, and the level of technical expertise required to work with various file types, with the aim of "enabling the greatest number of people possible to engage in the 5R activities" through the thoughtful considerations of technical choices that inform the selection of particular license types and other technical choices such as file format (Wiley, n.d.).

Open Educational Practices / Open Pedagogy

OER, Creative Commons, and the 5R permissions have enabled major conceptual changes to global education broadly. In my Canadian postsecondary educational context, OER are primarily leveraged as alternatives to commercial resources to decrease the costs incurred by learners participating in tuition-based educational experiences (Hayman, 2018, p. 7). However, proponents of OEP and open pedagogy expand the benefits of adopting and adapting OER within formal teaching environments, arguing that "when you use open pedagogy in your classroom, you are inviting your students to be part of the teaching process, participating in the co-creation of knowledge" (BCcampus, n.d.). Beyond replacing commercial resources with openly licensed content, educators and advocates are beginning to explore the pedagogical potential that openly licensed course content enables, which are typically learner-centered constructivist and social constructivist activities, such as inviting students to co-create OER, to remix or revise existing OER, and to contribute the artifacts of their learning to the core content of a course for the benefit of future learners.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

As the landscape of open education continues to evolve, the integration of various forms of OEP within postsecondary education contexts may signal a shift toward more inclusive, participatory, and student-centered learning strategies. However, various, and at times conflicting understandings of the terms OEP and open pedagogy proliferate across the open education landscape (Bates, 2019; Cronin, 2017), leading some researchers such as David Wiley and John Hilton III to call for more specificity in terminology.

OER-Enabled Pedagogy (OER-EP) / Renewable Assignments

This study adopted a narrowly bounded conceptualization of open pedagogy known as OER-enabled pedagogy (OER-EP). The terms OER-EP and renewable assignments are often used interchangeably. Unlike disposable assignments, the prevalent form of assessment in formal education whereby student work is essentially discarded after grading, renewable assignments aim to transcend the typical teacher-student hierarchy by emphasizing the lasting value and real-world relevance of students' outputs, encouraging the creation of learning artifacts that have broader, enduring impact beyond a single person's efforts to achieve a single grade in a single course (Katz & Van Allen, 2020).

David Wiley introduced the concept of OER-EP in 2017 as a departure from the overwhelming amount of semantic and definitional variance surrounding the terms open pedagogy and OEP. The term was further refined in a (2018) article co-published with John Hilton, in which the authors define OER-EP as "the set of teaching and learning practices that are only possible or practical in the context of the 5R permissions which

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

are characteristic of OER” (2018, p. 135). The authors propose a continuum of criteria distinguishing OER-EP from other assessment strategies (p. 137), shown on Table 2.

Table 2

Criteria Distinguishing Different Kinds of Assignments

	Student creates an artifact	The artifact has value beyond supporting its creator's learning	The artifact is made public	The artifact is openly licensed
Disposable assignments	✓			
Authentic assignments	✓	✓		
Constructionist assignments	✓	✓	✓	
Renewable assignments	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note. Reprinted from “Defining OER-Enabled Pedagogy,” by D. Wiley and J. L. Hilton III, 2018, *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 19(4), p. 137. Copyright CC-BY.

OER-EP is essentially a combination of constructionism, constructivism, and openness, culminating in learners’ participation in renewable assignments, “assignments which both support an individual student’s learning and result in new or improved open educational resources that provide a lasting benefit to the broader community of learners” (Wiley & Hilton, 2018, p. 137). As this study explores learners’ experiences of a single instance of OER-EP through the creation of a renewable assignment, these concepts will be further elaborated upon in Chapter Two.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The next term relevant to the study is the selected research methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is a qualitative research approach described by Larkin, Shaw, and Flowers (2009) as “committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences” (p. 1). IPA is interpretative,

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

informed by hermeneutics and phenomenology, and is highly idiographic (Alase, 2017). IPA research projects typically involve “collecting qualitative data from a reasonably homogenous group who share a certain contextual perspective on a given experience [...] These designs give us an in-depth view of a specific experience and do so with a recognizably personal scale to that view” (Larkin, Shaw & Flowers, 2018, p. 184). The approach and the methodological intentions of the study will be further elaborated upon in Chapter Three: Methodology.

Etuaptmumk / Two-Eyed Seeing

The final term relevant to the study is *Etuaptmumk* or *Two-Eyed Seeing*, an integrative approach to problem solving and understanding the world which resists notions of cultural superiority, calling for multiple worldviews and perspectives to be incorporated within the analytical process. *Etuaptmumk* serves as the epistemological framework for this study and is elaborated upon and revisited throughout the research. The *Etuaptmumk* framing also necessitated the inclusion of many Indigenous words from various nations.

For example, the word *Etuaptmumk* is a *Mi'kmawisimk* term, an Eastern Algonquin language spoken by the Mi'kmaq peoples whose territory sits within what is now known as the Atlantic provinces of Canada and in the northeastern United States. Additionally, *Omàmiwininimowin* and *Anishinaabemowin* words are incorporated throughout the study. *Omàmiwininimowin* (Algonquin) is the language of my Algonquin Anishinaabe ancestors, whose unceded territory spans what is now known as southern Quebec and eastern Ontario. *Anishinaabemowin* (Ojibwe) is the language spoken by some of the First Peoples of the Great Lakes region of central Ontario and surrounding

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

areas. The particular dialect of *Anishinaabemowin* included in this study is that which is spoken in *N'Swakamok*, the place where I currently reside (Sudbury, Ontario, Canada).

It would not be respectful or appropriate to identify and attempt to define each *Mi'kmawi'simk*, *Omàmiwininimowin*, and *Anishinaabemowin* term used in the study within this section. Rather, these terms will be introduced within their specific contexts, along with necessary background information and elaboration. It's also important to note that some terms, such as an Anishinaabe person's Spirit Name, will go undefined intentionally. This decolonial choice challenges normative academic conventions that assimilate Indigenous cultures into dominant Western frameworks. Allowing certain words to exist in their original form, without an English translation, is an act of respect and an act of resistance.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized as follows: In Chapter Two, the literature review critically outlines the theoretical foundations of OER-EP, viewed through dual Anishinaabe and Western epistemologies, an *Etuaptmumk* approach that will be further elaborated upon in the introductory sections of the chapter. Chapter Three's methodology describes the approach implemented to examine the experiences and perceptions of learners invited to create openly licensed, public-facing coursework. A rationale for the selection of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) research method is provided, followed by a detailed description of the study design and research procedures. In Chapter Four, the study's findings describe the products of the analysis, including a complete narrative account of the themes that developed through rigorous application of structured analytical processes and principles as described in Chapter Three, along with

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

representative transcript extracts. Chapter Five's discussion is assisted by the *Maang oshkaabewis*, the loon helper, whose teachings guide the analysis and support the *Etuaptmumk* epistemology which connects study findings to Anishinaabe *Maang* teachings and relevant literature. Finally, Chapter Six considers implications for future practice, suggests areas of future research, and offers final reflections.

Summary

Wiley and Hilton conclude their (2018) article titled *Defining OER-Enabled Pedagogy* by calling for further implementation of renewable assignments and OEP at all levels of formal education, along with further research, to enable educators to make informed decisions about the nuanced implications of adopting open educational practices such as OER-EP within their teaching practices. The present study explores college learners' experiences of the invitation to participate in OER-EP through the creation of openly licensed, public-facing coursework. The results of this study add to the growing body of empirical research by offering insights into how certain students within a specific educational context interpret and experience this invitation toward openness.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Introduction

Embedded within the term OER-enabled pedagogy (OER-EP) are several concepts fundamental to an understanding of the intended goals and rationale for infusing degrees of openness within academic courses and assignments. These concepts include terms such as constructionism, constructivism, renewable assignments, OER, and open licensing. This terminology is used in specific ways within the open education lexicon. Accordingly, the following sections examine each concept's relationship to OER-EP specifically, and to open educational practices broadly.

While often ignored in the current literature related to openness and open practices such as OER-EP, Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies hold relevance and importance within the context of OER-EP. Stein (2020) asserts that particularly since the 1970s, Indigenous scholars and practitioners have been making “efforts to denaturalize the Eurocentric and capitalist logics that order teaching and research, to create space for Indigenous knowledge to thrive on their own terms” (p. 160). Despite persistent advocacy and efforts from Indigenous scholars and communities, there is far more work to be done. Marker (2004) writes, “Universities are in increasingly paradoxical positions as they ostensibly invite Indigenous expression but resist the undoing of hierarchies that maintain hegemonic equilibrium” (p. 502). An important component of this study includes an analysis of how practices such as OER-EP may also function to maintain hegemonic equilibrium, or potentially disrupt it.

Therefore, each section of this chapter also seeks to honour both Anishinaabe and Western knowledge traditions through a critical exploration of OER-EP practices,

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

reflecting Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall's description of *Etuaptmumk* or *Two-Eyed Seeing*, a concept that involves "learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing" (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 335). Marshall explains that *Etuaptmumk* allows him to carry out his inherent responsibility to view phenomena critically and reflectively, "so that [his] efforts will be much more beneficial for the common good" (Cameron, 2018).

By adopting a critical and reflective approach to the study of OER-EP, I aimed to observe the following caution and call to action:

If open education serves only to reinforce the normative universalism of Global North institutions, publications, research priorities, funding, and metrics, then efforts to 'open' education may simply be exacerbating rather than challenging inequality. This is a challenge that must be faced and addressed by all engaged in open education. (Cronin, 2020, p. 14)

By implementing an *Etuaptmumk* approach to the exploration of the theoretical origins of OER-EP, I hoped to illustrate how OER-EP can be viewed with one eye as a contemporary extension of multiple Indigenous knowledge practices, and from the other eye viewed as an innovative Western pedagogical stance.

Recognizing that a single concept can be viewed with epistemological plurality such that the concept can be simultaneously viewed as both traditional and contemporary, well-rooted as well as innovative, is a valuable insight that can only be reached by examining OER-EP from multiple epistemological frameworks. However, Algonquin Anishinaabekwe scholar Lynn Gehl (*Gii-Zhigaate Mnidookwe*) cautions that

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

there are “competing world views or paradigms of understanding the world and our place in it. These world views [...] compete for space where oppressive power mediates who is entitled and who is not entitled to express their reality” (2017, p. 44). Viewing the foundational concepts of OER-EP through traditional Anishinaabe knowledge practices critically expands OER-EP and open education discourses in ways that are necessary in moving open education forward on a path of decolonization. However, tracing the theoretical origins of OER-EP through Western epistemological frameworks reinforces these dominant narratives and may impede decolonization efforts. Reiterating the Western perspective reinforces its dominance within academic discourses. Responding to Western perspectives with Anishinaabe perspectives can problematize, potentially destabilize, and, ideally, critically expand these discourses – but may not fully dismantle existing knowledge hierarchies. This tension must be acknowledged and cannot be reconciled. This tension represents my own efforts toward critical consciousness (Freire, 1970, p. 35) through *Etuaptmumk*.

To summarize, this chapter explores the foundational knowledge and theoretical understandings that underpin the practice of OER-EP, supported by an *Etuaptmumk* view that considers both Anishinaabe and Western perspectives. This approach enabled me to reach a depth of understanding that could not be accomplished by viewing OER-EP from one epistemological framework alone, leading toward an understanding that, I hope, achieves Elder Marshall’s call for broad benefit to the common good.

As such, the following sections juxtapose several educational concepts, including constructionism, constructivism, OER, and open licensing through Anishinaabe and

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Western ways of knowing. The intent is to make the erasure and colonization of Anishinaabe knowledge practices visible in order to disrupt further perpetuation of Western epistemic violence within open education discourses and practices.

Constructionism

Wiley and Hilton explain that OER-EP is predicated upon the 5R permissions along with Papert's (1991) constructionist principles (2018, p. 135). Papert's constructionist learning places students at the centre of the process, enabling them to actively construct an understanding that builds upon their pre-existing mental models by engaging in authentic learning experiences which typically involve the creation of tangible products (Papert & Harel, 1991; Udacity, 2016). Papert differentiated constructionism from Piaget's constructivism, a related, and often conflated theory of learning, as follows:

Constructionism [...] shares constructivism's view of learning as "building knowledge structures" through progressive internalization of actions [...] It then adds the idea that this happens especially felicitously in a context where the learner is consciously engaged in constructing a public entity, whether it's a sand castle on the beach or a theory of the universe. (Papert, 1991, p.1)

In the time since Papert's writing, Creative Commons licenses and the ability to publicly license learning objects became a possibility that was not available in the early 1990s.

Digital technologies and access to the World Wide Web proliferated throughout the decade. Creative Commons was founded in 2001, and in 2002, the initial suite of Creative Commons licenses, version 1.0, was released with the intent to promote "innovative reuse of all types of intellectual works, unlocking the potentiation of sharing

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

and transforming others' work" (Geere, 2011). The availability of digital technologies and the Creative Commons open licensing structure allow contemporary knowledge creators to apply Papert's constructionist principles of learning in digital spaces.

Thus, in the context of contemporary OER-EP, the active learning processes that enable constructionist learning occur when learners create a new OER or exercise some or all of the *5R permissions* to transform and remix pre-existing OER into new learning materials. For example, learners might translate an existing OER into another language, convert a print-based OER into an audio recording, or revise an existing OER to include context-specific examples. This engagement with OER enables learners to construct their digital, public identities.

However, Papert's theory of constructionism has informed many educational practices that do not involve openly licensing the resulting artifacts. For example, makerspace movements, discovery-based learning, and project-based learning share constructionist roots with OER-EP (Alesandrini & Larson, 2010, p. 118). The inherent learning value of constructionist pedagogy, it would seem, is in learners' awareness of potential public engagement with the artifacts of learning. Open licenses extend this consideration of public identity to include contribution to digital media repositories and considerations of the copyright permissions learners are willing to grant to reusers who wish to engage with the OER creations in the various ways that open licenses enable.

Constructionism in Indigenous Knowledge Traditions

Styres (2017) argues that the Doctrine of Discovery pervades Western academic traditions, which often perpetuate the "erasure of Indigenous people and their knowledges by either failing to acknowledge their legitimacy or by appropriation" (p.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

170). Tracing OER-EP's emphasis on learning by doing through the narrow frame of Papert's constructionism fails to acknowledge the deeply embedded, personal, action-oriented approaches common to many Indigenous knowledge traditions, including Anishinaabe ways of knowing, which have guided the learning journeys of Indigenous persons since time immemorial, despite colonial disruption and systematic attempts at erasure.

Indeed, Hilton and Wiley's (2018) description of constructionism is demonstrated in numerous Anishinaabe teaching and learning practices, traditional and contemporary. For example, Algonquin knowledge keeper Pinock Smith guides learners through Anishinaabe knowledge practices through the creation of traditional items such as baby cradle boards, baskets, birch bark canoes, moose callers, wigwams, snowshoes, toboggans, and children's toys such as the cup and bone game (Smith, 2020). Smith, as with many traditional knowledge keepers, anchors his teachings to the creation of tangible objects, walking learners through the entire process, from harvest to finishing touches, infusing these experiences with traditional stories and songs such that each learner's personal experience is at once an act of cultural preservation, spiritual connection, and an effort to create a physical object.

Similarly, N'Swakamok Friendship Centre in my home community of Sudbury, Ontario preserves Anishinaabe language and culture through a focus on holistic wellness connected to traditional knowledge practices. Community members gather to hear stories and teachings as they create cultural objects, such as ribbon skirts, hand-stitched beadwork, hand drums, and shakers. The workshops are guided by Elders and always include a shared meal. Another local agency, Shkagmik-Kwe Health Centre,

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

offers traditional community-based programs focused on healing practices connected to the four sacred medicines, which at times centre around the creation or cultivation of special objects, such as land-based subsistence programs wherein participants practice filleting various local fish species and seeking out traditional medicines.

Another powerful example of constructionist principles embedded within Indigenous knowledge sharing practices relates to the birchbark canoe, a mode of transportation utilized by the Algonquin Anishinaabeg for thousands of years. To remediate the erasure of traditional knowledge related to the crafting of birch bark canoes, several master builders from Pikwàkanagàn First Nation created *Gitche Chee-mun*, the largest birch bark canoe ever built. Pikwàkanagàn First Nation gifted *Gitche Chee-mun* to the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa to “inspire young people of the community to learn the traditional ways of canoe building so that they may pass the craft to their children, preserving it for generations to come” (Bailey, 2020, para. 5). Indeed, Indigenous knowledge keepers across Turtle Island are actively sharing traditional knowledge practices such as the building of birchbark canoes in celebratory ways, while also complying with contemporary Western curricula – a highly *Etuaptmumk* approach.

For example, Anishinaabe knowledge-keepers work collaboratively with museums such as the Canadian Museum of History to develop culturally informed curricula for use in Canadian classrooms (Canadian Museum of History, n.d.). Pikwàkanagàn First Nation works closely with schools to “deliver culturally appropriate instruction to elementary and secondary students” including curricula related to the birchbark canoe (Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation, 2018). Similarly, Kevin

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Lewis, Plains Cree *Nêhiyawak* and educator, invites students and community members to collaboratively construct traditional canoes using the old ways, as well as with modern tools. He explains that “there's math in measurements, there's biology in the trees, there's chemistry in the spruce gum mixture. There's so many cross-cultural themes that are tied to this canoe [...] our engineering, our architecture – all tied into this wonderful little craft” (as cited in Muzyka, 2020, para. 29). Lewis' holistic, integrative approach highlights the important ways that the *Nêhiyaw*, like the Anishinaabe, centre connectedness and experience in the facilitation of learning opportunities intended for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners.

Teachings related to the birchbark canoe are one of many examples of how Indigenous knowledge practices continue to focus on learner-centred, action-oriented facilitation strategies that make space for personal connection to deeply embedded communal knowledge traditions by actively creating artifacts of learning. Embedded within the discussion and creation of the birchbark canoe are stories, language, history, relationality, spirituality, mathematics, engineering, patience, perseverance, teamwork, and more. The vessel is at once a traditional means of transportation and a contemporary conduit of Anishinaabe culture, worldview, and identity, made accessible by gifted knowledge-keepers such as Kevin Lewis.

Antoine et al. (2018) describe these Indigenous pedagogical approaches as experiential, “because they emphasize learning by doing. In traditional pre-contact societies, young people learned how to participate as adult members of their community by practicing the tasks and skills they would need to perform as adults” (p. 18). Unfortunately, this traditional knowledge sharing in the form of learning-by-doing is at

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

times co-opted within formal education settings, in what Allen et al. describe as an “additive approach to Indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives,” sometimes pejoratively referred to as a “beads and feathers” approach to sprinkling Indigenous workshops within Western curricula in an ad hoc, disconnected manner (2018, p. 35). Learners are invited to participate in workshops that lack cultural connection and traditional teachings, reducing the learning opportunity to an inappropriate arts and craft session that appropriates rather than appreciates Indigenous cultures. These approaches deny learners opportunities to respectfully engage with sacred cultural traditions and highlight how essential cultural connections and community involvement are within a constructionist framework that respects Indigenous knowledge traditions. Additionally, these disrespectful acts highlight the problems that ensue when “Indigenous epistemologies are grafted onto Western ontologies [...] for instance, by being instrumentalized toward reproducing and relegitimising settler colonial society [...] the gifts of Indigenous ways of knowing and being are lost” (Stein, 2020, p. 166).

It is essential that learners' engagement with traditional knowledge be appropriately guided by Elders and knowledge keepers in ways that aren't always acknowledged and enacted within Western models of constructionist education.

Constructionism in Western Education

Mitchel Resnick, a former colleague of Papert, describes constructionism within the context of formal education as a focus on projects rather than problem-solving. Papert argues that students “would learn more if they saw problems in the context of a project. Seymour [Papert] didn't just want people to understand ideas, he wanted them to use ideas” (Resnick, 2017, 2:15). Using ideas to create artifacts that will ultimately be

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

visible and accessible to a broader audience is fundamental to this active learning process (Papert & Harel, 1991). Ackermann explains, “Papert’s approach helps us understand *how ideas get formed and transformed when expressed through different media, when actualized in particular contexts, when worked out by individual minds*” (2001, emphasis in original, p. 4). Papert’s perspectives emphasize that learning occurs in the act of construction.

Papert’s constructionism expands upon Jean Piaget’s exploration of conceptual change as predicated upon contextualized experience, and Vygotsky’s exploration of the significance of cultural artifacts in meaning making processes, extending these concepts to the situated and pragmatic choices that learners must engage in when creating artifacts that represent their public identities (Ackermann, 2001; Myers, 2016). Thus, an exploration of OER-EP from a constructionist lens might focus on learning-by-making through the process of remixing or revising an existing OER, a learning process that simply isn’t possible without the permissions inherent to most open licenses (Wiley, 2017a). It holds then, that Wiley and Hilton’s notion of the renewable assignment, the apogee of OER-EP, is contingent upon learners creating an artifact, the cornerstone of constructionist pedagogy. However, the authors expand this criterion to include value beyond the creator’s individual learning, public dissemination, and open licensing of the artifact (Wiley & Hilton, 2018). By combining constructionism with openness, the authors contend that OER-EP can at once benefit individual students’ learning, while also benefiting a broader learning community.

Although Wiley and Hilton do not name it in their framing of OER-EP, another learning theory essential to a thorough examination of OER-EP and its theoretical

foundations is the theory of constructivist learning, which is explored in the following section.

Constructivism

It is somewhat conspicuous that Wiley and Hilton omit an explicit discussion of constructivism from their theoretical basis of OER-EP given the close connections between OER-EP practices and constructivism. Indeed, constructivist learning theory underpins many learner-centred approaches to education, and it is oft-cited within the open education, distance education, and adult education literature. Educators who adopt a constructivist view of learning tend to place value on individual cognition, prior learning experiences, and to varying degrees, the social context of learning (Conrad & Openo, 2018). Constructivist educational theory is highly relevant when considering the theoretical foundations of OER-EP.

Social constructivism is another important and much cited branch of constructivist theory, extending the constructionist focus on an individual's personal construction of knowledge and public identity to acknowledge and explore "the social nature of knowledge and of its creation in the minds of individual learners [...] each learner constructs means by which new knowledge is both created and integrated with existing knowledge" (Anderson & Dron, 2011, pp. 84-85). Social constructivism decentres didactic, passive conveyance of information to make space for learner voice and participation in knowledge creation through dialogue, sharing of multiple perspectives, and social validation, repositioning the role of the educator away from one of knowledge-deliverer to one of facilitation, encouragement, and empowerment (Alzahrani & Woollard, 2020, p. 4). Ellen Rose at once acknowledges and

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

problematizes the increasing adoption of social constructivist teaching practices, arguing:

As social constructivism flourishes within educational discourses and practices, group work becomes foundational at all levels, leaving less time for individuals to construct knowledge and understanding during moments of independent, silent reverie. In fact, the image of children working alone – seated, heads down, in rigid rows of desks – has become a clichéd emblem for the lock-step, supposedly mind-deadening pedagogy that prevailed decades ago, before we came to our senses and adopted constructivist practices. It is worth considering the possibility that, in rejecting that model, we have allowed the pendulum to swing too far in the opposite direction. (2013, p. 74)

Within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the myriad, sweeping impacts the virus had on all forms of academic delivery, Rose's problematization of the unilateral adoption of social constructivist pedagogy is timely, important, and highly applicable to discourses related to open educational practices such as OER-EP. When group work in face-to-face environments becomes a public health threat, when Zoom fatigue and digital redlining pervades distributed learning environments in ways that function to increase the equity and access gaps rather than to narrow them, Rose offers an important reminder that learning context matters, that pervasive adoption of certain practices can backfire in unexpected ways, and that quiet, self-directed learning is not by default lesser than collaborative discourse and co-construction of knowledge.

Rose's assertions also call to mind a tension that exists within Indigenous research paradigms as well as within the open education literature: the role of the

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

expert and power hierarchies surrounding authority and knowledge (Gross, 2014; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). While the relentless pursuit of narrowly framed knowledge in an effort to achieve authority or expert status persists within contemporary colonial education models, despite the increasing prevalence of learning theories intended to shift the educational sphere away from the privileging of few expert voices while silencing and disempowering learners, contemporary colonial models of education often struggle to accept what anti-colonial scholars argue to be one of the major tenets of Indigenous knowledge practices: the humility of knowing (Shields, 2005). Approaching knowledge acquisition from this anti-colonial stance contrasts with the individualistic, meritocratic, excellence-oriented undercurrent of expertise which continues to pervade Western postsecondary education, inviting, rather, “sharing, learning, and unlearning,” enabling learners from diverse cultures to learn in ways that align with the “ancestral, family, and community settings” which emphasize holism and process (Bradie, 2017, p. 119).

However, Williams problematizes this simple contrasting of individualism and holism within Indigenous knowledge practices, asserting, “sometimes it is thought that because we concentrate on community that we don’t have a sense of self or individualism, but that is not the case. In order to be an active and contributing member of a community, individuals who are self aware and who know their gifts and expertise are essential” (2018, p. 33). In this manner, both constructivist and social constructivist modes of teaching and learning are apparent within many Indigenous communities’ knowledge practices.

Constructivism and Indigenous Pedagogies

Scholars who advocate for contemporary applications of traditional Indigenous knowledge practices often endorse a fitness-of-purpose approach to knowledge development which at times calls for collaborative engagement in communities, and at times calls for highly individualized, independent pursuits (Gehl, 2017; Tanaka, 2016). Both approaches can sit within constructivist and social constructivist discourses, making Indigenous pedagogical practices, both traditional and contemporary, a highly relevant, though often ignored, aspect of constructivist literature.

The social constructivist emphasis on relationship and accountability is emphasized by Wilson (2008), who in describing Indigenous research paradigms, argues that “relationships do not merely shape reality, they *are* reality” (p. 7). Linda Tuhiwai Smith reiterates this point by acknowledging that “it has proven nigh on impossible [...] to achieve change at the community level without community engagement” (2012, p. 291). This emphasis on *relationality*, *community context*, and *accountability through action* are key elements within Indigenous research paradigms as well as Indigenous teaching and learning frameworks, because these are core tenets and important foundations within many Indigenous worldviews, including those of the Algonquin Anishinaabe.

Gross (2014) explains that prior to colonial disruption, the process of teaching the Indigenous worldview to the next generation was more easily and fully realized. As might be expected, the home was the centre of learning, and parents, grandparents, other relatives, and indeed the entire community, carefully nurtured their children in the ways of the people. (p. 9)

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

These pre-contact methods of cultural transmission hold strong comparisons to constructivist theories of teaching and learning, and can be sharply, tragically, contrasted with the violence enacted on Indigenous peoples through the imposition of the Canadian residential school system, a stark example of a genocidal colonial agenda to sever Indigenous children from the very family and community connections Gross describes above, in an overt effort to “kill the Indian in the child” through the imposition of Euro-Canadian religious and cultural values (Abley, 2013, para. 2).

However, the pervasive and ongoing harms caused by residential schools specifically, and settler colonialism generally, are being revisited in contemporary discourses related to Western educational practices due in large part to the work of the TRC and TRC Commissioner Justice Murray Sinclair’s assertion that “education got us into this mess, and education will get us out of this mess” (CBC, 2015, 9:30). I will not revisit those discourses here, not because they are unimportant, but because the focus of this chapter is not to reiterate the myriad harms caused by settler colonialism, settler epistemologies, and related discourses of domination and exploitation, but rather, to explore what Indigenous scholars and educators have been doing to negate these harms and restore the teaching and learning practices of the Anishinaabe in ways that are possible in our current realities.

Williams describes a turning point in culturally-responsive educational practices and a point of departure from the colonial harms of the residential schools in her 1972 policy paper *Indian Control of Indian Education*, which, for Williams, “paved the way for band-controlled schools, where First Nations were able to begin the process of documenting and incorporating their knowledge into the curriculum and educational

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

processes across the country” (2018, p. 36). Despite the real challenges posed by pan-Indiginism and colonial fracturing, Elders, knowledge keepers, and scholars call for Indigenous persons to return to the traditional teachings to reclaim their cultural identities and start the healing journey (Gehl, 2017; Gross, 2014; Kimmerer, 2013; Manitowabi, 2020; Pritchard, 2001). It is worthwhile to explore how this call to action is being taken up by open education advocates within the context of OER development and through open pedagogical practices such as OER-EP, as there is a strong though perhaps inadvertent connection between Indigenous teaching and learning frameworks and OER-EP, an alignment that is not considered when examining the theoretical foundations of open education through an exclusively Western lens.

Examples of Indigenous Constructivism

In her poignant reflective piece which at once problematizes and emphasizes the importance of describing and enacting Indigenous knowledge practices within contemporary teaching and learning frameworks, Lorna Williams (2018) describes a series of learning activities that embody the spirit of social constructivism often found within open education literature. Williams invited learners to participate “in a series of four separate activities: pole carving, weaving, drumming, and singing and storytelling. The course was designed for all participants to experience an Indigenous learning process while engaged in a collective activity” (2018, p. 37). As with the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn’s collaborative construction of *Gitche Chee-mun*, and as with Kevin Lewis’s collaborative approach to the construction of traditional canoes within his Kâniyâsihk Culture Camps, Williams’ approach could be argued to employ a Vygotskian

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

model which utilizes the zone of proximal development in support of learner achievement. Williams explains that:

Expert-novice relationships with rich modelling and observation opportunities are abundant [within Indigenous learning activities]. From an early age, children and youth work alongside those who are more knowledgeable, skilled, and adept [...] much of the teaching is designed so that the learner is able to observe and practice with some watchful guidance. (2018, pp. 37-38)

Elders, knowledge keepers and cultural advisors do not need to be familiar with Vygotsky's writing to know that their teaching and learning practices are effective; they have been passed down generationally by oral tradition and direct modelling, and are vital to many Indigenous communities' knowledge traditions.

Another formidable example of constructivist theory informing Indigenous pedagogical practices can be found in *First Nations Pedagogy Online*, an openly-licensed web-resource designed by Sylvia Currie and June Kaminski (2017) to support Indigenous self-governance in education, particularly online education, by consolidating research, consultation, and community-based activities into one pragmatic resource intended to support online educators who wish to teach Indigenous students in a culturally-informed manner. Currie and Kaminski embody constructivist philosophy in their website design in two distinct and important ways. They invite practitioners to join in on conversations about culturally-informed practices in a variety of spaces, including an active Facebook page, blog site, and open-access Moodle courses; thus the

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

practitioners themselves are welcomed into a social constructivist learning experience as they share resources and dialogue about teaching strategies.

Additionally, many of the resources intended for classroom use that Currie and Kaminski share are also social constructivist in nature. For example, in their section titled *Experiential*, the authors at once acknowledge that “learning through experience is a pedagogical approach that has been well researched by various mainstream education experts including John Dewey, David Kolb, and Carl Rogers,” and also acknowledge that “experiential learning [...] is a widespread and vital – but often unrecognized – form of [Indigenous] learning” (2017, para. 1). The authors modify Kolb and Fry’s (1975) Model of Experiential Learning to reflect Smith and McGee’s (2005) description of how Indigenous students apply the experiential learning model in unique ways. The authors simplify these modifications into a new framework that they call the First Nations Experiential Learning Cycle, which consists of cyclical, iterative patterns of Experiencing, Reflecting, Meaning Making, and Acting (Currie & Kaminski, 2017). See Figure 1 on the following page for a visual representation of the First Nations Experiential Learning Cycle.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Figure 1

First Nations Experiential Learning Cycle



Note. Reprinted from "Experiential Learning," by Kaminski, J., 2011, First Nations Pedagogy. Used with permission. Kaminski explains that learners may move through the four elements non-sequentially and/or simultaneously.

