

We Are Still the Anishnaabe Nation: Embracing Culture and Identity in Batchewana First Nation

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Abstract: This case study was conducted by researchers engaged in “Understanding the Strengths of Indigenous Communities,” a research project involving five participating First Nations (see <http://www.usic.ca>). This particular study describes the centrality of cultural activities and beliefs in strengthening the community of the Batchewana First Nation. Deploying an innovative form of methodology, which stresses community participation in the development of the research process for the purposes of decolonization, the article explores how this community approaches culture from a holistic worldview. The findings suggest that cultural renewal is self-reinforcing and cumulative, and plays a key role in overcoming collective trauma, but that these benefits can be jeopardized through a lack of resources.

Résumé : Cette étude, intitulée “Understanding the Strengths of Indigenous Communities,” a été menée par des chercheurs associés à un projet regroupant cinq nations autochtones. Elle décrit le rôle primordial des activités culturelles et des croyances dans le mécanisme de consolidation de la communauté Batchewana First Nation. Utilisant une méthodologie innovatrice qui attire l’atten-

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tion sur la participation communautaire dans l'élaboration d'un processus de recherche ayant comme but la décolonisation, ce communiqué explore les points de vue holistiques utilisés par cette communauté. Les résultats suggèrent que le renouveau culturel est autodéterminant et cumulatif et qu'il joue un rôle clé dans la confrontation du traumatisme collectif, mais que ces bienfaits peuvent être mis en danger par un manque de ressources.

Keywords: Culture; First Nations; Communities; Pow-wow

Introduction

The Batchewana First Nation (BFN) is an Ojibwe band whose land is located in four different sites in Northern Ontario adjacent to the shores of Lake Superior (see <http://www.batchewana.ca>). At the time of European contact the band was a hunter-gatherer society who spent their winters dispersed over a large territory and who came together in the summer months at what was known as Bawatung, or Gathering-Place, now the twin cities of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, and Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. The band ratified the Robinson Superior treaty in the 1850s.

Like most indigenous communities in Canada, the Batchewana's hunting and gathering economy was severely constricted by European settlement and the subsequent logging, mining, and overutilization of resources. The majority of BFN members now reside in what is known as "Rankin Location" or simply Rankin, a relatively urban area located on the outskirts of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. About 100 residents live at Goulais Mission, a rural community located about 40 kilometres north of the city, and another 30 or so live at Batchewana Bay, located approximately 80 kilometres north of Sault Ste. Marie. At the Batchewana Bay site, only two families live on actual reserve land, while the other BFN members live nearby in what is called Batchewana Village.

The Batchewana Nation is one of five First Nation communities from across Canada—including Wagmatcook, Flying Dust, Teslin Tlingit, and Saanich—who are participating in a research project titled "Understanding the Strengths of Indigenous Communities" (USIC).¹ This research project, which has been conducted over the past five years, has been unique in a number of ways:

- It has focused on the strengths of the communities rather than on the problems.
- It has been inductive and community-driven—the researchers have been drawn from the community, trained, and have used their skills to elicit community perceptions of First Nations' own strengths.
- It has been a true collaboration between academics and community members.
- It approaches the concept of strength holistically, accepting that any one strength cannot be understood out of context of the larger social system.
- It focuses on the process by which strengths have been developed and maintained.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the research has been its focus on process in at least two senses: first, it explores the processes that have created rel-

atively strong First Nations and how those processes have been developed and maintained over time; second, it pays close attention to the ethics and politics of the research process.

Each of the five communities first identified its perception of its strengths. They then selected three or four of these strengths to explore in more depth. Culture was identified as a strength in several of the participating communities, and one of those communities, Batchewana First Nation, decided to conduct a case study to provide additional details. The end goal of the research is to provide guidance for community development that may be adapted by other First Nations for their own use. Since each of the communities has its own history, language, and culture, the findings from one study do not necessarily apply to the other communities. However, areas of commonality are likely, given the shared legacy of colonization.

In developing their case study of culture in their community, members of Batchewana First Nation decided to explore their perceptions of what culture is, what culture means to them, and how it plays a role in their lives. As this study shows, cultural renewal may lead to a stronger sense of identity and pride, resulting in personal and community empowerment. As these participants tell us, empowerment, social cohesion, and a sense of “connection” to other communities and nations comes from their community’s determination to reclaim its identity. As such, their voices suggest the possibility of a “reengagement [of Western and Aboriginal culture] . . . through an ethical process envisioned in the ethical space” (Ermine, Sinclair, and Jeffery, 2004, p. 48).

In the first part of this paper, we outline our methodological approach to this project, discuss some of the ethical issues at stake, and provide details of our research process as it unfolded in the context of BFN. We then draw on the voices of research participants to examine the process of cultural renewal and cultural transmission as they pertain to a community, like BFN, that has suffered the collective trauma of having their culture, traditions, and way of life denied to them, and hence almost disappear. After outlining the role that a strong cultural identity plays in building a healthy community, we discuss how involvement in cultural activities follows a reinforcing cyclical path, we detail the many personal and collective benefits that result from this kind of cultural participation. We go on to argue that without an adequate infrastructure to support a community’s cultural growth and development, however, the very real benefits such participation can afford a “relatively strong” community like BFN may be lost. Such a loss, we conclude, would have a detrimental impact on how community members see themselves, their links to those around them, and their ties to outside communities—both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—and hence a deleterious impact on the health and well-being of all involved.

“An ethical space”: Research between cultures

Ermine, Sinclair & Jeffery (2004) provide a context for our examination of culture within Batchewana First Nation. In their exploration of factors affecting the ethics of conducting research with indigenous peoples, they identify a schism that exists

between the worldviews of Western and indigenous cultures. Ermine et al. suggest that there is therefore a need to understand perceptions of culture and knowledge within the context of an Indigenous worldview, thus providing an alternative to “fitting Indigenous knowledge into Western frameworks and interests” (pp. 27-28).

These authors provide an in-depth examination of the ethics of conducting research in Aboriginal communities and outline a number of criteria for such endeavours. According to Ermine, Sinclair & Jeffery (2004), ethical research does the following:

- “Seeks to create knowledge relevant to the communities it serves” (p.16).
- Addresses the unequal power relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities by giving voice to indigenous perceptions and knowledge and thereby validates them.
- Provides an alternative view to that of the “Aboriginal problem” (p. 23).
- Respects the community’s collective ownership of knowledge through processes respectful of tribal authority and collective right to consent.

