Mnidoo-mkwendamwin: Beading and Restitching with Ancestral Threads of Memory

By

Estrella Racoma Whetung
B.A., University of Victoria, 2008
M.A., University of Victoria, 2010

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the School of Indigenous Governance

University of Victoria

We acknowledge and respect the Lək^{w}əŋən (Songhees and X^{w}sepsəm/ Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək^{w}əŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Abstract

This work was created to go beyond the study cultural mnemonic devices and into the realm of documenting how to make ancestral knowledge encodements that synthesize research through Indigenous beadwork, textile, other fibre arts. Beading is Indigenous resurgence that connects me to my ancestors, and this research delves into what that means in a grounded wholistic way through my intersecting lenses of being a chronically ill neurodivergent Two-Spirit Mississauga Nishnaabe Lucbanin artist and scholar. Conceptualizations around the body, mind, spirit, land, and material expressions of culture are often thought of as separate entities due to colonization, so a foundational part of this work examines approaches to Indigenous ideas of wholeness in community and identifies what forms of decolonization and resurgence can facilitate reconnection with the spiritual. Beads come together and interplay with one another in similar ways that gained wisdoms do within the research process. While the overall design that is created through knowledge is powerful and important, so is every stitch that makes that design come into being. Each relative who collaborated on this dissertation brought a prismatic array of experiences and played a powerful role in shaping the trajectory of the ancestral knowledge encodement of this work in the *Ngwaagan Regalia* (2025). Throughout the dissertation are ancestral knowledge encodements—created through historical inspiration, depictions of relatives, tea-visits with kin, and narratives shared by family and community members. The encodements created and embedded into this written dissertation take the forms of photographs, historical images, digitally stitched collages, digital mixed media illustrations, paintings, and diagrams. I have chosen to honour this tradition of weaving in the threads of previous generations and connecting it to those in the future through integrating ancestral mkwendamwinan (memories) in the same way that I am including contemporary conversational dbaajmownan (stories).

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Dedication

For Amik-ba: Amik-ba, gi-gii-mino-gwiiwzensiw miinwaa gi-ga-zaag'in gaaggekmik.

For Amik-ba: Amik-ba you were a good boy and I will treasure you forever.

Kina weyaa, chi-miigwech!

Thank you, everyone!

Nanda-gikendamaan Nishnaabemwin miinwaa Nishnaabe gikendaasowin miinwaa kaalaman sa Lucban endso-giizhik.

I seek to learn Nishnaabe language and Nishnaabe knowledge and Lucban knowledge everyday.

Pii ishkwaabii'amaan o'owe mazina'igan, apegish ni-wii-mazinigwaas miinwaa ni-wii-gwayakogwaas endso- giizhik.

When I finish writing this document, I hope I will bead and sew everyday.

Nimiigwechiwenimininim.

I am grateful to you all.

I would like to dedicate a very special miigwech to my long-time supervisor Dr. Jeff Ganohalidoh Corntassel. He accompanied me throughout this learning journey from the beginning and helped in the wonderful co-supervision of this dissertation with Dr. Andrea N. Walsh. I appreciate all of the dedication, care, and expertise (and motivational pressure!) they put into advising me throughout my work. Chi-miigwech!

Preface
Maanda Naajmowin (Context): Mewinzha, gaawiin ni-gii-mkwendaanziin ozhibii'igewin waa-zanagendayaan wii-giizhitooyaan pii gii-maadaadiziyaan: *Long long ago, I did not know the writing process would be something I would consider difficult for me to finish when I began the journey*[1]

"The question is this: from what base do we look at the world?"[2] To live as Anishinaabeg means that we are embedded within Creation; therefore, the concept of mno-bmaadziwin is essential to my ability to survive and thrive as a Mississauga Nishnaabe Lucbanin.[3] For me, the balance of the teachings defines mno-bmaadziwin. In our teachings, human beings cannot sustain themselves without relying upon the compassion of other beings and have responsibilities to uphold in these relationships in a good way. If we accept that we are a part of a life that is physical-spiritual in basis, then we must also acknowledge that these realities are inseparable. The physical cannot exist without the spiritual and I use this idea to approach my bmaadziwin as whole. How Anishinaabeg approach bimaadiziwin reveals our ethical standards and sacred responsibilities: "if we needed the bark from a tree, expressing thanks, intentions

[1] Maanda naajmowin means here is a story or narrative that is told in a certain way in Nishnaabemwin (the Nishnaabe language). An important note: I am a language learner who is not fluent in Nishnaabemwin, and Southern Tagalog, so sometimes I make mistakes. I have put together many of the ideas and concepts in ways that make sense to me in terms of morphology. Unfortunately, I no longer have my grandparents here to correct me with their multiple dialect fluency and knowledge of ancient teachings. My mother is a fluent speaker, but my father lost some of his ability to speak our language when he started going to school. Perhaps you understand things differently as a speaker and I encourage you to reach out to me if you are interested in connecting. I have used two wonderful online dictionaries to help me in my work in Nishnaabemwin and Anishinaabemowin (the Anishinaabe language). The majority of the definitions presented in this work in the footnotes, unless otherwise specified through family and/or community knowledge, are my interpretation of the dialects from the following resources, The Nishnaabemwin Online Dictionary, https://dictionary.nishnaabemwin.atlas-ling.ca/#/results and, The Ojibwe Peoples' Dictionary, https://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu/. I have graciously had family members such as my parents Everett and Leila, and cousin Carmen Wiigwaas Craig to help provide guidance with meanings as well. I am a language learner who is not fluent, so hopefully even if communicated imperfectly my intention shines through.
[2] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, (James Currey Ltd., 1986), 94. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was a Gĩkũyũ scholar and language advocate (Kenya).
[3] The good life, mno-bmaadziwin, is a balanced and rooted approach that recognizes and respects all beings in Creation. Note: this is my dialect for the spelling.

and actions would precede the taking. Thus, the origins of any feast, basket, lodge or canoe would have been honoured and a consciousness of its spirit respected."[4] Each learner in life arrives with the nbwaakaawin they have gained through their life experiences, but each has to embrace their sense of aakde'ewin in order to overcome the colonial constructs in their minds.[5] Thinking with mno-bmaadziwin as a foundation is central to defining myself as whole, and frees my fellow beings collectively from colonially imposed compartmentalization and categorization in our everyday lives. It is the harmonious totality we have as beings that strengthens our threads to the universe through Gzhe-mnidoo.[6] In the teachings from my family, we live in a space of webbing collectivity of wholeness with each other and are defined by our intertwining relationships with all beings in the universe.

How does cultural knowledge emerge in life? I have received Mississauga Nishnaabe and Lucbanin knowledge primarily through my context of my relatives who culturally and spiritually trained me to encode and carry stories since childhood.[7] Storytelling through our languages, everyday experiences, and engagement of memories has been the core space in which I have learned and understood knowledge. The lineage of my cultural knowledge is predominantly through my parents, my aunts and uncles, my siblings, my cousins, my grandparents, my great-grandparents, and all

[4] Kathleen E. Absolon, *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know Indigenous re-Search Methodologies*, 2nd edition (Fernwood Publishing, 2022), 37.
[5] Nbwaakaawin is wisdom in Nishnaabemwin. Aakde'ewin is bravery and refers to a strong heart in Nishnaabemwin.
[6] The Creator in Nishnaabemwin.
[7] When I talk about relatives and relationships, I am not limiting this terminology to my natal family and my human communities, but rather I am embedded within the Nishnaabe context of ndanwendaagnak and the ties to all of our relatives in the universe.

of my kin who have come before them. I would love to name each relative individually and I have tried my best to acknowledge each relative who has shared, but I also have hundreds of relatives and do not wish to exclude anyone in terms of how they have contributed to my life. I was taught that when you touch those threads of knowledge from your grandparents you are also tethering yourself to a broader sense of kinship and connection. Moreover, not every conversation I have been a part of since being trained in childhood has a specific timestamp attached to it as relationships with temporality are culturally defined. Each relative can reach back and grasp the threads of knowledge that connect them to previous generations and to the universe as a whole. For example, my grandparents were all born over a hundred years ago, so conversations with them had threads of knowledge that connected with their grandparents lived experiences in the early 1800s. Both sides of my family are prolific and with that abundance comes a treasure of stories that have been threaded together with loving care. When I was a child, my family identified that I quietly enjoyed visiting, listening to long narratives, and that I could accurately recollect these stories. Eventually, I would be asked to remember the stories and be encouraged to precisely relay them back to my family at a later time. This was an intertwining cultural and relational approach that was repeated regularly throughout my childhood and into adulthood to strengthen my abilities, engage precise listening skills, and encourage our way of passing down oral traditions. Many of my relatives share similar neurodivergent memory retention gifts, so there was nothing extraordinarily different about my neurodivergent abilities to retain, retrieve, and recite complex memories of narratives.

However, it was still prioritized as an ability that consistently needed to be nurtured and maintained through the rhythmic weaving of relationships.

The cultural learning I have gained from my relatives has been intertwined into my memories over four decades and the foundation of this knowledge is built from the ancient wisdom and experiences of all the beings who are in my life. When I speak about "my relatives" I am also acknowledging the many more than human beings who are a part of my life, and that I have been supported by and learned from. Shifting how we interact with one another and embodying the understandings of our ancestors are important ways forward for resurgence. Resurgence needs to be embraced and embodied in our everyday lives. This work requires attentiveness, care, and commitment. As Anishinaabe legal scholar and cultural educator John Kegedonce Borrows (Chippewas of Nawash First Nation) emphasizes, "practices and partnerships of resurgence and reconciliation must sustain the living earth and our more-than-human relatives for future generations."[8] In order for the renewal of our relationships to our more than human relatives to ensue it necessitates "the simultaneous resurgence of Indigenous laws, governments, economies, education, relations to the living earth, ways of knowing and being, and treaty relationships."[9] We share sites of knowing with our relatives everyday and we must become more accustomed to listening again.

[8] John Borrows, "Earth-Bound: Indigenous Resurgence and Environmental Reconciliation," in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, eds. Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 69.
[9] Borrows, "Earth-Bound: Indigenous Resurgence and Environmental Reconciliation," 69.

Collaborative sites of cultural knowledge and memory-making can become wonderful ways to inspire the work we wish to do. When I was growing up, I was encouraged by my parents to read cultural work such as the Nishnaabe community histories written by Mae Whetung-Derrick, Anishinaabe language and cultural books by Basil Johnston, and Nishnaabe historical narratives by George Copway, and each of them influenced my interest in Nishnaabe history. We would have conversations together while I was savoring the pages and would have further discussions each time I revisited these works. Lucbanin publications on culture were not as accessible; however, I always had my mother and my grandparents to ask when I had questions of curiosity about cultural traditions. Being with my family and visiting with our relatives, both human and more than human, has always been a space of learning for me. The expansion of my personal knowledge has also blossomed through visiting, walking together, and learning with kin in the urban Indigenous community in arts, language, and education. That synergistic act of coming together to have discussions and co-create with one another generates a new site of learning and memory encodement to draw strength from for resurgence. ‘Uncited’ cultural knowledge in this dissertation has emerged from some of these spaces of knowledge that have been shared with me throughout my life and the footnotes embedded are an important expansion of that understanding. Before starting this research, I considered a thought I had encountered when I was working on my studies during my master’s degree. As scholar Frantz Fanon writes about colonialism’s impact on the collective sense of being, with “one or two centuries of exploitation the national cultural landscape has radically shriveled. It has become an inventory of behavioral patterns, traditional costumes, and miscellaneous

customs."[10] In response to reading this at the time I wondered, "How are we to avoid becoming hollow relics and decontextualized inventories of our ancestors and their memories?" This work is my culturally grounded approach to answering that question. The direction of this work has transformed over time, but the heart of this has always been about considering tangible approaches to coming back to our own way of being and experiencing wholeness in the universe.

I was born and raised geographically dislocated from my home territories on the lands of the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Xʷsepsəm), W̱SÁNEĆ, SC'IA̓NEW nations and the desire to know more about our relationships in the cosmos has guided my pathway in life. Demonstrating how we relate to one another—especially on lands and waterways that are not our ancestral territories—is an important teaching in my family. To show appreciation and gratitude to the folks who welcomed my family I would like to speak a bit about how my parents came to the lands we reside upon before more thoroughly introducing myself and my family history.[11] My father Everett was born in upstate New York to Mississauga Nishnaabe parents and spent time oscillating between urban cities in the United States and the rural home communities of our family on Mississauga territories.[12] He spent a lot of time with his beloved grandparents and cousins and, while he may complain about the bitter -40 cold "slapping [him] in the guts," he has a beautiful

[10] Frantz Fanon was an intellectual from Martinique who had a complex view of his identity and how colonialism impacted Martinican culture as well as the African diaspora more generally. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (Grove Press, 2004), 172.

[11] I do not often share this story because it is very personal to my parents, but I want to honour their friends who have always been so loving and supportive towards us.

[12] My grandparents used to refer to themselves as Misi-zaagiing/Mshi-zaagiing Nishnaabe. They used to describe this as delta with many large river mouths and said that it connected them to the Mississagi River on the northern part of Lake Huron. From my understanding, the older folks in the community would also make a reference to Mshi-zaagiing/Misi-zaagiing Nishnaabeg as a plural marker for their identities. My grandparents used to call themselves "Nishnaa," but that may be a colloquialism of the post-World War I time period they grew up in.

appreciation for how he grew up enveloped in the loving support and encouragement of his family.[13] He came to the territories of the Songhees and Xʷsepsəm peoples when he was a teenager. My Southern Tagalog mother Leila was born in a rural copra farming town called Lucban, Quezon Province, the Philippines and immigrated to Turtle Island as a teenager through happenstance.[14] My mother's eldest brother Jose was recruited from the Philippines to work as a nurse in Chicago due to US nursing shortages and then to Saginaw in Michigan. Eventually, he was recruited and sponsored to work in Southern Ontario because of his specialization in ICU nursing and found a posting on Vancouver Island. My mother went through many hardships as a youth when she arrived but found friendship and acceptance amongst Indigenous peoples and new immigrants while working together at a local poultry processing plant. As she says, "Maybe we didn't all speak the same language, but we knew how to laugh together."

It was in this workspace that she met her beautiful best friend the late Susan Henry (W̱SÁNEĆ/Pauquachin First Nation) and, through this relationship, she got to know Susan's sister Mary-Anne Thomas (W̱SÁNEĆ/Pauquachin First Nation) and Mary-Anne's husband, the late Chief Andy Thomas (Xʷsepsəm/Esquimalt First Nation). Susan, Mary-Anne, and Andy treated my mother with absolute goodness, love, and family kinship and extended this kindness to my father after my parents got married. I have had the privilege since I was born to learn and gain an understanding of how to be

[13] This is the way my father Everett Whetung speaks about growing up in the snow on Rice Lake. It is a common memory that he mentions.

[14] Tagalog means "people of the river." Taga means "from," but it also on a deeper level means someone who is natively living in a place and -ilog means "river." Copra is cultivated and processed coconut. My mother's older sister Emma was originally sponsored to immigrate by their brother Jose, but unfortunately, she was unable to come due to life circumstances.

a respectful visitor in the homelands of Susan, Mary-Anne, and Andy.[15] This is knowledge that was born from kinship and loving care. The work that I have honoured, remembered, and stitched together is intended to be something that provides wiidookaazowin for community members who are interested in bmaadziwinan miinwaa mnidoo-mkwendamwinan.[16] This is a gyakwewin mazina'igan to honour all of my ancestors, all of the people in my life who have cared for me, and all of my kin who will come into being after me.[17]

[15] Before Andy passed on, we had the chance to work on an education research project together and what he shared with me changed the course of my work completely. I realized that my original plans for my PhD studies no longer held the depth of ancestral knowledge that I was seeking to understand. I cannot share what was said, but it was profound, and I want to recognize his contribution in shaping my PhD project ideas.

[16] Wiidookaazowin is help or assistance in Nishnaabemwin. Bmaadziwinan are cultures, or particular ways of living lives and beliefs in Nishnaabemwin. Miinwaa is "and" in Nishnaabemwin. Mnidoo-mkwendamwinan is my interpretation of spirit memories in Nishnaabemwin.

[17] Gyakwewin mazina'igan is a letter of good heartedness in my interpretation through Nishnaabemwin.

Chapter 1: Introduction
1.1 Ndaan'koobjignak: How I Have Come into Being[18]

Ndaan'koobjignak has been a central concept that I have repeatedly returned to throughout my life after I began to learn Nishnaabemwin more extensively as a teenager.[19] In Nishnaabemwin, it is my interpretation that this concept is our way of acknowledging our connections to kin through time. Seven generations before us and seven generations ahead. Ndaan'koobjignak means "my ancestors" and "my great-grandparents," but it also means "my great-grandchildren." That sound, "aanikoo," in Anishinaabemowin is important because it is referencing how something is linked together and the "bid" sound that is shortened in my dialect reflects the important act of tying.[20] Further, related words like dkobjigan reference a "tying string" or a "binding," but it is also our word for "hoop."[21] The threads of life that bind everything together are a huge part of how I situate myself in the universe. I believe in the binding principles of seven generations ahead: I am defined by how I honour everyone who has come before me and the way I am working to lay down a meaningful foundation for the generations who will come after me. Furthermore, I am dedicated to understanding how crucial it is to be thoughtful about my choices and the enduring impacts of how I choose to live. We are all connected by these strings of relationality.

[18] Ndaan'koobjigan means "my ancestor" and "my great-grandparent," but it also means "my great-grandchild" or my descendant. The –ak suffix functions as a pluralizer. There are variations of saying "ancestor" that refer to this tying together of generations like koobde too in Nishnaabemwin.
[19] The Nishnaabe dialect of the Anishinaabe language.
[20] In my dialect sometimes vowels are removed.
[21] In other dialects that I have heard this can also refer to when manoomin, or wild rice, is tied together.

Answering the question of, “Who are you?” has always required me to go well beyond the confines of academic self-location and into the realm of kinship-based understandings of how I have come to respect and relate to gakina-ayaa’ag around me.[22] In essence, the journey of how I have come to understand what it means to connect myself to the cosmos has been and will always be through my relationships with my family and my communities. I do not mean to critique the value of self-location, but at a certain point it becomes vital to look beyond yourself and consider the ways in which relationality informs how you have come to be, how you have come to know, and how you will engage in this world. Therefore, to know who I am is to understand aspects of my kin and how I have been shaped and transformed by these relationships throughout my life. I am embedded in my kinship relationships not only through how I perceive myself, but also in terms of how I commit myself to the work I do in life through narratives which have been formed by memories. The acts of honouring memories, memory-making, and memory-sharing are crucial to how I conceptualize the strengthening and resurgence of Nishnaabe-bmaadziwin and Tagalog kabuhayan.[23]

Over twenty years ago, when I started working as an Indigenous researcher it was the nature of community-based work that profoundly influenced my understanding of what Indigenous scholarship could be. However, a large part of what led me to scholarly pursuits was my attempt to try and understand how colonial and imperial

[22] Gakina-ayaa’ag is every being (plural), be they bemaadizidjig (human beings) or any other of my relatives in the universe in Anishinaabemowin.

[23] Nishnaabe-bmaadziwin is Nishnaabe way of life or Nishnaabe culture. Southern Tagalog in the provinces are very distinct. The dialects can be quite different from Northern Tagalog, and our concepts can also be markedly different due to differences in cultural ideas and the language. Kabuhayan is a Tagalog living, vitality, or livelihood.

systems work and the enduring and continuing impacts of colonization and imperialism on my cultures. In many ways, I did not understand Western systems and ways of thinking because I have been raised by parents who grew up with non-Western cultural teachings, languages, and ethics. Each field I have learned within has contributed to how I analyze sociocultural phenomena in my research work, but all of this has equally been defined by my lifelong pursuit of art and commitment to strengthening Indigenous resurgence by embodying ancestral cultural practices. I have been a practicing Mississauga Nishnaabe Lucbanin artist since my childhood and my family has always been supportive of my creativity through inspiration and mentorship. I am writing from a space of Mississauga Nishnaabe Lucbanin ways of being and knowing and representing how that can be transformatively and creatively embodied in Indigenous scholarly artistic practices. All these threads have been woven together to inform my knowledge pursuits. This dissertation is a culmination of the Indigenous resurgence ideas I have learned as well as my approaches to encoding relational practices and memory projects through beadwork and mixed media art.

I have chosen to create this dissertation through my lens as a neurodivergent and chronically ill Two-Spirit Mississauga Nishnaabe Lucbanin artist and scholar drawing from personal and family narratives and community stories. Some of these narratives are contemporary and others are from before I was born. These dbaajmownan offer a basis for engaging in a culturally grounded analysis of how the

spiritual interweaves with, strengthens, and provides a foundation for the continuation and resurgence of Mississauga Nishnaabe Lucbanin artistic memory processes.[24]

Figure 1. Ngwaagan Regalia Shawl Cape. This image shows the upper shawl cape portion of the ancestral encodement *Ngwaagan Regalia* (2025) that was collaborated on and created with relatives from the dissertation research. Please read Chapter 4 for information on what inspired this process as well as Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 for more in-depth details of how the knowledge was encoded into it. (Estrella Whetung, photograph, *Ngwaagan Regalia shawl cape*, 2025).

Moreover, I believe aspects of this work can be of benefit to Indigenous peoples in other cultures and other life contexts. This dissertation has been formed in this manner because it is how I understand my engagement with knowledge practices—my knowledge journey started before I was born and will continue beyond my corporeal

[24] Dbaajmownan are narratives or stories in Nishnaabemwin.

ending. The knowledge I have is not mine alone and in accordance with my teachings must be shared in loving care when and where appropriate. We have a responsibility to future generations to embody and be devoted to our teachings around continuous care and compassion. I believe we have to be committed to living our teachings around nurturing knowledge as "it is not enough to be Indigenous and inherit an ethic of care."[25] In essence, the teachings we receive must be lived and "acted upon by each generation."[26] This dissertation weaves together ancestral and contemporary memories along with conversations using creative artistic approaches to Indigenous documentation.

Each chapter is written in a way to orient readers to my understanding of Mississauga Nishnaabe Lucbanin practices around cultural knowledge sharing and knowledge creation as well as to demonstrate creative ways of engaging with cultural lifeways. Each story that has become a part of who I am has guided the creation of cultural memory pieces—something I understand as ancestral knowledge encodements for Indigenous resurgence.[27] The encodements created and embedded into this written dissertation take the forms of photographs, historical images, digitally stitched collages, and digital mixed media illustrations, paintings, and diagrams. The final cultural memory art piece that was encoded from the life narratives shared is a beaded regalia outfit called *Ngwaagan Regalia* (2025), or spider's web regalia (see figure 1).[28] Moreover,

[25] John Borrows, "Earth-Bound: Indigenous Resurgence and Environmental Reconciliation," in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, eds. Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 50.
[26] Borrows, "Earth-Bound: Indigenous Resurgence and Environmental Reconciliation," 50.
[27] These are often referred to in scholarship as cultural mnemonic devices.
[28] Ngwaagan can also refer to snares and rainbows in Nishnaabemwin.

ancestral memory quotations from the written dissertation have been printed on fabric and used for the inner structure of the regalia. Chapter 1 is an introduction to Mississauga Nishnaabe Lucbanin relational practices and how I am grounded in my kinship teachings. Chapter 2 encapsulates how I have been taught to engage in cultural analyses, visual relationship practices, and how cultural encoding can be read through images. Chapter 3 is a discussion of how relational knowledge practices, whether they be amongst humans or more than human beings, are central to shaping a sense of wholeness in our communities. Chapter 4 is a storytelling discussion of the transformative aspects of embodied cultural practices and how the people who have guided my dissertation work inspired the umbilically-connected projects that led to the creation of the *Ngwaagan Regalia*. Chapter 5 is an overview of what inspired my research interests, my research methodology, and each of the cultural components that have been essential in informing my collaborative practices. Chapter 6 is intended to embody a return to ancestral practices within the context of the dissertation work and describes the general structural elements of the *Ngwaagan Regalia*. Chapter 7 is an in-depth overview of the narratives shared by research collaborators (who I prefer to reference as relatives), provides insight on the orienting memory quotes, discusses overall themes that emerged, and explains how this knowledge was analyzed and embedded into the *Ngwaagan Regalia*.

Creative approaches to cultural resurgence help to shape the possibilities of how we might strengthen the threads of our connections to the universe. I approached this research in a number of ways to highlight diverse strategies in terms of how we weave

together visual art, storytelling, family and community histories, cultural teachings, and archival work. This dissertation features over thirty digitally stitched relational collages I have created as well as over a dozen historical and archival photographs and illustrations of my relatives. Additionally, I shared three variations of research models that I developed to show how the research process can transform one's thinking over time as well as to reveal how beadwork itself became my methodology. I did this with the intention of the dissertation both serving as an encodement and a possible cultural archive that people may want to draw from in the future. However, what happens when there are unexpected challenges to how we engage with knowledge? What if an Indigenous researcher finds knowledge about their relatives and communities, but cannot access it because it is copyrighted? One creative approach that I used in dealing with unpublishable copyrighted art that featured my relatives was to create new digital mixed media paintings that respectfully referenced the works. Overall, I created four digital paintings to address the copyright issues I encountered while trying to visually represent my community.

The *Ngwaagan Regalia* (2025) is embodied through several pieces of Nishnaabe Lucbanin regalia that I created to be the accompanying beaded synthesis of the research in this dissertation. It required years of beadwork and construction to create the regalia: over two kilometres of thread, many contributions from my animal, plant, and earth relatives, as well as hundreds of beads of various sizes, colours, and finishes. Physically, the beaded regalia is comprised of one pair of earrings, one pair of hair ties, one cuff bracelet, one belt, and one shawl cape. Moreover, the belt and shawl cape

have forty-seven beaded applique pieces that are affixed to them, and the shawl cape is lined with quotations from my relatives on fabric. However, on a deeper level the regalia itself acts as a spiritual encodement of the knowledge that has been shared, collaborated on, and drawn from within “Mnidoo-mkwendamwin” through family and community stories, tea-visits and interviews, journeys to my homelands, referenced work, and archival research. It is intended to be experienced, and it is my hope it will resonate with other beings too.