The First Nations Experiential Learning Cycle strongly informs the course design I've implemented within the online *Truth and Reconciliation* course, with learning units organized within similar headings that repeat throughout each unit in the course. The model is a strong example of constructivist philosophy integrated within culturally sensitive teaching practice as it emphasizes individual experience, prior knowledge, and learning in specific social contexts. The authors emphasize the importance of the individual learner's needs as well as community connection, asserting:

The essence of experiential learning is that what is learned has meaning – to the individual learner's own needs and goals, and to the community in which the learner lives his or her life [...] providing the learning climate where the learner can design their OWN experience learning experiences is even more empowering and provides a multi-layered educational experience. (Currie & Kaminski, 2017, para. 8)

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

These assertions not only echo constructivist philosophy, which when viewed through an Anishinaabe lens can be situated within knowledge sharing and teaching and learning practices that certainly pre-date Piaget and other often-cited constructivists, but also allude to the ethos of open educational practices, which also centre learner experience, perceived value, empowerment, and community.

Viewing OER through *Etuaptmumk* Eyes

The remainder of this chapter will focus on the Canadian open education movement, analyzed through an *Etuaptmumk* perspective. Elder Albert Marshall claims that “we need discussions about Truth and Reconciliation in all classrooms in every community and every educational institution across Canada” (2018, para. 1). While I strongly agree, the ways that these conversations are framed help to achieve specific and disparate goals, just as the ways that open education practices are enacted help to achieve various interpretations of Indigenization.

Open Educational Resources: A Common Starting Point

Within Western postsecondary education, discourses related to open education often begin with OER adoption, adaptation, and creation as an entry-point into open practices broadly. Weller et al. (2018) support this assertion through their citation network analysis of open and distance education research, claiming that “current interpretations of open education are often shaped by the OER movement with an emphasis on the ‘5Rs of reuse’” (p. 109). The 5Rs of reuse refer to David Wiley’s 5R *permissions*, specifically end-users’ ability to retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute openly licensed content (2014).

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Weller et al. attribute much of this focus on OER to David Wiley's work in conjunction with strategic initiatives funding open textbook development and adaptation, which have "gained a great amount of attention over the past few years, particularly in North America through projects such as OpenStax and BC Campus" (Weller et al., 2019, p. 110). OER provides postsecondary educators with a potential on-ramp into open education broadly. While Paskevicius and Irvine (2019) acknowledge that "many educators who have adopted OER report simply replacing an existing commercial resource with no significant changes to pedagogical approach or practice," ongoing research suggests that a minority of educators transition from OER adoption toward open educational practices more broadly (p. 2).

For example, the connection and potential pathway between OER use and adoption of OEP is supported by Nascimbeni and Burgos (2019), who analyze the relationship between university-level educators' use of OER and adoption of OEP to find that "a positive correlation exists between the use of OER [...] and the adoption of engaging open teaching methods" (p. 7). The authors suggest that "the use and reuse of OER goes hand-in-hand with the sharing of inclusive teaching strategies [...] open content appears as one of the key drivers for teaching innovation" (2019, p. 8). Caufield offers this hopeful view of the relationship between OER and open practices, claiming that "OER initiatives [offer] a way to plug Open Pedagogy into the institution at a molecular level. A way to build infrastructure that survives staff turnover, and the inevitable disintegration of your teaching and technology unit" (2016). Additionally, De Rosa and Jhangiani (2017) attest that "if we merge OER advocacy with the kinds of pedagogical approaches that focus on collaboration, connection, diversity, democracy,

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

and critical assessments of educational tools and structures, we can begin to understand the breadth and power of Open Pedagogy as a guiding praxis” (p. 10). In sum, there seems to be a general consensus that to some extent, OER and OEP are interconnected and that OER may offer potential pathways toward open pedagogical approaches such as the more narrowly bounded OER-EP, but this is not universally true.

The Ontario OER Landscape

In 2015, Ontario’s provincial government launched the Ontario Online Learning Consortium, later rebranded as eCampus Ontario, a not-for-profit organization intended to improve distance and technology-enabled learning opportunities offered at the 45 publicly-funded colleges and universities located across Ontario (eCampus Ontario, 2016). One of the key pillars within this mandate relates to open education, centering primarily upon OER awareness and creation initiatives, such as the Open Education Ontario summits which took place in 2018 and 2019 respectively, as well as eCampus Ontario’s open textbook infrastructure. While eCampus Ontario’s *2016-2018 Strategic Plan* focused on building foundational OER awareness across member institutions, with funds allocated to open content initiatives such as grant-funded OER development projects, the later *eCampus Ontario Strategic Plan 2018-2021* publication claims that “eCampus Ontario will continue to advocate for open practices and open resources,” with the key strategy to “create a Centre of Excellence for Open Educational Practices supporting this goal (2018, pp. 5, 34). Hayman, in her (2018) exploration of engagement with OER among Ontario educators, finds that “advanced OER practitioners (who are often OER advocates) have embraced the use of OER in their teaching and have

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

moved on to explore the ways that they can leverage the pedagogic advantages of OER” (p. 128). An edict that was repeated throughout the 2018 Open Education Ontario Summit hosted by eCampus Ontario was: “come for the OER; stay for the OEP!” However, before moving on to a more fulsome exploration of OEP through the concept of OER-EP and renewable assignments, it is valuable to explore OER projects which purport to support campus Indigenization efforts.

OER and the Indigenization Continuum

As awareness of OER grows within the postsecondary educational context across Turtle Island, open textbooks written from reconciliatory, decolonial, and Indigenous frameworks are being published and disseminated using open licenses, accessible through various open libraries including SUNY Open Textbooks, BC Open Textbooks Collection, Manitoba Open Textbook Initiative, and eCampus Ontario’s Open Library Portal. In many cases, the textbook projects are grant-funded and function to serve the host institution’s goals related to Indigenization.

Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) explain that conceptually, Indigenization represents a move within the academy to include Indigenous ways of knowing; however, the authors have observed that in practice, Indigenization occurs on a spectrum which includes three distinct, and at times incompatible, understandings of the meaning and intent of Indigenization. Gaudry and Lorenz define the first of these three concepts as *Indigenous Inclusion*, which focusses on increased representation of Indigenous persons through recruitment and hiring practices without making any significant changes to an institution’s structures, leading to “supporting the adaption of Indigenous people to the current (often alienating) culture of the Canadian academy” (Gaudry &

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Lorenz, 2018, p. 218). The second understanding, termed *Reconciliation Indigenization*, aligns more closely with *Etuaptmumk* as it situates Indigenous and Western knowledges “on common ground [...] creating a new, broader consensus on debates such as what counts as knowledge, how should Indigenous knowledges and European-derived knowledges be reconciled, and what types of relationships academic institutions should have with Indigenous communities” (2018, p. 219). Finally, the third concept, termed *Decolonial Indigenization*, “envisions the wholesale overhaul of the academy to fundamentally reorient knowledge production based on balancing power relations between Indigenous peoples and Canadians, transforming the academy into something dynamic and new” (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 219). Below, I situate recently published OER on Gaudry and Lorenz’s continuum of Indigenization in order to critically examine the degree to which Indigenous OER function to mirror existing inequities within the Canadian postsecondary landscape, or the degree to which these texts signal meaningful social change aligned with the collaborative, empowering, and inclusive orientations that pervade the rhetoric of open education and Indigenization.

Indigenous Inclusion. Gaudry and Lorenz explain that a major flaw with *Indigenous inclusion* approaches to Indigenization is the underlying assumption that postsecondary institutions are neutral spaces which adequately represent diverse ontological and epistemological perspectives. Efforts tend to be focused on preparing and supporting students and staff for success within current postsecondary environments, which can be beneficial, but do little to problematize or disrupt Western epistemological domination. While the authors and their survey respondents “saw inclusion policies as vital components of Indigenization,” they also tend to recognize “a

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

more foundational need to increase the presence of Indigenous knowledges and ways of learning” (2018, p. 220). An example of an OER which functions to perpetuate rather than problematize Euro-Western epistemological domination can be found in John Douglas Belshaw’s textbook *Canadian History: Pre-Confederation*. The textbook offers a survey of North American history up to 1867 and claims to “provide room for Aboriginal and European agendas and narratives” (Belshaw, 2015, para. 1).

However, the text situates Indigenous peoples’ relationship to Turtle Island, a relationship that many Elders assert has existed since time immemorial, within an obviously Eurocentric pre- and post-colonial framework. The text is predominantly about Europeans rather than about Indigenous peoples; it conveys a Eurocentric lens throughout. For example, Chapter Two is titled “Aboriginal Canada before Contact,” a framing which is at best an oxymoron, at worst a stark reminder of how the Doctrine of Discovery and related imperialist constructs continue to pervade academic discourses.

The important and relevant conclusion to draw here is that just because a text functions as a strong example of a quality OER, complete with a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, comprehensive metadata, and favourable reviews, does not, by default, make it an OER that supports Indigenization, even if the author claims to do so. Rather, the text is an upsetting example of openly licensed hegemonic discourse and little more.

Reconciliation Indigenization. A set of OER which aligns with Gaudry and Lorenz’s description of *reconciliation Indigenization*, “a vision that locates Indigenization on common ground between Indigenous and Canadian ideals, creating a new, broad

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

consensus,” can be found in the BCcampus Indigenization Project (2018, p. 226).

According to BCcampus, the goal of the project was to

co-create open educational resources that support faculty and staff with the incorporation of Indigenous epistemologies into professional practice, enabling postsecondary institutions to continue to build the structures and processes by which Indigenous students experience their postsecondary education in resonance with their own lives, worldviews, and ambitions. (BCcampus, n.d.)

The project was a joint undertaking between BCcampus and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training. It was steered by a committee of Indigenous education leaders working throughout British Columbia and resulted in a set of six learning guides co-authored by teams of Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers (BCcampus, n.d.). One of the strengths of this particular model was the reliance on a diverse Steering Committee, which established the overarching goals of the project and the ways that the project would support systemic change within postsecondary institutions in efforts to decolonize, reconcile, and Indigenize, while dually aligning with the goals of the various communities that the project team was committed to supporting (BCcampus, n.d.).

The resulting OER, a series of six learning guides targeting specific audiences within postsecondary education, including educators, support staff, administrators, and curriculum developers, offer a strong example of reconciliation Indigenization due to the sustained investment in relationship-building and reciprocal partnerships, as well as the representation of Indigenous knowledges which align with and respect Indigenous ways of knowing and being (McCracken & Hogan, 2020). Several of the texts have informed

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

my teaching practice and undergird the design of the *Truth and Reconciliation* course and several of the other courses I teach.

Decolonial Indigenization. I was very honoured to attend Dr. Susan Manitowabi's launch of Laurentian University's first openly licensed textbook, an OER titled *Historical and Contemporary Realities: Movement Towards Reconciliation* (2019). The book launch took place in early March 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic changed the ways that we gather and celebrate one another. When Manitowabi spoke at the event, she explained that the text "provides a basis for understanding cultural teachings, healing practices, and ways of knowing and being as a means of opening up a conversation around reconciliation" (as cited in Lappa, 2020, para. 3).

The text was funded through eCampus Ontario's Open Textbook Initiative and has been integrated into Laurentian University's Indigenous Social Work program curricula (eCampus Ontario, n.d.; McCracken & Hogan, 2020). Manitowabi's text is an example of decolonial Indigenization because it provides a concrete model of decolonized teaching practice. The text affirms Anishinaabe worldview, rejects colonial dispossession, celebrates resistance to colonialism through cultural reclamation, all rooted to the particular regional context of the lands encompassing the Robinson-Huron Treaty area. Using the medicine wheel as its framework, the text calls all readers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to consider "what will the future look like? What is our responsibility in developing a new narrative about the relationship between Indigenous / non-Indigenous people of this territory?" (Manitowabi, 2019, p. 135). This text is about my home, our stories, and contains explicit calls for all people who live here to learn

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

more about Indigenous worldview, calls which are beautifully framed within a variety of sacred teachings.

While the text is a gift, Manitowabi's generosity continues in the Epilogue, which offers a guide to future creators of OER who also wish to "collect and present Indigenous stories in a particular area in order to showcase the relationship between Indigenous / non-Indigenous People of that territory" (2019, p. 137). Manitowabi describes in detail how such projects can be undertaken in a good way, highlighting the various lessons she and the larger project team learned through the process. For example, Manitowabi emphasizes the importance of relationship-building and how

when working with Indigenous communities, it takes time to build relationships.

Once a resource person had been identified, the student had to make contact with this individual, offer tobacco (this signifies the beginning of a relationship and the acceptance of the tobacco represents a sacred pledge between the individual making the offer and the one accepting the tobacco) [...] one cannot just go into a community and expect that people will share their stories. (2019, pp. 138-139)

Manitowabi further describes how fixed timelines set by external funding bodies can make authentic relationship-building very challenging. The development team was given only seven months to complete the OER project. Without the pre-existing social capital that Manitowabi brought to this particular open textbook project, it is highly unlikely that the project would have been completed in a respectful and reciprocal way. This highlights existing challenges within open textbook development models, providing a

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

cautionary tale to would-be OER developers who wish to work with Indigenous communities to share Indigenous knowledge.

Another strong example of an OER which supports decolonial Indigenization is Centennial College's *Our Stories: First Peoples in Canada* (2020). This text was added to the eCampus Ontario Open Library in October 2020 and is filled with media-rich examples of Indigenous histories, cultures, and knowledges. The development team, which consisted of "a diverse team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous creators," describes its goal of "answering the Truth and Reconciliation of Canada's Calls to Action" by developing the text "through a decolonizing lens. The materials present a balance of historical and contemporary materials that value Indigenous perspectives" (Adams et al., 2020, para. 3). Through powerful acts of storytelling, conveyed through text, image, video, and audio recordings, the OER offers "truths about the times before the settlers, truths about the interactions of Indigenous communities, clans, and Nations, and the settlers, and truths about the ways we must move forward towards reconciliation" (Adams et al., 2020, p. vi).

While the text offers a fitting example of decolonization Indigenization presented as an OER, the dissemination of the OER is perhaps an example of the tension that Gaudry and Lorenz describe as inherent to decolonial Indigenization. Since decolonial Indigenization "is the most radical and substantive approach to indigenization and is by and large off the radar of most university administrators. In an atmosphere where substantial reconciliation indigenization is difficult to grasp, decolonial indigenization is almost unintelligible" (2018, p. 223). This unintelligibility is demonstrated in the choice to disseminate the online version of the OER within the Centennial College branded

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

website, such that the meaning and impact of the important stories contained within are negated by pervasive institutional branding, persistent banner ads, and prominent sidebars which call readers to “APPLY NOW!” “View the Catalogue,” and read the institution’s latest COVID-19 updates. Rather than allowing the OER to stand on its own, a choice was made to enclose the resource within the institution’s recruitment-oriented website.

The downloadable PDF version of the text offers similar institutional appropriation. One might expect page one to feature the beautiful cover art created by Chief Lady Bird, a Chippewa and Potawatomi artist, and Aura, an Oneida artist who collaborated to create cover art replete with metaphors of healing, gratitude, reciprocity, and transformation. Instead, the first page of the PDF includes images and welcome messages from two members of the institution’s senior leadership team, individuals who were not directly involved with the project and whose presence on the very first page of the text, appearing before the Dedication to Reva Jewell, Clan Mother of the Haudenosaunee, prior to the eloquent Forward and Territorial Acknowledgement, and prior to the introduction to the project team, suggests that the leaders and the OER development team may differ in their conceptualizations of Indigenization. Despite the profound contribution that this project represents in terms of Indigenizing *the commons*, these incongruities highlight the immense work left to unsettle and dismantle the colonial forces operating within Ontario’s postsecondary institutions.

The Ongoing Unsettling of Open Licensing

Another important decolonial Indigenization aspect of the *Our Stories: First Peoples in Canada* text is the project team’s selection of an Attribution, Non-

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Commercial, No Derivatives license (CC BY-NC-ND). This particular license falls on the more restrictive end of the spectrum of open licenses, preventing users from exercising all of the 5R permissions in full, since the No Derivatives clause stipulates that adaptations or modifications of the work are not permitted to be shared (Creative Commons, n.d.-b).

When viewed with Western eyes, the application of this particular license may be seen as less than desirable, since most repositories of open content tend to prefer less restrictive open licenses. For example, the BCcampus Open Library claims, “In our collections of open textbooks and other OERs, we do our best to adhere to the five Rs of open education as defined by David Wiley” (Beattie, 2016). OpenStax suggests a similar preference toward the more permissive Creative Commons licenses, urging potential content creators to select the Creative Commons Attribution license that “enables the content to be as *reusable as possible*. All the content is accessible to anyone without restriction and any author can use that content, share it with others, or create a derivative work that is customized and personalized” [emphasis added] (OpenStax, n.d.). In fact, in their groundbreaking (2020) white paper titled “Community First: Open Practices and Indigenous Knowledge,” McCracken and Hogan (2020) acknowledge that they initially envisioned conducting their environmental scan of Canadian OER which include Indigenous knowledges “by focusing on items that adhered to the 5Rs of OER [...] This criteria meant that copyrighted materials or items CC licensed under BY-NC-ND or BY-ND were not included as part of the scan” (p. 3). This initial framing would have excluded the *Our Stories: First People in Canada* text from their analysis.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

However, through conversations with Elders Shirley Horn of the Missinaabe Cree First Nation and Shirley Roach of the Garden River First Nation, the authors reconsidered their approach. McCracken explains that they “needed to reframe the approach [...] to recentre Indigenous concepts of knowledge and access” and to recognize that the “5Rs of OER were created in a Western context and [...] Western frameworks do not work for sharing Indigenous concepts” (McCracken & Hogan, 2020, p. 3). In their revised approach, McCracken and Hogan enact Cynthia Chambers’ (2012) description of “the true face of the commons that we share [...] the true curriculum, the one that calls us to renew our relationships with one another” (p. 30). This shared commons requires resistance to what Chambers describes as colonial enclosure. McCracken and Hogan’s white paper offers a strong example of how to engage in this work.

The *Our Stories: First People in Canada* text is replete with Indigenous knowledge in the form of stories. The OER authors explain that the stories included in the text “were gifted to Centennial College by citizens of Nations and members of Indigenous communities. We recognize that these are not our stories, and we claim no ownership of them” (Adams et al., 2020, p. iv). The use of the CC BY-NC-ND license functions as an example of how “a no derivatives license is sometimes intentionally used to limit how Indigenous knowledge can be shared” (McCracken & Hogan, 2020, p. 3) and also adheres to Creative Commons’ pre-licensing considerations, which explains that “only the copyright holder or someone with express permission from the copyright holder can apply a CC license or CC0 to a copyrighted work” (n.d.).

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

McCracken and Hogan (2020) navigate these intersections in a highly *Etuaptmumk* manner, concluding that the best way to approach the open sharing of Indigenous knowledges lies within the communities themselves, not within recommended practices constructed through an exclusively Western lens. They point to additional important developments related to traditional knowledge sharing practices and the open education movement, such as the (2018) *Traditional Knowledge and Creative Commons White Paper*, which examines the ways in which the CC license may be reinforcing the prevailing myth that traditional knowledge exists within the public domain (Creative Commons Community, 2018). Creative Commons has subsequently acknowledged this tension, stating “reuse freedoms associated with public domain materials, and fostered through digitization, can create tension when it comes to Indigenous cultural heritage” (2018, para. 3).

Existing copyright law, steeped in Western concepts and values, does not adequately protect Indigenous traditional cultural expressions” (Vézina & Muscat, 2020, para. 3). *Local Contexts*, an educational initiative co-directed by Jane Anderson and Kim Christen, Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage associates, along with James Francis Hodgson Sr., Penobscot Nation’s Tribal Historian, and Maui Hudson, Maori and Indigenous Studies professor, attempt to remediate the commodification of Indigenous knowledges. The authors explain that their project aims:

to support Native, First Nations, Aboriginal, and Indigenous communities in the management of their intellectual property and cultural heritage specifically within the digital environment [...] [through] legal, extra-legal, and educational strategies

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

for navigating copyright law and the public domain status of this valuable cultural heritage. (Local Contexts, n.d., para. 1)

Local Contexts offers an alternative to existing open licensing structures, allowing communities to ensure that their values are honoured in the ways that traditional knowledge is or is not shared, by whom, and for what purpose. The project is a significant contribution to the effort to disrupt and decolonize existing copyright legislation and open licensing practices.

The ethical concerns and tensions inherent to current copyright legislation, Creative Commons licenses, and OER hold relevance to open pedagogical practices such as OER-EP, particularly when OER-EP is leveraged in support of various levels of Indigenization. There are currently few Indigenization-themed OER available within *the commons*. However, these texts can play a fundamental role in increasing the public's awareness of the historical and contemporary challenges faced by Indigenous communities across Turtle Island and can be incorporated into educational experiences intended to invite learners to participate in progressive movement toward reconciliation and enhanced nation-to-nation relationships.

Viewing OER-EP through *Etuaptmumk* Eyes

Situated within the synergistic dynamic of OER adoption and open pedagogical practices, it is understandable why Wiley and Hilton (2018) premise their framing of OER-EP within the inherent copyright permissions made available through open licensing. The authors are leveraging a particular and pervasive thread within open education discourses in order to clarify the specific open practices they are referring to when citing OER-EP. They clarify that “in making this claim we do not mean to cast

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

doubt on the potential effectiveness of the many pedagogical approaches labeled open” (p. 133). Indeed, as the field of open education matures, dialogues related to open educational practices in support of constructivist-oriented student learning proliferate. Wiley and Hilton’s (2018) article is but one of many examples of open education advocates attempting to help practitioners put the theory and ethos of open education into practice within Western postsecondary education contexts. A narrow framing can assist with this goal.

Beyond the publication of the “Defining OER-Enabled Pedagogy” article, Wiley and Hilton support practitioners through two William and Flora Hewlett Foundation funded fellowship programs, namely, the OER Research Fellowship and the Designing with OER (DOER) Fellowship. Both programs are administered by the Open Education Group. The express goal of the DOER program is “to increase instructional designers’ capacities to design effective and engaging learning experiences with OER” (Open Education Group, n.d.). Together with subject matter experts, DOER Fellows create several renewable assignments based on the principles of OER-EP with the mandate that these resources are licensed CC-BY so that they can serve as workable examples for others interested in OER-EP and renewable assignments (Open Education Group, n.d.). Within this model, which relies so heavily upon the activities enabled by the 5R permissions, the preference for the most permissive of Creative Commons licenses proliferates.

In his introduction to the DOER Network and Fellows program, Wiley (2017) argues that it might be more useful to frame OER-EP as a question of “what would permission to engage in these 5R activities enable that is new and different in the

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

context of the way that you teach and that you try to support your students in learning?” (6:26). This query leads to a consideration of Wiley and Hilton’s (2018) framing of renewable assignments, a concept that I will critically evaluate in the following section.

OER-EP Supporting the Truth Phase of Truth and Reconciliation

In the introductory chapter, I explained that OER-EP invites learners to participate in renewable assignments, assignments intended to negate traditional assessment practices within formal educational contexts that tend to minimize the potential social impact and real-world value of student work by confining the audience of learners’ artifacts within a tightly bound, hierarchical teacher-student relationship (Katz & Van Allen, 2020). Wiley and Hilton (2018) label these traditional types of assessments as disposable, since “both faculty and students understand [these assessments] will ultimately be thrown away. Essays are examples of assignments that frequently fit this category” (p. 136). However, essays specifically, and disposable assignments generally, result in the creation of an artifact, and so too are aligned with Papert’s constructionist theory of learning. The difference between disposable and renewable assignments is not in the process of creating an artifact of learning, but in the audience, access, and subsequent engagement with the artifact. While Wiley and Hilton (2018) acknowledge the learning value inherent within disposable assignments, they also call attention to the reality that “millions of hours of work are done, graded, and thrown away each year [...] [and this] seems to be a missed opportunity” (pp. 136-137).

Just as disposable assignments represent a missed opportunity to engage learners in the knowledge-sharing benefits of renewable assignments, throughout the various iterations of the *Truth and Reconciliation* course that I’ve facilitated, I’ve noticed

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

another pervasive missed opportunity. Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike routinely claim little to no prior knowledge of Canada's residential school system and struggle to situate this system within the broader context of settler colonial harm and cultural genocide. These observations align with 2016 Environics survey results suggesting that "two thirds (66%) of non-Aboriginal Canadians say that have read or heard something about Indian residential schools [...] with awareness reported by only 52 percent of Canadians 18 to 29 years of age" (p. 29).

Further, students are largely unfamiliar with the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) or of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). These observations are again supported by the 2016 Environics survey, which found that only 40% of Ontarians surveyed had read or heard about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (p. 32). Students are also frequently unaware of Indigenous cultural and knowledge practices, though this sits outside of the scope of the *Truth and Reconciliation* course, which is more a review of Canada's colonial past and present than it is an exploration of the Indigenous cultures that colonial governments aim to oppress.

Indigenous scholars often express frustration at being stuck in the truth phase of truth and reconciliation. Jesse Wente laments "we're still at the beginning of the truth stage despite all of the testimony" (CBC, 2016, para. 41). While it can be disheartening to hear students share the same shock and anger that they are only now encountering these truths about Canadian colonialism, Justice Murray Sinclair and other Indigenous leaders emphasize the important role that truth-telling plays in the larger goal of reconciliation. He claims, "the people of Canada have been misled about who we are –

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

not only as Indigenous people, but as Canadians – and we need to make sure that they know the truth” (as cited in Morgan, 2018, para. 3). Progress is slow, but information is available and the students in my courses often express a strong desire for knowledge, and for change. Recently, this anecdotal desire has been exacerbated by the numerous reports of unmarked graves at former residential school sites across Turtle Island, the inaugural National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and the renewed focus on reconciliation and anti-Indigenous racism within the Canadian political sphere.

Emerging Research on OER-EP

Within the broader postsecondary education context, scholars and practitioners are taking up Wiley and Hilton’s call to explore the potential learning value of renewable assignments. Examples of OER-EP proliferate and are shared in open spaces such as the DOER network, DeRosa and Jhangiani’s *Open Pedagogy Notebook*, and the Open Education Network’s *Open Pedagogy Portal*. Within the open education literature, implementation and empirical evaluation strategies specific to OER-EP and renewable assignments are becoming available. For example, Katz and Van Allen recently published a framework supporting the collaborative design of renewable assignments, intended to “help others consider ways to develop open pedagogy practices” (2020, p. 4). While pragmatic, the framework doesn’t fully explore the various “complex, personal, contextual, and continually negotiated” relationship to openness that students bring to their engagement with OER-EP” (Cronin, 2018, p. 18). The framework highlights the importance of introducing students to Creative Commons licensing and their function, but it doesn’t extend this introduction to include an exploration of the Eurocentric assumptions that currently undergird CC licenses. Recently published design

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

frameworks and exploratory studies, such as Seraphin et al.'s (2019) conceptual framework for non-disposable assignments and Hilton et al.'s (2019) exploratory study of student perceptions of open pedagogy also predominantly feature Western assumptions which underpin OER-EP.

As awareness and adoption of OEP increases, a nascent body of empirical research specifically focused on learner perceptions of OEP, including OER-EP, is beginning to illuminate a spectrum of learner experiences and potential while also providing practical recommendations and suggested areas of further research.

For example, Axe et al (2020) conducted a systematic literature review of 25 research articles to gain a sense of learners experiences with OEP including OER-EP. Their review highlights positive experiences related to increased motivation and engagement, along with challenges relating to learner anxiety, privacy concerns, and time management (p. 72). The authors conclude that clear guidelines and appropriately scaffolded supports may encourage further learner engagement with open practices. They caution that “implementation of OEP should not be an afterthought,” further arguing that “education needs to facilitate more impactful engagement within the open community and society in response to issues of Indigenous justice, global pandemics, Black Lives Matter, systemic racism, climate change, and other urgent issues” (Axe et al, 2020, p. 73).

Additionally, Allan and Katz's (2022) study of nine graduate-level teacher candidates' experiences with renewable assignments found that engagement in a renewable assignment experience increased learners' understanding and awareness of OER, though participants also shared challenges with self-confidence related to sharing

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

their work globally. These findings connect with the Axe et al. conclusions learner efficacy may play a role in OER-EP engagement and related perceptions.

In a related study, Clinton-Lisell and Gwozdz (2023) investigated post-secondary learners' experiences with renewable assignments (N=69), finding that learners appeared to have "higher levels of motivation for renewable assignments compared to the traditional assignments" (p. 130-131). The authors conclude that students' psychological needs for autonomy and relevance may be better supported by renewable assignments as compared with traditional disposable assessments. The authors also found that learners who opted to publicly share their coursework reported higher levels of perceived competence and value in sharing their knowledge with others (Clinton-Lisell & Gwozdz, 2023, p. 131). They conclude their study with a call for "future studies using a qualitative approach would provide more information on students' lived experiences with renewable assignments" (Clinton-Lisell & Gwozdz, 2023, p. 132). These studies affirm the value in inviting learners to share their knowledge related to truth and reconciliation in Canada, but also warn that learners may struggle to overcome psychological and practical barriers. These conclusions are affirmed in this study's findings, articulated in further detail in Chapter Four: Findings.

Summary

In this chapter, I leveraged an *Etuaptmumk* approach to review select literature related to the foundational concepts of OER-EP. I began the chapter with an exploration of constructionism, followed by an exploration of constructivism, both viewed from Indigenous and Western epistemologies. I went on to examine the relationship between OER and OEP, focusing on the current OER landscape in Ontario and situating several

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Indigenization-themed OER on Gaudry and Lorenz's (2018) Indigenization continuum.

Next, I examined the colonial assumptions that undergird Creative Commons' current open licensing structure, along with the ongoing discourses and initiatives that are unsettling these assumptions. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of renewable assignments and a consideration of how OER-EP might support reconciliation and broader learning goals, making preliminary connections with the emerging research.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The central question that guided this study is *how do college students enrolled in a Truth and Reconciliation course experience the creation of a renewable assignment?* Given the exploratory nature of the inquiry, and the focus on participant sense-making and interpretation, a qualitative, inductive approach was deemed the most appropriate paradigm for exploring learners' perceptions of the given phenomena.

In this chapter, I describe the key methodological features that undergird the study, including epistemic and paradigmatic considerations, a detailed description of the research design, strategies for participant recruitment and selection, as well as techniques for data collection and analysis. Considerations specific to qualitative validation and the trustworthiness of study findings are described, along with the measures taken to ensure the research process was conducted ethically and participants were appropriately protected. Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall's concept of *Etuaptmumk* is woven through the chapter. Western research traditions are braided together with traditional Indigenous Knowledge practices in ways that honour both worldviews and affirm and strengthen the study design.

Philosophical Considerations

Idiographic Position

This study is situated within an interpretive research paradigm, premised on the assumption that learners' realities are not fixed, objective, nor universal. Rather, learners' perceptions of OER-EP are shaped by their individual experiences and are informed by unique socio-historic contexts. Learners' perceptions are also inextricably

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

connected to the contexts in which their experiences took place, all leading to highly subjective interpretations of the invitation to produce openly licensed coursework. It was appropriate, therefore, to approach the central research question from an idiographic, discovery orientation, focussing primarily on learners' "meaning, sense-making, and communicative actions" prior to engaging in cross-case analysis (Smith et al., 2009, p. 45). The decision to focus upon individual experiences within a qualitative paradigm resisted the temptation to offer a general understanding of OER-EP as the intended outcome of the research project. While this study contributes to a growing body of empirical research on OER-EP which may lead to general truth claims and emergent theories of practice, the goals of this study were to focus on the particular, beginning with a recognition that each learner experiences their lifeworld in unique and highly nuanced ways.