Research on the question of culture within an indigenous community necessarily requires an understanding of the differing worldviews and agendas of indigenous communities and non-Native scholars. Ermine, Sinclair, & Jeffrey (2004), recommend that an examination of the research process—the ethics and methodology—is crucial to ensuring that the research contribute to the decolonization of indigenous people, and that it contribute to “Indigenous ways of coming to knowledge on many levels; theoretically, cognitively, practically, and spiritually” (p. 13).

As a result of these contrasting worldviews, they suggest that qualitative research, conducted with a recognition of “the schism between Indigenous Peoples and the Western world,” provides an opportunity for the two cultures to begin a process of “reengagement . . . through an ethical process envisioned in the ethical space” (p. 48). Constructing an “ethical space” for research has been a challenging and at times difficult process. It has required ongoing dialogue, timing reflective of the community’s process, and adjustment of plans and methodology to develop a research protocol that is attentive first and foremost to the community. The USIC project was conceived in the late 1990s by Dr. Cynthia Chataway of York University and Larry Sault, at that time Ontario regional Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. They drew together a Project Oversight Committee (POC) composed of 20 people, 17 of whom were indigenous, to determine the type of research that would be useful to First Nation communities. As suggested by Ermine, Sinclair, & Jefferey, the group began with the premise that indigenous communities had strengths, and that an exploration of these strengths would prove useful to indigenous communities. The objectives of the USIC research included understanding local indigenous constructions of strengths and the processes of how these strengths have developed and been maintained over time. The objectives also included building indigenous capacity to conduct research through participatory design and training local researchers (Chataway, 2003).

After establishing their objectives for the research, the POC then convened a group of 40 indigenous people who nominated relatively strong First Nations from across Canada. From these nominations, the POC selected a number of First Nations to participate in the research, based on the objective of obtaining as diverse a group of communities as was possible. Chief and Council of Batchewana First Nation (BFN) passed a band council resolution supporting the project in April 2003 and were provided with ongoing reports throughout. A community oversight team (COT) of approximately 10 BFN members were recruited through postings at the band offices, and they provided ongoing advice to the project, reviewing and providing feedback on all aspects and publications. Batchewana's research team consisted of several members of the First Nation, including one of the authors of this report, Stephanie Boyer. The team was supervised by a professor at Algoma University College, Gayle Broad, under the direction of the national USIC principal investigator, Cynthia Chataway.

The project has employed several research methodologies including surveys, focus groups, and case studies. York University provided a three-day training session prior to the commencement of the project for both the community researchers and the research supervisor. Several of the COT members attended some or all of the training. The research supervisor provided ongoing support and advice through weekly meetings, participation in the first several focus groups, and reviewing transcripts of all focus groups and interviews. The first major data collection in the form of surveys and focus groups began in Batchewana First Nation in the fall of 2003 and continued until the spring of 2004. The case studies were conducted following the conclusion of the focus groups. The data for the cultural case study was drawn from the focus groups and a series of interviews conducted in January and February 2005.

The data related to the identification of culture as a strength in the community and its relationship to other strengths was collected through a series of focus groups. Over the course of an eight-month period, 13 focus groups involving more than 60 people were conducted. The COT members and the community researchers brainstormed potential participants for focus groups, trying to obtain a diversity of perspectives. Participants were asked to individually identify the strengths of their community, then draw pictures of the strength. Drawing their ideas before sharing them with the group appeared to help participants clarify their ideas and communicate them more effectively with others. For instance, one participant said, "The more I draw, the more ideas I have" (FG1A).² The 20 minutes or so allotted for drawing seemed to be well spent by most participants. The pictures drawn also sometimes illustrated more holistically the ideas expressed. For instance, one participant had this to say about their drawing of the crisis centre:

There's the sun shining and the trees growing here and the sun represents the afterbirth of the people that are in crisis. That's their coming out. The sun's going to shine. It's going to be a new day tomorrow after they come out of the treatment centre or the crisis centre. (FG11C)

Each group member was asked to place their drawings on a large sheet of paper. They were then asked to explain them, discuss why they perceived what they had depicted to be a strength, and gauge whether they believed it to be a small, medium, or large strength. Once everyone had placed their drawings on the large paper, they were then asked to arrange them in conceptual maps of how these strengths related to each other. The maps suggested a dense web of interconnections between strengths such as family, culture, the land, economic development, and health.

In late April 2004, the community researchers and the research supervisor identified one or two participants from each of the previous 13 focus groups who were assessed to be the most articulate and representative of their particular focus group. These individuals were invited to a final focus group, to create a composite visual map to illustrate how these community strengths related to each other. From the focus group data, it was clear that people considered the community's cultural development and strong sense of identity as a First Nation community to be a strength. "We Are Still the Anishnaabek Nation: Embracing Culture and Identity in Batchewana First Nation" was identified by the participants in the final focus group as one of eight strengths worthy of an in-depth exploration through a case study. The other strengths identified were: "Family: Strength of the Community"; "Elders: Circle of Knowledge"; "Land and Stewardship: Take Care of What We Have Now So We Will Always Have It in the Future"; "Education: Lifelong Learning Is Powerful"; "Economic Development: Community Growth"; and "Healthcare: Then and Now, From Cedar Boughs to Tylenol." (Of these, USIC has only had the time and resources to complete case studies on four of the eight. The cultural case study is one of these.) A timeline of important events in the community's history was then created, and a trend line for each strength was overlaid, indicating how that strength had waxed and waned in relation to community history. From this timeline, the group helped the researchers decide upon the topics outlined above to be the focus of in-depth case studies. In October 2004, after analyzing focus group transcripts, the terms of reference for this case study in culture were drafted, identifying three research questions for exploration:

- How does a relatively strong Aboriginal community engage with cultural activities (both creative artistic expression and the transmission of cultural heritage, language, and identity)?
- How does cultural identity shape a community's capacity to improve its situation, to empower its members to be stronger, and to co-operate together in sharing their knowledge of the past, the present, and in looking toward the future?
- How does interaction between cultural practice and community identity inform the inclusion or exclusion of an Aboriginal community within the broader Canadian society?

In consultation with the COT and the research team, approximately 15 individuals from the community were identified to be interviewed. These individuals had been active in cultural programming or committees, or were identified by the

community research team and/or the Community Oversight Team members as having some special knowledge of the way that culture and identity had been renewed or preserved within Batchewana First Nation. A further five people were selected somewhat randomly (by convenience) to ensure a range of ages, gender, and level of experience with cultural programming. In the end, seven people with considerable experience (most had been on the cultural committee at some point) and five people with little or no involvement in cultural activities in the community were interviewed.