I have intentionally written in a tone that is meant to harmoniously weave in my perspective with the stories and experiences of my relatives and my nations as well as the Indigenous knowledges I have referenced from artists, scholars, curators, educators, and kin from other nations. Therefore, I have chosen to strongly emphasize the diverse aspects of language, regional history, and community-specific cultural teachings in order to respect the importance of place-specific experiential knowledge. The languages of my ancestors are living and breathing and remind me to be careful in how I relate to my kin in the cosmos:

> A language of animacy builds on the insight that the world is alive and has an agency of its own. It must therefore be respected. If trees, mushrooms, otters, and mosquitoes are all endowed with agency, then the scope of our relationships take on different meanings. When we add the sun, moon, and stars to this list we may start to see and hear the world in a different way. Each of these forces possesses powers of communication.[29]

Although it may initially be structurally jarring to read a variety of dialects it is an important part of honouring the multiplicity of lenses that exist in our communities in

[29] John Borrows, “Earth-Bound: Indigenous Resurgence and Environmental Reconciliation,” in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, eds. Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 52.

terms of how people live and understand the world. Sometimes an inspiring pathway may appear not only through the commonalities, but also in those beautiful spaces of difference. Moreover, the language I have focused on is organized primarily in two ways: when referencing the broader contexts of my greater nations I use Anishinaabemowin and Southern Tagalog, and this shifts into Lucbanin dialect and Nishnaabemwin dialects when referencing the specific contexts of Nishnaabeg and Lucbanin teachings and stories. I balance this approach by highlighting sites of shared commonalities that tie us together in our greater nations. I wanted to celebrate what binds us together while showing respect for our different experiences in each community. I am cautious about generalizations because I want to honour the nuances and avoid essentializing my nations.[30]

My history of language learning is a central part of who I am: language learning for me is spiritually coming home and there can be no replacement for how that feels. As my parents always tell me, “You can only really understand the depths of a culture through language. Language is everything. Language shapes how you see and know.”[31] I grew up speaking the Lucbanin-Tayabasin dialect of Southern Tagalog from Quezon Province in the Philippines, but unfortunately when I started going to school, I began to use less and less of the language and more English. My maternal grandparents spoke it fluently as it was their first language with Spanish, Japanese, and English being later languages they were required to learn. My mother is also fluent in her dialect, and my

[30] Additionally, I have tried to respectfully note the communities of each person whose knowledge is referenced in this dissertation overall, so that there is a place-based context and a guide for the lineage of knowledge that is shared. This is a practice that I think is important for all people.
[31] This has been a commonly repeated teaching of my parents, Everett Whetung and Leila Whetung.

father learned the language quite quickly through their relationship. Despite this, I did not retain the language all that well and that has been a source of disappointment for me. I began learning bits and pieces of Nishnaabemwin as a child and more seriously began studying the language in my late teen years, but I found it equally as difficult as Southern Tagalog. At the time, I did not have many Nishnaabemwin resources and did not have access to immersion opportunities as my grandparents had passed away. As Gĩkũyũ scholar and language advocate Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o emphasizes, the "choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe."[32]

For me, the reality is that Indigenous languages are rich and multifaceted, but in that beautiful depth they are also so utterly difficult to learn. There is a sense of resentment that can emerge from language loss as well as feelings of hopelessness when you struggle trying to learn and relearn what came so easily as a child. My father had a similar experience with language loss in that he grew up around fluent speakers like his parents, grandparents, as well as aunties and uncles, but lost his fluency after he started going to school. Truthfully, I had my own perceived barriers about learning in general that I had to overcome. I was put into English as a Second Language (ESL) programming and remedial classes as a child for several years and, from that point onwards, was constantly reminded by people working in education that I would never make it to high school let alone graduate or go to university. Although, I consider myself

[32] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, (James Currey Ltd., 1986), 4. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was a Gĩkũyũ scholar and language advocate (Kenya).

fortunate to have parents who fought for me, believed in my abilities, and were always supportive of my learning journey. Yet sometimes those anxious thoughts of failure about learning would creep in. It has been challenging and overwhelming at times to learn two complex verb-based languages that have a massive variety of tenses and affixes.[33] In addition, my dialects are considered in some ways more difficult and complicated than other dialects of either language.[34] When I was in my twenties I was so frustrated that I wanted to quit learning and I did not think I had it in me to really obtain even marginal fluency. I felt like a failure. Sometimes fate has something else in mind for you. A chance meeting with Anishinaabe scholar Kathleen Absolon (Flying Post First Nation) in my early twenties helped me realize that I needed to keep trying and not give up on learning.[35] Since then, I have been a committed language learner and embrace the mistakes I make while learning and re-learning.

I have decided to introduce myself in both of my languages because I would like to respect and highlight the teachings of my parents: I cannot be half of a culture, nor can I be half of a person. I can only be a person who is wholly a part of both of my cultures and an aan'koobjigan/inapo forever grateful to my ancestors.[36] They have given me the gift of someone who is born to people of the river on both sides of my family. The most beautiful experiences in life can emerge from some of the most difficult challenges

[33] This is the nature of languages in the Algonquian and Austronesian language families.
[34] Challenges due to syncopation (e.g. I found it easier to learn Western dialect of Anishinaabemowin before my own dialect, so I could understand what the longer forms of words were).
[35] She was an impactful guest speaker in my First Nations Community Studies class at Camosun College invited by my teacher Sandee Mitchell (Anishinaabe from Kebaowek and Nipissing First Nations as well as Italian and French Canadian). Miigwech to Sandee for being such an amazing teacher and mentor to me over the course of my life.
[36] Aan'koobjigan is great-grandchild or descendant in Nishnaabemwin and inapo is grandchild or descendant in Tagalog.

and language learning has been that for me. This may not be a perfect introduction, but it encapsulates my learning journey and my core commitment to keep trying to communicate in my languages:

Aanii! Misi-zaagiing/Mshi-zaagiing Nishnaabe miinwaa Lucbanin ndaaw.[37] Dik miinwaa Jiijaak ndoodemag. Estrella Racoma Whetung ndzhnikaaz.[38] Ngashi Leila zhnikaazo miinwaa Noos Everett zhnikaazo. Ang pangalan ng Inana/Nanay ko Rosing at ang pangalan ng Amama/Tatay ko ay Antero.[39] Nookmis Rena-ba zhnikaazo miinwaa Nmishoomis Ted-ba zhnikaazo.[40] Pemdashkodeyaang, Oshkiigmong, miinwaa Lucban ndoonjibaa.[41] Gaawiin ingkendaanziin niibwa, aanwii mkoshinyaanh.

My translation as a language learner of my nested introduction is as follows:

Hello! I am Misi-zaagiing/Mshi-zaagiing Nishnaabe and Lucbanin. My doodemag are reindeer/caribou and crane.[42] My name is Estrella Racoma Whetung.[43] My mother's name is Leila and my father's name is Everett. My maternal grandmother's name was Ruperta and my maternal grandfather's name was Antero. My paternal grandmother's name was Rena-ba and my paternal grandfather's name was Ted-ba.[44]

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[37] Misi-zaagiing/Mshi-zaagiing Nishnaabe is a person from the territories of Mississauga Nishnaabeg in Southern Ontario, Canada. Lucbanin is a Southern Tagalog person from Lucban, Quezon, Philippines.

[38] My middle name is a reference to "Snowtrout" as Latin nomenclatures were commonly forced upon Tagalog families during the colonial period under Spain. In my family's case, it is possible that they chose it as a name. My last name is a reference to Baawting or "the place where the rivers meet" in my grandparents' interpretation or "the place of the rapids" to other Anishinaabeg. Important note: you will find differing narratives about the origin of "Whetung" as a name as well as our doodemag (clans). Every line of my family is enormous, but my Whetung family has over one thousand descendants in 250 years so that leads to variants of what has been passed down as knowledge.

[39] Inana is grandmother in Quezon dialects of Southern Tagalog and Amama is grandfather in Quezon dialects of Southern Tagalog. Out of affection, I used the terms Nanay and Tatay for my grandparents which mean mother and father and, to my understanding, may be based on loanwords from Nahuatl. Tatay never liked using his actual given name and he did not identify with it, so I am using the name that he preferred. "Tiyero" or "Tero" is a derivation of the word "tierra" in Spanish. His friends and family called him "Antero" because it is a way of saying "from the earth" or "of the land" to honour the loving relationship he had with his plant kin, pollinator kin, and water kin.

[40] My Grandpa Ted also went by Ed.

[41] Pemdashkodeyaang is Lake of the Burning Plains or Rice Lake in Ontario (the communities of Hiawatha and Alderville). Oshkiigmong is The Curve in the Lake or Curve Lake in Ontario (the community of Curve Lake). Lucban (also lukban) is pomelo in the Lucbanin-Tayabasin dialect of Southern Tagalog and the name of the Lucban town in Quezon Province, Philippines.

[42] Doodemag are clans in Nishnaabemwin. While this may be seen as unusual (or thought of as incorrect) I am using the plural form of clan in Nishnaabemwin to honour and recognize both of my grandparents. I am trying to find a way to honour both, as well as their teachings around recognition of maternal and paternal doodemag, and someday I will have a way of doing this properly in Nishnaabemwin.

[43] My middle name is my mother's surname because it is important to recognize your matrilineal ancestors in Southern Tagalog culture.

[44] The –ba suffix denotes that the person being referenced has passed on and is said to avoid calling their spirits back.

Pemdashkodeyaang, Oshkiigmong, and Lucban are the origin sources that I come from. I do not know many things, but I am learning through trial and error.

I want to be careful and self-aware enough to not speak in an essentializing way as I feel like that can easily misrepresent cultural perspectives and the rich diversity that exists within my communities.[45] Therefore, I will be clear in pointing out that I can only speak from my lens and learning as a Mississauga Nishnaabe Lucbanin who learned from my family and community. I do not speak on the behalf of other Anishinaabeg or other Tagalog peoples and respectfully recognize that there is a diversity and multitude of ideas, experiences, and histories in every family as well as every community.[46] For instance, there are various interpretations for the same or similar words in Anishinaabemowin.[47] In some communities, certain words may be seen as having a negative connotation, but those same words resonate differently in other places. My father's parents would sometimes have small quibbles and tease each other about how to frame certain ideas using Nishnaabemwin as they spoke different idiolects, which can be thought of as their own unique speech forms, of their dialect.[48] Pemdashkodeyaang and Oshkiigmong sometimes have different ways of describing things in Nishnaabemwin and other Nishnaabe communities have differences as well.[49] Similarly, there are a multitude of words in Lucban dialect that do not translate into neighbouring

[45] I am speaking both about Anishinaabe and Tagalog communities.
[46] Anishinaabeg are Anishinaabe peoples.
[47] Anishinaabe language.
[48] An idiolect is one's own particular manner of speech. I am not a linguist, but I believe there are infinite possibilities of idiolects that could exist in my dialects. Although, I am not certain if the differences between my grandparents' ways of conceptualizing things in Nishnaabemwin would constitute community subdialects.
[49] This is the understanding I have grown up with through my father who spoke Nishnaabemwin with his grandparents and older family members in childhood.

dialects.[50] It demonstrates how much linguistic diversity can exist even in a small cluster of tight-knit communities. As a language learner, this provides wonderfully expansive ways of describing how we see the world through our languages and enriches our engagement with decolonizing processes. However, at the same time, it also creates some difficulties in how to approach language resurgence especially when it comes to standardizing dialects. Nishnaabe language resurgence workers have found excellent approaches to honouring the variety of community differences in Nishnaabemwin.[51]

I would like to be precise and accurate about who I come from, how I define my rootedness, and my personal history.[52] Engaging cultural concepts around identity and genuine belonging have become areas of discussion in Indigenous nations and communities, particularly in recent years due to fraudulent claims of identity. As Celeste Pedri-Spade, an Anishinaabe scholar (Lac Des Mille Lacs First Nation), emphasizes there are enduring systemic issues that perpetuate the erasement of Black Indigenous relatives as well as relatives who have intersecting Indigenous identities with other racialized groups.[53] Therefore, if we are to properly address these ongoing problems it requires confronting the claims to Indigenous identity in academia in clear ways.[54] As

[50] If this interests you, please read Maria Edelyn M. Palle's article, "Salitang Lucbanin: Basehan sa Pagbuo ng Glosaryo," *EPRA International Journal of Research & Development (IJRD)* 6, no. 7 (July 2021), https://doi.org/10.36713/epra7750. Note: it is written in Tagalog.

[51] Please check out some of the amazing language work being done at the Nishnaabemwin Odawa & Eastern Ojibwe Language Resources website, https://nishnaabemwin.algonquianlanguages.ca/. Someday, I hope to see a similar momentum in Lucban-Tayabasin language work and neighbouring dialects in Quezon.

[52] I have two older sisters that I adore but would like to respect their privacy. I also have lots of love and companionship from nindayiminaanig (our dogs) and want to recognize their support.

[53] Celeste Pedri-Spade, "We need a better understanding of race, 'status' and indigeneity in Canada," *The Conversation* (Toronto Ontario: Canadian newsroom), August 7, 2022, https://theconversation.com/we-need-a-better-understanding-of-race-status-and-indigeneity-in-canada-186889/.

[54] Pedri-Spade, "We need a better understanding."

Pedri-Spade underlines, these challenges to claims "must name and focus explicitly on structures of whiteness, white entitlement and settler colonialism so we don't recreate the harms of past policies."[55] It is important to transparently talk about lived experiences because it will help people understand what perspectives, teachings, and ways of living I am intertwined and nested within. I am an Indigenous person who has an intersecting racialized identity and, often, I do not see my perspective represented or considered respectfully. Moreover, one of the most central teachings I have learned about through engaging in dbaajmownan is to directly talk about the lineage and genealogy of the stories and knowledge you are sharing.[56] I would like to accurately honour how I have come to understand certain cultural concepts and approaches as well as credit the amazing people who have inspired me along the way. Narratives are living and breathing beings too. We have to respect where they come from.

The dbaajmowin, or narrative/everyday story, of who you are is shaped by not only who and where you come from, but also where you live and how you respect those waters, lands, local peoples, and more than human kin. When I was growing up it was never considered rude or shameful to ask a person what community (or communities) their family comes from: this is a traditional practice from both of my cultures. It helps us identify relatives as well as recognize shared friends in the community. As a Nishnaabe Lucbanin, I understand the nuances of complex life experiences and how oppressive

[55] Pedri-Spade, "We need a better understanding."

[56] I became obsessed not only with the genealogy of stories early on in life and also family history research through my great-uncle Joe Whetung as a teenager. Doing archival work back then was different then than it is now—so much microfilm and microfiche! This interest was further supported by one of my friends from Hawai'i, Kalani Mondoy (Kanaka 'Oiwi and Bisaya from Molokai), who engages in both traditional oral genealogy and historical research for community genealogy. Please read more about his work here, https://hawaiiandna.wordpress.com/.

colonial systems can be with regards to enforcing identity parameters on Indigenous peoples: I am Two-Spirit, neurodivergent, and chronically ill and these aspects of my identity intersect with and envelop my life history. I have seen the impacts of residential schools, day schools, enfranchisement, living under violent occupations, and oppressive rule under dictatorships within my own family and how it has shaped me as someone who is intergenerationally affected. I have chosen to create and weave together a dbaajmowin throughout this dissertation through using visual collages, photographs, and digital art that exemplify the ancestral knowledge practices I have learned and the Mississauga Nishnaabe Lucbanin artistic approaches I wish to share.

There can be a fear or a resistance to sharing the life experiences that shape our identities, but I feel like denying or selectively curating those facets of my history would be dishonest and disrespectful to what my family has been through. I cannot edit out the sad parts. I am a Bill C-31 Nishnaabe Lucbanin who was born and grew up on the territories of the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Xʷsepsəm), W̱SÁNEĆ, SC'IA̓NEW nations and I regained my status/registration as a young child. I am a member of my grandmother's father's community, Alderville First Nation, but the story of how my family became non-status prior to Bill C-31 is complicated. After marrying, my grandparents were forcibly enfranchised after World War II.[57] They previously had status/registration in Alderville First Nation (my grandmother Rena-ba, born in 1926, is from the Simpson,

[57] See figure 2. Many Nishnaabeg practiced matrilocal marriage traditionally in that the husband would live with the wife's family for a period of time after marriage. This was to make sure that the match was harmonious, but the *Indian Act* as well as aspects of heteropatriarchy through settler colonialism changed this important relational tradition. Matrilocal traditions are strong in Lucban both historically and in a contemporary context, but it is a more permanent arrangement due to it being a bahay kubo (elevated anahaw/palm) longhouse culture. My parents followed this tradition, so I grew up with my mother's parents and her youngest siblings.

Muskratt, Cowie, and Howard families) and Curve Lake First Nation (my grandfather Ted-ba, born in 1920, is from the Whetung, Howard, Sandy, and McCue families) through their patrilines and both of their mothers were from Hiawatha First Nation.[58]

Figure 2. Family Weddings. In the *top* photograph is my Whetung-Simpson grandparents and their siblings. *Left to right*: Louise (Whetung) Simpson, my Grandpa Ted's twin sister; Grandpa Ted; Grandma Rena; and Everett (Muskratt) Simpson, my Grandma Rena's brother. The *left bottom* photograph is my Racoma grandparents' wedding day, and the *right bottom* photograph is my parents' wedding. My Racoma grandparents rented their clothing because they did not see the practicality in outfits they would only use once, but my Nanay embroidered and sewed my Tatay's pocket handkerchief. My parents chose to wear traditional regalia woven from pineapple fibres—a barong Tagalog (an embroidered shirt that blends Native Tagalog and colonial-era styles) and a dress that was beaded by my mother.[59] (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs courtesy of Everett and Leila Whetung, *Family Weddings*, 2025).

[58] I can detail many lines of my family beyond my great-grandparents, but that is a much longer story than this text space allows. I name my great-grandparents' family lines because often only patronyms are given a spotlight under colonial naming conventions. In terms of authenticity, if anyone is ever curious about my family, I invite people to ask and encourage people to research. My family has always been devoted to making sure our way of life as Nishnaabeg is vibrant and a source of strength for the next seven generations.

[59] Taal in Batangas, Philippines still makes some of the most intricate pineapple textile embroidery (Burdang Taal) for clothing and accessories.

I come from a large family who has always been dedicated to upholding Nishnaabe-bmaadziwin and my roots are deep in Mississauga communities as well as Nishnaabe communities around Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay.[60] My grandfather was a residential school survivor who served as a sapper for the Royal Canadian Engineers during World War II in Europe and was there until the end of the war. When he arrived home as a veteran he and his brother were punitively stripped of their status by the Indian Agent after an argument. My grandparents had built their home with their own hands, and the Indian Agent came by to tell them they had lost their status and had to leave the community. Their cherished home and lands were seized and auctioned off.

To be clear, the Indian Agent(s) in the community had an enduring acrimonious relationship to my grandfather, his parents, and his grandparents due to their outward and continuous political defiance and challenges to colonial authority. How do I know the forced enfranchisement was a targeted punishment? For many years after our 1923 treaty was signed my Great-grandfather Arthur Whetung Sr. was arrested multiple times for defying the treaty's extinguishment of our fishing and hunting rights. By the time of his 1931 arrest, he was well known for his refusal to recognize the Crown's laws. There were other veterans and families of veterans in our community who never lost their status, yet my grandparents did. This exemplifies one way Indian Agents abused their colonial power and reshaped my family's relationship to our territories.[61] One debwewin I am intimately aware of is that colonial policies are not always applied equally and in

[60] My family has always been quite political and devoted to challenging colonial states (e.g., under Britain, Canada, and the US).

[61] Please read more about compulsory enfranchisement amendments in the Gladue Rights Research Database here, https://gladue.usask.ca/node/2423/.

the same manner to everyone.[62] My grandmother, a day school survivor, lost her status through sexism in the *Indian Act* via her marriage to my grandfather, who was now considered to not legally be an 'Indian' any longer. My grandparents were "lucky" in that they were able to still live in the small town next to the reserve, but it was still an aggrieved situation that they would not be able to live with their family in the community.[63]

This is not a unique story: my grandparents joined an urban support group for enfranchised Indigenous veterans and their families in the 1960s and had many friends who were not able to find any places to live close to their more remote communities. Like numerous other Indigenous veterans, my grandfather was denied his benefits on top of being enfranchised.[64] He was, as my father often says, "Too Native to be a veteran and too much of a veteran to be Native." My grandfather was denied any help from Veteran's Affairs and the Department of Indian Affairs for his long-term injuries sustained during the war. My father and his siblings grew up non-status and did not regain their status until well into adulthood after Bill C-31. I think sometimes enfranchisement is painted as a consent-based choice that was made and that people easily integrated into mainstream Canadian society. My grandparents did not choose to be enfranchised, and it was a bitter experience to live through. Part of the reason I am sharing this story is because it has shaped who I am and my resolve to continue the work of my family—the act of defying colonialism and living fiercely as Nishnaabeg no

[62] Debwewin is truth in Nishnaabemwin.
[63] I am referring to the legal definition of this in the context of status and non-status.
[64] This was not rectified until nearly 25 years later when his friend was put in a head position for Veterans Affairs.

matter what obstacles may come. The other part is because I have experienced fraudulent people appropriating the stories of Bill C-31 people like me. When I met a classmate (and an incredible friend) at eighteen he encouraged me to share my non-status family story more widely because he said someday people might try to appropriate those experiences and it would be important to show an authentic perspective more widely.[65]

I am a diasporic Nishnaabe Lucbanin who grew up an ocean away from my homelands in the Philippines but had the wonderful opportunity to grow up immersed in the love and care of my grandparents from Lucban (see figure 2). My grandparents were born not long after the Philippine American War (my grandfather in 1917 and my grandmother in 1920) and grew up under the strife of American colonialism (1898-1946) as well as survived violent occupation under Japan (1942-1945). This is an important point because before the war with America (1899-1913), before the genocide committed by Americans, and before the Philippine Revolution (1896), Lucban was already an inward looking place due to its history of political resistance.[66] My grandparents were proud Lucbanin kampesinos and, when I asked them about issues around racial

[65] I want to honour my now departed friend Ron Tsaskiy George (a Wet'suwet'en hereditary chief and champion of fighting for the rights of non-status Indigenous peoples and the welfare of children in our communities). I learned so much from him when I started post-secondary school and he encouraged me throughout my life.

[66] Lucban is the homeland of Southern Tagalog resistance fighter and revolutionary leader, Hermano Pule (Apolinario de la Cruz, 1815-1841) who advocated for upholding the rights of Indigenous peoples (especially tribalized peoples), freedom from Spanish colonialism, and accountability from corrupt lowlander mestizos (Spanish/Indio and Mestizo de Sangley [Chinese/Indio] elites). Pule's uprising was squashed by Spain, and he was executed to serve as a warning to Southern Tagalog. This made Lucban and neighbouring areas further isolate and more heavily resist encroachment. Please read more in Mark Alvin P. Jabrica's article, "Rekindling the Heroism of Hermano Puli," 2009, https://makatamakoy.wordpress.com/2009/12/26/hermano-puli-hari-ng-mga-tagalog/. For more information on the colonial class system please read Sinaunang Panahan's, "The Spanish Colonial Class System in the Philippines: A More Nuanced Perspective," 2025, https://sinaunangpanahon.com/the-spanish-colonial-class-system-in-the-philippines-a-more-nuanced-perspective/.

identity, they referred to themselves as Native Malay or Indio when speaking about parallel experiences with colonialism and imperialism.[67] These were common terms when my grandparents were growing up to describe Austronesian peoples.[68] Many people, not just in Lucban, but also in other rural provincial areas of Luzon have a history of intermarriage between their Austronesian ancestors and the Aeta, Ayta, Agta, and Dumagat Indigenous peoples who have roots in the Philippines well beyond 66,000 years ago.[69] However, ethnicity and ancestral genetics are often perceived and experienced differently.

It is important to recognize that while my grandparents and mother have identified and continue to identify as Native Lucbanin they would not be considered Indigenous by current standards under the Philippine state as they are not tribalized minorities and terminology has shifted in the last hundred years. While it is common to be Christian in Lucban and my grandmother was a practicing Catholic, my grandfather and his family were neither Christian nor Muslim and he was openly critical about the corruptive nature of both the Catholic Church and organized religions in general. He

[67] Kampesinos are provincial (rural) farmers or peasant farmers. Native Malay is outdated terminology that was used by colonial officials. Read more on Johann Friedrich Blumenbach if you have an interest in that history. There was a distinction from Spanish colonial administrators between Indigenous peoples who were "civilized" Indios and often Christianized through colonialism, versus Indigenous peoples who were Muslim and/or practicing pre-contact spirituality.

[68] Please read more of Christian Erni's work if you are interested in excellent critiques around imposed racial concepts in the Philippines. "Resolving the Asian Controversy: Identification of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines," essay, in *The Concept of Indigenous Peoples in Asia: A Resource Book*, ed. Christian Erni (Copenhagen, Chiang Mai, Edison, NJ: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs; Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact Foundation; Distribution in North America, Transaction Publishers, 2008). Please read the work of Maximilian Larena et al. to have a more in depth understanding of the migration histories of the Philippines in "Multiple Migrations to the Philippines during the Last 50,000 Years," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, no. 13 (March 22, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2026132118.

[69] Miguel Arenas et al., "The Early Peopling of the Philippines Based on Mtdna," *Scientific Reports* 10, no. 1 (March 17, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-61793-7.

was not an anomaly in his thinking. As Filipino writer, artist, and curator Jeannie E. Javelosa remarks on the culture of my family's homelands:

> Mount Banahaw's history as a sacred mountain also represented the nationalistic spirit longing to be expressed in freedom. It was home to the so-called rebels against the Spanish colonization. In the mountain where these Filipinos would seek refuge, they would look to find their inner spiritual power through prayer and use of amulets (anting-anting), communed with Nature, kept a community strong, and tried to keep the local and traditional healing rituals alive. Spain called them rebels practicing demonic rituals.[70]

When you spend time in Lucban you can see that there is still a strong relationship to Native Lucbanin teachings and beliefs, traditions around community and social ways of life, and a devotion to living on the land in bahay kubo with reverence (see figure 3).[71] Despite multiple waves of colonization, many Lucbanin still practice matrilocal traditions and live off the land through farming, fishing, and hunting, as well as follow our structural kinship laws around governance inside and outside of the home because that is our way of life. In our family, we still settle disputes based on the traditional structure of ascribed rank at birth.[72] Therefore, disputes cannot be discussed directly between the parties that have had a clash of ideas; rather, they must be settled by the heads of the households through lineage and social rank. This is intended to restore balance and diffuse tensions that can exist through direct conflicts. Even though we have maintained

[70] Jeannie E. Javelosa, "Balik-Banahaw, balik loob," *Philstar Global* (Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City, Metro Manila, Philippines), January 2, 2011, https://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/allure/2011/01/02/644084/balik-banahaw-balik-loob.

