

Chapter 14

The Hauntings and Heart of a Place: Reconnecting to Grandmother Lands

John-Paul Peter Joseph Chalykoff

Michigan State University, USA & Michipicoten First Nation, Canada

ABSTRACT

This autoethnographic research presents personal stories from the author, connecting family, land, and music. He recounts stories his Ojibwe grandmother shared about her time in Franz, a small railroad village in northeastern Ontario that is now a ghost town. The connection to Franz is established through memories from his grandmother. Inspired to write a song, the author aimed to reconnect to Franz itself. The study follows the author's personal journey to visit his grandmother's land for the first time, making new connections and stories along the way. The research utilizes Indigenous autoethnography, Indigenous storytelling, and arts-based methods, such as a/r/tography, to link his stories to those of his grandmother, resulting in a reflection of storytelling, community history, and (re)connection to land, woven together by stories from the family matriarch.

INTRODUCTION

The year was 1944, maybe 1945. We're at a small railroad town in northern Ontario, north of Lake Superior. There's a young Ojibwe girl, about 4 or 5 years old, walking home on a dirt road along the rail-track. Her name is Frances; she's the baby of the family. World War II was still raging in other parts of the world. Her oldest brother, Allan, left some time ago to go fight in the war.

Her grandma, Mary, was working around the yard when Frances arrived, singing "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!" Astonished, Mary burst into laughter,

"Aaniindi gaa-noondaman iw nagamon?" (Where did you hear that song?)

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3729-9.ch014

“Ningii-noondaan radio-ing.” (I heard it on the radio.)

“Gi-debwe na? Gi-nisidotaan na?” (Are you for real? Do you understand it?)

“Gaawiin.” (No.)

The girl and her grandmother laughed heartily.

Somewhat puzzled, yet amused at having gotten a fit of laughter out of her grandmother, Frances began singing again, “Praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition!”

This is a story I remember my grandmother, Frances, sharing. It was one of many that she told of her early childhood in Franz, a tale from northern Ontario, in the heart of the Michipicoten First Nation’s traditional territory. Franz was a small railroad town (Figure 1) along the Algoma Central Railway, near the midpoint between Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst. It is now only a shadow of what it once was—a ghost town. However, for it to now be deserted, it must have once had much life. This chapter explores a period when the region was alive, a time when my grandmother and her family lived there. I share stories I remember her telling, the kind that brought life to a place that I never knew, and about which I have been trying to learn.

Figure 1. Algoma Central Railway (ACR) car running through Franz
Source: Author’s grandparents’ collection, circa early 1960s



Much of the inspiration for this research comes from the final course I took to complete my Master of Education degree from Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. I enrolled in the course “Place-Based Education” with Dr. David Greenwood in the early summer of 2019. In this course, we were encouraged to think about place and, more importantly, connections to place. One of our textbooks was *Hearth: A Global Conversation on Community, Identity, and Place* (Smith & O’Connor, 2018). The

17 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-hauntings-and-heart-of-a-place/271846

Related Content

The Organizational and Social Complexities of Managing and Retaining Generation Z Employees in the United States Retail Industry

Darrell Norman Burrell, Orna T. Bradley-Swanson, Amalisha S. Aridiand Eugene J. Lewis (2022). *International Journal of Public Sociology and Sociotherapy* (pp. 1-14).

www.irma-international.org/article/the-organizational-and-social-complexities-of-managing-and-retaining-generation-z-employees-in-the-united-states-retail-industry/297202

Use of Humanoid Robots for Students With Intellectual Disabilities

Aye Tunaand Emine Ahmetolu (2022). *Research Anthology on Physical and Intellectual Disabilities in an Inclusive Society* (pp. 1181-1196).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/use-of-humanoid-robots-for-students-with-intellectual-disabilities/289115

Network Politics and the Arab Spring

Ashu M. G. Soloand Jonathan Bishop (2016). *International Journal of Civic Engagement and Social Change* (pp. 23-27).

www.irma-international.org/article/network-politics-and-the-arab-spring/149855

Media and Child Rights in Africa: Narrative Analysis of Child Rights in Kenyan Media

Ukaiko A. Bitrus-Ojiamboand Muthoni E. King'ori (2020). *Media and Its Role in Protecting the Rights of Children in Africa* (pp. 125-148).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/media-and-child-rights-in-africa/241737

Actor Networks and Development of Cultural Tourist Destinations

Oswaldo Ledesma González, Rafael Merinero Rodríguezand Juan Ignacio Pulido Fernández (2022). *Handbook of Research on Cultural Tourism and Sustainability* (pp. 209-230).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/actor-networks-and-development-of-cultural-tourist-destinations/300571