A set of interview questions was designed (see Appendix A), and semi-structured interviews were conducted by a community member who had been trained in interviewing techniques. The USIC project at Batchewana First Nation was fortunate to have Stephanie Boyer, a member of BFN, conduct all of the interviews for this case study, as well as conduct all of the focus groups in the earlier data collection for the project. This continuity ensured a high quality of data collection while building community capacity. One of the final questions asked the participants to identify other community members who might have a somewhat different perspective regarding culture and identity, and others who might be able to enlarge the researcher's understanding. This resulted in identification of two or three additional interviewees.

The focus group report and transcriptions, some preliminary questionnaire data, together with the interviews conducted in the course of this case study form the basis for this article. In the USIC project, all of the focus groups and interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded by breaking the transcriptions into a series of meaning units. This allowed the researchers and authors to become familiar with the data, and allowed the theory(ies) to emerge, ensuring that the theory was "grounded" in the research data, not imposed by the researchers. Grounded theory analysis (Glaser, 1993) was used to develop a thicker description of how culture is practised in Batchewana, the value that the people feel cultural practices have, and, wherever possible, how the practices produce these positive social effects. Working from the perspective of grounded theory, it is important to acknowledge how these participants understand culture from an indigenous perspective before detailing some of the cultural practices that have created a sense of renewal.

An Indigenous perspective on culture

Anthropologists have debated the definition of culture for decades. As Clifford Geertz (2001) has said of culture: "The trouble is that no one is quite sure what culture is. Not only is it an essentially contested concept, like democracy, religion, simplicity, or social justice; it is a multiply defined one, multiply employed, inextricably imprecise . . ." (p. 11).

While agreeing on a simple definition of culture is difficult, participants in our discussions demonstrated a holistic and inclusive definition of culture. A wide range of activities were identified as being encompassed by culture, and culture was identified as flowing through every aspect of life. One research participant expressed the view that culture formed the basis for all of the other strengths in the

community: “Your culture, that’s your foundation, your basis, your fundamental. If you don’t have your fundamentals down, it’s just going to crumble . . . Everything depends on having a strong foundation” (FG8C).

This integrated, holistic worldview was identified as an essential aspect of being Anishnaabe, and a part of maintaining balance in one’s life. It is not something that one can choose, or not choose, but rather flows throughout one’s private and public life. As one participant phrased it:

Our way is not a way to be used when you need it; it’s something you have to live every day. . . . You have to incorporate it into every part of your life. . . . When they talk about that circle and the balance, you can’t only be in politics and not be cultural, and you can’t only be working in social work and not have part of the culture. That’s a non-Native perspective. . . . The old way and the traditional way is that everything is equal. There has to be balance . . . (I-1F)

At the same time as everything is seen as interconnected and interdependent, the need to be firmly grounded in culture, meaning primarily tradition and the teachings of the elders, was stressed in both focus groups and interviews. Tradition was viewed as a living and evolving thing, requiring creation of new approaches on a daily basis:

Not that we have to go back and live in buckskin but it’s what is in our hearts and what we learn and what we know because . . . material things will always change but it’s our teachings that are inside of us, that’s where [culture] is. (I-1A)

One of the most striking features of our participants’ description of culture in a holistic sense is how it dovetails with the opinion of experts from across Canada who recently concluded that culture has three elements, “tradition (heritage), creation, and patterns of living,” each of which “supports the others and is necessary for the other two to function” (Stanley, 2004, p. 20). Understanding culture as taking place within networks of social relations makes sense within an indigenous perspective, as the emphasis is on substantial benefit of cultural activities to both individuals and communities (see Cajete, 1999). For example, on an individual basis, “strong ties” such as those among family members or close friends may provide support to an ill or grieving member, while “weak ties” may provide access to letters of reference for employment or access to knowledge key to solving a particular problem. On a community basis, these networks increase a community’s capacity to deal with adversity, through strengthening the community’s resiliency. Within this framework, tradition, creativity, and patterns of living are intertwined and intrinsic: it is only through this inclusive approach that we can “hope to make sense out of the social effects of culture” (Stanley, 2004: p. 21) in the context of the Batchewana First Nation.

Culture and renewal: Overcoming trauma

Like many First Nations communities, Batchewana experienced a substantial period of time when practising cultural activities such as speaking the language, hosting gatherings, or holding traditional ceremonies was either forbidden or illegal. The research participants spoke of the residential schools, the censoring of

ceremonies and languages, and the attempt to turn the Anishnaabe people—traditionally a hunter/gatherer society—into farmers as examples of ways the culture had been almost lost. Many people came to believe that cultural activities such as drumming, dancing, and ceremonies were evil, and felt threatened by the few people in the community who continued to practise them. Alternatively, people found a way to be seen, at least, to be combining the old ways with the new. The last living midwife in the community, for instance, who used ceremonies and natural medicines to help community women in labour, also went to church every Sunday:

That was something that she had to do you know because if she didn't do that, what would happen in her day if they got caught doing ceremonies? So it's almost like a survival thing, it almost becomes a part of you. (I-1A)

During the period of severe oppression, the Anishnaabe culture did not entirely disappear, though many people did not speak about it. A few interviewees spoke of the shame or embarrassment of belonging to a family that continued to practise the “old ways” (I-1A). These experiences have become part of the collective identity for many community members, a marker of their commonality and their distinctness. One individual who works in human services put it this way:

We come from collective traumas. We have a different approach. . . . We're off-spring from the residential school era so we have that in common. We grew up with that type of dysfunction as a commonality so we understand each other. We can look at each other and say “look how far we come,” [as] opposed to a non-Native agency coming in to say “look how bad you are.” Right there, there are two separate approaches to situations and I think that's what makes us different. (I-1A)

As the local residential school closed in the late 1960s and the political consciousness of the era raised awareness and brought a renewed pride in being Indian, residents of BFN also began reclaiming their culture and renewing some of the cultural activities. Speaking of this time of reclamation and renewal, one participant suggests that:

over the last twenty-five years . . . there's been an enormous cultural awakening in our community. . . . [There are] still people that will reject our own way of who we are, but back then it was a lot worse because you're fighting everything you grew up with. (I-1A)

This latter point is reiterated by an interviewee whose father had been raised in the Roman Catholic faith and was beaten if he did not go to church. When he discovered an affinity for traditional spirituality after attending a longhouse ceremony in another community some 40 years ago, his first impulse had been to build a longhouse in Batchewana First Nation. This is because “when he went inside the longhouse [at Akwesasne] . . . [and] entered that ceremony, he said it was almost as if he was at home” (I-1A). The people at Akwesasne gave him ashes from the longhouse fire to start a ceremonial fire in his own community, but suggested that he talk with his own elders to learn about ceremonies that were specific to Anishnaabe people. Back in BFN, the elders started to talk to him:

They ended up putting him out on a fast . . . and that's how he started . . . he said when he came upon this [spiritual] way . . . it made him strive to be a good person. And he said that in his [earlier] life [he was told] that the Creator must have made a mistake when they made Indian people . . . [but] then when he discovered our own ways he knew that the Creator [hadn't]. It was self-acceptance, self-growth. (I-1A)

That said, some of BFN's traditional knowledge was lost during the "bad times" and had to be obtained from others outside the community, particularly when it came to some of the ceremonies. As one participant explained, there were not "many resource people in the area so we always had to get . . . [outside] Ojibwa people . . . that grew up with their teachings . . . to come in and speak" (I-1D).