[71] Bahay kubo are traditional Tagalog homes. You may find more photographs of traditional Southern Tagalog bahay kubo houses at the Robert Larimore Pendleton collection, *Tayabas (Philippines), Cabo-style thatch roofed buildings with hats bleaching at right*, 1934, photograph, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsphoto/id/13411/rec/2. As well as a more modern version through Joelaldor, *Valencia-Livranda Ancestral House*, 2014, photograph, Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Valencia-Livranda_Ancestral_House_Tayabas.JPG/.

[72] A person has a higher social rank if they are first born versus second born and so forth regardless of gender.

these traditions it would not necessarily be qualified as an “Indigenous way of life” in contemporary Philippine state terms.

Figure 3. Bahay Kubo. The *top* photograph shows bahay kubo houses made of bamboo and anahaw. The *bottom* painting depicts bahay kubo houses with stone foundations which eventually became fully concrete foundations. My family lived in both kinds of homes for farming as well as their house in town. Oftentimes, you might see people hanging items on the outside of bahay kubo for sale such as handwoven buntal fibre hats or bags. In Lucban, the concrete base styled bahay kubo had roofs made of woven anahaw palm leaves, windows made of capiz shells, and flooring usually made of narra wood. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage utilizing images in the public domain, *Bahay Kubo*, 2025. *Top* image: James A. LeRoy, photograph, *One of the better sort of bamboo houses of the lower class, built without nails or hammer. Bottom* image: Fabian de la Rosa, watercolour painting, *Filipino landscape with Nipa hut*, 1905).[73]

[73] Figure 3. Full image references (top): James A. LeRoy, *One of the better sort of bamboo houses of the lower class*, built without nails or hammer, n.d., photograph, in *Philippine Life in Town and Country*, by James A. LeRoy (New York and London: G.P. Puttnam' Sons, 1905), 28, https://archive.org/details/philippinelifein00lero/page/28/mode/1up. (Bottom): Fabian de la Rosa, *Filipino landscape with Nipa hut*, 1905, watercolour painting, 31.5cm x 23cm (12 3/8 in. x 9 1/16 in.), *Wikimedia Commons*, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fabi%C3%A1n_de_la_Rosa_-_Filipino_landscape_with_Nipa_hut_(1905).jpg/).

In the Philippines what constitutes an Indigenous identity has changed drastically from when my grandparents were born. In contemporary definitions, "tribal or indigenous peoples are groups which, although extremely diverse in terms of culture, social organization or livelihood patterns, have at the very least one thing in common: a historical continuity from pre-colonial *non-state* societies."[74] Therefore, Lucban exists as an interesting liminal space and as a community that defies the confines of these definitions: it is rural and on a sacred bundok, remains politically, linguistically, and culturally distinct, was not under the governance and direct authority of larger polities controlled by sultans, rajahs, lakan, and datu, and while the area has long been Christianized many still practice Native belief systems.[75] In my experience, indigeneity in Southeast Asia is a complicated topic because after the formal decolonization and independence periods many countries, the Philippines included, wanted to make further official distinctions between tribalized minorities and non-tribalized majority peoples in terms of identifying who could meet the criteria of 'indigenous.'[76] Unfortunately, there continues to be a widespread internalized colonialism around casting tribalized Indigenous peoples as 'inferior' and 'primitive.' In many areas of Southeast Asia, a

[74] Christian Erni, "Resolving the Asian Controversy: Identification of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines," essay, in *The Concept of Indigenous Peoples in Asia: A Resource Book*, ed. Christian Erni (Copenhagen, Chiang Mai, Edison, NJ: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs; Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact Foundation; Distribution in North America, Transaction Publishers, 2008), 288.

[75] A bundok is a mountain in Tagalog: this is a reference to Bundok Banahaw which is a sacred site for those who follow Native spiritualities as well as for Christians. Bundok is also the origin of the now-English word "boondocks (boonies)" which originally referred to rural spaces but then began to take on a pejorative and classist tone. Sultans in this context are high-ranking nobles with connections to Islamized polities and Islamized regions of Southeast Asia such as Brunei. Rajahs in this context are high ranking nobles with connections to polities in other regions of Southeast Asia such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Lakan are paramount chiefs/leaders of an elite rank, particularly amongst Tagalog peoples in Luzon. Datu are chiefs/leaders of an elite rank amongst many Austronesian peoples.

[76] I use these terms loosely and with some strong critique because I would argue that we have never experienced a true decolonization in the Philippines. Can a country have a true decolonization period if it is a neo-colonial state plagued with internal colonialism?

dichotomous socio-cultural identity surfaced in which highland (or mountain-based) marginalized and tribalized Indigenous peoples were divided from the politically-controlling majority maintained by lowland as well as coastal peoples.[77] This identity structure is a common feature of internal colonialism throughout the Global South: therefore, it highlights why terms like 'tribe' and 'indigenous' can have varied meanings in terms of context as **"**the former refers to a situation in which people *chose to live apart* from the state society, *to retain autonomy* and a particular lifestyle, the latter, in its present usage, refers to a situation of *threat to or complete loss of autonomy* through *ongoing colonization* by a state."[78]

The relationships forged with local nations happened primarily through my mother and her friendships when she first immigrated to Canada in the early 1970s and expanded when she met my father shortly after (see figure 2). This place, omaa, is not where onjibaawag, but it is where daawag.[79] I am privileged to have been gently guided into local Indigenous learning through these friendships as a child and appreciate all the kindness and warmth I have received from these relationships. The teachings I have received around respectful observation, listening with humility, and showing compassion for different experiences have been instrumental to how I situate myself on these territories as an outsider. Being Bill C-31 and growing up away from my home

[77] Erni, "Resolving the Asian Controversy," 288.
[78] Erni, "Resolving the Asian Controversy," 295.
[79] Omaa is here in Anishinaabemowin. Onjibaa is the verb, s/he or they (singular) for comes from a certain place or one's origin source in Anishinaabemowin. –wag is the suffix that is a pluralizer to change this verb into "they come from a certain place." Daa is the verb, s/he or they (singular) dwell or reside. –wag is the suffix that is a pluralizer to change this verb into "they dwell or reside."

communities is something I never hide nor have ever been ashamed of because it is a huge part of who I am. I always emphasize that I am geographically dislocated from my family but not culturally disconnected. I make this important distinction because "the story of reconnection" is not my space to assume: I grew up with my father and his siblings, but my grandparents passed away when I was young. I wish I could have had more time with them, but I am grateful to have had some wonderful opportunities to spend time with my grandparents' close-knit relatives since I was a baby. I consider myself lucky to have so many supportive amazing cousins living nearby along with my parents, siblings, uncles, and aunties. I have the privilege and joy of having family constantly in my life despite being far away from our cultural hubs and how that has formed the strength of my identity is not lost on me.

1.2 Through the Eye of The Needle: Thesis Statement and Points of Inquiry

A foundational aspect of my research has been to question the systematically enforced colonial categories we endure in all aspects of our lives and to examine ways in which we can engage in the resurgence of our knowledge processes. How do we embody our ways that remind us of our intrinsic connections to the universe? This research is intended to delve into what that means in a wholistic way. Conceptualizations around the body, mind, spirit, land, and material expressions of culture are often thought of as separate entities due to colonization, so my initial goal was to explore Indigenous approaches to our ideas of wholeness in community and to identify what forms of decolonization and resurgence facilitate reconnection with the spiritual. At the outset, I did not have a sense of certainty about how to communicate

these ideas in creative formats. Amidst my research journey I fortunately encountered the incredible works of Lois Edge, Sherry Farrell Racette, Dawn Marsden, and Lana Ray and I had a moment where I awakened and my eyes opened fully.[80] It was grounded cultural work that resonated with me so deeply—beadwork is a way of stitching together Indigenous cultural wisdoms, knowledge expressions, and collaborative experiences. Beading is art, but it can also be used to create methodology. I began to realize that I did not want to just study cultural mnemonic devices, and I immediately knew that I needed to make an ancestral knowledge encodement through beadwork as a way of synthesizing the research. Beading is Indigenous resurgence that connects me to my ancestors. While my research model and methodology went through a transformative process the core principles around Nishnaabe conceptions of relationality, circularity, time, dimensionality, specificity, and regionality remained. This work is intended to be an offering, or bagijigan in a traditional sense to those who experience and interact with it.

The wisdom of our ancestors is tangible spiritual knowledge that informs us of our way of being—often as an expression of wholeness and interconnected ways of living. As Anishinaabe scholar Emilee Bews (Batchewana First Nation) concisely explains “Anishinaabe knowledge systems are built upon relationality, with the

[80] Lois Edge is a Gwich’in Cree Métis scholar and educator (Gwich’in Nation of Northwest Territories). Sherry Farrell Racette is Algonquin/Métis/Irish scholar, artist, and curator (a member of Timiskaming First Nation). Dawn Marsden is an Anishnaabe and French scholar, researcher, and educator (Mississaugas of Scugog First Nation). Lana Ray is a Anishinaabe scholar (Opwaaganasiniing, Red Rock Indian Band).

understanding that all beings are related to and accountable for one another."[81] I framed the following questions as a jumping off point for my research inquiries:

- How do we redefine how we look at each of these elements—the spirit that exists in ourselves, our 'material' cultures, and the land—as being part of the whole?[82]
- Can spirit memory be transformed into a manner of strength for Indigenous peoples? In essence, is it possible for us to go beyond the physical understanding of concepts like 'blood memory' and apply that concept to both the land and 'material' aspects of Indigeneity?
- If spirit and memory were once imbued into the essence of our beings, our 'material' manifestations of culture, and the land, then how do we decolonize these aspects of ourselves in a wholistic way?
- What forms of decolonization and resurgence are central to facilitating reconnection with the spiritual?

I was scratching the surface of my perceptions with these questions and where I found myself in my inquiries became so much more powerful, expansive, and beautiful than I could have envisioned when I started. The research process brought me to many wonderful journeys to my homelands and territories that became my home, tea-visits and interviews with relatives, years of family and community archival research, a deeper understanding of my languages, an eye-opening analysis of the storytelling encodements I have received since childhood, and a more profound appreciation of everything that connects me to my ancestors and my relatives in the universe.

In my teachings from my family Nishnaabe concepts of nawendiwin, also known as kinship, are central to how we embody a sense of wholeness and responsibility to one another in our lives. Similarly, in Lucbanin teachings from my family, the cultural

[81] Emilee Bews, "Re-Centering Community: Exploring Land-based Education for Anishinaabe Learners of Batchewana First Nation," (master's thesis, McGill University, 2024), 10, https://escholarship.mcgill.ca/concern/theses/6q182r79x.

[82] At the time, I used this language as I was struggling with the binary separations between the material and spiritual as well as the tangible and intangible.

concept of kapuwa or fellow kin is an integral part of maintaining a collective sense of being and oneness. Both cultural teachings emphasize that we are all a part of one another. Nawendiwin and kapuwa encapsulate some of the most important aspects of how my upbringing has been shaped by respect, reciprocity, compassion, and harmony. Our lives as Nishnaabeg are a part of a complex web of relationships with all beings in Creation and this both impacts and shapes our bmaadziwin.[83] Another important approach to resurgence is manidoo-minjimendamowin, or spirit memory: manidoo-minjimendamowin is knowledge that is stitched together in our spirits before we enter the world.[84] I have chosen to engage in this teaching through the word mnidoo-mkwendamwin because the morpheme “mik” in mikwendamowin suggests the act of seeking out, recalling, discovering, and finding and I feel like I am on a reciprocal pathway of these aspects through my spiritual relationships.[85] Mnidook hold memories.[86] They dynamically remember the dreamscapes of our ancestors and support our ability to engage in our relational journeys of seeking and finding. Reaching into the depths of the cosmos to achieve a greater sense of understanding that Creation is “a necessary part of reaching a more adequate understanding of life.”[87] When we approach spirituality and resurgence in these ways, we come to realize that the loss we have experienced through colonization has not left us forever severed. We need to go

[83] Bmaadziwin is a way of life in Nishnaabemwin.
[84] D'Arcy Ishpeming'enzaabid Rheault, “Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin (The Way of a Good Life)” (master’s thesis, Trent University, 1998), 107. Important note: I first saw the term manidoo-minjimendamowin through the work of Maya Chacaby in “Kipmoojikewin: Articulating Anishinaabe Pedagogy Through Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe Language) Revitalization,” 2011.
[85] Mikwendamowin is also a word for memory but has some differences from minjimendamowin which, in my understanding, focuses on strongly holding thoughts and feelings in one’s mind. This is my own understanding, and others may have different interpretations.
[86] Mnidook are spirits in Nishnaabemwin.
[87] Vine Deloria Jr., *The World We Used to Live In: Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Man* (Fulcrum Publishing, 2006), 21.

through a process of recognizing the ancestrally stitched knowledge and umbilical knowledge that already exists in our spirits: this is an act of resurgence.

Chapter 2: Relationality
2.1 Nawendiwin: The Threads Connecting All Parts of Creation[88]

Chapter 2 encapsulates how I have been taught to engage in cultural analyses, visual relationship practices, and how cultural encoding can be read through images. This chapter also introduces some of the key aspects of what led me to my research and some ideas that I grappled with. Visual memories, as well as sensory based memory more generally, are a key part of my cultural orientation of the world as well as how I was taught to engage with teachings, narratives, and encoding knowledge. Each image in Chapter 2 has been selected to illustrate how my cultural practices of knowledge encoding have been informed and what that encoding looks like in practice. Without these cultural teachings I may not have been able to analyze and encode the knowledge shared to create the *Ngwaagan Regalia* (2025) for this dissertation. Recognizing the lineage and genealogy of storytelling honours our kin relationships and shows how we have come to know and understand our teachings, lived experiences, and the universe. From my understanding, inawendiwin is a defining aspect of how we come to know, and this is reflected in Anishinaabemowin.[89] For example, inawem is the verb for “to be related to somebody,” the word inawemaa can be used to describe a sibling or a cousin, and inawemaagan is how we describe a being who is kin, a relative, or a family member.[90]

[88] Nawendiwin is kinship and interrelatedness in Nishnaabemwin.
[89] Inawendiwin is kinship and interrelatedness in Anishinaabemowin.
[90] Inawemaa references a sibling or parallel cousin of a different sex. I am not going to get into the explanation of parallel and cross cousins in Anishinaabe culture because it is complicated and would deserve an entire dissertation of discussion.

For Anishinaabeg, the land is alive and imbued with spirit. In our teachings, we recognize that she is "the literal embodiment of the feminine, of First Woman, by which many Indigenous origin stories find their inception."[91] Anishinaabe teachings prioritize balance and oneness with all aspects Creation as being central to what it means to achieve mino-bimaadiziwin.[92] A part of being Anishinaabe is the recognition within one's spirit that all parts of creation are connected in a delicately strung web. Many Anishinaabe scholars write from this perspective, which might be termed as 'ecology' in Western thought; however, this term does not encompass the breadth and depth of connectivity Anishinaabeg feel in relation to all beings in creation. To reiterate further, Anishinaabe people do not mean this metaphorically either—*the land is our mother and provides for us*. She provides for us in a myriad of ways through teaching us how to live as peoples and shares her wisdom and guidance in our everyday lives if we are attuned and willing to listen. When we renew ourselves by participating in ceremony, we are returning to Shkakimikwe in a genuine way that cannot be quantified by Western standards: "the knowledge and wisdom [we] glean from the land is not founded in logical thought framed within the Western rational scientific tradition."[93] The botanical teachings found in Anishinaabe communities reflects our loving relationship with Shkakimikwe in profound ways—we survive and thrive as peoples because of her everlasting zaagidiwin and nibwaakaawin.[94]

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[91] Vanessa Watts, "Indigenous Place-thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European World Tour!)," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2, no. 1 (2013), 23.
[92] Mino-bimaadiziwin is the good life in Anishinaabemowin.
[93] Shkakimikwe is Earth Woman/Earth Mother in Nishnaabemwin. Nicole Bell, "Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin: Living Spiritually with Respect, Relationship, Reciprocity, and Responsibility," *Contemporary Studies in Environmental and Indigenous Pedagogies: A Curricula of Stories and Place*, eds. Andrejs Kulnieks, Dan Roronhiakewen Longboat, and Kelly Young (Sense Publishers, 2013), 100.
[94] Zaagidiwin is love and nibwaakaawin is wisdom in Anishinaabemowin.

As Anishinaabeg, we are taught that learning begins in a spirit way in-utero and we continue learning throughout the remainder of our lives.[95] Knowledge is woven in the womb and our connection to Creation cannot be denied—we are bound to Shkakimikwe through a spiritual cord in the same way that a child is connected to their parent through an umbilical cord. The land is alive, and we honour this as our everyday lived way of being and debwewin. When I rise in the morning, I give thanks to Shkakimikwe for her nurturing guidance and honour ndanwendaagnak through my thoughts and prayers.[96] I grew up fishing and growing sustenance with my family: it was taught that I needed to respect the integrity of each being in these processes. Many Anishinaabe communities still engage in traditional ways of subsistence venerating the "seasonal cycles of harvesting wild rice (*manoomin*), berry and plant gathering, fishing, large game and waterfowl hunting, rabbit snaring, maple sugaring, and the planting of seasonal gardens."[97] Through these approaches, Anishinaabeg are respecting their treaties with each of these beings while also renewing their relationships with other Anishinaabe communities. Through gathering and engaging in acts of resurgence, Anishinaabeg can interact with one another in Anishinaabemowin, share songs, and engage in storytelling to revitalize the thread of connectivity held with one another.[98]

Anishinaabeg have used our language to come back to our ways of understanding the world, and storytelling *in our language* has the power to redefine us

[95] Bell, "Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin," 91.
[96] Ndanwendaagnak is my relatives in Nishnaabemwin.
[97] PennElys Droz, "Biocultural Engineering Design: An Anishinaabe Analysis for Building Sustainable Nations," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 38, no. 4 (2014), 108.
[98] Droz, "Biocultural Engineering Design," 108.

spiritually by helping us come back to *being* Anishinaabe in a contemporary context. Many community members spiritually come home through storytelling, and I have always been grounded by that knowledge too, but how might we gain spiritual rootedness in other ways? When we centre the Nishnaabe teachings of dis-nbwaakaawin, or intuitively gained knowledge, it becomes clear it can be used as a strategy to guide our engagement with knowledge and responsible life practices.[99] Scholar D'Arcy Rheault uses the term gidisi'ewin and defines through teachings gained as "learning in a navel way" because it represents the connection of the spiritual cord of Shkakimikwe, also known as Earth Woman/Earth Mother, to each being's spirit navel in Creation.[100] This cord connecting us to Shkakimikwe "can never be severed" and, further, can be described as embodying the voices of our spirits who gained the sacred instructions from Gzhe-mnidoo before arriving on Earth.[101] Dis-nbwaakaawin prioritizes a balanced sense of mind, body, and spirit in terms of how we come into knowledge. In the context of decolonization and resurgence, we can become more receptive to the knowledges we can receive from our ancestors if we live in balance with all facets of Creation.[102]

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[99] My interpretation of umbilical wisdom in Nishnaabemwin. I am choosing to reframe this concept using language that I grew up with and understand because I do not understand the word Rheault is using in terms of how the morphemes break down beyond gi(iin)- (pronoun for "you" singular or "your" singular), (o)dis (the dependent noun for "navel/umbilical"), and –win (a nominalizer). My parents have talked about umbilical wisdom to me since I was a child and it ties to the sacred ceremonies they did for me when I was born. I am a language learner, so how I use language concepts is sourced from my knowledge as a non-fluent speaker. I am not using a "traditional" term and fluent speakers in my dialect may have much more appropriate terms that are unknown to me.

[100] D'Arcy Ishpeming'enzaabid Rheault, "Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin (The Way of a Good Life)" (master's thesis, Trent University, 1998), 92.

[101] Rheault, "Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin," 96, 93.

[102] Please see Mary Lou Fox Radulovich's discussion of Nishnaabe resurgence in: "Native People's Cultural Resurgence." *Canadian Children's Literature/Littérature canadienne pour la jeunesse* (1976): 66-70. It is important to recognize that Nishnaabeg have been discussing resurgence in that terminology for a long time. This is not a new conversation.

I have always been taught that embedding and nesting oneself in relationships is a part of the process of memory-making. As Kānaka scholar Katrina-Ann R. Kapāʻanaokalāokeola Nākoa Oliveira emphasizes, genealogical connections intertwine her people with the land, ocean, and heavens. The land is a living being and can also "have genealogies"[103] and relationships with their fellow lands and waters. Kānaka ways of knowing are genealogy-based: "like an umbilical cord that connects mother to child, the na'au is a spiritual link between ancestor and descendent. It is from the na'au that Kanaka ancestral knowledge emanates, strengthening the bond with one's ancestors, those both known and unknown."[104] She advocates for Kānaka scholars to tap into this ancestral link through visioning and argues that visions and dreams are a legitimate way to gain knowledge.[105] The na'au way of learning is a concept that reverberates in the same way that dis-nbwaakaawin as umbilical wisdom does because it is spirit-made and shows Indigenous peoples' connection with their ancestors. Her work encourages us to think of land and ocean as sentient beings that are capable of producing their own knowledge, lineage, and having their own histories. When I was born I had the honour of having my parents ceremonially engage in their teachings around umbilical knowledge and the care for my placenta.[106] My parents' traditions around this cultural

[103] Katrina-Ann R. Kapāʻanaokalāokeola Nākoa Oliveira, *Ancestral Places: Understanding Kanaka Geographies* (Oregon State University Press, 2014), 78.
[104] Oliveira, *Ancestral Places: Understanding Kanaka Geographies*, 102.
[105] Oliveira, *Ancestral Places: Understanding Kanaka Geographies*, 113. Please also read the work of Amy Shawanda and Joshua Manitowabi, "Anishinaabe Dream Methodology," *Turtle Island Journal of Indigenous Health* 1, no. 3 (2023): 25-37, https://doi.org/10.33137/tijih.v1i3.38566. Unfortunately, I did not come across their work until after I had completed my research work and dissertation drafts, but I would like to emphasize that it is excellent and a benefit to all Anishinaabe researchers.
[106] This was practiced for my older sisters as well.

teaching are remarkably similar even in terms of how they cared for my umbilical cord and placenta and the ways in which they protected and planted them.[107]

From an Anishinaabe standpoint, we recognize that all parts of Creation are intertwined as beings regardless of the forms they may take. In Nishnaabe teachings it is important to give thanks daily for nesewin, or breath, as this connects us to all our relatives in the universe.[108] When we honour nesewin, we are honouring our relationship with one another as well as respecting that shared sense of oneness. Sharing nesewin speaks of our enduring responsibility to one another and this is a value that I grew up with, not as a theory, but as a way of life. Similarly, my Lucbanin grandparents had many cultural teachings around sharing in the breath of life. From the time a person is born they engage in sharing this spiritual exchange of breath with loved ones in their life, especially their elders. This may be described as a "sniff greeting" in English, but it is something much more profound than words like that describe.[109] It is about honouring each other's spiritual essence as well as engaging in a deep exchange of life. All beings exist in relation to and interact with each other in Creation.

Furthermore, concepts around kinship and our responsibilities to our doodemag converge in conjunction with ndanwendaagnak, a teaching that recognizes all of our

[107] I recognize it is also a privilege that I grew up born into ceremonies such as this, but I want people with similar teachings to know that nothing can sever the spiritual threads they have to the universe through their umbilical knowledges.

[108] I want to recognize all the beautiful conversations we had at the Anishinaabe Language Table on this topic and many others at the University of Victoria.

[109] It is also referred to as a "sniff kiss" in other countries in Southeast Asia, but their cultural reasoning for the practice may be different. It is a common loving exchange between grandparents and their grandchildren where my family is from. It involves a deep inhalation of breath as well as a synchronization of breathing.

relations in Creation.[110] Anishinaabe elders such as Edna Manitowabi further express the idea of ndanwendaagnak through revealing the level of care and responsibility that we must have in terms of how we engage with one another:

> Everything is connected, just like the strands of a spider's web. Touch one and you affect them all. True wisdom is a recognition that everything is dependent on everything else, that everything is intertwined with everything else in an intricate network or web and therefore everything is respected because it is a part of the Great Spirit. Nothing is independent. All are related and interconnected.[111]

If we honestly believe ourselves to be in a complex web of inawendiwin or kinship, then we must be serious and committed to our kinship obligations. In Anishinaabe teachings, we address each aspect of Creation from the plant beings and animals to the mineral beings and waters, and the sky beings and stars as our relatives who are deserving of respect. When we engage in ceremonies, we say, nindinawemaaganidog to honour the spirits within of all our relatives and renew our sacred relationships with each of them.[112] While they may not speak in the same way as human beings, these beings are each a part of our communities and everyday lives in the ways that they engage in spirit and heart knowledge. As such, they are active community members who have an influence on how we function as human beings. For Anishinaabeg, our doodem or clan system reveals the integral role of our relational responsibilities and practices played in honouring our contemporary and "historical agreements between humans and non-humans."[113] There has been a rekindling of interest in our communities to seek

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[110] Doodemag is clans and ndanwendaagnak is my relatives in Nishnaabemwin.
[111] Edna Manitowabi, quotation, in "Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin: Living Spiritually with Respect, Relationship, Reciprocity, and Responsibility," by Nicole Bell. In *Contemporary Studies in Environmental and Indigenous Pedagogies: A Curricula of Stories and Place*, edited by Andrejs Kulnieks, Dan Roronhiakewen Longboat, and Kelly Young (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2013), 99.
[112] Nindinawemaaganidog is a different way of saying my relatives in Anishinaabemowin.
[113] Watts, "Indigenous Place-thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans," 23.

knowledge around our traditional ways of relating to one another through kinship. This restored focus on relationality provides a space for resurgence to blossom into political organizing methods grounded in "relationships to creation, one another, and future generations."[114]

2.2 A Visual and Narrative Discussion of Kinship

For Anishinaabeg, I feel we are always considering the lived and embodied practice of seven generations before us and seven generations ahead because "in an Anishinaabe sense, good work does not just come from the mind, but from the heart as well."[115] As referenced before, ndaan'koobjignak means "my ancestors" and "my great-grandparents," but it also means "my great-grandchildren." For me, dkobjigan is the "tying string" and "binding" force that grounds me in how I live my everyday life and how I honour my relations.[116] Throughout my life I have been dedicated to the traditional teaching of helping people through sharing all of the valuable pieces of knowing that I have learned and honouring my family commitments through knowledge creation. As Kainai scholar Apooyak'ii/Tiffany Dionne Prete emphasizes in her work on Indigenous resiliency through beadworking research practices: "the knowledge has been transferred to me, and I have a responsibility to share this knowledge with others as

[114] Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Towards a Relational Paradigm— Four Points for Consideration: Knowledge, Gender, Land, and Modernity," in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, eds. Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 177.
[115] Lana Ray, "'Beading Becomes a Part of Your Life': Transforming the Academy Through the Use of Beading as a Method of Inquiry," *International Review of Qualitative Research* 9 no. 3(2016): 373, https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2016.9.3.363.
[116] Please note that this is my own interpretation of the language as I have learned it and there is a multiplicity of ways of thinking about what I am sharing.

well."[117] This is a powerful methodology of engaging in kinship, community caring, and traditional knowledge sharing practices. For us to keep those threads of connection in motion we must be dedicated to showing up, being present with each other, and doing the work together in a good way. To honour my Nishnaabe relations means naming all the family lines that I am aware of and each of their known doodemag.[118] To only recognize my patrilineal last name and my grandfather's doodem is not the way I was taught to identify and recognize my familial relationships as it would be inaccurate and would not adequately uphold the family lines of my ancestors who are women. Some of these names have been lost due to patronymic naming conventions as many families may have had more daughters than sons to carry forward their lineages through Western patronymic conventions. I come from and am directly related to a number of Nishnaabe family lines.[119] I have included a number of communities and their

[117] Tiffany Dionne Prete, "Beadworking as an Indigenous Research Paradigm," *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal* 4, no.1 (2019): 37, https://doi.org/10.18432/ari29419.