This idiographic approach extends Kirkness and Barnhardt's (1991) framework of holistic educational practices in support of Indigenous student success into the research process by focusing on shared learning and "honouring the knowledge and gifts that each person brings to the classroom, workplace, and institution" (as cited in Cull et al., 2018, p. 27). Holding space for learners to share their experiences is rooted in a spirit of respect, a concept that will be elaborated upon in the *Mnaadendiwin* section of this chapter. Peck and Mummery (2019) argue that "qualitative researchers need to be able to capture and present [the] idiosyncratic qualities of experience to better understand human experience on a collective or transferable level in rich ways" (p. 2). While an idiographic focus aligns with interpretivist and qualitative approaches to social inquiry, the idiographic approach also complements the overarching goals of OER-EP which

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

positions learners as knowledge constructors, honouring Indigenous epistemological approaches to knowledge seeking that inherently value “personalized, relational, localized, place-based, and community-based embeddedness that cannot be undone” (Althaus, 2019, p. 198). The coinciding and complementary epistemologies of interpretivist inquiry, open educational practices including OER-EP, and Anishinaabe *gikendaasowin* (knowledge) cradle this inquiry, while an *Etuaptmumk* approach enabled an exploration of the epistemic divergences and tensions that exist within these core concepts.

Phenomenological Orientation

Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) describe phenomenology as “a philosophical approach to the study of experience” which includes various strategies for investing the lifeworlds of research participants, the “taken-for-granted, everyday [lives] that [they] lead” (pp. 11, 14). The central research question guiding this study aimed to elicit participants’ perceptions of, thoughts toward, feelings in reaction to, and experiences of participating in a particular instance of OER-EP. The phenomenological approach enhanced the current body of empirical research related to OER-EP by offering specific examples of how learners within a given context think and feel about a specific experience of OER-EP.

Phenomenological inquiry is an expansive discipline that can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophical traditions (University of Crete, 2010). Edmund Husserl is claimed to have brought contemporary phenomenology “into its own [...] much as epistemology came into its own with Descartes” (Woodruff, 2018, para. 35). Husserl, in a rejection of psychologism, developed and refined phenomenological philosophy,

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

methodology, and method over the course of his career (Reeder, 2009). Willis explains that Husserl wished to “steer a middle path” between “objectifying views that posit that the world, as we know it, exists ‘out there’ independently of human consciousness; and mental views that think the world is purely a construction of the mind” (2001, p. 3). In its contemporary philosophical form, phenomenology aims to reflect upon and account for everyday experiences with intentionality, to gain a sense of an underlying order and coherence (Dodson, 2015). Husserl reasoned that if the essential qualities of an experience could be identified, those features might “*transcend* the particular circumstance of their appearance and might then illuminate a given experience for others too” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 12). Thus, Husserl came to be associated with the foundational branch of phenomenology deemed pure or transcendental, which attempts to elucidate the eidetic aspects of phenomena through methods of phenomenological reduction in order to explore knowledge structures that enable the understanding of lived experience (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005). For Husserl, researchers must adopt a transcendental ego, bracketing themselves off completely to contemplate a detached consciousness and engage in phenomenological reduction (Ashworth, 1999).

Later thinkers such as Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre developed additional branches of phenomenology which became increasingly existential and interpretative, and less philosophical and descriptive in focus (Flowers et al., 2009). For Merleau-Ponty, the process of bracketing is less extreme than Husserl’s stance, representing a “resolve to set aside theories, research presuppositions, ready-made interpretations, etc. in order to reveal engaged, lived experience” (Ashworth, 1999, p. 708). To Heidegger, the researcher’s embeddedness within the world renders

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

complete bracketing impossible (Pereira, 2014). Heidegger acknowledges that one's forestructures, one's assumptions, beliefs, and lived experiences, will always inform interpretation (Armstrong, 2005). Heidegger wished to study "being-in-the world, wherein hidden meanings were sought and interpreted within their respective contexts" (Gearing, 2004, p. 1431). These tensions inform contemporary researchers' approach to interpretative phenomenological analyses, with some concluding that "looking beyond [researcher] preconceptions is possible and desirable, and [some] who reject the notion that humans even have the capacity to bracket out preconceptions" (Tufford & Newman, 2010, p. 82). I believe I sit somewhere in between these two stances.

The problematization of Husserl's method of phenomenological reduction led to a hermeneutic commitment and a focus on "the *meanings* of interacting others, recovering and reconstructing the *intentions* of the other actors in a situation [...] Meanings rather than phenomena take on significance here" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 32, emphasis in original). This focus on the meaning of lived experience manifested in the selection of the research question which guided this study, a question that I was interested in exploring as both a researcher and as an educator. Though I was not invested in a particular outcome in terms of what learners would share related to their experiences of OER-EP, I am influenced by my current understanding of open educational practices generally and by my experiences in designing and supporting renewable assignments for the students who join me in the courses that I teach. Recognizing researchers' being-in-the-world acknowledges that the genesis of research projects often stem from the embeddedness of the researcher within a given context, acknowledging this

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

embeddedness as a potential impetus for researchers to endeavour to answer particular questions situated within a broader topic of personal and professional interest.

While it may not have been possible to fully bracket my preconceived notions and hopes about what learners might share, it was helpful to proceed through the analytical process by applying various lenses or “prisms,” what Smith et al. describe as “different ways of thinking and reasoning about the phenomenon [...] intended to lead the inquirer away from the distraction and misdirection of their own assumptions and preconceptions back towards the essence of their experience of a given phenomenon” (2009, p. 14). These prisms include Anishinaabe *gikendaasowin*, Western educational theory, and the primacy of participants’ own unique understandings of their experiences.

Thus, the interpretations offered by participants guided the analysis, rather than any preconceived ideas about what might or should be shared. Attempts at researcher reflexivity intended to centre participants’ perspectives and position me, as researcher, as an inquirer interpreting the experiences and understandings shared by study participants. These interpretations aimed to honour participants’ stories, emphasize rich meaning, and answer the guiding research question with an attention to the particular, an approach commonly found within qualitative Western research methodologies as well as within various Indigenous methodological approaches. Total bracketing in the Husserlian sense was not possible and was not the goal. As Lavallée (2009) articulates, an element prevalent within several Indigenous epistemologies and research frameworks is an understanding that the researcher and participants, and indeed all of Creation, is interconnected. Therefore, the researcher “cannot possibly be completely objective [...] Emotions are connected to all mental processes. Every time we think, use

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

reason, figure, emotion is tied to that process; therefore, it is impossible to be free of emotion and subjectivity in research” (p. 23). Centering the study on the specific interpretations that participants shared enabled me to seek out “what may have been missed when studies were done with predetermined assumptions” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 85). In this study, the goal was to gain new insights into learners’ experiences of a specific experience of OER-EP.

Hermeneutics

Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on “illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within experience that may be taken for granted in our lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding” (Lavery, 2003, para. 12). This attempt at understanding centres on an interpretative process, hence the focus on hermeneutics, a methodology concerned with “understanding others’ perspectives and views” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 36). Within the hermeneutic tradition, some contend that all qualitative research is premised upon interpretation, indeed, that perception itself is an act of interpretation (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). For Kincheloe and McLaren, the hermeneutic act can be simply explained as “making sense of what has been observed in a way that communicates understanding” (2005, p. 311). However, this description is perhaps overly simplistic and reductive.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), hermeneutics as a methodology for examining a given phenomenon typically involves:

[...] several long, in-depth interviews with individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of interest. Analysis proceeds from the central assumption that there is an *essence* to an experience that is shared with others who have also

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

had that experience. The experiences of those participating in the study [...] are analyzed as unique expressions and then compared to identify the essence. (p. 18, emphasis in original)

Attempting to seek detailed, idiographic accounts and analyzing those accounts in pursuit of shared experiences is one of the core tensions of hermeneutic phenomenology. Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend, “the trouble with generalizations is that they don’t apply to particulars” (p. 110). While I aimed to focus deeply on the unique and highly individual understandings shared by study participants, I also explored the similarities and differences between participant accounts. The analysis section of this chapter offers a detailed explanation of how I navigated the tensions between the particular and the general.

The Hermeneutic Circle and the Double Hermeneutic. Heidegger’s concept of the hermeneutic circle, the notion that an understanding of the whole can only be achieved through an iterative process of moving from individual experiences to general understanding and back again repeatedly, is inextricably influenced by the researcher’s embeddedness within the research process, which necessarily informs the analytic strategy as the researcher moves back and forth across the data (Montague & Holland, 2020). The researcher is required to repeatedly engage in the double hermeneutic, an acknowledgement that each study participant engages in an interpretation of a given experience in the telling of that experience as guided by the interview questions. This is the first interpretative act. Subsequently, the researcher interprets the qualitative data from interview transcripts, a second interpretative act. Montague and Holland (2020) explain that “in the middle of that, the double hermeneutic is positioned. It’s your

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

interpretation of their interpretation of their experience.” This complexity of meaning and interconnection between participant and researcher interpretation must be addressed within the analytical process. Smith et al. suggest that researchers address the double hermeneutic by situating “the participant’s meaning-making [as] first-order, while the researcher’s sense-making is second-order” (2009). Since the researcher only has access to participants’ accounts of their lived experiences, and not the direct experiences themselves, and because the researcher’s interpretation of participant’s accounts is seen through “the researcher’s own, experientially-informed lens,” the researcher must simultaneously adopt both an empathetic and a questioning stance (Smith et al., 2009). I relied on Anishinaabe teachings of mnaadendiwin to ensure that I remained loyal to participants’ sensemaking as I iterated through the stages of analysis.

Mnaadendiwin

My positionality aligns with traditional Anishinaabe teachings that lie in the *Epingiishmag* (western) direction of the Medicine Wheel, which places a strong emphasis on respect and relationship. Manitowabi (2019) explains that in the English language, the word respect consists of two words: “re” is a prefix meaning “again” and “spect” meaning to “look at.” Manitowabi elaborates that

when we meet people for the first time, we develop a first impression of them but we do not develop ‘respect’ for them until we get to see them for a second time.

To gain respect for someone, we need to get to know them at a deeper level.

(2019, para. 9)

Respectful treatment of study participants, therefore, requires the researcher to return to, to “re/spect” the perspectives shared within study transcripts in iterative rounds of

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

whole-part-whole interpretive processes. Thus, each time I revisited a transcript, I honoured that participant's time and shared perspectives in an act of *mnaadendiwin*. In this manner, the iterative analytic process, which is highly contingent on active and careful listening, aligns with sacred Anishinaabe teachings such as *Mino Bimaadiziwin*, the Seven Grandfathers, which emphasize the importance of respect as one of several essential ways of being.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Description and Characteristics

The specific research method selected for this study is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), an appropriate approach given the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions that underpin the guiding research question. IPA is a contemporary and evolving qualitative research method that is highly participant-oriented and is therefore closely aligned to the focus of this study, which was to elicit the personal meanings and sense-making processes that learners engage in when invited to create a learning object that meets the criteria of a renewable assignment (Alase, 2017). IPA was originally proposed by Jonathan Smith (1996). Smith contends that the field of health psychology would benefit from research approaches which focus on the experiential aspects of the human condition, alleging that IPA, as a qualitative approach centred in psychology and rooted in phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions, could offer new and important insights (Smith, 1994; Smith et al., 2009). In recent years, IPA has been applied in multiple fields of applied psychology, as well as within "cognate disciplines in the human, social and health sciences" (Smith et al., 2009). IPA methodology is also being applied in

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

education research (Duran, 2020; Lucey & van Nieuwerburgh, 2020; Orr, 2019; Sakti Kaloeti & Manalu, 2021).

IPA studies are underpinned by three major theoretical influences: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Bartol, 2019). In practice, IPA studies tend to rely upon inductive analytical processes to move idiographic accounts, typically elicited in the form of semi-structured interviews, to “interpretative understandings of shared experiences; it is an iterative and inductive focus on personal meaning-making” (Pereira, 2014, p. 37). The Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) text *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research* provides a detailed guide to conducting IPA research projects. This study closely followed the processes articulated in the (2009) Smith, Flowers, and Larkin text, and was also informed by a series of three intensive IPA workshops facilitated by Dr. Jane Montague, Head of Psychology, and Dr. Fiona Holland, Senior Lecturer, Psychology, both affiliated with the University of Derby, England. I attended all of the workshops virtually, via Microsoft Teams, in May and June of 2020 and retain copies of each of the workshop recordings. As I moved through the data collection into the data analysis phases of the research project, I engaged in an additional Advanced IPA Data Analysis: Developing your Analysis, Writing it Up and Achieving Quality Across Your Thesis workshop facilitated by Dr. Elena Gil-Rodriguez, Counselling Psychologist and Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society. Dr. Gil-Rodriguez is an expert IPA researcher who regularly facilitates virtual IPA training workshops. I attended Dr. Gil-Rodriguez' Advanced IPA Data Analysis workshop in August, 2021, via Zoom.

Role of the Researcher

An Anishinaabekwe Elder shared a teaching that “Creator gave us two ears and only one mouth for a reason. Listen at least twice as much as you talk, and in time, you’ll become wise” (M. Osawamick, personal communication, February 13, 2020). Indeed, learning how to listen is emphasized in many Anishinaabeg teachings and in teachings and traditional stories originating from various Nations across Turtle Island. Evan Pritchard, descendant of the Mi’kmaw people and founder of The Center for Algonquin Culture explains that “Algonquins honour their famous orators and stress speaking from the heart and listening with the soul” (2001, p. 347). Similarly, in “Learning about Storywork from Stó:lō Elders” (2008), Jo-ann Archibald (*Q’um Q’um Xiiem*) describes how she has “heard Stó:lō and other First Nations storytellers say that we have “three ears to listen with, two on the sides of our head and one in our heart” (as cited in Archibald, 2008, p. 8). In an IPA study, the researcher’s primary commitment is to elicit and understand participants’ perspectives. This starts with listening with all ears to the detailed accounts offered by each study participant, who are the “experiential experts” of the study (Peat et al., 2019, p. 7).

This study leveraged semi-structured interviews as the primary means of data collection; therefore, my commitment to listening began by granting study participants the “opportunity to tell their stories, to speak freely and reflectively, and to develop their ideas and express their concerns at some length” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 56). Data collection was an interaction between each participant and I. I actively encouraged the discussion of relevant topics, paid close attention, and allowed participants’ concerns and interests to guide the interactions, so long as the matters arising related in some

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

way to the central research question. Smith et al. explain that the researcher must remain flexible and open to unexpected directions, since research participants will interpret their lifeworlds in unique and unanticipated ways. Thus, the role of the IPA researcher in the early phases of an IPA study is an active one, centred on listening, but also requiring the emotional intelligence necessary for establishing rapport, conveying empathy, probing for additional information, and guiding each interview flexibly, in a manner that honoured participant interests and followed the directions that they wished to go, without allowing the interview to stray too far from the central research question.

Once listening has taken place in situ, the researcher must return to the study data to begin the process of interpretation. This begins with a further act of careful listening in the form of creating verbatim transcripts of each audio-recorded participant account. Transcripts are “a semantic record [of each] interview [...] showing all the words that are spoken by everyone who is present [including] notable non-verbal utterances (such as laughter), significant pauses, and hesitations” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 74). To remain as close as possible to the data, the transcripts developed for this study were generated manually, rather than with the assistance of an automated software program. By manually transcribing each recorded interview, the act of listening with all ears continued beyond the initial interaction of data collection, reflecting Manitowabi's description of *mnaadendiwin* by re/turning to each interaction and examining it closely through the meticulous documentation of each utterance.

Once each participant's account has been fully transcribed, the role of the researcher expands to include overt acts of analysis, also deeply rooted in respectful listening. While Smith et al. (2009) provide a heuristic framework to support novice

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

researchers in conducting IPA analyses, they contend that the iterative and inductive cycle is not heavily prescribed but typically centres on several common strategies. The specific analytic strategies adopted by this study are articulated in the analysis section of this chapter. Throughout the analytic process, my role as IPA researcher was to move across the hermeneutic circle in a dynamic, flexible manner, allowing active engagement with the data to inform the analytic process as I explored the descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual concepts shared by each study participant, documented in the form of exploratory notes.

Once detailed exploratory notes were created in iterative whole-part-whole processes, my role shifted once again in order to observe emergent themes. The IPA researcher combines “participant’s original words and thoughts [along with] the analyst’s interpretation” to reflect “a synergistic process of description and interpretation” in order to communicate an understanding which relates “directly to both participant and analyst” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 95). Thus, my role at this phase evolved from one of close and careful listening to one of active interpretation, as I identified emergent and recurrent themes, searched for connections and patterns, and connected themes to existing theories.

Reflexivity. Peat et al. (2018) emphasize the essential role of researcher reflexivity in IPA studies, such that the researchers’ beliefs, perceptions, and experiences “can enrich their interpretations rather than them being an obstacle to making sense of the participant’s experiences” (p. 8). Goldspink and Engward (2018) argue that researcher reflexivity is particularly important at the juncture between descriptive observation and deeper interpretive work, contending that this juncture

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

provides “an intellectual space to begin to establish what the descriptive data mean to, and for, the research, and the researcher” (para. 3). Pausing to “survey the scene of their own understanding, grounding in the initial, descriptively oriented data” is yet another act of listening and respect – this time representing a listening to and respect for the researcher herself, and the dual position of being both inside and outside of the research (Goldspink & Engward, 2018, p 3).

Thus, this study included several opportunities for researcher reflexivity that informed the subsequent reflexive appraisals that occurred throughout the analytic process. These included my observations and reactions audio recorded immediately after each participant interview. Once the participant logged off and I was alone in the Zoom meeting, I continued audio recording and shared my perceptions and feelings regarding how the interview went. I also recorded my immediate reactions to the understandings shared.

Further, I maintained a researcher document, saved in a Google Doc, that I began in the pre-candidacy phase of the doctoral process and that I revisited and contributed to as the project evolved. I believe that this journaling process will be valuable to me even after the doctoral dissertation is completed. I hope to one day publish my study findings, and I will surely need to reflect on and learn from reactions to this study.

Additionally, I paused between the descriptive and interpretive stages of the analytic process to engage in a self-interview intended to make space for revisiting my initial reactions to participant interviews, the ongoing journaling process, and how my forestructures relate to the descriptive data. I started by asking myself three main

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

questions: Who is this participant? What is the main gist of what they shared? What are some key elements and quotes shared by this participant? Once I answered those questions, I returned to my post-interview reflection and compared my initial reaction to the interview with my growing understanding. The self-interview was audio-recorded and transcribed, and though it will not feature as a formal data point within the study, I believe that making space for engaged self-reflection informed and enriched subsequent analytic processes, positioning researcher reflexivity as embedded within, rather than adjacent to, the analytic process.

Participants

Study participants included seven adult learners enrolled at a publicly funded college in Ontario, Canada who completed an asynchronous online course titled *Truth and Reconciliation*, and who had been invited to participate in OER-EP through the creation of a renewable assignment. The renewable assignment required learners to select one of the TRC's 94 Calls to Action, to contextualize the Call to Action in terms of its significance and connection to historical and contemporary settler colonial harm, to research and comment on the progress made to date, and to research and describe an example of how an individual or group is working to support the Call to Action. Students were invited to share their learning in a variety of formats (text, audio, video) and had the option to publicly share and openly license their project on a website that I curate, called *Nàbowàdjige: Our Calls to Action*.

In order to achieve the idiographic commitments of IPA, balanced with the need for a sufficient number of participants for “the development of meaningful points of similarity and difference between participants,” a sample size of seven was selected for

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

this study (Smith et al., 2009, p. 51). While Smith et al. (2009) “suggest that between three and six participants can be a reasonable sample size for a graduate student project using IPA” (p. 51), a sample size of seven was selected due to the cultural significance and powerful spiritual connection that this number holds for the Anishinaabe, evoking important teachings such as *Mino Bimaadiziwin*, the Seven Fires prophecy, The Seven Points of Respect, and the Seven Generation Principle. Selecting a sample size of seven for this study aligned with my Algonquin heritage and to Anishinaabe spirituality, and also fulfilled the pragmatic need to work with “a concentrated focus on a small number of cases” as described by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009).

Recruitment Strategy

Eighty-one students who completed either the Fall 2020 or Winter 2021 semester deliveries of the *Truth and Reconciliation* course were invited via email to participate in the study. The invitation was extended to all students who completed the course, irrespective of the level of openness they ascribed to their final projects. Individuals who wished to participate responded to the invitation via email, signing and dating the attached *Participant Consent Form* (see Appendix B). Participation was granted until the desired sample size of seven was reached.

To ensure voluntary participation and negotiate the power hierarchies arising from the researcher also being the course instructor, recruitment for the study occurred after grades for the *Truth and Reconciliation* courses had been finalized. This timing was intentional to avoid any perceived coercion. Additionally, only one emailed reminder was sent to potential participants to prevent undue pressure to participate. Prior to

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

conducting participant interviews, it was explicitly communicated that participation would not influence course grades or confer any direct benefits, reinforcing the voluntary nature of participation in the study.

Study Setting

Study participants selected a date, time, and location that was most convenient and comfortable for them to participate in the semi-structured interview. The Zoom web conferencing software platform was utilized for conducting each interview, as it is the platform of choice within learners' current academic institution, so each participant had a basic familiarity with the functionality of the platform. To respect the safety of all involved, virtual, rather than face-to-face interviews were conducted due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. To establish rapport and demonstrate active listening, I enabled my web camera and microphone throughout the duration of each interview. However, I encouraged participants to turn their cameras on or off as their comfort levels dictated. The seven interviews took place from May to July, 2021.

Data Collection

Participant data was collected in the form of in-depth, semi-structured interviews, the most common form of data collection utilized in IPA studies (Reid et al., 2005). The semi-structured interview was an ideal form of data collection for this particular study, as the guiding question aimed to explore participants' perceptions of, thoughts toward, feelings in reaction to, and experiences of participating in a particular instance of OER-EP. The semi-structured interview approach, at times referred to as the "IPA interview" by contemporary IPA researchers, is useful for uncovering participants' perspectives,

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

enabling me to immediately follow-up if clarification or further elaboration on a given topic was required.

Spiers (2017) contends that IPA interviews “should be semi-structured, providing the opportunity for the participant, who is to be considered the expert on the topic at hand, to talk in great detail about the elements of their experience that are of importance to them” (p. 3). Seidman (2006) describes this storytelling process as an active act of meaning-making on the part of the participants, for “it is the process of selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them that makes telling stories a meaning-making experience” (p. 7).

To lend structure and coherence to the data set, Smith et al. (2009) encourage the flexible use of an interview guide to enable researchers to “come at the interview question ‘sideways’” (p. 58). Rather than asking participants to explain their perceptions of OER-EP directly, since it is a concept that they likely have little to no familiarity with and might find too abstract to answer, the interview guide functions to “set up the interview as an event which facilitates the discussion of relevant topics, [...] which will allow the research question to be answered subsequently, via analysis” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 58). The authors encourage researchers to view the interview guide as a flexible road map which enables them to refine the phrasing of certain questions in advance of the interview, envision a logical flow of questions, and help participants move from general, descriptive accounts to more particular, analytic ones. However, the authors also stress the importance of active listening and encourage researchers to prompt for additional information where appropriate, reorder questions if participant

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

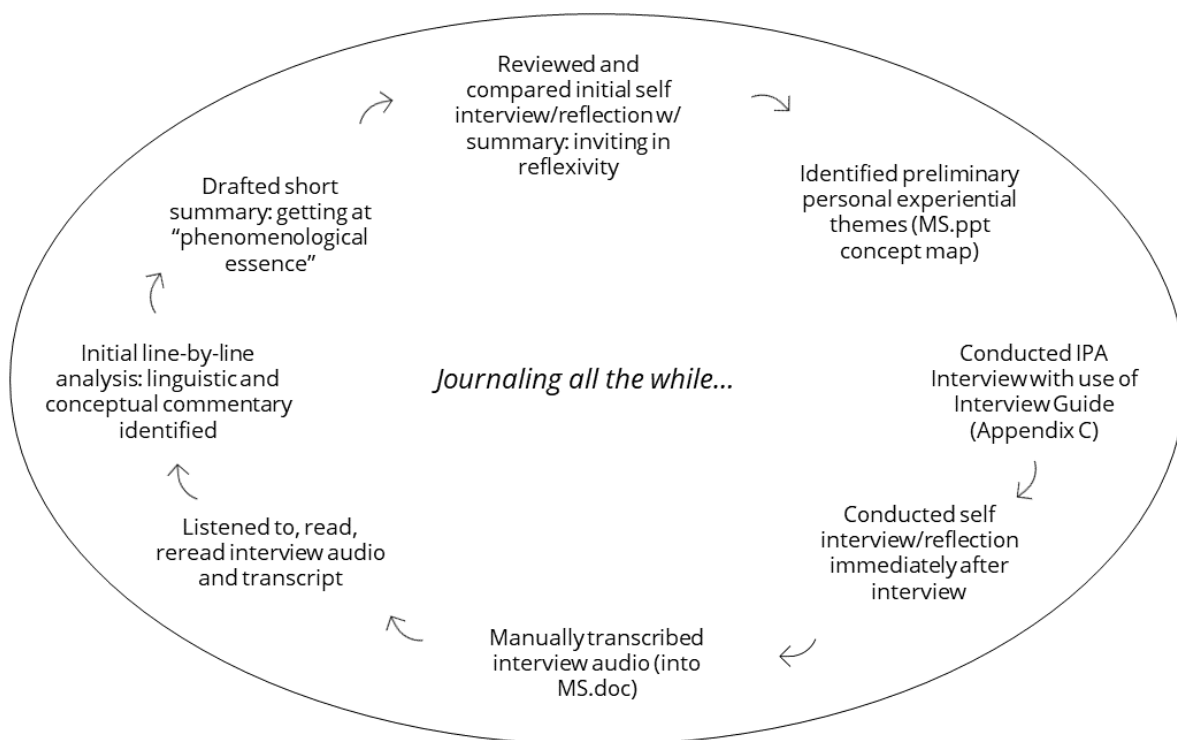
responses invite a different sequencing, and to omit questions if participants address them fully in earlier responses. Refer to Appendix C: Interview Guide to review the specific questions included in this study.

Analysis

Figure 2 provides an overview of the idiographic analytic processes undertaken for each of the seven participants. The process begins on the right side of the image, flowing clockwise. I selected a circular rather than linear graphic to honour Anishinaabe ceremonial practices and epistemologies which respect natural law. We start in Waabanong, in the East, and just as the sun moves across the sky, we move clockwise from the eastern direction.

Figure 2

Overview of Idiographic Analytic Processes



LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

This IPA study adhered to the following idiographic analytic processes. For each interview transcript, the following steps were undertaken. First, I generated each interview transcript manually. Then I worked with each transcript individually, following this sequence of analytic acts:

In step one I listened to, read and reread each interview transcript in order to centre the participant's testimonial within the analytic act.

In step two, I began an initial line-by-line analysis of the transcript text, seeking out areas of potential richness, such as the use of detail, spontaneity, use of figurative language, and other areas of potential interest, digitally underlining each instance and paraphrasing the content by adding descriptive commentary to a column positioned to the left of the transcript text. Smith et al. describe this process as a forced slowing down, an intentional attempt to reduce "our habitual propensity for 'quick and dirty' reduction and synopsis" which ideally leads to a "descriptive core of comments, which have a clear phenomenological focus, and stay close to the participant's explicit meaning" (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 82).

Continuing step two, I reviewed the transcript text again, and re-examined the data in order to form a preliminary linguistic and conceptual commentary. This notation appears in a second column positioned to the right of the transcript text. Holland and Montague (personal communication, June 10, 2020) explain that at this stage, comments "may be summaries, linguistic or conceptual associations, or preliminary interpretations." Participants' use of ambiguous language shifts in verb tense and pronoun use, and the communication of unquestioned truths or assumptions are all noteworthy at this stage. Linguistic comments were highlighted in green and conceptual

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

comments were highlighted in blue to offer me a clear visual distinction in later analytic stages.

In step three, I drafted a summary of the transcript text, restating in my own words what was shared in the interview transcript. This is an analytic strategy strongly encouraged by Holland and Montague, who suggest that such summaries can help the researcher “get at the phenomenological essence of things,” which may prove quite useful at the cross-case analysis stage (personal communication, June 24, 2020). These researcher-generated summaries typically consist of three to four paragraphs of text which concisely encapsulate the content of the transcript.

Next, I reviewed my initial reflection that was audio recorded immediately post-interview, noting how my initial reaction compared to my sense of the participants' experience of OER-EP after reviewing the transcript closely and attempting to summarize it accurately. This phase allowed for researcher reflexivity by making my thoughts, assumptions, and reactions overt through articulating in detail how participants' words correlate with my forestructures.

Step four of the analytic process involved the identification of preliminary personal experiential themes. At this stage, I took on a more central role within the analytic process, drafting “phrases which speak to the psychological essence of the piece and contain enough particularity to be grounded and enough abstraction to be conceptual” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 95). This stage recalls Heidegger's concept of the hermeneutic circle, as the personal experiential themes are at once focused on particular components of the transcript, reinforced to some extent by the researcher-generated summaries, while also interpreted in relation to the transcript in its entirety.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

This phase represents both “the participant’s words and thoughts [and] also the analyst’s interpretation, [reflecting] a synergistic process of description and interpretation” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 95). It is the emergence of an understanding.

In step five I heeded Smith, Flowers, and Larkins’ advice to map the emergent personal experiential themes within a conceptual chart, to assist me in breaking away from the chronology of the interview transcript. The authors encourage analysts to “look for a means of drawing together emergent themes [in order to] produce a structure which allows you to point to all of the most interesting and important aspects of your participant’s account” (2009, p. 96). I completed this mapping process using a digital concept mapping strategy, with preliminary personal experiential themes clustered according to their perceived relatedness to the central research question, to each other, and based on their dissimilarities with one another. At this phase Holland and Montague (2020) caution novice researchers to avoid discarding themes that may seem unimportant or unrelated to the research question, as future transcripts and cross-case analysis may prove this initial assumption false. Major personal experiential themes were drafted at this phase, facilitated by the visual representation offered by the concept mapping process. Smith et al. describe how strategies such as abstraction, subsumption, polarization, contextualization, numeration, and function can enrich the analysis. Once the mapping process has been carried through to a point where the “analyst feels comfortable with the outcome, it is important to make notes about how this key stage of analysis was conducted” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 99). These notes were detailed in my reflexive research document.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Steps one through five were repeated for each of the remaining six participant transcripts, with careful attempts made to “treat the next case on its own terms, to do justice to its own individuality” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 100). Again, the importance of reflexivity is reinforced, for the themes identified in the first case should have no impact upon the themes identified in subsequent cases. Smith et al. encourage rigor in the form of strict adherence to the analytic process by closely and carefully, following each of the steps outlined within each phase of the analysis, and careful documentation of each step of the analysis within the research diary.

Step six of the analytical process involved looking for patterns across the entire body of study data. The seven concept maps generated by iterating through steps one through five were compared to one another in an effort to identify unique as well as shared elements (refer to Appendix D). Smith and Nizza (2022) clarify that the aim at this point is “to look carefully at the materials within and across cases to identify connections, similarities, and differences [...] individual tables of personal experiential themes will inevitably be different in structure and wording” (p. 52). I decided it was best for the analysis to remove each data point from the mind map from which it originated, to enable me to look at the entirety of the data with fresh eyes. I colour coded each of the seven mind maps, cut each of the data points out of them, discarded the preliminary personal experiential themes, and spread the data out on a large surface.

I followed Smith and Nizza’s guidance by first focussing on synthesis, the similarities between accounts. Over time, patterns and interconnections did begin to reveal themselves, along with divergences and particularities. I continued to sort and regroup, until eventually a set of preliminary group experiential themes emerged. I noted

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

the degree of recurrence among participants and took care to describe the preliminary results of the cross-case analysis in my reflexive research document.

As I took a step back to take in a more holistic view of the understanding that was emerging, I heard a loon calling, close and clear. This was not a coincidence; rather, it was a spiritually significant message, a message from okàdeniganàtig, maang, loon, the essential messenger of the Anishinaabe and the one who holds Ojiig'anung on their tail. I will elaborate on these teachings in Chapter Five: Discussion.