The re-establishment of the pow-wow was perhaps one of the most symbolic moves in terms of recognizing the resurgence of the culture. Before the pow-wow grounds were established there was sometimes drumming late in the evening in one section of the community. However, in the late 1970s or early 1980s a group of people simply started clearing the grounds where the pow-wow would eventually be held—brushing the area and building the arbour, despite the fact that no approval had been obtained from Chief and Council. While the pow-wow is a social gathering distinct from ceremonial or spiritual activity, participants were quick to identify it as one of the most significant milestones signalling a return of the celebration of being "Indian":

Pow-wows are viewed in the community as more of a social activity. But when you really think about [it] . . . a pow-wow is a ceremony celebrating life and that's why our outfits are made from all the colours. The colours represent creation and what is out here in the universe. (I-1A)

As suggested in the above quote, the revival of the pow-wow also stimulated the renewal of a number of traditional arts and crafts: beading, leatherwork, and regalia-making. The formation of a dance troupe and the development of singing groups and drum groups were also associated with the revival of the pow-wow. The dance troupe involved a large number of people ranging in ages from eight to forty, and other community members were called upon to help make the outfits and organize fundraising drives so that the troupe could travel to various pow-wows and competitions. Several participants spoke of trips to Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the Skydome in Toronto as being highlights for the dancers. In short, research participants emphasized that the activities of the pow-wow—dancing, singing, socializing—contributed in many ways to the identity of First Nations people. As one participant described it:

It gives you a sense of identity . . . it makes you realize that you're a First Nations person and dancing is just a way to celebrate that . . . I guess it's a universal thing where all tribes can come together and celebrate. . . . And then as well we have our own different cultural rites and rituals as Ojibwe, Cree . . . the different Nations. (FG-1A)

Spirituality — a way of life

While the pow-wow was probably the most visible cultural activity to emerge from the research, participants also mentioned other cultural activities as contributing to this sense of identity—several art displays that had been shown at the Band Office, for example, and a recent photo exhibition that had been curated by a BFN member. In addition, there were many references to, and discussions of, the spiritual teachings—often called “traditions” or the “red road” or quite simply, “ways.” Participants referred to pipe ceremonies, sacred fires, the Seven Grandfather teachings, smudges, “putting down the tobacco,” sweat lodges, sunrise ceremonies, naming ceremonies, and rites of passage. Clan feasts and “finding our colours” were also mentioned. Some of the participants felt that the spiritual teachings were the foundation for their life and an extremely important part of the culture. The comments of one participant demonstrate the intrinsic nature of culture when it reveals itself through spirituality: “It’s what is in our hearts and what we learn and what we know because time . . . [and] material things will always change but it’s our teachings that are inside of us, that’s where it is” (I-1A).

Another person described how the spiritual teachings were part of the daily routine and part of the family’s lifestyle:

On a personal level . . . you get up [in the morning], you give thanks and you smudge and it’s a way of life. . . . When we have our clan feast and when we have our women[’s] . . . sweat lodge or our fast or anything to do with . . . our drum . . . sometimes we get some of the pipe carriers to be there . . . we don’t go through a program or any committee we just do it on our own. (I-4D)

Another individual spoke of how learning the spiritual teachings had given her a sense of belonging—a feeling of “rightness”—that other religions had not provided. After being fostered by a Christian family she had adopted that family’s beliefs and become a born-again Christian. However, there was, as she explains:

always something missing. . . . When I got to university and started learning about the culture and spending time with elders and learning about traditional ways and the values and all that, it just sort of all fit and clicked. . . . “Yeah, this feels good.” (I-F)

While some research participants had rejected Christianity in their return to the older traditions, other members spoke of integrating Christian and traditional beliefs—a point that well demonstrates one way that cultural practices can evolve. On the whole, this also seemed to be an acceptable way of practising one’s faith. As one participant explained: “The community has respect for the different way[s] we honour the Creator. . . . [As you can see from my drawing] I have a church and a sweat lodge” (FG-4D).

In fact, one of the most remarkable features to emerge from the discussions about spirituality in the focus groups was the compatibility that many participants saw between traditional spiritual teachings and Christian teachings. People appeared not to see combining traditional spirituality with other beliefs as a problem, and several participants indicated that they respected the belief systems of everyone. At one focus group meeting, an individual explained that she says her

prayers to the Creator and offers tobacco daily, but that she also respects the choice of others to attend Christian services. In response to this, another participant stated that although she was a staunch Christian, she would like to learn more about the traditions as she felt that this was a part of her culture that she still wished to develop.

One elder indicated that the respect for differing traditions and practices is one area where the cultures are beginning to meet, and that the priest has invited her to be part of the church services she attends while also practising her traditional spiritual path:

I get up, say my prayers and then I ask the Great Spirit to help me for that day. . . . I smudge and put my tobacco down . . . you know I still go to church even though I . . . am walking that spiritual way, the Native way. A lot of times the priest will ask me to go down and bless the waters because it's the woman's job to bless the waters . . . so I [do] that with my tobacco and my feather. (FG-5C)

Traditional medicines and healing practices were linked to the spiritual teachings, and a number of research participants referred to “our sacred medicines.” One elder knew a great deal about the medicines and provided instruction to others about how to collect, store, and use them. Others felt that the traditional health program was a good example of “culturally appropriate services where we actually take care of our own” (I-1A). People spoke of several aspects to healing including collecting the traditional medicines, learning from a traditional midwife, and the use of medicine men and women to provide alternative therapies. They emphasized that Aniishnaabe culture was founded on a holistic approach—body-mind-spirit-emotion—and that the traditional ways of healing were based on methods that address all four aspects.

The renewal of the culture has meant that community members were now well aware of where to go within the community for the traditional teachings and who to contact for the various types of spiritual practices. Unlike the experience of the community member who 40 years ago had to search for the knowledge from other communities and in so doing join a kind of underground society, this information is now readily available to those who want it. For a community that has experienced such a collective trauma, the revitalization of cultural activities and spiritual practices in the past 20 years or so has been not only dramatic, but quite remarkable.