[118] It was common for Nishnaabe leadership doodemag to intermarry and my family did this frequently. There are many possible reasons for this, but the explanation by my father is that it was to strengthen kinship. If you would like to read more about the intermarriage practices between the Mgizi, Dik/Waawaashkeshi, and Jiijaak doodemag please check out Heidi Bohaker's *Doodem and Council Fire: Anishinaabe Governance through Alliance*, 2020.

[119] I hold no shameful feelings about my European ancestors, but I know very little about most of them (besides their countries of origin). The truth is that they were largely fur trader and mercantile men marrying Nishnaabe women à la façon du pays (by custom of the country or common-law relationships). Unfortunately, they would typically leave my kwe (woman) ancestors after the baptisms of their children and remarry to European women or women of mixed ancestry. The European ancestors I am aware of who have lived stories that have been passed down were people who married into Nishnaabe communities and learned how to respectfully live our way of life. I want to uphold my Kanien'kehá:ka family members through my great-aunt Mel Whetung's marriage to Jim Loft from Tyendinaga, and their children from this beautiful relationship: Sam Loft & Jackie Doreen (Lin, Melba, and Jackie), Snook Loft & Betty Hill (Jim, Leanne, Dorothy and Kevin), Evie Loft & Robert Watts (Bob, Sue, and Jaime). My father's aunt, uncle, and cousins were brilliant and have so many talented grandchildren and great-grandchildren as well. Also, special recognition for my Watts, Siwik, and Loft cousins for being so amazing, supportive, and loving with their visits. Our point of Nishnaabe connectivity is through Aunt Mel as well as through our Howard relatives from Hiawatha. I also want to pay respect to my ancestral connection to leader Odeserundiye (John Deserontyon/Deseronto).

associated family lines, but there are many more beyond my scope of inherited knowledge.[120]

Table 1. Ndanwendaagnak[121]
Adams (Gnoozhe/Gnebik/Jiijaak/Dik; Rice Lake)[122]
Anderson (Rice Lake)
Ashquabe (Georgina Island)
Bigwin/Bigwind/Gchinoodin/Great Sail (Dik/Waawaashkeshi; Rama/Rice Lake)[123]
Bird/Mgizi (Mgizi; Rama)[124]
Blaker (Dik; Rice Lake/Curve Lake/Rama)
Charles (Waawaashkeshi; Rama/Scugog)
Cowie/Cow/Cowe/Kou (Dik through the patriline of John Cow and Jiijaak through the line of Storm; Rice Lake)[125]
Crowe/Crow/Kaagaasi/Gaagaakshiinh (Gnoozhe/Gnebik; Rice Lake)[126]
David (Rice Lake).
Fawn/Gdagaakoons/Maanshiins (Rice Lake/Curve Lake/Rama)[127]
Goose/Pishikinse (Dik; Scugog)[128]
Herkimer/Herchmer/Mageyakomegokwe (Mkwa through the matriline of Mageyakomegokwe from Rice Lake and the Herkimer patriline is from Sandhausen, Germany; Credit River/Rice Lake)[129]
Howard (Dik; Rice Lake)
Ingersoll/Ingersol (Rama)
Johnson (Curve Lake/Credit River)
Kenice/Canise/Kanise (Miizhmizh; Rama)[130]
Knott (Mgizi; Curve Lake)
Lake (Rice Lake)
Loucks (Rice Lake)
Marsden (Waawaashkeshi/Zhashk; Rice Lake/Scugog/Rama)[131]

[120] Note: I am choosing to not use the traditional Nishnaabemwin names in this section for each community name, so that community members can find this information through search indexes more easily.
[121] My relatives.
[122] (Pike/Snake/Crane/Caribou).
[123] Big Wind. (Caribou/Deer).
[124] Bald Eagle.
[125] John Cow's son Daniel married Bridget Sherry/Searraigh/Searrach (Foal in Gaeilge) from Ennistymon (County Clare, Ireland), but my understanding is she also had familial ties to Galway.
[126] Raven or Crow. (Pike/Snake)
[127] Fawn as said in different ways.
[128] I am not sure if this is a reference to a shortened version of shkode-bzhikiins (buffalo), but perhaps it is.
[129] (Bear).
[130] Finch or Grosbeak. (White Oak).
[131] (Deer/Muskrat).

Table 1. Ndanwendaagnak (continued)
McCue/McKue (Dik through the matriline of Mary Ishpaamokwe Whetung and McCue patriline is from Ireland; Curve Lake/Georgina Island/Scugog)[132]
Mitchell (Manitoulin Island/Saugeen/Scugog)
Muskrat/Muskratt/Muskratte/Musgrave/Zhashk (Jiijaak/Zhashk; Rice Lake/Curve Lake/Credit River)
Paudash (Jiijaak; Rice Lake)
Precourt/Pricour/Ashegan/Oshegan/Ashigan (Georgian Bay/Parry Sound/Penetanguishene). Rice Lake (Rice Lake)[133]
Sandy/Negwakmigaang (Ngig; Rama)[134]
Shalifoe/Shelifoe (Dik; Keweenaw Bay)[135]
Shilling (Rama)
Simcoe (Waawaashkeshi; Rama)
Simpson/Pashageezhig (Dik; Rice Lake)[136]
Smoke (Rice Lake)
Snake/Gnebig (Ngig/Mik/Menmeg; Georgina Island/Rama)[137]
Storm/Snowstorm (Jiijaak; Rice Lake)
Taylor (Ngig; Curve Lake/Scugog)
Tobico/Adoopikaang (Credit River/Curve Lake/Rice Lake)[138]
Whetung/Baawting (Dik/Moos/Mashkooz; Curve Lake)[139]
Yellowhead (Waawaashkeshi; Rama).[140]

[132] (Caribou). Ishpaamokwe means High Up/Tall Woman.

[133] Important note: in my view, my ancestor Martha's relatives (Precourt, Precour, Pricour, Pricourt, etc.) have been erroneously associated with "métis/Métis" (non-Red River Métis and people who, in my understanding, have unclear ties to the historic Métis Nation) history in the Georgian Bay area. My ancestor identified as Nishnaabe. I am not aware of any of her relatives having ties to the Métis Nation through marriage. Ashigan is Bass in Anishinaabemowin.

[134] Place where it is sandy. (Otter).

[135] Respect and love to my cousins from Keweenaw Bay (Matthews, Loonsfoot, Miller, Jermac, and Tolonen). When my family was living in the US, they used to visit their Whetung-Blaker cousins frequently here.

[136] When the sun is at its peak. Note: this is my great-grandmother Min's choice in orthography. (Caribou).

[137] (Otter/Beaver/Catfish).

[138] Place where there are alder.

[139] Baawting is where the rivers meet (according to my grandfather) or place of the rapids. According to family stories, our original patriline ancestors are from Adoopikaang to around the Cataraqui River on the shoreline of Lake Ontario with specific ties to Port Hope south of Rice Lake. Our original matriline ancestors had ties to Waaninaawangaag. (Caribou/Elk or Moose/Elk).

[140] Important note: I am not being inconsistent with my use and understanding of Nishnaabemwin. While each of these communities are Nishnaabemwin speakers we do not always have the same way of saying the same thing. Each community can have a multiplicity of ways of conceptualizing doodemag, and family names and I have done my best to honour the specific way each ancestor would have used their particular idiolects to describe their way of seeing themselves. Using a standardized format would be easier for me as the writer, but it does not honour the way each of these ancestors spoke.

This is my understanding through oral traditions and the genealogical story work carried by my family and I apologize if my recollections of my grandparents' stories are not compatible with those of other kin relations.[141] It is important to recognize the people who have written about this in their comprehensive works and honour the many community members have put in so much love and care to document ancestral encodements.[142] Throughout my life I have been inspired by the absolute devotion that community members have for upholding our families, community histories, and nationhood, so an integral part of my lifework is to help community members through engaging in Indigenous projects with a cultural lens. In my view, creative projects such as these allow people to grasp the seemingly intangible through the tangible in community art, language learning, historical research, genealogy, and repatriation of ancestors.

The spiritual threads that bind everything together are a foundational part of my artistic practice. This exhibition piece I created is called, *Nindanikoobijiganag: We are Star People* (see figure 4). It is meant to represent how I think about our Nishnaabe understandings of the universe through our storytelling, relationality, and Two-Spirit lens. It was inspired by my cousin Darren-ba Shilling Taylor from Mnjikaning and

[141] Please contact me if you have additional or corrective information to contribute.

[142] Please read the detailed works of Brian Beaver (*Alderville First Nation…A History*, 2020), Peggy J. Blair (*Lament for a First Nation: The Williams Treaties of Southern Ontario*, 2008), Ruth Clarke (*What We Hold Dear: Treasured Memories of Alderville First Nation*, 2006), Chadwick Cowie ("Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg: Nationhood, Diplomacy, and Identity," 2023), Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge (*Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Baha'i Pioneers*, 2011), Heather Y. Shpuniarsky and The Village of Hiawatha Committee (*The Village of Hiawatha: A History,* 2016), Mary Jane Muskratte Simpson (*A History of the Rice Lake Indians*, 1953), J. Michael Thoms ("Ojibwa fishing grounds : a history of Ontario fisheries law, science, and the sportsmen's challenge to Aboriginal treaty rights, 1650-1900," 2004), Donald B. Smith (*Mississauga Portraits: Ojibwe Voices from Nineteenth Century Canada*, 2015), Mae Whetung-Derrick (*Oshkiigmong: The Curve in the Lake—A History of the Mississauga Community of Curve Lake: Origins of the Curve Lake Community of Anishnabek*, 2015).

Oshkiigmong who taught me how to live in a good way according to our Two-Spirit teachings.[143] It is also meant to represent the importance of the intergenerational knowledge connection between elders in the community with young ones.

Figure 4. Nindanikoobijiganag: We are Star People. An exhibition piece for the On Beaded Ground exhibition at the Legacy Gallery, Victoria, BC. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage, *Nindanikoobijiganag: We are Star People*, original photographs credited to Kyra Kordoski, 2025).[144]

What I see in visual memory-making may be quite different from what others see, but I was taught by my family how to read what is spiritually encoded into cultural creations and it is my responsibility to share that knowledge with other community members. This was one of my primary considerations when I created this work for the *On Beaded Ground* exhibition (2021) and I hoped that people would see it and make

[143] Mnjikaning is the Place of the Fish Fence and Oshkiigmong is the Curve in the Lake.

[144] Figure 4 full references (left), Estrella Whetung, *Nindanikoobijiganag: We are Star People*, 2021, beaded and sewn mixed-media art piece (front), *On Beaded Ground* exhibition, Victoria, BC., photograph by Kyra Kordoski, University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries, https://legacy.uvic.ca/gallery/onbeadedground/estrella-whetung/ufy2xt_g/. (Right), Estrella Whetung, Nindanikoobijiganag: We are Star People, 2021, beaded and sewn mixed-media art piece (back), *On Beaded Ground* exhibition, Victoria, BC, photograph by Kyra Kordoski, University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries, https://legacy.uvic.ca/gallery/onbeadedground/estrella-whetung/nuxmgcpw/.

some of those spiritual connections too. Several people that I know shared with me that they cried when they saw Elder Yoda and Baby Yoda in their regalia and it humbled me. There were some limitations in what I could share in my artist's statement due to character limits, but it encapsulates the main ideas of relationality that I was referring to as well as the critiques of colonialism I wished to discuss:

> These pieces are about finding a way to truly represent my Nishnaabe understandings of the cosmos through our Star People stories and teachings about relationality that mesh with my love for science fiction and my role as a Two-Spirit community member. I chose Yoda for this as an iconic figure from the Star Wars universe who has been embraced as a part of Indigeneity and Baby Yoda (Grogu) because he has become a celebrated contemporary Indigenous pop culture and futurisms icon. Elder Yoda's rainbow ribbon skirt reflects their Two Spirit identity and is meant to challenge colonial heteropatriarchal understandings of family, gender, and elders. Baby Yoda's mossbag is beaded with waterlilies to represent Nishnaabe stories of Star People and has beaded galaxies modelled after Star Wars. The beaded galaxy is inspired by Margaret Nazon's work. This work is meant to show the intergenerational bond that is so crucial between elders and children in community.[145]

When I made the outfits of the Elder Yoda and Baby Yoda, I wanted to make sure that I incorporated and encoded as much traditional knowledge as I had within their regalia. I used common materials that my contemporary kin utilize such as modern and antique beads for their regalia-making. I also used materials my ancestors have used before in making regalia such as cloth made from cotton and wool as well as velvet ribbons, stone beads, and smoke-tanned deer hide. The earrings for Elder Yoda were created several years prior to the exhibition in March 2018 as a beading sample that incorporated some of the sun ray design shapes that you find in traditional gold-smithing in the Philippines. Additionally, I used a variety of shells such as pearl, dentalium, and

[145] Estrella Whetung, "Nindanikoobijiganag: We are Star People," *On Beaded Ground*, 2021, accessed June 16, 2025. https://legacy.uvic.ca/gallery/onbeadedground/estrella-whetung/ufy2xt_g/.

abalone to represent the sacred importance that shells hold in both of my cultures in our traditional regalia and communal spirit memories.

Figure 5. Gimaa Gchinoodin/Kanise. My ancestor who was a Mississauga principal leader in the Zhooniyaang-zaaga'igan area with specific family responsibilities to De Grassi Point in Cook's Bay. (Elizabeth Simcoe, etching, *Canise or Great Sail, an Ojibwa Chief*, 1794).[146]

Figure 5 is the oldest illustrated record that I have of one of my direct ancestors and his regalia can reveal a lot about who he was and the sociopolitical realities he was facing at the time. Gimaa Gchinoodin/Kanise (Canise/Kenice) is the paternal great grandfather of my great-great grandmother Sarah Sandy Whetung.[147] He and his father Gimaa Kanise were Mississauga principal leaders for the Zhooniyaang-zaaga'igan area along with other Nishnaabe head leaders Gimaa William Miskwaaki, Gimaa John

[146] Figure 5 full reference, Elizabeth Simcoe, *Canise or Great Sail, an Ojibwa Chief*, 1794, etching, 123mm x 87mm, Baldwin Collection of Canadiana, Toronto, courtesy of Toronto Public Library, https://digitalarchiveontario.ca/objects/262215/canise-or-great-sail-an-ojibwa-chief?ctx=1b1c0fce902328d9e46b3d21f701c2c202d5fabf&idx=0/.

[147] Gimaa is a reference to a leader, headman, or "chief." As referenced before, this means Big Wind (now Bigwin), and he was sometimes referred to as Great Sail.

Aisance, and Gimaa Joseph Snake.[148] To my knowledge, Thorah Island in Ontario was previously named after him and his father.[149] Further, Hannah Snake is the maternal great-grandmother of Sarah Sandy.

These names still dot the landscape of Ontario with Bigwin Island as well as Snake Island being named after our relations who carried these names. Gimaa Kanise and Gimaa Gchinoodin had close relations with Gimaa Joseph Snake. When Hannah Snake was widowed, she re-married to a man named Bird and Sarah's grandmother Esther Bird Sandy was adopted by her stepfather.[150] Esther married Thomas Sandy and had a son named Elijah Sandy (the father of Sarah Sandy) and he married Ann Marie Foster.[151] This portrait (see figure 5) was originally sketched by Elizabeth Simcoe who was the wife of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe and a well-known Upper Canada writer who documented early settler life through diaries and illustrations. In the image, Gimaa Gchinoodin/Kanise is wearing a hairstyle that my father has said is typical of Nishnaabe men at this time—which is that he is wearing a high bun, and this would usually be fastened with a giizhik branch going through the hair in a similar fashion to a hair pin.[152] The giizhik branch is a sacred medicine as well as a form of

[148] "Gallery 1793-1815: Engraved Portrait of The Great Sail, 1796," The Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common, accessed January 6, 2025, https://www.fortyork.ca/29-gallery/103-gallery-17931815.html#!1793_Canise_Native_Chief/. Zhooniyaang-zaaga'igan is Lake Simcoe.

[149] Note: the information presented here about our family having ties to the De Grassi Point area of Cook's Bay in Lake Simcoe is consistent with family oral traditions.

[150] He chose the name Bird to reflect that he was Mgizi/Eagle doodem. Her brother was a well-known translator named Zhaawnogiizhik (Henry Bird Steinhauer) who worked with his wife Seeseeb (Jessie Maminawatum, a Cree community member of Norway House, Manitoba) on Indigenous language and syllabics documentation. You can read more about their interesting lives in Melvin D. Steinhauer's work *Shawahnekizhek: Henry Bird Steinhauer: Child Of Two Cultures*, 2015, and Isaac Mabindisa's work, *The Praying Man: Henry Bird Steinhauer, Ojibwe and Methodist Minister*, 2012.

[151] To my knowledge, Ann had a Scottish father and a Nishnaabe mother.

[152] Giizhik is cedar in Nishnaabemwin.

spiritual protection. In this illustration he is wearing his hair in what appears to be a shaved scalp lock which was often an indication that they were in a tumultuous time of war and unrest. Additionally, he is wearing a shawl cape, complex ear ornaments likely made of shell, deer sinew, and copper or silver and is holding a traditional pipe stem.[153] Metals such as copper and silver were shaped into disks, rings, balls, and bells and functioned as spiritual protection for the wearers. The knowledge of how to read the adornment and styling of people in my nations is something that has been passed down to me by my parents, grandparents, aunties, and uncles.

Figure 6. Martha Precourt Whetung. My great-great-great grandmother (circa 1890s) wearing a ribbon trimmed dress standing with traditional Nishnaabe weavings. (Undated photograph of Martha Whetung, Maryboro Lodge Museum).[154]

[153] It was common at the time to wrap and stretch ear cartilage for adornment as well as slash the ear lops to fit in multiple copper hoops.

[154] Figure 6 full reference, Maryboro Lodge Museum: Kawartha Virtual Museum, *Personality Gallery: Martha Whetung*, photograph, https://maryboro.ca/virtual/personality-gallery/.

Figure 6 is a photograph of Martha Whetung who was my Grandpa Ted's great-grandmother. She was from Naadawe-zaagiing but raised her family with her husband Gimaa Joseph II Whetung primarily in Oshkiigmong.[155] Her father was French with roots from Normandy and Nouvelle-Aquitaine as well as Belgian Flemish ancestry.[156] He worked on Drummond Island as a carpenter with his sons from a previous relationship before moving to Penetanguishene.[157] Her Nishnaabe mother was from the Ashigan family in the Georgian Bay area and her parents had a short-lived relationship as her father remarried several times and had children with each of his *à la façon du pays* Indigenous wives.[158] From my grandparent's recollections she did not identify as being of mixed heritage, nor "métis" and she lived as Nishnaabe with her mother's family.[159] I am trying to avoid superimposing my notions of Nishnaabe identity onto her and do not wish to assign a blended identity without being certain of her perspective. Her younger sister went on to marry into a French family and, sadly, that line of my relatives appears to have no longer interacted with our family as they seemingly went on to pursue a mainstream settler life in Penetanguishene, a largely Loyalist settler community.[160] As far as I know, Martha never made mention of her father, so who he was as a person was not passed down in my branch of the family. This is not unusual when a person does not have a sustained interest in maintaining their kinship relationships.

[155] Naadawe-zaagiing is one way to say the River Mouth (or delta) of the Large Snake or Georgian Bay.
[156] The ancestors from present day Nouvelle-Aquitaine were from mostly on the coast near La Rochelle.
[157] The War of 1812 changed the borders and, according to my family history, Penetanguishene was a common area for Loyalists to relocate.
[158] Her children said that her connections were specifically to Beausoleil as well Parry Sound. One of her relations, likely her brother, appears in the 1871 Ontario census as Oshegan/Ashegan noted as living in Parry Sound.
[159] See earlier footnote relating to the Precourt family in table 1. I want to be clear that I respect the fact that there are Nishnaabeg who have ties to the Red River through their Métis and Cree ancestors and there are Anishinaabeg particularly in Northern Ontario who are proudly both Anishinaabe and Métis.
[160] Sometimes this is the other side of the history of ancestral disconnection that can happen in Indigenous and settler communities.

When Martha was in her seventies, she was contacted by a steamship travel company that was hoping to advertise the Trent region for its cottages as well increase interest in guided hunting and fishing opportunities for tourists. According to some family stories, the name she gave them was Gaawaategaamag.[161] In my interpretation this means Place of Glistening Lake Water, but I have also considered that she may have meant Gaa-waasaagamaag which I interpret to mean Place of Bright and Shiny Lake Water.[162] Unfortunately, it has been said that the company thought this word was too difficult to say, so it was shortened to "Kawartha Lakes" and that is how the region received this name. It is sad to me that our language and the way that she used Nishnaabemwin were not respected because my family has always been so dedicated to making sure Nishnaabemwin thrives. Crucial ways in which we see the world are often lost in translation. In the photograph she is wearing a shawl as well as a garland of plant medicines around her neck. Her dress is trimmed with ribbons, and she is wearing a woven floral hat, likely made of reeds or willow.[163] There are other weavings in the foreground of the photograph as well. The larger basket is one that is typical of the kind the women in my Nishnaabe family would weave and looks like it is made from black split ash. The smaller weaving to the left has zigzagging patterns which are meant to represent the miiknaansan made by ngigwak.[164] The larger block shaped triangles can represent a few different things: according to my Grandpa Ted, they can represent

[161] Please read my cousin Mae Whetung-Derrick's work for a much more comprehensive and documented family story about Martha. Please see pages 19-21 of *Oshkigmong: The Curve in the Lake – A History of the Mississauga Community of Curve Lake: Origins of the Curve Lake Anishnabek (2015),* (Lakefield, ON: Peterborough Historical Society, 2015; 2022). Citations refer to the 2022 reprinted edition.
[162] Gaa-waasaagamaa is also a known name for Georgian Bay.
[163] It is hard to see in the image, but I believe these ribbons are velvet.
[164] Miiknaansan are trails in Nishnaabemwin. Ngigwak are otters in Nishnaabemwin.

weweg on their sky path and other times they are meant to show mtigwaaki miiknaansan.[165]

Figure 7. Gimaa Joseph II. This photograph is from around the 1880s. He was the husband of Martha Whetung, and this was his regalia. (Undated photograph of Gimaa Joseph II, courtesy of Everett and Leila Whetung).

When my father was growing up and going fishing, trapping, and hunting with my Grandpa Ted he was taught to mark visual encodings such as these on pathways. It served a practical and helpful purpose to mark where a community member might find sustenance ahead if the climate was not in the best condition for tracking. However, the action of making these marks was also intended as a spiritual way of recognizing

[165] This is also confirmed in the wonderful history work of Mae Whetung-Derrick. Some of this history work is not accessible to the public as far as I know because they were community-held resources that she worked on. Weweg are geese in Nishnaabemwin. Mtigwaaki miiknaansan are forest pathways in Nishnaabemwin.

kinship to wesiinhyag and other beings and the inherent powers that they have.[166] I was taught when I was young that when you make, paint, weave in, sew, or bead markings and representational patterns of beings you are encoding an agreement with these beings in the universe.[167]

This is a photograph of Gimaa Joseph Whetung II, my Grandpa Ted's great-grandfather (see figure 7).[168] He was a longtime Oshkiigmong community leader as well as a person who, like his wife Martha, was dedicated to maintaining and upholding our way of life through community knowledge transmission. He is wearing one of the traditional headdress styles for Mississauga leaders which is a wide crown shape with eagle feathers that point directly up along with a fringed deer hide jacket that has a fringed yoke and fringed long shirt. According to my cousin, Darren-ba Shilling Taylor who was a longtime Two-Spirit ceremonial shkaabewis and regalia-maker, the manner in which Gimaa Joseph II's regalia was constructed has strong indications that it was made by a Two-Spirit shkaabewis for specific ceremonial purposes.[169] He is wearing a silver treaty medal with several protections made of metals around his neck and is holding a baagndibe'gan which would have been made out of ash, oak, or maple wood because these are sturdy and extremely hard materials that are durable.[170] He lived as other Mississauga Nishnaabeg did: he spent much of his time fishing, hunting, and

[166] Wesiinhyag are animals in Nishnaabemwin.
[167] I am referring to our everyday lived realm and everything that exists in the beyond.
[168] Photo courtesy of my father, Everett Whetung. To my knowledge, this is him and not his son Gimaa Joseph III even though they looked quite similar. Gimaa Joseph II was taller with a more robust build like his grandson my great-grandfather Arthur who was 6'7".
[169] Shkaabewis is a ceremonial helper in Nishnaabemwin. I will not be describing exactly what that means because it is sacred knowledge that I have been taught is not intended to be described in a public way.
[170] Baagndibe'gan is a traditional war club in Nishnaabemwin.

trapping as well as passing down oral histories to his children and other relatives. These oral histories shared by him, my other ancestors, and kin centred our relationships and responsibilities to the waters and land and became instrumental to the documentation of our territories.[171]

Figure 8. Hank Cowie's Fishing and Hunting Lodge. This image features many of my family members. All the guides featured are my relatives who worked as seasonal guides (circa 1920s). This includes Madden Howard, Bob Paudash, Jack Simpson, Hanlon Howard, Bill Muskratte, Dan Muskratte, Bert Adams, Ben Taylor, Pat Loukes, and Art Whetung. (Undated family photograph of Hank Cowie's Lodge and guides, courtesy of Carmen Wiigwaas Craig).

