

maamakaajichige mazinaakizon:  
A Journey of Relating With/Through Our Anishinabe Photographs  
by

Celeste Pedri

H.B.Comm., Lakehead University, 2006  
M.A., Royal Roads University, 2011

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

Dr. Andrea N. Walsh, Supervisor  
Department of Anthropology

Dr. Ann Stahl, Departmental Member  
Department of Anthropology

Dr. Christine O'Bonsawin, Outside Member  
Department of Indigenous Studies

## Abstract

Anishinabeg are not strangers to photography. Like many Indigenous communities in North America and elsewhere, Anishinabeg have a history of being pictured by governments, artists, and researchers working within the confines of colonial thought and practice. Not surprisingly, much of this colonial artwork has drawn considerable scholarly critique, calling attention to issues including misuse of power, cultural appropriation, assimilation, and misrepresentation. While this work continues to be significant in contributing understanding of how colonialism played out visually and materially, it may also unintentionally generate the misconception that Indigenous Peoples were only the subjects of the camera or had little or no authority over the photographic experience. Indeed, photography has its own history and place within the creative practices and traditions of many Indigenous Peoples.

This research project explores the role of Anishinabe photography in the reclamation and continuance of Anishinabe stories, memories, and knowledge among Anishinabe families with ancestral and present day ties to Anishinabe lands in the northwest region of Ontario. As a result of imposed colonial legislation, Anishinabeg in this region have been displaced from their traditional lands, which has had direct consequences on their ability to retain their language, culture, and life skills. Today, Anishinabeg live in the aftermath of colonial violence perpetuated against their ancestors. The severing of land and kin connections has left many Anishinabeg struggling with issues including loss of identity and sense of belonging. Despite of these ongoing challenges, Anishinabeg have struggled to recover and maintain their knowledge, language, sovereignty, and spirituality through various personal and shared activities and initiatives.

This research incorporates a research framework that integrates visual, narrative, and material strategies to directly confront the aforementioned colonial legacies of erasure and disappearance of Anishinabeg. It seeks to explore and privilege Anishinabe experiences and stories by weaving together various theoretical and methodological threads of decolonization, photography, place, visibility, materiality and memory. Through processual and creative ways of bringing together and experiencing photographs, it contributes to understandings of the significance of photography to Indigenous-led efforts directed towards decolonization, including cultural revival and continuity, sense of belongingness, identity, and caring for relationships among person, place and land. This research intervenes in Anishinabe lands, stories, and experiences that fall outside the jurisdiction of the Indian Act or “official” dominant versions of history and therefore provides a powerful counter narrative that seeks to both destabilize widely accepted colonial myths and contribute to Anishinabe sovereignty.

Major findings of this research position Anishinabe photographs as highly relational and social things that may help configure and congeal a host of relationships between people, the land, and their ancestral past. It introduces new ways of working with and through historical family photographs—ways that are grounded in existing Anishinabe material and embodied practices. Through these practices it contributes knowledges about the past that can be acquired through these practices. As such, it offers new sets of relationships that strengthen individual ties to the ancestral past in ways that both honour our responsibilities to our ancestors and their teachings as well as our commitments to generations ahead of us.

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## List of Translations

Anishinabe(g):	A term used by the Odawa, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and other Algonquin indigenous peoples (also referred to as Aboriginal or First Nations peoples). Anishinabe territory extends from Quebec westward to around the Great Lakes of Ontario and parts of Manitoba and south to areas in Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota and North Dakota.
Anishinabekwe(wag):	Ojibwe woman(women)
Chi miigwetch:	Many thanks
Debwe/Debwewin:	My truth
Nebwakwin:	The act of looking backwards, while at the same time bringing forward the knowledge and experiences that our Anishinabeg ancestors have always carried
Indoondaanagidoone:	I come from a certain place to talk for a certain reason
Kitchianishinabe(g)	Elders
Kitchianishinabekwe(wag):	Female Elders
Manoonmin:	Wild rice
Tikinagan:	Baby carrier
Wagejibism:	Baby bunting bag

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Chi miigwetch to my ancestors. I will wear your teachings. I will live your knowledge...  
in the best way I know how...always.

## **Introduction**

### **Indoondaanagidoone**

*boozhoo anang onimiwin ndishnikaz Lac des Milles Lacs niindoonji mukwa nindodem*

I introduce myself to you in Anishinabemowin. Starting out in our traditional language is important because it demonstrates an intent “to do things in a good way” and it helps prepare us emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually for what we are about to do (*kitchianishinabekwe* Wanda Baxter, personal communication, February 2016). My name is Celeste. I am member of the bear clan and my Anishinabe community is Lac des Mille Lacs First Nation.

### **Situating Myself in the Research**

As a Indigenous researcher, I embrace the advice of Cree scholar Onowa McIvor (2010) on how to begin this text. That is, I must first situate myself in this research by answering the following questions: From where do I speak? What brings me here? What do I have to contribute to my people/community/nation? First, I speak from the heart. I speak as a proud descendent of powerful and strong Anishinabeg including *baa ahn a kut, koko kana ah shik, cha-is, boon na kut, and boon na penaise*, people who lived and breathed the lands and waters in a part of Anishinabeg territory that extends from Thunder Bay to Atikokan and from Shabaqua to Ignace, Ontario. I speak as a mother, daughter, granddaughter, and niece. Second, my ancestors brought me here. They did so through my dreams and the stories shared by my kin and community members. They brought me here through my appreciation for the marks they left behind for me, the photographs they made that evidence their survival and strength. Photographs that inscribed their presence on the land and placed them in the many life roles and

relationships they embraced at different points of their lives. Lastly, I am here to offer my family and community my *debwewin*—a truth that belongs to me but at the same time is connected to the lives and experiences of all my relations that came before me. My *debwewin* is informed by my engagement with Anishinabeg photographs as an anthropologist and an artist, and as an community member committed to opportunities and initiatives that strengthen positive relationships among Anishinabeg and are focused on strengthening intergenerational ties, reclaiming our stories and teachings, and regenerating a sense of belonging and identity.

## **Introduction**

This research project explores the role of Anishinabeg photography in the reclamation and continuance of Anishinabeg stories, memories, and knowledge among Anishinabeg with ancestral and present day ties to Anishinabeg lands in the northwest region of Ontario. As a result of imposed colonial legislation, Anishinabeg in this region have been displaced from their traditional lands (see Adler, 2010; Pedri, 2014), which has had direct consequences on their ability to retain their language, culture, and life skills. Today, Anishinabeg live with the colonial violence perpetuated against their ancestors, including Indian Residential Schools and the Sixties Scoop.<sup>1</sup> The strategies aimed at erasing Anishinabeg and their histories from the Canadian landscape has had devastating effects on Anishinabeg. The severing of land and kin connections has left many Anishinabeg struggling with issues including loss of identity and sense of belonging. Despite these ongoing challenges, Anishinabeg have struggled to recover and maintain

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<sup>1</sup> The term *Sixties Scoop* refers to the Canadian practice, beginning in the 1960s and continuing until the late 1980s, of apprehending extremely high numbers of Aboriginal children and fostering or adopting them out into non aboriginal families.

their knowledge, language, sovereignty, and spirituality through various personal and shared activities and initiatives. These include community regalia making programs, Anishinabemowin language classes, traditional sustenance activities (moose hunting, fishing, harvesting wild rice, blueberry picking, etc.), and community powwows.

This research incorporates an Anishinabe-based framework that integrates visual, narrative, and creative strategies to directly confront the aforementioned colonial legacies of erasure and disappearance of Anishinabeg. It seeks to explore and privilege Anishinabe experiences and stories by weaving together various theoretical and methodological threads of decolonization, photography, place, visibility, materiality and memory. Through processual ways of bringing together and experiencing 82 Anishinabe-based<sup>2</sup> photographs, it contributes to understandings of the significance of photography to Indigenous-led efforts directed towards decolonization, including cultural revival and continuity, sense of belongingness, identity, and caring for relationships among person, place and land. This research intervenes in Anishinabe lands, stories, and experiences that fall outside the Indian Act or “official” dominant versions of history and will therefore provide a powerful counter narrative that seeks to both destabilize widely accepted colonial myths and contribute to alternative forms of Anishinabe sovereignty. Said

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2 I use the term “Anishinabeg-based” to denote three aspects that make these photographs significant to Anishinabeg way of life. First, unlike the majority of historical photographs of Anishinabeg that circulate through various channels and locations (e.g. social media, libraries, books, archives, museums) that are taken largely by non-Indigenous photographers who are not members of the Anishinabeg community where they conduct their work, these images are taken of Anishinabeg within an Anishinabeg community context. Second, these images have been cared for within our Anishinabeg families since their production, some for almost 100 years. Third, they have come together as a collection through the collaborative efforts of Anishinabeg, through the ongoing participation of different generations of families who are struggling to reclaim their histories and culture and to reconnect with one another and the lands from which they were displaced.

narratives attend to the lived experiences and identities of Anishinabe people, family and community and differ from national narratives that seek to construct a nation-state identity.

### **Historical Background**

Anishinabeg are not strangers to photography. Like many Indigenous communities in North America and elsewhere, Anishinabeg have a history of being pictured by governments, artists, and researchers working within the confines of colonial thought and practice. This type of colonial photographic work drew from dominant Eurocentric conceptualizations of photography and culture, which resulted in visual texts that removed Indigenous Peoples from their lands, produced generalizations about Indigenous “others” and preserved history by creating visual traces of the past. This is exemplified in the late nineteenth-century anthropometric photographs of Anishinabeg, which were used by colonial authorities to bolster specific beliefs about race and the inferiority of Anishinabeg (Willmott, 2005). It is also evidenced by the iconic images of various North American Indigenous Peoples taken by famed photographers including Roland Reed and Edwards Curtis around the turn of the twentieth century (Glass, 2009). Their photographs presented a romanticized, exoticized version of Anishinabeg, sacrificing the complexity of a peoples’ way of life and relationship with that land for the achievement of a particular colonial aesthetic. Moreover, photographs and paintings of landscapes in Canada created around the same time period typically depicted the land as a barren, open expanse of space ripe for development by a “civilized” people (the colonizers). These examples illustrate an urge to wrap Indigenous Peoples and place into what Trouillot (1995) has aptly termed, “particular bundles of silence” (p. 27), linked to

strategic colonial attempts at both figuratively and literally erasing Indigenous Peoples and their histories.

Not surprisingly, much of this colonial artwork has drawn considerable scholarly critique, calling attention to issues including misuse of power, cultural appropriation, assimilation, and misrepresentation (see Alloula, 1986; Faris, 1996; Maxwell, 2000; Edwards and Hart, 2004). While this work continues to be significant in contributing understanding of how colonialism played itself out visually and materially, it may also unintentionally generate the misconception that Indigenous Peoples were only the subjects of the camera or had little or no authority over the photographic experience. Recent scholarship has attended to the role of photography within Indigenous Peoples creative practices and traditions. This work does not simply unravel these bundles of silence; rather it implodes them, illustrating how photography has been a “historical force in its own right” (Bajorek, 2012, p. 148) used by Indigenous Peoples to carry out their own respective agendas very different from those of their colonizers. For over 100 years, Indigenous Peoples have used photography to combat colonialism, to understand how contemporary colonialism relates to historical forms of colonialism and to do the important work of moving forward towards decolonization (Pedri, 2014). In both historical and contemporary contexts of oppression and dispossession, photography often becomes a practice used in the struggle to maintain autonomy and self-integrity (Buckley, 2000; Pinney, 2011), to mourn and heal (Birkhofer, 2008; Tsihnahijinnie, 2003), and to resist and persevere (hooks, 2003; McNeil, 2009). This research contributes to this emerging body of research that addresses the role of photography in countering colonialism within Indigenous communities, lands, and spaces.

## Research Purpose and Objectives

This research explores what kinds of relations are made present and possible through the experience of Anishinabe photographs and the role and value of this process in regenerating and strengthening Anishinabe stories, relationships with self and kin, knowledge, sovereignty and memory. The goal of this research is three-fold:

a) To reclaim our Anishinabe stories and cultural teachings through an engagement with Anishinabe photographs and to reveal how the process of bringing together, and experiencing a collection of photographs may make these histories and experiences knowable in ways that foster the development of kin and community relationships integral to our cultural continuity;

b) to empower Anishinabe photographs as ‘things’<sup>3</sup> that when juxtaposed to colonial policies and practices (e.g. displacement, erasure) may challenge and confront Eurocentric versions and understandings of history and specific beliefs and assumptions about Anishinabe identity, culture, place, and sovereignty;

c) to contribute new ways of relating to, and learning from, our ancestral past—ways that are grounded in the embodied, intuitive and creative aspects of our Anishinabe knowledge system and extend to draw from anthropological contributions around materiality, visuality, place and memory. In other words, to answer the call put forward by Indigenous scholar Linda Tuwhai Smith (1999) who urges Indigenous scholars to not abandon Western theory or method, but to decolonize them by drawing on one’s own teachings, values and worldview as Indigenous people.

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<sup>3</sup> This research positions photographs as “things,” different than “objects,” which are understood as fixed or finished. Rather, things are emergent, fluid, and in a continuous process of becoming. Things are constituted through ongoing relationships with material and people (see Barber, 2007; Brown, 2001; Miller, 2010; Ingold, 2010; Bunn, 2007);

This research will directly confront our colonial history of erasure and displacement through intentional and creative ways of enacting Indigenous presence,<sup>4</sup> which respect cultural protocols and teachings, and contribute emergent, situated, and creative forms of learning and sharing knowledge. A more appropriate way to describe this project is a “visual journey” that braids together historical photographs, relating on/within our territory, memory, truth sharing, and the creation of new artwork. This journey is one of significance as it nurtures existing and new relationships that are integral to our health and wellbeing as Anishinabeg as we move towards decolonization. Confronting colonial myths, empowering our Anishinabe histories, and re-enlivening our relationship to the lands within our territories (from which we were forcibly removed) is instrumental to the process of decolonization at a personal or intimate level, but also to broader processes of truth-telling, education, and reconciliation that must continue to take place within communities across North America. These processes will be unique to each community, yet must involve members from both Indigenous nations and non-Indigenous communities. The outcomes of this type of work have very real consequences as the erasure of Indigenous peoples and histories is linked to many forms of contemporary colonial violence enacted within our communities.

### **Research Framework**

Given the holistic, cyclic, and relational nature of Anishinabe worldview (Johnson, 1976; McPherson & Rabb, 2011; Rheault, 1999; Simpson 2011; 2000) Anishinabeg often use the circle as a pedagogical tool to explain important concepts or ideas. As an

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4 Gerald Vizenor (2008) comments on the significance of native photography not as evidence of “Indianness” (which is something created and propagated by the Western, distant observer bent on collecting, cataloguing and defining the Native) but as rich sources of Indigenous stories and as remarkable traces of Indigenous presence.

Anishinabekwe researcher, I draw on my circle teachings to provide a framework or guide (Figure 1) that outlines the important methodological steps and the relevant theories informing them. It is my hope that this will assist the reader with understanding the integration of the two major research papers and the collection of artwork with accompanying written statement presented in subsequent chapters. In this section, I will also address any necessary overlap in each of the three components. It is my hope that this helps explain how this entire journey was part of my own movement towards decolonization as a researcher/artist and community member.

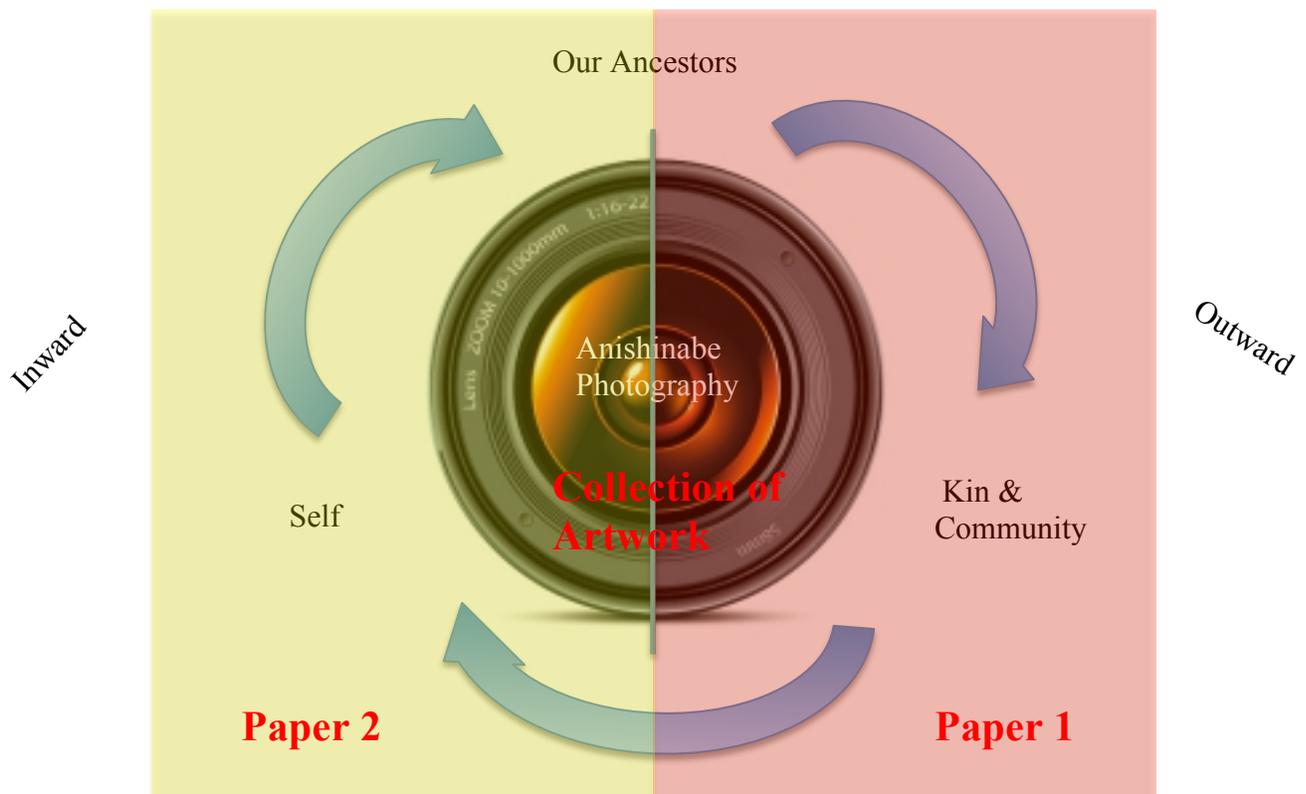


Figure 1: Research journey framework.

This research journey begins with my interest and appreciation for photographs of my Anishinabe ancestors. These photographs constitute marks they made and left behind for me to pick up as valuable sources of Anishinabe knowledge and presence.

Photographs of my ancestors have always helped connect and re-connect me to people and places that were integral to my identity and sense of belongingness. They have done so as evidence of Anishinabe lives lived within Anishinabe territory and as powerful springboards for talking about the past, and working through the past in the present in preparation for a future time. I have found that in the hands of my older relatives my photographs operate as oral history as well as visual history, something that Elizabeth Edwards (2005) outlines in her pivotal article “Photographs and the Sound of History.” From this personal experience, I begin to journey outwards toward other family members and members of my Anishinabe community with whom I had already developed positive relationships. These are people that I knew had demonstrated a grassroots commitment to coming together in a good way to reclaim our knowledge as Anishinabeg and were therefore actively involved in the struggle to decolonize. Moving outwards to involve others in the research journey is part of a decolonizing approach in learning and sharing what we know (see Shahjahan, Wagner, & Wane, 2009; Wilson, 2008).

What ensues is a collaborative process of gathering photographs of our Anishinabe ancestors taken from c.1915 to the late 1960s. More specifically, the coming together of photographs that previously existed only in places like individual photograph albums, boxes, and wallets, into a catalogue that reveals our ancestors together in ways that honour their life roles and presence within our lives. This part of the journey connects the collection and experience of photography to decolonization, specifically the

role photography plays in reclaiming identity, stories and knowledge, resisting colonialism, and articulating Anishinabeg sovereignty. The first paper presented in Chapter 1, *Waasaabikizoo: Our Photographs are Good Medicine*, details this journey. It integrates theories of decolonization and anthropological theories of photographs as highly relational and social objects that assist in developing relationships integral to the recovery and transmission of stories. The main focus of this article is to highlight the messages our ancestors bring us about what the struggle to decolonize entails. Towards the end of Chapter 1, I discuss the beginning of my work as an artist and the part of our photographic journey that entails repeating or remaking the ancestral photographs with the descendant(s) of the Anishinabe(g) originally pictured. I introduce how this process helps us address challenges around loss and absence due to ongoing colonialism. By carving out spaces of possibility and imagination, I draw on theories of visual sovereignty (Dowell, 2013; Hearne, 2012) as a creative act of production to expand our understanding of what it means to live out and strengthen our relationships to one another and the land within our Anishinabe territory.

In Chapter 2, I continue my journey outward presenting the entire collection of artworks in an exhibition of artwork entitled, *The Teaching is in the Making*. The artist/anthropological statement that accompanies the collection of artworks outlines specific details about the exhibition space and delves deeper into the meaning and significance of the repeat photography (Smith, 2007) process. Specifically, it attends to the transformation of our photographic archive to a site of construction and creativity and how this process serves as a powerful tool to counter colonialism and re-assert Anishinabe sovereignty. This recreation of photographs involved an intentional act of

inscribing our continued presence in our traditional lands, most of which are “owned” by settler colonial governments. Similar to the paper presented in Chapter 1, this section draws on the relational and social aspect of photography, while also integrating and expanding upon Anishinabeg theories of place whereby notions of place emerge through a whole host of relationship building activities and practices concerned with kinship, belonging, identity, and community wellbeing. The historical photographs juxtaposed to the new ones speak to the existence of the ongoing fight for self-determination and a deep bond with our ancestors that we strive to maintain.

Towards the end of Chapter 2 I begin my journey inward, with the creation of six artworks that are the result of a more intimate and material engagement with my own ancestral photographs. I begin to discuss this next part of the journey, previewing the sensuous, corporal, and deeply personal process of materializing my ancestral photographs through careful and contemplative ongoing creative acts that embodied my continued relationship and commitment to my ancestors, their stories, and lives.

Chapter 3 presents the last paper, *The Day My Photographs Danced: Materializing Photographs of my Anishinabe Ancestors*. This final stage in the research documents my journey inwards as I seek a way of learning with my own ancestral photographs that draws upon my identity as an Anishinabekwe maker, specifically as an artist who works with a variety of textiles to make regalia and other cultural items for my family and friends. In this stage, I locate Anishinabeg photographs as distinct Anishinabeg things that can be worked with in performative and artistic ways. I attend to how these processes that both honour creativity and innovation and are grounded in well-established Anishinabeg material practices, play a role in the production of memories

about the ancestral past that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. By putting theories that stem from different ontologies and epistemologies into practice, I transcend different binaries such as form/process and past/present, in order to bring forward is integral to inspiring and materializing new ways of remembering and relating to our ancestral past. This leg of the research journey emphasizes, perhaps, the most material and phenomenological approach to the interpretation of Anishinabeg photographs, which at times take a back seat to linguistic/symbolic/representational paradigms. This journey inward brings me in close relationship to my ancestors through the performative and embodied aspects of Anishinabe ways of knowing. As the research journey continues in a clockwise direction, it returns to where it started—with my ancestors. But coming full circle, there is a new set of photographic marks made that carry the teachings of our ancestors and will extend forward for future generations to take up, learn from, and honour in their own way. As such, the research journey will continue. It never ends.

## Chapter One: Waasaabikizo: Our Pictures Are Good Medicine

### Abstract

This article explores the role of Anishinabeg photography in the ongoing struggle to decolonize among Anishinabeg with ancestral and present day relationships to lands now occupied predominantly by settler peoples in northwestern Ontario. Drawing on work carried out with several Anishinabeg families, this article connects the collection and experience of photography to decolonization, emphasizing its processual nature and role in mediating memories of the past in ways that are respectful of and privilege Anishinabeg culture and knowledge. By contextualizing this work within a context of Indigenous photography and decolonization, this article furthers understandings of the significance of Indigenous photography to Indigenous-led efforts directed towards reclaiming Anishinabeg identity, cultural memory, intergenerational knowledge, and sovereignty. This work reveals how Anishinabeg photography privileges Anishinabeg narratives and experiences that, in turn, counter dominant versions of history and operate as a powerful decolonial force. Overall findings of this research reveal methodological and applied understandings of how photography contributes to ongoing Anishinabeg efforts towards decolonization.

*Keywords: Anishinabeg photography; decolonization; visual sovereignty*

## **Waasaabikizo: Our Pictures are Good Medicine**

This article explores the relationship between Anishinabeg photography and decolonization. It examines the role of historical photographs c.1915 to c. 1969 in Anishinabeg efforts aimed at reclaiming histories, restoring intergenerational ties and cultural survivance (Vizenor, 2008). The photographs under study are of Anishinabeg children, women, men and youth—people who are still with us today and individuals who have journeyed on to the spirit world. They are photographs of Anishinabeg with significant ties to areas of Anishinabeg territory west of the City of Thunder Bay, Ontario around areas that include Shabaqua, Shebandowan, Kashabowie, Atikokan, Raith, Savanne, Upsala and Dryden.

As a result of imposed colonial legislation Anishinabeg in this region have been displaced from their traditional territory, which has had direct consequences on their ability to retain their language, culture, and life skills. Today, Anishinabeg live in the aftermath of colonial violence perpetuated against their ancestors, including Indian Residential Schools, Indian hospitals, the Sixties Scoop, and colonial child welfare legislation and policy. The strategies aimed at erasing Anishinabeg and their histories from the Canadian landscape has had devastating effects on Anishinabeg. The severing of land and kin connections has left many Anishinabeg struggling with issues including loss of identity and sense of belonging. This history of ongoing colonialism includes not only the strategies employed by colonial officials aimed at eradicating or assimilating Anishinabeg in this region, but also the perseverance of Anishinabeg in countering this violence. By using the term “perseverance,” it signals not only their ongoing struggle to survive as Anishinabeg, but also the strength and tenacity displayed in doing so.

Over the past decade, Anishinabeg in this area have engaged in an increasing number of various projects aimed at reclaiming their culture, history and language, and restoring a sense of

belonging. These efforts include powwows, community kitchens, regalia making programs, land-based activities, language programs, drumming, and ceremonial activities. Central to all of these initiatives is the importance of *gathering*, the coming and being together of people in safe and welcoming environments. While some gatherings are intended to draw many people, most of them are smaller, more intimate gatherings that include several generations of families, from babies to kitchianishinabeg. Within these spaces there is a growing interest and commitment to work that helps Anishinabeg move beyond the devastating effects of colonialism towards a future where Anishinabeg may live their lives in a good way.

In this article, I draw on the work carried out through the collective efforts of several Anishinabeg community members who draw on Anishinabeg photography in order to contribute new ways of learning from, and engaging with, their ancestral past. People I met with contributed eight to ten photographs, based on which photographs were most meaningful to them. This work will reveal the significance of these efforts to the ongoing work of decolonization, specifically, the regeneration of memories and reclamation of stories and cultural teachings that are significant to the development of healthy kin and community relationships and cultural continuity. First, I situate this work by connecting it to a broader context of Indigenous photography, drawing on examples that exemplify the linkage between photography and decolonization. In doing so, I reveal how working with photographs within a context of decolonization reveals a particular way of thinking with and thinking about photographs—a way that emphasizes the relational and processual nature of photographs. I then present the specific project, carried out over the course of several months. I provide specific examples of how the process of bringing together and experiencing these historical Anishinabeg photographs contributes to the ongoing decolonial work of Anishinabeg in this region.

## **Indigenous Photography and Decolonization**

Indigenous peoples have a longstanding and complex relationship with the camera. This relationship is evident by the extensive collections of iconic turn-of-the-century photographs taken by individuals driven by American Romanticism, the glorification of the past and the desire to find and photograph the kind of ‘Indian’ that corresponded to their own ideas and visions of what Indians were and looked like (King, 2011). Both Glass (2009) and Wilmott (2008) illustrate how these kinds of colonial photographs become elevated to historical “truth” through the employment of colonial aesthetics and visual genres linked to specific Eurocentric ideologies around what photographs were and could achieve—that photographs were neutral documents that provided undisputable evidence of some person or event at a particular past time and place. Of course, these realist views were well suited to the colonizer’s work of surveillance and infiltrating the lives of Indigenous peoples in the name of science, territorial expansion, or some “moral” responsibility to help civilize the savage. Subsequently, much research has attended to the role of photography in the colonization of Indigenous Peoples, highlighting issues that include abuse of power, cultural appropriation, racism, assimilation, and misrepresentation (see Alloula, 1986; Faris, 1996; Margolis, 2004; Maxwell, 2000; Willmott, 2005). While this research provides significant findings that illustrate the colonizers urge to wrap Indigenous peoples into “particular bundles of silence” (Trouillot, 1995, p. 27) in a broader agenda aimed at erasing Indigenous peoples and their histories, it may also unintentionally create a misconception that Indigenous peoples were merely the subject of the camera and not active participants in the photographic process.