Transmitting culture across generations

In the final focus group, when participants pulled together the maps generated by the previous 13 groups, participants chose to place elders at the top of the map to emphasize the important role they play in conveying cultural knowledge and teachings to future generations. They gave elders the subtitle “Circle of Knowledge” because of their important position as an intergenerational link—enabling the circle of cultural knowledge to be completed through their passing on of this knowledge to those who would carry it forward to future generations. This process of transmitting the culture on to youth was a high priority among many of the

research participants. Several people discussed how the resurgence of the culture and related activities had given today's youth a much different perspective on Aboriginal culture than they and their peers had experienced. Several of the research participants felt strongly that the teachings and traditions needed to be passed on to the next generation, or even the next seven generations as the traditions teach: "You have a responsibility to share that and to teach that to other people. . . . What is the point of receiving those teachings if we're not going to pass it on to somebody else?" (I-1F) Another said: "I think the role of the [culture] committee is to bring back the culture and to show it to the younger generations . . . so that way they can pass it on to their children. . . ." (I-1E).

Participants identified a number of ways that youth in BFN have been engaged in cultural activities. The youth attend and participate in the annual powwows including the dancing and regalia-making, and according to some of the participants, most children are now given their "Indian" name at a ceremony. But the cultural renewal at BFN has initiated and/or influenced a number of programs that were identified as particularly significant to this process of engaging youth in cultural activities that are part of their own heritage. One was a day camp where children learned about camping and traditional skills such as canoeing, archery, berry-picking, and fishing. Each of these activities was seen to incorporate the transference of a set of skills with the transmission of indigenous knowledge as embedded in the activity itself. In other words, the day camp not only taught the skills of canoeing or berry-picking, but also exposed the youth involved to a holistic worldview and indigenous knowledge regarding animals, plants, and spirituality. In this way, culture was transmitted to younger members of the community. Other programs identified as contributing significantly to cultural transmission were the "Warrior Down" program, a peer counselling and leadership development program focused on suicide prevention, and a pre-natal program that integrated cradle-making and moccasin-making into activities aimed at young mothers and mothers-to-be. Again, these programs conveyed skills while at the same time integrating indigenous knowledge and indigenous ways of knowing into the teaching and transference of these skills.

As suggested earlier, this process of transmitting cultural knowledge, values, and activities on to the next generation was seen as crucial by so many of the participants. When one was asked if there was anything she wanted to add as the interview drew to a close, she stated: "I would just like to say, teach your kids . . . [and] if you don't have kids to teach, teach others' children. Your nieces, your nephews, your cousins. . . . We have to leave something for our children" (I-1A).

The participants also spoke of how elders transmitted the culture on an individual basis—to their grandchildren, or other children in the community, and sometimes one-on-one with individuals who wanted to learn about specific parts of the culture. For example, one elder spoke of a younger person that s/he had been instructing in the use of traditional medicines for over 10 years in addition to the children's group on cultural traditions that s/he regularly instructed for an hour each week. Several participants mentioned how awareness of the culture was also

increased when elders opened meetings or gatherings with a smudge and a prayer. Workshops, bringing speakers in from outside the community, and regular gatherings and feasts were all mentioned as ideal opportunities to simultaneously teach indigenous skills and transmit indigenous culture.

In sum, research participants described culture as immanent: a process that is imbedded in all aspects and activities of life, whether physical, spiritual, or social. It is a set of traditions, a way of knowing that is transferred through activities, through ceremonies, and through formal and informal teachings. If the suppression of the culture resulted in a collective trauma that affected everyone in the community in some way or other, the collective effort that has gone into reclaiming that culture through the transference of indigenous knowledge has not been in vain. True, research participants recognized that there is a cultural evolution taking place: some practices have been lost, while others require adaptation to meet the realities of today's world. Participants were, however, united in attributing significant value and importance to retaining the culture through the transference of knowledge of indigenous communities.

Cultural identity and Aboriginal pride: Community capacity and empowerment

Every aspect of what we do, everything that happens in our community reflects who we are as a People . . . I'm always so proud. . . . There is a foundation that's laid here that all reflects who we are as Aboriginal People. (I-1A)

There is growing evidence that factors such as cultural discontinuity and the denigration of culture can have a significant deleterious impact on the health of indigenous communities (Suicide Prevention Advisory Group, 2004). Conversely, research confirms that a well-developed cultural identity strengthens community capacity and empowers its members. The evidence in this case study illustrates that in Batchewana First Nation, the growing sense of pride in being "Indian," together with the social cohesion that resulted from the increasing role that culture is playing in the community, has contributed to both individual and community empowerment and capacity.

Research participants contrasted the experiences of their own childhood, during a period when the culture was not as vital as it is today, and were able to provide a number of examples that illustrated a growing capacity to address their needs and concerns without outside assistance. One research participant even suggested that communities in the broader Canadian society could benefit from adopting some of BFN's culture and experiencing the accompanying sense of pride that an active involvement in it brought. Speaking of this connection between cultural involvement and pride, one participant said:

It makes me feel better as an Anishnaabe-kwe [an Anishnaabe woman] to be involved in [our traditions] . . . to be proud of my culture and not to sit back and not be ashamed of who I am. So it just makes me proud to be an Anishnaabe person. (I-1E)

Many of the research participants spoke of the revitalization of culture as having had a powerful impact on their lives, an impact that was not possible in years past when the culture was denied and/or hidden. A number spoke of how gradually the culture had emerged from an era of silence, when references to activities such as drumming and dancing were cloaked in terms such as “that stuff” (I-1C). Several participants spoke of how cultural activities were once viewed as “bad” or “evil”: “I remember . . . as a youth hearing my family saying that it’s evil and it’s the devil . . . that is what I thought too until I actually went there . . .” (I-1B).