The image (figure 8) of Hank Cowie's fishing and hunting lodge on Pemdashkodeyaang and exemplifies our family's commitment to the waters and the land.[172] Hank Cowie was my great-grandmother's brother, and he was devoted to our family and making sure our Nishnaabe ways of sustenance were supported. He was the son of Wellington Cowie and Hannah Blaker and, as evidenced by this image, he worked with many of my other family members.[173] Most of my family worked as fishing,

[171] See Peggy J. Blair, *Lament for a First Nation: The Williams Treaties of Southern Ontario*, 2008.
[172] This is the name of Rice Lake, but the lodge was on Hiawatha First Nation side of the lake.
[173] George Blaker and Charlotte McCue (daughter of Mary Ishpaamokwe Whetung and William McCue) as well as the Tobicos and Herkimers were amongst her ancestors.

hunting, and trapping guides on the lakes for settler tourists seasonally as well as spent a lot of time cultivating rice, gathering, and farming. Odayimiwaan (their dogs) were key to the success of the work they did in guiding as well as integral to fulfilling their family responsibilities to community sustenance.[174] Daniel Muskratt was my great-grandmother Min's brother and Bill Muskratt was her younger brother.[175] Madden Howard was my great-grandmother Bella's father, Hanlon Howard was her brother, and Arthur Whetung Sr. was her husband. Gimaa Robert Paudash, Jack Simpson, Ben Taylor, and Pat Loukes are also my relatives.[176]

These are some photographs (figure 9 and figure 10) of my Grandma's father, Al Simpson and Wilfred Sunday processing manoomin or wild rice in Pemdashkodeyaang.[177] They are drying the mnoomin out in the sun on mat cloths and in the other photograph (figure 10) Great-grandpa Al is dancing in his mkiznan on the mnoomin to remove the chaffs.[178] Both of my parents grew up cultivating rice and ricing with my grandparents and other relatives living in our homelands. This was both an integral family activity as well as an important way for the community to harvest, work on processing the rice, and lovingly store what was processed together.

[174] My dog Amik-ba was named after my Grandpa Ted's first hunting dog who was brave, faithful, and an excellent tracker.
[175] She was raised mostly by her Muskratt grandparents and Daniel was technically her uncle, but they were close in age and grew up together as siblings.
[176] Gimaa Paudash's mother Sarah Cow was the sister of Daniel Cow. Daniel Cow was the father of my great-great grandfather Wellington Cowie. Jack Simpson was related through my great-grandfather Al Simpson. Ben Taylor was related through Howard ties at Hiawatha and other family at Curve Lake. Pat Loukes was related through Cowie ties at Hiawatha.
[177] I believe this is on the Alderville side of the lake rather than Hiawatha, but I may be incorrect.
[178] Mnoomin is rice and mkiznan are moccasins in Nishnaabemwin.

Figure 9. Drying Mnoomin. My great-grandfather Alfred Simpson working on drying mnoomin (wild rice) with Wilfred Sunday. (John Boyd, photograph, *Drying wild rice, Rice Lake*, Library and Archives Canada, 1921).[179]

In the photographs it appears the drying mats are made of cotton sheets, but my mother and my grandmothers on both sides also used to weave mats and shallow baskets from materials such as reeds, grasses, cedar, and other plants to dry out the rice as well as help the winnowing process.[180] After the rice harvesting season was done my family and communities would hold celebrations to mark the change of seasons as well as preparations for the new season.[181] In a contemporary setting, this takes the form of Miigwechiwi-Giizhgad celebrations on my Nishnaabe side and the Pahiyas Festival on my Lucbanin side.[182] As my parents often tell me, this is a hard way

[179] Figure 9, full reference, John Boyd, *[Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg drying wild rice, Rice Lake]. Original title: Drying wild rice, Rice Lake*, October 14, 1921, photograph, Library and Archives Canada, https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Home/Record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=3366872&ecopy=e011303091/.
[180] I believe basswood was also used in some cases. For my mother's side they used pandan leaves primarily.
[181] This is around Autumn (September) in Ontario and happens three times a year for different seasons in Quezon.
[181] In other times this may have looked quite different than it does presently in colonial context.
[182] Thanksgiving Day in Anishinaabemowin, but for my family this is spread out over a number of days in which we get together to process food through preserving and canning, cooking, and feasting together. The Pahiyas

to live and grow up because you only eat what you can grow, gather, harvest, trap, fish and/or hunt and there is no shortage of work to be done when the sun rises.[183] There is a spiritual power that comes from knowing that beings of the waters, lands, and skies will give to you in abundance if you respect them, work hard for them, and give your thanks everyday through what you do.

Figure 10. Dancing on Mnoomin. My great-grandfather Alfred Simpson dancing on mnoomin. (John Boyd, photograph, *Tramping in pot of wild rice, Rice Lake*, Library and Archives Canada, 1921).[184]

celebrations were originally related to bringing offerings to Bundok Banahaw, but it has grown to be a festival where millions of people come to Lucban to celebrate over the span of a few weeks.

[183] My father has eaten a zhgaak (skunk) before and did not like the experience.

[184] Figure 10, full reference, John Boyd, [*Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe man tramping in pot of wild rice, Rice Lake*]. Original title: *Tramping in pot of wild rice*, Rice Lake, October 14, 1921, photograph, Library and Archives Canada, https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=3366874&ecopy=e011303090/.

2.3 Returning and Continuing the Work of Our Ancestors

In some ways, when I look at images like these, I experience a sense of grief for all the things I do not know and all the experiences I wish I had on our home territories. The reality is that I am the first generation in both of my family lines to be born urban and not raised on our home territories and this has impacted my way of being. When I was younger, I sometimes wondered what my life would have been like if I had grown up in Lucban or on Pemdashkodeyaang and Oshkiigmong weaving like my mother, Nanay, Tatay, and my Grandma Rena or going fishing, ricing, hunting, berry-picking, and trapping with my grandparents on both sides. My parents grew up doing all of these activities and that was their lived reality growing up with bush knowledge—I know that I do not even have an ounce of the survival and cultural skills of my parents.

When I was a child, my father told me that I was never going to feel as deeply connected to the place I was born in the same way that it feels for Indigenous peoples who belong to these territories. This was a difficult lesson to learn and for some people it can feel painful, but he was right because I did feel something so powerful and different the first time I came home. Being on the land and waters with your family and speaking your language in your homelands situates you in an intimate way that cannot really be replaced by anything else. Yet I realize the homelands I am from are not perfect settings that have been untouched by time, and I think there can be a danger in not recognizing how our territories have been modified and transformed by the disruptive qualities of colonialism. What provides hope for me is that we have amazing

community members who are doing the work of addressing the impacts of colonization on our relatives—the waters, lands, plants, and animals.[185]

Figure 11. Sarah and Joseph. These are photographs of my great-great grandparents, Sarah Sandy and Gimaa Joseph Whetung III and our relatives (circa early 1900s). (Estrella Whetung, digital collage, *Sarah and Joseph*, original photographs courtesy of R. Whetung (*left top* and *bottom*) and Everett Whetung and Leila Whetung (*right*), 2025).[186]

My great-great grandmother Sarah Sandy Whetung (figure 11), pictured with family and my great-great grandfather Gimaa Joseph III Whetung, is from Mnjikaning (Place of the Fish Fences or the Lake Simcoe/Rama area today). I chose to include this

[185] There is so much incredible work happening, so it is hard to highlight just a few. Please see the work being done at the Alderville Black Oak Savanna, https://www.aldervillesavanna.ca/; the Manoomin Curriculum Project, https://www.trentu.ca/education/resources/manoomin-curriculum/; the Canadian Bushcraft Podcast with Caleb Musgrave, https://www.podchaser.com/podcasts/the-canadian-bushcraft-podcast-2315822; and the Mount Banahaw de Lucban Botanical Garden and the College of Agriculture at Southern Luzon State University, https://www.slsu.edu.ph/.

[186] Photographs of Sarah with Joseph III were shared with me by my cousin R. Whetung of Oshkiigmong Anishinaabeg First Nation/Curve Lake Band of Ojibwe.

visual memory because she is smiling with our relatives and many archival photographs of Anishinaabeg do not have smiles and laughter in them, but I know my family loves to joke around. The way that her skirt was made is the same way that I make ribbon skirts today in terms of shape and construction. In the image above, Gimaa Joseph III is holding a fishing spear and his hunting knife while wearing his fringed regalia shawl, shirt, and leggings that are made of deer hide. Like his father (see figure 7), he is wearing a silver treaty medal.

In scholar Jackson Pind's comprehensive and thoughtful work on the Curve Lake Indian Day School, it is noted that Gimaa Joseph III was a "'chief'" with the implication being that this was merely in name rather than from a true leadership position in the community.[187] The role of a gimaa is not given by band councils or by other colonial institutions and mechanisms, but by the will of the people, our more than human kin, and our ancestors. Unlike leadership in many Western institutions of governance, the role of a gimaa is collaborative, kinship-based, and traditionally never held solely by any one individual because there will always be a range of voices and ideas within a nation. We do not have kings with authoritative power who are only selectively responsible in our nation or male primogeniture. According to my family's teachings, when there is a difference of opinion amongst community members the complete spectrum of voices is deserving of respect and representation through leadership. My great-great-grandfather

[187] Jackson Pind*, Students by Day: Colonialism and Resistance at the Curve Lake Indian Day School* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2025), 70, 262. Jackson Pind identifies as a mixed Anishinaabe-settler with Alderville First Nation roots.

fulfilled the role of gimaa as requested by community members and through his doodem responsibilities much like others in our family and communities.

As I mentioned before, my Whetung paternal line is from Oshkiigmong or Curve Lake and many of my ancestors engaged in formal leadership roles, but what I find more interesting is their commitment to our waters, our lands, and upholding our ability to live mno-bmaadziwin. Gimaa Joseph III and our other relatives dealt with a lot of colonial abuses and became dedicated to pursuing legal means to attempt to create changes for Nishnaabeg. Like his father and mother before him, he and Sarah had to deal with being harassed by settlers for fishing, hunting, gathering, and trapping on their ancestral territories.[188] Their son, my great-grandfather Arthur Whetung Sr., was arrested in the early 1930s and he decided to write letters along with his wife Bella Howard Whetung to the Department of Indian Affairs to address his wrongful arrest, pending charges, as well as the lack of official documentation of the Williams Treaties (1923).[189] They made complaints to the Department of Indian Affairs as well as to Indian Agents several times, but it was not until they wrote to the Crown in 1932 that they received any traction:

> The First Nations actually involved in the treaty received no such information. In fact, it was not until 1932, after a frustrated Arthur Whetung complained directly to the Privy Council, that the First Nations finally received copies of the completed treaties. Six copies were forwarded to the Rice Lake Indian Agent, and Arthur Whetung was informed by the Secretary of Indian Affairs that a copy

[188] His father Gimaa Joseph II was incarcerated for hunting and trapping in the early 1880s.

[189] She used to correspond with a Department of Indian Affairs deputy superintendent by the name of Duncan Campbell Scott. As a survivor of the Muncey Institute/Mount Elgin Indian Residential School, she was a fierce critic of the residential school system and had a lot to express in her political letter writing to officials. At the time, I believe that Scott had been paying for bush guiding and outdoors lessons from my family members on the Kawartha Lakes and Rice Lake.

> of the treaty had been sent to the agent at Hiawatha. At that time, perhaps not coincidentally, the King's Printer finally published the treaties.[190]

This action that my family set in motion was an important part of pursuing recognition, redress, restitution, and compensation for the wrongful termination of our ability to engage in our fishing, hunting, trapping, and gathering life practices.[191] Many of my ancestors refused to acknowledge this termination by the Crown and were committed to continuing our way of life regardless of the challenges they experienced. They felt that it was impossible to sever anyone's umbilical tie to the universe, nor deny a person's rightful connection to Shkakimikwe. My relatives were harassed, shot at, seriously injured, blamed for crimes they did not commit, arrested, put on trial, and incarcerated in these dangerous interactions with settlers, but they still continued going right back out on our waters and lands. 136 years after my ancestor Gimaa Joseph II was arrested our Williams Treaties First Nations Settlement Agreement was finalized in 2018.[192]

Minnie Muskratte Simpson (figure 12, on the left pictured with her younger sister) is my Grandma Rena's mother. Minnie and her siblings were from the Hiawatha side of Pemdashkodeyaang and had worked locally after attending school. In figure 12, they are wearing clothing that is typical of the time period as many members of the community wore both Western influenced clothing as well as traditional regalia depending on the occasion. My great-grandmother Min went on to become a writer, as

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[190] Peggy J. Blair, *Lament for a First Nation: The Williams Treaties of Southern Ontario* (UBC Press, 2008), 168.
[191] Please read the Supreme Court judgment on R. *v*. Howard (1994) as well as Blair's full work in *Lament for a First Nation*, https://decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/1138/index.do/.
[192] Please read Jackson Pind and Jack Hoggarth's article, "Revisiting the Williams Treaties of 1923," Anishinaabeg Perspectives After a Century (2023). https://theconversation.com/revisiting-the-williams-treaties-of-1923-anishinaabeg-perspectives-after-a-century-217764/.

well as a regular columnist in the Cobourg Sentinel-Star newspaper, and a community historian. She wrote a detailed book called "A History of the Rice Lake Indians" (1953) about our Alderville community's history and pieces of that work tie to her home on the other side of the lake in Hiawatha. She was dedicated to documenting dbaajmownan and promoting arts in the community through crafting and sewing circles. Like many of my relatives she had a deep love for her plant kin, especially flowers, and spent a lot of time learning plant medicines and sharing this knowledge with our family.

Figure 12. Minnie and Her Sister. A photograph of my great-grandmother Mary Jane Muskratte Simpson and her little sister (circa 1905-1910). (Undated photograph of paternal grandmother's mother with sibling, courtesy of Alfred Simpson).

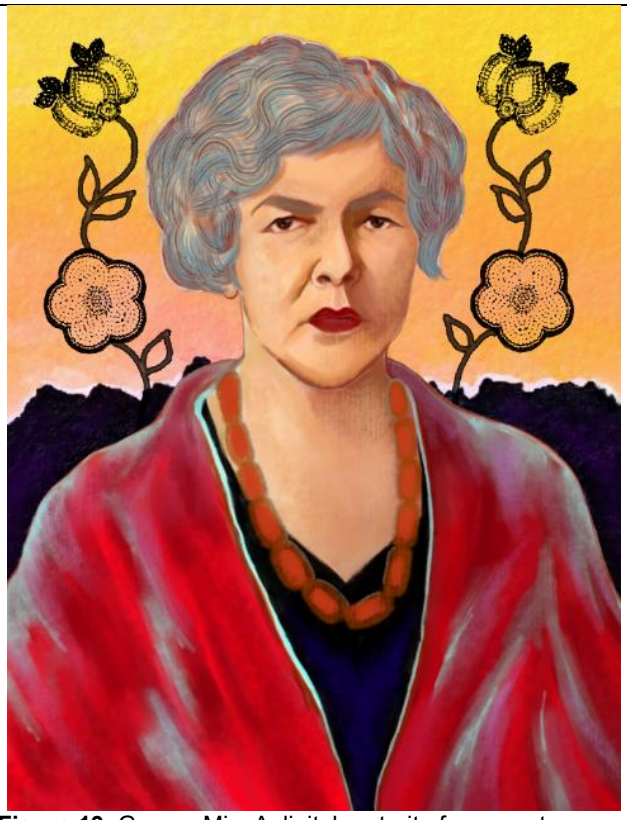

Figure 13. Granny Min. A digital portrait of my great-grandmother Mary Jane Muskratte Simpson inspired by paintings of her in regalia by artists Helen Cavalier Quinn and Montgomery in the late 1950s. (Estrella Whetung, digital portrait inspired by a family photograph and painting as well as Helen Cavalier Quinn's work, *Granny Min*, 2025).

In the image of my great-grandmother Min (figure 13), I was inspired to create a digital painting inspired by two portraits painted by an American-Canadian artist named Helen Cavalier Quinn as well as an artist named Montgomery.[193] I used a photograph of Great-grandma Min in a family portrait as a guide for her features and a photograph I took of a sunset on Pemdashkodeyaang as a base for the background.[194] The painting

[193] Please look at Helen Cavalier Quinn's portrait of my great-grandmother at the following reference, Art Gallery of Northumberland, "Auntie Min (Mary Jane Muskratte Simpson)," Instagram photo, June 21, 2023. https://www.instagram.com/p/CtxD3p0tPsx/?igsh=NGI1N3BiMWNxeWE4/.

[194] Please refer to figure 15 for the family portrait photograph. Pemdashkodeyaang is Rice Lake in Nishnaabemwin.

by Cavalier Quinn was featured in an exhibition at the Art Gallery of Northumberland in the summer of 2023 and the work by Montgomery formerly belonged to my Aunt Linda before she passed away, and now resides with my Uncle Meredith. In the digital portrait above, she is wearing a shawl that shows her love for bold bright colours that are spiritually significant and is wearing a large, beaded necklace.[195] I have integrated transparent digital images of my beadwork with traditional Nishnaabe blossom and strawberry floral motifs in the background.

The photograph in figure 14 is of my great-grandmother Bella Howard Whetung with my Grandpa Ted and one of his siblings who passed on early. My great-grandmother Bella was a traditional midwife from Pemdashkodeyaang, but lived in her husband Arthur Whetung's community, Oshkiigmong while working in many areas harvesting, fishing, trapping, guiding, and delivering babies.[196] As my father's cousin Evelyn Loft Watts writes, "Bella was a strong woman. She had survived the residential school experience and vowed none of her children would go to residential school."[197] However, to my knowledge, this was not something that could be completely avoided. From my understanding, my Grandpa Ted started going to the same school his mother went to a few years after this because there was no consistent teacher for the day school in the community and there was a history of discord between my family and the Indian Agent(s). My grandfather was forced to learn animal husbandry, mostly learning

[195] My Uncle Meredith has another portrait by an artist named Montgomery of Great-grandma Min wearing her regalia as well (see figure 22 in Chapter 4).
[196] Arthur Whetung Senior. My Grandpa Ted's brother was also named Arthur.
[197] Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge, *Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Baha'i Pioneers*, (Essex, Maryland: One Voice Press, LLC., 2011), 7.

about dairy cows, and had to do uncompensated manual labour both at the school and on Southern Ontario farms. He ran away so many times that eventually they stopped looking for him. In my family's experiences, there was no similar forced labour component at the day school in Oshkiigmong until well after my grandfather was an adult, so it is unlikely that this labour happened there. After he came home, he worked as a hunting and fishing guide with his family, trained horses, and eventually went into civil engineering and masonry after returning from service in WWII.

Figure 14. Traditional Mkiznan. A photograph of my grandfather Albert Edward Whetung with his mother Isabella Howard Whetung and his sibling (circa early 1920s). (Undated photograph of paternal grandfather with his mother and sibling, courtesy of Everett and Leila Whetung).

My grandfather and his siblings had a difficult time in the schools they attended because they reverted to speaking Nishnaabemwin and this was similarly reflected in

the experiences of their cousin Gimaa Elsie Knott.[198] They continued to use the language regardless of the abuses and were fiercely protective of each other when they were punished for their perceived obstinance. Despite scholar Jackson Pind's finding in historical records that there was an indication of tolerance around speaking the language at the Curve Lake Indian Day School that was not the experience of my grandfather, his siblings, and other family members in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s.[199] Sometimes what you find in the pages of the archives is markedly different from Indigenous living memories in families. My responsibility is to seek the nuances.

This photograph in figure 14 is from a happier time in my grandpa's childhood before his time in school. His mother Bella made all his clothing as she was an expert in fibre arts such as weaving, sewing, and beading, and was a traditional hide and fur tanner. He loved the way that she made his wrap-around smoked hide mkiznan that had ties that lace up the legs.[200] Grandpa Ted's parents would smoke and tan the hides of the wesiinhyag that they caught and hunted as well as spent time weaving and making baskets, bags, and mats.[201] He had a deep level of appreciation especially for the women in our communities who engaged in artistic practices for this reason. He knew it was hard work to gather and process materials and then create the intricate and finely detailed work. This is something that he would remark upon to my father as he was growing up. When my father was growing up, my Grandpa Ted said that artists in the

[198] Pind, *Students by Day,* 150-151.
[199] Pind, *Students by Day*, 83-84, 91.
[200] Moccasins in Nishnaabemwin.
[201] Animals in Nishnaabemwin.

community, our family included, were never getting compensated enough as their work was relegated to being thought of as ornamental 'crafts' for tourists.[202]

My Grandma Rena, second from left in figure 15, went to Alnwick Industrial Day School in her home community. She was denied further education outside of the day school by the Indian Agent, so her mother pulled her out of school to homeschool her with the reason of her needing to help out with their family dairy farm and with ricing.[203] My Grandma worked as a servant in Toronto and then went to nursing school. I think she was drawn to working in community wellness and healthcare because of her own life experiences. My Grandma had many chronic illnesses as a child because she was born pre-term. So, she did not learn how to do a lot of traditional activities like weaving sweetgrass and split ash baskets until she was older but was quite happy to spend time playing the organ and piano. When I was visiting her cousin Nona-ba in the autumn of 2009 she laughed and joked about how funny my Grandma was and how often she would lay her arms on the piano keys in dramatic ways just to create some laughter for her cousins.[204] She had illnesses, but she was devoted to the arts that she loved and challenged herself to engage in artistic practices even when her health had other ideas. Her way of being really inspired me to continue expanding my artistic practices despite the limitations that have come from my own chronic health issues and disabilities.

[202] A lot of my personal knowledge comes from family stories over the years rather than from interviews.
[203] This was a more widespread practice than is often talked about. Many families in our communities would try as hard as they could to reason with the Indian Agents to have their children at home with the surface reason of requiring help with gathering, harvesting, fishing, and hunting. The deeper reason had to do with the problems that existed in the schools as well as witnessing detrimental changes that were causing language and culture loss.
[204] Nona, Jean, and Lorne Simpson were her cousins, but also amongst some of her most cherished best friends.

Figure 15. A family portrait of my Muskratt Cowie Mitchell Simpson family. My grandmother Rena June Simpson Whetung and her parents Mary Jane Simpson and Alfred Simpson as well as her older brother Everett Simpson (circa 1930s). (Undated photograph of paternal grandmother and family, courtesy of Everett and Leila Whetung).

In the photograph in figure 16 are my grandparents, but I called them Nanay and Tatay. This is how we say “mother” and “father” in my mother’s hometown of Lucban, Quezon.[205] My grandparents were kampesino farmers who grew a lot of different kinds of crops but primarily focused on cultivating coconuts and rice with their children, carabao, and asong Lukban at our farmlands in Kalangay, Mahabang Parang, Palalangnan, and Maapon.[206] Most days, after a long day of farming Tatay would take the fish-storage bags he wove and go fishing at the river with his friends. My grandparents were prolific traditional weavers using palm, pandan, banana, pineapple,

[205] As a note, these are loanwords from Nahua people who came from Guerrero, Mexico to Lucban during the Spanish colonial years. Our traditional Tagalog way of saying grandmother is inana and for grandfather it is amama. It is a way of recognizing those who come before you and this is encoded in our dialect.

[206] My Tatay’s most honoured carabao (water buffalo) was named Cimarron and he was critical to our family farm’s daily work and overall ability to thrive. Carabao are only semi-domesticated and require a personal relationship and agreement to work with people. If they do not respect and bond with you, they will not help you. Tatay used to go swimming together with Cimarron in the river frequently. Asong Lukban are Native farm dogs in Lucban, but other Tagalog may have other ways of saying Native dog like “aspin.” My Nanay also had dalawang unggoy (two long-tailed macaque monkeys) who were her farm companions and guards.

bamboo, and reed fibres. They particularly loved to make bakero and sambalilo as well as balulang bags made from pandan leaves.[207] The bag and hat in the photograph were made by both of them with the hat being woven from finer buri fibres whereas the bag is using a broader palm-like leaf fibre called pandan.

Figure 16. My Lucbanin family. A photograph of my grandparents Rosing and Antero in Lucban (circa 1950s). (Undated photograph of maternal grandparents, courtesy of Everett and Leila Whetung).

It is tradition for Lucbanin to wear ancestral anting-anting made of copper, silver, and gold for many of the same reasons that my Nishnaabe family wear sacred metals

[207] Bakero is a cowboy hat. This is an adapted term from “vaquero” from Spanish. Sambalilo is a sombrero hat. In other dialects of Tagalog balulang bags are called bayong. Note: The Daya family in Lucban still expertly makes these bags. It used to take Nanay around 2-5 days to weave a buntal hat.

and other regalia.[208] However, there is the additional purpose of anting-anting being a form of pamana, or spiritual inheritance, from the previous persons who wore them.[209] In the photograph, Tatay is also wearing a traditional short sword called a bolo that had an ornately hand-carved carabao horn handle and scabbard made of metal and tanned carabao hide.[210] This bolo was an important anting-anting to my grandfather: he carried it everywhere. Cultural creations like ornate bolo could be anting-anting passed down in families to show the socio-cultural rank that exists in the lineage of a family.

Figure 17. Lucbanin Buntal Weaving. Buntal weavers in Lucban making traditional hats (circa 1926). (O.M. Butler, photograph, *Native Women Making Hats, Quezon (Tayabas), 1926*, 1926).