Reflecting on the expansive body of photographic work produced by Edward Curtis, Cherokee author Thomas King (2011) acknowledges that there is a part of him that wishes Curtis

had photographed Indigenous peoples “as he found them, the men with crew cuts...the women in cotton print dresses” (p. 38). This raises the question of whether or not these kinds of images exist? And if so, who took them and what is their meaning and relevance to us today? In response to these sort of questions emerges a growing body of research on Indigenous photography that strives to “flip the lens” back onto the overshadowed photographic practices of Indigenous peoples. Grounding photography within Indigenous Peoples’ creative practices and traditions, this work demonstrates how photography has been a “historical force” (Bajorek, 2012, p. 148) used by Indigenous communities to achieve different goals linked to confronting and countering the ongoing legacies of colonial violence with the aim of moving towards decolonization.

In surveying the photographic practices of Indigenous peoples around the globe, one will find multiple examples of how photography connects with many of the goals and outcomes associated with decolonization. Photography has been used around the world by Indigenous peoples to combat colonialism, disrupting dominant colonial narratives attached to colonial ways of looking and representing the other (see Askren, 2009; hooks, 2011; Jones, 2011; Tsinhnahjinnie, 2009). Through photography Indigenous peoples address many of the issues entrenched in colonialism including land, identity, family relationships and culture (Edwards, 2001; Lidchi, 2009; Passalacqua, 2011). Indigenous communities have used photography to struggle to maintain their autonomy, and self-integrity (see Bajorek, 2012; Buckley, 2000; Pinney 2011; 1997). These photographic acts contribute to decolonization as strategic activities that work against imperialism and colonialism at different levels, reclaiming and empowering Indigenous identities, histories, and cultures (Smith, 1999; Corntassel, 2012; Laenui, 2009; Ritskes, 2012; Sunseri, 2007).

There are several key conceptual commonalities between Indigenous photography and decolonization that must be highlighted in order for them to be positioned as “good allies.” First, decolonization and photography are both social and relational processes that require individuals to think, feel, look, listen and act. Both decolonization and photography are creative, emergent and fluid processes that happen at a particular time and place. Edwards and Hart (2008) suggest photographs are unrealized documents that are active, powerful, open, and impossible to restrict in terms of meaning. Cruz (2012) shares similar words about decolonization when she discusses how decolonization is about visioning and the movement towards the unknown. Second, Indigenous photographs are significant historical documents rich with information about Indigenous beliefs, customs and practices (Askren, 2009, Bell, 2010; Herle, 2009), kinship and ancestry (Driessens, 2003; Marr, 1996; Brown & Peers, 2006; 2009), and life histories and important cultural sites (Fallat & Moore, 2001); thus, photographs are well-positioned to assist in the aspect of decolonization that requires reclaiming our Indigenous knowledges, which have been suppressed and misappropriated by the colonizer (Kovach, 2009; Laenui, 2009; Smith, 1999). Lastly, Indigenous photographs are technologies of memory that may help individuals reclaim a hidden or lost past, providing much personal and collective value as they open us discussions related to colonization and decolonization (see Margolis, 2004; Payne, 2006; Brown & Peers, 2006; 2009; Walsh, 2006). Establishing these linkages helps develop a different way of thinking about and thinking with photographs, which is imperative as Bell (2008) states, “decolonization involves unsettling Eurocentric conceptions of what photographs are, their history, as well as the identities, histories, and experiences of those who are the subjects of the camera” (p. 124).

## The Waasaabikizo Project

### Project Beginnings

This project began with an ongoing relationship I have with one photograph that is part of my own collection. It is of my grandmother, Shirley Shebobman, shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 2:** *Shirley Shebobman in Kashabowie, Ontario. 1962. Collection of the Author*

This is the only photograph I have of her at this age and it is special to me because in this image she is pregnant with my mother. Of course the fact that she is pregnant is something that cannot be seen to the average viewer. Indeed, even people who knew my grandmother then could look at this image and probably wouldn't recognize that she is not alone in the photograph. But each time I look at it, I never see only my grandmother; I always see Shirley *and* my mother, Marcia. If one were to "read" this image, at first glance, through her reluctant smile and the slight tilt of her head, one may see simply the apprehensiveness and secrecy of a young 16-year old girl. But when I look at my grandmother, nothing appears simple at all. When I look at this picture, I see a thriving presence of strength, womanhood, and love. This photograph was representative of the

kind of image King (2011) longed to see and was representative of the kinds of photographs I had encountered in the possession of my fellow Anishinabeg community members. Historical photographs of our ancestors smiling, working...living their lives as children, youth, women, men and Elders within our territory.

From this image and other images in our family collection, I also learned a great deal about where my ancestors lived throughout our territory. For example, I learned that neither my grandparents nor great-grandparents lived on a reserve. I learned that they struggled to live in different areas around places now known as Kashabowie, Shebandowan, Burchell Lake, and Kaministiquia (to name a few) and that they chose to live and travel throughout this area for different reasons, all of which were integral to their ability to hunt, work, engage in ceremony, etc. I learned about gender roles, specifically about the responsibilities and strength of women. I learned how my great-great-grandmother Cha-Is, refused to subscribe to any form of female domestication and how she successfully raised her children while taking on several other responsibilities as she travelled throughout the area, trapping both large and small game and leading the organization of different ceremonies. I learned about the ongoing struggles with the colonial violence inflicted upon their physical, emotional, and spiritual being, for example, how my great-grandfather, Tousannt, lost his ability to speak Anishinabemowin because he attended St. Joseph's Residential School for the majority of his childhood. But I also learned that he went to great efforts and made big sacrifices to keep his own children, including my grandmother, out of the Indian Residential School system.

My photographs were a rich repository of teachings that I could use to understand how my life as an Anishiabekwe was linked to the lives of my ancestors, their stories, and the places with which they struggled to maintain relationships. Having had this personal experience, I

began to wonder about other photographs that may exist in other shoeboxes, cookie tins, albums and frames. . . pictures of our extended relations, friends and community that emitted the same strength and beauty. I wondered what it would be like to see photographs of all our ancestral relations come together. How could that happen? What would result if this was done? What could we do with these photographs and how could this work possibly contribute to our ongoing efforts of healing and combating historical and contemporary colonialism?

### **Visiting with Photographs**

I brought these questions to my greatest teacher, my mother. She suggested that I consult with my grandmother and my great aunts. She also suggested that I reach out to other kitchi-Anishinabekwewag (female Elders) in my life; the women with whom I had good and respectful relationships, and mentored, taught and inspired me. This approach was consistent with Indigenous knowledge sharing practices, where access to knowledge is grounded in meaningful relationships with members of your family and community (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Kovach, 2009; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008; 2001). This approach also reflected the significance of Elders to Anishinabe knowledge sharing practices and to the role of women in this process. I met with my grandmother, two of my great aunts as well as two kitchi-Anishinabekwewag with whom I had existing relationships. Under the guidance and support of these kitchi-Anishinabekwewag I identified and met with ten Anishinabe families who had ancestral ties similar to those held by my immediate family. The selection of these individuals was based again on my existing relationships with members of these families, people who had demonstrated a commitment to re-building community and reclaiming cultural teachings through their ongoing involvement in group-based programs and activities.

When I asked people what they thought should be done with these photographs, people voiced their interest and desire to see their photographs grouped together. People were interested in a tangible visual resource that they could share with their extended family members and friends; a resource that would reveal real bodies in real places and that could include information about who was in the picture, where it was taken and its cultural significance. We discussed the idea of a digital grouping; however, some of the Elders voiced a concern that many community members do not necessarily have access to a computer.

Over the course of several months, I worked with different family members to select images that would become part of this resource. This happened over two to five visits lasting anywhere from two to four hours. Sometimes only two people were present, and at other times, three generations of family members were involved. People contributed photographs based on their own unique relationships with their images—with the people and places pictured. During these visits, we did a lot of talking and story sharing around the photographs. Drawing from research using photo-elicitation (Brown and Peers, 2006; Harper, 2002; Marr, 1996), each historical photograph was taken as a “kind of memory bookend” (Harper, 2002, p. 18) or a starting point from which to access information about the past, and to also explore how the past operates in the present and into the future. People offered personal reflections as they began to see themselves—their experiences and visions for the future—through the filter of the photograph.

Instead of scripted interview questions, a dialogical approach was followed, whereby I would listen to the perspectives shared, which were based on each individual’s personal relationship to the photograph, and then offer my own reflection. This approach, similar to those utilized by Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) and qualitative/narrative inquirers Ellis and

Berger (2001) and Vannini & Gladue (2009), allowed for the co-construction of meaning or building up of knowledge whereby everyone shared their voice and participated in the collection and interpretation of stories. While I had originally intended to audio record these meetings, I felt the equipment was intrusive and out of place, therefore, I recorded the sessions in the form of journal entries following each meeting. By the end of the process, people contributed 8 to 12 photographs each, resulting in a total of 82 images.

### **Recreating the Photograph**

In order to explore how our family photographs enact and embody various relationships (e.g. between people, people and places, etc.), a small group of fifteen of the historical photographs were employed in a process similar to what researcher/artist Trudi Smith (2007) calls “repeat photography”. Repeat photography is a process whereby old photographs are used as “reference points” for the remake of an image in the same place/from the same vantage point. Initially, I had planned to visit exact locations where images were originally taken with the descendants of the people in the historical images; however, I realized early into the gathering stage of the project that exact locations were very difficult, if not, impossible to determine because the background of photographs looked like several possible locations. Despite our inability to pinpoint exact places, individuals still expressed interest in visiting locations where the photograph could have been taken—locations that they knew were important to their ancestors—in order to retake the photograph. Consequently, the repeat photographs were taken in and around Thunder Bay, Kakabeka, Burchell Lake, Fort William First Nation, Kashabowie, Upsala, Savanne, and Lac Des Mille Lacs. Following this process of remaking images, I met again with each person who had their picture taken, some people preferred to meet alone and

some people brought members of their family with them. I drew on “photofeedback”<sup>1</sup> (Samson-Cordel, 2001) to facilitate the sharing of personal truth/experience around the new image juxtaposed to the old one. Discussions lasted approximately 60 minutes and were informal and unstructured.

## **Our Journey With Anishinabeg Photographs**

### *Anishinabeg photographs*

Through this process of gathering photographs, which entailed visiting with each other, selecting family photographs, sharing stories, and other collaborative creative acts, emerged a 66-page community-based catalogue (Appendix A), entitled “Waasaabikizo: A Gathering of Ojibwe Photographs.” The title, chosen in consultation with an Elder, is Anishinabemowin for “he/she shines or reflects.” It encapsulates the idea that the photographs in the catalogue emit powerful storied medicines that wash over us, acknowledging that our ancestors left us these items that we could use in our healing journey.

What is profound about these photographs in Waasaabikizo is that they are Anishinabeg-based. I use the term “Anishinabeg-based” to denote three aspects that make these photographs significant to Anishinabeg way of life. First, unlike the majority of historical photographs of Anishinabeg that circulate through various channels and locations (e.g. social media, libraries, books, archives, museums) that are taken largely by non-Indigenous photographers who are not members of the Anishinabeg community where they conduct their work, these images are taken of Anishinabeg within an Anishinabeg community context. Second, these images have been cared for within our Anishinabeg families since their production, some for almost 100 years. Third, they have come together as a collection through the collaborative efforts of Anishinabeg,

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1 This involves using a photograph to elicit the sharing of a person’s ideas or stories

through the ongoing participation of different generations of families who are struggling to reclaim their histories and culture and to reconnect with one another and the lands from which they were displaced.

As an Anishinabeg-based collection, they present a unique pathway into people's lives because people take pictures, in part, because of what they believe is important. Gerald Vizenor (2008) comments on the significance of native photography not as evidence of "Indianness," which is something created and propagated by the Western, distant observer bent on collecting, cataloguing and defining the Native (see also Walsh 2006), but as rich sources of Indigenous stories and as remarkable traces of Indigenous presence and survivance. In the context of decolonization, these photographs may be taken up as a dominant versions of history and operate as a powerful decolonial force that contributes to new ways of combatting contemporary colonial violence—ways that challenge and equip Anishinabeg to work through present day struggles with the strength, perseverance and resilience of their Anishinabeg ancestors.

In the following section, I first discuss the importance of gathering photographs, outlining specific details regarding the organization and presentation of our ancestral photographs. I then provide a synthesis of key insights into our decolonial journey, grouping ideas into five themes that emerged through our continued engagement with the photographs in Waasaabikizoo. These include: 1) countering stereotypes and colonial myths; 2) cultural identity, memory and intergenerational healing; 3) reclaiming histories and knowledge; 4) acts of resistance; and, 5) strengthening Anishinabeg sovereignty. In an effort to better situate our work and establish a more intimate connection, I include specific photographic examples from the catalogue and from the repeat photographs to exemplify how these images contribute to our efforts to decolonize within these respective themes.

## **Gathering Photographs**

One of the main challenges with bringing together this number of photographs, taken of different people, in different situations, over a long time period, is how to gather and present them. This is of importance because there is a relationship between the photographs that is integral to determining how they come to acquire meaning and value to their viewers. Instead of relying on a model whereby photographs are presented along a linear time sequence or a structure based on family names/groups or a set of predetermined themes, I consulted with my kitchi-Anishinabekwe for direction. Together we talked about how this project was grounded in our continued practice of honouring ancestors and acknowledging their presence in our lives. We discussed how these are the same principles underlying many of our Anishinabeg ceremonies. She encouraged me to look at the entire grouping of these photographs through my own relationship with ceremony and spirituality as an Anishinabekwe. This was no small feat and caused some anxiety; however, I put my tobacco down and asked the Creator for guidance and direction. I allowed myself to be open to help and I prayed for clarity—to be able to identify and accept such help when it came to me.

One day on a drive with my partner, I started to reflect about the significance of “gathering” to our way of life as Anishinabeg. How through our ceremonies and other cultural practices, we recognize the importance of physically and spiritually coming together as Anishinabeg. I thought of how many Anishinabe people accept the responsibility to carry and look after sacred bundles that include items like drums, feathers, and medicines that are part of these gatherings. I thought of how bringing together this collection of photographs could be like assembling a bundle that could be shared within our families and to outside people as a kind of medicine— because in many ways the memories and stories these photographs embody are

“good” medicine. I kept thinking about how at different ceremonies we take the time to honour different groups of people and stages of life. We do songs, offerings, and prayers for our children, our women, our men, our Elders, and the land.

When I went back to “look at” all the photographs that had been collected, I began to see the images through the filter of ceremony, which included thinking about tradition, protocols, and responsibilities. Remembering the words of my Elder, I decided to group the photographs according to “rounds” (similar to the rounds in our sweat lodge ceremony) that honour the journey and lives of our children, women, men, and Elders and honour our roles and responsibilities as mothers, life partners and caretakers of the land.

With every photograph I included a written caption that explains who is in the photograph and approximately when the photograph was taken. When possible I included the location; however, it was difficult to “pin-point” a place on the map, given that many of these photographs were taken as people were “out in the bush” on their trap lines, traveling to visit friends and family, and engaged in other daily life activities.

There is also other written information presented that I have scripted based on my visits with people, listening to stories and how these stories continue to bring meaning and value to their lives today. Contributing my own story not only meant sharing my experiences with my own family’s photographs, but also contributing insight that helped elucidate key linkages between stories. While every person has their own story to share, many of us have similar stories and there is strength and healing in understanding how our stories connect us as Anishinabe people.

Early on in the project I visited one of my kitchi-Anishinabekwewag. She shared something with me that also informed the gathering and organization of these photographs. She

shared her love of poetry, specifically *The Song of Hiawatha* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Despite the connection this narrative has to colonial stereotypes and myths linked to the romanticization of Indigenous peoples and the idea of a 'vanishing Indian', this Elder cherished the poem because it helped her remain connected to her traditional language and land when she was in Indian Residential School. The famous poet utilizes many Anishinabe words in his writing. As a young girl at the school she survived much abuse and mistreatment, and she would often visit the words and imagery in the Longfellow poem as a personal strategy of cultural survivance and resilience. Thus, in many ways I likened the way I related to these old family photographs to my teacher's relationship to the Longfellow poem—as a means of remaining connected to people and places that were significant to my identity and way of life as an Anishinabekwe.

To honour this connection between photography, poetry, and cultural continuity/ survivance made possible through the gift of the Elder's time and knowledge, I turned to research into poetic inquiry and representation. Drawing on "found" poetry (Drury, 2006), I transformed parts of my research notes that were recorded following my visits with people into five short poems. I placed these poems at the beginning of each "round" or section of images. This process required an intimate and personal reading of people's stories to highlight powerful, evocative and commonly used words, that "become" the poems (see Padget, 1987, as cited in Faulkner, 2009). Because research poems also require attention to aspects such as form and cadence (Faulker, 2009), I intentionally appropriated the meter of trochaic tetrameter utilized by Longfellow but disrupted the pattern of eight syllables per line with a traditional chant of seven syllables. The number seven acknowledging the seven nokomis (grandmother teachings) that Anishinabeg strive to follow throughout their lives.

## **Countering Stereotypes and Misconceptions**

As mentioned earlier, a preoccupation with historical photographs of Anishinabeg produced by colonial ethnologists and voyeuristic artists, often propels the misconception that Anishinabeg were merely the subject of the camera—an object of fascination. Yet, as a body of photographs created by and for Anishinabeg, Waasaabikizo works to dispel this myth. Our photographs reveal a rich history of Anishinabeg actively engaged in the tradition/practice of taking a variety of photographs, including portraits of people and families, pictures of people in significant places, and pictures of people engaged in important life activities. These photographs directly challenge many stereotypes constructed through the employment of visual allegories and genres (Willmott, 2009) used to frame Anishinabeg as either disappearing/vanishing peoples or less civilized/evolved humans. Rather, our photographs reveal Anishinabeg children, women, men and Elders carrying out their daily life as skilled, innovative, and resourceful individuals. Moreover, as stimulating and insightful documents, our photographs challenge the misconception that Anishinabeg are history, but are firmly situated within our own histories grounded in active, ongoing relationships among people, things, and the land.

One of the most commonly held misconceptions that contribute to the colonization of Anishinabeg is the notion that Anishinabeg were/are present only on reservation lands, which in turn, normalizes the belief that Anishinabeg lands are only reserve lands. Yet, nearly all of our historical photographs were taken of Anishinabeg within lands that fall outside the Indian Act. This signals a vibrant ongoing presence of Anishinabeg within lands that may not be recognized by governments or members of the public as “Indian land” but nonetheless are lands that ground our history, identity and culture as Anishinabeg.

The trope of the vanishing/disappearing Indian is fueled by the colonial extinguishment strategy that aimed to assimilate all Anishinabeg into mainstream, “White” society. Western photographers often refrained from taking pictures of Anishinabeg in “Western” clothing because it evidenced the assimilation of Indians. Given that these photographers were by and large concerned with preserving what was left of an authentic ‘Indian’ culture, these photographers expressed interest in taking pictures that depicted their idea of what a true or real Indian looked like (e.g. in beadwork, leather, etc.). While there are smaller collections of historical photographs that depict Anishinabeg in “Western clothing” in front of structures like cabins and stores (see White, 2007, Willmott, 2009), what is interesting is that there is a void of photographs with Anishinabeg together in both ceremonial/traditional clothing *and* everyday “Western” dress. This absence contributes to an oversimplification and absorption of Anishinabeg life into an imagined dichotomy of the authentic/traditional Indian of the past and the assimilated/modernized Indian. However, the photographs in Waasaabikizoo work to dispel this dichotomy.



**Figure 3:** *John and Rose Deafey with their children, family and friends. Circa 1926. Collection of the Author.*

For example, Figure 3 is a photograph taken from a gathering likely in the Bass Lake area in northwestern Ontario. My great-great grandfather appears with members of his family and friends, some dressed in their dance regalia, and others in a more Western style of dress. These images correspond with the stories my older relatives share about how my great-great grandfather and his family would host small ceremonial gatherings in the area and how he liked to drum and sing. This photograph replaces the narrative of cultural loss and assimilation with one of cultural continuity. From the feather headdress worn by my great-great uncle to the cloche hats of my great-great grandmother and great-grandmother, these images present a visual allegory of innovative, dynamic and flexible Anishinabeg who resisted imposed colonial identity categories and strived to negotiate what it meant to live their lives as Anishinabeg at a particular time and place. These pictures present Anishinabeg who strove carry forward their important spiritual and community-building activities. This image shows me that that which is sacred is not stagnant but stylish.

Several scholars have illustrated the significance of photographs to the negotiation and development of cross-cultural relationships, highlighting how photography is a highly social act involving the photographic subject(s), producer and viewer(s) (Edwards, 2009; 2005; Pink, 2006; Walsh, 2006). A dominant historical narrative shaping the ongoing relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples is one of segregation. For example, Canada's Indian Residential School system was predicated on Eurocentric and colonial ideologies that positioned Indigenous people as less civilized than settler Canadians. Many Anishinabeg students were sent to IRS for long durations to "de-Indianize" them with the ultimate goal of assimilating them back

into Canadian society civilized community members. Just as the reservation system contained Indians to bounded parcels of land, IRS was an education system that separated Indigenous peoples from settler Canadians.



**Figure 4:** *In the left photograph, young boys are playing in Kashabowie, Ontario in the early 1950s (Collection of the author). In the right photograph, two families pose for a portrait somewhere on Lake Shebandowan around the late 1930s (Collection of M. Rosskogler).*

Yet, Figure 4 reveals a very different relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, specifically between children and families. In the left photograph, two of my great uncles are playing with a childhood friend, who is of non-Indigenous ancestry. This photograph conveys a different kind of cross-cultural relationship. A relationship between children, who despite the colonial and racist influences that shaped a society where Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations were prevented and discouraged, were connected through childhood friendship. While some may posit that this photograph simply reveals a youthful ignorance to colonial pressures, this photograph articulates the resiliency of children to imposed social norms and behaviours stemming from Eurocentric, colonial and racist ideologies. In the

photograph on the right, Anishinabekwe Polly Jordon poses with her baby and non-Indigenous children somewhere in the Lake Shebandowan area. Polly's baby girl is in a traditional tikinagan used to keep Anishinabeg babies and young children safe and protected from the natural elements in the bush. Both Polly and her baby are surrounded by young children who were identified by one of Polly's family members as "members of the Smith family," a non-Indigenous family who used to live in the area. Like the previous photograph, this image projects a very different cross-cultural relationship between Indigenous and settler peoples within a family context. The photograph reveals evidence of intimacy, kindness, and pride. Polly's expression reveals a calm, happy and content woman proud to be standing with her baby and what appears to be the baby's "entourage." The boy standing to the right of Polly has his right hand extended, helping support the tikinagan, his expression reflecting a certain familiarity and protectiveness, almost as if the baby was a younger sibling.

The negative stereotype of the "lazy Indian" is another stereotype, which has contributed to the misconception that Anishinabeg were not productive, hardworking members of society. Yet a large majority of photographs in Waasaabikizoo reveal Anishinabe women, men and even children hard at work on the land. These kinds of images challenge the "lazy Indian" stereotype through powerful visuals that reinforce Anishinabe teachings around traditional land management and harvesting activities.

### **Memory, Identity and Intergenerational Healing**

When I look at my own family pictures, I often do so with the understanding that my ancestors made these images, in part, because they wanted to create something meaningful that could be shared with their family members in the future. In this way, photographs reflect what our ancestors want us to remember about their lives. They are photographs made with purpose

and can be used to bring us purpose as we use them to remember people and places that are instrumental to our continuance as Anishinabeg. Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel (2012) states, “Our stories need to be re-told and acted upon as part of our process of remembering and maintaining balance within our communities. It is the stories that sustain us and ensure our continuity as peoples” (p. 89). Similar to our stories, a continuous engagement with our family photographs is integral to our process of remembering and working towards living a good life. Memory signals a link to the past, a sense of a living connection, and it is powerfully mediated by technologies like stories, books, and photographs (Hirsch, 2012; 1997). For Anishinabeg who continue to grapple with issues of identity loss, self-worth, and self-esteem—struggles connected to decades of colonial violence directed at their physical, emotional, spiritual and mental existence—memory is important because, as Assman (2008) illustrates, “memory is the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood or identity” (p. 109). Assman argues that photographs function as “carriers of memory”—that they may remind or trigger our memories because they “carry memories, which have been invested into them” (p. 111). At the personal or individual level, photographs may trigger specific memories of past events or experiences, but in cases when photographs are witnessed or experienced in a group setting, they also play an integral role to the development of collective memory, or a shared memory composed of group experiences.

Collective memory is often dependent on intergenerational ties within a community whereby younger generations listen to, understand, absorb and contribute to the collective memories of the various groups to which they belong (see Connerton, 1989; Halbwachs, 1992). Yet, one of the lingering effects of colonial violence within Indigenous communities is the severing of intergenerational familial ties, which has greatly hampered the transmission of

information from one generation to the next. Waabaabikizo brought together younger and older members of generations, drawing on family photographs to help bridge this intergenerational gap.



**Figure 5:** *Anishinabekwe Jean Tenniscoe poses for two portraits sometime around the early to mid 1940s. These photographs were likely taken around Savanne, Ontario where Jean was employed in the local sawmill. Collection of L. Sawdo.*

Figure 5 depicts two portraits of Anishinabekwe Jean Tenniscoe taken sometime during the early to mid 1940s. These photographs were contributed by her son and throughout the duration of the project three generations of Jean’s family were able to come together to reflect on her life, where she worked, how she met her husband, her talents and life skills and what it meant to them today: As Jean’s grand-daughter expressed:

I can’t believe how hard she must have worked to look after her children in the bush! She must have been so strong and resilient. I look at my life today and think about how who I am as a mother is related to her experiences and life. (D. Aho, personal communication, December 14, 2014)

As Wickam (2012) illustrates, decolonization is about rebuilding Indigenous relationships within the family. This process is integral to the transmission of Anishinabeg values, knowledge and beliefs. Anishinabeg family photographs when experienced by descendants, strengthen the connection to past experiences, which provide a strong foundation for the development and maintenance of present day kin relationships.

Attached to the concept of collective memory is cultural memory defined as a form of memory that is shared by a number of people and conveys to them, cultural identity (Connerton, 2008; Assman, 2008). Cultural memory is socially-constructed through material objects that often serve as powerful reminders to past events and experiences. External items like monuments, libraries and archives and other mnemonic institutions contribute to cultural memory specifically to groups that have experienced a wide-spread violence directed towards their culture or way of life. Thus, as a collective body of photographs, Waasaabikizoo contributes to a form of Anishinabe cultural memory that is linked to cultural identity. As a collective body of photographs, Waasaabikizoo provides key insight into Anishinabeg culture and teachings, which are significant to Anishinabeg today.

For example, many of the images depict strong and diverse relationships with the land. A vast majority of pictures are taken outside where Anishinabeg of all ages are photographed engaged in different activities with family and friends including fishing, traditional harvesting, sightseeing, resting/relaxing, trapping, visiting, shopping, and ceremonial gatherings. These images serve to reinforce the direct relationship between Anishinabeg way of life and the land—that relationships to the land are tantamount to living a good life. What is also interesting is there is not one photograph taken outdoors that doesn't have a person within it, such as a landscape or nature photograph, which are typical genres of photography. Indeed in scouring over many

photographs in the possession of several families, I do not recall seeing such a photograph. While this absence may be a result of previous curatorial choices to only save photographs picturing individuals, another point to consider is how this absence of photographic images that objectify the land within Anishinabeg photographic practice may speak to broader Indigenous understandings of interdependent relationships between nature and culture (the land and people).

### **Reclaiming Familial Histories and Knowledge**

In *Silencing the Past*, Trouillot (1995) provides a philosophy of history that reveals how the experiences and perspectives of oppressed peoples is often silenced in the production of history.

He states:

we all need histories that no history book can tell, but they are not in the classroom...they are in the lessons we learn at home, in poetry and childhood games, in what is left of history when we close the history books with their verifiable facts. (p. 71)

The photographs in *Waasaabikizo* give rise to stories that fall outside Canada's Indian Act or "official" dominant versions of history and serve as powerful counter narratives that not only destabilize widely accepted colonial myths but also help reclaim integral familial information and Anishinabeg knowledge.