After several hours of mind mapping via paper, I moved back to the computer to generate and repeatedly revise a draft table of group experiential themes. I found it difficult to eliminate data and originally incorporated too many subordinate themes. Eventually, I arrived at the table of group experiential themes detailed and discussed in Chapter Four: Findings. I corroborate the results in a detailed table representing the group experiential themes, along with representative quotes from each participant, and related transcript line numbers. The cross-case analysis enabled me to present the study results in a coherent narrative account (see Chapter Four: Findings).

Validating the Study

Lincoln and Guba's Four Dimensions Criteria (1985) aided in establishing the trustworthiness of this study. These criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability and are described in the following sections.

Credibility

Marshall and Rossman (2016) explain that the goal in establishing the credibility of a qualitative study is to "demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was appropriately identified and described" (p.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

261). This alludes to the central role of truth value in ensuring the credibility of a qualitative analysis, as well as IPA's specific phenomenological commitments. The purpose of this IPA study was to capture what it is like for learners to participate in a specific occasion of creating an example of OER-EP. The extensive analytical process as described in the previous section, which centred each participant's account of their own experience within subsequent analytic acts, was the main strategy for ensuring that the phenomenological commitment to truth value was honoured in the study.

However, the goal of an IPA study is not solely to provide a descriptive account. The researcher's subjective interpretation is a valid component of the IPA analysis. Therefore, an additional important strategy in ensuring the study's credibility included the audio recording and ongoing journaling within my reflexive journal, my Google Doc, of my reactions to participant accounts in situ and during the analytic and interpretative processes. This clear articulation of biases and assumptions enabled an explicit account of how my forestructures influenced my interpretation of the data. Reflecting in this way also allowed me to critique my novice interview skills, including areas where I could have probed for further information or attempted to repeat a question in a different way. I was also able to voice, and therefore process, my strong affective reactions to what the participants shared. In this way I was able to continue to listen with all ears, including my heart, to what participants shared and also to what their sharing evoked in me.

An additional strategy commonly utilized by qualitative researchers aiming to ensure the credibility of their analyses is the use of an independent auditor who reviews the analytic processes, examining initial participant transcripts along with the various

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

steps the researcher employed to arrive at the final cross-case analysis and interpretative account. To enable an independent auditor to conduct such a credibility check, I maintained a highly detailed audit trail by clearly documenting each component of the analytical process implemented for each idiographic account, as well as clearly documenting how the cross-case analysis was conducted and how it evolved over time.

Since the researcher's individual interpretations and subjectivity are bounded within the study, the goal of this type of external review is not to arrive at a single, definitive account, but to ensure that the specific account presented is credible insofar as it is grounded in participants' actual claims, and that a clear link can be identified between the participants' accounts, the themes identified, and the overall analysis that was produced.

Transferability

To enable future researchers to make transferability judgements about the study, I provided thick descriptions of the study participants, the study context, the research process, and my forestructures. These strategies "enable the reader to assess whether [the study] findings are transferable to their own setting; this is the so-called transferability judgement" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 122). While this study was deeply focused on the particular, Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) argue that "idiographic qualitative research such as IPA has much to contribute to our understanding of phenomena, as it can complement actuarial claims derived from quantitative studies through a focus on the particular which can help illuminate the universal" (p. 758).

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

The study findings relate most directly to the particular example of OER-EP under investigation, and therefore to future iterations of the postsecondary course in which this instance of OER-EP is embedded. However, it is also possible that future researchers may conclude that study findings are applicable to their particular research goals and contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316).

Dependability

Nowell et al. explain that “to achieve dependability, researchers can ensure the research process is logical, traceable, and clearly documented” (2017, p. 3). The dependability of the study is assured by a meticulous adherence to the analytic process, as informed by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin’s 2009 guidebook which describes in detail the iterative steps which led to this study’s final analysis. Just as a detailed audit trail functions to support the study’s credibility, the audit trail can also enable an independent third party to assess the study’s overall dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability is “concerned with providing evidence that the researcher’s interpretations of participants’ constructions are rooted in the participants’ [accounts] and that the data analysis and the resulting findings and conclusions can be verified as reflective of and grounded in participants’ perceptions” (Given, 2008, para. 3). The final narrative account of the analytic process, Chapter Four: Findings, is designed to ensure confirmability by clearly tracing the researcher’s interpretations back to the original participant accounts. These connections are supported by a conceptual table of mapped themes, with specific transcript line numbers from each participant account indicated along with the frequency of participant statements that correspond with each

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

theme. Further, the final analysis includes verbatim extracts taken from participants' accounts of their experiences, incorporated into Chapter Five: Discussion, in order to trace a clear line from and between participant meaning-making and researcher sense-making activities.

Limitations

The inherent limitations of qualitative research, as described by Price and Murnan (2004), are those elements within the design or methodology that shape or influence the interpretation of the study's outcomes. A notable limitation of this study, reflective of broader challenges in IPA research, is the focus on a small, homogeneous group of participants. Specifically, this investigation gathered in-depth insights from seven students who had engaged in an OER-EP assignment within a distinct course at a particular higher education institution. While the data yielded rich, detailed accounts, the limited sample size may not fully represent the wide spectrum of student experiences and perceptions associated with OER-EP.

Further, the IPA approach and Etuaptmumk framing embeds the researcher's perspectives within the analysis, introducing a unique set of insights informed by my own individual biases. Despite reflexive efforts to mitigate these biases, my background, worldview, and experiences have undeniably shaped my interpretation of the data. While the interpretative and therefore subjective nature of the IPA analysis may be considered a limitation, I consider it a strength. The methodology allowed me to leverage my distinct perspectives to explore context-specific insights and draw connections to Anishinaabe teachings that are not often included in formal academic research.

Summary

In sum, this chapter described the philosophical underpinnings that informed the study, the alignment between the study question and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the specific research and analytic methods that were undertaken, as well as various validation strategies. This framework supported my inquiry into learners' perceptions of the renewable assignment project that I incorporate into the *Truth and Reconciliation* course and positioned me to engage in an *Etuaptmumk* analysis of learner's shared experiences, which I interpreted from Anishinaabe and Western viewpoints. The richness, complexity, and contradiction that their shared stories revealed is described in Chapter Four: Findings.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

This chapter describes the results of the study, beginning with a brief introduction to the seven study participants along with the individual choices they made related to publishing their renewable assignments. Next, group experiential themes (GET) are described and discussed. The GET include four superordinate and nine subordinate themes, summarized in Table 3, below.

Table 3

Group Experiential Themes

1. THIS LEARNING IS MEANINGFUL

- 1a. This Learning is Meaningful to Me
- 1b. This Learning is Meaningful for Me
- 1c. This Learning is Meaningful for Others

2. I HAVE SOMETHING I CAN OFFER

- 2a. I Design for my Audience
- 2b. I Recognize the Importance of Peer-to-Peer Learning

3. I MAKE CAREFUL DECISIONS THAT SUPPORT MY GOALS

- 3a. My Licensing Decisions are Rooted in Respect
- 3b. My Choices Related to Anonymity are Personal and Contextual

4. MY EXPERIENCES MAY GUIDE YOU

- 4a. I Have Recommendations to Share with Educators
- 4b. I Have Recommendations to Share with Learners

Superordinate and subordinate themes are worded in the first person as an homage to the idiographic commitments of IPA, even as I share the more generalized understandings that resulted from cross-case analyses.

Participant Information

Seven participants shared perceptions of their experiences of creating renewable assignments for the final project in the *Truth and Reconciliation* course. An overview of

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

participants' decisions related to the renewable assignment are summarized in Table 4, below.

Table 4

Participant Overview

Pseudonym Selected By Participant	Transcript Number	Shared to Website?	Call to Action Researched	License Selected	Level of Anonymity
Brianna	1	✓	10	CC BY	First and last name
Star	2	✓	75	All Rights Reserved	First and last name
Tendai	3	✓	22	CC BY NC	Anonymous
Simon	4	✓	24	CC BY	First and last initials
Britney	5	✓	3	All Rights Reserved	First name
Sarah	6		41	N/A	N/A
Jessica	7	✓	83	CC BY NC ND	First and last name

The variability among participants is noteworthy. They each researched a unique Call to Action. Six of the seven participants opted to share their work on the public-facing *Nàbowàdjige: Our Calls to Action* website. All participants made strategic decisions related to the license they selected and their degree of anonymity. These divergences and nuances pervade the study data and will be further discussed later in this chapter.

The following sections introduce each of the seven study participants in further detail, summarizing their key characteristics and their choices related to the renewable assignment. Note that pronouns used reflect the preferences of each study participant.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Brianna

Brianna is an optimistic young person who values education, introspection, and shared experiences. She is on a path to becoming a social worker and, at the time of our interview, was working in an educational context on a First Nation's reservation. While she values formal education, she has experienced low levels of motivation and a lack of confidence at times in her postsecondary studies. Despite initial concerns about the quality of her work, Brianna ultimately decided to challenge herself, committing to designing a final project that she deemed worthy of sharing with others. She thought, "Well, why don't I take this opportunity to actually prove myself wrong and see if I can really put in that effort and do a great job at this project?" (256-257)². Brianna shared a highly reflective account of her learning related to Call to Action 10, published with a CC BY license using her full name.

Star

Star is a visual artist who experiences deep empathy for those who have suffered trauma and loss due to the Canadian residential school system. She is a mature student who approaches her learning with the gift of lived experience. However, Star expressed deep dissatisfaction at her lack of prior knowledge related to Canadian settler colonialism, explaining, "I had no awareness of this at all, and I'm 57 years old. I was not taught this in school" (167-169). Star's *Truth and Reconciliation* coursework thus represents her sensemaking and extreme care and compassion as she grappled with important truths. Ultimately, Star conceptualizes her final project as an art piece, a tribute to Call to Action 75 that holds deep personal significance. She selected an All

² These in-text citations correspond to specific line numbers from the transcripts of individual participants.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Rights Reserved license for her publicly-shared project and opted to use her full name on the *Nàbowàdjige: Our Calls to Action* website.

Tendai

Tendai is a mother, a health care worker, and a mature student who holds lived experience of colonial harm from an African context. She is committed to learning about Canadian settler colonialism, and she supports reconciliation efforts. A dedicated learner, Tendai put great effort into her final project which explored Call to Action 22. In our interview, Tendai repeatedly expressed shock and dismay at the lack of knowledge related to reconciliation and the ongoing injustices faced by Indigenous persons living on Turtle Island, describing conversations with her children, with her colleagues working in long-term care, and with her fellow students. Speaking of her colleagues, she exclaimed, “Canadians who are nurses, they have *no idea* of all these things that happened, these news stories about these little children whose bodies that were discovered [...] they were *born here* in Canada, and they *don’t* even know” (132-135, emphasis in original). Tendai applied a CC BY NC license to her media-rich final project, choosing to post her work anonymously.

Simon

Simon is a mature student who is diligent and methodical about his studies. He appreciates the learning value inherent to more traditional or typical approaches to assessment, but also acknowledges and appreciates what he refers to as the third component of OER-EP, explaining, “there’s that *third component* that other people would also be looking at this [...] I was thinking about the project a little more [from] multiple perspectives [...] it felt more important because other people would read it”

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

(168-177, emphasis in original). This third component motivated Simon to envision his project as a contribution to a larger whole, something that other people might benefit from and use in the future. He applied a CC BY license to his exploration of Call to Action 24, posting his work using his first and last initials as identifiers.

Britney

Britney is a confident, motivated learner who values lifelong learning. She cares deeply about disability advocacy and eagerly engaged in her learning about Jordan's Principle through Call to Action 3. As a person who experiences life with disabilities, Britney made deep empathetic connections to the stories she encountered, continuously asking herself if persons in her own life may have been affected by Jordan's Principle. Britney is called to help others on their own learning journeys. At one point during our interview, Britney quietly but assuredly stated, "I've always been a teacher" (261). This positionality motivated her to share her final project on the public-facing website. She applied an All Rights Reserved license to her work and opted to include her first name.

Sarah

Sarah is committed to truth and reconciliation, believing that Indigenous persons can lead us on a path of healing, and that everyone can play an active role in creating a more equitable future. When she is intrinsically motivated to complete her coursework, she finds it fun, enjoyable, and rewarding. Sarah was highly motivated to learn more about Call to Action 41, designing her final project for herself and for an imagined audience. Ultimately, Sarah opted not to post her work to the public-facing website due to privacy concerns and a desire to share personal information and private reflections

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

directly with me, the course professor. Sarah described her learning as deeply impactful, explaining that researching Call to Action 41 specifically and Canadian settler colonialism broadly, “makes me a better person” (226). As Sarah did not post her project publicly, she did not select a license for her work.

Jessica

Jessica is a highly motivated learner who aims to empower others to learn about truth and reconciliation by sharing her own experiences of moving from a place of unknowing toward a place of deeper understanding. As a person who experiences life with a visual impairment, Jessica designed her final project with her audience and their accessibility needs in mind. She described becoming consumed by her final project, explaining that “I really became almost intoxicated by it [...] it was keeping me up at night, it was, I mean not in a *bad* way, but like I just couldn’t stop thinking about it [...] I was just so *excited*” (156-162, emphasis in original). Jessica’s final project centered on Call to Action 83. Through a media-rich presentation which included self-recorded video, audio voiceover, and a plethora of curated images, Jessica celebrated and showcased an artistic collaboration that inspired and uplifted her. She shared her final project using a CC BY NC ND license, posted using her first and last name.

This Learning is Meaningful

The analysis manifested a number of recurrent themes. The first strong recurrent theme indicated perceived significance, categorized as *Group Experiential Theme 1: This Learning is Meaningful*, consisting of three subordinate themes: 1a. This Learning is Meaningful to Me, 1b. This Learning is Meaningful for Me, and 1c. This Learning is

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Meaningful for Others. The following sections present an overview of study data and related interpretations in connection to the first group experiential theme.

1a. This Learning is Meaningful to Me

Participants shared deeply contextual, personal motivations for engaging in their learning about the Calls to Action. Participants tended to frame the personal importance of their learning, although varied, around lived experiences, intrinsic motivation, and emotional connections.

For example, Star was motivated to learn about Call to Action 75 because she has experienced the loss of family members, some of whom are buried overseas and out of town, making their grave sites inaccessible to her, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Star's love and grief for her own deceased family members influenced her highly empathetic approach to her research and sharing related to Call to Action 75. Britney's learning was similarly motivated by deep, personal connections. Britney explained that she "chose to do Jordan's Principle because I connect to it very personally because it has to do with disability [...] it is very connected to me because I have cerebral palsy" (62-66). Additionally, Britney described her connections to Indigenous persons and communities, explaining that she

grew up around a lot of Indigenous people too because parts of my family are Indigenous [...] knowing the things that they've been through not disabled, imagining how they'd go if they did have my situation on hand, that would have been very sad. (121-125)

For Britney, learning about Jordan's Principle brought forward an awareness of the privileges she experiences as a non-Indigenous person in terms of her ability to access

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

required disability supports. Like Star, Britney demonstrated a high degree of empathy and personal sensemaking as she described her personal connections to her learning.

Sarah's connections stem from her own perceived lack of knowledge and abiding curiosity. Having a minimal understanding of the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada, Sarah explained:

I always wondered, 'Why is that happening?' ... Why are they being so targeted? Why does this seem like it's only, not only, but largely happening to Indigenous women?' I just had all these questions about it, so I *actually wanted* to research this and find the answers to those questions and kind of finally have that closure.
(82-86, emphasis in original)

Though their personal motivations for engaging in their learning are as varied as the Calls to Action they chose to research, the above excerpts demonstrate the self-determined connections that underpinned participants' learning. For personal reasons relating to lived experiences, curiosity, and empathy, this learning held meaning for the participants.

Another aspect that was shared by multiple participants related to their intrinsic motivation to work on their projects, at times bordering on obsession. Jessica used the words "intoxicated," "captivating" and "really consuming" to describe her feelings as she created her final project, noting that the project would at times keep her awake at night (159-170). Like Jessica, Star also experienced a preoccupation with the assignment, describing long walks and hours of contemplation. Star continuously asked herself, "'how can I do this justice?' ... I don't know how many hours I just sat and thought, 'How can I do this?'" (234-237). The care and dedication demonstrated by Jessica and Star

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

was also alluded to by other participants, including Sarah, Tendai, Brianna, and Simon; however, these participants connected their intrinsic motivation to their desire to help educate others. These accounts are described later in the chapter, in the discussion of subordinate themes, 1c. This Learning is Meaningful for Others; and 2a. I Design for my Audience.

Additionally, several participants discussed strong emotional reactions to their learning. For example, Britney described feelings of shock as she learned about Jordan's Principle. She stated, "I actually spent almost a week just watching videos before I even started [the project] because it was really fascinating to me ...it was, 'Wow'" (108-115). While Britney experienced shock, Brianna described feelings of anger, uncertainty, and confusion as she learned about the lack of progress made on her selected Call to Action (519-520). She was mindful to make space to "pause and sit and actually think about what it truly meant to me [...] Why am I putting so much effort into an assignment [...] those emotions [...] really changed, I think, the way I went about the assignment" (511-522). At the time of our interview, Brianna shared that her understanding of the Call to Action had continued to evolve beyond the bounds of the *Truth and Reconciliation* course. She explained that,

Since I've done the project, I've actually learned more about this working in an education system on a First Nation reserve. [...] It's still so new, but it's really nice to see that some First Nations reserves are going in that direction [...] It's great to see. (88-105)

As Brianna's relationship to this knowledge evolves, her emotional connections and reactions also expand.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Star also described a “deep emotional connection that I have not had with other class assignments [...] something has hit me and yeah, for that entire year, for the entire class, the connection [...] I still haven’t lost it” (254-260). Later in the interview Star shared, “I still get emotional when I think about it because it is, it’s really deeply connected” (346-347). These perceptions underscore the personal importance that participants placed on their learning, drawing on lived experiences, intrinsic motivation, and emotional connections to describe the meanings they drew from their learning.

1b. This Learning Is Meaningful for Me

Several participants framed the learning as personally significant in terms of their growth and development as content creators, postsecondary learners, and allies to Indigenous persons.

For instance, Simon, a confident writer, described the process of curating media objects and embedding them into his project as something “that was new for me, but I found that interesting, I feel that kind of added another component to the project” (93-95). Jessica also pushed herself outside of her comfort zone when it came to incorporating technology into her project, opting to record an introductory video and an audio voiceover as well as a concluding video. She stated:

I’m definitely not a public speaker and I’m not somebody who is overly comfortable in front of the camera by any means [...] it was the passion of what I was learning about and my excitement to get that message out there I think is what drove my overall desire to make it [...] more interactive and a lot more personalized [...] it quickly turned away from being a bit of anxiety and more so

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

became like, 'this is how it needs to be' and I was just so excited and I was so ready for that. (226-242)

Jessica's goals for the project motivated her to overcome her insecurities related to self-generated audio and video content.

The desire to overcome insecurities in service of the final project was also experienced by Brianna, who compared the experience to overcoming stage fright. Brianna indicated:

It's almost like stage fright. [...] Stage fright in knowing, 'Okay, is my project actually this great for other people to see?' I think that's where it came from a little bit of confidence thing too [...] having that option to choose a renewable [...] assignment, I think it actually helped my confidence a lot with postsecondary education in general. (534-541)

This powerful metaphor of overcoming stage fright evokes the trepidations some participants experienced as they moved through the process of creating their renewable assignments. Ultimately, six of seven participants opted to share their work openly. Some of the motivations that underpinned their decisions related to public sharing are highlighted in the next subordinate theme, 1c. This Learning is Meaningful for Others.

Additionally, participants framed the significance of their learning in terms of their ability to serve as better allies to Indigenous persons. Like Sarah, Tendai was motivated to research for her own personal understanding. She explained that "doing that research and to write things to get more information in answering that assignment is what I was interested in doing, to get more information for myself (182-184). Sarah claimed that engaging in the research process brought her "a little bit of hope, just a

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

little bit,” as she learned about ongoing activism and justice-seeking efforts related to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada (242). Through her research, Sarah learned about the Women’s Memorial March, an awareness and advocacy campaign that inspired and uplifted her. She shared, “I’ve made it my mission to do that one day [participate in the Memorial March] and so I hope that other people will do it again too” (137-142). Like Sarah, Jessica made real-world connections through her research. Jessica saw the final project as an opportunity to celebrate and amplify the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists who collaborated in response to Call to Action 83. She explained that “being able to almost celebrate that positive expression that happened so locally to me was just so exciting” (155-156). For Jessica, amplifying a specific, local artistic collaboration between Indigenous artists and allies was exciting and refreshing.

For the reasons articulated above, the learning embedded in the creation of their renewable assignments held meaning for the study participants, helping to increase their competencies in creating media objects, improving their confidence as postsecondary learners, and bolstering their abilities to act in allyship with Indigenous persons.

1c. This Learning is Meaningful for Others

The final subordinate theme connected to participants’ perceived importance of the learning for others, notably, is the urgent need to increase awareness of truth and reconciliation efforts among the broader Canadian public. Tendai spoke at length about her shock and dismay at the lack of knowledge among young persons (including her teenaged son), among healthcare workers employed at the long-term care organization

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

where she works, and among her fellow classmates. As she created her assignment, she shared her work with her children to solicit their feedback. She said:

You know what surprises me is my children, they go to school, and they do history, but they have *no idea* of these things. So, I was wondering if the history is selecting things that they want people to know, because this is basically something that everybody who is doing Canadian history should be knowing, but I'm surprised they have *no idea* of these things. (98-102, emphasis in original)

To remediate this suspected revisionist history, Tendai committed to educating her children and others about Canadian settler colonial harm. She explained that for her, the most important motivator was “to pass on the information that I have learned to make other people aware, especially the teenagers, to know the history of Canada and why we are here today and what’s going on (71-74). As with Tendai, a perceived lack of knowledge motivated several participants to engage in public sharing of their work.

Sarah explained that she was “happy that we were able to share [the final projects] with other people, with other students because obviously, people need to know more about this” (299-301). Sarah illustrated her point by describing an encounter she had with another student in her program. They were comparing their elective course selections for the semester. Sarah told the student that she was enrolled in the *Truth and Reconciliation* course, describing how she

explained how it has a lot to do with residential schools, and she looks at me and she says, ‘Oh, what’s that?’ [laughs] and so I [thought], ‘Oh!’ She had no idea, and I was *shocked*. I was like, ‘Oh, wow.’ So, then I had to go on kind of a teaching thing about it, but it just goes to show how many people don’t know

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

about this and so the more people who know and are aware of this the bigger difference we're able to make, so I was for sure happy that we were able to share our work and teach others. (308-317, emphasis in original)

Though Sarah opted not to post her final project to the public-facing website, she nonetheless acknowledged the need for increased awareness among her peers and among Canadians broadly.

Accordingly, *Group Experiential Theme 1: This Learning is Meaningful* manifested in three ways. Participants reported perceived importance for self, described in subordinate theme 1a. This Learning is Meaningful to Me, centering their perceptions on lived experiences, intrinsic motivation, and emotional connections. Study participants also described specific benefits gained from engaging in the learning process, detailed in subordinate theme 1b. This Learning is Meaningful for Me. Subordinate theme 1b included participants' accounts of their development as content creators, their growth as postsecondary learners, and their improved capacity to act in allyship with Indigenous persons. Finally, participants identified an urgent need for others to learn more about truth and reconciliation, as expressed in subordinate theme 1c. This Learning is Meaningful for Others. Participants described their shock at the lack of awareness of settler colonial harm and truth and reconciliation activities among their family members, colleagues, and fellow students. The meaning that participants ascribed to this learning is a thread that continues through the remaining group experiential themes, as the project's perceived importance motivated participants to share their learning with others by participating in the renewable aspects of the assessment in ways that aligned with their individual goals.

I Have Something I Can Offer

The second recurring pattern within the data involved participants' affirmations that their work and the work of their peers could be beneficial to other learners. This is categorized as *Group Experiential Theme 2: I Have Something I Can Offer*. This second superordinate theme is separated into two subordinate themes: 2a. I Design for My Audience, and 2b. I Recognize the Importance of Peer-to-Peer Learning.

2a. I Design for My Audience

All study participants indicated that the design choices they made for their final projects were heavily influenced by the needs and preferences of an imagined audience. Additionally, all participants rejected exclusively text-based submissions in favour of multimodal projects that included curated and self-generated media. Though several participants explained that creating a media-rich final project took them longer and included more technical challenges than text-based submissions may have, they made these choices due to a desire to hold their imagined audience's attention and engage the audience in meaningful learning. These audience-oriented design choices connect closely to subordinate theme 1c. This Learning Is Meaningful for Others. Participants acknowledged the importance of sharing their knowledge, and they attempted to do so in ways they thought would be most impactful.

For example, Star wove visual elements, musical accompaniment, and poignant quotes into her project in order to capture her audience's attention. She indicated that her aim was to prompt her audience to say, "‘Hey, wait a minute, what is this?’ and actually get the information they need. I really wanted them to pay attention" (153-157). Star compared her process of curating impactful audio-visual elements for her final

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

project to the creative flow she experiences when designing other forms of visual art. As she selected representative images and music for her project, she explained how, “it all flowed together, it all blended. Things come to me, and I know that I need to use them in a certain way” (141-510). Star allowed her creative intuition and artistic skills to guide her as she created a final project intended to hold an imagined audience’s attention.

Similarly, Brianna opted to design a media-rich learning object, explaining that aesthetics were “very important because personally, when I’m looking at articles or projects, I really like the visual aspect of it, that’s what draws me in” (162-164). Brianna explained that the “visually-appealing extras” she incorporated into her project were intended to make the experience more engaging for her audience: (206). “What really motivated me [...] to put the effort and time into it was knowing that it would be posted for others to see. I think that made an absolute huge difference” (202-204).

Jessica also created a media-rich final project. Her goals were threefold: she wanted to captivate her audience, connect with them in an empathetic way, and design an accessible learning object that didn’t present barriers to individuals who experience life with disabilities. Despite a discomfort with filming herself, Jessica opted to include introductory and concluding videos to bookend her presentation. The videos describe her personal learning journey related to settler colonial harm in Canada:

I think there’s a sense of feeling uncomfortable learning about Indigenous history when you had never learned about it previously and you are not Indigenous. [...] There can be a sense of guilt, maybe feeling uneducated about something so huge. I wanted to put myself in those shoes to allow people who are experiencing

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

the same feelings to understand it's okay. I mean, it's not okay! But it's okay to start here. It's better to start here than not at all. (93-103)

Jessica envisioned her final project as an entry point for other learners and wanted to explicitly address some of the feelings of shame and ignorance that engaging with this learning generated for her. By sharing her own experiences and perspectives, Jessica aimed to acknowledge these emotions and encourage her audience to continue with their individual learning journeys despite feelings of guilt or shame.

Jessica also included multimedia elements within her final project to increase the accessibility of the resulting learning object. She described her decision to include visuals, videos, and audio narration as

[...] an accessibility move. With myself being visually impaired, I think that being able to watch a video that has so much information that I'm interested in learning but having to pause and zoom [...] really takes away from the overall experience of learning and maybe the artistic experience [...] when I get to watch videos that have the voiceover [...] it actually really enhances the experience for me, so I wanted to make it more accessible in that way. (124-132)

Britney, who also experiences life with disabilities, described her design choices through an accessibility lens as well. Like Jessica, Britney's design choices were influenced by her own experiences interacting with various media:

I chose to add several different media types because not everybody learns in the same way. I know that I like to be able to read about what I'm trying to learn about, but I also like to be able to watch videos and see visuals of what I'm learning so that I can connect it further. I have a very image-type brain. (72-77)

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

These calculated design choices demonstrate a high degree of empathy for and awareness of an imagined audience and their learning needs.

Like the other study participants, Simon approached the assignment differently due to an imagined audience, describing this audience awareness as an additional element or “third component” that separated his experience of OER-EP from the process of designing more standard or traditional postsecondary assignments. Simon explained:

I think I approached it [the final project] differently because I was thinking, ‘Okay what would be, what would be interesting for other people?’ [...] In this there’s that *third component* that other people would also be looking at this, so I feel like I was thinking about the project a little more from multiple perspectives, and I think it was a bit more interested in sort of double-checking just one more time to make sure that like other people would find it okay. (164-177, emphasis in original)

For Simon, the third component of the assignment, the broader public who may engage with and learn from his work, prompted him to consider his design choices from multiple imagined perspectives, and to edit and revise his work so that it aligned to the potential learning needs of others.

Tendai also alluded to the third component of the assignment, the imagined audience and their needs. When describing how the project differed from other projects she’d completed during her postsecondary studies, Tendai explained, “in making this project [...] it’s not only me learning, it’s me learning and sharing what I have learned!”

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

(368-372). Tendai, as did the other participants, recognized the importance of sharing her knowledge with others and endeavoured to do so in an impactful way.

Notably, a desire to create an effective learning experience for an imagined audience was also shared by Sarah, the only study participant who opted not to publish her final project on the *Nàbowàdjige: Our Calls to Action* website. Sarah explained:

I wanted to express everything that I'd learned and to hopefully be able to put it together in such a way that if someone else were to see it, they'd be able to understand the Calls to Action, they'd be able to learn from it and actually benefit from it. I tried really hard to make it [...] great, because I just really wanted it to be beneficial. (153-158)

For Sarah, the desire to create an exceptional final project was connected to her desire to help others learn, even though she ultimately decided not to share her final project openly due to privacy concerns.

All study participants indicated that their design choices were influenced by a desire to engage an imagined audience. Brianna rationalized this influence by claiming, "I just *felt* it should be more engaging [...] because other people were going to see it, whereas most projects, just your professor sees it and that's it" (208-210). Brianna's assertion summarizes an overarching sentiment shared by all of the study participants and connects strongly with the common feeling that the knowledge they had to share was meaningful for others, as described in subordinate theme 1c. This belief in the importance of sharing information related to the Calls to Action impacted participants' design choices as they endeavored to create engaging and accessible learning objects for an imagined audience.

2b. I Recognize the Importance of Peer-to-Peer Learning

Several participants explicitly described the positive impacts of peer-to-peer learning. Given that the *Nàbowàdjige: Our Calls to Action* website is designed for high school level learners, study participants tended to focus on the potential benefits for younger students.

Brianna used particularly strong language to describe peer-to-peer learning and how openly sharing coursework contravenes prevalent norms and conventions within higher education. She claimed, “A lot of times, postsecondary seems *secretive* with assignments if that makes any sense? Especially when it comes to plagiarism [...] You almost never hear of postsecondary students sharing their final work. Like, that’s almost *absurd*, like that’s *confidential*” (366-369, emphasis in original). Brianna went on to describe several possible benefits of openly shared postsecondary assignments for younger learners enrolled in elementary and secondary school:

From a high school students’ perspective or elementary [school perspective], it would probably open some doors into them learning what postsecondary courses and final projects might consist of and being able to see what they might be able to do when they go out to postsecondary and maybe it would help them pick what they do in postsecondary and stuff, just having that open knowledge of what it’s going to be like. (370-375)

For Brianna, openly shared postsecondary coursework could reveal aspects of postsecondary education that can be opaque to younger learners attempting to make informed decisions about their academic futures. While she described this sharing in favourable terms, she also acknowledged that open sharing of coursework contravenes

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

the dominant culture in postsecondary, which tends to treat student-generated coursework as “secretive” and “confidential” (366-369).

Sarah, like Brianna, described the benefits of openly shared postsecondary coursework for high school students. She explained:

I think that maybe high school students will look at it like, ‘Oh! Look at these college students, look at what they’re learning! That’s really good!’ They’ll see us leading by example and teaching others and hopefully that would inspire them to teach other people. (343-353)

Sarah believes that openly shared postsecondary coursework can both educate and inspire young learners to share their knowledge with others. Sarah also identified benefits to postsecondary students in terms of leadership and providing inspiration to others.