[208] It is hard to think of an equivalent word for anting-anting because talisman does not quite fit.

[209] There are many scholars who talk about the concept of mana amongst Austronesian, Melanesian, Micronesian and Polynesian peoples. I was taught by my family that pamana is spiritual inheritance, but also the inheritance of ancestral power and prestige through lineage. In contemporary times, many people may use this solely to refer to the inheritance of land or money.

[210] This was practical as something to be used for protection and to clear brush, chop wood, etc. They are not exclusively worn by men as my mother and her sisters also had/have them.

The archival photograph from 1926 in figure 17 shows traditional weavers from Lucban who are using fibres of the buri palm to make buntal hats.[211] At one point in time, Lucban and Tayabas were the centres of making buntal and abaca silk hat bases for hat makers around the world. These fibres are made from buri palm and abaca banana trees.[212] Into the 1900s, there was still a regular trade network that existed between people in Lucban and Indigenous nations living on the east coast and Sierra Madre mountain regions in which they would trade for our buntal weavings and we would trade for their snails and other delicacies that are special to their region.[213]

[211] This photograph was taken when our province was known Tayabas but has since been renamed Quezon. Full reference for figure 17, O.M. Butler, *Native Women Making Hats, Quezon (Tayabas), 1926*, 1926, photograph, Courtesy of United States National Archives (photo no. 151-FC-84Q-9), https://search.library.wisc.edu/digital/AUDLO36TWACKB48Y.

[212] "Native Women Making Hats, Quezon (Tayabas), 1926," University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, January 4, 2025, https://search.library.wisc.edu/digital/AUDLO36TWACKB48Y#dci-item-details/. Note: some people confuse this with Quezon City which is a different region roughly 100km north of our province.

[213] This includes the Dumagat and Agta living in the Sierra Madre range as well as the Agta/Ayta/Aeta around Lopez Bay, but is not limited to these nations. If you know, then you know. These snails are delicious.

Chapter 3: Ancestral Knowledge
3.1 Manidoominensag: Spirit Relational Practices through Ancestral Knowledge[214]

"I was stitched together in a kaleidoscope of shape and color/ Pieces of the nation, before our time, my body is not just mine/ You ripped out stitches, changed the pattern/ As though I was yours to design."[215]

Figure 18. Seeing Your Spirit Through Giving. My Grandpa Ted's cousin Norman Knott contributed a painting named *Alone* for a Oshkiigmong children's book called, *Giving: Ojibwa Stories and Legends from the Children of Curve Lake* (1987). This image is my digitally painted interpretation of his work incorporating pieces of the *Ngwaagan Regalia* (2025). (Estrella Whetung, digital painting inspired by Norman Knott, *Seeing Your Spirit Through Giving*, 2025).

[214] Beads in Anishinaabemowin; however, in my interpretation of the morphemes of the word beads can be described as little spirit seeds or berries in the language. I am using this concept to also think about the seeds and berries of ancestral knowledge that guide us through spiritual inquiries. See Chapter 5's section on research models.

[215] Alana Sayers, poem featured in "Cultural Appropriation of First Nations Art," Art Gallery of Greater Victoria Magazine, March 1, 2018, https://emagazine.aggv.ca/cultural-appropriation-first-nations-art/.

Chapter 3 is a discussion of how relational knowledge practices, whether they be amongst humans or more than human beings, are central to shaping a sense of wholeness in our communities. This was an important chapter for me to exemplify the many ways in which we engage in relational practices that connect us with each other in the universe using tangible examples. Discussing this in a grounded manner provides some possibilities for how we can embody cultural resurgence every day. Some of these practices are ones that I was taught by my parents, and other traditions are ones that I learned as I got older. In opening this discussion on relational practices, I want to share a few important spiritual greetings that I grew up with because I feel like these are daily possibilities of engaging with our relatives in deeper ways and strengthening the ties between generations. Truthfully, I am middle aged, and I do not see younger generations enacting these greetings as often, particularly in urban contexts anymore. However, in sharing these relational memory approaches I hope that youth will consider making these teachings a part of their daily lives and spiritual relationships. Pagmamano, or mano po, is an important spiritual greeting between generations that I was taught by my mother and Lucbanin grandparents. A younger person will take the hand of an elder, or relatives who are older than them, press the back of the hand to their forehead, and politely ask to be blessed with loving-kindness. This is a spiritual teaching and blessing meant to confer both respect for one's ancestors and an exchange of spiritual force between generations. When I was a child, my father taught me a traditional Nishnaabe spiritual greeting that he learned primarily from his father and grandparents at Oshkiigmong. When you are saying "Aanii" as a greeting, which is a shortened reference to "Aaniish naa (ezhi-bmaadiziyan)?" to someone each person

would extend one of their hands out palm up as a sign of respect as well as an acknowledgement of each other's spirits as you encounter one another.[216]

My Grandpa Ted's cousin Norman Knott contributed a painting named *Alone* for a Oshkiigmong children's book called, *Giving: Ojibwa Stories and Legends from the Children of Curve Lake* (1987).[217] It is one of the only images I have found depicting one of the traditional Nishnaabe spiritual greetings that I grew up with from Curve Lake. The person's outstretched hand is recognizing the spirits of the plant beings, animal beings, waters, lands, sky, and celestial beings. This image (figure 18) is my digitally painted interpretation of his work integrating beaded elements of the *Ngwaagan Regalia* (2025). As Georgia Elston notes in her description of his painting (see figure 18), "the hand shown on the cover is a symbol of honour, the promise in an agreement or treaty."[218] This spiritual teaching is meant to show one's reciprocal responsibilities as well as honour the threads of kinship that we have for one another. Additionally, in the context of treaty-making the hand outstretched signals an important "invitation to 'link arms together.'"[219] I share these teachings with honesty and integrity because they are the

[216] This is a shortened form of "Aaniish naa (ezhi-bmaadiziyan)?" or how are you? My father, grandparents, and great-grandparents translated "Aanii" as "how are you," as in the state of one's emotional, mental, and spiritual self or they would say "Gyak?" as a greeting referencing living in an upright or a good way. Note: I am not aware of "Aanii" meaning "I see your light," and have only seen this interpretation circulating in recent times.

[217] Figure 18 reference for inspiration, Norman Knott, *Alone*, painting adapted for book cover, In *Giving: Ojibwa Stories and Legends from the Children of Curve Lake*, edited by Georgia Elston (Waapone Publishing & Promotion), 1987.

[218] Georgia Elston, Introduction to *Giving: Ojibwa Stories and Legends from the Children of Curve Lake*, ed. Georgia Elston (Waapone Publishing & Promotion, 1987), 5. Elston also notes that Norman Knott "always wished he had called [the painting] 'Giving,'" *Giving: Ojibwa Stories and Legends from the Children of Curve Lake*, 56.

[219] John Kegedonce Borrows, Anishinaabe/Ojibway, Chippewas of Nawash First Nation, personal communication, December 6, 2025.

ways I grew up with, and I hope future generations can embody relational knowledge in similar ways that remind them of their responsibilities to the next seven generations.

Colonialism is a force that can distort how you connect, feel, and think. It is an obstacle to Indigenous memory-making processes. I have grown up with parents and grandparents who taught me how to spiritually greet one another and how to share in the breath of life with utmost love and gratitude. However, colonialism started to unstitch the centrality of these cultural practices and deceive me into thinking that some of these traditions were just superstitions of previous generations. Colonial indoctrination through the mainstream education system started early for me—what was natural to me became questioned as superstitious and strange. Colonialism began to teach me that there could only be one kind of truth—the kind that is confirmed by and authenticated by those who are understood by mainstream society as "legitimate" sources. Sometimes as a teenager I would skeptically ask my parents, "Is that even true?" when they would share their knowledge only to have their stories and lived experiences confirmed in the dusty pages of a history or ethnography book. I spent a lot of time having to unlearn the imposed systemic ideas that are common in mainstream education and re-centre the teachings of my ancestors:

> The greatest road-block [Indigenous] people meet on the way to a cultural balance is the present educational mill in which bewildered [Indigenous] children find themselves. It is here that the child's [Indigenous] values are questioned before he has had a chance to completely internalize and understand them. Many of the unspoken values he has lived by before coming to school are, by implication, ridiculed and even rejected.[220]

[220] Mary Lou Fox Radulovich, "Native People's Cultural Resurgence," *Canadian Children's Literature/Littérature canadienne pour la jeunesse,* (1976): 67.

Anishinaabe scholar John Kegedonce Borrows posited an important question around the possibilities of resurgence in earth-based relationships by saying, “Who are we citing?”[221] Scholars Gina Starblanket (Cree-Saulteaux from Star Blanket Cree Nation) and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe) put forth an interpretation of this vital question by noting that it “highlight[s] the importance of looking to the living earth, the seasons, animals, places, and elements to draw out important lessons.”[222] Someday, I hope to be able to cite the expressions of my more than human relatives as a typical practice rather than an obscure anomaly. As Indigenous peoples, our task becomes the act of cutting out the loose thin threads that colonialism has superimposed on our ancestral memory threads and working on the crucial task of mending these connections.

Some of the challenges I have encountered throughout my research have been emerging and ongoing issues within academia whether that be questions of authenticity of voice, lapses in ethical conduct, or how bias shapes context interpretation, and navigating how this effects citational practices. It is a considerable task to remove pieces that have problematic elements and it is important to recognize the labour involved in that work when creating an encodement. When threads of information are removed it is a similar process to reworking misaligned stitches and cleaning up thread work in sewing as it requires careful intention, precise focus on details, and insights on

[221] Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, “Towards a Relational Paradigm— Four Points for Consideration: Knowledge, Gender, Land, and Modernity,” in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, eds. Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 188.
[222] Starblanket and Stark, “Towards a Relational Paradigm— Four Points for Consideration: Knowledge, Gender, Land, and Modernity,” 188.

how it will impact the outcome of the work. When I speak about authenticity and conduct, I am not employing a misguided purist notion of culture, nor making a moral measurement of lived experiences.[223] However, I am highlighting incongruent work in the context of perspectives that do not resonate with my cultural ethics around honesty and respect and do not align with my spiritual teachings. In my view, Anishinaabe knowledge is primarily being shaped and created by Anishinaabeg; however, there are also issues around the exploitation and erosion of Anishinaabe knowledge production by outsiders.[224] This problem is further compounded when this work is circulated and cited beyond the realm of community members who hold grounded wisdom about knowledge production. Other outsiders may also engage in narratives of histories based on revisionist forms of knowledge production. While this is not always done with the intention of erasure the lasting impacts can be felt by communities for generations. This issue points to a more complex collective problem in terms of how knowledge formation can affect Indigenous self-determination and nationhood in broader contexts.

Early on, I started to consider how to be mindful in my engagement with the work I have chosen to amplify versus the work I have decided not to highlight. I put sensible thought deliberating on how to disentangle incongruent information from my work, the potential effects it would have, and the questions that may arise from this choice. I discussed how to adjust my work with my supervisors and committee and found that

[223] Essentializing and idealizing culture is something that I actively try to be cautious of because my grandparents had grounded and nuanced perspectives of our histories. The storytelling of my grandparents exemplified that our ancestors were complex people making difficult and sometimes imperfect choices.
[224] I recognize that the erosion of our knowledge production due to colonialism is not new, but this is an added dimension to how that is happening in contemporary times.

there are many different Indigenous writers out there who strengthen the ideas I wanted to share in ways that enriched my work. Decisions like this are never made lightly by Indigenous scholars as sometimes problematic voices shaping Indigenous knowledges may be the only published sources documenting the stories of elders and other community members who carry our histories. My method and approach to this takes into consideration the teachings of my grandparents around the transference of spiritual essence into what we create and how we carefully weave in the creations of others. In my specific context, my work is an encodement of knowledge that has a spirit and an important aspect of the process has been to precisely ensure the connected threads that are a part of it are in harmonious alignment. The purpose and nature of my work may contrast from other scholars, so they may employ different strategies to creatively approach problematic materials. Engaging in relational knowledge practices in contemporary times means that we may need to make difficult decisions to honour the spirits in our work, prioritize the voices of our community members through generating more accessible and collaborative knowledge, embody cultural ethics, and transform archival sources.

3.2 Mnidoo-mkwendamwinan: Re-encoding Our Memories[225]

Sometimes there can be competing narratives of how we are written about and depicted as Indigenous peoples versus how we represent ourselves within our own storytelling and narratives. I am blessed to have so many family and community members who have published detailed work about our community histories as well as

[225] Mnidoo-mkwendamwinan are spirit memories in Nishnaabemwin.

our ways of knowing and being. However, I have also encountered settler literature about my family that I have found unusual, puzzling, or even offensive. My great-grandfathers and other relatives prominently appeared in Bev Lundahl's Canadian true crime novel *Entangled Roots: The Mystery of Peterborough's Headless Corpse* and the lives of my direct ancestors were documented in the settler memoirs of Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852) and *Life in the Backwoods* (1853).[226] I have also come across decontextualized interpretations of my family history through "The Métis of Burleigh Falls: Final Report" (2000), a historical research project that was put together for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. In the report, a personal dispute between my great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather and other community members was erroneously interpreted as evidence of widespread Nishnaabe discrimination against 'Métis' and the 'Métis community' of Burleigh Falls.[227] There is a danger in researchers treating Indigenous peoples in historical records as if they are flat characters without nuanced reasons for their motivations and I believe we need to be thoughtful and critically aware in how we examine published works about our communities.

[226] A photograph of my ancestors can be viewed through Bev Lundahl's work through this reference, "Hiawatha First Nation Council, 1894," 1894, in *Entangled Roots: The Mystery of Peterborough's Headless Corpse* (Your Nickel's Worth Publishing, 2014), 99.

[227] Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (prepared by Public History Inc.), "The Métis of Burleigh Falls: Final Report." Métis Nation of Ontario, 2000 (publication), 2011 (digital copy), https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/ontario20report20-20burleigh20falls.pdf. My interpretation of the report is that it conflates historical settler concepts of mixed Indigenous identity and settler documentation of Nishnaabeg with having a 'métis' history in the area. This is inaccurate. The community at Burleigh Falls is primarily comprised of non-status Nishnaabeg and Nishnaabeg who may have European and/or other First Nations roots in their ancestries. I have many relatives there who lost their status after World War I, the Williams Treaties (1923), and World War II. To my understanding, they do not identify as Métis. In fact, my grandfather's beloved uncle was one of the leaders of Burleigh Falls and his sister-in-law was from the community, so it would be peculiar if his father and grandfather were discriminatory towards people who lived there based on ethnicity.

There are many frustrating aspects of citational practices within mainstream scholarship.[228] How do we recognize the integrity and importance of each being involved in the research process? When thinking about how citational practices need to change, how do we elevate our knowledge production recognition in a way that upholds our unpublished Indigenous community members? How do we respect and incorporate our other relatives who are not usually understood as living and autonomous beings through a Western lens? I often consider how mainstream academia still prioritizes the written word over Indigenous oral traditions and collaborative knowledge production that happens through conversations. If we are thoughtfully considering how we take part in respecting the grounded sources of Indigenous knowledges, then we also have to highlight the limitations of how knowledge is documented, recognized, and disseminated in institutions and how this constructs colonial divisions that are unnatural in Indigenous teachings. When I have come together with my relatives to bead, I see it as resurgence and a way of defying the expectations of colonialism: "the act of beading can serve to disrupt the dislocation of Indigenous women's ways of knowing, providing an avenue for Indigenous women to pursue research that is congruent with their worldviews."[229]

In my experience, Indigenous knowledge production is largely something that is born from knowledge collaboration, co-creation, and collective learning. For Nishnaabeg

[228] Miigwech to my friend and scholar Boma Brown (Ijaw and Igbo from Nigeria) for our many discussions on citational practices in research and, more broadly, writing.
[229] Lana Ray, "'Beading Becomes a Part of Your Life': Transforming the Academy Through the Use of Beading as a Method of Inquiry," *International Review of Qualitative Research* 9, no.3 (2016): 363, https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2016.9.3.363/.

and Lucbanin, I think that cultural knowledge production provides an avenue for us to define our contemporary realities on our terms without asking for permission from outsiders. By coming together to engage in cultural arts such as beading we are illuminating our histories that have been concealed by colonialism: as Algonquin/Métis/Irish scholar Sherry Farrell Racette (a member of Timiskaming First Nation) writes, “the simple act of retaining and protecting knowledge was political--the materials themselves often believed to be living and potent.”[230] There are some beautiful possibilities that emerge through knowledge that is shaped through the conversations, interactions, and experiences that we have with one another, but this is often not recognized as having the same weight as other forms of knowledge production by mainstream scholarship. When I engage in research, I am always thinking about how to connect with people who are grounded in the work and are using creative strategies to immerse themselves in knowledge production. As a result, I am focused on amplifying the voices of people who are committed to continuing relational knowledge practices in our communities as well as highlighting people who are making space for community members to pursue knowledge.

What this looks like in practice for me is the act of visiting my relatives, something my grandparents and great-grandparents referred to as cherished tea-visiting, as well as working on collaborative research through these visits. What I have learned in my education journey is that there is nothing wrong with creating and

[230] Sherry Farrell Racette, “Tuft Life: Stitching Sovereignty in Contemporary Indigenous Art,” *Art Journal* 76, no.2 (2017): 115, DOI:10.1080/00043249.2017.1367198.

collaborating on knowledge through family and community relationships.[231] When I am working on co-created beading projects I know I am enacting the wisdom that "beadworking is an act of knowledge transmission."[232] Community-held knowledge is strengthened by the threads of kinship that we have with one another, so I have made a conscious effort to prioritize this form of knowledge production over information from people I do not have a relationship with.[233] Indigenous relational research is not about the passive and unidirectional reception of information, but rather it requires us as researchers to reframe and reconsider the relationships that we have with our kin. It requires us to recognize that spirit that exists within knowledge production. I see the profound ways this manifests through the interconnections that form in my beading relationships.[234] As Ray writes, "beading is a way to strengthen relationships and community knowledge."[235] The ideas that blossom are gifts and I feel a great responsibility to make sure that I am not reshaping that knowledge in ways that are inauthentic and damaging to the integrities of those who have shared. If the question is "How do we make sure that we are not being extractive?" then a foundational part of the answer means that we have to be careful, considerate, and compassionate in terms of how we relate with one another in all ways, not just in research applications.[236]

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[231] My relationship with my cousin Zofia Rogowski has been a huge part of my artistic practice and broadening how I engage in mentorship and learning collaboratively.

[232] Tiffany Dionne Prete, "Beadworking as an Indigenous Research Paradigm," *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal* 4, no.1 (2019): 39, https://doi.org/10.18432/ari29419.

[233] I am referring to all my relations be they human or more-than-human beings. Please look at the works of scholar Sherry Farrell Racette in her discussions of visiting relatives in the museum. Maureen Matthews' work, *Naamiwan's Drum: The Story of a Contested Repatriation of Anishinaabe Artefacts* (2016) and Claire Poirier's article, "Drawing Lines in the Museum: Plains Cree Ontology as Political Practice" (2011) are excellent reads that cover the topic of Indigenous relationships with more-than-human beings (who are thought of as "objects" in archival and museum spaces) in a far greater capacity.

[234] Prete, "Beadworking as an Indigenous Research Paradigm," 44.

[235] Ray, "'Beading Becomes a Part of Your Life,'" 364.

[236] Do no harm, tread carefully, and consider all risks involved.

Nishnaabe scholar Mary Lou Fox Radulovich (Manitoulin Island) emphasizes cultural resurgence as a pathway to strengthen the children in our communities. There are many important aspects about what she shares, but I want to highlight a few key things. This article was published almost 50 years ago using the language and terminology of *resurgence*: it is important to recognize that approaches and ideas around resurgence are not new to Nishnaabeg. My ancestors were dedicated to our way of life and were openly critical about the brutality and corrosive aspects of colonialism. They found strategies to continue cultural knowledge transmission in our family and communities and felt that intergenerational sharing was an important part of Nishnaabe resurgence. I was always taught that when we come together, we can experience language and culture in the collective ways of our ancestors. It is important to engage this way of thinking early on in life in our communities, as Radulovich discusses in her approaches to Indigenous children's education:

> They are encouraged to develop aesthetic attitudes about their own culture by seeing and knowing how wigwams were made and decorated; by seeing, handling and playing with real deer hide; by seeing dancing costumes, bead and quill work, and dolls representing different tribes. Using these as a basis for their own experiments in design and will encourage creative development for each child in a very personal way.[237]

She speaks about the integral aspect of developing the gifts of children in our communities in an experiential and sensory way. While these approaches to teaching and learning have been relegated as marginal and less important in mainstream education, they are the cornerstone of Anishinaabe knowledge transmission.

[237] Radulovich, "Native People's Cultural Resurgence," 70.

The act of re-encoding our memories is not just speaking and theorizing about knowledge transmission, land pedagogies, and relationality. I feel that re-encoding our memories requires us to be engaged in the act of doing and providing tangible examples of resurgence. For me, this looks like working on collaborative knowledge projects, sharing knowledge of place with one another, coming together to experience the waterways and lands of our family stories, and engaging in relational responsibilities. The reciprocal relationships we make with one another create new shared experiences and, in turn, provides a space for the blossoming of new stories and memories. As Anishinaabe scholar Lana Ray (Opwaaganasiniing) writes, beadwork is a crucial part of "Anishinaabe collective consciousness."[238] From my observations as someone who engages in teaching cultural workshops, I would also say beadwork is a part of the spiritual awakening for youth and other people coming back to community. It becomes an open invitation to spend time with one another through visiting and a way of invoking the spirit memories of our ancestors.[239]

3.3 Naagan Ge Bezhig Emkwaan: Making and Renewing Our Relationships[240]

For Anishinaabeg, Gchitwaa-Naaknigewinan is integral to "how humans interact with non-human creatures in the formation of governance" and one approach that we have to upholding this relationship of respect is through the making living

[238] Ray, "'Beading Becomes a Part of Your Life,'" 364.
[239] I first came across this terminology from the Anishinaabe scholar Maya Chacaby.
[240] Dean M. Jacobs and Victor P. Lytwyn, "Naagan Ge Bezhig Emkwaan: A Dish with One Spoon Reconsidered." *Ontario History* 112, no.2 (2020): 192, https://doi.org/10.7202/1072237ar/. This translation of Dish with One Spoon into Anishinaabemowin was provided to the authors by Anishinaabe elder Reta Sands.

agreements.[241] As many Anishinaabe scholars have discussed and written about over the years, in Creation exists unity of all aspects of life, but the significance of our spiritual lives as spirit beings is crucial to our lived experiences as Nishnaabeg. Within our teachings, Gchitwaa-Naaknigewinan shapes the relationships that spring from it and these ties entrench mutual accountability in all ways.[242] The Gchitwaa-Naaknigewinan informs how we relate to one another in our daily lives; therefore, any disruption of these interconnected relationships is seen as the fragmentation of our ways of being.[243] Within the Sacred Laws, there are numerous agreements that human beings must uphold with beings in "the animal world, plant world, sky world, mineral world" and other more-than-human worlds.[244] As Mohawk and Anishinaabe scholar Vanessa Watts (Six Nations of the Grand River) argues, the complex governance systems that Anishinaabeg have are "directly related to not only the [plants' and] animals' ability to communicate with us, but their *willingness* to communicate with us."[245] I have been taught by my family that the dish that is shared with one spoon in the Naagan Ge Bezhig Emkwaan agreements are symbolic of the interconnectivity and harmony of the parties involved as well as their everlasting commitment to good relations with one

[241] Vanessa Watts, "Indigenous Place-thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European World Tour!)," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2, no. 1 (2013): 27. Gchitwaa-Naaknigewinan are sacred laws in Nishnaabemwin. Please read Chad Cowie's article, "Michi Sagiig Nishnaabeg: Nationhood, Diplomacy, and Identity" (2023), for an insightful look into treaty-making, gifting, and governance in our communities.

[242] The sacred laws (Gchitwaa-Naaknigewinan) in Nishnaabemwin through my own translation. I welcome fluent speakers to disagree if it does not make sense to them.

[243] Vanessa A. Watts, "Towards Anishnaabe Governance and Accountability Reawakening our Relationships and Sacred Bimaadiziwin" (master's thesis, University of Victoria, 2006), 97, https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/items/8c6c34dc-f989-4f1b-87d7-b97b8b23a1e0/. See discussion (particularly on pages 84-98) of this disruption and the ways in which Anishinaabe governance can be redefined in the aforementioned thesis.

[244] Watts, "Indigenous Place-thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans," 25.

[245] Watts, "Indigenous Place-thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans," 30.

another. As Anishinaabe scholar Lori Beavis (Michi Sagiig and Irish-Welsh descent, Hiawatha First Nation) writes, “decolonization [can be defined] as a receptivity to make change and think about the world with openness.”[246] In what ways might we engage in transformative approaches that prioritize that openness with one another? When we consider the potential ways to repair the harm done through the colonial unraveling of our relational practices, coming back to our traditional approaches to renewing relationships provides a potential pathway to decolonization.

These relational agreements were honoured, remembered, and encoded through spirit-centred creations such as beaded wampum belts and regalia. Each group was to be responsible for taking care of the dish in a way that did not abuse the land or their relationship to one another. To stop hostilities with one another and go forward in a good way, Nishnaabeg in the eastern Great Lakes made a Naagan Ge Bezhig Emkwaan agreement with Haudenosaunee in 1701 and my ancestors were in attendance to witness.[247] The formalization of this agreement is important in emphasizing relationality, respect, and the enduring nature of our commitments:

> The resulting Treaty included promises to protect people who travelled through other nations’ territories. Odawa Chief Hassaki said: ‘remember when we will meet them [Haudenosaunee] in the hunting grounds, that we regard them as our brothers and as our own children. We have a life-long obligation to them to be henceforth of the same kettle.’ Other Chiefs invoked similar references to a common kettle, bowl or dish. The Treaty was memorialized in a wampum belt that depicted a single dish in the middle of the belt.[248]

[246] Lori Beavis, “To Know Dibaajimowin: A Narrative of Knowing: Art, Art Education and Cultural Identity in the Life Experiences of Four Contemporary Indigenous Women Artists,” (doctoral thesis, Concordia University, 2016), 214.
[247] Alan Corbiere, “Gidonaaganinaa ‘Our Dish’: An Intertribal Treaty Encoded in Wampum,” *Anishinabek News: The Voice of the Anishinabek Nation* 19 edition, issue 9 (November 2007): 22. Mississauga leader Peter Jones is quoted here relaying the responsibilities of the agreement.
[248] Jacobs and Lytwyn, “Naagan Ge Bezhig Emkwaan,” 194.