From the photographs, people learned that their ancestors had names in Anishinabemowin (Ojibwe language), different than their English first and last names. They



**Figure 6:** *A portrait of John and Peter Deafey circa 1921. Collection of Author.*

learned how individuals received these names and the significance of these names to the Anishinabe way of life. For example, Figure 6 is a portrait taken of brothers Peter and John Deafey. During this research when family members were reviewing the photographs grouped together, one Elder took pause to remember and recite the Anishinabemowin names of these men, known to him as a little boy as “Boon na kut” (Winter Cloud) and “Boon na penaise (Winter Thunderbird)”. This information was returned to the immediate descendants of these men, who were thankful to receive this information. One family member stated that from the picture and the style of the mens’ dress, she had always thought that these men weren’t “traditional” (had been assimilated into mainstream culture); yet this misconception was overturned in learning this information.

Reclaiming familial histories often provides insight into Anishinabeg cultural norms and practices that had been suppressed/forbidden by colonial institutions.



**Figure 7:** *Frank and Rose Kishiqueb circa late 1940s, Kashabowie, Ontario. Collection of the Author.*

For example, Figure 7 is an image of my great-great grandmother Rose Shebobman (nee Weweji-Penaise) and her second husband Frank Kishiqueb. Rose was married to my great-great grandfather John Shebobman prior to her partnership with Frank and had had other children with John, including my great-grandfather Toussant Shebobman. Yet, official birth and baptismal records recorded by Jesuit missionaries that are presently available for public access, state that all of Rose's children were fathered by her second husband Frank. When looking at this image, my grandmother explained how Rose was quite younger than her first husband John, and had decided to take a second man into her life (Frank), when John became very old. Rose, her children and grandchildren looked after John in a family cabin on Kashabowie Lake until his passing. My grandmother remembers bringing him cooked potatoes and tea in his home everyday. Yet, Rose started a new relationship with Frank prior to John's death. Upon hearing this story, we discussed how this story had been "covered up" and "not talked about often" because it was considered shameful by "White" outsiders. Part of the work of decolonization involves understanding how we have internalized colonialist ideas and practices (Waziyawintawin, as cited in Wheeler, 2007). Before one can free him/herself from colonial shackles, one must understand how he or she has been constrained. This image of Frank and Rose gave rise to the opportunity for me to discuss this history with older members of my family.

We talked about how this wasn't shameful and how many Anishinabeg went through similar experiences where they were made to be positioned as inferior and uncivilized against colonial, non-Anishinabeg cultural norms and values. This photograph facilitated important dialogue, which functioned as a powerful counter-colonial force that helped restore dignity: A history of shame transformed into a history of resistance and refusal to conform to imposed cultural norms.

### **Restoring language and teachings**

Elizabeth Edwards (2005) argues that photographs function not simply as visual history but as oral history, linked to sounds, gestures and the relationships in which and through which these practices are embedded. In the presence of some of the Elders involved in the process of bringing together Waasaabikizo, these images “spoke” not the language of English (the language of colonialism) but Anishinabemowin. During her experience of the photographs, one Elder felt compelled to speak in Anishinabemowin and share teachings around the language, and stories around strategies she used to keep her language as a young child in residential school. She shared how children told traditional stories to each other in Anishinabemowin, many of which have been forgotten and are no longer told. She spoke about Memegwesi(suk), the small winged beings that visit you when you are on your fasting/vision quest and how they only live by shorelines where there are high rocks/cliffs. She shared the Anishinabemowin term for our neighbouring tribe, “Bowanahk,” referring to the Lakota Peoples. She explained how this term was related to the fact that in ceremony Anishinabeg medicine people could see when the Lakota were coming and that is how our tribe were able to defeat them in battle.

During one particular visit we discussed the process of receiving our Anishinabe spirit names in ceremony and I shared with her that my sons had recently received their names from my grandmother. When I share the spirit name of my second child, “Nitaw Gamik” I shared that

my grandmother had explained there was no English translation and that Nitaw Gamik is best described as a young Earth spirit. Upon hearing this name, this Elder also remembered that Nitaw Gamik often visited us in the form of a small frog in the shaking tent ceremony. These types of experience reveal that our pictures often serve as a gateway to Anishinabeg knowledge and language that can only be accessed by being together with the photographs and letting them lead us in new directions (as opposed to relying on solely their representational value).

Reclaiming this knowledge is integral to our decolonization efforts and reconnecting with who we are as Anishinabeg as the Elder stated:

When you are speaking the language, it is like living in another world...you can feel what is in the hearts of your ancestors. (S. Churchill, personal communication, August 31, 2015)

### **Acts of Resistance**

Several authors have illustrated that through the eyes of the colonized, historical photographs of Indigenous Peoples reveal the struggles of people fighting to retain and practice their way of life amidst great uncertainty and oppression (see Askren, 2009; Lidchi, 2009, Lonetree, 2011; Payne 2006; Racette, 2011). Images that reveal the tenacity and strength of our ancestors contribute to decolonization because decolonization is not about grounding our identities and histories in victimage (Wheeler as cited in Waziyawintawin, 2005a) but in the continued struggle against those colonial forces that threaten our very existence as Indigenous peoples.



**Figure 8:** *Josie Kabatay ricing on Whitefish Lake near Thunder Bay, Ontario around the late 1940s. Collection of M. Rosskogler*



**Figure 9:** *A young Josie Kabatay poses with the family dog while her mother, Polly Jordon watches over her. Circa late 1930s. Collection of M. Rosskogler*

In Figure 8 young Anishinabekwe Josie Kabatay is seen ricing for manoonim (wild rice) near Whitefish Lake, near Thunder Bay, Ontario. In Figure 9 she is out on the family trap-line

with her mother looking on. Many of the images in *Waasaabikizo* were taken during a period when mandatory attendance at IRS was heavily enforced. Parents who refused to send their children to IRS were often imprisoned, yet, photographs of Josie ricing evidence a resistance to imposed colonial systems of education which perpetuated many forms of violence towards Indigenous children. These images reveal that this resistance is grounded in Anishinabeg knowledge and education—an intense land-based pedagogy that is integral to Anishinabeg survival and way of life.



**Figure 10:** *John Deafey (man on the right) drums while family and friends dance. Circa 1925. Collection of the Author.*

In Figure 10 my ancestors are participating in our culture/ceremony involving the big drum and jingle dancing. My family used to host ceremonial gatherings at a location termed “secret” and “far away” from any non-Indigenous settlement. My grandmother described how someone used to stand guard at the pathway to the opening of the clearing where people met. During our research, one Elder presented me with a copy of a letter written by the Deputy

Superintendent General of Indian Affairs approximately four years prior to this picture. The following is an excerpt from the document:

I have, therefore, to direct you to use your utmost endeavors to dissuade the Indians from excessive indulgence including dancing. You should suppress any dance that causes waste of time, interferes with the occupations of the Indian, and unsettles them for serious work. (Graham, 1921)

Even though our ceremonies and cultural practices were banned, our ancestors strived to carry out these activities within their home territories with their families, friends and children.

What is also striking about this gathering of photographs are the multiple of images that depict strong, and vibrant women and children (see Figure 11).



**Figure 11:** *In the left photograph, Jean Tenniscoe is with her son somewhere along their family trapline circa 1950 (Collection of L. Sawdo). In the right photograph, Julia Berkan holds her young son Eric around the mid 1960s in Kashabowie, Ontario (Collection of M. Berkan).*

This presence is particularly telling given the broader historical context in which these photographs were created. Our colonial history is one of forced absence—children rendered absent from the land or community through imposed racist educational legislation, and women,

frequently made absent through gendered violence directed at their physical, mental and spiritual beings. Yet, in these photographs, one witnesses a present resilience to these absences. In essence, these photographs reveal an Anishinabeg cultural identity that is shaped not only by a legacy of colonial interference but also a struggle to resist the most devastating forms of colonial violence—violence that took children away from their mothers and that attacked the lives and wellbeing of our Anishinabekwewag (Ojibwe women). Simply put, these images reveal that we challenged/opposed violence with a fierce and steadfast love of our children.

### **Dreaming in/with Portraits and Anishinabeg Sovereignty**

Several of the photographs in *Waasaabikizoo* are close up portraits of family members. These portraits were perhaps the most ubiquitous and unstable photographs to work with. When met with nothing but the gaze of our ancestors, participants often experienced a wide range of emotions. While everyone agreed it was a gift to have images of our relatives as a reminder of their presence, the portraits also reminded individuals of their disconnect from these people. Of the loss and absence due to the intergenerational effects of colonization, as one participant stated:

It is in this portrait that this loss cannot be hidden because there is not too much else happening in the photograph to distract attention...not like the ones where they are ricing or doing some kind of activity. (M. Pedri, personal communication, July 4, 2015)

Many of our portraits are intimate strangers, close afars, meaningful voids. They are enigmatic. During the research process, the question of what do with this loss and how to work through/with this absence was raised and consequently answered through the process of re-making 15 portraits out in our ancestral lands.

Anishinabekwe scholar Maguire Adams (2009) asserts decolonization is about transformation. It involves changing negative and reactionary energy into positive experiences

and outcomes for our families and communities. In a related point, Raheja (2007) states that Indigenous sovereignty is a creative act of self-representation that has the potential to strengthen the intellectual health of communities battling colonialism. Expanding on Dowell's (2013) position that locates visual Aboriginal sovereignty in the act of production, I have argued elsewhere (Pedri-Spade, 2014) that Anishinabeg sovereignty includes creative photographic acts that reclaim and re-story Anishinabeg lands claimed by settler colonial narratives and dispossession/occupation, and re-inscribe Anishinabeg presence in/on their ancestral homelands.



**Figure 12:** *Left photograph: Mary Peters (Weweji) stands in front of her family cabin located at Burchell Lake circa 1949. Collection of E. Moore. Right photograph: Reena Legarde, the great grand-daughter of Mary at Burchell Lake in December 2014. Collection of the Author.*

Figure 12 depicts Mary Peters (Weweji) the great grandmother of Reena Legarde. Both pictures were taken at Burchell Lake, where Mary used to live with her family. Before the remake of this portrait, Reena had not been to Burchell Lake. She had never met her great grandmother in person. During our trip to Burchell Lake, Reena brought her son and we were able to spend time on a beach where an older family member told us many Anishinabe families used to gather to socialize, swim, have fires and eat together.



**Figure 13:** *Left photograph: Fred Peters with his daughter Frances and several of his grandchildren around the mid 1960s in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Collection of E. May. Right photograph: Ernie May with several members of his family in his home in Thunder Bay Ontario on January 2, 2015. Collection of the author.*

Figure 13 is a portrait of Fred Peters with his daughter and several of his grandchildren, including Ernie May (the smallest boy sitting on his sister’s lap on the far left). It was taken in the Thunder Bay, Ontario. The repeat portrait accompanying this photograph is of Ernie May, now a grown man with a growing family. Ernie as a proud father, uncle and great-uncle.

Both of these repeat images re-inscribe an Anishinabeg presence within Anishinabeg territory defined by and through love—love for our children, our ancestors, and our continued commitment to building strong relationships *within* our families *within* our Anishinabeg territory. Throughout the repeat process, we learned to transform spaces of loss, and uncertainty through our own creative work with the historical images. The process of re-producing our photographs revealed that out of absence comes more than loss. That out of absence comes possibility and imagination—a space where we can exercise our freedoms, rearticulate and expand our understanding of Anishinabeg sovereignty. A space where we can laugh, cry, reflect...together.

Our engagement with our photographs facilitated opportunities for reconnecting and strengthening our present day relationships with one another and the land. This demonstrates how integral Indigenous photographs are to developing a renewed sense of community (Askren, 2009; Lonetree, 2011, Brown & Peers, 2006). Moreover, in recreating our photographs we contribute a powerful visual sovereignty because the two images together reveal a continued presence and an ongoing collective responsibility to carry forward the relationships and teachings that were/are integral to our lives. As one participant stated:

When I see the photographs, there is a connectedness there. Things were really tough back then and you look at the pictures now... you look at yourself and your life in relation to theirs and you appreciate their struggles even more. So, it is almost as if the experience of their struggle is heightened...and you feel so much appreciation. It strengthens your resolve to carry on and live in a good way. My life takes on new importance and meaning in relation to their lives and their histories. (M. Pedri, personal communication, September, 2014)

This quote demonstrates how there is a connectedness to community and immediacy that is present in photographs, potentially, more than in any other media (Aird, 2003; Evans, 2012; Hirsch, 1997; Racette, 2011; Tsinhanahjinnie, 2003)

The stories we shared and the photographs we made were our responses to our ancestors' "visual call to action" (Racette, 2011, p. 89) because, as Thomas (2011) states, our ancestors were leaving us an intentional mark of their evidence in this world which they intended for us to discover and relate to in our own way. As we came together, we looked to the photographs searching for and sharing not only stories about our ancestor's lives, but evidence of ourselves within these stories. In a way, our ancestors are looking back at us, checking up on us as any

good teacher or caretaker would. Thus, our work embodies the existence of the ongoing fight for self-determination, pride, and a deep bond with our ancestors that we strive to maintain (Thomas, 2011). As one participant stated, “In looking at these images, I feel so proud to tell my son what it means to be Anishinabe.” (D. Sawdo, personal communication, November 2014)

Lee (2012) demonstrates how by sharing the stories of our Anishinabe ancestors within our lands, we put Anishinabe knowledge back into creation for future generations in ways similar to the knowledges placed onto/within the land by our ancestors as rock paintings or birch bark scrolls. In coming together to share our stories, gather our bundle, and leave our own marks, we present and place a version of ourselves and our relationships back into Creation as a mark of gratitude—as a thank you and an acknowledgement of our responsibility to our ancestors.

Through the embodied act of making a new image, we were essentially redefining what it means to be related to our ancestors, where relations were not necessarily bound by genealogy, knowledge, similar experiences, or even a similar connection to the land. Rather, the concept of relations or ancestry transformed into an unrestricted space of creative production where people intentionally honoured their relatives, performing a continued Anishinabeg presence. Also, to put something, another photograph, out into the world simultaneously extends this presence forward to future generations and back to those who still continue to guide and teach us.

“Relations” as a fluid and unrestricted space of creative production is also a sovereign space because it is a territory generated and controlled by Anishinabeg. It contributes to sovereignty because these photographs were about putting an image into the world in the way people wanted to be seen as opposed to being interpreted by others. So neither ancestral relations nor rights to lands are bound by particular moments or sutures in history like land claims settlements, the establishment of lands reserved for Indians, or Indian residential schools. Rather,

these processes are about enacting our responsibilities to live out our relationships—to land and people— in intuitive, artful, innovative and emergent ways. Anishinabekwe researcher and teacher Yerxa (2014) makes a similar connection in relation to her family and community reclaiming their Anishinabeg rights to harvesting manoonmin (wild rice):

As active agents of liberation, our imaginations and visions shattered colonial confinements; the past, present and future came alive at the same time. (p. 160)

Many of the photographs in this collection reveal the instrumental role of Anishinabeg women to Anishinabeg sovereignty.



**Figure 14:** *Agnes Rat with her son Phillip and grandson Louis on their family trap-line sometime during the early 1950s. Collection of L. Sawdo*

Images such as Agnes Rat with her son and grandson (Figure 14) show how involved women were in food sovereignty—from knowing where and how to get food (fish, berries, birds, animals) to teaching younger generations to hunt and prepare food. Reflecting on the concept of sovereignty in relation to Inuit Peoples, Simon (2009) states that sovereignty begins at home. It

begins with individual acts that strengthen the health of our families and communities. During the project, one participant, stated:

There is just so much going on in this picture that provides evidence of my grandmother's work. Wood she chopped, a wash bucket, her tools, and then her baby in the mix, a reminder of her role as a lifegiver. (D. Aho, personal communication, December 21, 2014)

The role of Anishinabeg in the continuance of spiritual sovereignty was also emphasized. Reflecting on the image of her late mother with my great-great grandmother, one participant described how instrumental this Elder was in facilitating different ceremonies for Anishinabeg families. She explained how Cha-Is also delivered women's teachings about sexual health and medicines to young women living in Kashabowie, Ontario:

Cha-is was this remarkable...giant woman. She was so strong but kind. She would just do things. I remember walking with her down the tracks. She was the one who gave my spirit name. (E. Moore, September 4, 2014)

## **Conclusion**

Just as we have been gifted with songs, ceremonies, and other tools, our ancestors left us photographs. These photographs were intentional. They exist because our ancestors wanted to show us something. They wanted to share their lives with us. So as we continue on our path towards decolonization, our photographs help guide us in a good way because these images provide us with valuable teachings and knowledge that are essential to Anishinabeg life. From the photographs of our mothers embracing their children to the images of our ancestors living and learning on the land, we learn that decolonization has direction. Our ancestors are showing

us what we need to strive for. In a way, we learn that our ancestors have known all along what it means to struggle towards decolonization.

Our photographs may be of people that did not have a physical presence in our lives but still have an integral presence in our memories, stories, ceremonies and prayers. They are photographs of people who are respected and honored because the struggle to maintain and build Anishinabeg community, identity and self-determination continues to be shaped by how these people lived, their experiences, and the gifts of knowledge they imparted to those they cared for and loved. They are photographs of people who continuously remind us of our responsibility that our relationship with them is integral to the relationships we have with our own children, grandchildren now and seven generations ahead.

From our photographs, we learned a great deal about where our ancestors lived throughout our territory. We learned of their ongoing struggles with the colonial violence. We learned about how they persevered and fought to live according to their values and beliefs. We learned what they liked to do, whom they visited, where they travelled to during different times of the year. In short, we learned about their relationships with life that made them *strong* Anishinabeg.

I emphasize the word strong because strength radiates from every image in our collection. In every face, I only see skill, determination, pride, and love. I see people who are survivors, innovators and courageous leaders. In our photographs I find good medicine.



**Figure 15:** Left photograph: Shirley Shebobman in Kashabowie, Ontario. 1962. Left photograph: Shirley Shebobman and her great grandson “Nitaw Gamik” in Kashabowie, Ontario. 2014.

## **Chapter 2**

**The Teaching is in the Making: A Collection of Artworks**

**Thunder Bay Art Gallery (June 24-September 6, 2016)**

*The Teaching is in The  
Making*



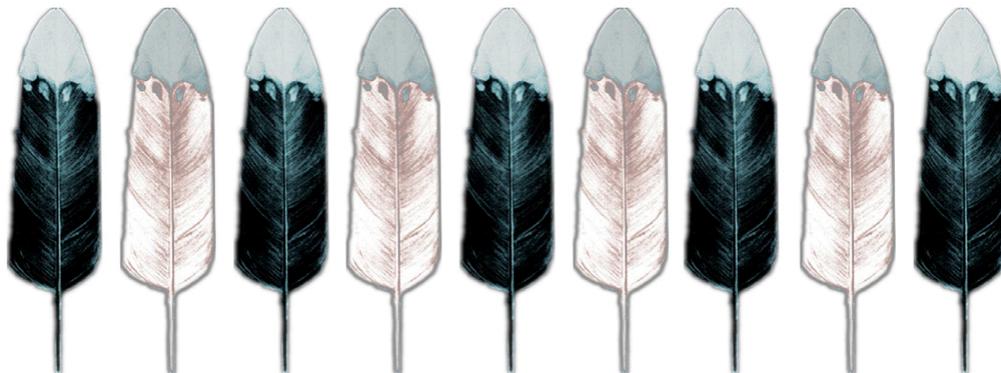
Louis Sawdo  
outside his  
family's cabin  
circa late  
1940s



Reid Aho,  
grandson of  
Louis Sawdo,  
2014

As kids we would spend  
hours together playing at  
the Lake, in the  
bush...all over the place.  
The older kids tried to  
look out for the younger  
ones. We weren't scared.  
We never felt alone. We  
had each other.

- Julia Rusnak





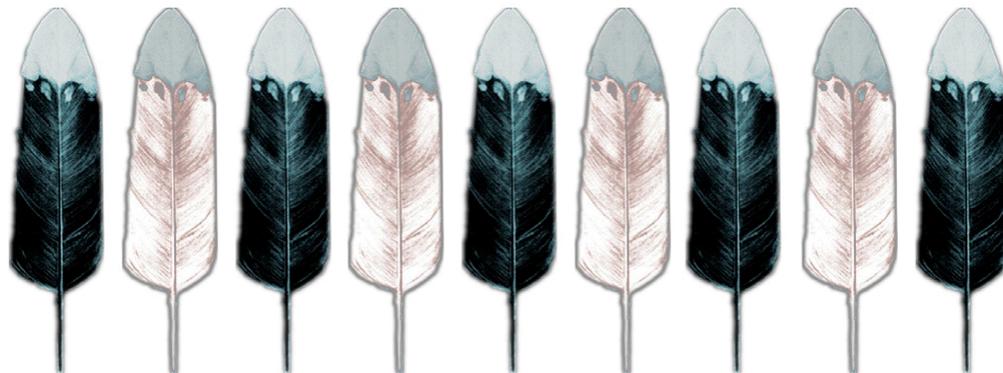
Family members Arnold Shebobman (middle) and Lawrence Kishiqueb playing with friend, Walter Holbeck sometime during the 1950s at Kashabowie Lake



The great-great nephews of Arnold Shebobboman, Kiniw and Keeshig Spade, playing on the shores of Kashabowie Lake, 2014

My grandmother Jean is  
such an inspiration to me.  
I often think of all the  
challenges she had to  
face...physically and  
mentally. She was so  
strong and this  
beautiful family came to  
be as a result of her  
life's work.

- Dawn Sawdo Aho





Jean  
Tenniscoe  
along the  
family trap  
line  
sometime  
during the  
1940s



Jean's grand  
daughter  
Dawnon the  
shores of Lac  
des Mille  
Lacs Lake,  
2014



Jean Tenniscoe hugs her son Louis Sawdo around the early 1950s likely somewhere along their family trap line.



Jean Tenniscoe's grand daughter Dawn Aho hugs her son Reid out on Lac des Mille Lacs First Nation, 2014.



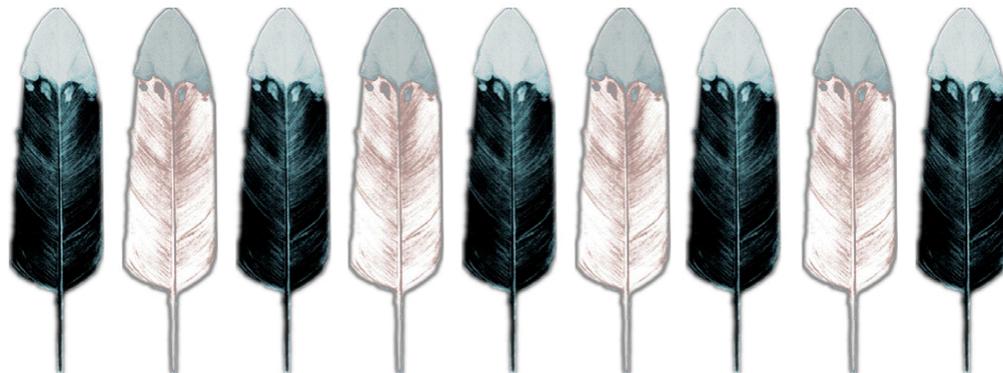
Fred Peters  
outside one  
of his  
trapping  
cabins likely  
around Lac  
des Mille  
Lacs Lake  
circa late  
1930s.



Fred Peters'  
great  
grandson  
Clark  
Chapman  
outside his  
family RV,  
2014.

Polly, my grandmother,  
really knew how to survive  
and she had so much  
knowledge about the world  
that she shared with  
people. I feel connected  
to her. I know her spirit  
is with me.

- Maddy Rosskogler





Polly Jordon  
dancing in  
her jingle  
dress circa  
1926.



Madeleine  
Rosskogler, the  
granddaughter  
of Polly Jordon  
in her  
traditional  
regalia, 2015.



Louise  
Deafey in  
Kashabowie,  
ON during  
the 1950s.



Julia Rusnak,  
the niece of  
Louise  
Deafey in her  
traditional  
regalia, 2015.



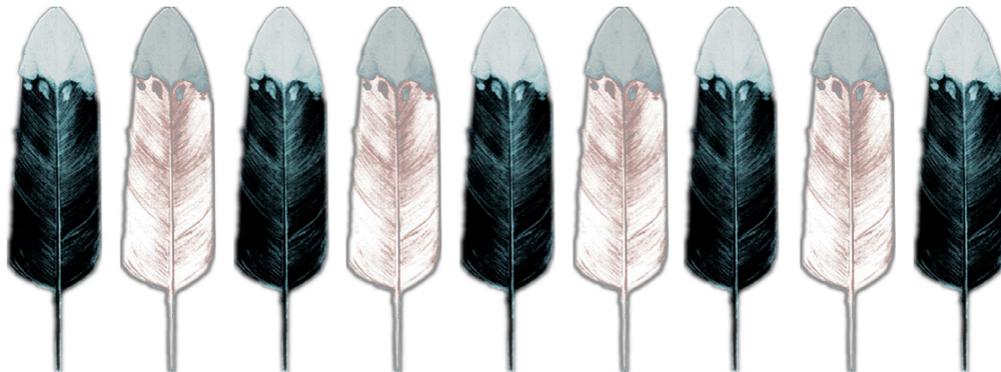
Mary Weweji  
outside her  
cabin at  
Burchell  
Lake  
sometime  
around the  
late 1940s



Reena Legarde, the great grand daughter of Mary Weweji at Burchell Lake, 2014.

I know we are different  
people with different  
challenges, but in a way I  
feel our healing journeys  
are  
connected.

- Cher Chapman





Freida Peters  
as a very  
young  
woman in the  
1930s.



Cher  
Chapman,  
the grand  
daughter of  
Freida Peters,  
2015.



Marlene  
Peters in  
Upsala,  
Ontario  
around the  
early 1960s



Chantall  
Kemp, the  
grand  
daughter of  
Marlene  
Peters in  
Thunder Bay,  
Ontario,  
2015 .



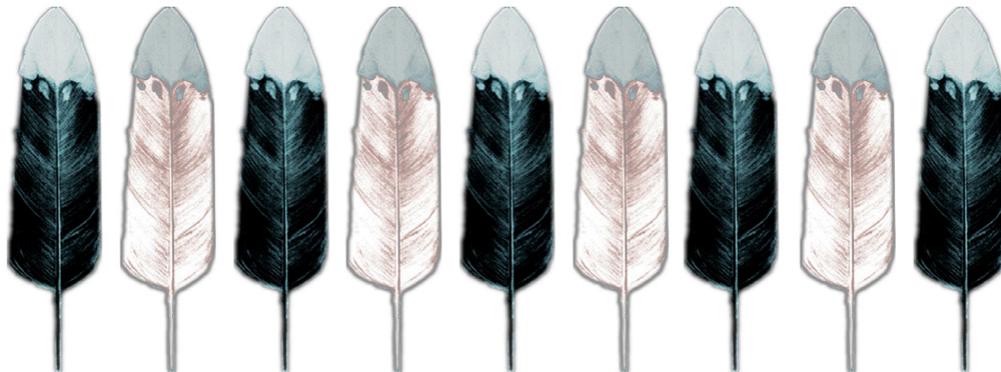
Kathleen  
McKenzie in  
Kashabowie,  
Ontario  
during the  
1950s.



Chrystine  
Primeau and  
Marcia Pedri,  
the great  
nieces of  
Kathleen  
MacKenzie,  
2015.

I am a grandmother...a  
great-grandmother now! And  
now I get to do things  
that I only remember  
seeing my own great-grand-  
mother do. It's coming  
back.

- Shirley Shebobman





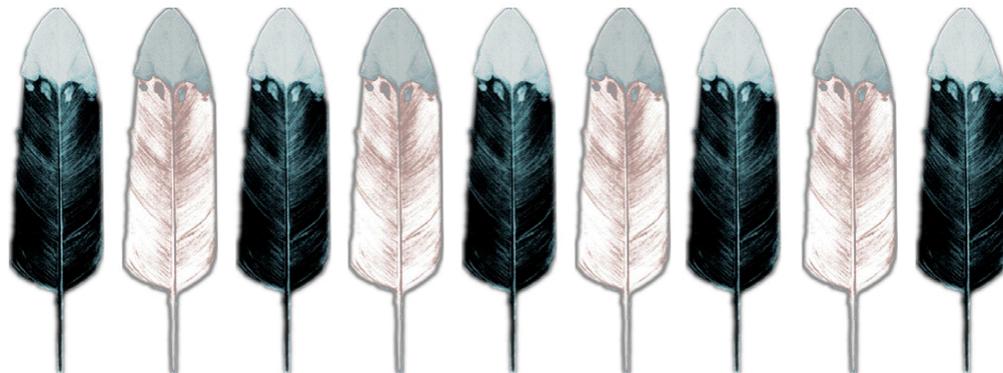
Shirley  
Shebobman,  
in  
Kashabowie,  
Ontario circa  
1961



Shirley Shebobman with her great grandson Kiniw Spade in Kashabowie, Ontario, 2014.