Jessica leveraged her own recent experiences as a high school learner to envision her final project. She explained:

I kept thinking about myself in high school and if I had the opportunity to be able to access a website like this, what would I want to see? What would I want to learn? I was able to kind of put myself in those shoes. [...] I started really thinking about things in a way that I wouldn’t have if the assignment was only going to be seen by my professor. (325-333)

Jessica imagined her younger self learning from openly shared content generated by postsecondary learners to inform her design and content choices for her final project.

Tendai also solicited youthful perspectives to help inform her final project by asking her teenaged children for feedback. She recalled:

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Having kids myself, I asked them 'Do you think this works?' [laughs]. I had to ask them to make sure that for people their age, 'Are they going to like it? Is it too much? Is it too little for people your age to be able to read it and to understand what I was writing?' (90-94)

Where Jessica attempted to imagine her learning needs as a younger person, Tendai solicited her children's perspectives to inform her development of her final project, recognizing that teenagers are knowledgeable about the preferences and learning needs of other teenagers. This strategy helped Tendai improve upon her final project, and also served her goals of sharing information related to truth and reconciliation with her children who, in her mind, were not receiving fulsome instruction through their formal education.

Unlike Brianna, Sarah, Britney, and Jessica who were all recent high school graduates at the time of our interviews, Star, like Tendai, was a mature student engaging in postsecondary studies later in life. Star expressed enthusiasm for OER-enabled pedagogy and wished that such practices had been available to her as a young learner:

I'm really excited about the public-sharing and the open licensing because it is a new way of learning. I would have loved to have had this when I was growing up, because reading from a book can be a little humdrum, but seeing it through the eyes of another student [...] Yeah, I would look at, I would turn to them before turning to another book, because it's their perspective, their point of view and I would relate to that more. (318-325)

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Star does not question the value of peer-to-peer learning, instead expressing a preference for other students' perspectives over written course content.

Sarah echoed this sentiment, believing that peer-to-peer learning may invite increased learner engagement. Sarah provided the following rationale:

Young people, sometimes they're able to make it more fun and more creative [...] a little more appealing to a youth such as a high school student [...] that might make them a little more interested and make them a little bit more open to learning this stuff [...] maybe it brings something new and fresh to the eyes of high school students hopefully that would make them more willing to learn about it and not only that but to hopefully go ahead and teach it to someone else themselves. (343-353)

Sarah hopes that engaging with content generated by peers can help to educate youth, and also empower them to educate others. This statement connects with a perspective Sarah shared earlier in the interview, when she emphasized that engaging in OER-enabled pedagogy “reinforces the ideas that it’s not just the government or the *big people* that can make a change. It’s *everybody*. Everybody can make a difference” (259-262, emphasis in original). For Sarah, peer-to-peer learning can provide a model of empowerment through knowledge-sharing and collective action.

In sum, the perspectives that participants shared related to audience awareness and the benefits of peer-to-peer learning and echoed and extended the views expressed in *Group Experiential Theme 1: This Learning is Meaningful*. In the first theme, participants acknowledged the importance of the learning for themselves and for others. In the second theme, *Group Experiential Theme 2: I Have Something I Can*

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Offer, participants described the strategies they enacted to convey the significance of their learning through audience-aware design decisions and by endorsing the learning value of content generated by and for other learners.

I Make Careful Decisions that Support my Goals

The third recurring pattern identified across participant accounts relates to the motivations and tensions that informed their licensing and authorship decisions. This third recurring pattern is categorized as Group Experiential Theme 3: I Make Careful Decisions that Support my Goals and is further divided into two subordinate themes: 3a. My Licensing Decisions are Rooted in Respect, and 3b. My Choices Related to Anonymity are Personal and Contextual.

3a. My Licensing Decisions are Rooted in Respect

Participants demonstrated a high degree of variability in terms of the license they selected for their openly published final projects. Brianna and Simon opted to use CC BY licenses, Star and Britney selected All Rights Reserved licenses, Tendai selected a CC BY NC license, Jessica selected a CC BY NC ND license, and Sarah did not select a license as she had decided not to openly publish her work. While the copyright licenses they selected varied greatly, participants tended to rationalize their licensing decisions across two broad categories: respect for their own preferences and goals, and respect for other creators' intellectual property rights and creative outputs.

When asked to explain her selection of an All Rights Reserved license for her final project, Star explained:

I put a lot of emotion, heart, and soul into this project. [...] I spent long hours working on this project. It wasn't just a weekend. I'm saying weeks, you know.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

[...] The reason I chose it [All Rights Reserved license] is because it was like a painting that I wouldn't want anybody to draw on. [...] I just couldn't see how anybody could go in and change it and yet it still be the same piece. [...] My heart said no, and I felt really bad for that. (320-337)

Star, a visual artist, compares her final project to a painting. Typically, when other people tamper with or modify visual art, this is considered vandalism, yet Star expressed remorse for choosing a more restrictive copyright license for her final project, even though an All Rights Reserved license aligned with her preferences for future uses of her work.

Though Brianna chose a much more permissive license than Star, Brianna also expressed ambivalence about her licensing choice, indicated that she'd chose differently if she had the opportunity to complete the project again. Like Star, Brianna repeatedly referred to the amount of time, effort, and care she put into her final project, connecting her feelings of ownership to the amount of work she invested in the piece. Brianna also determined that normative citation conventions may have influenced her choice of license, explaining:

Now if I were to choose differently, I think I wouldn't need attribution. [...] I was open to other people doing changes and things like that, and maybe just getting a credit, I just mean having my name in it or something as a reference. [...] I think a huge thing with that is with any of the research we do in school, we have to reference everything we use, so I think I was just used to that type of mentality of, 'Well if I have to reference everybody else's work, then they should have to reference mine.' I think that's where that came from. (304-327)

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Here Brianna is incorrectly conflating attribution, or lack thereof, with certain types of copyright licenses. However, all of the license options provided to students, from the most permissive CC BY to the most restrictive All Rights Reserved, empowered them to retain copyright and expect attribution for their licensed works. Brianna indicated a desire for reciprocity in attribution, contending that if she's required to appropriately cite others, she should be afforded the same respect.

Unlike Star and Brianna, Simon made the decision to openly share his final project using a CC BY license as soon as he read the assignment description. He remained satisfied with his choice at the time of our interview. Where the other study participants described an evolution in their decisions related to public sharing and open licensing, Simon was the only participant who decided from the outset that he would contribute to the website using a CC BY license. When prompted to rationalize his thinking, Simon explained:

Generally, there's an understanding that if you contribute to something online other people may take that information and use it. [...] I feel like it's sort of part of contributing to a larger effort. I think if I had done something like a doctoral thesis or something that I put years of effort into, then I would say, 'No, this is my work, and I don't want people to profit from it or change it. I want this to be mine.' [...] I felt happy for other people using it, for the amount of effort and time I put into it.

That's just sort of the nature of how websites operate. (214-225)

Like Star and Brianna, Simon frames his feelings of ownership around the time he invested in the project. For Simon, his work contributed to a larger collective effort that he felt happy to participate in given the level of effort required of him. However, Simon

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

also indicated that he would feel increased ownership over more time-intensive outputs such as a doctoral dissertation.

Simon also indicated that it was new for him consider his written outputs as potentially modifiable by future users: “to think that you could take information and use it in different ways like remixing it or profiting from it [...] that’s interesting to me and maybe something that could be pulled out a bit further in intellectual property discussions” (251-264). This suggestion is further expanded upon in subordinate theme 4a. I Have Recommendations to Share with Educators.

Jessica explicitly described the tension between her dual goals of sharing a meaningful learning experience with others and honouring the creative work and intentions of the artists she profiled in her project. Jessica stated:

Once my project became what it was, and I was really sharing this artistic project that became quite special to me, I had personal connections with the artists at that point. I started thinking like, ‘Okay, this licensing thing is more than just a technicality. [...] I realized it was so important to make sure that the work was protected to an extent, while still being able to get that message across and share it publicly with individuals, which was my overall goal. (315-324)

Jessica ultimately concluded that all of her goals could be achieved by applying a more restrictive CC BY NC ND Creative Commons license to her work, which allows Future users to access, copy, and redistribute her project, but inhibits users from profiting from or distributing modified versions of her original output.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Britney also opted to use a more restrictive license for her final project, which drew heavily on content taken from The Caring Society's website. Britney explained that she chose an All Rights Reserved license:

A lot of the information I was reading on Jordan's Principle was restricted, the photos and everything, so I emailed them [The Caring Society] personally to get their permission to use Spirit Bear. [...] I knew, 'Okay contact them! Don't use that without that!' [...] I knew it was a good idea to ask for the permissions and to not go higher than what I should. (199-232)

Britney, like Jessica, concluded that permission to include copyrighted materials in their final presentations did not grant future users the right to profit from or modify that content. Out of respect for the artists and agencies represented in their works, both learners decided that more restrictive licenses were the most appropriate and respectful option.

Therefore, respect for self and respect for others guided participants' decision-making as they selected the most appropriate copyright license for their final projects. Participants also demonstrated a high degree of care and criticality in their decisions related to authorship, described in the next section.

3b. My Choices Related to Anonymity are Personal and Contextual

In addition to selecting a copyright license for their publicly shared final projects, participants were also empowered to make choices related to their authorship, choosing to post their work anonymously, pseudonymously, or eponymously. Again, there was a high degree of variability among participants. Brianna, Star, and Jessica posted their work using their first and last names. Simon opted to use his initials. Britney used her

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

first name only. Tendai chose to post anonymously, and Sarah did not make a selection as she did not share her work publicly.

When asked to rationalize their decisions related to anonymity, all participants connected their choices to their individual preferences when working on the web. For example, Britney shared that “my name is in a lot of places because of my advocacy work [...] so for me, it's not that big a deal being myself” (240-241). Conversely, Simon opted to publish using just his initials, explaining, “I felt like that was striking the right balance [...] for the most part if there's a choice to anonymize myself, I try to. I felt that initials are pretty anonymous, so that was fine for me” (189-194). Tendai also opted for a higher degree of anonymity, rationalizing her decision based on her lack of celebrity. Tendai stated, “I'm not somebody who can make people want to see what I wrote if they see my name. [...] They'll say, 'Who is Tendai?' [laughs] [...] I thought if I leave it anonymous it would be helpful” (240-249). For Tendai, sharing truths related to settler colonial harm was more important than sharing her name.

Like Tendai, Sarah also opted for anonymity, choosing not to share her work publicly in any form. Sarah's decision not to publicly share her work was rooted in her desire to share personal information about herself in her author biography without sacrificing her safety. While Sarah initially intended to share her project on the public-facing website, she ultimately changed her mind, explaining:

I didn't really feel comfortable with people knowing my name and what school I went to and stuff like that. [...] Deciding not to publicly share [the final project] did impact me choosing to engage more with the project because not publicly sharing it, I felt more safe to just say my name, where I'm from, and my

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

background and stuff like that and because I knew that only you were going to see it, so it made it feel a little bit more safe. (365-383)

Earlier in the interview, Sarah expressed her deep connection to her learning. Her final project was an extremely personal reflection of her sensemaking related to Call to Action 41. Sarah's decision not to post her work publicly allowed her to embed herself within her work in a way that did not jeopardize her safety or comfort levels related to her personal privacy.

Thus, participants made a variety of choices related to their degree of anonymity in relation to their publicly shared work. The motivations for their decisions were individual and contextual.

My Experiences May Guide You

While study participants tended to blur the definitions of educator and learner in their responses to my interview questions, at the conclusion of each interview I invited participants to share specific advice with educators who are considering the potential merits of OER-EP, and with learners who may be invited to participate in OER-EP. These responses are grouped into the final superordinate theme of the study, *Group Experiential Theme 4: My Experiences May Guide You*. This final theme includes two subordinate themes: 4a. I Have Recommendations to Share with Educators and 4b. I Have Recommendations to Share with Learners.

4a. I Have Recommendations to Share with Educators

The suggestions participants offered to educators ranged considerably but can be broadly categorized to include considerations of course context, promotion, content creation in relation to copyright and plagiarism education, and technical support.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Simon expressed strongly that renewable assignments would be most impactful in certain course contexts. He asserted that an OER-EP project “might not be as effective if there isn’t that feeling of urgency and need for more work. [...] It feels a lot more empowering to be able to do this when there’s that feeling that it’s needed” (432-438). Star echoed Simon’s statement as she drew comparisons between other course assignments and her OER-EP experience:

If it was an English class, you know, there’s no connection there for me; I’m just doing an assignment. [...] Whereas with this, it’s like something has hit me. [...] It was a demonstration of creating something that was impactful in order to teach others the true history. (256-278)

Simon and Star’s statements connect to *Group Experiential Theme 1: This Learning is Meaningful*. The meaning they ascribed to the specific course topic correlated with the meaning they ascribed to the renewable assignment.

Simon expanded on his point, explaining that the renewable aspect of the final project allowed the course to culminate in a powerful, actionable way. He explained:

I thought it was a great idea. I’m happy that we finished on that note. [...] I think a lot of students will end that course thinking, ‘Boy, I wish I could do something about this’ and so I think that in this case specifically, this is a great opportunity for students to have that opportunity to begin making a difference. (412-423)

Simon suggests that concluding the coursework with a renewable assignment allowed students to put their cumulative knowledge, experiences, and emotions into action, providing a forum for the urgent need for truth-telling that multiple participants expressed as a result of their *Truth and Reconciliation* course experience.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Brianna focused her suggestions on the possible promotional benefits of OER-EP, suggesting that the renewable final project could be leveraged to promote the *Truth and Reconciliation* course within the postsecondary institution, potentially increasing enrolment. She suggested that a link to the *Nàbowàdjige: Our Calls to Action* website could be shared on the corporate website so that “anyone who makes it onto the Cambrian [College] website or who’s a Cambrian student can see the projects [...] maybe it would help to bring more students to the course, potentially, in future semesters” (456-464). Brianna also thought it would be beneficial to let students who enrolled in the *Truth and Reconciliation* course know about the renewable final project early in the semester, explaining:

If I’d known about this assignment expectation at the beginning of the semester, I think it would have helped the outcome of the beginning assignments, even though they had nothing to do with the final project. I think just knowing that your professor wants and believes that you can do this great job and be posted on a website that others can see, I think that might help motivate you even do that first assignment. (444-450)

Earlier in her interview Brianna critiqued the secrecy that pervades assessment practices in postsecondary coursework. These suggestions align with Brianna’s advocacy for transparency rather than secrecy related to assessment practices, suggesting that students might be motivated by the invitation to participate in a renewable assignment, even prior to enrolling in the course.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Brianna also suggested that OER-EP could be promoted to other professors at the college and across the postsecondary system. She suggested that I, as instructor, could:

Maybe let other professors know about this option too? I don't know if any of them really know that this [OER-EP] is an option for them to do for final projects or whatever assignment they choose. So, just kind of educating them that this is an option and that for me there was good feedback. (456-464)

Again, Brianna reiterates the importance of sharing and transparency, this time focusing on educator-to-educator knowledge sharing relating to OER-EP practices and student perceptions of renewable assignments.

Further, several participants expressed how new the concepts of public sharing, open licensing, and content creation were for them. Star clearly stated, "I've never heard of public sharing or open licensing prior to this class [laughs] so that was all new to me" (362-365). Jessica described a learning curve related to licensing implications and decisions, explaining that

I've never completed a project like this before that would be shared publicly in this way [...] when you started talking about licensing I was like 'uhmmm' [laughs] [...] there was definitely a lot of learning curves going on there. (307-311)

Since concepts of public sharing and open licensing are new to many learners, Simon suggested that overt instruction about content creation should be incorporated into the mandatory plagiarism training that postsecondary students are often required to complete. He explained:

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

We have little primers on plagiarism [...] I think it's very common now that schools and colleges will remind students that you cannot plagiarize someone else's work, but I don't think I've ever seen a comment that, 'Your work is your own and other people don't have the right to plagiarize your work either'. (284-292)

This comment aligns with Brianna's earlier statement that openly shared coursework may be viewed as an "absurd" departure from academic conventions (366). Participants are suggesting that when students are invited to shift their role from content user to content creator, they should be supported by explicit instruction and discussions related to creator rights, licensing choices, and related issues such as the remixing and reuse of openly shared content. Simon elaborated that,

in the past, my experience with using information has been to cite something, so I'm familiar with using information in that sense. [...] it's new for me to think that you could take information and use it in different ways like maybe remixing it or profiting from it possibly. (242-254)

Engaging in OER-EP confronts students with different ways to engage with information sources, an approach that was unfamiliar to all who participated in the study. These novel ways of engaging with and sharing information can be supported through explicit instruction.

Finally, Star, Simon, Jessica, and Tendai suggested that it would be beneficial to provide learners with increased support in the use of technology. As learners endeavored to create media-rich learning objects that aligned with their project goals and overarching visions, some were confronted with barriers related to their existing

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

technology skills. Some participants falsely associated these barriers with their mature student status, assuming that younger learners might enter postsecondary studies with superior technology competencies, but recent high school graduates such as Jessica also expressed challenges with technology. Jessica explained:

I'm not exactly a tech-savvy individual. [...] Some of the roadblocks that I faced along the way were [...] as someone who doesn't make YouTube videos for a living [laughs] to take the idea in my head and actually bring it to life on screen. I think having more resources and a little more guidance on how [...] to create something more if that's what you want to do [would be helpful]. (377-392)

Simon echoed Jessica's suggestion, stating:

I'm not sure if younger students are more familiar with blog posts and embedding videos and stuff like that, but I feel like those technical skills are something that I'm not as familiar with. [...] I think having little how-tos or something on how to do this might be helpful, because then when it comes to the final project you already know how to do all those technical things and you can just put your energy into finding that information and preparing your project. (318-329)

Both participants advocate for supporting materials such as how-to videos or documents as well as direct instruction and support that may assist learners with the technological elements of creating and sharing media-rich renewable assignments.

To summarize, several participants shared suggestions that educators might consider as they introduce OER-EP assessments into their classrooms. These suggestions ranged from considerations of the course context, leveraging OER-EP to promote courses and drive enrolment, knowledge sharing of OER-EP between

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

educators, explicit instruction related to open licensing and public sharing, and increased supports for the technological aspects of creating media-rich learning objects.

4b. I Have Recommendations to Share with Learners

When prompted to share their feedback and advice with future learners who may be invited to participate in OER-EP, participants offered supportive comments, pragmatic considerations, and encouragement to think critically about the broader social implications of their contributions.

Star exclaimed, “Don’t be afraid! You know? Like me, I was hesitant. I was unsure. Ask questions [...] like, what would be the benefit of placing my assignment on this site be? Be bold. Be brave! Go for it!” (425-428). Star acknowledges her own initial reservations about the experience in her advice to future learners. Similarly, Brianna focused her feedback on the benefits of sharing experiences with others:

I’ve learned so much from hearing about other people’s experiences. So, in this case, I would share my feelings I had about the assignment and kind of motivate or encourage them to challenge themselves, even if they weren’t confident in their abilities with their studies. (422-427)

Like Star, Brianna acknowledged that students may have initial reservations about and negative reactions to the invitation to publicly share their coursework. By sharing her own perceptions, Brianna hopes to encourage students to move past these initial trepidations to overcome what she earlier described as “stage fright,” which may allow future students to experience the increased confidence that she felt as a result of engaging in OER-EP (534).

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Britney also focused her suggestions on the benefits of learning from others. She advises future learners to “be open to learning from others and know that you’re able to teach others from your work. [...] Remember that everyone is a lifelong learner and how many people can learn from your work if you decide to share it” (251-259). Britney’s advice connects to her passion for educating others. However, Sarah introduced a pragmatic caveat to these encouragements to publicly share coursework, cautioning that “if you want to publicly share, definitely consider yourself and what you feel comfortable sharing before you go ahead and just share everything. Be sure to really think about it” (410-414). Sarah’s cautious advice aligns with the value she places on personal privacy and safety.

Additionally, both Sarah and Britney encouraged future students to think carefully about their topic selection. Sarah suggested that learners

Pick a topic that you actually find at least a little bit interesting [laughs] because you’ll be spending a lot of time researching it, learning about it, reading about it.

So if you find a topic that you actually want to learn about [...] then it won’t feel so much like work, you know, because you actually *want* to learn about it. (410-414)

Sarah was deeply invested in learning more about her selected topic and encouraged others to find that same level of investment as she believes this will help motivate their learning. Britney reiterated this perspective, claiming that “the main thing is choose a topic that interests you because if it doesn’t interest you, the project isn’t going to turn into what you’re hoping for” (250-251). While their advice is directed toward students, educators can also encourage careful, critical consideration of topic choices at the early stages of an OER-EP project.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Finally, participants reiterated earlier statements that their publicly shared work holds personal meaning, restating that publicly sharing their knowledge related to truth and reconciliation felt beneficial for themselves and for others. Tendai suggested that future students “should be willing to put your mind out there [...] if you have information that you believe is true, it’s good to put it out there for people to learn from” (284-292). Similarly, Simon concluded, “I think these opportunities are really important for students to put together everything they know and make a difference and show the world what they can do and how they’ve helped” (297-308). Jessica also connected her advice to a broader social context. She encouraged students to

Really look at this and consider that other people are going to be learning from it, you know? This isn’t just about showing your learning. You’re showing your learning to people who are now going to be learning from it. [...] With an assignment like this, you have an opportunity to make an impact, you have an opportunity to foster change, and even if it’s only one person, even if one student reads your assignment [...] even if that happens just one time, that’s a gold for me. (349-372)

Jessica describes impacting a single audience member as “gold,” an aspirational goal that she encourages other learners to embrace. Similarly, Sarah expressed satisfaction with the renewable assignment experience, stating:

I was very happy that this was an option and that thousands of people are coming to the website and learning about it. There’s so much content, more and more every semester. [...] I think it’s great that more people are learning [...] and they’ll go out into the world and they’ll be better Canadians. (326-331)

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

These concluding endorsements of the OER-EP project emphasize participants' belief in the significance of peer-to-peer learning and open knowledge sharing as they encourage future learners to consider the broader social impact of engaging in a renewable assessment like the one they participated in for *Truth and Reconciliation*.

In this manner, participants shared advice with future learners that focused on overcoming affective barriers, pragmatic concerns, and considerations of the potential social benefits resulting from participating in OER-EP.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the results of this study exploring college learners' experiences of the invitation to participate in OER-EP through the creation of openly licensed, public-facing coursework. The chapter began with brief introductions to each of the seven study participants, followed by an overview of the various decisions participants made related to their final projects. Next, I introduced and discussed each of the four group experiential themes and related subordinate themes, which included *Group Experiential Theme 1: This Learning is Meaningful*, comprised of subordinate theme 1a. This Learning is Meaningful to Me, 1b. This Learning is Meaningful for Me, and 1c. This Learning is Meaningful for Others; *Group Experiential Theme 2: I Have Something I Can Offer*, consisting of subordinate theme 2a. I Design for my Audience, and 2b. I Recognize the Importance of Peer-to-Peer Learning; *Group Experiential Theme 3: I Make Careful Decisions that Support my Goals*, comprised of subordinate themes 3a. My Licensing Decisions are Rooted in Respect, and 3b. My Choices Related to Anonymity are Personal and Contextual; and finally, *Group Experiential Theme 4: My Experiences May Guide You*, including subordinate theme 4a. I Have

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Recommendations to Share with Educators, and 4b. I Have Recommendations to Share with Learners. In Chapter Five: Discussion, I will review these findings via an *Etuaptmumk* analysis of the previously presented data.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

This study leveraged an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology and an *Etuaptmumk* epistemological framing to explore the following research question:

How do college students enrolled in a Truth and Reconciliation course experience the creation of a renewable assignment?

Seven students who completed the Truth and Reconciliation course and who participated in the OER-EP final project provided study data in the form of semi-structured interviews. Each semi-structured interview was transcribed and analyzed in accordance with recommended IPA methodological processes. Iterative cross-case analyses followed, resulting in four group experiential themes and nine subordinate themes (see Table 3, Chapter Four). The results of the study highlight the personal meanings that participants associated with the experience of participating in OER-EP, considerations of the needs of an imagined audience, nuanced decision-making associated with licensing and anonymity, and considerations for educators and learners who may engage in OER-EP.

Continuing the *Etuaptmumk* Interpretation

When I began this study many moons ago, I naïvely thought that I could separate the practice of OER-EP from the context of the Truth and Reconciliation course that the OER-EP project is embedded within. However, this approach would have been impossible and would have placed artificial barriers on my path to broaden my understanding of learners' unique perceptions of this specific example of OER-EP. I

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

reminded myself that IPA studies are principally concerned with “the detailed exploration of personal lived experience, examined on its own terms and with a focus on participants’ meaning making” and embraced a more context-specific approach (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Additionally, the methodological processes described above were supported by an *Etuaptmumk* epistemological framing that empowered me to consider the guiding research question through dual Anishinaabe and Western knowledge systems. This analytical process began in Chapter Two: Review of Literature, where I discussed Anishinaabe pedagogical approaches in relation to constructionism and constructivism, Gaudry and Lorenz’s (2018) Indigenization continuum, select literature related to the foundational concepts of OER-EP, and the colonial assumptions that undergird Creative Commons’ current open licensing structures.

In this chapter, I will continue the *Etuaptmumk* analytical approach by interpreting the study findings through the dual lens of traditional Anishinaabe *gikendaasowin* (knowledge) and relevant academic literature. In the following section, I explain how the loon emerged as an *oshkaabewis*, a helper who arrived during the cross-case analysis phase of this study. The loon’s teachings deepen my appreciation of learners’ perceptions of the OER-EP experience embedded within the Truth and Reconciliation course.

Sharing my stories in this way may be perceived as a break from conventional interpretative approaches found in most doctoral dissertations and IPA studies. This breach is intentional and necessary. To truly embrace an *Etuaptmumk* epistemology, I believe it is essential to recognize traditional knowledge practices, sacred stories, and

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

visits from spirit helpers as legitimate knowledge sources, teachers. I have carried this awareness with me throughout my academic journey, but I've refrained from sharing this *debwewin* (truth) in my academic writing because it didn't feel safe to do so.

In the introductory chapter to her seminal text *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012), Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes Indigenous research practices and perspectives as an act of resistance, an extension of efforts to decolonize and deconstruct Western scholarship practices to resist ongoing colonial harm and various forms of oppression imposed on Indigenous persons and communities. Smith writes, "increasing numbers of Indigenous academics and researchers have begun to address social issues within the wider framework of self-determination, decolonization and social justice" (p. 22). She continues, "research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions" (p. 23). Applying this equity-orientation to the context of Open Education discourses and practices, Cronin (2020) asserts:

If open education serves only to reinforce the normative universalism of Global North institutions, publications, research priorities, funding, and metrics, then efforts to 'open' education may simply be exacerbating rather than challenging inequality. This is a question that must be faced and addressed by all engaged in open education. (p. 14)

Anchoring this discussion chapter to the teachings of the loon is an act of vulnerability and an act of resistance, a rejection of normative academic conventions rooted in neocolonial epistemologies that tend to silence and erase sacred sources of knowledge. This chapter represents my growth as a researcher and as a person of mixed Euro-

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Canadian and Algonquin Anishinaabe ancestry. It is an affirmation that I can and must walk in a way that honours all the parts of me, and all of the ways that I understand the world. I am ready. It is time. The following, therefore, is a summary of what *maang* has helped me to appreciate in relation to the study findings.

An Introduction to *Maang*

I outlined the methodological processes of this study in Chapter Three: Methodology. However, I am going to expand on the earlier description of the cross-case analysis phase to describe the arrival of the loon helper, a messenger whose teachings inform my *Etuaptmumk* approach throughout this chapter.

On a warm summer evening in 2022, I began a new phase of my study. After many months of idiographic analysis, I was ready to engage in the iterative cross-case analysis phase of the IPA process. I colour-coded, printed, and physically cut participants' data to help me move from the parts, the individual data sets, to the whole, the entirety of the relevant data analyzed for commonalities, idiosyncrasies, and connections. I was ready to meet my group experiential themes.

It took me all evening to cut out the data. When I was finished, I placed the seven clusters near a wooden turtle, the Anishinaabe spirit animal representing *debwewin*, truth. I put *semaa* (tobacco) down and requested help accessing the *debwewin* shared by my study participants (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Preparing for Cross-Case Analysis



Note. The above photograph was taken by the Principal Researcher in early August 2022.

Exhausted, I decided I would leave it there for the night and begin the actual cross-case analysis the next morning. As I slept, I dreamt that I was in the middle of a lake. A loon surfaced close to me, within arm's reach, and stared at me with beautiful red eyes. I woke up refreshed and immediately returned to my data.

I started the cross-case analysis by placing all of the paper circles together in a lidded container. I shook the container seven times and then poured the mess of papers out onto a large work area. I began physically manipulating the data into related word clusters. I tried my best to let the process flow intuitively, naturally, without letting the results of my idiographic analyses shape my cross-case analysis too heavily. I kept telling myself, "Don't overthink it. Just do it!" I didn't want to simply reproduce what I had already done. The cross-case analysis should, ideally, bring me to a new level of understanding.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

As the word clusters grew and changed, I very clearly heard the call of a loon, which helped me to recall my dream from the night prior. As I continued to group and regroup participants' data, I started thinking about some of the loon teachings that have been shared with me, and the connections between those stories and the stories study participants had offered. I continued to group and regroup my data as the hours passed. The loon continued to call out intermittently.

Finally, I took a step back and reviewed the resulting word clusters. I listened for the loon's messages, but they had fallen silent. In that instant I knew that I had met my four group experiential themes and nine subordinate themes. I also knew that the loon and related Anishinaabe teachings must inform my subsequent sensemaking. When helpers visit, it is essential to take notice. For the Anishinaabe, these are not coincidences. I had been visited by a helper spirit, *okàdeniganàtig* (Algonquin), *maang* (Ojibwe).

Therefore, as I discuss my interpretations of the main study findings in the following sections, I will do so in a way that weaves some of the loon teachings that have been shared with me with relevant extant literature. This *Etuaptmumk* approach is a gift that allows me to situate participants' perspectives within Anishinaabe and Western epistemologies simultaneously, allowing both knowledge systems to inform and deepen my understanding of learners' perceptions of the OER-EP project embedded within our Truth and Reconciliation course. I am grateful for the loon helper and the guidance provided to me by *maang* and by those who generously shared their *maang* teachings with me. These gifts have offered such clarity, and the dialogues between the traditional teachings and the academic literature fascinate me.

This Learning is Meaningful

Study participants framed the significance of their participation in the OER-EP project based on their lived experiences, intrinsic motivations, and emotional reactions to their learning. Their personal connections functioned as a metaphorical North Star, a beacon that guided and motivated them as they navigated various technological challenges and overcame personal insecurities to eventually arrive at their ultimate goals for their projects.

For example, Star expressed a deep connection to her project due to her own experiences of loss and grief. Britney's work was guided by her lived experiences as a disability advocate and person who experiences life with disabilities. Sarah, Jessica, and Tendai each expressed a deep intrinsic desire to learn more about their chosen Calls to Action, describing the research and design process using strong language such as "intoxicating," "captivating," "really consuming" (Jessica). Brianna described an evolution in her willingness to participate in OER-EP as akin to overcoming stage fright, a striking metaphor that alludes to the performance anxieties that can arise given the public nature of engaging in OER-EP. Indeed, all participants were guided by various personal motivations that anchored to lived experiences, intrinsic motivations, and strong emotional reactions to their learning.

***Ojiig'anung* and its Relationship to Meaning**

Here I will share a laconic version of a Star Teaching that was gifted to me by a respected colleague. The Star Teachings of the Anishinaabe are as old and as sacred as the night sky. For some, it is problematic to share these stories in ways other than oral and ceremonial; out of respect for the stories and the storytellers, I will be brief.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

James Tregonning (*Woonowin We'iingaans*), Montagnais, generously shared his stories of the Ojibwe night sky with me, which were gifted to him by a friend from the Ojibways of Onigaming First Nation (James Tregonning, personal communication, November 10, 2022). Some of the stories that James shared with me included the *Maang* constellation and the stars that comprise it.