The intention of the agreement was to recognize that hunting and fishing opportunities were generally held in common with the dish representing the land and the sustenance being represented by the food in the dish.[249]

Figure 19. Relatives and Regalia in Bloom. This image is a collage of some of my most recent memories with my relatives with our regalia in full bloom. Our cousin Makenna Whetung invited Carmen Wiigwaas Craig and me to a Métis fashion show (December 2024) with her partner Quinn Cunningham as well as visited with us at the Honouring Wətanmy Powwow (July 2025). I have included a photograph of my ozhaashijiibikag (fireweeds) plant relatives that I have been tending to since they were only two seedlings. They are now a family of many cousins together. Carmen, Makenna, Quinn, and my ozhaashijiibikag have gifted me with so much inspiration and guidance in my creative pursuits. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage, *Relatives and Regalia in Bloom*, *lower left* photograph by author and *top left* and *right* photographs courtesy of Quinn Cunningham and Makenna Whetung, 2025).

As Anishinaabe scholar Alan Ojiig Corbiere (M'Chigeeng First Nation) emphasizes, while wampum belts are largely portrayed as something used primarily by

[249] Corbiere, "Gidonaaganinaa 'Our Dish,'" 22.

Haudenosaunee “the historical record shows that the Anishinaabeg also used wampum.”[250] This resonates with the family knowledge that has been passed down to me and I would argue many other nations around the Great Lakes used wampum belts to encode their relationships as well. According to oral traditions in my family there is more than one Naagan Ge Bezhig Emkwaan agreement that has been made with our neighbours beyond the one in 1701, including ones with our longtime kin the Huron-Wendat Nation.[251] Beadwork through spirit-centred creations such as wampum belts and regalia (see figure 19) is a defining aspect and storied ancient tradition of Nishnaabe culture: it is a central part of our lives and history.

In terms of how Anishinaabe-gikendaasowin has been interpreted, what was historically taken from communities was usually plucked, haphazardly documented, divided, and then circulated into separate categories by outsiders essentially constructing a systemic silo.[252] This mistreatment is not unique to Anishinaabeg. Indigenous knowledge has been fragmented by colonial processes in our everyday lives. All elements that form our sense of being coexist in a way that is intertwined and interwoven, so it is important to think of “the mind, body, and spirit [existing] simultaneously not separately.”[253] If we think of learning as a shared process that involves all aspects of ourselves as well as how we relate to one another, then we can begin to re-orient notions around how knowledge is formed and connected. For

[250] Corbiere, “Gidonaaganinaa ‘Our Dish,’” 22.
[251] Meredith Whetung, Mississauga Nishnaabe, Alderville First Nation, interview, August 31, 2024.
[252] Anishinaabe-gikendaasowin is Anishinaabe knowledge in Anishinaabemowin.
[253] Nicole Bell, “Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin: Living Spiritually with Respect, Relationship, Reciprocity, and Responsibility,” in *Contemporary Studies in Environmental and Indigenous Pedagogies: A Curricula of Stories and Place*, eds. Andrejs Kulnieks, Dan Roronhiakewen Longboat and Kelly Young (Sense Publishers, 2013), 92.

Anishinaabeg, the realm of plants is not separate from music and communication: they are very much connected and informed by one another. In Anishinaabe botanical teachings, we are encouraged to have conversations with plants and to sing to them to maintain good relationships. These are all aspects of inaadiziwin and izhitwaawin.[254] Therefore, using an approach like mno-bmaadziwin can inform pedagogies around how knowledge is gathered and disseminated. A part of my research has been to question the categories that have been systematically forced upon us in all aspects of our lives and to examine ways in which we can renew the connections that exist in our knowledge processes. We must be brave enough to access the heart knowledge we have—which has been born out of the zaagidiwin our ancestors had for the seven generations that we are a part of.[255] The interconnections I see in mno-bmaadziwin teach me how to relate to my fellow beings in Creation in a respectful manner as well as help to re-orient my way of thinking.

To honour this relationship with Shkakimikwe, we must always be in a process of listening to and speaking with the land, water, and other beings in Creation. As elder Shirley Williams notes, "'You need water, you need the land, and you need the animals. You need to talk to them.'"[256] The land provides physical sustenance, spiritual nourishment, and knowledge to us; however, as scholar Vanessa Watts explains, "even amongst ourselves it can be easy to forget that our ability to speak to the land is not just

[254] Inaadiziwin is a way of life in Anishinaabemowin. Izhitwaawin is a way of belief in Anishinaabemowin.
[255] Zaagidiwin is love or treasure in Nishnaabemwin, but there are other ways of discussing the all-encompassing kinds of love that can be described in the language.
[256] Vanessa A. Watts, "Towards Anishnaabe Governance and Accountability: Reawakening our Relationships and Sacred Bimaadiziwin" (master's thesis, University of Victoria, 2006), 40.

an echo of a mythic tale or part of a moral code, but a reality."[257] The trees are still speaking to us and one another, but we are not using the listening skills of our ancestors to hear.[258] We have much to learn from the plants, animals, and other beings. The teachings encompassed within inawendiwin knowledge can be used transformatively to engage Indigenous pedagogies around land and place-based research.[259] A part of this process means re-storying our minds in terms of what we define as 'nature' because a pedagogy of the land reveals how colonialism has changed our relationships *with* the world. Through the act of gikendaasowin reclamation, we can reshape our minds and participate in resurgence acts that centre the land, water, and our place-based connections that define our ways of living mino-bimaadiziwin.[260] This is crucial to not only land-based pedagogies, but also resurgence in a broader sense.

When my relatives testified about our territories during the Williams Treaties, they were accessing the dbaajmownan of their ancestors to speak precisely about what their relationships were to the land and waters and which distinct areas each family were responsible for.[261] In the oral traditions of my family, the waters and lands that they traversed, loved, and had a distinct and communal relationship with include: Lake Huron, the Mississagi River and headwaters, Lake Nipissing, Manitoulin Island, Georgian Bay, headwaters of the South River, Parry Sound, Christian Island, Beausoleil Island, the Muskoka Lakes, Lake Ontario, the Etobicoke watershed, Sparrow Lake,

[257] Watts, "Indigenous Place-thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans," 32.
[258] Watts, "Indigenous Place-thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans," 32.
[259] Inawendiwin is kinship in Anishinaabemowin.
[260] Gikendaasowin is knowledge in Anishinaabemowin. Mino-bimaadiziwin is the good life in Anishinaabemowin.
[261] Dbaajmownan are recollections and narratives or stories in Nishnaabemwin.

northern areas of the Black River, Lake Simcoe, Chiefs Island, De Grassi Point in Cook's Bay, the Holland river (including beyond where it splits), Snake Island, Georgina Island, Thorah Island, Lake of Bays/Trading Lake, Lake Scugog, the Kawartha Lakes, Balsam Lake, Burnt River, Kennisis Lake, Redstone Lake, Scugog River, Sturgeon Lake, Emily Lake, Emily Creek, Katchewanooka Lake, Polly Cow Island, Curve Lake, Ston(e)y Lake, Gull Lake, Gull River, the Otonabee River, Eels Lake, Eels Creek, Baptiste Lake, Jack(‘s) Lake, the Madawaska River, the waterways of Algonquin Park, the Ganaraska River north of Port Hope, Rice Lake, the Trent River, Cow Island, Sugar Island, Belmont Lake, Crowe Lake, Beaver Creek, Prince Edward County, the Bay of Quinte, Grape Island, the Great Cataraqui River, Simcoe Island, Wolfe Island, and Gananoque.[262] I am sharing this knowledge of land and waterways that has been carefully passed down to me by my relatives because I want to emphasize that each of these living places are relatives to me, my family, and my communities. I also want to honour the important knowledge that our place relatives share with us through their memories and stories. These place relatives have been crucial in helping us survive, thrive, and continue to live as Nishnaabeg. There are many places that I do not have the same relationship with as my ancestors had, but it is my hope that people understand my commitment to sharing what was passed down to me.[263]

[262] I am referring to my more recent family members as well as our ancestors. It is not limited to these places, but these are the areas that I know of through family stories. Please see the testimonials of community memory about territories here in the "Bound Volume of Testimony Given to a Commission, Chaired by A.S. Williams, Investigating Claims, by the Chippewas & Mississaugas of Ontario, to Compensation for Land Not Surrendered by the Robinson Treaty of 1850," 1923, RG10, Volume number 2331, Microfilm real number: C-11202---C-11203, File number: 67, 071-4A, https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=2079183&ecopy=e005259495/.

[263] I am not making any claims about exclusive “access” and “use” through rights-based or “ownership” discourse.

Figure 20. Going Home. This image is a set of photographs from my visit home (June 2023). The first photograph is when my cousin Gimaa Taynar Simpson took us for a walk in the fields and forest behind his home in Alderville First Nation. The top right is my visit with my ancestor Hannah David McCue's (1860) beautiful quillwork makak (my Mnjikaning relative Cherylanne James is seated behind). The bottom right is my visit with my Great-grandpa Al's ricing photographs at the Peterborough Museum & Archives (I am holding beautiful artwork by Cherylanne). (Estrella Whetung, digital collage, *Going Home*, original photographs courtesy of Carmen Wiigwaas Craig, 2025).

Remembering that the knowledge we receive from the land and waters comes from Shkakimikwe herself provides an opportunity for us to shake free of imposed colonial thinking. If we take seriously the teaching that the land is a living being, then we are far more likely to listen and converse with the land and other beings more intently and with respect. When I am collecting medicines from the garden that I have grown, I prioritize asking for permission from each plant being before I gather. I offer semaa to show respect and acknowledgement for the spirit of each being.[264] I actively spend time

[264] Semaa is tobacco in Nishnaabemwin.

socializing with my plant and animal relatives everyday and I regularly engage in seed and seedling exchanges with community members. One of the most powerful things that my grandparents on both sides taught me is I always need to be in a state of giving what I have and my garden is meant to be shared with everyone whether that be with bneshiinyag, fellow doodem relatives, esbanak, or mischievous jidmoonyik.[265] We should consider what our more-than-human relatives think and feel *as beings*, not as *things* and *creatures* we can exploit. Academic approaches would benefit from this restructuring of power dynamics in terms of how people relate to more-than-human beings not just theoretically, but also in our daily practices. A part of this relationship to Shkakimikwe also means I have to remember who and where I come from both spiritually and through making physical journeys—it means making sure I am tea-visiting with my relatives and that I go home (see figure 20) in a good way.

[265] Bneshiinyag are birds, doodem is clan, esbanak are raccoons, and jidmoonyik are squirrels in Nishnaabemwin.

Chapter 4: Honouring My Grandmothers
4.1 Weaving with Ancestral Threads: Learning from My Relatives

> If everybody in my life has created me, then that is something that's really profound. When you look at all of the interactions that you have with every other person in the world be they good, be they bad, be they whatever: you're interacting with someone you have a contract with and you can make that contract into anything you want […When you] have that one connection it's all those things that make up you. I think people need to realize that a little bit more. I think it'll help everybody's spirit if they did that. I think it would inform their decision-making process and I think it would really inform their connections with how they interact with their spirit and their land and their ancestors.[266]

Chapter 4 is a storytelling discussion of the transformative aspects of embodied cultural practices and how the people who have guided my dissertation work inspired the umbilically-connected projects that led to the creation of the *Ngwaagan Regalia* (2025). Every idea that I have had is rooted in and connected to the beings in my life who have shaped the person I have become as an artist and a scholar. This chapter is my way of engaging in traditional protocols around acknowledging how this project was born through all the incredible people and other beings who have aided me culturally, curatorially, and academically throughout my learning journey. Just as Nishnaabeg and Lucbanin acknowledge the lineage and genealogy of the stories we receive it is also important to highlight how ideas come into inception.[267] Embodying our relationships through our practices is an important part of both Nishnaabe-bmaadziwin as well as Lucbanin lifeways, so I think it is crucial for me to acknowledge the hard work of so

[266] Darren-ba Shilling Taylor, Nishnaabe, Mnjikaning and Curve Lake First Nations, interview, May 8, 2019.
[267] When my Nanay was reaching the next phase of her life many people came to Lucban to visit with her and hear her stories about their families and kinship relationships. She was one of the oldest remaining people in our town from her generation with living memories and community stories that spanned back into the 1800s.

many of my kin who have gifted me with inspiration and encouraged me to express myself through my artistic practices.[268]

The teachers I have had throughout my life encouraged me to think of creative ways to communicate my ideas and research practices and this has given me the academic space to pursue this work in a meaningful way that is respected.[269] Similarly, my friend and curatorial inspiration Lorilee Wastasecoot (Ininew iskwew from Peguis First Nation and York Factory) provided me with guidance and support of ideas around how I could incorporate art into my research. When she invited me to participate in a beadwork exhibition, *On Beaded Ground* (2021), at the University of Victoria Legacy Galleries I was humbled and inspired to push my ideas around encoding relational practices and memory projects through beadwork further.[270] Lorilee gave me the space and support to access my emotional and spiritual roots through my beadwork pieces. I was able to address my grief through honouring my relatives who have passed on as well as speak openly about my COVID-19 health journey. Through this, I had the opportunity to talk about gender identity, Nishnaabe beliefs about the cosmos, and spiritual transmission through intergenerational teachings. Further, I was able to communicate some of my ideas around making new traditions through repatriation and innovative uses of older materials. One of the pieces I created, *Nindinawemaaganidog: Trickster Tuppie* (2021) (see figure 21) was intended to discuss the integral role of

[268] Nishnaabe-bmaadziwin is a Nishnaabe way of life in Nishnaabemwin.
[269] Miigwech to Andrea Walsh, Jeff Ganohalidoh Corntassel, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, and John Kegedonce Borrows for the wonderful feedback and support throughout my studies.
[270] Please see the full *On Beaded Ground* exhibition in its documented format online here, https://legacy.uvic.ca/gallery/onbeadedground/.

awesiinhyag and Tricksters as respected relatives for Nishnaabeg as well as Indigenous peoples in broader terms.[271]

Figure 21. Nindinawemaaganidog: Trickster Tuppie. This is a photograph of one of the pieces I submitted for a beadwork exhibition called, *On Beaded Ground* (2021). Participating in this exhibition was powerful and filled with a tremendous amount of joy, inspiration, and deepening of my relational practices through art. (Estrella Whetung, Photograph of beaded and sewn art piece for *On Beaded Ground* exhibition, *Nindinawemaaganidog: Trickster Tuppie*, original photograph by author, 2021).

Each of the animal tricksters in *Nindinawemaaganidog: Trickster Tuppie* are connected to the hearts of Indigenous nations, as represented by the tufted heart petal flower, and each one has a nesewin line connecting a shell mnidoo bead to the heart.[272] The tufting in the centre was made from the hair of caribou and deer and embodies my

[271] See detailed photographs of the beadwork, tufting, and sewing of *Nindinawemaaganidog: Trickster Tuppie* at *On Beaded Ground*, https://legacy.uvic.ca/gallery/onbeadedground/estrella-whetung/3ndrxibg/. Awesiinhyag are animals in Anishinaabemowin.

[272] Nesewin is breath and mnidoo is spirit in Nishnaabemwin.

relationship with my doodem relatives. The jingle cones on the edges honour the storytelling medicines of Tricksters as well as the goodness of our animal relatives: moreover, the choice of jingle cones was made to show my respect to gifted Anishinaabe artists like Jessica Sagaate Day who is a jingle dancer and beader who shares so much with our communities. Each of the pieces I was inspired to contribute allowed me to deepen my research approaches and ideas about innovative ways to engage in beadwork as a relational practice through nawendiwin, or kinship, protocols.

Figure 22. Ancestral Knowledge in the Everyday. *Left*: an image of a portrait of my Great-grandmother Min in her Mississauga Nishnaabe regalia that was painted by an artist named Montgomery on an unknown date. *Right*: this is an image of an acrylic painting that I created for my friend Robin Ross as a graduation gift. Her kookum (grandmother) was a good friend of the renowned Cree painter Allen Sapp and this was my attempt to capture a Cree Métis woman in strap dress regalia in Saskatchewan sunset as an homage to his work. The act of gifting and honouring both my relationship to my friend as well as the important relationship her kookum had to Allen Sapp was a fundamental piece to this artwork. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs of paintings, *Ancestral Knowledge in the Everyday,* 2025. Original references for images (*left*): Montgomery, oil painting of Mary Jane Muskratte Simpson, collection of Meredith Whetung. (*Right*): Estrella Whetung, acrylic painting*, Zoongide'ewin: She Begins a Journey*, collection of Robin Ross, 2007).

My mother, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and their mothers before them have all engaged in not only artistic practices, but also collaborative and relational artwork throughout their lives. This is the kind of work that inspires me to return to ancestral knowledge and kinship practices everyday (see figure 22). The women on both sides of my family learned to weave, sew, do embroidery and beadwork, as well as other cultural arts at an early age (see figure 23).[273]

Figure 23. Weaving and Beading Memories. This image shows the traditional hat and bag weaving techniques of my family and community in Lucban. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage of family photographs, *Weaving and Beading Memories*, 2025. Original photographs courtesy of Leila Whetung).

[273] I do not want to limit the kinds of arts that were engaged in, but it is difficult to list everything.

I was taught to practice these forms of art when I was about six or seven years old. I would join my Nanay in her sewing and embroidery: she would give me some of the fabric she had drawn patterns on, guided me, and then we would do embroidery together. When I was a child, my grandparents would engage in kwentuhan and magkwentuhan while working on projects together.[274] This is a central part of being Lucbanin. My Nanay was an expert weaver and would frequently make sambalilo hats, mats, and balulang bags (see Figure 23).[275] This is not considered an unusual skill in Lucban because it is the official art capital of Quezon Province: "it is normal for them to see, experience and practice their culture and heritage, which is embedded and transmitted from generation to generation […because] it is part of their everyday life, [and] it showcases the significance of their people and how they create a sense of place."[276] In figure 23 (bottom left photograph), my mother wearing a buntal hat with Pahiyas Festival community members in regalia made of beads, weaving, and rice. Lucbanin are keenly aware of how important our traditional arts and cultural practices are because it is seen as our unique way of life.

Lucban is a historic town with a specific history and identity but is also a place with deep ties and connections to other communities on Mount Banahaw. When describing the importance of Lucban as a place of significant creativity and innovation

[274] Magkwentuhan is the act of sharing stories with one another and kwentuhan is storytelling in Tagalog.
[275] Note: my family did not make the balulang in figure 23. If you are interested in reading more about the bags, please see this article, https://www.dti.gov.ph/archives/regional-archives/mimaropa-success-stories-regional-archives/woven-bags-that-pass-through-many-generations/.
[276] Claire Ann Maguyon Yao, Maricel Dañez Herrera, and Jame Monren Tapalla Mercado, "Pangangalaga o Pag-Unlad? (Preservation or Development): A Phenomenological Study on the Views of the Stakeholders on the Conservation and Urbanization of a Historic Town: The Case of Lucban, Quezon, Philippines," *Journal of Heritage Management* 9, no. 1 (April 28, 2024): 29–51, https://doi.org/10.1177/24559296241237369, 38.

scholars describe it as a potential site to learn from: “historic towns have relevance because of this intangible living heritage embedded in the town’s built heritage. Immaterial values—knowledge, ideas, and skills—can remain and forge enlightening connections between the ancient world and modern cities.”[277] In figure 23 (middle photograph), it shows my sister riding my family’s carabao and wearing a traditional woven peaked hat called a salakot. Each strand of buntal fibre used in weaving is as thin as superfine crochet yarn (see top right photograph of figure 23) and this is displayed in the intricate weaving details (middle row of figure 23). It took my Nanay 2-5 days to weave the white buntal sambalilo hat that was given to my father as a gift (see bottom right photograph of figure 23). I would collaborate and work with her for hours and I never grew tired of these projects because it meant that we could watch *The Golden Girls* on television and create something beautiful together.

Collaborative cultural art projects such as these and communal art spaces have always been a part of my family. There is something beautiful about sitting together, feeling the same spiritual frequency, and working on art in the same space even if you are working on different pieces or separate artwork. My great-grandmother Min was a central part of forming an Indigenous women’s Homemakers Association Club (1947) with Minnie Brant from Tyendinaga and served as the first president for a number of years.[278] One of the main aspects of these clubs was to ensure a ”better way of life” for the communities through artistic practices such as sewing, quilting bees, beading, and

[277] Yao, Herrera, and Mercado, “Pangangalaga o Pag-Unlad?,” 31.
[278] Alfred Simpson, “A History of the Rice Lake Indians.” A History of the Rice Lake Indians. January 10, 2025, https://www.ricelakereserves.com/page30.html/.

weaving, but these circles also came together to discuss the political dimensions of our lived realities as Indigenous peoples.[279] These artistic spaces provided an avenue for Indigenous women to come together as leaders and organize for political change without being suspected of engaging in resistance activities by Indian Agents.[280]

Visiting with relatives in my homelands and having a strong social relationship with my family and communities has been a key part of my ability to stay grounded as someone who lives so far away.[281] I am blessed to have a large family who are constantly working on incredible community projects and sometimes I have the exciting opportunity to see the resurgence work that they are generating in person. Honouring and remembering the lineage and genealogies of our artistic practices is a powerful way of embodying Nishnaabe and Lucbanin ways of life. When I went to the quillwork makakoon exhibition called *Mnaajtood ge Mnaadendaan: Miigwewinan Michi Saagiig Kwewag Minegoowin Gimaans Zhaganaash Aki 1860/ To Honour and Respect: Gifts from the Michi Saagiig Women to the Prince of Wales, 1860* (2023), I had the opportunity to experience the ancestral artistic and relational practices of my family as

[279] Mary Jane Muskratte Simpson, "A History of the Rice Lake Indians," *A History of the Rice Lake Indians*, https://www.ricelakereserves.com/page29.html/. My father has always told me that these clubs were a common space for political organizing for women in our family in a comparable way to sporting, fishing, and hunting clubs and gatherings were for men in our family.

[280] Please read Aroha Harris and Mary Jane Logan McCallum's chapter "'Assaulting the Ears of Government': The Indian Homemakers' Clubs and the Maori Women's Welfare League in Their Formative Years," in *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism* (2012) for a more detailed look into the political history of Indigenous Homemakers' Clubs.

[281] Being with my cousins is always enriching: I have had the opportunity to visit with relatives (miigwech Brenda) at Kinoomaagewaabkong (The Teaching Rocks) and who worked on the *'Mnaajtood ge Mnaadendaan: Miigwewinan Michi Saagiig Kwewag Miinegoowin Gimaans Zhaganaash Aki 1860'/ 'To Honour and Respect: Gifts from the Michi Saagiig Women to the Prince of Wales, 1860'* quillwork makak exhibition (miigwech, Lori, Sheryl, and Kim). My cousins in Lucban made the space for me join them for our Undas (ancestor remembrance) ceremonies as well.

well as the resurgence work that my relatives are doing in a contemporary context.[282] It was a powerful way to witness how we can care for the threads of relationality in our communities. Seeing the incredible 163-year-old quillwork of my ancestors Catherine Fawn Muskrat and Hannah David McCue inspired me to incorporate their design motifs into my research work.[283] At Hiawatha First Nation, community members were invited to add quills to a commemorative wiigwaas legacy piece by Sandra D. Moore (Hiawatha First Nation) about the exhibition named, *We Have Not Forgotten*.[284] What struck me about this is act of embodying memory through art is perhaps someday 163 years from now my relatives will be looking at that quillwork that we contributed quills to create.

While I was privileged to learn traditional arts directly from my mother and my maternal grandparents, I was unable to learn similar practices from my paternal grandparents because they both passed on before I was three years old. The nature of colonialism is that sometimes you must go through a process of remembering what you think you do not know and that often emerges through meeting the important people you learn from in your life. My friend Sarah Dickie (Slavey-Dene and Halqumalem from Fort Nelson First Nation, see figure 24) has been someone who has continuously shared her gifts and artistic wisdom with me in the twenty-something years that we have

[282] Makakoon are baskets or boxes in Anishinaabemowin. My Cowie relative Lori Beavis co-curated the exhibition with Laura Peers and many other relatives such as Sheryl Dundas, Kim Muskratt, and Chad Cowie were also involved in the work.

[283] Please also look at the beautiful exhibition website here, https://www.tohonourandrespect.ca/.