Initially, those interested in bringing the culture out of the closet faced opposition. Several people spoke of how the pow-wow—a social gathering free from any religious ceremonies—was staunchly opposed by some at the time of its initiation in the 1970s: “People didn’t want to have the pow-wow. People weren’t interested in knowing who we were” (I-1C). But other members of the community, eager to proceed despite the opposition and lack of widespread community support, simply went ahead and got the ball rolling:

[This was] a group of people who . . . followed the traditional ways, wanted a pow-wow, wanted to have pow-wow grounds. And they kind of just fought for it. . . . They started brushing an area without Council’s permission, without anybody’s permission and they just took it upon themselves to start . . . getting the pow-wow together. (I-1C)

Fortunately, this reticence regarding indigenous cultural activities and traditional spiritual ceremonies no longer exists. In fact, there is general acceptance of such practices. As one participant stated, “Now, [that] more people are aware of who we are, I think it has done a complete three-sixty” (I-1C). That opinion was borne out by many of the participants, who felt that people had moved well beyond fearing and/or keeping silent about cultural activities, social gatherings, and traditional ceremonies, to the point where people now took pride in participating in them:

People openly discuss things in the hallway or at community functions. And they’re more proud to say that they are a traditional person that attends ceremonies or picks medicines or is involved in healing. There is less shame involved. We are more proud. (I-1G)

What the case study revealed, in fact, was that as one individual became empowered through participation in cultural activities, a ripple effect occurred whereby interest was stimulated through family connections into the broader community. One individual who is known to be following the traditional ways spoke of his family’s growing acceptance and then pride over his membership in a drum group:

[No one in my family] has done that before. When I did it I had uncles asking “What are you doing that for?” As it grew they had to accept that it was what I was doing and you know now those same people say, “Where did you guys go this weekend? How did you do?” (I-1B)

One woman spoke eloquently of having left home in her late teens, anxious to leave behind the “fighting and drinking and drugs” that she felt were simply part of being Indian, then finding that leaving her community behind was much more difficult than she had anticipated. She found that going to university and being part of a Native Studies program gave her an opportunity to appreciate her culture:

When I left here I could care less if I saw another Indian for the rest of my life. . . . [Then] I went to [university] and it was like thank god I’m here and there are like 400 other Native people here and they all want to go to school and they don’t drink and they don’t party and we all want to go to class and we all want to learn and it was just awesome. (I-1F)

Other participants spoke of their new-found pride in being Anishnaabe, and how the cultural activities now available in the community had brought families together and provided opportunities for young people that would allow them to grow up following a healthy lifestyle:

It’s been a positive influence on myself and on my son. It kept him out of trouble and . . . it gave him a sense of pride, a sense of identity and it kept him busy on the weekends. . . . Some people like to go to the bars and dance a lot on weekends. I like to go to pow-wows and dance and stay sober and show my son that there are better options out there. (I-1D).

The resurgence in cultural activities, especially the social gatherings, has also provided an opportunity for families from different groupings within the community to come together. Batchewana First Nation, like many other indigenous communities, was traditionally structured in a complex system of families and clans. The traditional culture provided for annual separations into small groups, quite unlike today’s close association of BFN members on reserve lands. This has contributed to the need for creativity by BFN members in developing social relations that reflect today’s realities but also reflect the traditional cultural values and precepts. Several of the research participants spoke of the changing community dynamic and the gradual renewal of social relations:

I know so many people who bring their kids [to the pow-wow] and back like maybe twenty years ago we wouldn’t see them at a pow-wow ever. . . . [These are] people [who] come from families where it was a big “no” to be involved directly with their culture. . . . The [pow-wow has also] brought together families that . . . didn’t really have much interaction [before]. (I-1D)

Although research participants recognize that there are still divisions within the community, they credit the cultural activities that have been co-ordinated in recent years as having brought the community together in many ways. Participants also recognized that not all First Nations have this strength:

The pow-wow and Aboriginal day [and] feasts . . . provide for the whole community, and are there to try to bring the community together. . . . There are reserves that are close by that don’t have any of that, that aren’t actually . . . aware of any of that. So I think that our First Nation is very strong to have what we have, to help us learn about who we are. (I-1C)

Some individuals spoke of how they had taken this new strength that came of taking pride in their culture to advocate on behalf of themselves and others. Two individuals spoke of how they had advocated against the portrayal of Aboriginals in the school system, prompted by their observation of stereotypes in their children's homework. One child was asked to outline the reasons that living off-reserve would be beneficial, while in the other case Aboriginals were portrayed as savages: "So we were doing his homework and it said . . . that 'the pioneers would park their wagons in circles to ward off the savage Indians' . . . I went right to the school the next morning" (I-1A).

Research findings show that as the participants at Batchewana First Nation found more and more opportunities to engage in cultural activities, their sense of identity and their pride in that identity grew. As a result, a stronger sense of community developed. This sense of individual and collective empowerment continues to have a ripple effect throughout the community, bringing families closer together and helping to overcome some of the divisions caused by the disruption in the social fabric that occurred as a result of European contact and the subsequent dislocation from traditional lands and a way of life. As individuals become empowered, they are able to advocate for change at a more systems-wide level, creating an ongoing cyclical effect.

The research at Batchewana First Nation also revealed that this growth in cultural awareness and activities has given community members a strong sense of confidence that, in turn, has contributed to community capacity in a wide variety of areas. Community members attributed the substantial efforts BFN has made to regain its land and have its treaty rights recognized to their increased cultural strength. They also compared themselves to "non-Native" cultures and discovered that there are some culturally specific practices that are worth sharing with other cultural groups, including the dominant Eurocentric culture.

Building social relations of trust is now recognized as a key component to growth and development (Chataway, 2004). The pow-wow, as discussed above, functioned in this way, bringing the community of BFN together and bringing the Anishnaabe culture out of the closet within the community. It also brought people from outside the community into Batchewana First Nation:

[The pow-wow] was marketed for everyone to come and share the experience and maybe some of the non-Native people from the surrounding communities or surrounding areas were able to participate. As a result, [they] became more accepting of Anishnaabe culture. . . . And people, not just mainstream Canada, they're more accepting. (I-1G)

Research participants spoke about how the pow-wow built bridges between Batchewana First Nation and other First Nations, particularly those along the North Shore of Lake Huron, but equally how—as the pow-wow gained a higher profile—this extended to many communities well outside the region. As the above quote illustrates, the pow-wow also helped to develop relationships with "mainstream Canada"—relationships that continued to develop as people across the various communities became aware of each other's cultural activities. For

example, research participants spoke of a Fall Festival event in Sault Ste. Marie where dancers from BFN collaborated with ballet dancers from a dance school in the city to perform at a widely acclaimed event; of a BFN entry into the Community Day parade in Sault Ste. Marie; and of visitors from Belgium, Germany, Hong Kong, and other countries attending the pow-wows.