It was important to always  
have your children near  
you because that is how  
they learned to do things  
that were important to  
living as Anishinabe  
People.

- Wanda Baxter





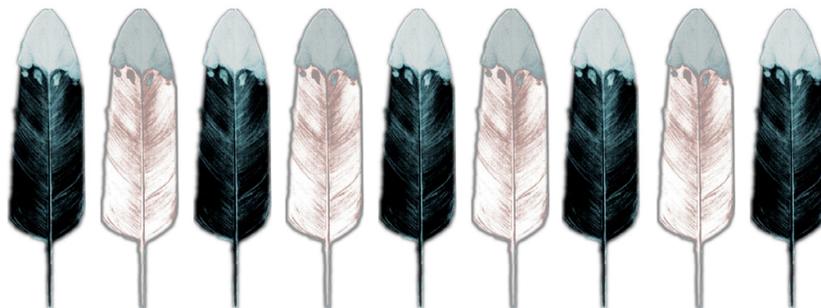
Family patriarch Fred Peters is surrounded by his daughter Frances (back left) and several of his grandchildren in Thunder Bay, ON circa late 1960s. His grandson Ernie May is the little boy on the far left.



Ernie May, the grandson of Fred Peters (far right) with his wife, children, niece and great nieces and nephew in Thunder Bay, Ontario, 2014.

Cha-Is used to take women  
from the community down  
the tracks to share  
teachings about women,  
spirituality and ceremony.  
She's the one who gave me  
my spirit name.

- Elizabeth Moore





Alice Peters,  
Cha-Is Deafey  
and Julia Berkan  
in Kashabowie,  
Ontario circa  
late 1940s.



Elizabeth Moore , the daughter of Alice Peters with Julia Rusnak, the grand daughter of Cha-Is Deafey, 2014.

*The Day My Photographs  
Danced*



Cha-Is  
Deafey circa  
1939



“Roses”,  
2014

Jingle Dress  
with linocut  
print and  
beaded yoke



Detail



Detail



Shirley  
Shebobman,  
1962  
Kashabowie, ON



“Shirley’s  
Tobacco Bag”

2015

Delicas on  
Brain-tanned  
hide



John and Peter  
Deafey circa  
early 1920s



“Grandfather’s  
Grandfather”

Celeste Pedri-  
Spade, 2015

Acrylic on Raw  
Hide/Wood  
Drum



Rose Deafey in Kashabowie,  
ON circa late 1960s



Rose's granddaughter Marcia  
Pedri in Thunder Bay, ON,  
1963



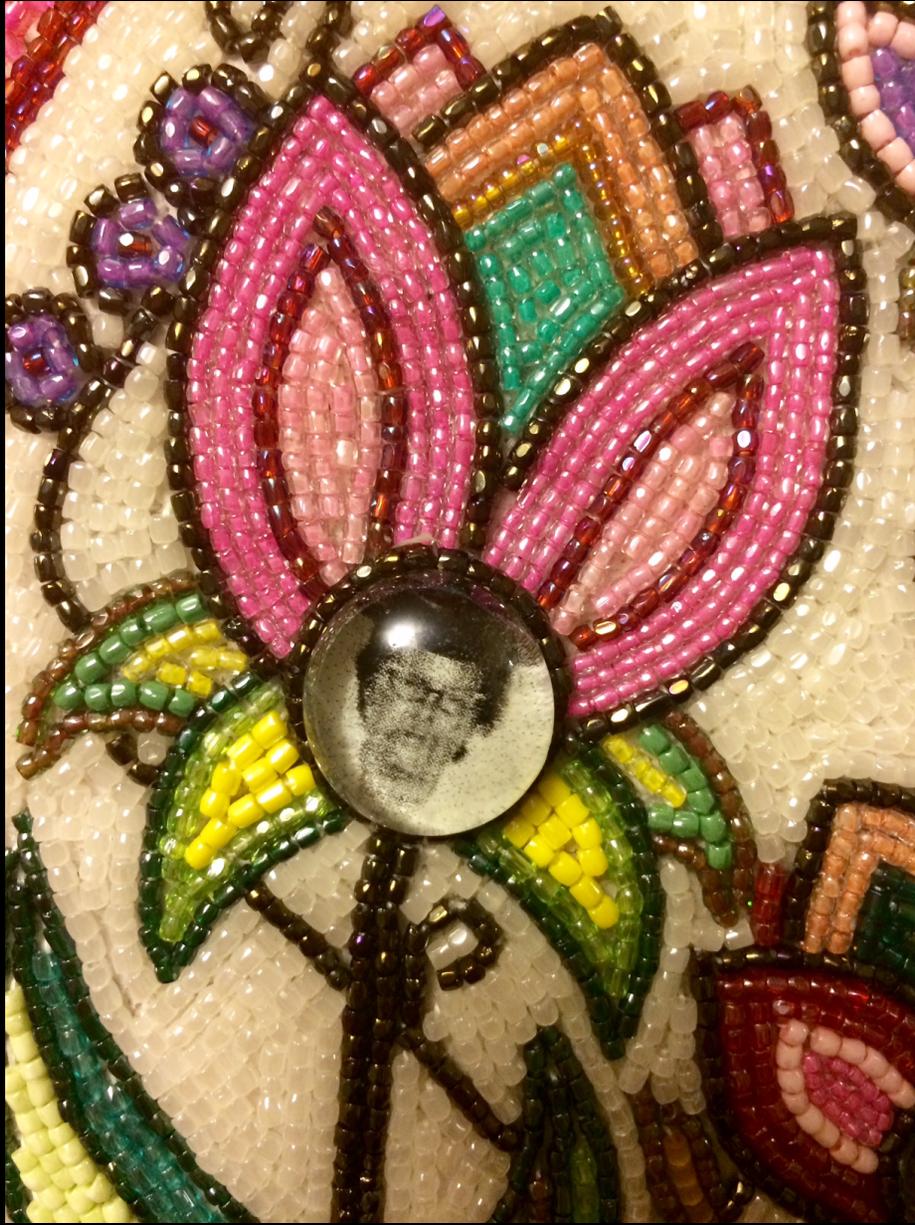
“Always With Me”

2015

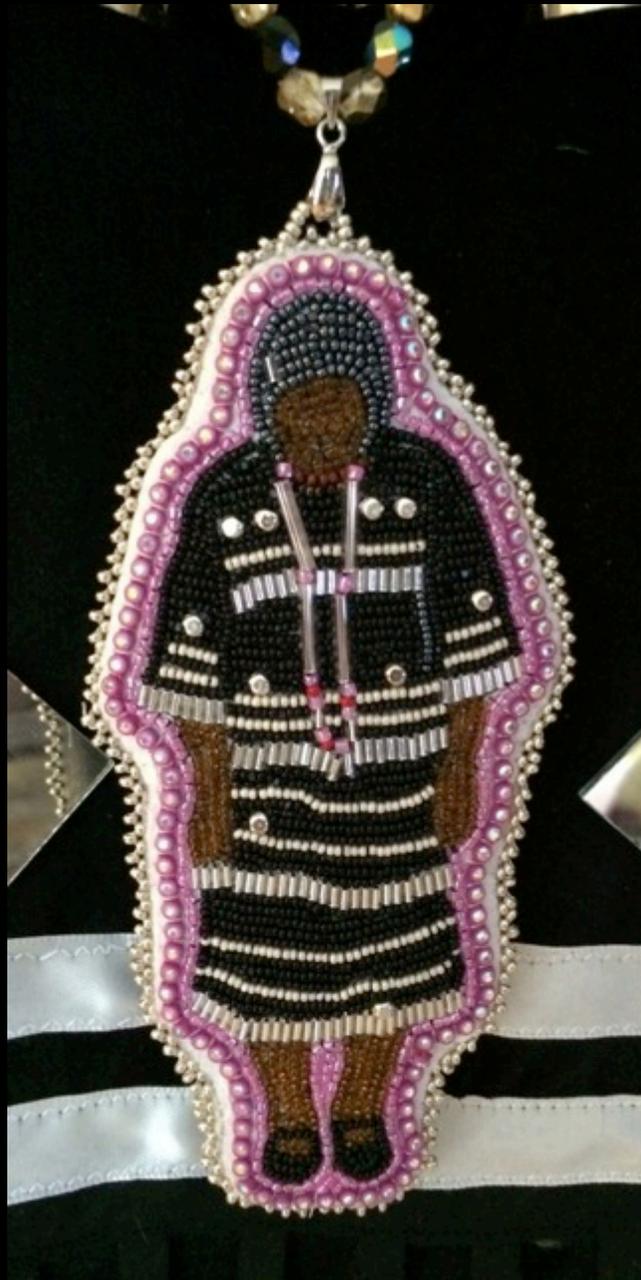
Women's Necklace  
with Cut Czech beads



Detail



Detail



Polly Jordon circa  
1926



“For Maddy”

Celeste Pedri-  
Spade, 2015

Velvet Jingle  
Dress with  
beaded medallion



Julie, Rose and Linda Shebobman in Kashabowie, ON circa late 1960s



“Ogichidaakwewag” Fabric Quilt Hanging, 2016



Detail

## **Artist Statement: The Teaching is in the Making**

*In many ways we see ourselves, who we are and where we have come from, in the photographs of our Ojibwe ancestors. The life experiences of generations of Ojibwe radiate from these images that our family members have left for us like light that reflects from the surface of the many bodies of water that flow throughout our vast territory. The stories wash over us like good medicine, helping us along in our healing journey.*

### **Introduction**

Photographs do more than provide evidence of past, people, places and events. They don't just tell us what to believe in, they also provide us with a reason to believe. In other words, like stories, photographs help sustain our faith. They do so as both historical documents that reveal and confirm valuable information about our ancestors and as powerful catalysts that can transform the way we think about and work through the past. As an Anishinabekwe, I have come to learn that Anishinabeg have of a vibrant and diverse history of sharing valuable teachings through both stories and images. Pictures of my own family members have been integral to my own journey of connecting the dots between people I may have never met and places I have never been to, and yet are integral to the development of my identity and belongingness as an Anishinabekwe. Taken up within my head and my heart, these photographs have always had this power to mark me— intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.

*The Teaching is in the Making* is about restoring and re-storying relationships that are integral to Anishinabeg history, identity, and continued survivance. The art pieces materialize moments of relating, remembrance, and healing made possible through the experience and recreation of Anishinabeg family photographs and my

own artistic engagement with my family's photographs. The artwork is about 'living out' the marks and stories that our ancestors left behind. It is about honouring not only a past existence, but their continued presence in our lives. It recognizes the integral role our Anishinabe photographs play in understanding important teachings necessary for our survival including ideas of continuance, healing and interconnection (see Vizenor, 2008; 1994).

*The Teaching is in the Making* is part of a larger project centered on the collection and experience of 82 Anishinabeg-based family photographs taken from the late 1910s to the late 1960s. Over the course of several months, I met with members of different Anishinabeg families with ancestral connections to lands in northwestern Ontario, specifically to areas around the communities of Kashabowie, Shebandowan, Atikokan, Kenora, Raith, and Savanne. The intent was to work with my family and other community members with whom I had an existing relationship in order to bring together a community catalogue. People I met with contributed 8 to 10 photographs each, based on which photographs were most meaningful to them. I use the term "Anishinabeg-based" to acknowledge that the photographs were taken by Anishinabeg of Anishinabeg and that the images were taken care of by our families for 45-100 years.

Some of the individuals who took part in this process were invited to participate in an activity whereby we re-took the historical image with the individual(s) sitting or standing in the place of their ancestors. What was learned from this experience was unique to each individual, yet overall this process provided a means for people to revisit or reconnect with the Anishinabeg stories of

their ancestors--stories that are both unique to each individual but that connect to a unified and shared history marked by the resilience and perseverance of our Anishinabeg people. Additionally, through a more private engagement with a handful of ancestral photographs, I created seven regalia and other cultural items using fabric, leather, raw- hide, beads and other various textile and metal components. These items embody my relationship to my ancestral past made possible through a sensuous and material experience of the images.

In this essay, I will first discuss the layout of the gallery space, attending to the specific curatorial choices that are integral to the experience of these artworks. I will then discuss specific elements of the artistic and ethnographic process that lead to the artworks which are part of *The Teaching in the Making*, connecting these processes to larger themes that relate to the regeneration and re-presencing of Anishinabeg history, knowledge, relationships, and people within our home territory. In doing so, I will reveal how *The Teaching is in the Making* is connected to our ongoing processes to harnessing photography to learn, to respect, to understand and to engage in the ongoing processes of healing and reconnecting as Indigenous People who have and continue to struggle against/with many forms of colonial violence including the aftermath of residential schools, the “sixties scoop” and the Indian reserve system. I will demonstrate how *The Teaching is in the Making* makes a powerful contribution to Indigenous presence and survivance and sovereignty.

### **The Gathering Space**

I am reluctant to assign the title of “exhibition” to this collection of works.

I prefer to use the word, gathering, because it reflects an Anishinabe way of conveying the coming together of people and art at a specific time and place, for a specific purpose. The intent is to transform the gallery space into a more traditional gathering space (like in the roundhouse or powwow arbour), where the community members/guests of the gathering sit around the perimeter and the sacred items and/or dancers are in the middle. Moving around the arbour, I was taught to dance in a zigzag pattern, moving toward the centre drums for personal healing and self-reflection and outwards, for the healing and wellbeing of my family and extended community.

Following this teaching, the photographs (both historical and contemporary) and stories of the Anishinabeg I worked with line the outer perimeter walls of the gallery space, while the drum, blanket and regalia items are in the centre of the gallery space, placed on a blanket of cedar, facing outwards back towards the photographs. Gallery visitors are guided to first “dance outwards” along the perimeter of the gallery space to view the photographs and story boards, and then to “dance inwards” to view the regalia and cultural items.

### **The Outer “Circle”**

Hanging on the perimeter walls are 30 pieces of photography presented in 15 pairs. Each pair consists of a historical family photograph paired with new photograph. The new photograph is of a descendant (or descendants) of the original person/people in the older image. Filling the spaces between these 15 pairs are 12 text boards. Six of the boards are quotations provided by Anishinabeg family members that contributed historical photographs to the larger collection of 80

photographs and the other 6 boards are poems that I have personally crafted. The poems represent found poems (Faulkner, 2009) that were crafted from personal stories shared by people in the repeat photographs. The poems are my way of synthesizing the spirit of the individual stories and creating a linkage between the photographs as well. By incorporating these textual pieces, I am acknowledging the relationship between the story and image that is important to eliciting responses in the viewer, unleashing meaning, and inviting stories (Bernardin, 2011).

### **The Inner “Circle”**

In the center of the gallery space, sit the six (6) regalia and cultural items placed on boughs of cedar. These items have been feasted and blessed in a private ceremony at my community roundhouse and therefore should not be on the bare floor. The dresses and beadwork will be placed on bodices and the blanket and drum will be placed directly on the cedar. As per my Anishinabe teachings, a small feast dish and water offering will accompany these items to feed and honour our ancestors. The drum will be played by local men at the opening and will be played again before the gathering closes.

### **Repeating Images of Our Ancestors**

The idea to recreate some of the images of our ancestors came from a conversation with a community member when I was planning my research and looking for ways to experience these images in a way that reflected my individual creativity and interest in the camera. During this planning stage, I looked to the work of other Indigenous photographers engaged in work with historical photographic archives of Indigenous peoples. What I found was that much of the

work which drew on archival images of Indigenous peoples, used photographs created by non-Indigenous photographers and that this work aimed to challenge and subvert colonial narratives and stereotypes. What I was particularly drawn to as an Anishinabekwe artist was the work of other female Indigenous artists creating art that incorporated their own family photographs. I found that this work offered valuable insight into Indigenous identities, gender issues, and the importance of relationships within Indigenous families (see Pistilli Conrad, 2009; Passalacqua, 2009; Racette, 2011; Thomas, 2011; Tsihnahjinnie, 2009; 2003).

I knew that I wanted to explore the role of the camera in regenerating relationships (to the past, to one another in the present, to our ancestors, etc.), which were integral to our survivance as Anishinabeg. Having arrived at this, I became inspired by the work conducted by visual anthropologist and artist Trudi Smith (2007), specifically her use of repeat photography as an embodied experience that involves an artistic and ethnographic-informed retake of a photograph in order to “make the past present and to present the past” (p. 183). Smith employs repeat photography as an embodied ethnographic act that relies upon identifying the exact location of the historical photograph and retaking the image from the exact vantage point. In doing so, she explores the value of archival photographs in exploring experiences of space and place across time. Drawing from her work, I met with several individuals to select an image of their ancestor(s) that we could retake. Photographs were selected collaboratively with participants; however, I tried to ensure that my work reflected our women, men, children and kitchianishinabekwewag (female Elders).

My initial intent was to scout out the exact location where each historical photograph was taken and retake it; however, early on in the process I discovered that it was very difficult to pinpoint locations, given that the photographs were portraits and not landscape images. Also, one of the Kitchianishinabekwegag involved in the process didn't seem to understand the need to locate the exact same location given that we knew our ancestors walked all over our territory and indeed their presence could still be seen and felt, specifically through sharing stories, fasting and other ceremonies. I saw this view is indicative of Indigenous understanding of place as an expansive, fluid concept based on the interconnectivity of human and natural environments (see Gow, 2003; Swentzell, 1997); whereby notions of place emerge through a whole host of relationship building activities and practices concerned with kinship, belongingness, identity, and community wellbeing (Basso, 1996; Morphy, 1995; Snyder, Williams & Peterson, 2003; Swentzell, 1997). Thus, we began the process of going out to locations where we knew our ancestors talked about or where the people who participated in the repeat photographs felt connected to as Anishinabeg. During these field trips, we talked about what we knew about the people in the photograph, about who they were, places they used to visit, what they liked to do, and who their friends and family were. We also talked about what we didn't know about the people and why we lacked the knowledge (e.g. residential schools, child welfare, interference by private and government organizations). People decided on what they wanted to wear in the photograph and how they should pose. Some individuals decided to try to dress and pose in a similar manner to their ancestor, while others decided to honour their relatives by wearing

their regalia. While every person's experience and story was unique to them, what connected the narratives of all our images was our belief in and admiration for the struggle of our ancestors—what they had to endure to remain connected to their children, their spirituality, their friends, and their lands. As people shared their perspectives, it became quite clear that the same tenacity and spirit was still present in each and every one of us as the descendants of the people originally pictured.

As the photographer, I felt a tremendous sense of honour and responsibility. I After all, I was documenting Anishinabeg that many people in society believe no longer existed. I was documenting people I knew had to fight to maintain their Indigenous presence in different Western institutions. I was documenting people who were the survivors of intergenerational colonial trauma. I was documenting people who were so full of hope, love, and strength, despite decades of struggle. It became imperative for me to find a way to privilege them—their presence, or as Siebert (2015) suggests, that they were living, breathing Indigenous People belonging in a contemporary world. For each portrait, I used a tilt shift to bring an almost three-dimensional quality to the image, to create movement and energy. I employed this aesthetic to emphasize that, yes, there is something never settled about Indigenous existence—we are always struggling maintain our presence, our identity, our cultural practices, our rights to our lands—but also to emphasize that through this struggle, Anishinabeg carry themselves with a grace, fortitude and dignity. Using a tilt-shift is a way of playing around with the planes of focus in a way that defies physics. I saw my friends and family members as individuals who continuously strove to defy and resist colonialism.

Similar to Smith's work, *The Teaching is In the Making* explores the possibility of turning the archive from a site of excavation to a site of construction and creativity (Foster, 2004), as Sondergaard (2013) states "archives will always play a large part in construction that is human being" (p. 313). Yet, Vokes (2012) reminds us that issues of power are central to photographs involving Indigenous people because photography came into Indigenous societies as a tool used by the European colonizer to exploit, dominate, and colonize Indigenous Peoples. As we repeated the photographs of our ancestors, transforming the archive to a site of construction and creativity, this process became a powerful tool to counter colonialism and re-assert Anishinabeg sovereignty because the remake of each photograph was an intentional act of Anishinabeg going back out onto their traditional lands, now "owned" by a settler colonial governments thereby re-inscribing Anishinabeg presence in contested lands. Indigenous photographer/academic Martin (2015) describes this process:

Within the historical images there resides the opportunity to examine the footprints of Native Peoples upon the land, and simultaneously to re-inhabit and re-claim these Native places in the active interpreted present. (p. 5)

Examining these footprints for us, meant using the images and their stories (Edwards, 2009) to reconnect with our ancestral past and discuss what that past means to us in the present and future. In this way, we recognized our family photographs as a powerful archive of social relations (Borggreen & Gade, 2013); and, through the repeat photography process, we were re-connecting and strengthening relationships among one another. This reveals how integral

photographs are to developing a renewed sense of community (Askren, 2009; Lonetree, 2011; Brown & Peers, 2009; Thomas, 2011). The historical photograph juxtaposed to the contemporary one contributes a powerful visual sovereignty (Dowell, 2007; Passalacqua, 2009; Pedri-Spade, 2014; Raheja, 2007) because the two images together reveal a continued presence *and* our ongoing collective responsibility to carrying forward the relationships and teachings that were/are integral to our lives. As one participant stated:

When I see the photographs, there is a connectedness there. Things were really tough back then and you look at the pictures now... you look at yourself and your life in relation to theirs and you appreciate their struggles even more. So, it is almost as if the experience of their struggle is heightened...and you feel so much appreciation. It strengthens your resolve to carry on and live in a good way. My life takes on new importance and meaning in relation to their lives and their histories (M. Pedri, personal communication, September, 2014)

This quote demonstrates how there is a connectedness to community and immediacy that is present in photographs, potentially, more than in any other media (Aird, 2003; Evans, 2012; Hirsch, 1997; Racette, 2011; Tsinhanahjinnie, 2003)

The repeat photographs were our response to our ancestors' "visual call to action" (Racette, 2011, p. 89) because as Thomas (2011) states, our ancestors were leaving us an intentional mark of their evidence in this world, which they intended for us to discover and relate to in our own way. The new image isn't a reenactment or copy, rather it is a reflection, whereby the new photograph mirrors the old

inasmuch as the old photograph mirrors the new one. Photographs are very much like mirrors. We look into mirrors to check on ourselves. We look into mirrors not so much for the purpose of seeing exactly how we appear, but to look for the best version of ourselves as possible. Berger (1972, p. 8) states “the way we see things is affected by what we know and what we believe.” I would also add, what we want to hope and dream for.

As we came together, we looked to the photographs searching not only for stories about their lives, but evidence of our best selves within these stories, because the stories emanating from the images were of pride and determination. In a way, our ancestors are looking back at us, checking up on us as any good teacher or caretaker would. Thus, the two images together speak to the existence of the ongoing fight for self-determination and a deep bond with our ancestors that we strive to maintain (Thomas, 2011). It is a bond I believe they feel as well. As Anishinabeg we often connect over a shared history of colonial violence, yet through the production of this artwork, we connected over a shared history of successfully surviving this violence as one participant stated “In looking at these images, I feel so proud to tell my son what it means to be Anishinabe” (D. Sawdo, personal communication, November 2014). It is an important aspect of our healing journey—to recognize and reaffirm our history of countering decades of colonialism, which can get overshadowed by past and present forms of colonial violence we encounter every day. Moreover, in recreating the photograph, we are presenting a version of ourselves back to our ancestors as a mark of gratitude—as a thank you and an acknowledgement of our responsibility to them. Indigenous scholar Vine Deloria Jr.

(2001) reminds us that for Indigenous people “place” is best understood as the relationship of things (land, people, other-than human, spirit) to each other. Lee (2012) reminds us that for Anishinabeg, relationships *are* responsibility and reciprocity; therefore, for Anishinabeg place is the reciprocal relationship we find ourselves within our Anishinabe territory and all the beings and things within them. Therefore, this experience of remaking photographs of our ancestors enfolded ongoing reciprocal relationships to place that were not about experiencing the land in the same way as our ancestors did, but were about establishing and working on our own relationships in a respectful, non-invasive way. Following the teachings of our ancestors, we left each place in the same way we found it, instead inscribing our presence through our relationships and the shutter click.

### **The Regalia and Cultural Items**

Racette (2011) states an artistic practice of resistance is one that simultaneously focuses outward and inward, giving strength to those engaged in struggle. As part of my journey inward, I selected several photographs of my own ancestors to materialize into regalia and cultural items that I in turn could give back to my own family members. Prior to this endeavor, I received a dream that I was making regalia out of photographs of my ancestors, and after consultation with my mother and kitchianishinabekwewag, accepted the responsibility to carry out this vision.

I approached each image of my ancestor with the question of what can I do for you?—what can I do to honour our relationship, to say *miigwetch* for your struggle and continued guidance? As I proceeded to work with each photograph, it

was if I was entering into a conversation with each person. As I actively worked with my materials, taking direction from the smaller details of each photograph that compelled me to act, I let the materials guide my direction. With every contemplative act I stitched together something that embodied my continued commitment to my ancestor's stories. Each creative act helped propel this conversation forward as I remained attentive to how my body, in relation to the materials, helped reveal and re-inscribe ancestral knowledge. For example, as I created the quilted piece "Ogichidaakwewag" I had to find a way to quilt the outline of their bodies. As I started to place the black applique, I realized how much my work started to resemble a topographic map, where their black appliqued material stood for the vast lake systems in our territory. I then started to think about stories told me to me about how young Anishinabekwe used to receive women's teachings during long walks towards specific lakes. This reaffirmed teachings I've received around the role of women in protecting or looking after the water in our territory.

As I worked with every material this conversation continued and I was able to strengthen my relationship paying attention to how every material act revealed knowledge related to my ancestors that I would not have learned without this process of making or doing. Methodologically, materiality offers opportunities to revisit images in ways that help tell stories of the past and create meanings that would otherwise go unnoticed (Osmond, 2010). This acknowledges that photographs do not simply emit our stories about the past, but can actively participate in their configuration and congealment.

## Conclusion

As Anishinabeg we often connect over this shared history of colonial violence. Through current systems based on Eurocentric concepts of justice and restitution, we are constantly compelled to prove the wrongs committed against us. To recount and relive the violence. Yet, Anishinabe are not byproducts of violence and tragedy. We are strong innovators who have and continue to persevere. *The Teaching in the Making* is intended to remind us of this and at the same time inspire us to walk our own sovereign path. Photographs of our ancestors compel us to acknowledge and honour their lives. They inspire us to leave our own marks for future generations to experience and for our ancestors to witness. As an artist and visual anthropologist, the act of remaking photographs represents and reinscribes our legacy of struggle towards decolonization and because it involves Anishinabeg coming together on their territory, to take control of the the visual legacy of their ancestors and exercise self-determination in how Anishianbeg are made present today. This is Anishinabeg sovereignty.

Our photographs do not just bring the past into the present, through our embodied experience of them in their recreation, they are about presenting back a version of self to the past, a self that is not disengaged, disinterested, or disconnected but a self that walks with knowledge of and appreciation for all of the work done before us—As people who walk on the same lands as our ancestors did but are leaving our own footprints. And this is what sovereignty is to me. Raheja (2007) argues visual sovereignty is exercised by Indigenous artists and communities through creative acts of self-representation that dismantle Western

stereotypes of Indigenous Peoples and strengthen the “intellectual health” (p. 1161) of the community. In a similar point, Dowell (2013) argues that visual sovereignty is enacted through creative acts that make Indigenous stories visible. While visual sovereignty is about resistance, voice, self-representation, and the revitalization of Indigenous knowledge, our visual creative work revealed that at heart of Anishinabeg sovereignty is belief. A belief that the footsteps of our ancestors will lead us to a good place. In other words, Anishinabeg sovereignty is an intense responsibility to our ancestors, their relationship with our Anishinabeg lands and our ongoing commitment to living in a way that reflects a respectful relationship with their life experiences and stories. It is a commitment to living out the teachings of our ancestors within our homelands. As an artist—as a maker—I see photography as a powerful tool in this struggle.