James explained that the where the Western world sees the Little Dipper, the Anishinaabe see the *Maang* constellation (see Figures 3 and 4, next page). The North Star, known to the Western world as Polaris, holds many Anishinaabe names depending on region, including *Ojiig'anung*, *Giiwiidin Anang*, and *Wicahhpi Owanjila* (Vukelich, 2018). James' teachings place *Ojiig'anung* on the tail feathers of the *Maang* constellation. Therefore, the *Maang* constellation is often drawn in the middle of the Ojibwe Star Maps, with *Ojiig'anung* placed at the very center (see Figure 4 and Figure 5, below and next page).

Figure 4.

Ojibwe Maang (Loon) Constellation



Note. Ojibwe Giizhig Anung Masinaaigan was originally painted by William Wilson based on the unpublished works of Carl Gawboy (as cited in Lee, 2016).

Figure 5.

Ojibwe Star Map with Maang (Loon) Constellation in Centre



Note: Ojibwe Giizhig Anung Masinaaigan was created by A. Lee, W. Wilson, & C. Gawboy, 2012.

Annette Lee, mixed-race Dakota Sioux artist, astronomer, educator, and Director of the Native Skywatchers program that brought forward the Ojibwe *Giizhig Anung Masinaaigan* depicted in Figures 4 and 5, shares that the *Ojiig'anung*, the North Star, [a]ppears almost motionless as viewed from the ground. All other stars and celestial objects in the entire day and night sky appear to be circling around it. The motionless star is a leader. This leadership is reflected in the star knowledge by naming *maang*, the Ojibwe clan leader, as the constellation containing the seven brightest stars nearest the motionless point [...] *Maang* (Loon) is a leader in the sky, and a leader on the Earth. (Lee, 2016, emphasis in original, p. 50)

When I consider *maang's* central position within the night sky, and the seemingly motionless *Ojiig'anung* acting as a literal and metaphorical guide since time immemorial, I find connections with the first group experiential theme, *This Learning is*

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Meaningful. Knowledge of *Ojiig'anung*, in relationship with the passionate commitment demonstrated by study participants, leaves me with a strong understanding that OER-EP can be impactful when learners are empowered to follow their own *Ojiig'anung*, to make space for their own personal motivations to engage in OER-EP, and perhaps in open pedagogical practices more broadly. What might compel learners to challenge themselves to overcome their stage fright and engage in OER-EP in ways that serve them and their goals?

Social Justice as Ojiig'anung

Bali, Cronin, and Jhangiani (2020) frame open educational practices including OER-EP within a social justice perspective, concluding that a strong synergy between open pedagogical practices and social justice exists “in the long-term development of students as citizens who learn how they might empower others when they are in a context to do so” (p. 10). This claim holds true for my study participants, who all discussed their desires and actions to empower others, leveraging the knowledge they developed in the Truth and Reconciliation course in tangible ways.

For example, Sarah hoped to participate in the next annual Memorial March for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirited relations. Tendai felt an urgent need to share her truths with her colleagues in the healthcare sector and with her children. Jessica was driven by a passionate desire to amplify positive actions that supported her chosen Call to Action, overcoming her discomfort with self-generated video to create an impactful experience for her audience. Indeed, all study participants described a desire to empower others by sharing their knowledge in myriad ways, including but not limited to participating in OER-EP.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

At times, the synergies between open education and social justice have been taken for granted, implied rather than explicitly delineated and critically evaluated. In her keynote address at the OpenCon 2015 conference, Audrey Watters problematized these assumptions, asking:

What happens when something is 'open' [...] and yet, the project is still not equitable? What if, in fact, it's making it worse? What are we going to do when we recognize that 'open' is not enough? I hope that we recognize that what we need is *social justice*. We need politics, not simply a license. We need politics, not simply technology solutions. We need an ethics of care, of justice, not simply assume that 'open' does the work of those for us. [emphasis added]

Sarah Lambert (2018) responds to Watters' call by coining the term *openness determinism*, an extension of earlier scholarly work concerned with technological determinism in mainstream education. For Lambert, openness determinism is premised on the assumption that "somehow openness will democratise education, as technology itself was expected to do previously" (2018, p. 240).

Watters' and Lambert's critique of openness determinism can be extended to Wiley and Hilton's (2018) definition of OER-enabled pedagogy, released at a time when openness determinism had reached a crisis point in the field of open education (Lambert, 2018, p. 235). To achieve their goal of providing a clear characterization of open pedagogy, Wiley and Hilton brought forward a new term, *OER-enabled pedagogy* (OER-EP) "as the set of teaching and learning practices that are only possible or practical in the context of the 5R permissions which are characteristic of OER" (2018, p. 135). In this framework, the authors emphasize the *what* and *how* of OER-EP through

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

their descriptions of constructionism and the continuum of criteria that distinguish disposable assignments from renewable OER-EP assignments, but they aren't clear on the *why*. Reflecting Edwards' (2015) assertion that "openness alone is not an educational virtue" (p. 253), it is vital for us to question what is the *Ojiig'anung* of OER-EP? Of OEP broadly? What can it be? What should it be?

In recent years, scholars have called for a renewed focus on the synergies between open education and social justice (Archer & Prinsloo, 2017; Bali, Cronin, & Jhangiani, 2020; Clinton-Lisell & Gwozdz, 2023; DeRosa, 2021; Lambert, 2018; Nizami & Shambaugh, 2019). My study participants echo these synergies.

For example, Star suggested that if the course "was an English class, you know, there's no connection there for me, I'm just doing an assignment [...] Whereas with this, it's like something has hit me". Based on the broader context of Star's sharing, the connection for her is the importance of achieving some form of justice for children whose bodies remain in unmarked graves on the former sites of residential schools. Simon also suggested that the OER-EP final project "might not be as effective if there isn't that feeling of urgency and need for more work [...] it feels a lot more empowering to be able to do this when there's that feeling that it's needed". The perceived urgency and importance of truth-telling drove Simon and other participants to engage in OER-EP.

This commentary reinforces the conclusion that OER-EP itself was not the *Ojiig'anung*. The licensing choices and modality of the learning object was not as significant as making, holding, and taking space for important truths to be shared with those who need to hear it. Supporting the *truth* part of Truth and Reconciliation was the

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Ojiig'anung. For these reasons, I understand OER-EP to be one vessel that can enable learners to move toward an *Ojiig'anung* which may be the enactment of various forms of social justice. However, without an *Ojiig'anung*, OER-EP may simple be a vessel without a purpose or destination, a canoe without a paddle or paddler. This is not unique to OER-EP; indeed, without a clear guiding purpose, the same might be said, at least in part, of all educational assessment strategies.

I Have Something I Can Offer

The second group experiential theme, *I Have Something I Can Offer*, indicates a high degree of care demonstrated by study participants toward their anticipated audiences, alongside an acknowledgement of the positive benefits of peer-to-peer learning. Per the OER-EP assignment criteria, students were invited to create a final project designed for high school-aged learners. In the preamble of the assignment, I write:

So many students who come through this course say something to the effect of, "Why the heck am I just learning about this now?" To address that question, I've designed this final project around our shared frustration with the current state of education and lack of awareness of colonial harm and inequality in Canada. This assignment invites you to share your knowledge with high school students who have been denied the opportunity to learn about Canada's colonial past and present. YOU can help change things by researching a Call to Action and sharing your learning with others. (See Appendix A for the full text)

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

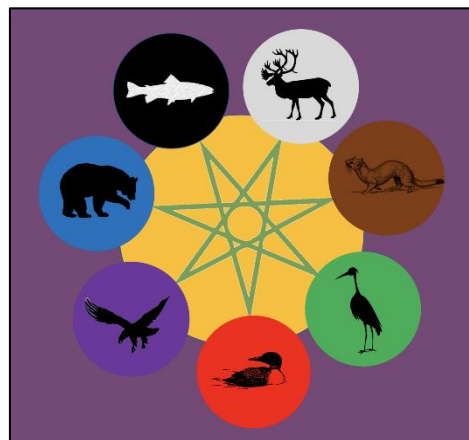
Students who engaged in the OER-EP final project were invited to share their truths with purpose, which evokes for me the Anishinaabe *gikendaasowin* of the *Maang* Dodem, the Loon Clan.

Maang Dodem and Justice

The Anishinaabe *Dodemag*, the traditional clan systems, vary regionally. All provide practical and highly sophisticated frameworks for maintaining social and spiritual order within Anishinaabe societies. Writing in 1885, author and historian William W. Warren, of French and Ojibwe descent, explains that the clan system “dates back to when the Earth was new” (p. 42). Warren elaborates that “each grand family is known by a badge or symbol, taken from nature; being generally quadruped, bird, fish, or reptile” (p. 45). The clan system provides each person with clear roles and responsibilities that draw on their inherent gifts and help them to effectively serve their communities in a manner that maintains social cohesion and balance. Figure 6, below, represents the Anishinaabe *Dodemag* as depicted by Bob Goulais (Nipissing First Nation) for Atikameksheng Anishnawbek.

Figure 6.

Anishinaabe Dodemag



Note: Anishinaabe Dodemag, Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, 2020

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Since the loon stands “at the doorway between the water and the land but also between the material world and the spirit world,” *maang* is viewed as an important messenger, leader, and guide (Barnes et al., 2013). The *Maang Dodem*, Loon Clan, along with the *Ajijaak Dodem*, Crane Clan, “were given the power of Chieftainship. By working together, these two clans gave the people a balanced government with each serving as a check on the other” (Benton-Banai, 1981). While the teachings and implications of the Anishinaabe *Dodemag* are extremely expansive and multi-faceted, the particular thread that I would like to explore in the context of OER-EP is that effective social justice advocacy requires care and respect and does not occur in isolation from others.

Honouring Self, Honouring Others

Early in my research process, a respected and established scholar within the field of open education asked me, “Can learners even create OER that would be useable in postsecondary contexts?” The question evokes an assumption about learner capabilities (or lack thereof) that open educational practices such as OER-EP aim to disrupt. Not only have I witnessed learners’ ability to create high-quality, media-rich, accurate, and impactful OER, but they have done so in ways that honour their own voices and stories while also amplifying the voices and contributions of equity-seeking individuals, groups, and communities.

In their recently published study of student experiences of renewable and traditional assignments, Clinton-Lisell and Gwozdz (2023) extend Lambert’s (2018) application of social justice principles to open education discourses with a focus on the potential for recognitive and representational justice within renewable assignments. The authors define recognitive justice as “recognition and respect for cultural and gender

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

differences [...] with the goal of recognition being 'a different-friendly world, where assimilation to majority or dominant cultural normal is no longer the price of equal respect'" (as cited in Lambert, 2018 and Fraser, 1998). Clinton-Lisell and Gwozdz define representational justice as "equitable opportunities for self-expression by peoples who have been historically underserved and marginalized by educational systems" (p. 3). The OER-EP project embedded in the Truth and Reconciliation course offers students opportunities to enact recognitive and representational justice in nuanced, layered ways.

These dual functions of honouring oneself and honouring others parallel the leadership strategies of the Loon and Crane Clans of the Anishinaabe *Dodemag*. However, an individual's particular positionality will influence the degree of care that they extend to others. As an example, while all participants demonstrated a strong awareness of their imagined audience as they described their OER-EP outputs, only two participants, the two participants who self-identified as experiencing life with disabilities, explicitly attended to issues relating to accessibility.

Mnaadendiwin and Accessibility

In Chapter Two, I introduced the concept of *mnaadendiwin*, developing a respect for another person by getting to know them at a deeper level (Manitowabi, 2019). Two of the seven study participants demonstrated specific forms of *mnaadendiwin* by enacting accessible design choices in their projects. Jessica including voice over, ALT attributes, closed captions and larger fonts in her project. Britney added media elements and minimal text to help those with processing challenges connect with her key messages and main points. These learners, who had been directly impacted by

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

accessibility barriers in their own educational journeys, were mindful to dismantle these barriers within their OER-EP projects as an act of *mnaadendiwin* towards a functionally diverse target audience. Participants who didn't disclose lived experiences with accessibility barriers didn't discuss accessibility as an element of their design choices. Like a loon without a crane, their leadership actions included potential equity gaps that problematize the social justice implications of OER-EP aims.

In their systematic review of accessibility within OER, Zhang et al. (2020) provide a holistic review of the literature concerning accessibility in OER and OEP. They conclude that "use of OER and OEP for inclusive learning is still in its infancy [...] more awareness should be raised to encourage further investigation in this field" (p. 7). Accessibility barriers don't exclusively exist within student-generated OER. Indeed, inclusive access to OER and OEP remains a concern for many individuals involved in open education. Bali, Cronin, and Jhangiani (2020) claim:

It is imperative to consider the full range of potential impacts because OEP do not necessarily result in positive effects [...] Despite what may be the best intentions of advocates and practitioners, any OEP may neglect to consider factors that can maintain or widen the digital divide [...] they may ignore issues related to accessibility [...] In so doing, OEP may perpetrate harm upon the very groups whom advocates and practitioners seek to serve. (p. 3)

In the context of my study this proves to be true, to a degree. As students focus on truth-telling for a particular demographic of learners, they may not be equipped to consider and attend to barriers such as the accessibility of the subsequent OER. However, there are strategies that can mitigate these barriers.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Liyanagunawardena, Adams, and Williams (2020) remind us that, “while there is much more support for learners with disabilities in formal education, especially in developed countries, there is very little support, if any at all, for them in informal learning around the world” (p. 162). It is extremely important, therefore, that open resources related to Truth and Reconciliation attend to these accessibility issues. A strategy that has been effective within the context of the Truth and Reconciliation course is to treat the OER-EP submissions as first drafts, enacting iterative design principles to improve upon the original submissions. Each summer, I hire two student assistants who help me improve the accessibility of the *Nàbowàdjige: Our Calls to Action* website by adding transcripts and closed captions to videos, alternative text to images, adjusting language to be more inclusive, etc.

These collaborations take advantage of the permissions enabled by the open licenses that some students have applied to their OER-EP projects, allowing us to collaboratively and iteratively attend to some of the quality issues that skeptics of student-generated OER tend to be concerned about. This strategy, for me, is also connected to the dual leadership responsibilities enacted in the Anishinaabe *Dodemag*. Where the original authors falter, the subsequent editor-helpers can remediate. Loon is supported by crane.

Peer-to-Peer Learning

While several study participants spoke positively about peer-to-peer learning through creating and accessing learner-generated OER, Brianna made explicit comparisons between OER-EP and typical assessment practices. Brianna used the words "secretive" and "confidential" to describe normative conventions related to

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

assessment practices in formal education contexts, framing the OER-EP alternative as “almost absurd” when juxtaposed against these customs.

Expanding on these perspectives, Brianna considered the potential benefits of learner-generated OER in various contexts; for example, she imagined high school students gaining insight into the types of assignments they might complete at the postsecondary level, other postsecondary learners who might be drawn to the Truth and Reconciliation course because of the opportunity to engage in OER-EP, and current Truth and Reconciliation students benefiting from reviewing existing final projects to find inspiration and ideas for their own OER-EP final projects. Sarah also thought that high school students would be inspired by the leadership demonstrated by postsecondary students through their OER-EP outputs. Star expressed excitement about public-sharing and open licensing, claiming that learners would relate more readily to information created by their peers. None of the study participants questioned or challenged the inherent value of peer-to-peer learning.

The Anishinaabe *Dodemag* reminds me that structures and processes must be enacted to disrupt normative Western assessment practices that position learners at the bottom of knowledge hierarchies. The skepticism related to the utility of learner-generated OER highlights the tension that while social constructivist principles may be accepted in theory, biases and assumptions continue to present barriers to practice, even among individuals who are knowledgeable about open education broadly.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Writing in 2017, DeRosa and Robison argue that a mindset shift is required, claiming we need to,

[d]e-emphasize the idea that only perfectly polished work belongs on the web, and instead suggest that the internet is far more powerful and helpful to use if we use it as a *portal* through which we can communicate with others [...] this is something that we all have to do together: to change the web from a stale collection of rapidly-outdating artifacts of perfection to a living, growing, collaborative space where new ideas are always developing. (pp. 121-122)

Several years later, the call to action embedded within this quote remains relevant and is echoed by study participants who were excited by the collaborative nature of OER-EP, but also acknowledged that these practices breach normative academic conventions and assumptions in myriad ways. Just as the *Maang Dodem* benefits from equal partners who hold them to account and call them to more, students can benefit from collaborators who help them to consider aspects of their contributions that may inhibit rather than promote justice.

I Make Careful Decisions That Support my Goals

The third major study theme explains how study participants' various licensing choices and authorship decisions were guided by their unique understandings of *mnaadendiwin*, respect. Self-respect guided Star, Brianna, and Simon as they decided on the most appropriate licenses for their final projects. Their decisions were based on personal, evolving, and at times contradictory reactions to other people citing and modifying their work. Jessica and Britney also rooted their licensing decisions in respect, navigating tensions between their own licensing preferences and their desires

to protect and honour the existing copyright of works cited in their final projects. These actions required *zoongide'ewin* (courage), having the strength of heart to “do what is right even when the consequences are unpleasant” (Vukelich, 2017). The *mnaadendiwin* and *zoongide'ewin* demonstrated by study participants evokes for me the Legend of the Shut-Eye Dance.

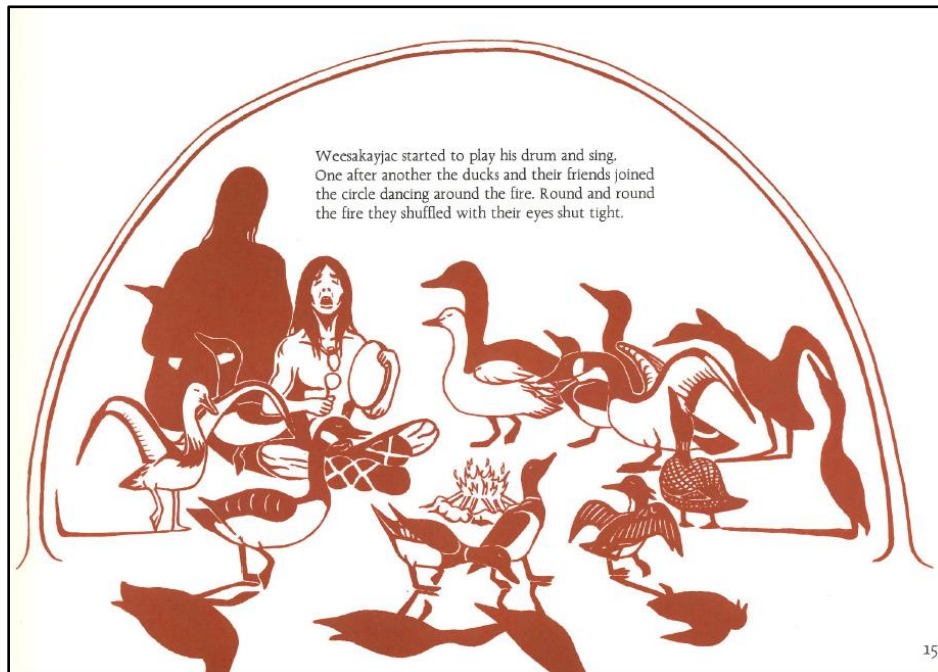
The Legend of the Shut-Eye Dance

There are many variations on the Legend of the Shut-Eye Dance depending on who is telling the story and what community they are from. The version I am most familiar with is brought forward by the Timiskaming Algonquins and Timagami Ojibwa. A print version of the legend was produced in 1985 for the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education to support a literacy program geared to Indigenous children.

In the Timiskaming and Timagami version of the legend, a trickster figure named Weesakayjac is very hungry and decides to deceive a group of water fowl in an attempt to secure an easy meal before the birds fly south for the winter. Weesakayjac invites the water fowl into his wigwam. They gather around a small fire, designed to give just a little bit of light. Weesakayjac teaches the birds a special *Shut-Eye Dance*, instructing them to circle around the fire, dancing with their eyes closed. The birds do as they are told.

Figure 7.

Weesakayjac Entices the Birds to Dance the Shut-Eye Dance



Note: The Shut-Eye Dance: A Timiskaming Algonquin Legend was illustrated by Alec McCauley and adapted by Mary Upper, 1985.

As the others continue dancing, Weesakayjac kills the birds one by one. A curious loon has a bad feeling and opens one of his eyes to see what is going on. He understands Weesakayjac's true motivations and calls to the other birds to run for their lives. The other birds open their eyes, rush to the wigwam door, and fly away. However, the loon is the last to reach the wigwam door. Weesakayjac catches him and kicks him hard on his way out. As a consequence, the loon's body is permanently altered, with hind feet so far back that he can't walk on or take flight from land, only from water.

In every version of the Legend of the Shut-Eye Dance that I've encountered, the bird who speaks the truth, typically a loon, suffers a severe consequence as a result. For example, in some versions of the legend, the loon's eyes are turned permanently

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

red. The legend offers an explanation of certain physical characteristics of *maang*, but the meanings run much deeper than that.

It took me several years to find the *zoongide'ewin* (courage) to incorporate the Legend of the Shut-Eye Dance into the Truth and Reconciliation course. I feared that students would find a video of me reading from a children's picture book, infantilizing. I worried they wouldn't understand the depth of meaning in a seemingly simple story. I was wrong. In their reflections, students make connections between the legend and the disconnect between words and actions, particularly in relation to the lack of progress on the TRC's 94 Calls to Action and the revisionist histories told about Canada's relationships with the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. Students explain how the legend emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and the importance of trusting one's intuition.

The Legend of the Shut-Eye Dance has become an anchoring metaphor for much of the work that we do in Truth and Reconciliation, and I see the teachings of the legend operating in study participants' approaches to their final projects in the course. For example, Star's assertion that her final project "was like a painting that I didn't want anyone else to draw on" led her to apply an All Rights Reserved license to her work. Star explains, "My heart said no, and I felt really bad for that". Enacting the best option for her work and listening to her heart despite bad feelings is an act of courage and self-respect. Just like *maang* in the legend, Star empowered herself to follow her intuition and remain true to her preferences.

While Star's negative feelings about applying a closed license to her work likely relates to the openness essentialism discussed earlier in this chapter, it is notable that

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

six of the seven study participants described their licensing decisions as the result of an evolving process that required careful consideration of their own needs as well as their obligations to respect the copyright of others featured in their work. While my study results corroborate Werth and Williams' (2021) finding that "students are generally motivated and engaged by the prospect of their work having meaning outside the limitations of the disposable assignment," (p. 63) the Legend of the Shut-Eye Dance is an important reminder that open pedagogical practices such as OER-EP call on learners and educators alike to think critically and contextually about many aspects of the resulting outputs, including but not limited to the licenses applied, the level of anonymity conferred to the authors, the accessibility of the resulting outputs, etc. Cronin acknowledges that learner behaviours in relation to privacy are complex, contextual, and highly individual (2020, p. 17). Therefore, a well-designed OER-EP assessment must operate from a fundamental understanding that:

Students are the authors and copyright holders of the homework and other artifacts they create as part of their education. There is no morally or ethically appropriate scenario in which faculty can *require* students to openly license their homework or other creations as part of an assignment. [emphasis in original]

(Wiley & Hilton, 2018, p. 144)

Respecting learners' copyright decisions and designing the assessment to provide many learner-driven choices empowered them to participate in ways that aligned with their values. We see this in Star's decision to apply an All Rights Reserved license to her project, described as a "painting that [she] didn't want anyone else to draw on." We

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

see this in Sarah's decision not to share her work publicly. We see this in Brianna's dynamic thinking related to sharing her final project publicly.

It is also important to recognize our responsibilities as educators in ensuring that students are empowered with the requisite knowledge to avoid the Shut-Eye Dance. In the context of open licensing, this requires direct educational interventions that inform learners about Creative Commons licenses and their limitations, guiding learners through the complexities of openly licensing works that include traditional knowledge and copyrighted materials, and addressing the possibility that learners will feel guilt, shame, or regret for selecting more restrictive licenses.

Educators wishing to avoid enacting the Shut-Eye Dance in their open pedagogical practices must be aware of the myriad complexities for all involved. Educators must be equipped to let in more than a little light when it comes to helping students navigate OER-EP assignments and other forms of open pedagogy, understanding the collective responsibility of balancing individual rights, agency, and choice with the broader needs of the learning commons. Traditional teachings such as the Legend of the Shut-Eye Dance can offer powerful entry points and metaphorical anchors for these discussions, highlighting the symbolic relationships between the actions of engaging in OER-EP and other forms of openness, the tensions that exist within these practices, and the ethics required to dance with both eyes open.

My Experiences May Guide You

The final overarching study theme is an amalgamation of participants' suggestions for educators considering OER-EP assignments for their classes, and participants' suggestions for learners who have been invited to participate in OER-EP.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Participants' data encouraged educators to learn about and enact OER-EP depending on the course context, incorporating appropriate adjunct supports such as explicit instruction and guidance related to open licensing, public sharing, and technology use. Participants' suggestions for learners mainly highlighted their own positive experiences with OER-EP, including encouragement to keep an open mind, to find their voice, and to take advantage of the opportunity to share bravely.

When viewed holistically, the rich data generated in this study, made possible by the open, honest sharing of the seven study participants, evoke for me the teachings of the drum. For Anishinaabe people and in many Indigenous cultures, the drum is far more than a percussive instrument. This is reflected in traditional languages. For example, *dewe'igan* (drum) is an animate word in *Anishinaabemowin* (Ojibwe). The drum is understood to hold spirit, and the teachings reflect the immense responsibility that comes with caring for a drum.

In his powerful memoir titled *Up Ghost River*, residential school survivor and former Chief of Fort Albany First Nation Edmund Metatawabin (Mushkegowuk Cree) describes *dewe'igan* as follows, "The drum is a powerful tradition, as it strikes the heartbeat of Mother Earth. We drop into that rhythm to symbolize the many coming together as one" (2014, p. 263). Echoing this emphasis on community and interconnectedness, Ghislaine Goudreau (Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn), a close colleague and member of the *Waabishki Mkwaa* women's hand-drumming circle, explains how the hand drum offers spiritual healing and cultural connection to those who participate in hand drumming circles. Ghislaine explains:

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

The more we know about our sacred items, such as the drum, the more we will know about ourselves and how to obtain and maintain balance amongst the four elements of our being [...] Many important healing tools, such as the drum, are circular and remind us that we are all related, and that we need to work together as a collective in order to become stronger. (2008, pp. 79-80)

It took years before I felt prepared to pick up the drum. I attended many ceremonies, listened careful to the teachings that were shared, read as much as I could, and opened my heart to the songs that were gifted to me.

Picking up the *Maang* Drum

After my dad passed in December 2021, an *oshkaabaywis* (helper) gifted me a beautifully beaded ceremonial shaker. As I grieved, I sat with this shaker and thought about the many symbols contained within it. I'd bring my shaker with me to ceremonial events, and slowly found my voice and my rhythm as I added traditional Anishinaabe songs to my bundle. The more I sang, the more comfortable and confident I became. I found myself joining the drum group on campus to sing Honour songs at campus events. I've led songs during ceremonial events on campus and in the broader community. I enjoy these connections and find healing in the songs. However, I didn't find the courage to pick up the hand drum until my grandmother entered hospice in the early spring of 2023.

A student, herself a residential school survivor, offered me traditional tobacco, *semaa*, and asked me if I would be willing to speak at student-led Truth and Reconciliation event on campus. With my grandma's illness progressing rapidly, I found

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

myself hesitating to make the commitment, but I knew my grandma would want me to honour this important request. I accepted the *semaa*.

On the day of the event, I held the *semaa* and went down to our Indigenous Student Services Centre on campus to smudge. As I was smudging, I heard one of the community hand-drums make a “ping” sound. In ceremony, the women often say that when the drums unexpectedly make sounds, they’re speaking to us. With that knowledge, I went over to where the hand drums are kept to find out who was trying to talk to me.

Our community hand drums are shared among all persons at my postsecondary institution. Anyone can pick them up, as long as they have the teachings to do so in a respectful way. There are many beautiful hand drums available, all of which have been birthed and cared for by the campus Cultural Coordinator and Indigenous students, staff, and faculty who participate in the hand drum-making workshops. Up to this point, I hadn’t felt prepared to pick up the drum. I understand it’s an immense responsibility to care for a drum, one that shouldn’t be taken lightly or rushed into. But on this day, I opened the cabinet containing the community hand drums, paused, then picked up the first one that called out to me.

All of the hand drums are covered in soft blankets while they are not in use. The teaching is that just like the infants and the elders, the hand drums should be comfortable and warm while they rest. I uncovered the one I had selected and felt a rush of emotions as I saw *maang* and her babies painted on the face of the drum. I smudged her, warmed her, sounded four honour beats, then headed off to the event. On that day, I shared my stories, sang my songs, and overcame my stage fright and

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

trepidations around caring for the hand drum. My grandma asked about the event and I told her that I'd picked up the hand drum for the first time. "That's my girl," she said. She passed one week later.

Figure 8.

Community Hand Drum Featuring Maang



Note. The community hand drums are available in our campus Cultural Centre and are cared for by Elders, knowledge keepers and helpers. Photo taken by the Principal Researcher in March 2023.

Open pedagogical practices such as OER-EP have synergies with the teachings of the drum. There are important interconnections and deep responsibilities that must be attended to as one journeys from silent novice to active member of a practitioner community, be it the open education community or Anishinaabe women's hand drumming groups. The *maang* teachings, paired with the perspectives of my study participants and my own lived experiences, have helped to shape my understandings of

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

learner experiences of OER-EP and the ways that I can continue to move forward as a helper in this important work.

Summary

In this chapter, I applied an *Etuaptmumk* analysis of the study findings, extending the discussion of study results to incorporate the teachings of the loon, *maang*. I introduced *maang* and the helper role that *maang* assumed during the analysis phase of the study. I contextualized participants' meaning-making through *Ojiig'anung*, connecting OER-EP and social justice through this lens. I extended the discussion of social justice to the leadership principles represented by the *Maang Dodem* and its *Ajijaak Dodem* counterpart, considering the ways that the Anishinaabe *Dodemeg* can guide respectful ways of honouring self and others simultaneously through OER-EP outputs. I extended this discussion to considerations of accessibility and the value that participants perceived in peer-to-peer learning. Next, I shared the Legend of the Shut-Eye Dance as a symbolic reminder of the importance of critical thinking, context, and courage in relation to OER-EP. Finally, I shared knowledge of *dewe'igan* (drum) and my personal story of picking up the *maang* community hand drum as a representative example of opening being an ongoing process supported by many interconnected helpers.

In the next and final chapter, Chapter Six: Conclusion, I will offer personal reflections, an overview of the study, implications for practice, questions for further research, and expressions of gratitude toward each participant.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Introduction

Like many doctoral candidates who have walked their own dissertation journeys, I write this concluding chapter from a place of amazement and exhaustion. While this research process has been a gift, at times it has felt like an immense burden. I am reminded of the *Wichita Do Ya* Anishinaabe Water Song. This song is often taught to children to teach them that life is comprised of quiet flowing times and times of difficult, choppy waters. *Wichita Do Ya* reminds me to seek balance during the high times and the low times, to appreciate that change is constant, and to believe that, despite life's obstacles, I can and will reach my destination. Now here I am, with the destination in view. I can see the shoreline, and I continue to paddle.

This study took me nearly four years to complete. In that time, I lost my father and my grandmother to cancer. My younger sister's health declined due to major illness. I moved, changed job roles, survived a global pandemic, and underwent a surgery. I also made space for spending time in nature, attending ceremonies, and contributing to my various communities. I stepped up as a caretaker, found healing through song, movement, friendship, and therapy. I taught full-time and took on the coordination of three college-level programs. I published, presented at conferences, and was awarded a major research scholarship. All the while, the dissertation whispered to me, "Don't forget me; don't give up on me." With the unflinching support of my supervisor, I inched forward.