As suggested earlier, the return to cultural traditions also strengthened the community's capacity to fight for their treaty rights, including fishing rights in Lake Superior (the Agawa case),³ and to regain their land. Whitefish Island, a traditional gathering place for First Nations from across North America, was finally restored to BFN in 1990, while Rankin Location, the largest of the four pieces of land belonging to the community, was purchased in 1949 but not given official reserve status until many years afterwards. One of the research participants explained how culture contributes to the assertion of political rights:

Before we would have sat back . . . [but now] we had a couple of cases go to the Supreme Court. . . . Becoming more aware of our culture [has made us] . . . self-confident to go forward and start fighting for our rights. (I-1E)

Another example of this increased ability to take control of, and responsibility for, meeting the community's own needs was mentioned by a research participant when discussing economic development—incidentally, one of the eight major strengths that had been identified by Batchewana First Nation in the earlier focus groups. BFN was the first First Nation in Ontario to establish an industrial park, and it also has a hockey arena, a daycare centre, owns its own educational institution, and has a high level of educational achievement in comparison to other First Nation communities. This participant indicated that at least some of this economic development is attributable to BFN's growth in cultural involvement:

Our economic development strategy . . . was started ten years ago and within the vision of that strategy it indicates that we're a self-determined, self-directed community that is tolerant of people's visions and religions regardless of their perspectives. . . . A lot of the activities in economic development are based on that vision statement. (I-1G)

Pride and self-confidence, a strong sense of identity—these are all evidence of an escalating and healthy cultural engagement. Some of the participants stated that the traditional spiritual teachings provided the foundation for this growth and were also responsible for having sustained the community through the bad times. In a focus group, one participant drew a survivor on a desert island to illustrate how the Seven Grandfather teachings kept the community going in this way, explaining how though “the original missionaries arrived in Batchewana village in the sixteen hundreds . . . [and] came here to civilize and change us . . . we are still resilient and we never went away” (FG-3B).

The resiliency of the community bodes well for the future, and many of the research participants suggested that the community was likely to become stronger in years to come due to the role models that have developed within the community through cultural renewal. The significance of role models was mentioned by several research participants, especially as they related to the drum group that has

both engendered pride through their accomplishments and shown that a lifestyle free from alcohol and drugs can be a “normal” way to live. This message has had a significant impact on the community’s youth. As one participant explained:

I think about the kids today and I know that we have a couple of kids here in our community that don’t even know what alcohol tastes like. . . . Those are our kids, those are our lives, those are our prizes and those are going to be our leaders for tomorrow. . . . They are going to be really powerful. (I-1A)

Another group that serves as a community role model—the Bear Creek Singers—have won competitions as far away as New Mexico and are the recipients of some prestigious music awards:

We’ve got world class singers. . . . They have won two Aboriginal music awards . . . [and] when you go to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and you place first, that’s the bomb. . . . you can’t get any higher. . . . That’s a result of this community waking up and accepting who they were and . . . we certainly have something to be proud of today. (I-1A)

Through individual and community empowerment, BFN members have been able to expand cultural practices and develop role models for future generations. Their determination to reclaim pride in their identity is giving their children a different sense of who they are and who they can become—whether they end up as musical award-winners or powerful leaders. The community is also providing leadership to other First Nations by being recognized as a strong First Nation, and by hosting a pow-wow where First Nations culture is celebrated and community pride is evident. And it is influencing mainstream Canada as well by sharing its culture with nearby communities and visitors from other countries.

Inclusion/exclusion within Canadian society

The research in Batchewana First Nation indicates that although there has been a cultural renewal, and an increase in people’s sense of empowerment and pride through cultural activities, BFN members have experienced widespread exclusion from mainstream Canada: that exclusion is not easily forgotten: “Genocide . . . [has] been part of the plan since day one. . . . The government had [a plan] . . . to wipe us out” (I-1D).

The research participants spoke of the ways that this exclusion from Canadian society is still felt today. One participant contrasted his experience as a drummer travelling to a number of First Nations communities with his experience “in town” in Sault Ste. Marie:

Seeing all those brown faces was like . . . I belong. You feel like you belong because you go up town and you get followed around in the stores because you’re brown-faced [and are therefore suspected of shoplifting] but you go to a pow-wow and . . . you feel . . . accepted and you know you’re an equal. (I-1B)

As mentioned earlier, the renewal of cultural practices within Batchewana First Nation has promoted the building of social relations between First Nations and mainstream society. The attendance of non-First Nations people at indigenous cultural events and activities, the widespread recognition of First Nations

achievements at venues such as the Aboriginal Music Awards—these would all appear to promote the inclusion of an Aboriginal community within the broader Canadian society. Certainly, too, advocating for more cultural awareness within the educational system will lead to greater inclusion as textbooks are changed to reflect historical realities as opposed to the “pioneering” myths of old.

There is no doubt, however, that cultural difference continues to be a basis for exclusion within the context of Canadian society. One research participant who had spent a number of years living outside the BFN community described her first experience of working off-reserve as “hard” and a “culture shock.” She cited different daily protocols around greetings as just one example of how her own culture had served to exclude her from mainstream society:

People thought I was very rude and stuck up and I wasn't polite because at home you did not have to say to every person you see “Good morning, how are you today?” . . . There wasn't a need to do that, you could just smile and nod at somebody and they would know that you were acknowledging them. . . . And it was like stress every time I went to work . . . “Oh my god, I got to remember to do that every single day.” (I-1F)

While this individual was willing and able to make the adjustments required to hold on to her employment, other research participants felt that mainstream society had some practices that were simply not acceptable. One contrasted her experience at meetings of Chief and Council in BFN with a meeting she attended at the local school board (not BFN controlled), concluding that the cultural differences between the two communities were startling. Observing that mainstream society even excluded its own members through its practices, she explained how:

in our community we go to a meeting [of Chief and Council] and we say what we want to say. Whether you're disgruntled or whether you're happy . . . you have every right to go to the meetings. You know you are going to have an option to be able to get up and say what you have to say. But when we went to the meeting at the school board . . . [and gave our presentation] I thought we were going to sit down and have a discussion with these people . . . and it was “Thank you very much, next!” . . . We didn't even get to talk. And that was when I realized what we have here [in BNF]. I thought is that how non-Native people treat their own people? . . . I was utterly shocked. (I-1A)

As mentioned earlier, cultural activities have contributed to BFN members being more tolerated and accepted by mainstream society. Networks have been established between the cultural communities of Sault Ste. Marie and BFN, and community-based organizations such as the Kiwanis Club and Community Living Algoma were mentioned by participants as groups that had invited BFN members to participate with them in raising awareness of Aboriginal culture. Still, there remains much to do. One research participant explained the situation as such:

I . . . have this frame of mind as soon as I get my clothes on for work and I get in my car. I know that by the time I get to work I've already switched my mindset . . . I know that is what I got to do. And then I switch it back again on my way home. . . . There needs to be Aboriginal people in where I am, and I

think that non-Aboriginals need a lot of help in understanding why Native people do the things that we do. (I-1F)

Another participant warned that in spite of these seemingly inclusive practices on the part of mainstream society, First Nations people still have to be encouraged to take pride first and foremost in who they are, and demonstrate that they do not fulfill the stereotypical images of mainstream society: "I . . . tell my son and even my nieces and nephews to just be proud of who you are and celebrate your identity . . . and take responsibility for representing our people in a good way" (I-1D).