## EXHIBITION AGREEMENT

This is an agreement between

**Celeste Pedri-Spade**  
125 Wasco Drive  
Thunder Bay, ON P7G 1A3.  
Tel. Number  
[cvpedri@gmail.com](mailto:cvpedri@gmail.com)

and the Thunder Bay Art Gallery

by which we agree:

### 1. Exhibition.

**Celeste Pedri-Spade** (hereinafter referred to as the Artist) will provide the Thunder Bay Art Gallery (hereinafter referred to as the Gallery) with work to be exhibited by the Gallery under the title of "**The Teaching is In The Making**": **Re(Store)ied Memories of Anishinabeg**.

### 2. Exhibition Fee.

The Gallery will pay to the Artist an Exhibition Fee of **CDN\$ 1150** - in accordance with the current CARFAC Fee Schedule - upon the opening of the exhibition. This fee includes the use of images of the work and its presentation for publicity, educative, interpretive and archival purposes in accordance with the Gallery's mission (see item 10, below).

### 3. Venue.

The Gallery will exhibit the work from **June 24 to September 4, 2016** in that part of the gallery space commonly referred to as **Gallery I**. The Gallery will be open to the public during established public viewing hours: Tuesday to Thursday noon to 8pm; Friday to Sunday noon to 5pm.

### 4. List of Work.

120 days prior to opening, in consultation with the Curator, the Artist will provide a List of Works to be included in the exhibition. Use a separate page to list the work and include the following information for each piece: title, date, medium, dimensions, credit line and value. Any exceptional physical considerations regarding care, handling and/or conservation as well as public safety and security must also be identified. All works still in progress must be itemized. This list forms a part of this contract.

### 5. Delivery of Work.

The Artist will make delivery arrangements with the Registrar. The condition of the work will be monitored both incoming and outgoing. Condition will be recorded as a physical state. All works will be finished and suitable for display (including matting, framing, etc., if applicable) unless other arrangements have been made and agreed with the Gallery. Works in progress will be exhibited only by prior agreement.

### 6. Installation.

The Gallery will be responsible for the installation, display and lighting of the works of art after consultation with the Artist. In the event of any disagreement over aspects of presentation, the Curator reserves the right to make the final decision. The exhibition will remain intact for the stated time period (see item 3, above) during public viewing hours and no works will be added, removed or altered. The Artist is responsible for communicating any special technical considerations germane to the presentation and their associated costs to the Gallery and these must be mutually agreed upon.

### 7. Return of Work.

The Artist is responsible for arranging the collection of all work included in "**The Teaching is In The Making**": **Re(Store)ied Memories of Anishinabeg** immediately following the closing of the exhibition. The Artist will make collection arrangements with the Registrar.

### 8. Insurance.

The Gallery will be responsible for the insurance of the works on site. The Artist will be responsible for the safety and security of the work while in transit. Seven days prior to shipment, the Artist will confirm the itemized list of values, in order that the Gallery may make insurance arrangements.

### 9. Invigilation.

The Gallery will provide invigilation for the exhibition during public viewing hours.

### 10. Publicity.

The Gallery will arrange all publicity for the exhibition, will be responsible for its design, layout, content, printing and distribution to Gallery membership and interested parties and will cover the costs thereof. 120 days prior to opening, the Artist will provide the Gallery with a biography and three or more sample colour images of finished work, suitable for reproduction, representing the character of the project and including title, date, medium, dimensions and applicable credit line(s) for each image. The Gallery reserves the right to document the work and its presentation for publicity, educative, interpretive and archival purposes in accordance with our mission, and will not use, publish, or distribute any subsequent representations of the Artist's work without the Artist's specific permission. Should an invitation be produced, the Artist will be provided with 25 copies for personal distribution.

### 11. Sale of Work.

All sales of work from the exhibition are the sole responsibility of the Artist or designated agent and must be negotiated directly between the Artist/agent and the interested buyer. The Gallery will provide access to a price list to the visiting public, will note any enquiries and will forward those enquiries directly to the Artist, but will have no other part in the sale



## EXHIBITION AGREEMENT

of work. So that the Gallery may maintain an accurate price list, the Artist will provide the Gallery with an itemized price list for the work and will keep the Gallery apprised of sales in a timely manner. The Artist and/or their clients will be responsible for their own delivery arrangements after the period of exhibition.

### 12. Events and Activities.

The Artist agrees to the following additional involvement:

- Opening Reception: TBD
- Artist talk: TBD
- Publication: Catalogue TBD
- Other: artist demonstration, workshop, docent training, classes

As applicable, in accordance with the Ontario Ministry of Health's food handling guidelines, the Gallery may provide refreshments for events and staff to serve them, at its own expense.

### 13. Sponsors and Partners.

The funding for the exhibition and attendant activities, named above, will be the responsibility of the Gallery.

### 14. Attachments

The following information is attached to and forms part of this contract:

- List of Work (reference item 4)
- Brief artist's biography (reference item 10)
- Three colour images (reference item 10)

The Artist must supply the following information seven days prior to opening:

- Confirmed itemized list of insurance values (reference item 8)

### 15. Force Majeure

In the event that any part of this agreement on the part of the Artist or the Gallery will be prevented by an Act of God, physical disability, the acts or regulations of duly constituted public authorities, strike, civil tumult, war, epidemic, interruption or delay of transportation service or other cause beyond their control, each will be relieved of their obligations hereunder during the period such prevention exists. It is understood and agreed that there will be no claim for damages by either party of this agreement.

This agreement is governed by the laws of the province of Ontario and Canada. Any dispute arising out of or related to this agreement will be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Ontario courts.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have signed this agreement, dated the <day> day of <month>, <year> :

THE ARTIST:

  
Signature

March 21, 2016  
Date

THUNDER BAY ART GALLERY:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nadia Kurd, Curator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **Chapter 3: The Day My Photographs Danced: Materializing Photographs of My Anishinabe Ancestors**

#### **Abstract**

The majority of research on the production and transmission of knowledge about the Anishinabe past has privileged the role and power of storytelling. Without devaluing this process, this research explores the role of Anishinabe photographs as distinct material things, in memory production. Through the materialization and transformation of six (6) photographs of my Anishinabe ancestors, I ground my approach in the performative and embodied aspects of Anishinabeg ways of knowing and emphasize the agency of the materials worked with in the process of meaning-making. Research findings stress the conceptualization of Anishinabeg memory as a visceral, tangible, relational, and sensorial experience—one that privileges creativity, intuition, and imagination—to strengthening relationships to the ancestral past, now and into the future. By locating Anishinabeg photographs as distinct Indigenous things, I transcend ontological and methodological limitations associated with conceptualizing photographs as only indexical traces. Rather, I trace or “stitch” through the different relationships between actants made visible, sensible and knowable through a material and phenomenological oriented approach that is informed by my teachings and identity as an Anishinabekwe.

*Focused on the straight seam under my fingertips, I glide the fabric forward...slowly, intentionally... in anticipation. With the last and final stitch, I raise the needle, lift the metal foot, and carefully lift the finished dress towards me. I reach for my scissors and cut the thread, releasing the finished piece from the machine. As I hold up the dress to examine my work, the calico cotton transforms into a blanket of faces. People that I recognize but do not really know. As I look closer, I see that I am holding images of my ancestors: A dress of photographs underneath satin ribbons, floral appliques and jingle cones. I understand that I am just dreaming. I am aware that I will awake soon. But in that moment I am overwhelmed by the urge to put this dress on. I long to feel the fabric against my skin...to hear the sound of its metal cones....*

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## **Part 1**

### **Introduction**

I remember the day I recounted this dream to my mother at her kitchen table back in 2011. Like always, she was busy working. Every evening her kitchen transformed into her “sewing space”—a space where many beautiful regalia items materialized through her creativity, ingenuity, patience, and skill that had been my classroom for many years. While some mothers may have responded with a question like, “well, what do you think that dream meant?” My mother, sitting at her sewing machine, framed, as always, by the clutter of the evening’s work, responded with, “so what will you learn from doing it?”

And with this simple, yet significant question, I embarked on a two-year project revolving around the materialization of six family photographs taken of my Anishinabe ancestors. I set out to make Anishinabe regalia—regalia used in ceremony and dance—with images located within our family album. The resulting work became part of an exhibition entitled, *The Teaching is in the Making*.<sup>1</sup> The images, taken from around the early 1920s to the late 1960s, spanned four generations of our family. They were selected from a larger community-based project I facilitated that brought together 82 photographs

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<sup>1</sup> *The Teaching is in the Making* was held at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery June 28-September 4, 2016

from other Anishinabeg family albums taken during the same time period. As a result of a collaborative research agenda that respected the wishes of these families, I prepared a community-catalogue— a tangible visual resource that included all 82 photographs (see Pedri-Spade, 2016)

While the creation of this community archival resource was significant, I felt like something was missing. I wanted to do something more. While I found tremendous value and meaning in gathering the images, documenting information about our relatives, and facilitating opportunities for Anishinabeg to come together, re-connect and reclaim stories about our past that colonial authorities had, for generations, oppressed or erased, I still felt that there was a piece missing. I felt a deep voice, like a piece of me was missing in this project. I felt the work was unfinished. I wanted more from my family photographs and at the same time I wanted to do more for these images because experiencing them in an album or a book left me unsatisfied. As an Anishinabekwe, so much of my identity was defined by and through my ability to create things; to bring together different materials in transformative processes. I understood and was most comfortable with myself as a maker of things. I can hear my mother now:

Anishinabekwewag are makers! We make things for our people—our families— food, clothing, blankets, ceremonial clothing, slippers, baskets, etc. It is what we do. It is who we are. (M. Pedri, personal communication, September 2012)

There are a few introductory points about the significance of such an undertaking that I must attend to from my position as an Anishinabekwe and as a visual anthropologist. My first point relates to the value of dreams or dreaming to Anishinabe knowledge and research. Within Anishinabe worldview, dreams are valuable tools. As

Marsden (2004) illustrates, dreams are especially helpful in guiding a person's actions towards achieving knowledge goals or making sense of the world. My second point relates to my identity and role as a practicing visual anthropologist with a particular interest in, and commitment to, linking processes and practices of remembrance, family stories, photography, materiality and creativity. As an Anishinabekwe artist and researcher I find myself "at home" exploring those fluid, messy and critical spaces where I can not only write about history but think, smell, and touch it. Therefore, I locate myself within what Stoller (2015) describes as the multi-sensorial spaces where stories of the past are told and retold, experienced and understood through sound, movement, scent and touch. Third, in making regalia based on these photographs, I immediately locate photographs not simply as finished items that can be *read* but as material items that can be *worked with*. Thus, this endeavor corresponds with anthropological/artistic focus on processes of making things and what happens to photographs as they become caught up in the life histories and social interactions of the people who experience them (see Bunn, 2011; Owen, 2005; Ingold, 2013; 2011; 2007).

This paper contributes to Indigenous anthropological literature that remains sensitive to the ways people understand their pasts and possible futures through the relationships they and others have with photographs. It incorporates a phenomenological and material informed approach that acknowledges the performative, embodied aspects of Anishinabeg ways of knowing and emphasizes the agency of those materials we work with in revealing new meaning in the research process. Like any good seamstress, I begin this work by doing some preparatory groundwork, basting together theories of Anishinabeg knowledge, photographs, memory, and materiality and then outlining my

methodological approach. Following this pursuit, I then present my art pieces and research findings. In doing so, I demonstrate that moving beyond conceptualizing photographs as evidence of a past existence towards taking them up as a historical and material “thread” is integral to inspiring and materializing new ways of remembering and relating to our ancestral past—ways that are attentive to and respectful of Anishinabe knowledge and way of life. In doing so, I contribute to Anishinabe understandings and meanings of memory, materiality and photography which have significant implications for both Anishinabe families and communities and their allies working in these areas.

### **Anishinabeg Photographs, Regalia and Materiality**

Like many other Indigenous peoples, Anishinabeg have a long and complex history with photography not simply as passive subjects but as active and agentive participants (see Pedri-Spade, 2014; White, 2007). Anishinabeg have a history of photographing themselves throughout their territory either sitting in a portrait-style setting or engaged in cultural and ceremonial activities (gathering wild rice, fishing, dancing, drumming, etc.) (Pedri-Spade, 2016). Both my research into historical Anishinabe photographs and my current photographic practice has revealed that Anishinabe photographs both convey and help configure significant relationships among Anishinabeg, our traditional lands, and our ancestors and that these relationships are significant to our continued efforts to empowering Anishinabeg to tell their histories, which have been suppressed through decades of colonial oppression and to re-asserting their sovereignty in contested places (Pedri-Spade, 2016; 2014).

Within the growing body of literature presented by Anishinabe academics, there has been considerable attention paid to the tradition of storytelling in conveying

Anishinabe history related to past events, people and places, locating these histories in the oral storytelling traditions of our Anishinabe ancestors. This focus on the relationship between oral storytelling and the production and representation of Anishinabe knowledge about the past has had a strong influence on existing research into Anishinabe visual culture (paintings, pictures, beadwork, rock paintings, etc.), which privileges a representational framework and makes little or no distinction between the visual and textual (see Robertson, 2007; Erdrich, 2003; Corbiere & Migwans, 2013; McGlennen, 2013; Willcott, 2005). While Anishinabe visual culture does indeed convey a story and is often rich in symbolic meaning, one must acknowledge that there are distinctive aspects of our visual cultural items as things,<sup>2</sup> which are made with different materials, through different processes and practices that compel one not to simply reduce them to mere vessels for a story.

Geismar (2009) and Bell (2010; 2008) argue that in order to fully understand the meaning and value of Indigenous-based photographs, one must understand them as a distinct Indigenous objects and that insight from Indigenous language around photography and other material culture may assist in this endeavour. In Anishinabemowin the root of the word for photograph (*mazinaakizon*) is “*mazinaa*,” which, as Erdrich (2013) states, “... is the root for dozens of words all concerned with *made* images and with the *substances* [emphasis added] upon which the images are put, paper, screens...” (p. 17). Thus, the significance of materiality to Anishinabe photography is located within Anishinabemowin and supports Barthes (1981) notion of

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2 The concept of ‘things’ is different than ‘objects’, the latter being understood as fixed or finished. Rather, things are emergent, fluid, and in a continuous process of becoming. Things are constituted through ongoing relationships with material and people (see Barber, 2007; Brown, 2001; Miller, 2010; Ingold, 2010; Bunn, 2011)

the “structural autonomy” (p. 15) of photographs that do not only convey realities of stories, but also help configure them (Banks, 1998; Belting, 2005; Edwards, 2009; 2002; Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2005). Indeed, the material things belonging to a people can condense the social history of a community, the stories of individuals, and “through their persistence and materiality project them forwards” (Thomas 1993, as cited in Gillespie, 2010).

Stoller (2015, 1995) urges researchers to address the texture of social life—to think about history as more than text on a page or stories told about the past. In his work involving the Songhay people in West Africa, Stoller (1995) demonstrates how history is a set of living forces that sensuously brings the past into the flow of life. Stoller encourages researchers to address the “tactile dimension of history... that which people are able to hear, smell, and touch the past” (Stoller, 2015, para. 5). As an Anishinabekwe artist/researcher I have often longed for this tactile dimension of history, inspired by the words of my kitchianishinabeg that would often discuss how, *we wear our teachings*, that *we live our knowledge*. I have written elsewhere (Pedri-Spade, 2011; 2014; 2016) about the performative, embodied, and creative dimensions of Anishinabe knowledge—how Anishinabeg produce and make use of a range of material artworks—drums, songs, paintings, photographs—in transmitting knowledge related to all aspects of life from one generation to the next and how these ways of knowing *are* ways of being *and* ways of practicing our spirituality.

Some of the most significant and sacred things we make and look after as Anishinabeg, are referred to as our “regalia”. From an Anishinabekwe perspective, regalia may include ribbon skirts or dresses worn in ceremonies, other dresses or items

(beadwork, scarves, bags, etc.) danced at powwows or other special gatherings.

Kitchianishinabekwe Wanda Baxter describes Anishinabeg regalia and its spiritual and cultural significance:

Our regalia has a spiritual life. It already existed before someone made it. When you make it, you are bringing it here (to this world) to help you and to help others.

This is why we look after it so well. This is why we feast it. (W. Baxter, personal communication, December 10, 2015)

I remember my mother, one of the most accomplished regalia makers in our community, explain that the spirit of the regalia items we make carry all the relationships with people and other living beings that went into its making and this is why it is so powerful. She explained that as a maker, you strive for excellence in your work not because you are trying to “show off” but because your task is to materialize and present what Wanda referred to as this “spiritual life.” She also explained to me that when we dance our regalia we are honouring the connection we have to our ancestors, and we are carrying out our responsibility as the people who are looking after the regalia and are inextricably linked to all the relationships that went into its production.

While Anishinabe photographs and Anishinabe regalia are different kinds of items (in the sense that they involve different kinds of material processes), they are similar in their ability to convey, configure and coagulate a host of relationships among Anishinabeg, their teachings, lands, and ancestors which are significant to their continued survivance as Anishinabeg.

## **Memory, Embodied Performance and Agency**

Several notable scholars emphasize the relationship between embodiment and memory: That one cannot forget that many people, think and remember with and through their bodies (Barber, 2007; Connerton, 1989; Coombes, 2003; Pink, 2009; Stoller, 1995; Trouillot, 1995; Schneider, 2012). Reclaiming and articulating our histories as Anishinabeg is linked to our ability to remember past people, places, and events and it is therefore critical to attend to the question of how these processes may relate to the formation of embodied memory. There is a considerable gap in academic research into the relationship between embodiment, materiality and Anishinabeg memory as the majority of research has privileged language, the role and power of oral storytelling. Without devaluing this process, and with my mother's words in the back of my mind, I argue for the need to consider the significance of making or working with things to create other things, and how this process contributes to existing Anishinabeg theories and practices around the ways people remember the past and how these ways affect our understandings and actions in the present.

In a similar vein, Jones (2007) states that while memories emerge inside people's minds and are often expressed through oral methods, they are also "transferred onto material objects" (p. 12). He argues that in order to fully understand the relationship between material culture and memory, it is crucial to involve the body in the analysis because one needs to account for the interaction between embodied individuals and the material world. Similarly, Jeffries (2016) states our skin is the most active medium through which we can process information, yet because we emphasize speech and orality, we rarely acknowledge how we come to understand through our sensory awareness,

specifically our experience of textiles. However, Pajaczkowska (2016) suggests that one can understand the role of material culture in memory production by “articulating activities of embodied knowledge with forms of thinking and knowing” (p. 80). Berkofer (2003), McGuinness (2016) and Stallybrass (1993) position cloth as a kind of memory as different pieces of clothing worn by individuals can evoke specific kinds of memories, specifically related to the absence of departed loved ones. They do so as people touch and smell items that previously belonged to individuals, thus triggering specific memories. The relationship between textiles, people and their ancestors is significant within Anishinabe culture. The power of cloth and other textiles like beads or leather and their relationship with the human body is well known by many Anishinabeg, including my own family. For example, clothing owned and worn by someone is linked to their physical, mental, and emotional being. Over time, clothing can hold positive or negative emotions or thoughts of a person. Clothing may also carry visitors—a presence of our ancestors or spirit helpers that comes to help us in life. Textiles used in the making of regalia, like beads, leather or cloth also carry part of the creator of the regalia item, which will impact the life and overall wellbeing of the individual who wears it at either ceremonial or life events. Similarly, other Anishinabe material items like hand drums embody the spirit of the animal (raw hide cover), the tree (drum frame), the person (drum carrier/singer) and the spiritual life of the song (Pedri-Spade, 2016; Pedri, 2011). Therefore, the spiritual life of something like a photograph or a regalia item may have an agency endowed through multiple layers of human/other than human relationships that played a part in its entrance and usage here in this world. This agency is similar to Bennett’s (2010; 2005) work, which states a thing’s “efficacy or agency depends on the

collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces” (2010, p. 23).

The power or agency of things has implications for their role in bringing forward knowledge of the past as Johnson (2016) states, “Wearing or making historical objects can evoke an embodied, experiential relation to past people, utilizing bodily experience as a unique way of knowing” (p. 51). This compels researchers to approach historical documents not as static representations of a past event or person, but as a material thing that one connects to through performative acts that may include acts of acquisition, acts of storysharing and acts of creating (Schneider, 2012). Schneider argues that taking this approach is important to bringing history into the production of a counter-memory.

Indeed, knowledges of the past are communicated and sustained through performative and embodied practice (Connerton, 1989) whereby memory as a dynamic and social process of retrieval, reconfiguration, and invention is often provoked by visual and material things (Kuchler & Melion, 1991; Casey 1987 as cited in Roberts & Roberts, 1996; Coombes, 2003). Photographs are such things that may act as powerful points of memory (Hirsh, 2012) that stimulate and provoke other cultural processes (Roberts & Roberts, 1996).

### **Creativity and Improvisation**

Anthropological approaches to material and visual culture argue that things do not come into the world already finished but are made through extensive efforts and are composed through ongoing relations involving materials and people (Miller, 2010; Barber, 2007; Bunn, 2007; Ingold & Hallam, 2007; Ingold, 2010; Knappett, 2007). Ingold (2010) illustrates how creativity involves processes of both innovation and

improvisation but encourages researchers to focus on the latter as opposed to the former, which requires a processual approach. He urges researchers to explore “the entanglement of things” (p. 21) not as a network of connections between things and people, but to trace the meshwork of interconnected lines of growth and movement. Approaching things in this fashion overcomes dichotomies of nature and culture, subject and object, and past and present (see Ingold & Hallam, 2007; Ingold, 2010). By turning our attention to creativity, we can uncover productive processes that were hidden or neglected (see Barber, 2007) and by employing our own creative methodological methods, discover how the ‘new’ is not necessarily ‘disconnected from the old’ (Coleman, 2011). These possibilities may prove useful in an Indigenous research context because overcoming these imposed dichotomies and categories is important to decolonizing our knowledges. Moreover, reclaiming a past that is not disconnected to the present is a common aim of many Indigenous research agendas, especially those focused on cultural revitalization/reclamation.

### **A Method of Making**

Wright (2004) states that an awareness of photography as material culture calls for a different and more nuanced methodological approach in anthropological research. Working from an Anishinabekwe standpoint, this approach must be grounded in the Anishinabeg philosophy of *Nebwakawin*, which informs an Anishinabeg knowledge system. *Nebwakawin* is the act of looking backwards, while at the same time bringing forward the knowledge and experiences that our Anishinabeg ancestors have always carried. *Nebwakawin* as thinking back, bringing forward and stitching it all together, which is similar to Coleman’s (2009) image work that revolves around transforming

photographs through creative processes whereby the making of something new is not disconnected from the past, old—that by materializing the affectivity of a photograph into something new, one might learn from and engage with the past in new ways.

Given my connection to Coleman’s (2009) work, specifically my interest in the ability of photographs to move me and generate memories and knowledge of that past that often remain hidden by purely textual research (Barber, 2007; Leavy, 2009), I turn to Elizabeth Edwards’s work on the material practices of photography, specifically her work on photographic affects and the specific ways that photographs are put to work. Edwards (2012) outlines two interconnected embodied and sensory encounters significant to my methodology. The first she terms *placing*, which is defined as “a sense of appropriateness of particular material forms to particular sets of social expectations and desire within space and time” (p. 226). *Placing* is linked to the notion of appropriateness or the culturally determined factors that allow photographs as material objects to be worked with or performed in certain ways. As an Anishinabekwe, the notion of *placing* is linked to my responsibility to acknowledge and carry out the work I received through my dream and through consultation with my family to ensure it was done in a good way. Indeed, my first step was accepting and committing to working with my family photographs to produce the regalia items. This process was done together with my mother and grandmother and was commenced through putting out a tobacco offering in order to start the process in a respectful way. Following this, I went back to my collection of photographs and selected seven images. Selection was based on both preexisting relationship with the images—I had already formed a strong attachment to some of the

photographs—and my own intuition as an Anishinabekwe—some images simply stood out to me with a desire to be part of this work.

Instead of working on multiple items at the same time, I was instructed by my Elder to devote my time to each photograph independently. I spent time not analyzing or reading the image, but just simply sat with the image. Instead of approaching each image with a question of, “what can I do with you?” or “what do I know or remember about you?” I approached each image with, “what do you want of me?” In other words, I privileged a non-representational approach that moved away from questions about what images represent towards questions that ask what images might do and embody (see Bell, 2008; Coleman, 2009; Gell 1998; Geismar, 2009; Mitchell 2005; Wright 2004). The shift towards this approach was also informed by teachings I had received on how to interpret Anishinabeg things within my Anishinabeg learning circle. Mainly, that instead of asking what things represent or mean, we, as Anishinabe people should be asking what meaning do these things bring us or lead us toward (Pedri, 2011; Pedri-Spade). My methodological approach was also informed by my own identity as an Anishinabekwe maker and a personal responsibility to create regalia and other items that are linked to our ongoing commitment to honour our relationships with each other, our ancestors and the spirit world.

The second encounter Edwards (2012) outlines in her work on photographs and material affects is *remediation* or *replacing*, which considers the ways in which the repurposing of photographs into newly desired objects with different signifying possibilities is affected by the appropriate material practices. Remediation as a method required me to attend to the range of what Keane (2005) calls the “bundled” (p. 188)

sensorial and material affects. Edwards refers to these as “haptic” multisensory embodied relations that arise when individuals view, handle, wear, and move with photographs as they perform a sense of appropriateness. As I worked materially with each photograph in a creative process that required me to bring in and work with other materials, I drew from Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) (Latour; 2005; Oppenheim, 2007), which is a descriptive process that calls upon the researcher to focus on the connections between both human and non-human entities that lead to new entities and does not discriminate between that which is human and non-human, instead approaching all entities as actants. Actants can be humans, animals, objects and concepts, which are treated equally in an analytical sense. I approach ANT based on its congruence with Anishinabe ontology, which takes our realities as emergent, ongoing relationships between people, things, non-human entities and the land—all of which are equal and in continuous movement within Creation.

By the end of my artistic engagement with the historical images, I produced 7 items including a jingle dress, a beaded tobacco bag, a beaded neck choker, a velvet jingle dress with a small beaded medallion, a grandfather (big) drum, and a quilt.

In the following section, I present my research findings in a performative, dialogical text. This departure from a more “traditional” anthropological voice responds to the call to “visualize” anthropology (Grimshaw & Ravetz, 2005) by focusing on descriptive accounts that acknowledge the “recursive movement between practice and reflection” (p. 6) and emphasize more “phenomenologically inflected perspectives” (p. 7) that reinscribe the body and the senses into ethnographic practice and “writing”. I will present six performed vignettes organized around the materialization of the photographs into new

items. I locate this work alongside artistic/anthropological scholarship that seeks not to “analyze” social, cultural, and aesthetic practices through systematic fieldwork and theoretical devices, but that seeks to reveal inner dialogues, reverie and imagination that would otherwise go unseen (see Schneider & Wright, 2013; 2010). This approach also permits me to respect the relational aspect of knowledge production, as performative modes of representing research help bring the text into a relational view (Soyini Madison, 2005; Wilson, 2011). Following this performative pursuit, I will conclude with a discussion that reflects on the significance of working materially with photographs to Anishinabe theories of memory and the sharing of Anishinabeg knowledge about the past.

## **PART 2**

### **The Setting:**

The author’s sewing room in her home. This is a physical place, but is also a type of liminal space that enables a temporary detachment from ordinary time and place to allow her to examine fundamental concepts and challenge them. In this space, Celeste engages with several photographs of her Anishinabe ancestors, transforming them into different regalia pieces and cultural items.

### **The Actants:**

**Celeste:** Anishinabekwe (Ojibwe woman), the maker

**Cha-Is:** A portrait of the author’s great-great grandmother, taken around the mid to late 1940s in Kashabowie, Ontario.

**Shirley:** A photograph of the author’s grandmother, taken in 1962 in Kashabowie, Ontario.

**Deafey Men:** A portrait of the author's great-great grandfather John Deafey and his brother Peter Deafey taken around the early 1920s, location unknown.

**Polly:** A photograph of the author's great-great aunt Polly Jordon, taken around 1926, location unknown. Polly was actually a first cousin of my great great grandmother Cha-Is

**Rose:** A photograph of the author's great grandmother Rose Shebobman taken at her home in Kashabowie, Ontario sometime during the 1950s.

**Marcia:** A photograph of the author's mother taken in Thunder Bay, Ontario in 1963.

**Shebobman Women:** A photograph of the author's aunts, Linda Shebobman and Julia Rusnak and her great grandmother Rose Shebobman taken in Kashabowie, Ontario around the late 1960s.

### Cha-Is



Figure 16: A portrait of Cha-Is Deafey in the 1940s transformed to a women's jingle dress. Photographs provided by the author.