While completing the study, I've often turned to Evan Pritchard's profound text titled *No Word for Time: The Way of the Algonquin People*. While his stories haven't

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

featured directly in the study, they have shaped my approach and worldview in profound ways. Pritchard helped me find the courage to embrace the *maang* helper as central to my *Etuaptmumk* interpretation. Pritchard also helped me forgive myself for taking as long as I needed to complete the dissertation process. Over the past four years, I've experienced moments of shame and defensiveness when well-intentioned people would ask, "Are you *still* working on that degree?" I'd think of Pritchard, citing Dr. Meyer Friedman, explaining how "a deadline-oriented lifestyle can lead to a distortion of the perception of time, which in turn leads to an irregular heartbeat, eventual heart disease, and death" (2001, p. 16). It felt prudent, therefore, to work my dissertation into my life, rather than allowing the dissertation to take my life from me!

Pritchard explains that time is a construct that
has no meaning, but every experience we encounter has meaning which
becomes a story we share with others [...] It's good to remember that real
productivity is measured by the long-term effect of what we are doing and how
well we are doing it, not by the quantity of the activity. (2001, pp. 32-34)

For me, this quote is quite grounding as I reframe my perception of the study not as something that is happening, but as something that has happened and is coming to an end. What stories will I carry forward with me? What truths do I wish to highlight here, to hold up as the gifts they are?

In this final chapter, I will recapitulate the overarching purpose, processes, and results of the study. Additionally, I'll discuss the practical implications of the study findings in terms of teaching practice and future empirical research. I end the chapter with an expression of gratitude to each participant.

Summary of the Study

This study has been guided by one overarching research question: *How do college students enrolled in a Truth and Reconciliation course experience the creation of a renewable assignment?* As an educator who embraces and enacts open pedagogical practice in the form of OER-enabled pedagogy (OER-EP) in my college-level *Truth and Reconciliation* course, I wanted to dig deeper into learners' perceptions of this approach to assessment. While I had been inviting learners to participate in OER-EP for several semesters prior to beginning the dissertation study, I hadn't had a chance to really unpack the experience with students. This study provided me with that opportunity.

I decided that Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) would be an appropriate research method given IPA's focus on meaning-making and personal perceptions of lived experiences. I supported this approach with an *Etuaptmumk* epistemological framing that calls for the braiding of Indigenous – a in my case Anishinaabe – a knowledge systems with Western understandings. Former Chief of Acadia First Nation, Charles Labrador, describes this interweaving of knowledge systems beautifully. He says, "Go into a forest. You see birch, maple, pine. Look underground and all those trees are holding hands. We as people must do the same" (as cited in Rowett, 2018, p. 55). Therefore, in my review of literature and subsequent analyses, I attempted to honour the *Etuaptmumk* approach by interweaving Anishinaabe knowledges within the existing and predominantly Western literature related to open education. For example, I reviewed foundational concepts within open education through a decolonial lens and extended the standard IPA methodological

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

approach to include a discussion chapter devoted to the *maang* helper and related Anishinaabe teachings (see Chapter Five: Discussion).

My data collection and analysis followed the conventional IPA methodological processes. I conducted semi-structured interviews with seven study participants. Each interview was aided by a Research Guide that consisted of nine questions to help focus my inquiry into learners' perceptions of OER-EP (see Appendix C). I transcribed each audio recorded interview manually, to help me get closer to the study data and as an act of *mnaadendiwin* (respect) for each participant and their stories. I adhered to Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) multi-step process for idiographic and cross-case analyses. These steps are described in detail in the Analysis section of Chapter Three: Methodology.

Four group experiential themes and nine subordinate themes revealed themselves. These results were summarized in Table Three, Chapter Four: Findings. For the reader's convenience, Table Three is duplicated below.

Table 3

Group Experiential Themes

1. THIS LEARNING IS MEANINGFUL

- 1a. This Learning is Meaningful to Me
- 1b. This Learning is Meaningful for Me
- 1c. This Learning is Meaningful for Others

2. I HAVE SOMETHING I CAN OFFER

- 2a. I Design for my Audience
- 2b. I Recognize the Importance of Peer-to-Peer Learning

3. I MAKE CAREFUL DECISIONS THAT SUPPORT MY GOALS

- 3a. My Licensing Decisions are Rooted in Respect
- 3b. My Choices Related to Anonymity are Personal and Contextual

4. MY EXPERIENCES MAY GUIDE YOU

- 4a. I Have Recommendations to Share with Educators
- 4b. I Have Recommendations to Share with Learners

The study results underscore the personal significance that participants attributed to their involvement with OER-EP in the *Truth and Reconciliation* course. Participants also demonstrated a high degree of care and consideration toward their imagined audience, described their complex decision-making related to licensing and anonymity, and offered suggestions for educators and learners considering their own engagement with OER-EP. In the following section, I will elaborate on the implications of the study findings for educators looking to integrate OER-EP and other forms of open assessment into their teaching practice.

Implications for Practice

Participants shared many insights regarding the practical aspects of engaging in OER-EP in formal postsecondary teaching and learning contexts. I will focus on three key areas that require further consideration, including open licensing, plagiarism training, and the generative artificial intelligence (gen-AI) disruption; the accessibility of learner-generated content; and the technology challenges associated with generating media-rich content.

Open Licensing, Plagiarism Instruction, and the Gen-AI Disruption

Study participants demonstrated low levels of understanding related to open licenses and intellectual property rights. One study participant confused attribution and open licensing, assuming that applying a Creative Commons license meant she wouldn't receive attribution for her work. Another study participant was surprised to

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

learn that he holds the intellectual property rights to his coursework, admitting he hadn't given it much thought as he didn't perceive his coursework to be of any value beyond his individual learning. OER-EP creates heightened relevance for conversations related to the ethical creation, use, and reuse of copyright and openly licensed content. In my specific context, I see that I can do more to empower learners to view themselves as content creators, not just content consumers. I can assume that learners' preexisting knowledge related to Creative Commons licenses, traditional knowledge licenses, and their own intellectual property rights will be low. Explicit instruction related to these topics may help students navigate some of the inherent tensions and personal decision making required when engaging in OER-EP and other forms of open pedagogy.

Postsecondary institutions can assist with this awareness-building by incorporating explicit instruction related to open licensing and intellectual property rights within existing copyright and plagiarism-focused instruction and related policies. Further, as postsecondary institutions mandate the Indigenization of curricula, they should also support educators and learners alike in building awareness of the coloniality embedded within existing copyright legislation, citation styles, and policies related to licensing content. Principles of ethical data governance and Indigenous data sovereignty should be incorporated into existing faculty and student-facing instruction.

In my context, this is not currently the case. Typically, student-facing academic integrity workshops and related policies tend to position learners as content consumers, with little to no attention paid to learners as content creators. The learning goals of such workshops tend to be focused on appropriate citation and the consequences of engaging in cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty. While it's important that

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

students understand copyright regulations and their responsibilities related to academic integrity, it's also important that learners are empowered with information related to their rights as content creators, particularly in the dawning age of gen-AI.

As this study comes to an end, the education sector and society broadly is grappling with the implications of gen-AI and the disruptive potential these technologies hold. In the context of postsecondary education, there is a veritable moral panic occurring as students integrate gen-AI tools into their coursework in various ways. Currently, the Canadian Copyright Act does not explicitly address the use of AI to create or remix content. Postsecondary institutions in Canada and across the globe are just beginning to release position statements, policies, and guidelines related to the use of gen-AI tools to complete summative assessments and other types of coursework. In June 2022, the Canadian government tabled the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act (AIDA). This proposed legislation aims to regulate the use of artificial intelligence systems within Canadian society but will take some time to come into effect (Macek et al., 2023).

The disruptive potential of gen-AI has yet to be fully realized by broader society and within the context of higher education specifically, but the technology is here *now*. It is essential, therefore, that we evolve our practices. Clint Lalonde, acting Director of Open Education at BCcampus writes:

It is important we all pay attention to what is happening in the generative AI space and approach these tools like we do any other education technology — with a critical and ethical eye that balances the pros and cons to assess whether the tool helps us achieve our goals as open educators. (2023, para. 11)

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

As an open educator, I aim to partner with learners and my institution to navigate the use of gen-AI in the classroom. Finding balance between learner empowerment, respect for intellectual property, and related ethical considerations such as data sovereignty is a complex and ongoing process. We must lean in and learn alongside our students and our institutions.

Accessibility of Learner-Generated Content

A related consideration is the accessibility (or lack thereof) of learner-generated content. Two of the seven study participants self-identified as experiencing life with disabilities. These same participants were the only ones who explicitly discussed their strategies related to ensuring the accessibility of their self-designed learning objects. While several participants described their efforts to create engaging, media-rich content, they did not create content that would be engaging for *all*. For example, many images lacked alternative-text, video and audio did not include closed captions, text-based submissions lacked readable fonts, sizing, suitable contrast, and appropriate use of colour.

Since learners have generally heretofore been positioned as content consumers rather than content creators, it is not surprising that they lack awareness of accessibility considerations in content design without having lived experiences of accessibility challenges. Given the high degree of consideration all participants afforded to their imagined audiences, I do not interpret the lack of accessibility of their learning objects as a problem related to empathy, but rather a problem related to awareness. Learners require explicit, scaffolded assistance in creating accessible content. However, this requires knowledgeable educators who themselves understand accessibility standards,

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

guidelines such as the Universal Design for Learning framework, and strategies for actualizing these principles to create inclusive learning experiences that can benefit all learners.

Just as we are in the early stages of grappling with the disruptive potential of gen-AI in our classrooms, we are also in an infancy stage when it comes to fully realizing accessible, inclusive learning environments that are designed to meet the unique needs of all learners, rather than retroactively responding to accessibility barriers in an ad hoc way. My current practice related to OER-EP and accessibility enacts a retroactive accommodation approach to accessibility. I hire summer students to help me revise students' OER to meet accessibility standards. I do this because the final project already asks a lot of students and I don't want them to become completely overwhelmed. However, this strategy runs the inadvertent risk of suggesting that accessible design is less important than other elements of the design process, and this is simply untrue. In future deliveries of the course, I will include accessible design in all aspects of the content creation process. I will incorporate adherence to accessible design standards in my assignment rubric and as a prerequisite for publication on the *Nàbowàdjige: Our Calls to Action* website. Other educators looking to support learners in the creation of accessible OER should be prepared to support students in achieving baseline accessibility standards through explicit instruction and support. Highlighting accessibility aspects as integral to all stages of the design process, rather than retroactively attending to accessible design, may lead to greater awareness of the importance of accessible design practices among the learners engaged in OER creation.

Challenges Associated with Technology

Another consideration for practice that I will carry forward with me is the potential disconnect between learners' visions for their projects and their existing technology skills. Many participants described their desire to create engaging, media-rich content that would invite a younger audience to *really* pay attention to the knowledge being shared. Some participants felt that text alone would not accomplish this goal, and so they curated existing images and music to help them create an aesthetic for their work. Some participants generated their own audio narration, videos, and imagery to help them create a memorable experience for their imagined audience. While some of the mature students attributed their technology challenges to their age and lack of proficiency, younger participants also expressed difficulties with incorporating technology.

Putting ageist assumptions related to technological abilities aside, participants' statements highlight the need for proactive supports and clear pathways so that all learners can meet their project goals and enhance their digital literacies in ways that foster learning while minimizing stress. Since study participants had access to the technologies needed to enact their visions for their projects and had access to asynchronous support resources such as YouTube videos and other forms of didactic instruction, I believe that the challenges they identify highlight the need for additional *human* resources, that is, highly skilled and readily available technology helpers.

The classroom teacher may not be the best technology helper in all cases, since many educators are continuing to develop their own technological competencies and find they are racing to keep up with students. Indeed, educators have identified

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

technology challenges as a barrier to their own OER adoption and creation (Hassall & Lewis, 2016; Ovadia, 2019; Ochieng & Gyasi, 2021). Adding go-to technology support to educators' ever-increasing list of duties may not be the best strategy in all contexts. Further, educators have a limited amount of time to devote to mentoring students who are working to create OER and other authentic representations of their learning. The number of students enrolled in my classes is growing, yet classroom time and office hours remain quite limited.

As educational institutions encourage faculty to embrace learners' multiple means of expression and to enact authentic assessment strategies, they must equally support faculty in actualizing these goals in the form of robust learner supports. I am reminded of the early days of online learning adoption in my postsecondary institution, and the time I spent supporting educators in my role as an instructional designer. Who is the equivalent support person for students? Where are the learner-facing instructional designers? In many Canadian postsecondary contexts, the answer, increasingly, points to the librarians working to enhance academic libraries to better meet the needs of contemporary learners.

Many Canadian postsecondary institutions, alongside elementary and high schools, are engaged in a process of reimagining existing library spaces to better support students' digital literacies and technology-enabled learning goals. These modified library spaces are often referred to as *learning commons*, spaces that “bring users together for collaboration on specific learning goals [...] [librarians working in learning commons] are frequently required to provide services other than reference, such as technology support” (Karasic, 2016, pp. 54-55). However, staff working in

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

learning commons environments have expressed challenges related to meeting “both the technological and research needs” that users demand (Karasic, 2016, p. 54).

Indeed, we are all called to continue developing our skillsets to meet the needs of the modern learner.

I will happily direct my students to the learning commons if I am confident that a friendly, skilled support person will greet them and assist them in a timely manner. This vision requires institutional resources in the form of hiring, training, and after-hours staffing of learning commons spaces. I hope that as institutions revamp their existing library spaces, they attend to the human elements that are required for an effective commons. While technology integration is important, the availability of technology can be paired with appropriate learner support services to maximize positive outcomes.

While many other implications for practice emerged from the study data, the three I describe above feel most immediately relevant to my particular teaching context, and may offer reflective opportunities for educators looking to improve their practice as issues related to licensing, generative AI, accessibility, and technology proficiency continue to evolve. How will we keep up? There is certainly no shortage of opportunities for further learning. I hope that future empirical studies will assist us in achieving our pedagogical goals. In the next section, I discuss several questions requiring further research.

Questions Requiring Further Research

Throughout the inquiry process, participants shared perspectives that sit outside of the scope of this particular study but warrant future research. These potential focus areas include how educators might frame OER-EP without the coercive pressure to use

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

the least restrictive license (avoiding openness essentialism), potential longitudinal studies that capture learners' evolving thinking related to engaging in OER-EP, and studies of learners' perceptions of the efficacy of learner-generated content in comparison to instructor-generated content, publisher materials, and the like.

Avoiding Openness Essentialism

One area of interest for future research relates to participants' allusions to openness essentialism as they described their thinking and perceptions of OER-EP. As an example, one participant apologized for applying an All Rights Reserved license to her work and expressed regret in doing so, despite feeling that her project was her own unique expression of knowledge that she didn't want anyone else altering. Another participant decided not to share her work publicly due to privacy concerns, claiming she didn't want to lose marks on certain aspects of the project, but also didn't want to share private details about herself online.

These stories highlight specific and important tensions that exist within OER-EP and other open pedagogy strategies. If we are inviting students to openly publish their work online, the implicit suggestion may be that we *want* them to openly publish their work online. This attitude is also embedded within Wiley and Hilton's (2018) description of OER-EP, as critiqued in Chapter Five: Discussion. Future studies aiming to identify factors such as perceived coercion, power dynamics, and the impacts on individuals involved in OER-EP and other forms of open pedagogy may assist with improvements to practice and policy.

Longitudinal Analyses of Perceptions of OER-EP

One limitation of the current study is that it was not designed to investigate participants' perceptions of OER-EP before, during, and after they engaged in the process. Rather, this study reflects learners' perceptions *after* having engaged in a specific form of OER-EP. Several participants described their evolving, at times contradictory thinking and decision-making related to various design elements, licensing, anonymity, and public sharing of their final projects for the *Truth and Reconciliation* course.

While this study contributes to the empirical data related to learners' perceptions of OER-EP, future studies focused on perception changes over time may assist in building a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic nature of learners' perceptions of OER-EP. Longitudinal analyses may also be effective in identifying causal relationships between specific educational interventions and learners' perceptions, as well as the longer-term impacts of engaging in OER-EP and other forms of open pedagogy.

Efficacy of Learner-Generated Content

Several participants expressed positive views of learner-generated OER, describing learner-generated content as superior to textbooks, instructor-generated materials, and other written documents. Participants shared that learner-generated content was more engaging, authentic, and relevant to their learning needs.

Future studies that assess the efficacy of learner-generated OER in context-specific areas such as Indigenous Studies may underscore the value of students' voices, knowledge, and lived experiences and may assist with the development of

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

evidence-based practices and guidelines for educators and institutions. While learner-generated OER and other types of content hold transformative potential in education contexts, there are also prevailing attitudes and biases to assess and address. Studies that bring forward both the strengths and weaknesses of learner-generated OER may help to disrupt misconceptions and biases related to the efficacy and usability of learner-generated content.

While many of the participants' statements raised possibilities for future empirical research, perceptions related to openness essentialism, evolving perceptions of engaging with OER-EP, and participants' favourable attitudes toward learner-generated OER are three potential avenues for further investigation.

Gratitude

Many helpers have made this dissertation journey possible for me. I have acknowledged some of my helpers in the Dedication and Acknowledgments sections located at the beginning of this document. To conclude this study, I wish to thank each study participant directly for the gift of their time and perspectives. In this final section, I address each participant directly and identify one gift that they shared with me that I have added to my bundle.

Brianna: Chi-meegwetch for the powerful metaphor of overcoming stage fright. It helped to remind me that OER-EP is a process, not just an end-product and that this process is experienced by vulnerable and unique individuals.

Star: Chi-meegwetch for describing your final project "as a painting that you didn't want anyone else to draw on." This powerful image comes to my mind every time I think about openness essentialism and why it is so important to allow creators to make their

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

own choices related to their work.

Tendai: Chi-meegwetch for your passion related to sharing the truths of settler colonialism in Canada. Your allyship and advocacy is a gift that I know you will continue to share with your children. You will help us raise a generation who understand, and from this place of understanding, positive changes can take root and flourish.

Simon: Chi-meegwetch for engaging so enthusiastically in conversations related to intellectual property, copyright, open licensing, and learner-generated content. You affirmed for me that learners can and do care about these topics, particularly when they are framed in ways that are personal and contextual.

Britney: Chi-meegwetch for your disability advocacy in this project and more broadly. You rightly describe yourself as a teacher and remind me that my most impactful teachers are the learners who join me in this work.

Sarah: Chi-meegwetch for reminding me that learners' comfort levels related to publicly sharing will be varied and contextual, and that the success of OER-EP shouldn't be exclusively based on open sharing, but on honouring learners' unique choices.

Jessica: Chi-meegwetch for your passion and respect for other content creators. You've reminded me that human connections are the true lifeblood of learning, in all contexts.

Nimeegwetchiwendam (I am grateful).

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Appendix A: Student-Facing Assignment Description

Below, find the student-facing assignment description for the Final Project included in the *Truth and Reconciliation* course. This project meets Wiley and Hilton's (2018) 4-part test for renewable assignments and OER-enabled pedagogy.



The Final Project



If you're in the mood to listen rather than to read, [click here to access an audio version](#) of the following text. Total run time: 8 minutes, 12 seconds.

Preamble

So many students who come through this course say something to the effect of, "why the heck am I just learning about this now?"

I've designed this final project assignment around our shared frustration with the current state of education and lack of awareness of colonial harm and inequality in Canada.

This assignment invites you to share your knowledge with high school students who have been denied the opportunity to learn about Canada's colonial past and present. YOU can help change things by researching a Call to Action and sharing your learning with others.



If you want to and are comfortable, you can share your final project on a website called [Nàbowàdjige: Our Calls to Action](#). The first time I taught this course, students helped me name the website. Since then, students from various semesters have helped me fill it with important information about the current progress of the 94 Calls to Action. However, you are by no means obligated to contribute to the website. This is a personal choice and whatever you choose to do, I respect your decision.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Time Commitment

Plan to spend at least nine hours on this assignment.

Before You Start

Here's an overview of the pre-work / pre-thinking you'll need to complete before you start actually writing the assignment:

1. If you skipped reading the Calls to Action last unit, [read them now!!!](#)
2. Pick **one** of the Calls to Action that you're interested in exploring further. This might be one of the Calls that you identified in your Reflection #2, or you can pick a different Call entirely – follow your heart.
3. Think about how public you want to be with the final product of this assignment. Your options include:
 - Sharing with me and other learners in the course, via the Share Final Project Discussion Forum (I am expecting everyone to do this at a minimum)
 - Sharing anonymously via our public-facing website
 - Sharing using a false name or alias (a pseudonym) via our public-facing website
 - Sharing using your actual name via our public-facing website
4. If you decide to contribute to our website, I also want you to think about the types of permissions you are comfortable attaching to your assignment. Can people who find your writing on the internet:
 - Read, watch, or listen to it; changing nothing
 - Read, revise, remix, and redistribute your work as long as they give you credit for the original and don't use your work to make money
 - Read, revise, remix, redistribute and profit financially from your work as long as they give you credit for the original
5. Consider that you're writing for high-school aged young adults, persons aged 13 - 21. I suggest that you avoid fancy, technical words, and make an effort to incorporate images, audio, and video to help hold their attention. Not all young people are interested in reading long documents. Spend some time thinking about how to design your assignment in a way that will hold the interest of your youthful target audience. And yes - audio, video, visual presentations, and the like are all available formats if you want to add some technology-enhancements to your project.

Writing the Assignment

Okay! Now that you've thought through some of the larger questions, let's move on to the specific requirements of the final project. To keep things cohesive, and to help you manage your workload, I'd like everyone to follow a similar outline, as follows:

Give it a Title!

Please give your assignment a title. It can allude to the specific call to action, or it can be something creative - author's choice.

Find a Cover Image

Please search for an open-source image to accompany your assignment. Look for something that's a good fit for your topic. You can find open-source images on www.unsplash.com.

Section One: Introduce the Author (That's You!)

Start your assignment by introducing yourself to your audience. You can achieve this by answering some or all of the questions below, adding whatever information you feel is relevant. Feel free to include personal photos, to record some audio, or to create a short video. The purpose here is to help your audience understand who you are as a person. Only share to the degree that you're comfortable with.

- Who are you?
- What's your background?
- What program are you taking?
- Why did you select *Truth and Reconciliation* as one of your General Elective courses?
- What are your future career aspirations?
- If you want, you can share other personal information too: kids, pets, interests, hobbies - you get the idea.

Section Two: Introduce the Call to Action

In this section, I'd like you to spend some time explaining which Call to Action you've selected and why it is personally / professionally important to you. Then go on to explain why that particular Call to Action should be important to all persons living in Canada, and how it connects to Canada's legacy of colonial harm. Assume that your audience knows nothing about the TRC, Canada's settler colonialism, or even about the residential school

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

system. Explain the context as much as you think you need to in order for your audience to understand and appreciate the significance of the Call to Action.

Additionally, I'd like to you to [go to this website, called Beyond the 94](#), find the Call to Action that you selected, and see if the Call is considered to be "Not started," "In progress - proposed," "In progress - underway," or "Complete" and include a status update at the end of this section. Feel free to add your personal opinion about why the Call to Action has or hasn't been completed.

Section Three: Celebrate the Good Work

This is the section I'm most excited for! Finally, a celebration. I want you to do some Google research to find a person, group, organization, charity, movement, or some other example of real humans who are doing good work to support the Call to Action that you selected. This doesn't need to be a government organization; grassroots efforts are just as important (if not more so) to share and acknowledge. Use this section to celebrate and honour their work as you see fit.

Section Four: Call for More

Okay, so I'm a high school student reading your blog post. You've told me about yourself, described a Call to Action, and shared a specific example of how a person or persons are working to achieve the Call. Now what?

I'd like you to end your assignment with a strong and direct call for more. Where can your audience go to learn more? Include some relevant links to readings, videos, websites, etc. What can your audience do to get personally involved? Include some suggestions. Since this assignment is all about learning about the Calls to Action, it seems appropriate to end with your own Call to Action!

If you'd like, you can also include a direct statement to the Canadian government or other agencies or organizations named in your Call to Action, urging them to do more. Get critical. Don't hold back.

Success Criteria

I'll grade the assignment out of 15 marks. Do 8 things to earn 8/15. Do 10 things to earn 10/15. Do all of the things to achieve a perfect mark. Try to go big on this one! It's worth 30% of your final mark.

Mark	Action
	Includes a complete list of references (this is mandatory though ungraded)!
1	Includes an introduction to the author that is interesting and inviting
2	Enhances the self-introduction with a photo, illustration, audio clip, or video

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

3	Clearly identifies one specific Call to Action
4	Clearly explains why the selected Call to Action is personally and/or professionally important to the author
5	Clearly identifies why the Call to Action should be important to all Canadians
6	Explicitly connects the Call to Action to Canada's colonial legacy, to the legacy of the Residential School System, and/or to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
7	Provides a progress update on the specific Call to Action, identifying whether the call is not started, in progress (proposed), in progress (underway) or complete
8	Identifies the work of one specific person, group, organization, charity, or movement that is working to support the selected Call to Action
9	Explains the significance of the identified person, group, organization, charity or movement in supporting reconciliation in Canada
10	Enhances section three with a photo, illustration, audio clip, or video found on the internet (appropriately cited - I can help with this part)
11	Includes a specific and direct call to action that invites high school students to learn more
12	Includes a specific and direct call to action that invites high school students to get involved
13	Writes in an authentic, personal voice (use of the first person is strongly encouraged)
14	Proofreads the submission to eliminate distracting errors like typos and spelling mistakes
15	Completes the self-assessment associated with this assignment (mandatory as I need to know your preferences for sharing)

Submitting your Work

1. Complete the Self-Assessment, which includes important questions about your willingness to post your submission publicly and your selected permissions for reuse
2. Submit your project to the Final Project Deliverable #1 Discussion Forum
3. Review my feedback, which will be emailed to you directly
4. Review other students' feedback, which will be a component of the next portion of the final project

Alignment

Completing this portion of the final project will demonstrate your ability to achieve the following learning objectives:

- Connect the legacy of Residential Schooling to contemporary social issues (3.3)
- Explore a variety of recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report that are being honoured and those that aren't (4.4)

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

The following is a verbatim record of the Participant Consent Form utilized in this study. The Consent Form was emailed to potential study participants. The body text of the email read as follows:

Email Subject:

Invitation to Participate in an Education Research Project

Body Text:

Dear Former SOC 1012 Students,

My name is Jessica O'Reilly. I am a doctoral student enrolled in a *Doctor of Education in Distance Education* program at Athabasca University. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research project about student perceptions of OER-enabled pedagogy. You are eligible to participate in this study because the final project in SOC 1012 is an example of OER-enabled pedagogy, so you have direct experience with, and valuable opinions about, this particular teaching and learning practice.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will be interviewed once using the Zoom web-conferencing platform. The interview will take approximately one hour of your time. By participating in this study, you will help us learn more about students' perceptions of OER-enabled pedagogy.

To learn more about this study, please see the attached Participant Consent Form. Questions and expressions of interest can be sent via email to: Jessica O'Reilly, EdD Candidate, Athabasca University (Principal Investigator) jessica.oreilly@briancollege.ca

This study is supervised by Dr. Dianne Conrad who may be contacted at dianne@athabasca.ca.

This study has been reviewed by the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board and the Cambrian College Research Ethics Committee.

A fillable form was attached to the above email. The fillable form included more

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

information regarding participant consent, right to withdraw from the study, along with a section for participants to include their signature and the date that the document was signed. The following is a verbatim record of the text of the attached form:

Exploring Learners' Perceptions of a Renewable Assignment

Principal Researcher: Jessica O'Reilly
EdD Candidate, Athabasca University

Email: jessica.oreilly@briancollege.ca

You are invited to participate in a research study about learner perceptions of OER-enabled pedagogy, a teaching strategy that empowers learners to share their knowledge openly, publicly.

In particular, I am interested in learning how former *SOC 1012: Truth and Reconciliation* students experience the invitation to create openly-licensed, public-facing contributions to the website *Nàbowàdjige: Our Calls to Action* (<https://nabowadjige.home.blog/>) for the final project.

By analyzing study participants' perceptions of, thoughts toward, feelings in reaction to, and experiences of participating in this particular example of OER-enabled pedagogy, this study may assist other educators as they attempt to empower learners to engage in meaningful, relevant, real-world learning experiences.

This research will take approximately one hour of your time and requires you to participate in a recorded interview via Zoom. You can participate from any location. Several steps will be taken to protect your anonymity and identity:

- We will select a pseudonym, a fictitious name, and will change your Zoom name to the pseudonym prior to starting the recording
- You can choose to turn your camera on or off during the interview
- Recorded video outputs will be permanently deleted immediately after the interview
- Recorded audio outputs will be edited to remove any identifying information
- Transcripts will not contain any identifying information
- All electronic data will be stored in password protected folders within a password protected computer and will be permanently deleted after five years
- Hard copy data will be stored in locked cabinets and will be destroyed after five years via confidential shredding
- Your actual name will never be used when communicating study results

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

There are no anticipated risks of participating in this study and your participation is completely voluntary. The interview is being recorded for transcription and data analysis purposes only. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions and can withdraw from the study for up to thirty days post-interview by indicating your wish to do so, without consequence. At that time, any data you have provided will be permanently destroyed. Your right to withdraw will be communicated to you verbally prior to commencing the interview, and in writing via a follow-up email sent out post-interview.

The results of this research study will be made publicly available via Athabasca University Faculty of Graduate Studies Dissertations and Theses digital repository, pending successful Dissertation Defence. Study participants also have the option to access a summary of the results and can request how they would prefer to receive the results; for example, an Executive Summary can be emailed or mailed to participants once the study is completed.

If you require additional information about this study or would like to speak directly to the principal researcher, please contact Jessica O'Reilly at jessica.oreilly@cambriancollege.ca.

This study has been reviewed by the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board and the Cambrian College Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any comments or concerns regarding your treatment as a participant in this study, please contact Athabasca University's Office of Research Ethics at 1-800-788-9041, ext. 6718 or by email at rebsec@athabasca.ca. You can also contact the Cambrian College Research Ethics Committee via email at research@cambriancollege.ca.

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records.

Please indicate your consent by signing and dating below:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Interview Guide

1. Renewable assignments are assignments that support an individual student's learning by creating an object or artifact that other people can benefit from. The final project in SOC 1012 meets the criteria of a renewable assignment. Let's have a look at the final project that you created in the *Truth and Reconciliation* course. Can you describe the project to me?

[Using the web conferencing tool's screensharing capability, the learner's final project will be displayed on screen].

2. What was the experience of creating this final project like for you?

[Potential probes: Did the potential public nature of the final product impact your engagement? Your learning? Your integration of technology]?

3. How would you compare the experience of creating this final project to assignments you've created in other classes?

4. How did you feel about the invitation to publicly share your final project on the *Nàbowàdjige: Our Calls to Action* website?

5. If you decided to share your project on the website, you were asked to select a Creative Commons license to apply to your work. There were three options to choose from. As a reminder, they were:

- I don't want to grant permission for anyone to change my work.
- I'm okay with people reading, revising, remixing, and redistributing my work as long as they give me credit for the original and don't profit financially.
- I'm okay with people reading, revising, remixing, redistributing, and profiting financially from my work as long as they give me credit for the original.

Can you describe which option you chose and why?

6. What, if anything, did you learn about public sharing and open licensing by completing this project?

7. What advice would you share with other students who have been invited to create a renewable assignment, either in *Truth and Reconciliation* or in other courses?