Future challenges and preliminary conclusions

Although the case study at BFN illustrated that there has been a major resurgence in the culture over the past 20 to 30 years, it also demonstrated that the gains that have been made are precarious, and could easily be lost if efforts are not continued. During the past 18 months, the cultural co-ordinator has moved to another job, and the position has not been refilled. The Band Council appears to be preoccupied with internal divisions and has not posted an advertisement for the position. In 2004 the format of the pow-wow was changed from a "competition" to a "traditional" and relocated, causing concern among some members that the event, and BFN's established reputation as a host, would suffer. This apparent lack of emphasis on sustaining the culture was keenly felt by all of the interview participants, and concern was expressed that ongoing investment in cultural activities is needed. "[The cultural co-ordinator] . . . had the budget to put things on and [he was] the contact person. Right now there is no contact person. There is no one to lead, and you need a leader" (I-1B).

Participants seem to feel that the profile of cultural activities in the community was not as high as when the cultural co-ordinator was in place. That said, most of the programs are still running under the auspices of other departments (e.g., health, elders, schools), which suggests that the important role of BFN government in authorizing these cultural activities, which in turn increases the number of people who feel comfortable participating in them, has continued. In terms of current priorities, speaking the language and teaching the language to youth was identified as a high priority by research participants, as were some of the heritage activities such as canoeing, berry-picking, and understanding how to live off the land. Participants also spoke of the practical difficulties inherent in revitalizing the culture when people come from all age groups and may be at very different levels of experience and knowledge. They expressed concern about the substantial loss of cultural knowledge due to the suppression of activities and the loss of language. However, it was generally acknowledged that Batchewana First Nation remains a relatively strong First nation community engaging with culture in a wide variety of interesting and innovative ways, and with encouraging results.

For example, the research data suggests that for many community members, the experience of participating in cultural activities began a process of rebuilding collective values and building social cohesion in the community. This in turn

engendered pride in their Aboriginality, and enabled them to start naming their collective trauma and their experiences under colonization. The sense of belonging that has come from this collective process has helped individuals develop their own capacities, and interact with greater confidence with people from outside the community.

The research also indicates that culture contributes to the development of social capital, building ties and relationships both within the community and with external groups, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. The research indicates that the social effects of culture extend into civic participation, as evidenced by the fact that BFN has stood up for its rights in its land claims and court cases. Participants also tied cultural renewal and involvement closely to community development, social cohesion, and a strong sense of identity.

One of the research participants made some observations about the status of Batchewana's cultural renewal that provides some insight into the process itself. This participant indicated that there are many layers to culture, and that the growth and revitalization at BFN has moved the community forward and strengthened it, but there are still areas that need to be further explored. She explained that the participation in cultural activities and social gatherings has given the community a sense of pride and identity, but that in her opinion, restoration of the traditional teachings and spirituality that constitute indigenous knowledge needs to go further yet:

Let's say there were ten layers you could divide culture into and when you go from one layer to the next layer then it becomes more involved and more detailed. . . . I would say that the culture maybe affects Batchewana First Nation to the third or fourth layer. . . . I think they are proud of the fact that they are First Nation. I think that they are proud of their people and their community. But I don't think they have that base of the teachings of the way we should be living our lives as Anishnaabe people—as the keepers of the land, as taking care of seven generations, as respecting the animals, as fighting for the waters.
(I-1F)

This participant's comment illustrates a highly developed, holistic understanding of culture as encompassing political, social, and spiritual aspects of a people. The analogy of culture to a series of integrated detailed layers of pride and identity captures the expression of many of the research participants that culture is everything in their lives, from berry-picking to speaking the language to their programs for children. It captures the concept that culture describes who they are as a nation.

Involvement in cultural activities has been evolving gradually in BFN, through a reinforcing cyclical path—as people become more familiar with cultural activities and see that some of the most educated, healthy people in the community are engaged, they are inspired to join. With participation in cultural events comes a deeper sense of identity, belonging, and confidence as well as stronger ties within the community and with outside communities, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

There is no doubt that Batchewana First Nation has benefited from the renewal of its cultural heritage and that the effects of this engagement have strengthened the community substantially. However, this research also shows that a loss of these benefits can result from a lack of attention to a basic supportive infrastructure, such as having a cultural co-ordinator, and a lack of funding. This suggests that a crucial role for policymakers is to bring to public attention the broader benefits of cultural engagement, so that communities will be more likely to invest their time and resources in supporting this type of activity. Without commitment at all levels of government, and without awareness of the substantial social benefits of cultural activities, communities may place more emphasis on other aspects of development and overlook this crucial need. In light of the way that BFN, by embracing its culture and identity, is building a legacy and ensuring that the Anishnaabe nation will continue for many generations to come, such an oversight would be damaging indeed.

Notes

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2. To protect the anonymity of the participants, quotes are identified as being from either FG, meaning focus group, or I, interview. Thus FG-1A means the quote was from a participant in focus group #1 (of 14) who was designated A.
3. *R. v. Agawa* (1988), 28 O.A.C. 201. The Band Council of Batchewana First Nation supported this case to be tried in the Supreme Court of Canada and was influential in other later decisions that extended entitlements under treaties.

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Appendix A

Questions for Interviews for Case Study

1. What role does our culture play in your personal life?
2. What about those around you? (Family, friends, community members)
3. What role does the culture play in the programs and services offered throughout First Nation?
4. What activities take place in the community that contribute to the culture and identity us as Anishnaabe people?
5. When was the Cultural Committee and Program established?
6. How was it established?
7. How did you feel about it then? How do you feel about it now?
8. Was there any opposition to it from the community? If so, how was that overcome?
9. What were some of the first activities undertaken by the Committee and Program?
10. How has the program grown and evolved?
11. Have there been any setbacks or challenges? If so, how were they overcome (or were they)?
12. What effects have the Committee and Program had on the community?
13. What effects, if any, has BFN culture had on the outside communities?
14. What influence has culture had on the progression and development of BFN?
15. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about culture and identity in BFN?
16. Who else may I speak with that you know was involved or observed the progress of development of culture and identity?
17. Do you know where I can find documents relating to culture in BFN?