**Celeste:** What do you want me to know?

**Cha-Is:** Tell me what you notice.

**Celeste:** You're eyes are soft and you have a very pretty dress on...with what looks like a velvet collar. There is a pinkish hue to the photograph.

*I am moved by the pink stain of the image surface...I begin by dying yards of cream cotton using a pink dye. As I grab the material, I twist it up and knot it just like the fabric wound around her head in the picture. I dip the knotted fabric into the warm water. It needs to stay submersed, but it keeps bobbing to the top. My hands are back in the water. The pink liquid is pleasant, warm, comforting...I can feel her gaze in the murky pink water. I can see my own reflection in the water...*

**Cha-Is:** What now?

**Celeste:** Now I unfold the fabric and let it dry.

**Cha-Is:** And?

**Celeste:** It looks like rose petals...

*I think back to Kashabowie, where she lived... her last home here on earth. I am taken back to a day I spent in Kashabowie with my mom and great-aunt. I remember taking a walk to the old day school where many of the women in my family went. I can recall the tree-line at the edge of the school grounds and my aunt placing one hand on a big birch tree while pointing down towards the ground at a small wild rose bush.*

***Aunt:** You know the truancy officer that used to chase us girls back to the school when we tried to skip out, they buried his ashes someone in there. You know all we wanted to do was be with each other and mom... and grandma. You know grandma, Cha-Is, she would take us wherever she went to do work... getting spruce root, or bark or animals. I loved being with her.*

**Celeste:** I am making you a rose dress... a jingle dress. I've beaded roses on the velvet yoke for you too. I wonder did you know how much your grandchildren wanted to be with you? What did it feel like to have no say in how they were educated... where they learned?

**Cha-Is:** A jingle dress?

**Celeste:** Yes. I know I never saw your regalia. I've heard about it though. I know it was light blue and that it had ribbons and mirror on it. It is a jingle dress because that is what I dance in..that is what my mother dances in... and that is what your granddaughter. My grandma Shirley wears.

**Cha-Is:** Working backwards

**Celeste:** But forwards with something new.

**Cha-Is:** They didn't teach you how to dance at school, did they?

**Celeste:** No. But I learned.

**Cha-Is:** Yes. You did.

**Celeste:** You aren't looking at me in the picture.. And I wonder why you aren't looking at the camera.... Why you are looking away?

**Cha-Is:** Looking away, or looking towards?

**Celeste:** Towards.

**Cha-Is:** Debwe.

*I want others to see Cha-Is...or rather to see...how she looks outward towards me, towards a future for her kin, community.*

*And so I get to work carving a linoleum block of her face. As I carve away pieces of the plastic with my carving blade, I am peeling back layers of time. I can sense Cha-Is scraping away at the outer layer of bark on the spruce root she used to collect to make her birch bark baskets. I can feel the strength of her hands. I can feel the roughness of her fingertips.*

*I roll the paint over my block and press her portrait onto the fabric... then I repeat it.. again and again. It becomes the pattern of dress. I am reminded of my mother's words: "It is really important to choose the right pattern...It is the strongest part of your dress. It is what brings everything together."*

*I remember the stories the women in my family share about how Cha-Is brought people together. How she brought families together. How she assisted in large ceremonial gatherings and celebrations. Gatherings, which were prohibited through the Indian Act.*

**Celeste:** Cha-Is, this is to honour your role in bringing people together. Miigwetch ninkokum.

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### Shirley



Figure 17: A photograph of Shirley Shebobman taken in 1962 in Kashabowie, ON is transformed to a beaded leather tobacco bag. Photographs provided by the author.

**Celeste:** Wow Grandma, you are such a looker.

**Shirley:** Well, even though we lived in the bush, we still did our hair, our nails. I liked to dress nice.

**Celeste:** It looks like it was windy out...but it is a warm, inviting wind. You look relaxed... but a bit apprehensive. This photograph is full of secret.

**Shirley:** And life.

**Celeste:** Yes, I can feel your warmth. Grandma, you were so young, beautiful and full of life.

**Shirley:** It is because I am pregnant with your mother here.

**Celeste:** She was your first child.

**Shirley:** Yes....with her I learned what it means to bring life into the world....

**Celeste:** She marked a beginning...

*My heart swells...*

*Beginnings.*

*The beginning of life is always acknowledged through ceremony in our Anishinabe culture. And ceremonies are started with an offering of tobacco to start things out in a good way. I decide to make a tobacco bag with the image embroidered in small delicate beads. I choose various shades of whites, greys and blacks to work with. I begin by securing the first bead. I decide to start at the centre of her eye. It is her warm gaze that moves me. I know she is looking at me. As I pull my needle back through the fabric, I am pricked by the realization that I can find her gaze in the eyes of my oldest son.*

**Celeste:** Keeshig looks so much like you.

**Shirley:** My Keeshigbahnahnakut. He does, doesn't he?

*I want to honour the circular relationship of life our Elders talk about. The intergenerational bonds that are the basis for everything we are as Anishinabe. I want to honour my grandmother as a life giver. I bead in a circular pattern beginning from the centre bead located in her gaze and moving outwards I build with each bead individually. As the beads lead me farther away from the centre, my process slows. It takes longer to see progress in my work and I begin to lament for her. For a time when she was separated from her first daughter, my mother.*

**Celeste:** There was a time when you were prevented from being a mother..

**Shirley:** The church took your mom for a time. I was young. Our ways were different.

**Celeste:** It happened to lots of young Anishinabekwewag...

**Shirley:** Yes. It did, but I got her back.

**Celeste:** Yes. You did.

*I pause.*

*There is no thread strong enough to repair this rip.*

*I cry.*

*I put more tobacco out...*

**Shirley:** Remember my strength

**Celeste:** I will bead you some beautiful colourful flowers to frame your face.

**Shirley:** Miigwetch. Our flowers are good medicine.

*I finish the beadwork and I begin the process of selecting the moose hide to construct the bag and fringe. As I sort through my collection of leather, I reach for a piece of brain-tanned moose...a coveted piece, valued for it's soft and felt-like texture. As I work with the leather, I recall the stories my aunts tell about how the old ones used to make this brain-tanned hide—how they would skin the animals, flesh the pelt. How the brains of the animal were mixed with old bars of lye soap and spread over the raw hide. How they would take all day by the stove to stretch it out... until it was dry... how their knuckles would bleed....*

*I breathe in the smoky smell of the leather. It sticks to my fingertips....*

**Shirley:** When I was a young girl it was my job to look after my grandpa, your great great grandpa, John. I used to make the fire so that I could make him his favourite potatoes. I would bury them and cook them in the ashes. He loved the smoky taste.

**Celeste:** Yes, I can see the ashes in the beaded flecks of your hair here!

*I run my hands over the finished piece...her hair, her cheek, her mouth... I follow each bead and the tips of my fingers follow the circular path. I can trace the continuity of life... the struggle of a mother, a grandmother.*

**Celeste:** Yes. And you look after us so well!

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### The Deafey Men



Figure 18: A portrait of John and Peter Deafey taken circa 1920s and a big drum with their image. Photographs provided by the author.

**Celeste:** What stylish and sophisticated Anishinabeininiwag! I like your hat Choomish.

**The Deafey Men (John):** We owned them. Look at the fit.

**Celeste:** Yes, your clothing looks perfectly tailored. It suits you well.

*I am drawn back to John's hat, the way it is cocked slightly to the left. I wonder if this was intentional? A fashionable defiance of a man who didn't always play by the rules? I am drawn to their eyes...Peter's slight shift of the eyes signals a distrust, a hesitance, and yet a practiced skill...to be watchful and cautious. I then direct my focus back to John. His mouth is slightly open and his right hand hangs at waist level. I can sense that this is his habit. That he holds his hand this way for a reason. I know this because I have seen this hand before. I have witnessed this habitual stance in many of our men who are skilled drummers and singers.*

**John:** I drummed on the big drum. I knew the songs...Peter too. Your great-great granny and I would host gatherings at Bass Lake.

**Celeste:** Yes I have seen another image...the one with you drumming...



Figure 19: John Deafey drums on the right with other Anishinabe community members in attendance, circa mid 1920s. Location unknown. Photograph provided by the author.

**Celeste:** I want to make you a drum...a grandfather drum. A beautiful drum...with the best...thickest...moose hide.

**John (laughing):** Why, you don't like the old washbasin drum?

*I begin my work by soaking the raw hide in a large pail of water. As it soaks, I check on it sporadically to see if it soft enough and ready to work with. Once enough water has penetrated the skin, I reach into the water to lift it out. I am struck by how heavy the raw hide has become. My forearms burn and I can barely manage to lift the skin. I think of how much work it must have been for John and these men to carry around their drums, their regalia, and everything else needed to look after our Anishinabe people during gatherings and ceremonies...how they would have to walk four hours, miles into the bush, because back then what they were doing was outlawed by the Canadian*

*government. The weight of the soaked hide is the measure of his dedication and perseverance.*

*I cut a round piece for the top of the drum and I cut another circle to make the string.... I continue to cut around the edge of the circle, going around, making the circle smaller and smaller as the length of thick skin continues to grow...*

**The Deafey Men (Peter):** That string you are making it called the *babeesh*.

**John:** It is like the umbilical cord that attaches us to our mothers...

*I look back to the image of my great-great grandfather drumming. I can see the concerted effort on his face as he strikes the drum. As I continue my work and stretch the hide over the drum frame, looping the babeesh through each cut hole along the edge, my hands begin to blister ... and I can feel the rough calluses on the spot on his hand, at that point where his fingers meet his palm....where he holds his drum stick as he strikes the surface with each beat. I put the strung drum aside. As it dries over the next few days, I can hear the sharp crackle of the hide as it dries and tightens. I can hear the drum coming to life. I hear these men sing. I can hear their songs...*

**The Deafey Men (Peter):** We used to have to post someone at the edge of the clearing to act as a lookout in case anyone came. We made sure that the site was guarded thick brush.

**Celeste:** You had to hide.

**The Deafey Men (Both):** Yes. We did. But we still carried on...

*I want to honour their tenacity and I want to do it in a way that privileges their presence. I want them to know that they no longer have to hide. I want every man who will drum on this drum to be looking into their faces, to feel their presence, to acknowledge their struggle every time they strike the surface. I want my sons to sing honour beats for these men.*

**Celeste:** I am going to paint your image on the drum.

**The Deafey Men (Both):** How?

**Celeste:** Just as your image is burned into my mind, my heart and my body, I am going to burn it into a screen with light and use this to mark you onto the drum.

*I finish the drum by framing their image with bright Ojibwe floral work. But unlike the border of trees and shrubs that cut them off from a world that would persecute them, this border encircles them in a gratitude for and celebration of their song... and their style.*

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## Rose and Marcia

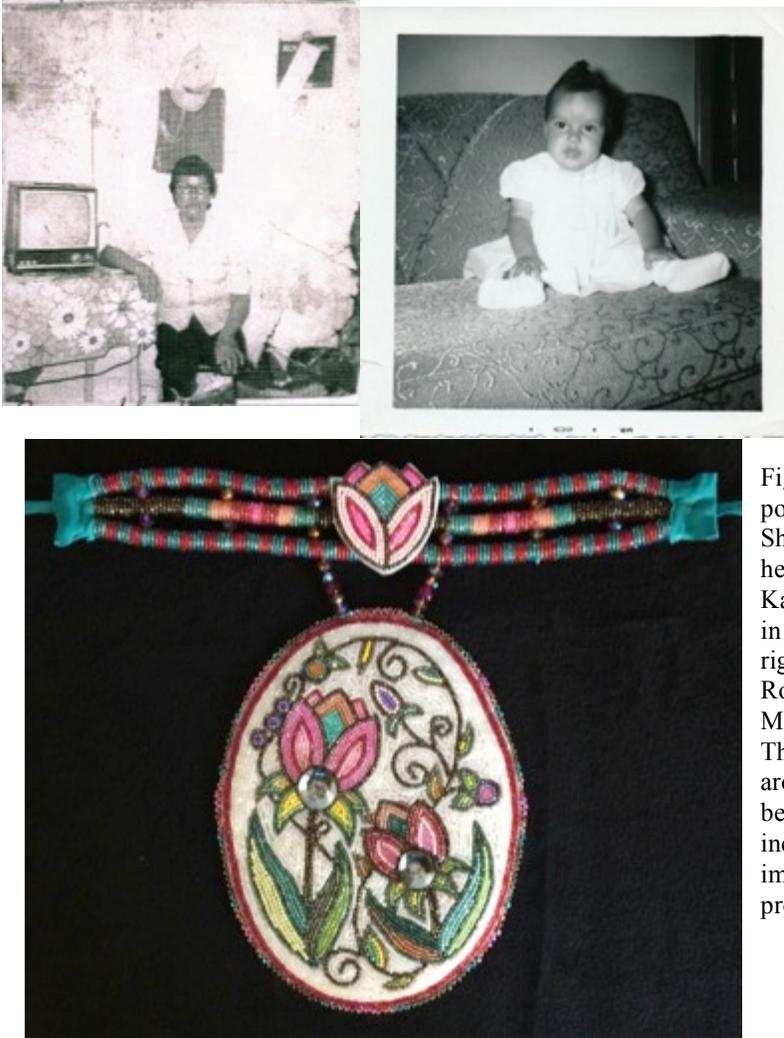


Figure 20: Top left: A portrait of Rose Shebobman taken in her home in Kashabowie, Ontario in the 1960s. Top right: A portrait of Rose's granddaughter Marcia Pedri taken in Thunder Bay Ontario around 1963. Bottom: beaded choker incorporating their images. Photographs provided by the author.

**Celeste:** Two separate photos. Two lives. Two hearts...apart.

**Rose:** Yes...a picture of us together doesn't exist.

**Celeste:** I know. I looked.

**Rose:** We didn't want it that way. It didn't have to be that way.

*I want to do something that ties these people together, grandmother and granddaughter who spent years separated. I look for direction in the presence of my great grandmother...*

**Celeste:** Grandma Rose, the way your arms are placed, the left one hanging low on your lap, the other resting on the table. You are like a mother bear in summer guarding over her young cubs. You were a protector. You were a healer. You cared for your family...

*I go back to the image of my mother as an infant. There is something out of place and unsettling to me about this image. She seems alone, teetering on a large sofa...I desperately want her to be in the arms of her grandmother. I feel frustrated by these images. I look within the photographs... I look at what is around the women for guidance and I am still lost. I pick up the image of my mother and I attack it with a pair of scissors. I cut away at the image. As the pieces fall, I feel gratified. I feel freedom. As the image becomes smaller, and I am only left with her small face in the cradle of my hand...*

**Rose:** Now what...

**Celeste:** Now I can start something new...

**Rose:** New life

**Celeste:** Yes. New growth

*I cut away at the image of Rose in the same way as I did to the photograph of my mother. I place both faces in front of me and start to draw flowers around them. With each line I draw, these women become closer. Each curve and connection bends the years. The flowers become the medicine to carry these two women- to reframe their stories. As I finish the design and start the beading, I find a space where their lives can connect. I recall how both were skilled makers... sewers, bead makers. How they were both mothers, caretakers, and excellent cooks. As I secure each strand of bead and the flowers take shape, I see these women inextricably bound by their roles and responsibilities as life givers..*

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### Polly



Figure 21: A photograph of Polly Jordan dancing in an unknown location around the mid 1920s with a miniature beaded medallion carried by a velvet jingle dress. Photographs provided by the author.

**Celeste:** My great great choomish is drumming for you Polly.

**Polly:** I am dancing hard.

**Celeste:** I can tell...in your jingle dress. A healing dress.

Polly: Yes, the influenza pandemic and war took many of our people...many of our young people...

**Celeste:** Are you dancing for yourself or for the healing of someone else, perhaps?

**Polly:** You can't separate the two...

*I can sense a sadness in Polly's body, but as she brings her left foot forward, I am deeply aware of the work being done here...how her step attempts to lift the eclipse of sorrows that I, myself, have found myself journeying through in the dance circle. I can feel that Polly is tired and I can see evidence of this in her dress as well...*

**Celeste:** Some of your mirrors on your dress have fallen off, Polly!

**Polly:** Yes, and they are important because they protect us from all of the negative spirits and intentions that may surround us in the dance circle...

*I am moved to remake Polly's dress for her. I select a black velvet. It is rich and soft, and yet one of the most difficult fabrics to work with. It is a struggle, maneuvering the plush cloth through my machine. I reflect on the struggles of Polly...of my ancestors...of the hardness of their lives. In the velvet I can touch their unwavering devotion. As I continue in my work, I think back to a discussion I had with Polly's granddaughter, our cousin Maddy about Polly's dress...of how this dress was likely taken apart years later after the birth of Polly's daughter, Josie to make her little baby a wagejibism...*

**Celeste:** You really were a diligent and resourceful *kwe*<sup>3</sup>, Polly. I have heard many stories of how you and Cha-Is and Menigotchigan used to travel around the Shebandowan and Kashabowie areas, helping people with your medicines and ceremony.

**Polly:** That's what our Anishinabekwewag do. We look after all the people.

*I begin to fasten the small metal cones to the dress and as I move along each row, I can see Polly and these Anishinabekwewag moving from home to home. Each row of jingles is a village of families. I begin to place the diamond shaped mirrors on the fabric. As I fasten them in place, I see my own reflection and I know that Polly is reminding me of my own role in looking after my family and community. With the last cone and mirror in place, I stand back and look at the finished dress....*

**Celeste:** Something is missing...This isn't done.

**Polly:** mhmmm....

**Celeste:** I think it is time for you to rest, Polly.

*I think of Polly's tireless work. I can run my hands across her leathered face and feel the years of fishing, trapping, ricing, praying, visiting, skinning, basket weaving, berry*

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3 Slang for "woman"

*picking...I want this dress to be different. I want this dress to carry Polly...to provide a respite. And so I bead a small portrait of Polly dancing and I place it around the neck of the dress...*

**Polly:** I am not dancing the dress, the dress is dancing me...

**Celeste:** Yes Polly. From you I understand the dress looks after us as much as we look use it to look after our Anishinabe people.

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### Shebobman Women



Figure 22: A photograph of Rose Shebobman (centre) with her two daughters Julia (left) and Linda (right) taken in Kashabowie, ON circa 1969. A quilted version of the photograph. Photographs provided by the author.

**Celeste:** You ladies look like you mean business. You exude confidence and strength...

**Shebobman Women:** (laughing)

*I can immediately hear their jokes and laughter in this photograph. I can see and hear what came after this photograph was taken...someone making a joke followed by a chorus of cackles, heads thrown back...*

**Shebobman Women (All):** AAAYEEESH.... Schkmaa<sup>4</sup>!! (laughing)

*This photograph brings forward many moments full of laughter, many moments of women gathered around me. Relaxed. Confident. Resilient. I find comfort and security here. I find protection. I want to make a blanket to honour these women. A blanket brings warmth. It is what Anishinabe exchange in appreciation and gratitude. It is what is used in ceremony to help look after people....*

**Celeste:** Where were you three in this picture?

**Shebobman Women (All):** In Kashabowie...some of us didn't live here anymore but we always came back to be with family...even when things changed and people moved. This is our home.

*I begin the process of transforming the image...the outlines of their bodies to applique that can be quilted with. I create a pattern from the photograph and as I stand back and look at my work, I immediately find the rock paintings left by my ancestors... the marks around our winter hunting grounds now within the boundaries of a Provincial Park...*

**Celeste:** I am thinking about Sturgeon Lake 57...

**Shebobman Women (All):** Where grandpa's family came from. They were forced out.

*As I trace the applique pattern onto the black material, I work through this story of displacement. As I carefully cut the black piece, I feel like I am navigating through the winding lakes and rivers that my family knew intimately...I recall reading the testimony of a non-Indigenous settler. A diary entry that relates the horror of police forcing a group of Ojibwe families, women, children, and men from their hunting grounds near Atikokan in the middle of winter... of how he was certain they would die....*

**Celeste:** But they didn't. They persevered....

**Shebobman Women (All):** We are survivors....

**Celeste:** Warriors.

I frame their image with quilted feathers, made with pieces of material I accumulated over the years from making people's skirts, ribbon shirts, dresses....

**Celeste:** You see... I made you three warriors your own headdress!

**Shebobman Women:** "AAAYEEESH" (laughing)

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4 Slang for "get out of here!"

## Discussion and Concluding Remarks

My performative ethnographic vignettes are both evocative and conceptually productive because they work to dispel the mind versus matter binary that supports the myth that “memory is about minds rather than it is about things” (Stallybrass 1993, as cited in Freeman, Nienass & Daniell, 2016, p. 47). They work to privilege the intersections of experience, sensation, and meaning that we access through a direct engagement with materials. Geismar (2009) illustrates how through their materiality, photographs provide a malleable base for infinite and even playful reproduction, but what often prevents individuals from exploring these possibilities is a Eurocentric tendency to limit our understanding of photographs to only authentic representations of a ‘real’ event, person, or artefact. I argue, that this limitation is also linked to a restricted understanding of a photograph as only a mnemonic device, as opposed to mnemonic assemblage, which also shapes and congeal memory by way of its materiality. Bennet (2010) defines assemblage as:

ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts...Assemblages are living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent of energies that confound them from within. (p. 23)

This process of assemblage necessitates what Ingold (2010) calls, a “forward” reading of creativity as an “ongoing generative movement that is at once iterant, improvisatory, and rhythmic” (p. 91). While the materiality of the photograph triggered my creative intent and activity, there were times when the materials made their own choices, propelling me forward in new directions. Take, for example the creation of the rose-coloured jingle dress (figure 2). By permitting the material aspects of this image (the knotted fabric

around her head) guide me, there were key moments where the material properties (e.g. cloth, fabric dye, water) interacted in a manner that literally and figuratively “pushed-back” against me, forcing me in to envision not only the image of Cha-Is, but to find myself in her reflection. In this case several components of the photograph (the fabric around her head, her gaze, the pink wash of the photograph) affected me in a way described by Barthes (1981) as the photograph’s “punctum”, which provokes a more intense and personal reaction in the viewer. Barthes positions the punctum as the ultimate imitation of death because the photograph of his relation invokes a sense of his own impending death; therefore, photography is ultimately about *that which has been and no longer is*. Unlike, Barthes working materially with this punctum, I found that the photograph is about *what has been and still is*. Therefore, I suggest that the life of the materials I worked with, experienced through my living body, lead to a ‘punctum’ that is a reaffirmation of life.

In making different material choices around accessing and attaining knowledge of my historical photographs, I confirmed Johnson’s (2016) assertion that in accessing and producing knowledge of the past, people tend to lean towards things that they are most familiar with because people can best understand and connect with things when we can already relate to them. Yet, in remaining close to the materials and processes most familiar to me, I chart very new, unfamiliar territory, entering and exploring a liminal and spiritual space of creative production. This is a vibrant and limitless space where I become engulfed in a powerful wave of ancestral presence that includes past people, stories, places, experiences, feelings, sights, sounds, and smells. As I engaged in the processes of assemblage that included stretching, sewing, beading, cutting, etc., their

presence became inscribed within my body, mind and spirit. In this way, I became implicated as part of my ancestral past and not simply a distant witness or knower of past events and people. My assemblage work resonates with the anthropological urge against making any binary discrepancy between the act/performance of creating something and its form/structure or as Barber (2007) states, “(the process) of improvisation and making things stick” (p. 25).

Friedman (2002) reminds us that visual artists often work in expressive forms that resist language. The memories of my ancestors inspired me to work with them, they led me to materialize them in ways that honoured my own identity and artistic ability. In turn, the process of materializing the photographs led me towards not only the recovery of memory, but also a discovery of a new understanding or appreciation for the memory itself. This illustrates, how, dialectically, we both produce and are products of historical processes (Pinney, 2005) and this increased appreciation for memory is consistent with Anishinabe worldview which is grounded in relational accountability and responsibility—that it is not sufficient that we access information about the past, but that we also honour and celebrate it— as I have mentioned previously, *we wear our teachings. Indeed, we wear them proudly*. With each stitch, I was putting something back into the world that embodied our relationship, our co-presence.

Indeed other Indigenous groups have illustrated this idea of *wearing our teachings*, engaging with photographs in new material ways to represent some aspect of the ancestors or to convey their presence among people today (see Geismar 2010; 2009; Bell 2010; 2008; Roberts & Roberts, 1996). The final pieces neither represent my ancestors stories nor do they embody their presence. Rather, they materialize our

relationship made possible through connecting to the photograph as a “material architecture” (Schneider, 2012, p. 143). In this process memory becomes a limitless series of reverberations that ricocheted back and forth with each stitch, with each movement, with every imagining and every placement. This is quite different than conceptualizing memory as a repository or filing cabinet as Freeman, Nienass & Daniell, (2016) state, and is closely aligned with the concept of memory as a set of liminal practices (see Giddons, 2007), yet it differs because this process is not completely accidental or spontaneous, rather, it is grounded in the Anishinabeg practices, values, and relationships that permit me to work with photographs as material things and the corresponding specific materials, techniques, tools and actions. Of course, this process is dependent on the fact that making is emergent as well—that these items are composed through ongoing relationships involving the maker and materials (Miller, 2010; Ingold & Hallam, 2007; Ingold, 2013; 2010, 2007; Knappet, 2007). And that the resulting form and style of each item is a result of processes that are done with the whole body of a person (see Pink, 2009; 2006). Therefore, I locate Anishinabe memory as a set of relational practices.

Several researchers (see Edwards, 1997; 2009; Edwards & Hart, 2004; Glass, 2009; Porto, 2004) explore how particular choices related to the material production of photographs reveal particular attitudes and beliefs about history—as Edwards (2009) states, through their materiality historical photographs reveal not a fear of potential loss of the past, but rather a concern with a future that does not relate to the past (p. 133). Thus, it is not simply a matter of packaging up historical information so that future generations will possess the past. Rather, careful choices around the materiality of the

information need to be made so as to ensure that future generations are able to engage with or relate to the past. This became very clear when I chose to select the smoked brain-tanned hide to complete the tobacco bag instead of a commercial hide. As the smoky smell of the leather rubbed off on my fingertips, I envisioned the experiences of my grandmother as a young girl cooking over the fire for her grandfather. This is consistent with the way in which some cultural items do not symbolize thought so much as stimulate and provoke it (Roberts and Roberts, 1996). Barber (2007) makes a similar point about how memory should not be thought of as a file cabinet in which people deposit past events, but as a “guiding hand of consciousness” (p. 11) that helps us remember the way.

The imperative to *remember the way* is, perhaps, deeply felt by those whose histories have been suppressed through colonial and imperial ideology and practices. Trouillot (1995, 1993) attributes the erasures of ‘insider’ histories to the ontological limitations of the dominant colonizing group. Pursuant to this logic, the re-presencing of histories and knowledges of those fighting against colonialism, like Anishinabeg, is impacted by the ability to transcend these limitations. This includes moving beyond memory as a filing cabinet or photographs as evidence. Several authors reveal how different material architectures impact the knowledge about reality imparted through their physical forms and the performative conditions of their production (Edwards & Hart, 2004; Glass, 2009; Porto 2004). The fact that different things mediate different experiences and generate different kinds of knowledges becomes very significant when one considers how memory emerges out of both individual subjective experiences and shared social processes (Connerton, 1989; Evans, 2012; Coombes, 2003; Gillespie,

2010). While, this research focused on the materialization of my ancestral photographs, which was a very personal endeavor, future research can explore the role of the finished items as they continue in their spiritual life—when the dances are danced, the beadwork is proudly worn. When the drum is sounded and the tobacco bag is passed around different drums at community.

Through this process, of what Bell (2008, p. 125) refers to as “the praxis through which people articulate their eyes and their bodies in relation to pictures” I reveal that Anishinabeg memory encapsulates more than the ability to recall information about past people, places, and events, experienced either directly or indirectly through stories shared. Rather Anishinabeg memory is a visceral, tangible, relational, and sensorial experience and that carving out spaces that privilege our creativity, intuition, and imagination helps strengthen our relationship to our ancestral past, now and into the future. This is significant given that as time passes, relationships between the physical or digital traces of the past and the history behind them can often become separated (Hevenor, 2013). By acknowledging and carrying through with my dream of transforming my ancestral photographs to regalia and cultural items and by locating Anishinabeg photographs as distinct Indigenous things, I have transcended ontological and methodological limitations associated with conceptualizing photographs as simply an indexical trace and instead have traced, or rather, stitched, through the different relationships between actant made visible, sensible and knowable through a material and phenomenologically-oriented approach that is informed by my teachings and identity as an Anishinabekwe. This research is significant to Indigenous communities and their allies in

the work at reclaiming and re-presencing Anishinabeg histories and knowledge, as Trouillot (1995) states:

we all need histories that no history book can tell, but they are not in the classroom... They are in the lessons we learn at home, in poetry and childhood games, in what is left of history when we close the history books with their verifiable facts. (p. 71)

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*I curl the last gold metal cone around the knotted piece of ribbon at the hemline of the dress and as I pinch the top of it with the large pliers I can feel the ache in my palm. My hands are tired and my arms are stiff. My mind is worn-out from the many travels I have taken with each memoried stitch. I stand back and look at my finished work, smiling at Cha-Is looking back at me. I lift the dress off the form and can feel the weight of history in my arms. I unzip it carefully and step inside. I have never been so careful, so cautious and gentle. As I pull up the zipper, I turn to face the mirror and for the first time, I see our reflections together. And as all jingle dancers know, the heavy weight disappears, as each part of me bears a part of the dress. As I stand there, my little boy enters the room and immediately rushes for my skirt, brushing the cones, laughing as he jumps up and down. I jump with him and we start to dance...and the room fills with a metallic downpour of love and spirit...and for a brief moment all three of us dance together.*

## Conclusion

In this concluding chapter I first provide an overview of the major research findings in relation to the overall research goals. I then discuss specific challenges or limitations that I experienced along the research journey. Finally, I present some recommendations for future research.