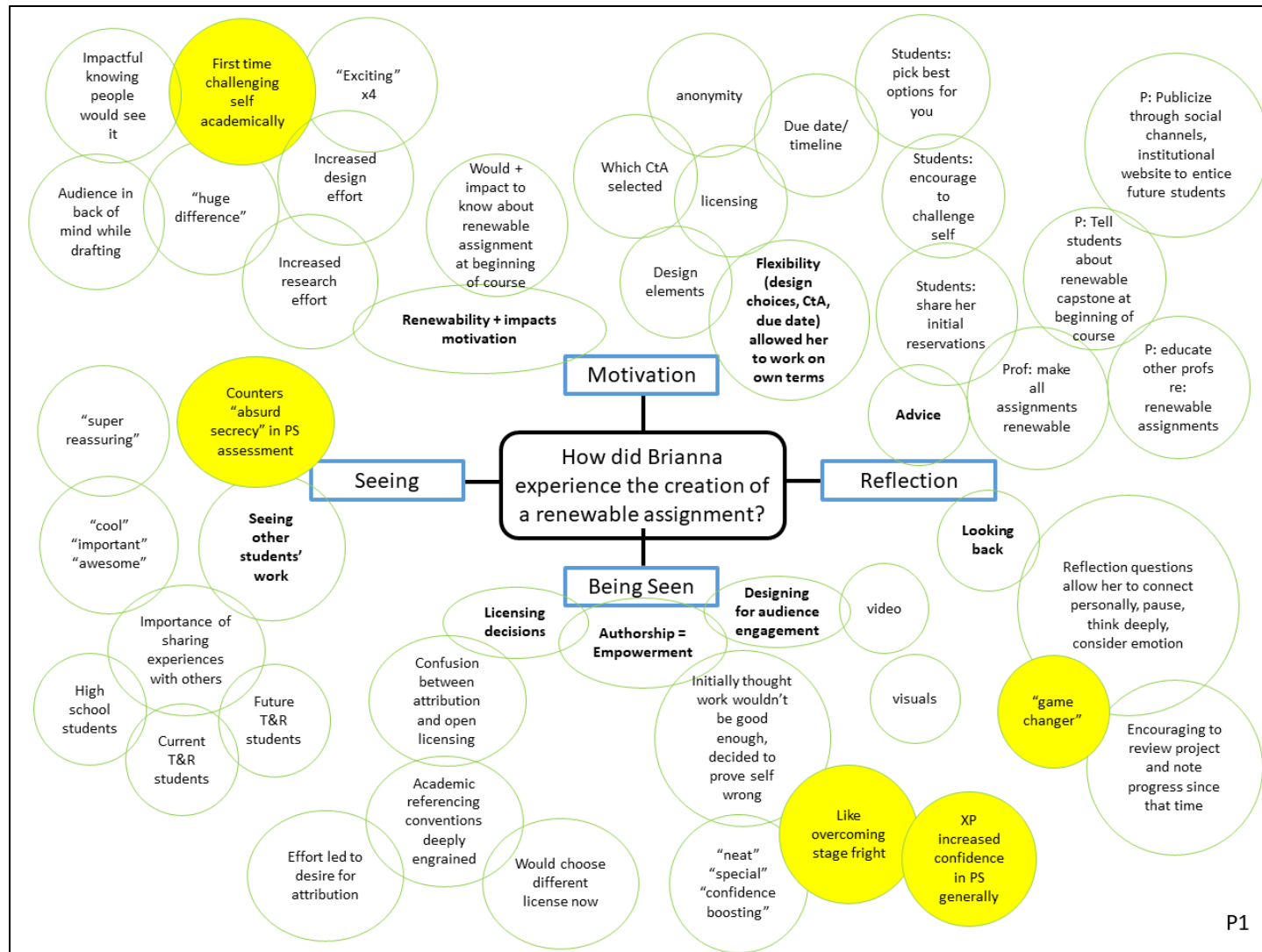
8. If you were to do this type of assignment again, what changes might improve the experience for you?

9. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience of creating a renewable assignment as a final project in *Truth and Reconciliation*?

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Appendix D: Concept Maps

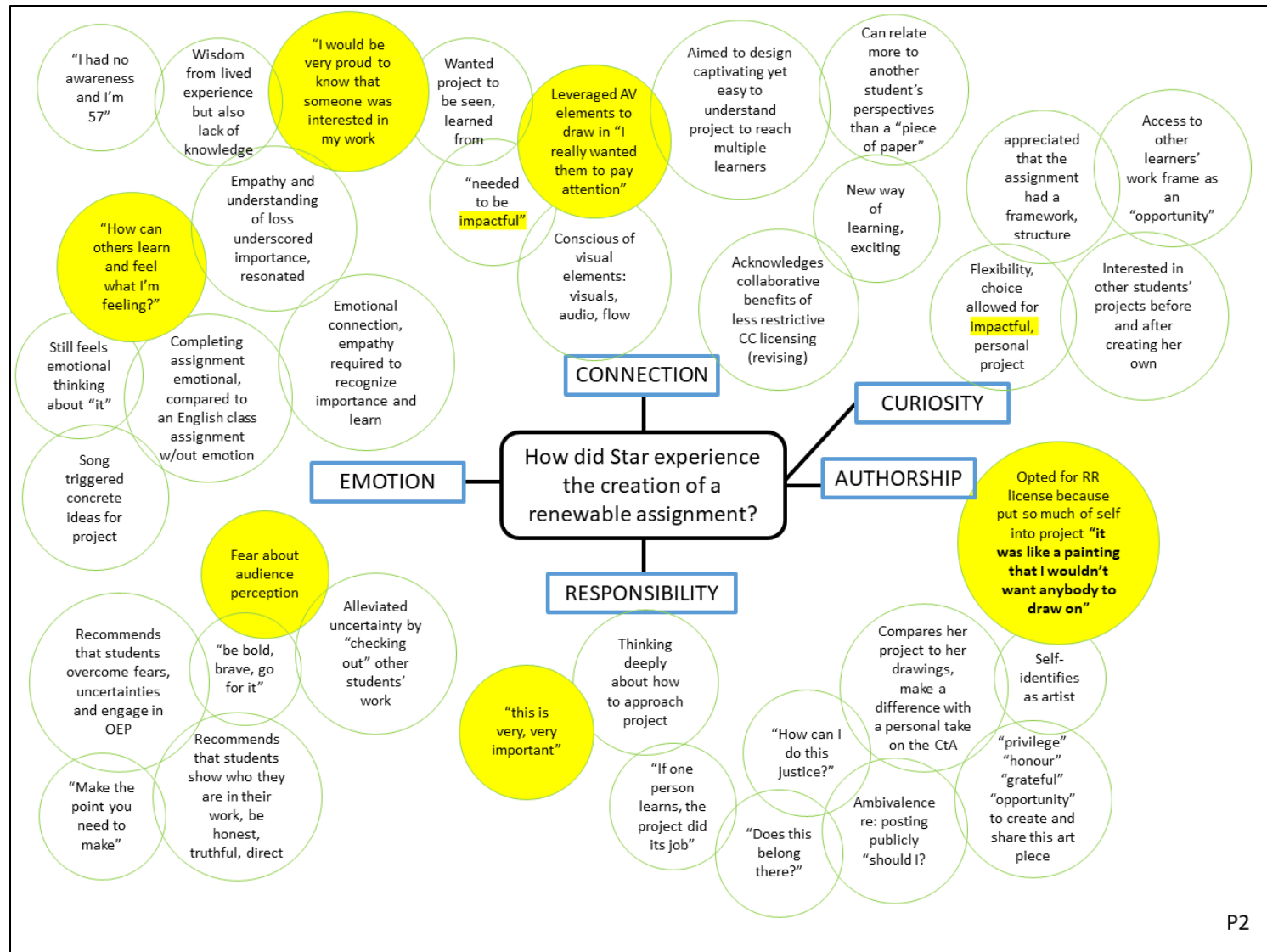
Participant One "Brianna"



LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

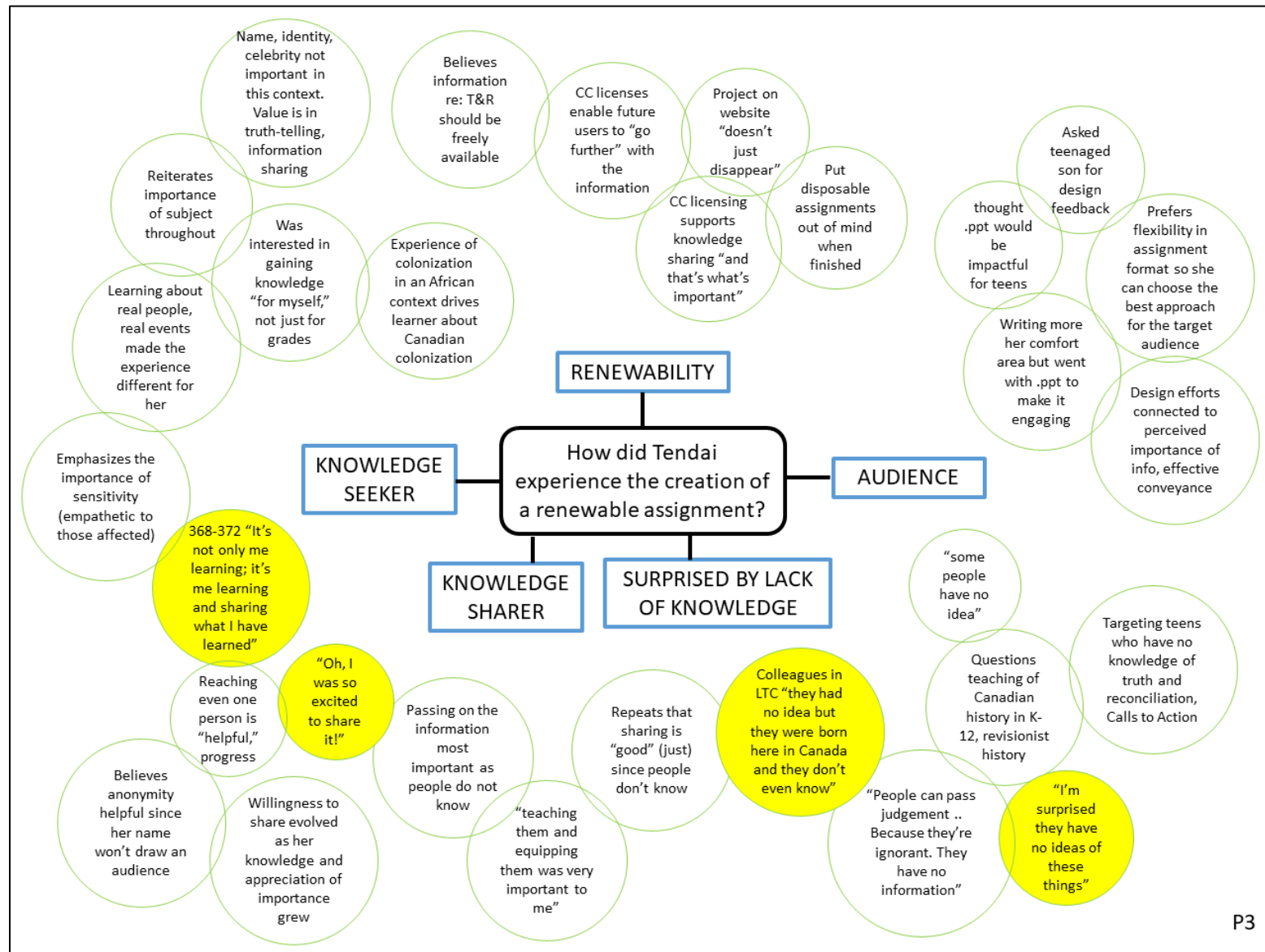
Participant Two "Star"

Participant Three "Tendai"



P2

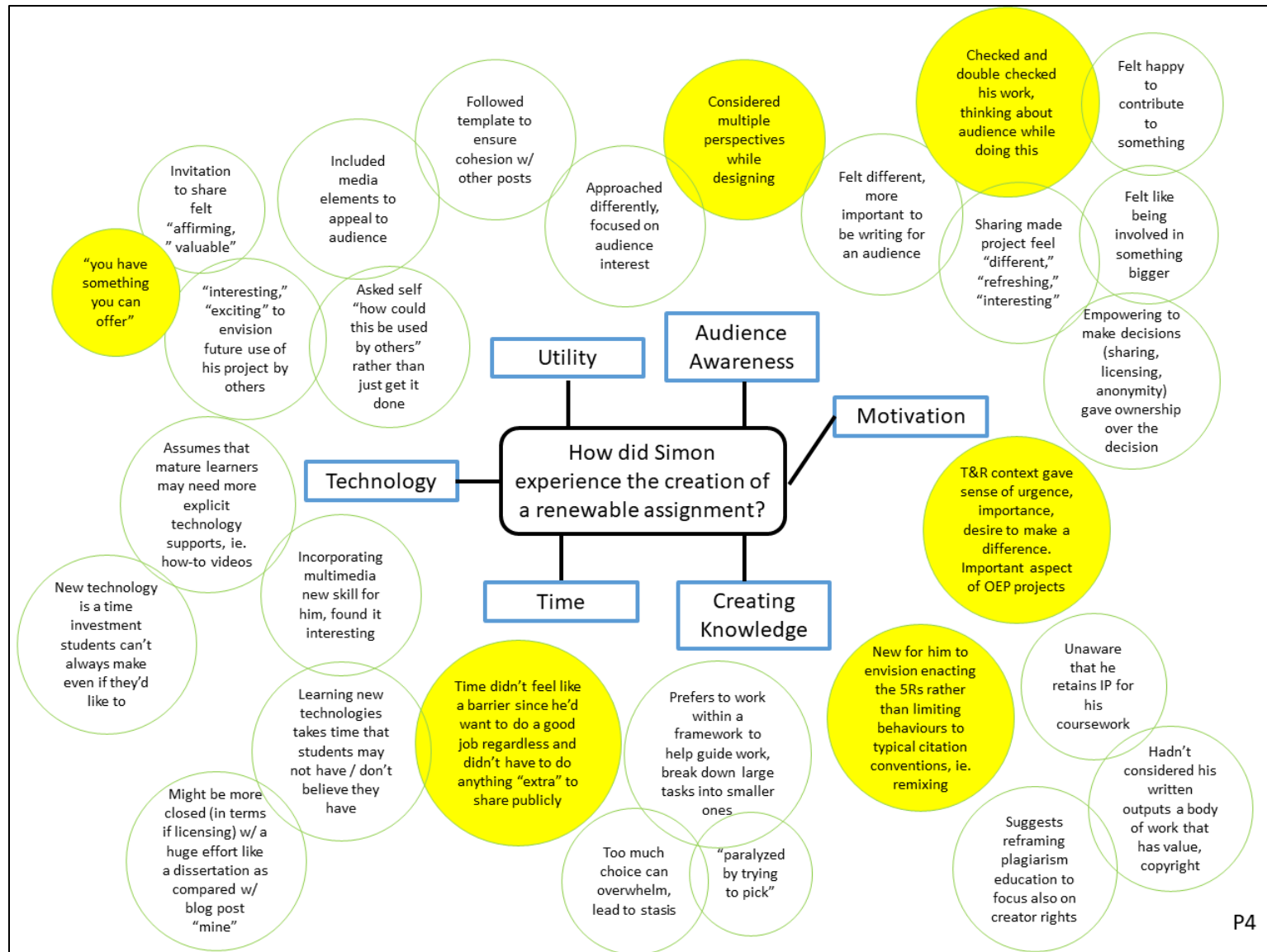
LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT



P3

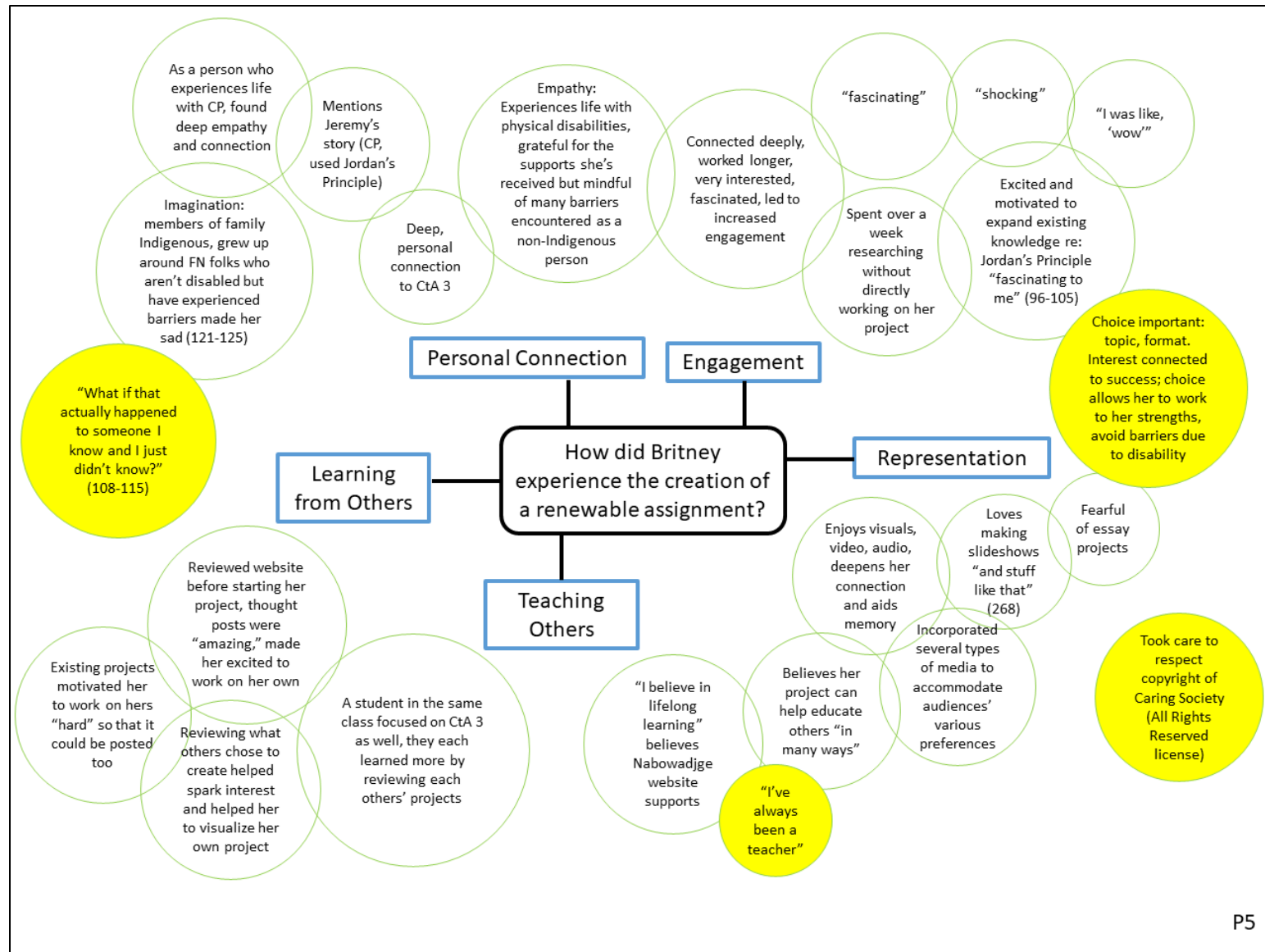
LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Participant Four: "Simon"



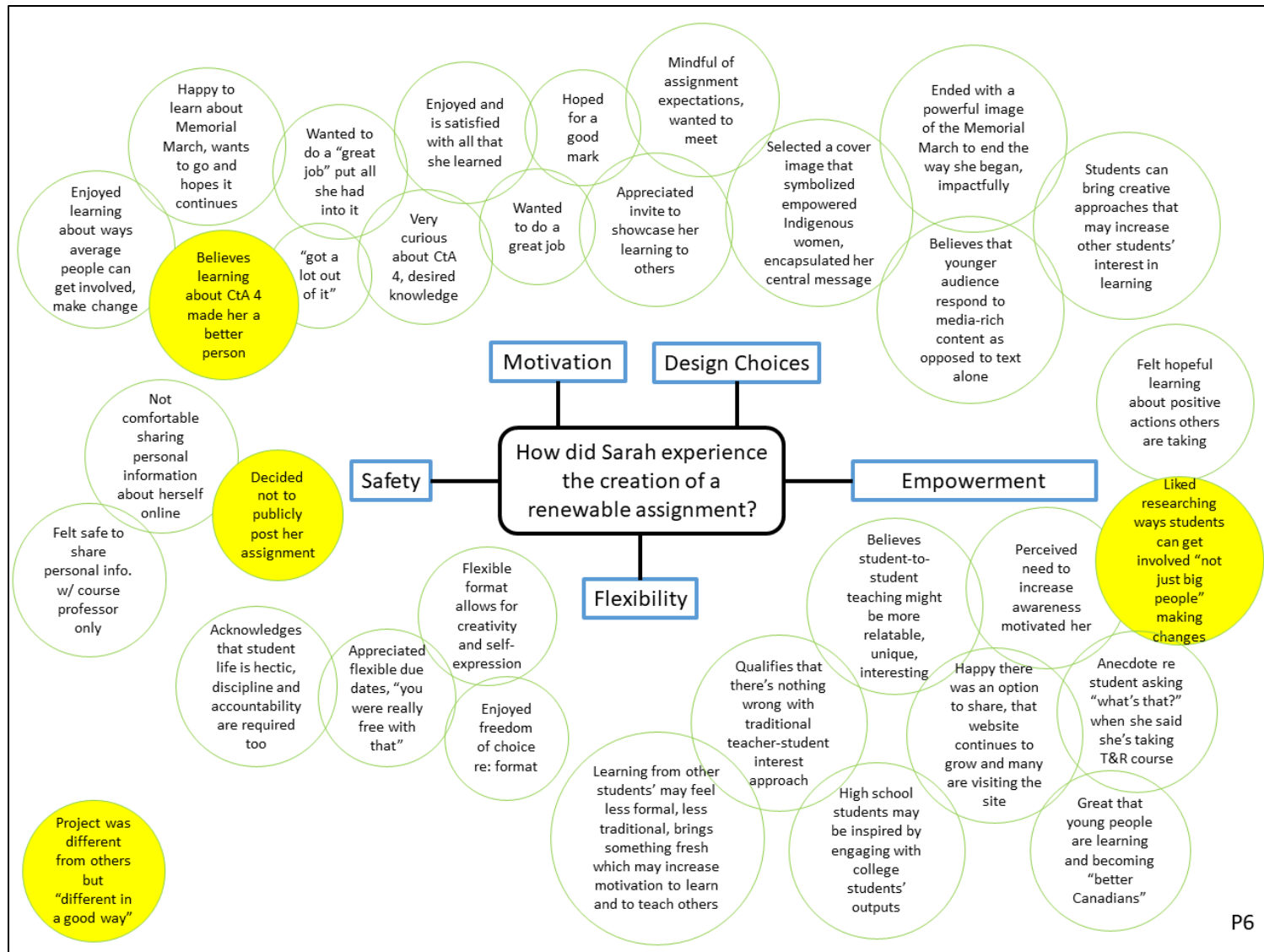
LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Participant Five "Britney"



LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

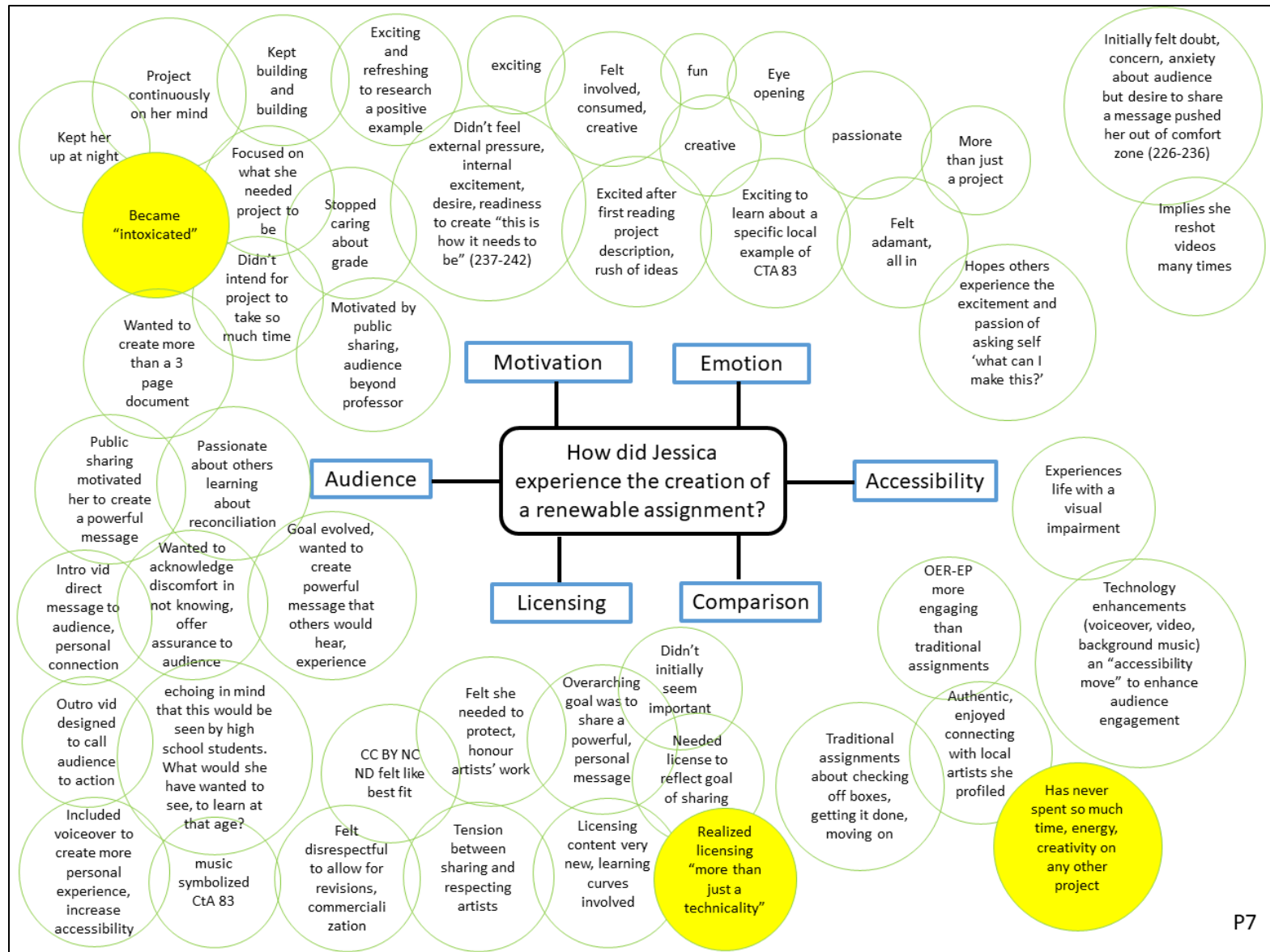
Participant Six "Sarah"



P6

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT

Participant Seven "Jessica"



P7

Appendix E: Certification of Ethical Approval – Athabasca University



CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL- RENEWAL

The Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (REB) has reviewed and approved the research project noted below. The REB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2) and Athabasca University Policy and Procedures.

Ethics File No.: 24237

Principal Investigator:

Ms. Jessica O'Reilly, Graduate Student
Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences\Doctor of Education (EdD) in Distance Education

Supervisor:

Dr. Dianne Conrad (Supervisor)

Project Title:

Exploring Learners' Perceptions of a Renewable Assignment

Effective Date: March 03, 2021

Expiry Date: March 02, 2023

Restrictions:

Any modification or amendment to the approved research must be submitted to the AUREB for approval.

Ethical approval is valid *for a period of one year*. An annual request for renewal must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date if a project is ongoing beyond one year.

A Project Completion (Final) Report must be submitted when the research is complete (*i.e. all participant contact and data collection is concluded, no follow-up with participants is anticipated and findings have been made available/provided to participants (if applicable)*) or the research is terminated.

Approved by:

Date: February 10, 2022

Carolyn Greene, Chair
Athabasca University Research Ethics Board

Athabasca University Research Ethics Board
University Research Services, Research Centre
1 University Drive, Athabasca AB Canada T9S 3A3
E-mail rebsec@athabascau.ca
Telephone: 780.213.2033

Appendix F: Certification of Ethical Approval - Cambrian College



Cambrian College

of Applied Arts

and Technology

1400 Barrydowne Road

Sudbury, Ontario

Canada P3A 3V8

Telephone

(705) 566-8101

Facsimile

(705) 524-7329

www.cambrian.on.ca

April 26, 2021

Jessica O'Reilly
School of General Studies and Academic Upgrading
277 Kingsmount Blvd
Sudbury (ON) P3E1L2

Dear Ms. O'Reilly,

RE: Exploring Learners' Perceptions of a Renewable Assignment

Ethics Approval

Original Approval Date: April 23, 2021

Expiry Date: April 23, 2022

I am pleased to inform you that the Cambrian College Research Ethics Committee has granted approval to the above-named research study, for a period of one year, under the REC's delegated review process.

Please note that approval is based on the following:

- a) The REC must be informed of any protocol modifications if they arise.
- b) Any unanticipated problems that increase risk to the participants must be reported to the REC immediately.
- c) The study is approved for one year. If needed, please apply for an extension before the expiry date.
- d) A copy of the final report must be submitted to the REC upon completion of the project.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sherrill McCall".

Sherrill McCall
Dean, Planning and Research
Cambrian College

Appendix G: Certification of Ethical Approval (Renewals) – Athabasca University



CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL - RENEWAL

The Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (REB) has reviewed and approved the research project noted below. The REB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2) and Athabasca University Policy and Procedures.

Ethics File No.: 24237

Principal Investigator:

Ms. Jessica O'Reilly, Graduate Student
Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences\Doctor of Education (EdD) in Distance Education

Supervisor/Project Team:

Dr. Dianne Conrad (Supervisor)

Project Title:

Exploring Learners' Perceptions of a Renewable Assignment

Effective Date: March 03, 2022

Expiry Date: March 02, 2024

Restrictions:

Any modification/amendment to the approved research must be submitted to the AUREB for approval prior to proceeding.

Any adverse event or incidental findings must be reported to the AUREB as soon as possible, for review.

Ethical approval is valid *for a period of one year*. An annual request for renewal must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date if a project is ongoing beyond one year.

An Ethics Final Report must be submitted when the research is complete (*i.e. all participant contact and data collection is concluded, no follow-up with participants is anticipated and findings have been made available/provided to participants (if applicable)*) or the research is terminated.

Approved by:

Date: February 07, 2023

Paul Jerry, Chair
Athabasca University Research Ethics Board

Athabasca University Research Ethics Board
University Research Services Office
1 University Drive, Athabasca AB Canada T9S 3A3
E-mail rebsec@athabascau.ca
Telephone: 780.213.2033

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN OPEN RENEWABLE ASSIGNMENT



CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL - RENEWAL

The Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (REB) has reviewed and approved the research project noted below. The REB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2) and Athabasca University Policy and Procedures.

Ethics File No.: 24237

Principal Investigator:

Ms. Jessica O'Reilly, Graduate Student
Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences\Doctor of Education (EdD) in Distance Education

Supervisor/Project Team:

Dr. Dianne Conrad (Supervisor)

Project Title:

Exploring Learners' Perceptions of a Renewable Assignment

Effective Date: February 2, 2024

Expiry Date: February 02, 2025

Restrictions:

Any modification/amendment to the approved research must be submitted to the AUREB for approval prior to proceeding.

Any adverse event or incidental findings must be reported to the AUREB as soon as possible, for review.

Ethical approval is valid *for a period of one year*. An annual request for renewal must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date if a project is ongoing beyond one year.

An Ethics Final Report must be submitted when the research is complete (*i.e. all participant contact and data collection is concluded, no follow-up with participants is anticipated and findings have been made available/provided to participants (if applicable)*) or the research is terminated.

Approved by:

Date: February 02, 2024

Paul Jerry, Chair
Athabasca University Research Ethics Board