This research explored what kinds of relations are made present and possible through the experience of Anishinabe photographs and the role and value of this process on the regeneration and strengthening of Anishinabe stories, relationships with self and kin, knowledge, place, sovereignty and memory. Through the bringing together and experience of Anishinabe photographs taken from around the late 1910s to the late 1960s, the research aimed to reclaim Anishinabe histories and experiences in a respectful way that challenged colonial or Eurocentric narratives of who we are and where we come from. It also introduced new knowledge that may be acquired from photographs by employing a material and phenomenological oriented approach that is informed by Anishinabe identity and teachings.

In doing so it aimed to strengthen relationships with self, kin, community, the land, and our Anishinabe ancestors, presenting new ways to conceptualize and work with photographs. Therefore, this research contributed to our ongoing struggle to decolonize as Anishinabe people living within Anishinabe territory. In the following points, I will summarize the key research findings:

- a) Anishinabe photographs are powerful tools that provide valuable information related to kinship, Indigenous education, traditional sustenance activities, gender, and place. In the hands of Anishinabeg,

these photographs help restore and strengthen a sense of identity, dignity, belongingness and pride.

- b) Anishinabe photographs evidence and contribute to an Anishinabe presence. They do so by evidencing the struggle to remain present as Anishinabeg committed to living out their lives as Anishinabe within Anishinabe lands. They also do so through the kind of creative and engaged work they bring about that facilitates the continuation of reciprocal relationships among present day Anishinabeg, their ancestors, and Anishinabe territory.
- c) Anishinabe photographs effectively disrupt and intervene in colonial narratives (visual and textual) and stereotypes that position Anishinabe as history (people of the past), unproductive members of society, or victims of colonialism. They counter these constructions with images and stories of survival, strength, and tenacity.
- d) Anishinabe photography contributes to and expands Anishinabe understandings of place and sovereignty. They do so when photographic archives become sites for relationship building and creativity. When this happens, new ways of inscribing Anishinabe presence within Anishinabe lands emerge and notions of place emerge as a whole host of relationship building activities and practices concerned with kinship, belongingness, identity, and community wellbeing.
- e) Anishinabe photographs are highly social and relational objects that help configure and congeal human to human, human to land, and human

to other-than-human relationships that bring forward new meanings and interpretations about the past, in the present, and into the future.

- f) Teachings located in Anishinabemowin, the work we do with other Anishinabe items, and our cultural practices (gathering) stress the significance of photographs as distinct Anishinabeg things that can be worked with in ways that draw upon existing Anishinabe material, social and spiritual practices. When this occurs, new sets of relationships emerge that strengthen individual ties to the ancestral past in ways that honour our connection to our ancestors and the teachings they have entrusted us with.
- g) Material and phenomenological approaches to Anishinabe photographs reveal that Anishinabe memory is a visceral, tangible, relational, and sensorial experience and that carving out spaces that privilege our creativity, intuition, and imagination helps strengthen our relationship to our ancestral past, now and into the future. Working in non-verbal ways with Anishinabe photographs give rise to new experiences and knowledge that linguistic, textual, or representational approaches may not reveal.
- h) Applying theories that may stem from different ontologies and epistemologies into practice is important to expanding and decolonizing Anishinabeg knowledge, specifically on the relationship between the visual and material. Focusing on creativity and processes of making contributes nuanced and insightful meanings that transcend binaries like

nature/culture, past/present, form/process, which tend to prevail in Western ideology.

### **Challenges and/or Limitations**

Now that I outlined key research findings, I move on to discuss some of the challenges details of the historical photographs. Given the age of the photographs it was difficult to ascertain where the photographs were taken or what family member/friend took them. This information may have provided another entryway to explore relationships around/within the photographs. Often, the response I received was, “geez, I can’t recall” or “I think it was dad’s cousin or friend that might have taken it.” When I asked where the photograph was taken, the response I often received was, “oh, it was probably out on our trap line somewhere” or “out in the bush around where we used to go.” Whenever possible, I recorded the location; however, because there was so much ambiguity around who took the images, I was not able to record this information. Also, for many of the photographs, it was difficult to confirm an exact date of their creation. As such, I worked with family members to place them within an approximate date range. This often occurred by locating a birth date of one of the individuals in the photograph and then guessing their age in the photograph. I state this as a limitation as knowing dates of when photographs are created may be useful for providing historical and cultural context.

Another challenge I experienced while working with the historical images related to conflicting information. It is sometimes very difficult to make out faces or physical features in photographs. There was one case where there the identity of a person in one of

the images was questioned by a relative of one of the participants. In this case, I worked with an older member of the family to address the ambiguity.

Given the age of these photographs and the fact that only one copy existed, another challenge was how to “collect” the photographs in a way that people felt comfortable with. During my visits with individuals, I brought along a portable scanner and would make a copy of the image on site so that the photographs did not have to ever leave the possession of the participant.

As mentioned in Chapter three, during the part of our research journey where I retook the historical photograph with descendant(s) standing in place of the original sitter, I was not able to determine the exact location or vantage point of the historical image. I became discouraged as I saw this an important aspect of the repeat photography methodology. However, through working with my participants, I came to see how this was more of a personal limitation and that continuing to carrying through with the retaking of photographs within Anishinabe territory, even if the new photograph was not in the exact location as the old could still provide a meaningful and valuable experience to the research participants, which it did indeed. Moreover, as I have previously discussed, this process helped expand Anishinabe understandings of place and sovereignty.

Another challenge/limitation, which also could be considered a research strength is my ‘insider’ position as the researcher and my choice of working with individuals with whom I had a preexisting relationship and knew had previously demonstrated a commitment to activities that focused on reclaiming our histories and reconnecting with each other in a good way. I present it as a limitation in that it may be viewed as a non-

inclusive approach that controlled the research setting to produce specific research findings. My response to this is that relationships are what makes research in Anishinabe communities possible and, indeed, ethical or ‘good’. Moreover, as an Anishinabekwe researcher I was ultimately responsible for looking after my research participants. It is very difficult to look after individuals you have just met and it is very hard to look after too many people at once. Like our ceremonies, which are kept intimate, the person leading the ceremony does the work of developing a relationship with the people he or she will be assisting prior to the ceremony because this is his or her responsibility. This teaching informs my understanding and approach to research and why I made the decision to include people with whom I had built a relationship. Moreover, the choice to keep this research within my existing relationships was also motivated by my own goal of self-preservation. From my previous research and community activist work, I have come to learn of the ‘triple burden’ many of us face. That is, we are not only responsible for writing history, we must *right* history and at the same time, struggle to ensure we don’t *become* history.

As I discuss in chapter two during the first stage of the research journey, I worked with participants to produce the community catalogue, which brought together 82 historical images along with important cultural and historical contextual information and different stories and teachings from the participants themselves. I discussed the importance of a tangible resource that people could hold and look at with their families and friends. A limitation of this research is that there is no online platform to host this catalogue; however, this was done intentionally. Within many of our Anishinabe communities, we have just started the work of coming together, rebuilding relationships,

reclaiming our stories and restoring pride and dignity. Indeed, lateral colonial violence is something that we continuously struggle in, in our own families, and within our extended communities. The message our kitchianishinabeg convey is that this process of healing cannot be rushed. It involves visiting and sitting down with people. It involves face-to-face conversations and not necessarily a click of a button or Facebook “likes”. Thus, a catalogue, while it may seem dated, does permit the kind of slow-paced interaction/communication between individuals: People sitting down with a relative or friend to look through photographs and relate to what they see and learn in their own way.

A significant challenge or limitation relates to my engagement with and commitment to practices and theories of decolonization as a community member and scholar. In a fairly recent and compelling article scholars Tuck and Yang<sup>1</sup> (2012) remind us that decolonization *is* the repatriation of Indigenous land and Indigenous life and that decolonization *is not* a metaphor for other kinds of goals or activities related to social justice. Indeed, I feel compelled to address that while I have demonstrated photography’s role in facilitating the kinds of experiences and activities that help restore relationships between Anishinabeg and their lands—relationships which regenerate different kinds of knowledges that are integral to our continued survivance as Anishinabeg—decolonization is still very tricky business for us. The best way that I have described this process to date is that decolonization is a bit of a sneak-up<sup>2</sup> for Anishinabeg involved in this research.

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1 See Tuck, E. & Yang, K. W. *Decolonization is Not A Metaphor, Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education and Society*, 1(1), 1-40.

2 The sneak-up is danced by Men’s Traditional dancers at gatherings and powwow. In the dance, the dancer must be clever and cunning. He must sneak-up on his prey or his opponent.

Our ancestral territories—the lands we know our grandparents, great grandparents and great-great grandparents lived and cared for, prior to non-Indigenous settlement— are now “Crown land” and worse, private lands converted to recreational vehicle parks, fishing resorts, and private summer camps. Lands where we know we conducted ceremonies and had permanent gathering sites to celebrate cultural events and look after our elderly and sick are now provincial or municipal parklands. Having said this, it is important to note that for this project, we were able to move around parts of our territory that are now Crown land, municipal land and private property without interference; however, this is definitely not always the case for many of us.

### **Future Research**

A final challenge, which is also a site for potential research, relates to the process by which these stories and experiences, which are grounded in very intimate experiences and rooted in Anishinabe relationships, move outward to become part of a larger, public narrative. What happens when they become taken up within broader processes of truth-telling, education, and decolonization that continues to take place within communities across Turtle Island? Indeed there is a public dimension to this research that brings the visual work and stories to a mainstream audience through the art gallery exhibition. While I have attempted to outline some of the important curatorial choices that I believe respect the spirit and intent of the work, and facilitate the experience of gathering together in our Anishinabe way, the scope of this research does not include the reaction, reception, experiences, etc. of those who will receive this work, etc. Future research that explores these areas is required and much needed, especially given the rise of research-based Indigenous art that is grounded in decolonization. After all, decolonization is also a

dramatic reimagining of the relationship between settler and Indigenous Peoples. Future research should explore the shift in conceptualizing public art gallery roles and responsibilities towards creating safe spaces for the kind of work that unsettles and disrupts colonialism while at the same time facilitating respectful and safe opportunities for doing the important work of restoring and rebuilding relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members.

The kind of visual work produced in this research, specifically the regalia and cultural items, presents both challenges and opportunities for caretakers (family, community, institutional) of archival items like historical photographs. This research attended to the kinds of meaning and knowledge that may only be produced through a very intimate, corporeal, and prolonged engagement with items. While many research studies continue to explore considerations of the digital or virtual archive in the development of collective memory and identity, future research must also address other kinds of sensuous, embodied, and material engagements with Indigenous things that are integral to accessing and working through the past. This raises specific questions around access, rights, responsibilities and what kinds of encounters are permitted and encouraged. Moving forward, I envision partnerships between the caretakers/owners of archival materials, anthropologists, and artists as integral to facilitating the types of creative dialogue and productive exchanges that are also linked to broader processes of truth-telling, decolonization, and reconciliation. From my experience, facilitating opportunities for people to not only hear or read about history, but to touch it, feel it, and absorb it, leads to the kinds of transformative experience whereby people not only learn about also care and develop a sense of responsibility or commitment.

Another notable area of future research related directly to the Anishinabe photographs included in this research is a deeper exploration into the lives and experiences of Indigenous women. Indeed, the majority of photographs that comprise our collection are images of women: Women engaged in a variety of activities, negotiating multiple roles and responsibilities. Indigenous women have continuously been centred as a target for colonial violence in many ways. This violence is present in historical colonial photographic archives where Indigenous women are labeled/positioned as the “Indian squaw” or the docile, nameless wife of some man. Approaching Anishinabe photographs through a critical Indigenous feminist lens may centre Indigenous women’s lives and experiences in anti-colonial and resistance strategies and the important work towards self-determination, sovereignty, and relationships to the land.

This research addressed a small gathering of Anishinabe historical photographs. There are many other shoeboxes, photo albums and cookie tins full of beautiful marks created and left by our ancestors. There are also many other inquisitive and creative Anishinabe community members who are getting prepared to take responsibility for these items. This was just one journey of relating with/through our Anishinabe photographs. It is my wish that this work will lead to more research initiatives grounded in the needs and desires of Anishinabe families and communities and that we will continue to build and strengthen our histories, knowledges and relationships.

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Appendix

Waasaabikizoo: A Gathering of Ojibwe Photographs

Community Catalogue



# WAASAABIKIZO

A Gathering of Ojibwe Photographs

Celeste Pedri-Spade



### **Waasaabikizo: He/she shines, reflects**

In many ways we see ourselves, who we are and where we have come from, in the photographs of our Ojibwe ancestors. The life experiences of generations of Ojibwe radiate from these images that our family members have left for us like light that reflects from the surface of the many bodies of water that flow throughout our vast territory. The stories wash over us like good medicine, helping us along in our healing journey.



# Waasaabikizo

A Gathering of Ojibwe Photographs

Celeste Pedri-Spade

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I would like to acknowledge the kitchi-anishinabeg who helped guide this project and/or offered support throughout its duration in different ways. I offer chi-miigwetch (a big thank you) to my grandmother Shirley Shebobman, my aunts Frances Shebobman and Julia Rusnak, and Shirley Churchill, Louis Sawdo, Wanda Baxter, and Josie Kabatay. Chi-miigwetch to all the people who contributed photographs and gifted me with their time, kindness and stories. Chi-miigwetch to my partner Robert, my children and my parents for their love and support.

## *Introduction*

boozhoo anag onimiwin nndishnikaz mukwa nindodem Lac Des Mille Lacs First Nation nnindoonjii

I want to begin this in a good way and so I have shared with you my spirit name, my clan, and the community I am affiliated with as an Anishinabekwe (Ojibwe woman). My spirit name is ‘star dancing’, my clan is the bear, and I am a member of Lac Des Mille Lacs First Nation.

I am extremely honoured and grateful to present a great gift shared by several generous and inspiring Ojibwe. This gift consists of around 80 photographs taken approximately 50 to 100 years ago. What makes these photographs so meaningful is that they are photographs from within our communities, taken for our families, and cared for by our People for decades. They are significant because most collections of Ojibwe publicly available feature historical pictures of our relatives taken by ‘outsiders’ and thus often misrepresent and distort who we are and our histories.

This collection is comprised of photographs of our Ojibwe relatives—those who are still with us today and those who have journeyed on to the spirit world. They are of people who spent their whole lives in the part of our territory that begins just west of what is now called the City of Thunder Bay and continues onward to areas in northwestern Ontario around Shabaqua, Shebandowan, Kashabowie, Atikokan, and Kenora, Raith, Savanne, Upsala and Dryden.

These photographs reveal Ojibwe who struggled to maintain their sovereignty and autonomy against ongoing acts of colonial violence aimed at assimilating/eradicating our People including the reservation system, Indian Residential Schools, Indian hospitals, enfranchisement, and the child welfare system. These are photographs of people that many of us did not meet in person, but still connect to through our dreams, our stories and memories, and our ceremonies and prayers; photographs of people we respect and honour because who we are and what we know today continues to be shaped by how they lived, their experiences, and the gifts of knowledge they imparted to those they cared for and loved. These are photographs of people who continuously remind us of our responsibility that our relationship with them is integral to the relationships we have with our children, grandchildren and the generations that have yet to come.

Indeed, what ensues on the following pages is an Ojibwe-based collection. The term “Ojibwe-based” signals that these photographs came together as a result of the vision and efforts of Ojibwe. As an Ojibwe-based collection, they provide a significant entryway into the stories and experiences of our relatives. They are rich in culture not only in their ability to convey important information about our way of life, but as useful vehicles or tools in carrying out our commitment to living our lives as Ojibwe.

## Gathering Photographs



This project started out with one picture from my own family collection. It is of my grandmother, Shirley Shebobman, pictured to the left. This is the only photograph I have of her at this age and what makes it so special to me is that here, she is pregnant with my mother. Of course the fact that she is pregnant is something that cannot be seen to the average viewer. Indeed, even those who knew my grandmother back then could look at this image and probably wouldn't do the math to realize that she is not alone in the photograph. But when I look at it time and time again, I never see just my grandmother; I always see Shirley and my mother, Marcia. At first glance, through her reluctant smile and the slight tilt of her head, one may see simply the apprehensiveness and secrecy of a young 16-year old girl, but what I see in this photograph, is a thriving presence of strength, womanhood, and love. I see a great promise of life before me and an openness to all life's great mystery. When I hold the image and look into my grandmother's eyes, when I open myself to her warm gaze, we are joined through a reaffirmation and celebration of a shared faith and commitment to life. As I look at her and she looks back at me, a space emerges where time is no longer relevant and the borders blur between who she is and who I am, between her story and my own, between her hopes and desires and those belonging to me. I am neither lost nor found in this space, neither knowledgeable nor confused. I am in a space of healing.

From this image and other images in our family collection, I also learned a great deal about where my ancestors lived throughout our territory. I learned of their ongoing struggles with the colonial violence inflicted upon their physical, emotional, and spiritual being. I learned about how they persevered and fought to live according to their values and beliefs. I learned what they liked to do, whom they visited, where they travelled to during different times of the year. In short, I learned about their relationships with life that made them strong Ojibwe.

I want to emphasize the word *strong* because it is strength radiates from every image in my own family album. I don't see trepidation or hesitation. I don't see Ojibwe People trying to assimilate into Western culture. I only see skill, determination, pride, and self-determination. I see people who are skilled innovators and can adapt to any situation.

Having had this personal experience, I began to wonder about other photographs that may exist in other shoe boxes, cookie tins, albums and frames. Pictures of our extended relations, friends and community that emitted the same strength and beauty. I wondered what it would be like to see photographs of all our ancestral relations come together. How could that happen? What would result if this was done? How could this contribute to our ongoing efforts of healing and combating historical and contemporary colonialism?

I brought these questions to my greatest

teacher, my mother Marcia. She suggested that I consult with my grandmother and my great aunts. She also suggested that I reach out to other kitchi-Anishinabekwe in my life; the women with whom I had good and respectful relationships and that mentored and inspired me. I met with my grandmother, Shirley, my aunts Julia and Frances, as well as Shirley Churchill and Wanda Baxter. I presented my ideas and was offered encouragement and kindness.

Under the guidance and support of these kitchi-Anishinabekweg I met with several Ojibwe families who had ancestral ties similar to those held by my immediate family. Over the course of several months, I worked with different people to select images that would become part of this collection. People were asked to contribute photographs based on their own relationships with their images—with the people and places pictured. During these visits, we did a lot of talking and story sharing around the photographs. In the end, people contributed 8 to 12 photographs each, resulting in a total of approximately 80 images.

One of the main challenges with bringing together this number of photographs, taken of different people, in different situations, over a long time period, is how to gather and present them. This is of importance because there is a relationship between the photographs that is integral to determining how they come to acquire meaning and value to their viewers. Instead of relying on a model whereby photographs are presented along a linear time sequence or a structure based on family names/groups or a set of predetermined themes, I consulted with my kitchi

anishinabekwe Wanda Baxter for direction. Together we talked about how this journey was about honouring ancestors and acknowledging their presence in our lives. We discussed how these are the same principles underlying many of our Anishinabeg ceremonies. She encouraged me to look at the entire grouping of these photographs through my own relationship with ceremony and spirituality as an Anishinabekwe. This was no small feat and caused some anxiety; however, I put my tobacco down and asked the Creator for guidance and direction. I allowed myself to be open to help and I prayed for clarity—to be able to identify and accept that help when it came to me.

One day on a drive with my partner Rob, I started to think about the significance of “gathering” to our way of life as Ojibwe. How through our ceremonies and other cultural practices, we recognize the importance of physically and spiritually coming together as Ojibwe. I thought of how many Ojibwe accept the responsibility to carry and look after sacred bundles that include items like drums, feathers, and medicines that are part of these gatherings. I thought of how bringing together this collection of photographs could be like assembling a bundle that could be shared within our families and to outside people as a kind of medicine— because in many ways the memories and stories these photographs embody are ‘good’ medicine.

I kept thinking about how at different ceremonies we take the time to honour different aspects of and people in life. We do songs, offerings, and prayers for our children, our women, our men, our Elders, and the land. When I went back to “look at” all the photographs that had been collected, I began to see the images through the filter

of ceremony, which included thinking about tradition, protocol, and ritual. Remembering the words of Wanda, I decided to group the photographs according to “rounds” (similar to the rounds in sweatlodge) that honour the journey and lives of our children, women, men, and Elders and honour our the roles and responsibilities as mothers, life partners and caretakers of the land.

With every photograph there is a textual caption that explains who is in the photograph and approximately when the photograph was taken. When possible I include the location; however, it is difficult to always pin-point a place on the map, given that many of these photographs were taken as people were “out in the bush” on their trap lines, traveling to visit friends and family, and engaged in other daily life activities.

There is also other written information presented that I have scripted based on my visits with people, listening to stories and how these stories continue to bring meaning and value to their lives today. There is also some commentary that highlights the linkages between stories because while every person has their own story to share, what I found was that many of us have similar stories and that there is strength and healing in understanding how our stories connect us as Ojibwe.

Early on in the project, during one of my visits with kitchi-Anishinabekwe Shirley Churchill, she shared something with me that also influenced the gathering of these photographs. She shared her love of poetry, specifically *The Song of Hiawatha* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Despite the connection this narrative has to colonial stereotypes and myths linked to the romanticization of

Indigenous People and the idea of a 'vanishing Indian', Shirley cherished this poem because it helped her remain connected to her Ojibwe language and land when she was in Indian Residential School. The famous poet utilizes many Ojibwe words in his writing. As a young girl at the school she survived much abuse and mistreatment, and she would often visit the words and imagery in the Longfellow poem as a personal strategy of cultural survivance and resilience. Thus, in many ways I likened the way I related to these family historical photographs to Shirley's relationship to the Longfellow poem—as a means of remaining connected to people and places that were significant to my identity and way of life as an Anishinabekwe.

To honor this connection between photography, poetry, and cultural continuity/ survivance made possible through the gift of Shirley's time and knowledge. I crafted several short poems and placed them throughout the grouping of these photographs. These poems are based on my own emotional, physical, and spiritual experiences with the images and the stories shared with me by the many gracious people I visited. I have intentionally appropriated the meter of trochaic tetrameter utilized by Longfellow but disrupt the pattern of eight syllables per line with a traditional chant of seven syllables, the number seven acknowledging the seven nokomis (grandmother teachings) Ojibwe strive to follow throughout their lives.

## *Abinoojiiyag / Children*

*Our children are our greatest gift  
We learn and live through love for them  
Our work takes place as they look on  
They never leave our mind or side*

*Way ya hey, ya hey ya, ho  
Way ya hey, ya hey ha, ho*

*There was a time they left our care  
Through violent rape of love and life  
But never lost, no death in faith  
Their hearts and spirits lead them home*

*Way ya hey, ya hey ya, ho  
Way ya hey, ya hey ha, ho*



Lawrence and Norman Peters pose with baby Ronald Peters on the lakeshore near Kashabowie, Ontario area sometime around 1950.



Louis Sawdo in a walker-like carrier outside his family's home somewhere on their trapline around 1949.



Polly Jordan (centre woman) poses with her baby Josie along with members of the Smith family somewhere in the Lake Shebandowan area around 1936. Josie is in a Tikinagan, which is used by many Ojibwe to keep their children safe while traveling or doing work in the bush.

Ojibwe children were not excluded from the daily work of their parents, grandparents and/or other caregivers. Babies were kept in specially made carriers called Tikinagans and placed in spots where animals could not reach them and they would be sheltered from harsh weather. But it was not just parents who did the spectating, babies watched their parents as they worked, cleaning animals, roasting rice, washing clothes and performing other life activities. Young children were also expected to help.

*"It was important to always have your children near you because that is how they learned to do things that were important to living as Anishinabe People." - Wanda Baxter*



Josie Kabatay poses with the family dog as her mother Polly Jordon looks on. This photograph was taken somewhere along their family trapline around the mid 1940s.



Marcia Pedri at the age of 6 months in Thunder Bay, Ontario, 1963.



A young Louis Sawdo stands outside his family cabin sometime around 1951.



Lenny Churchill poses by the railroad tracks in Kenora, Ontario sometime during the early 1940s.



Left Photograph: A young Elizabeth Moore plays with a little dog in her mother's cabin in Kashabowie, Ontario in the mid 1950s. Right Photograph: Josie Kabatay poses with a small goat in the early 1940s in the Lake Shebandowan area. This photograph was taken by a family friend who passed it along to an Allied soldier in World War II. The soldier carried around this image of young Josie as a sort of talisman as he moved throughout Europe during his service.



Josie Kabatay ricing on Whitefish Lake (near Thunder Bay, Ontario) during the late 1940s.



The photograph on the right is of siblings Lilas, Gerry and Mae Siliker. It was taken around 1952 outside Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in the Kenora, Ontario area. In the photograph above, a young Josie Kabatay is roasting wild rice during ricing season at Whitefish Lake, near Thunder Bay, Ontario in the mid 1940s.

There are extensive collections of photographs taken by colonial authorities of Ojibwe children while at Indian Residential School. Government legislation mandated all Indian children to attend Boarding Schools. Children and toddlers sometimes as young as 2 years of age were taken from their families and brought to schools far away from their homes. There were many instances where children were just taken from their family's cabin without prior notification or parental consent. Often mothers and fathers would be out in the bush working and would return home to find their children gone. Parents had no idea where their children were sent or when they would be back. While some children were allowed to leave the school during short periods during the year, other children stayed at the school all year long. Others never returned home to their families.

The photograph of young Josie helping rice is quite remarkable because it illustrates aspects of an Ojibwe-based education, including sustenance strategies and respect for the land. Josie never attended Indian Residential School and was educated by her parents. As a result she learned how to speak both Ojibwemowin and English. She learned how to hunt, fish, trap, rice, build shelters and other tools, skin animals, cook and sew. She learned math skills and how to read, write.

There are different potential reasons as to why and how some Ojibwe evaded the boarding school system. Some parents were presented with the option of enfranchisement and their children could then attend rural day schools with non-Indian children. Other families would move further into the bush to avoid colonial authorities.





Left photograph: Arnold Shebobman (centre) with his uncle Lawrence Kishikweb (right) and friend Walter Holbik (left). This photograph was taken somewhere along the shores of Kashabowie Lake in the early 1950s. In the photograph on the right, three of Arnold's sisters pose for the camera sometime during the mid 1950s in Kashabowie, Ontario. Left to right: Nora, Frances and Julia Shebobman. It was important that children spend time together not only to occupy themselves while parents worked, but also to develop strong social bonds that would develop into supportive long-term relationships in adulthood. Building positive relationships among kin and community members was and continues to be key to living a good Ojibwe way of life.

*"As kids we would spend hours together playing at the Lake, in the bush...all over the place. The older ones tried to look after the younger ones. These are some of my best memories ...being a young girl in Kashabowie with my sisters and brothers. We were never scared. We never felt alone. We always had each other." - Julia Rusnak*



*ni maamaa in annig / mothers*

*Our mothers carry life within  
From them the strength of nation grows  
They hold the people in their hearts  
They give so many can survive*

*Hey ya way, ya hey ya, ha  
Hey ya way, ya hey ya, ha*

*Mothers see through strength of spirit  
Their visions draw us back to life  
They know of land in such a way  
That we may thrive as Ojibwe*

*Hey ya way, ya hey ya, ha  
Hey ya way, ya hey ya, ha*



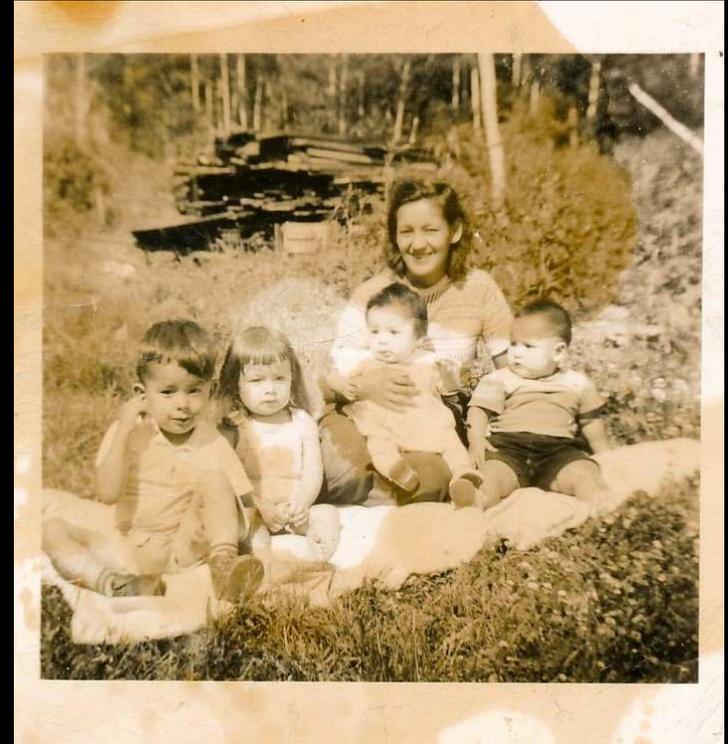
Jean Tenniscoe holding her son Louis somewhere along the family trapline during the early 1950s.



Julia Berkan (nee Peters) with her son Eric in their Kashabowie, Ontario home around the early 1960s.



Frieda Chapman (nee Peters) with her daughter Esther in the Upsala, Ontario area around the early 1960s.



In the two photographs above Jean Tenniscoe is with her young children somewhere along the family trapline during the 1950s. Keeping children safe and content was no small task for a mother living in the bush, especially with several toddlers. This photograph was likely taken by her husband Phillip Sawdo. It reflects a mother's love and pride for her family and it marks a significant time for the Sawdo family, a time when the children were not yet faced with the threat of mandatory education within the Indian Residential School system and they could remain together, living and working in different places that were significant to their history, wellbeing and identity as Ojibwe People. A few years after these photographs were taken Phillip and Jean moved to a house in the Atikokan, Ontario area. They moved so that their children could remain with them and attend a rural day school instead of being sent away to an Indian Boarding School.

*" My mother worked so hard for us. She did everything for us. She loved all us kids so much. They (my parents) made a huge sacrifice for us when we changed our life, moving to Atikokan. They shouldn't have had to do that as Anishinabe People, but what was the alternative? That choice probably saved us kids."- Louis Sawdo*



Polly Jordon sits with her daughter Josie Kabatay in the photograph on the left. This picture was taken around the late 1940s.

*" My grandmother had my mom late in life. She had lost two sons in infancy earlier in her life...such a tragedy. But then she was unexpectedly gifted with a baby girl when she was in her forties. They were really close and Polly taught my mom so much about the land and culture." - Madeleine Rosskogler*



Shirley Churchill with her children Preston, Aaron and Barry in the 1960s in the Upsala, Ontario area.



Rose Shebobman (centre) with her daughters Julia (left) and Linda (right). This photograph was taken near their Kashabowie, Ontario home sometime during the 1970s. Rose had 14 children with her partner Toussant Shebobman. Her older children were delivered in the bush by her mother and/or grandmother, both skilled in various forms of medicine. Rose spoke only Ojibwemowin to her children and grandchildren and passed on many teachings and skills to the women in her family throughout her life.



Marion Siliker (nee Peters) (second from left) with her children Lilas (right), Mae (middle) and Gerry (right). These are the children from the photograph on page 18, approximately 10 years later (around the early -mid 1960s).



Marlene Peters (left) with her mother Frances Peters in Upsala, Ontario during the 1960s,



Cecilia Bonner (partner of Fred Peters) poses with her children Frieda, Rosie (on lap) and Charlie. This photograph was commissioned by the family and taken inside a studio in Fort William, Ontario around 1910.

## *anishinabekwewag / women*

*They lead the way with grace and strength  
the many battles they have braved  
Sharp minds, kind hearts, skilled hands, they work  
for family and community*

*wee chee na, hey ah hey ah  
wee chee na, hey ah hey ah*

*A presence like no other kind  
Sustained by struggle to survive  
Fierce spirits fuel steadfast pursuits  
so that all of life may flourish*

*wee chee na, hey ah hey ah  
wee chee na, hey ah hey ah*



Polly Jordon (back right) poses with two of her aunts (names unknown) around 1918.





The photographs on these two pages depict generations of women. The photograph on the page opposite is of Cha-is Deafey, taken in an unknown location around 1940. Her daughter, Rose Shebobman, is pictured sitting in her cabin during the mid 1960s in Kashabowie, Ontario. Rose's daughter, Shirley is photographed just outside Kashabowie, Ontario in 1963. At the time this picture was taken Shirley was about four months pregnant with her first daughter, Marcia.

*"My mother gave me my first Indian name, Eshaa na kwe aa bik, it's like the light that reflects off the water. I was about 7 or 8 years old. My second name came from my grandmother Cha-is. She gave me the name Waabaa aa ziit., the wind coming off of the water. She did this when I was about 14 or 15, around a time that I was really sick. There wasn't a doctor who would come. She did the healing. I remember she used medicines from the bush....and my name... because Indian names are Indian medicine."- Shirley Shebobman*



The top-left photograph is of Mary Peters (nee Weweji - Penaise) outside her cabin at Burchell Lake around the late 1940s/early 1950s. The other two photographs are of Mary's daughter, Julia Berkan (nee Peters) taken in Kashabowie, Ontario around the late 1950s/early 1960s.

Both women were known for their exceptional organizational, cleaning and gardening skills. The idea that life in the bush is somehow an unordered and chaotic way of living is a misconception as many Ojibwe can attest to how living successfully on the land requires one to be very organized, tidy and well prepared.





Jean Tenniscoe appears in these three photographs as a young women in the Savanne, Ontario area in the late 1940s. Originally from an Algonquin reserve in southern Ontario, Jean moved to northwestern Ontario as a young girl with her parents and siblings. Her parents were skilled trappers who hunted and trapped all throughout the area now referred to as Quetico Provincial Park. As a result Jean was knowledgeable about the land and bush life. She married an Ojibwe trapper Phillip Sawdo, whom she met working as a camp cook in the Savanne Sawmill. Together they raised their children on the land.

*"My grandmother Jean is such an inspiration to me. I often think of all the challenges she had to face. Her life was so demanding...physically and mentally. Yet, she was so strong and this beautiful family came to be as a result of her life's work." - Dawn Aho*



Polly Jordon dancing in her jingle dress somewhere around the Bass Lake area around 1926.



Frieda Chapman (nee Peters) outside the Indian Hospital in Fort William, Ontario sometime during the 1940s.

Kathleen McKenzie along the shores of Kashabowic Lake during the 1950s.

*" The ladies back then took really good care of themselves. They knew how to be out on the land, trapping, skinning, gathering plants...and they also took pride in their fashion sense. No one went around with ripped clothes or holes. Everyone had their hair nice... and their nails nice." - Frances Shebobman*

The photographs of Ojibwe women provide a glimpse into the versatility, expansiveness, and openness of Ojibwe life. Because Ojibwe world view acknowledges the importance of multiple ways of being, people did not conform to bounded, inflexible life practices, but would expect different changes in their own way.

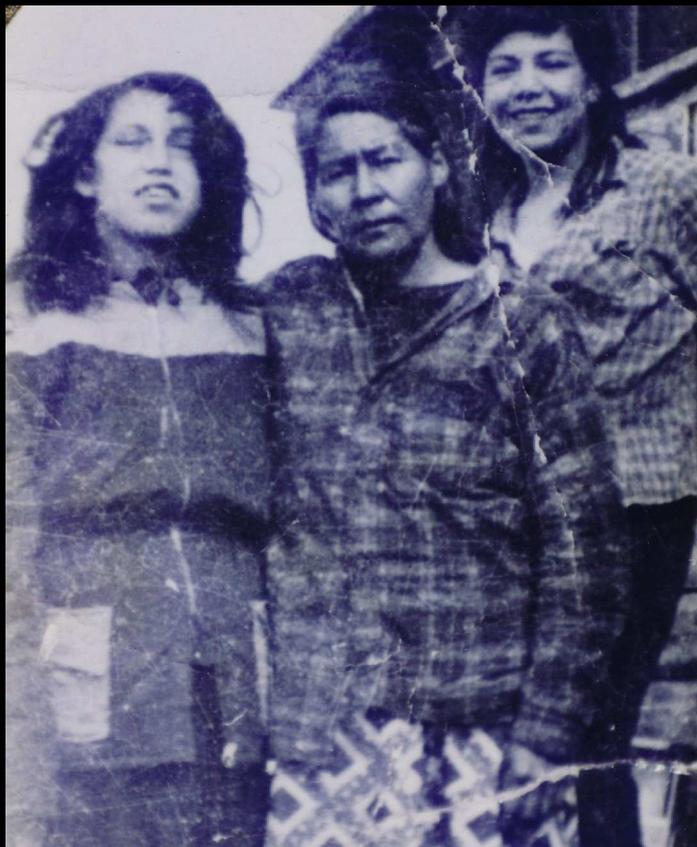


Young women from the Indian Residential School outside Kenora, Ontario pose for a picture together while still in school uniform sometime around 1950. Some of the women hold up pictures of Hollywood idols. Shirley Churchill is among the girls in the back row. She still remembers a great camaraderie among girls at the school and the importance of friendships during this period of her life.



The photograph on the right is of the "Peters girls" taken around the early 1950s. Back row, left to right: Rosie Peters, Frances Peters (May), and Marion Peters. Front row, left to right: Frieda Peters (Chapman) and Mary Peters (King).





Alice Peters (left) with Cha-Is Deafey (centre) and Julia Berkan (nee Peters) in Kashabowie , Ontario around 1945.



Josie Peters (left) with an unidentified friend during the 1950s.

*"My mom (Alice) was really close with Cha-Is. Cha-Is used to take her and other young girls down the tracks to a spot and would give women's teachings. She gave teachings about ceremony and spirit and also physical and sexual health. She also taught us what plants could be used for different things. Cha-Is was the one who gave me my spirit name." - Elizabeth Moore*



Christine Samson (right) with a friend on the sheep farm where they worked after leaving Indian Residential School in Kenora, Ontario during the mid 1930s. Many former students of the School were required to work on this farm, which provided food to the students at the school.



Alice Peters (left) poses with her friend near the Fort William reservation around the mid to late 1940s.



A young and fashionable Marlene Peters poses in a pageant dress near Upsala, Ontario and again in a day dress (right photograph) in Fort William, Ontario around the early 1960s.

*"My grandma Marlene worked so hard. She worked on the ships most of her life and didn't retire until she got really sick...but I'm grateful we spent the time together and that we grew as close as we did. When she was sick we did everything together. I'm so thankful for the time we had. I only wish we had had more of it." - Chantall Kemp*

An unidentified women poses in her garden likely around the Savanne or Raith, Ontario around the early 1940s.



Marlene Peters poses outside her home in Upsala, Ontario around the early 1960s.





Louise Deafey poses in an unknown location sometime during the 1950s.

*"What stands out to me is that there are so many pictures of the women in our families. Women doing so many things...from working on the land in old boots and lumberjack tops to dancing in their traditional regalia to posing all dolled up with their hair and makeup nicely done. This speaks to their strength, diversity, and tenacity.... how they took on so many roles and responsibilities. Also, I think it is very telling that there are so many photographs of women here because we know about what they were living through... the most violent forms of colonialism which often lead to their disappearance from their homes and the land. We encounter this reality still today as Indigenous women. There's a story in the news about a murdered or missing Indigenous woman almost every day. It is easy for the public to position our women as victims, but we can see here evidence that we are not victims, we never were. ...we were and are brave survivors....warriors." - Celeste Pedri-Spade (great grand niece of Louise Deafey).*



*ne wee tig gay mah gun nun /  
My Partner*

*Two people walk, two sets of tracks  
paths not crossed but travelled in sync  
with life and with one another  
parters unified through respect*

*Ho ya hey, ya ho ya hey  
Ho ya hey, ya ho ya hey*

*Two hearts that beat, four hands that work*

*Bound not by force but forceful bond*

*Committed to learning and growth*

*Preparing and caring in love*

*Ho ya hey, ya ho ya hey  
Ho ya hey, ya ho ya hey*



Polly and Merritt Jordon at Windegogo Lodge near  
Kashabowie, Ontario during the late 1940s.



Frank Kishikweb and Rose Shebobman (nee Weweji-Penaise) in their home in Kashabowie, Ontario around 1959.



Frieda and Donald Chapman near Savanne, Ontario around the late 1930s.



Shirley Shebobman and Billy Primeau in Kashabowie,  
Ontario around the mid 1960s.



Annie Sawdo and her husband around the mid 1930s.



*ininiiwoug / men*

*He walks a path of sacrifice*

*No map to guide his memory*

*A knowledge lived but rarely voiced*

*From the blood of his ancestors*

*Hey ya ho, yah hey ya ho*

*Hey ya ho, yah hey ya ho*

*Rough hands do not yield hardened hearts*

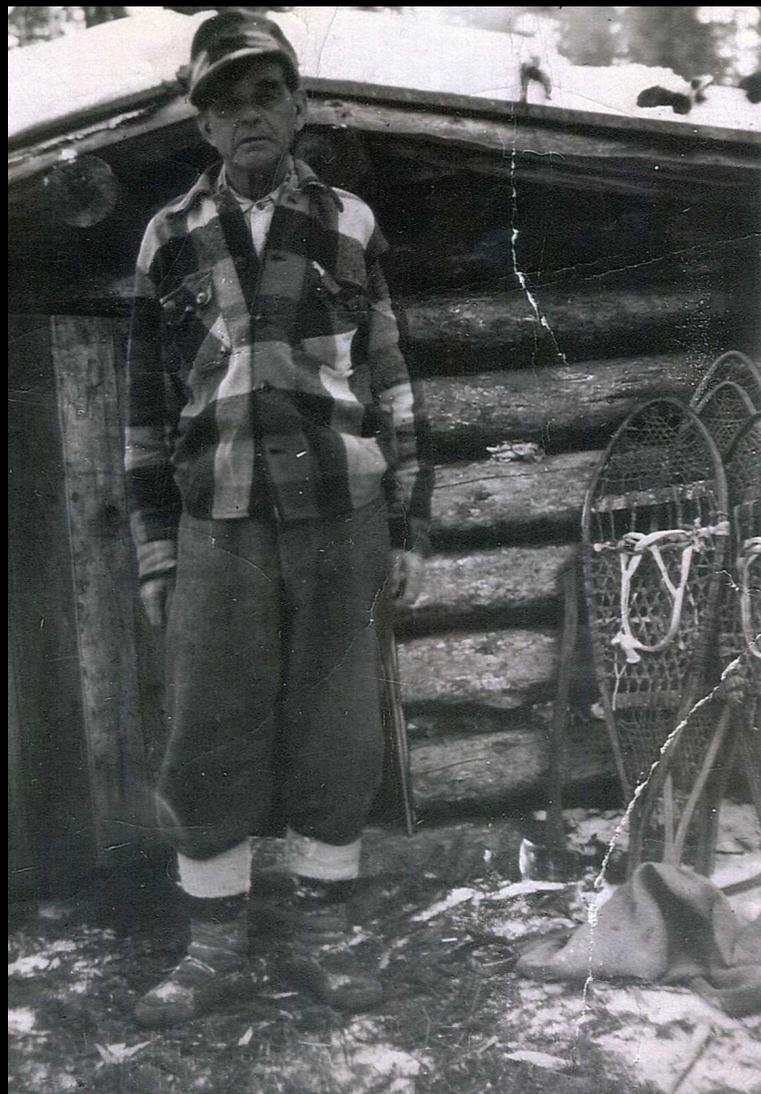
*Among brothers, husbands and sons*

*Every day a journey towards*

*Humility, respect, wisdom*

*Hey ya ho, yah hey ya ho*

*Hey ya ho, yah hey ya ho*



Fred Peters stands outside his trapping cabin on Lac Des Mille Lacs Lake around the late 1930s.



Phillip Peters carrying a sap bucket in Kashabowie, Ontario in the early/mid 1960s.



Frank Churchill (right) poses with an American tourist as he works as a fishing and hunting guide during the mid/late 1950s.



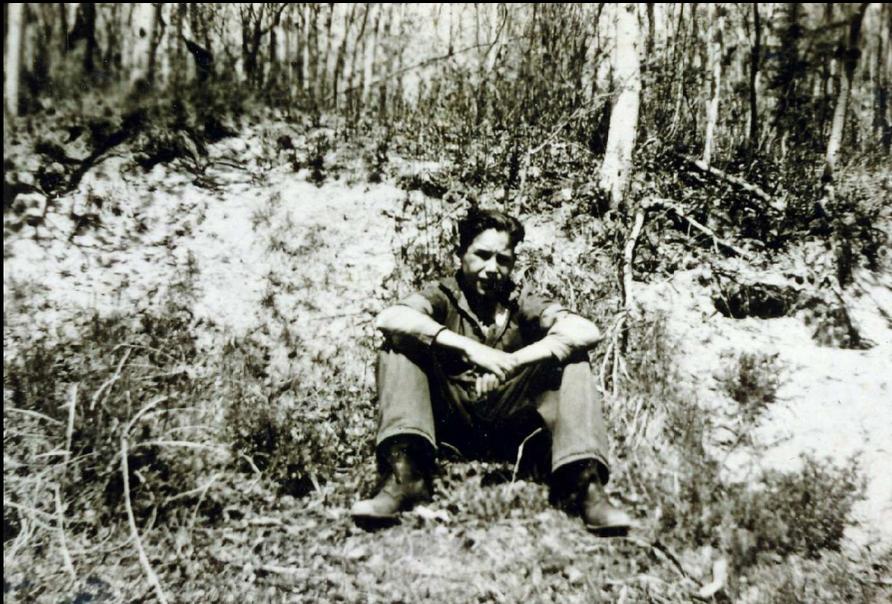
Brothers Phillip (left), Louis (middle) and Robert (right) enlisted in the Canadian Army when Canada entered World War II. Phillip was too young to enlist and lied about his age so that he could join with his brothers. Both Phillip and Robert survived their appointments but sadly, Louis, a Rifleman was killed in the Battle of Normandy on June 17, 1944. He was only 23 years of age. Phillip named his son Louis after his brother. These men are recognized by their family and community as brave ogichidaag (warriors). As grandsons of Chief Susie Rat and great-grandsons of Wasakoninie (Fiery Hand), they were descendants of great Ojibwe leaders that supported and protected Ojibwe living throughout the Savanne, Ontario area and beyond.



Phillip Sawdo in his Army uniform around the early 1940s.

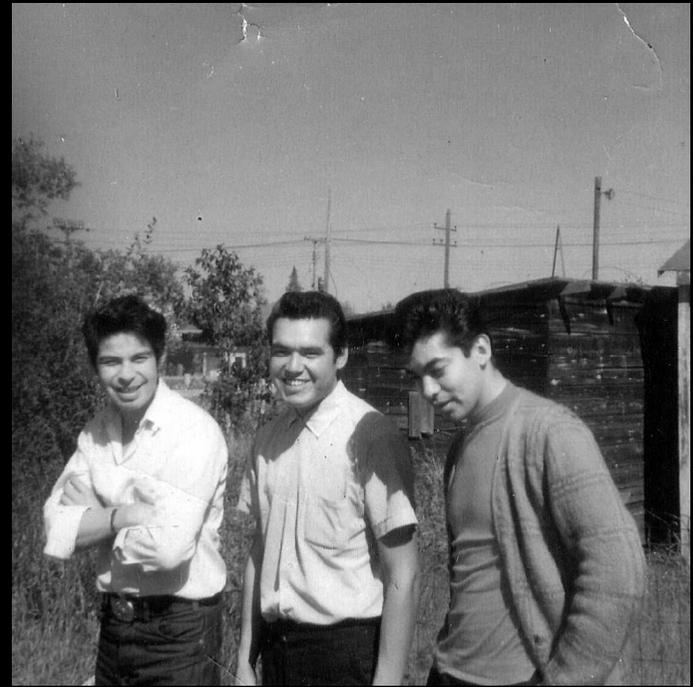


In the top photograph, Frank Churchill is working on a sheep farm in Kenora, Ontario around the late 1930s. He spent several years working on the farm, which supplied food to local Indian Residential Schools, including the school he attended, Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School. In the photograph below, Frank's son Donald poses somewhere in the bush in the Kenora area. As a young man Donald worked in various roles in the bush industry.





Brothers John and Peter Deafey around the mid to late 1920s. Both of these men spent their lives working on the land as trappers, guides, conservation officers, and bushworkers. They were connected not just through biology, but also through their spirit names: Boon na kout (winter sky) and Boon na penaise (winter thunder bird) .



Left photograph: Brothers Wesley and Fred Chapman around Upsala , Ontario area in the 1960s. In the right photograph Wesley (left) and Fred (right) are jointed by their cousin Wayne Peters (middle).



An unidentified Ojibwe man appears in front of a float plane in Kenora, Ontario during the mid 1930s.



Phillip Sawdo (man in the hat, holding the paddle) with some local men who participated in community paddling races. This photograph was taken in the Savanne, Ontario area during the 1950s.



*kitchi-anishinabeg gaye aki / Elders  
and the land*

*Wisdom gained from years of learning*

*Honoured keepers of great teachings*

*Protectors of land and waters*

*Humble servants to their People*

*Hoka hey, ah way ah hey*

*Hoka hey, ah way ah hey*

*Their words provide good medicine*

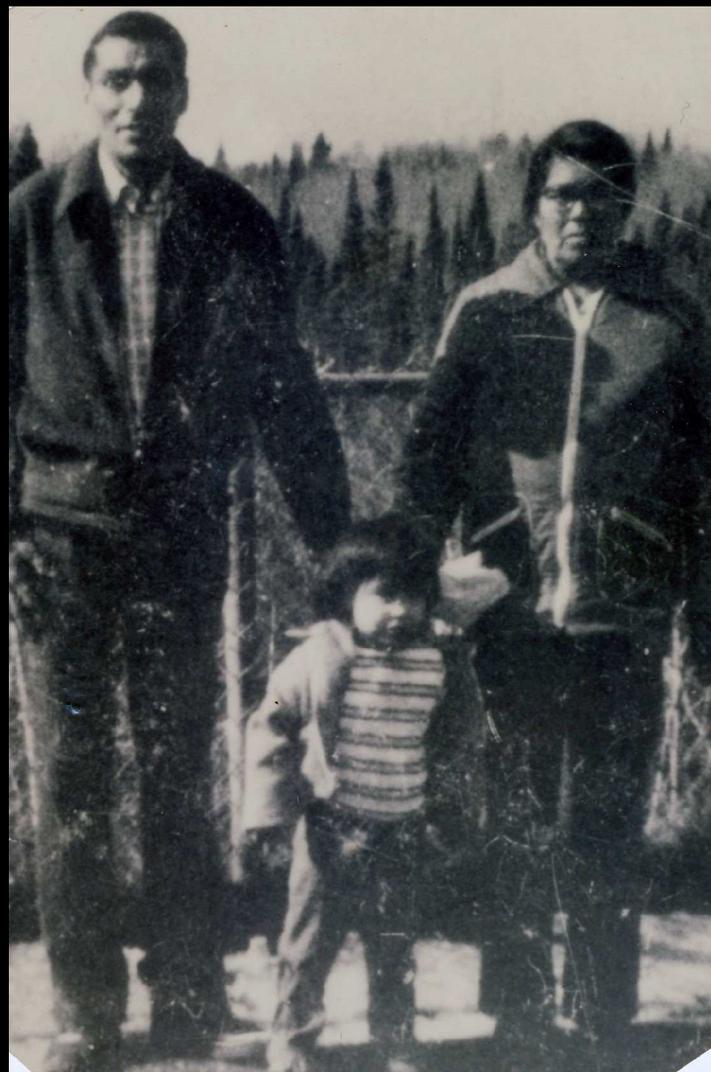
*Their hands are worn yet remain strong*

*Their hearts are occupied by all*

*A strong spirit that leads the way*

*Hoka hey, ah way ah hey*

*Hoka hey, ah way ah hey*

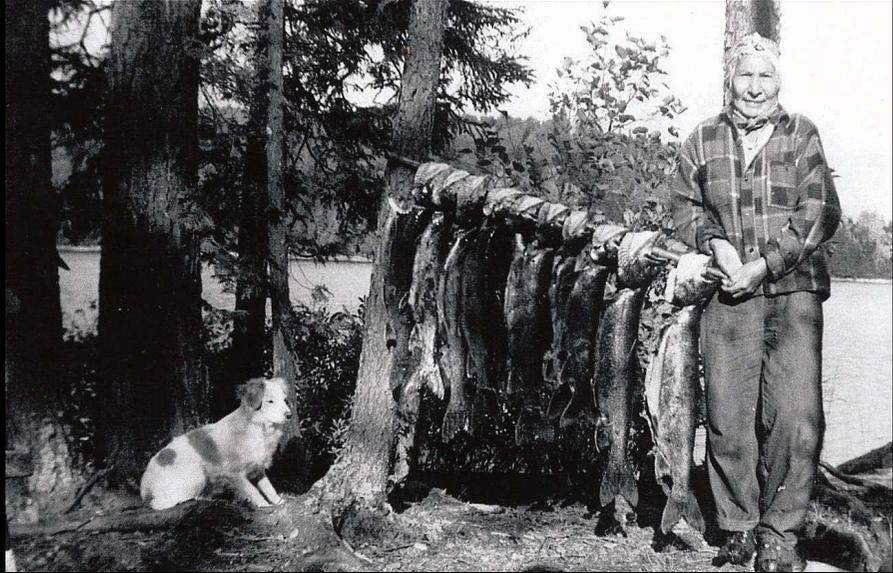


Tousant and Rose Shebobboman (nee Deafey) with their grandson Derek Primeau in the Thunder Bay, Ontario area during the late 1960s.



The man in the centre of this photograph is Fred Peters. He is surrounded by several of his grandchildren, from his daughter Frances (the woman standing behind him, to his left). This photograph was taken during Fred's later years in Thunder Bay, Ontario. His family would visit him regularly at St. Joseph's Manor.

In the top photograph Polly Jordon poses beside a line of fresh trout on Windedgogo Island in the early to mid 1950s. Below, her partner Merriitt poses outside one of their trapping shacks at Moose Bay with their daughter Josie.





John Deafey (man on right kneeling) drums with a member of the Spoon family while Polly Jordon (woman in the jingle dress on the far right) dances with another woman and a few youth. This photograph was taken in the Bass Lake area around the mid 1920s. John Deafey would often host ceremonial and social gatherings for local and visiting Ojibwe a few times a year.

*"To me, this picture really illustrates how innovative and resourceful our ancestors were. My great grandfather is drumming on what looks like a modified tub and the women here are wearing beautiful jingle dresses that are spiritual and respectful of the dance, yet reflect styles of dresses worn during the 1920s and early 1930s." - Marcia Pedri*



The man standing in the centre of this photograph, behind the drum, in blazer is John Deafey. His brother, Peter Deafey, is in his traditional regalia (third person from the left). John is standing beside his wife Cha-is and three of their young children. They are surrounded by family and friends who have come together in ceremony and social celebration during the mid 1920s.



Frieda and Donald Chapman (centre couple) pose with their daughter -in-law Shirley Churchill and son Frank at Kakabeka Falls, Ontario in the early 1950s.



Mary Peters (Weweji- Penaise) at her home near Burchell Lake around the mid 1960s.



Merritt Jordon, the partner of Polly Jordon thrashing rice at Whitefish Lake during the late 1940s. Whitefish Lake was a popular destination for many families harvesting wild rice. In the early Fall, families would travel for days by canoe and portage to this area and stay until they gathered and prepared enough rice to last the entire year. Rice was also traded for other food and household items.

Agnes Rat holds a huge fish while her grandson Louis shows off his own catch. They are joined by her son Phillip Sawdo. This photograph was taken somewhere along the family trap line during the early 1950s.

*"My grandmother lived in a small cabin in the Savanne area. The highway runs along where she used to live. That was her home. When she passed away, the government just took it over. Even though her cabin is gone, it's still special to me...it's still her home."* - Louis Sawdo