[284] Wiigwaas is birchbark in Anishinaabemowin. Please read more about this discussion in Laura Peers, Lori Beavis, and Christine Beavis's article, "Expanded Loans as Forms of Indigenous Access, Reconnection, and Sovereignty: Mnaajtood ge Mnaadendaan—Miigwewinan Michi Saagiig Kwewag Miinegoowin Gimaans Zhaganaash Aki 1860/ To Honour and Respect—Gifts from the Michi Saagiig Women to the Prince of Wales, 1860," (2024). Miigwech to Carmen, Jade Lacosse, Angela Easby, and Cherylanne James for joining me in witnessing and experiencing the quillwork exhibition, community celebration, and museum and archives, and contributing to the quillwork legacy piece.

known each other. She introduced me to her Slavey-Dene beading approaches and has encouraged me throughout every project that I have worked on, providing not just metaphorical seeds of wisdom, but also literal seed beads and other traditional materials for me to incorporate into my artwork.[285]

Figure 24. Sasa: Beading in the North. This is a photograph of my incredible longtime friend and beading artist, Sarah Dickie. She is wearing a stunning shawl cape art piece known as *Beaded Cape* that she won the Chosen Award for in the 2018 Regional Juried Art Exhibit. This exhibit and esteemed event in her home community of Fort Nelson was put on by the Peace Liard Regional Arts Council and Northern Rockies Art Council. (Wayne Sawchuk, photograph portrait of Sarah Dickie in her award-winning piece, *Beaded Cape*, *Alaska Highway News*, 2018).[286]

I have had the chance to see Sarah work on beautiful collaborative beadwork pieces with her late Etsoo Adeline Dickie (nee Kotchea) who was a master beadwork artist.[287] Her Etsoo also encouraged me when I was starting to learn beading and her

[285] Miigwech also to Sara Santana, Maria Rose Sikyea, Letitia Annamalai, David Mutuku and Laura Sutherst for gifting beads.
[286] Figure 24 full reference, Wayne Sawchuk, photograph portrait of Sarah Dickie in her award-winning piece, *Beaded Cape*, in "2018 Regional Juried Art Exhibit results: Sarah Dickie's piece, 'Beaded Cape' won a Chosen Award," *Alaska Highway News*, May 17, 2018, https://issuu.com/alaskahighwaynews/docs/ahn_may_17_2018/.
[287] Etsoo is grandmother in Dene. Adeline was also known as Mukluk Mama. She was an expert at putting together distinct colour patterns that reflected the beauty of the universe, but I am particularly fond of her wonderful use of purples and pinks as I am not naturally great at putting together those colours.

gorgeous use of colour combinations have always pushed me to want to deepen my complexity of putting together my beadwork. As Sarah writes in her artistic remembrances:

> Some of my first memories were playing hide and seek in a closet full of home-tanned moosehide, learning to be safe around an endless supply of needles, beads, and other supplies. My Etsoo (grandmother) taught me to sew, and I have sewn on everything – commercially tanned deerhide, home-tanned moose and deer hide, stroud (wool-felt), using glass beads, traditionally harvested porcupine quills, moose- and caribou-hair tufting, moccasins, mukluks, vests, mittens, hair ties, barrettes, pins, broaches, and earrings with nary a scrap wasted. Harmony with nature is an important piece that underpins a lot of my work.[288]

My grandparents also grew up hunting, trapping, hide tanning, sewing, harvesting quills for quillwork and making sure "nary a scrap [was] wasted."[289] Although I was unable to learn these skills directly from them Sarah has given me the space to learn similar ancestral knowledge from her and her family, and I am forever grateful for this. Throughout my entire career as a beadwork artist, Sarah has been with me every step of the way to provide ideas and inspiration, helpful technical knowledge, potential projects to work on, and guidance when I am struggling. Sometimes the process of remembering does not come through the sources that you expect, but the threads of Creation brought these people into your life to learn valuable lessons that inspire and shape you.

[288] Sarah Dickie, "#40 – A Study in Traditional Practice (Sarah Dickie)," The Peace Liard Regional Arts Council, accessed May 5, 2025, https://peaceliardarts.org/40-a-study-in-traditional-practice/.
[289] Sarah Dickie, "#40 – A ac in Traditional Practice (Sarah Dickie)."

4.2 Waapijiibizonan: Relational Practices through Mossbag Memories[290]

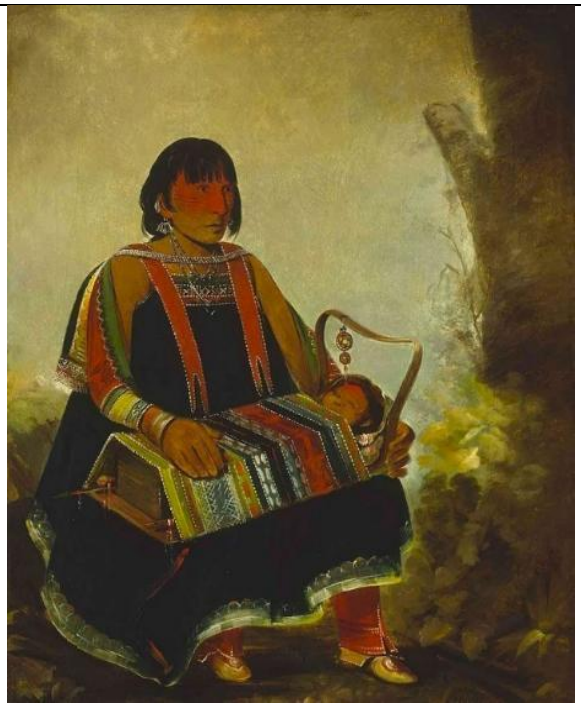

Figure 25. Jú-ah-kís-gaw with Her Child. American artist George Catlin (1835) depicted an Anishinaabe woman named Jú-ah-kís-gaw in a beaded ribbon regalia strap dress with her child in a waapijiibizon (mossbag) and dikinaagan (cradleboard). (George Catlin, oil on canvas painting, *Jú-ah-kís-gaw, Woman with Her Child in a Cradle*, Smithsonian American Art Museum, 1835).[291]

Over the years, I have been invited to participate in memory-making beadwork projects by kin, and they have allowed me to collaborate with them through mentorship and through making beadwork pieces to commemorate important life events.[292] Each person you meet in life, even if it feels like a fleeting moment, can shape the way that you see the world and strengthen your spiritual threads. I met Erynne Gilpin (Saulteaux-

[290] Waapijiibizonan are mossbags in Anishinaabemowin.

[291] Figure 25 full reference, George Catlin, *Jú-ah-kís-gaw, Woman with Her Child in a Cradle*, 1835, oil on canvas painting, 29in x 24in. (73.6cm x 60.9cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C., https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/ju-ah-kis-gaw-woman-her-child-cradle-4186/.

[292] Miigwech to Jude and Alana Sayers for allowing me to collaborate with them on ceremonial art projects together over the years. Miigwech to Kim, John, and Lindsay Borrows for allowing me the creativity to collaborate on their family and academic projects in the form of beaded regalia, beaded projects, paintings, and moccasins together.

Cree Métis with Filipina, and Celtic ancestry from The Pas) a Michif community doula and scholar roughly ten years ago. I was amazed because she has both Anishinaabe and Southern Tagalog roots like my own and we now call each other pinsan.[293] Through my pinsan, I met her wonderful partner Peruzzo Andrade (Caá-Poré/Cafuzo) who is a filmmaker and photographer from Brazil and both have taught me so much about relational spirituality and how to pursue my artistic passion projects.[294] Around the same time, I met an incredible Northern Tutchone artist by the name of Shelby Blackjack who is also Erynne's friend: when she told me that she was a beadwork artist I said that I was just starting out in my learning journey.[295] She encouraged and inspired me to think about how I was using the materials I had and different ways of incorporating layered designs and colour combinations in my beadwork. Before I met Shelby, I was apprehensive about using colours like orange, yellow, pink, and bright greens, but she taught me to jump in and try to push myself outside of my usual artistic colour zone. Erynne invited me to participate in helping her create a beaded belt for her wedding to Peruzzo. She had a partially completed piece of beadwork and some fantastic conceptual ideas, so then we collaborated to use those elements to make a completed beaded regalia piece for her that reflected and celebrated her Michif, Filipino, and Celtic roots. Collaborative thinking and communal artist spaces shared with my friends have allowed me to expand my artist research practices in ways I had not anticipated.[296]

[293] From a sacred place called Bundok Taal. Taal is only two hours away from Lucban and I have relatives who live there as well. Pinsan is cousin in Tagalog and I am proud to call both Erynne and her sister Emilee mga pinsan.
[294] Please check out Erynne's dissertation work, "Land as Body: Indigenous womxn's* leadership, land-based wellness and embodied governance," (2020) and Peruzzo's thesis work, "GULE: The masks we carry: intersectional Indigenous storytelling through visual arts narratives, film and community-governance," (2020).
[295] As well as an expert sewing and painting artist.
[296] They are my kin, and they are my relatives.

In conversations with Erynne around traditional birthing and child-rearing practices (see figure 25), I began to consider that perhaps I needed to engage my ancestral threads to my great-grandmother Bella who was a traditional Nishnaabe midwife in a more formal way.[297] Originally, I thought it was not my place to take that space as I am not a parent; however, I know holding onto necessary knowledge without sharing it is against my family protocols. Over time, I began to more frequently share teachings that I had received from my family about birthing practices, post-partum practices, and baby regalia to make sure that future generations have access to this knowledge.[298] I had always been interested in how dikinaaganan and waapijiibizonan, also known as cradleboards and mossbags, are made since I was a child and had worked on a few illustration and painting projects featuring them in my early twenties, but it was not until my thirties that I received the opportunity to make waapijiibizonan.

In the summer of 2018, my longtime friend Robin Ross (Cree-Métis from Kawacatoose First Nation with roots in the Qu'Appelle Valley) contacted me as she was expecting her first child and really wanted to bring her daughter into the world with traditional baby regalia.[299] Robin has always been so supportive of my artwork and has inspired me to think outside of the box many times when we have worked on

[297] I have come back to George Catlin's *Jú-ah-kís-gaw, Woman With Her Child in a Cradle* painting many times over throughout my life searching the details to find more ancestral answers. Mississauga language interpreter and performance artist Maungwudaus George Henry spent time with George Catlin in Paris, France. (1845) See Chapter 5 of *Mississauga Portraits: Ojibwe Voices from Nineteenth-Century Canada*, by Donald B. Smith (2015). Note: my Lucbanin family also have many midwives and teachings that I share with Southern Tagalog who are interested in the topic.

[298] Please check out the thesis of Amy Shawanda in the discussion of teachings about resurgence and Anishinaabe motherhood in, "Anishinaabe Motherhood: The Act of Resistance by Resurging Traditional Teachings and Pedagogies," (2022).

[299] We were a part of a handful of Indigenous students in the department of Anthropology in the mid-2000s.

collaborative projects together.[300] She asked me about waapijiibizonan and if I would possibly be able make one for the arrival of her daughter. In truth, I did not know how to make a waapijiibizon, but I did have a mutual friend from Saskatchewan, Laura Pinay (Cree-Saulteaux and Métis from Peepeekisis Cree Nation and Riel's band), who was experienced in making them.[301] I have a lot of experience doing design and sewing work, but I think it is important to constantly be open to learning different technical skills from people who are gracious enough to share.

Figure 26. Robin's Waapijiibizon. This mossbag was constructed and sewn together mid-2018. I had a limited timeframe, so it is mostly manufactured embroidery and beaded blue daisies that I made on vintage velvet fabric. The lacing piece is made of split commercially tanned moose hide and the trim is done in velvet and poly-cotton bias tape. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage, *Robin's Waapijiibizon*, 2025. Original photographs by author (*left* and *bottom right*) and photograph with doll (*top right*) is courtesy of Robin Ross).

[300] Many traditional art practices, papers, posters, collages, paintings, and student films over the years.
[301] Pipikwan Iskwew is her traditional name in Cree. Migizigan Boodaajigan Ikwe is her traditional name in Anishinaabemowin.

Laura walked me through the general steps to constructing a mossbag and gave me some guidelines about measurements for fabrics but encouraged me to tap into those ancestral intuitions. I also asked for advice from Sarah Dickie about fabric choices and how to do some of the lacing up the centre of the mossbag (see figure 26), then I started the design process. I had limited time to work with before Robin's daughter arrived, so I focused on gathering materials that I already had in my fabric stash which included vintage velvet, velvet ribbons from England, and red bias tape.[302] I used velvet ribbons along the trim in the style of Jú-ah-kís-gaw's regalia and her child's dikinaagan. I used commercially tanned split moose hide from one of my travels with my cousin Zofia Rogowski and used laces that my father had given me for the project. I did not have enough time to do full beadwork panels beyond the two blue daisies, so I used the machine-embroidered lapels from a dress I was saving for a special occasion. Helping Robin with her traditional birthing experience was a momentous occasion, so using the floral embroidered panels for it was perfect. I lined the mossbag with a soft baby blanket that I had intended to send her as a gift. In my teachings, this is how ancestrally driven collaborative knowledge is born.

In the fall of 2018, my language teacher and friend Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe) contacted me and asked me if I would be interested in making another waapijiibizon. Of course, I was happy to oblige as she too was expecting her

[302] Miigwech to my Auntie Linda Whetung Shaffer for always teaching me to be innovative with how I use materials through recycling old fabrics and clothing to create new artwork. She helped me explore the use of antique and vintage materials in my childhood.

first child. I had a little more time to work on this mossbag project, so I was able to complete fully beaded panels on the sides of the bag (see figure 27).

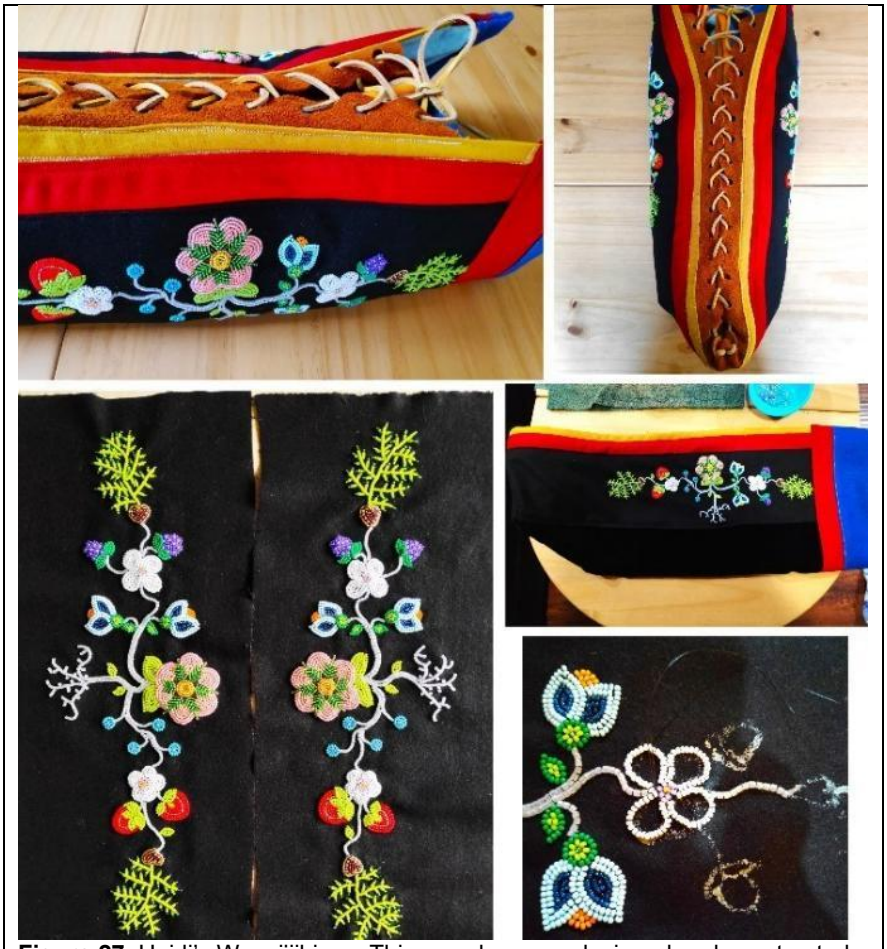

Figure 27. Heidi's Waapijiibizon. This mossbag was designed and constructed from the fall of 2018 to January 2019. It features beaded medicines and berries. Like Robin's mossbag, the multi-coloured wool ribbon trim inspired by Jú-ah-kís-gaw's regalia and her child's dikinaagan, as well as split commercially tanned moose hide. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage, *Heidi's Waapijiibizon*, 2025. Original photographs by author).

This time, I used melton wool for most of the construction, including the multi-coloured ribbon strips that I cut myself, because Heidi's due date was in the wintertime.[303] I am mindful to select materials based on what fits seasonally for each child as well as choosing fabrics that reflect the specific kinds of medicine people want for their children.

[303] This fabric is amazing and was introduced to me by Sarah. She sent me a pattern, pre-cut fabric, melton wool, hide, beaver fur, and beads for my first major beading project—mittens.

Heidi's son arrived a little early, so I was working on the mossbag until 4am on the day of his special ceremony. Heidi and I collaboratively worked on a design for the waapijiibizon beadwork in which she wanted to feature medicines such as cedar, roses, and berries on the panels. I used old beading patterns from the 1800s for the rose design as well as the strawberry design and freehanded the other berries. The cedar design was inspired by the beaded plant diagramming work of Anishinaabe master beadwork artist, Jessica Gokey. I added heart shapes with gold beads into the cedar branches and designed a root system to connect all the plant relatives.[304] Similarly to Robin's mossbag, I incorporated some of the elements that were inspired by Jú-ah-kís-gaw's regalia and her child's dikinaagan as well as the same split commercially tanned moose for the lacing centre piece. I painted the design on with flour and water the way Sarah showed me when I first started beading through a technique that her Etsoo had taught her. I did not know this then, but my own ancestors also had used this method for transferring beading patterns on cloth. The lining of the mossbag is made from a soft flannel because of the timing of the birth and the laces are made of commercially tanned elk hide from an Indigenous owned and operated tannery.

In early 2021, I was working on my beadwork pieces for *On Beaded Ground* and had the chance to document my work process.[305] As I had done in previous projects, I wove in the threads and design characteristics of by Jú-ah-kís-gaw's regalia and her child's dikinaagan into my work. This time it was for the purpose of making a mossbag

[304] Gold is one of the sacred metals where my mother comes from and I use it in beadwork for similar reasons that I use copper and silver from my Nishnaabe teachings.
[305] Miigwech to my friend Jaden Keitlah (Tseshaht and Ahousaht First Nations) for encouraging me to document my artwork process more regularly.

for Baby Yoda in my *Nindanikoobijiganag: We are Star People* exhibition piece.[306] What I did not realize at the time is this piece would inform how I could teach mossbag tutorials online without requiring much preparation or a large use of materials for the process.

Figure 28. Angela's Waapijiibizon. The Baby Yoda mossbag I made for the *On Beaded Ground* exhibition at the beginning of 2021 informed how I guided my friend Angela through her mossbag construction process at the end of Summer 2021. The *bottom left* photograph shows Angela's incredible beadwork for her baby and the *bottom right* images show the video tutorials and communications we had during this project. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage, *Angela's Waapijiibizon*, 2025. Original images (*top row* and *bottom right*) are by the author. Photograph (*bottom left*) is courtesy of Angela Easby).

In the summer of 2021, my longtime friend Angela Easby (Métis Anishinaabe, member of the Métis Nation with ties to Treaty 3 territories in northwestern Ontario)

[306] Please see more details at the *On Beaded Ground* exhibition website and read my exhibition piece description as well: https://legacy.uvic.ca/gallery/onbeadedground/estrella-whetung/nuxmgcpw/.

contacted me in need of a little bit of guidance to work on her waapijiibizon (see figure 28) for her child.[307] I have known Angela for nearly a decade and had the good fortune of meeting her both through my friend Erynne as well as in the context of Anishinaabe Language Table. Angela has always pushed me to think about the multiple dimensions and framings of cultural, historical, and socio-political ideas I have grappled with over the years. She has also been a tremendously supportive person with my Nishnaabemwin learning and artistic practices over the years. Figure 28 is a photograph of Angela's amazing beadwork for her mossbag panels featuring so many beautiful medicines like wiingaashk and giizhik as well as plant relatives like ode'iminan.[308]

Truthfully, I do not think that Angela required much guidance because she is a naturally gifted artist with an excellent understanding of colours and patterning, but I am honoured she asked me for assistance in her waapijiibizon project. This gave me the chance to engage with my ancestral teachings around baby regalia as well as to share the knowledge that Sarah and Laura had shared with me at the beginning. We started out by having a few conversations about the possible technical dimensions of the fabrics needed for the project (see figure 28), then I recorded videos of each step from cutting out the fabric, constructing smaller parts of the bag, and then sewing each piece together. I made these tutorial videos (see figure 28) through using a waapijiibizonens—a miniature sized mossbag. I may not have had the idea of using a miniature format for

[307] Please see Angela Easby's important community-based language dissertation work in "Anishinaabemowin Revitalization and Movement: An Inquiry with Learners," (2025).
[308] Wiingaashk is sweetgrass, giizhik is cedar, and ode'iminan are strawberries in Anishinaabemowin.

instructional purposes if I had not made a miniature mossbag for the *On Beaded Ground* exhibition, so I am thankful that participation led me into this direction.

Figure 29. Carmen's Waapijiibizon for Emma. My cousin Carmen asked for some assistance in making a mossbag for her sister's child at the end of 2024. Carmen put so many beautiful ideas together to create this family memory project. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage, *Carmen's Waapijiibizon for Emma*, 2025. Original photographs courtesy of Carmen Wiigwaas Craig).

In the autumn of 2024, my cousin Carmen Wiigwaas Craig reached out to me to ask for some guidance in making a waapijiibizon for her sister Emma Lee Nguyen's upcoming birth of her child. In a comparable way to Angela, I believe that Carmen did not require much direction from me because she too is a naturally talented and creative artist. Over the years of making waapijiibizonan it has become clearer that I am upholding a sacred responsibility that has been given to me by the women in my family, particularly my great-grandmother Bella. Therefore, every time I am requested for assistance in memory-making projects like this I am overjoyed to have a chance to

participate. Carmen is a relative that I met through Anishinaabe Language Table around eleven years ago and I remember her being shocked when I said, “We must be related,” after she introduced the community that she comes from Pemdashkodeyaang.[309] There is always the beautiful possibility of finding relatives wherever you may find yourself and the Anishinaabe Language Table has been a community space where I have been able to find more kin.

When Carmen started working on the project she chose to seek out materials through thrifting and sustainable shopping because she is consciously aware of the waste that is made through hyper-capitalism. We went bead shopping for a few colours, but she also accessed her bead collection for some treasured colours, and I shared some of my beads with her too. For her beadwork she chose to create intricate panels of large flowers that are representative of her sister, manidoonsag, an ode’imin, and a complex moving pattern of traditional Nishnaabe spirit lines with spirit circles to embed mkwendamwin and mshkikiwan into the piece.[310] When she finished her beadwork, we got together, and I supervised her sewing process to complete the outer parts of the waapijiibizon and then she completed it. Every waapijiibizon project that I have worked on has been threaded with zhawenjigewin and stitched together by inawendiwin with each person. Each of the projects is connected to the ancestral chain of knowledge that I have received from my relatives be they Anishinaabe, Dene, Cree, Métis or from other

[309] Both Hiawatha First Nation and Alderville First Nation are located here. Carmen has ties to both sides of the lake, but her home community is Hiawatha First Nation.
[310] Manidoonsag are insects or bugs Anishinaabemowin. Ode’imin is a strawberry in Anishinaabemowin.

Indigenous nations: this is what relational resurgence looks like through beadwork and sewing.

I chose this selection of regalia examples to highlight the centrality of the women and Two-Spirit people in my life who have encouraged me to engage in ancestral knowledge practices. They have inspired me to pursue my ideas creatively and think of innovative possibilities in how we can create new traditions and encode knowledge for our communities. In my dissertation work I was searching for a way to highlight everything that I have been taught in my journey of return to ancestral memory-making practices. As I was researching, I considered how I am a part of the first generation in my family lines who was not held in traditional baby-carrying regalia when I was a child. Focusing on mossbags and centring regalia are ways to honour my conscious decision to return to these teachings from both sides of my family. In many ways, a mossbag and other forms of baby-carrying that exist are something that are central to the first regalia that an Indigenous child may have when they are born on this side. The love and prayers that are put into the adornment of regalia through stitching, weaving, and/or beading are so clear when it comes to what we make for children in our communities. I am proud to have been invited to contribute that to Indigenous families. If I had not worked so extensively on regalia pieces such as mossbags for Indigenous relatives I may have created something in a different format from the *Ngwaagan Regalia* for this dissertation.

Chapter 5: Research Approaches
5.1 Gyako-bmaadziwin: How I Have Come to Engage[311]

"The beads speak to us from spaces and places across time […] There are a multitude of beads, patterns and voices that are each complex and unique and distinct. These voices are speaking to us."[312]

Chapter 5 is an overview of what inspired my research interests, my research methodology, and each of the cultural components that have been essential in informing my collaborative practices with relatives. This chapter is meant to thoroughly discuss the intricacies of the research process and how imperfection is not just an unavoidable part of the journey but is often a foundational learning aspect of research in real life. As a Nishnaabe Lucbanin researcher, the imperfections of my work provide an important reminder of our teachings around humility as well as the importance of relationships to my kin. Moreover, this chapter is a raw and transparent window into my work as a researcher who struggles with chronic health issues and how that has influenced the trajectory of my research process. The flaws of my process became a strength in the work because they emphasized the ways I could creatively pursue knowledge production from my unique lens. I feel that if we can accept that unexpected transformation is a part of everything that we do, then we are embracing important teachings around humility. For me, humility is a key component of both Nishnaabe and

[311] Gyako-bmaadziwin is the honest, right, and just life in Nishnaabemwin.
[312] Lois Elizabeth Edge, "My Grandmother's Moccasins: Indigenous Women, Ways of Knowing and Indigenous Aesthetic of Beadwork," (doctoral thesis, University of Alberta, 2011), 106, https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/thesescanada/vol2/002/NR80952.PDF?oclc_number=881138093/.

Lucbanin teachings in that it emphasizes allowing space for change and growth, acceptance of support, and an understanding of one's place in the universe.

When I began the research process, I thought that I could somehow synthesize elements of my Nishnaabe upbringing in a way that could be seamless, document all the interesting cultural conversations I have had over the years and communicate this research smoothly and effectively in a creative format. In a way, I was setting out to try and do something connected to my master's degree project through the creation of a cultural mnemonic device, but also wanted to focus on Anishinaabe perspectives more exclusively and I now think of my work in the *Ngwaagan Regalia* (2025) as ancestral knowledge encodements for Indigenous resurgence.[313] What I learned throughout this is I have not been able to find a way to separate out the parts of my life that are *only* Nishnaabe and I cannot remove the impacts of growing up on Indigenous lands and waterways that are not my own. What I have come to know circles back to the beginning of my childhood in understanding that I cannot be half of a person because I am a whole being and that I have been shaped by the peoples of these territories as well as all the beings that live here.

The invitation to witness and learn is a gift that I am grateful for, and I am humbled to have received kindness and goodness in this generous knowledge sharing. Learning and following protocols are an important part of how I think about ethical

[313] My master's project, "Biidaaban: The Aim is Liberation," (2010), was a labour of love built through over 50 interviews with Indigenous peoples from around the world and composed in the form of a graphic novel. If it is of interest the project can be accessed here, https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/items/3295062f-d2a7-47e8-a4ce-a23e099b5f65/.

engagement because shared understandings shape how we work together. Boundaries are not just healthy, but also necessary. By recognizing the precise context that we collaborate in and work within we are more able to respect these boundaries. As Anishinaabekwe artist Cathi Charles Wherry from Mnjikaning underlines, we need to consider the place in which we are operating: is it a "public, shared, secular, or sacred space? Are you working in the domain of a specific community or culture?"[314] All of these features shape the work we do.

When considering what research practices can look like there are many community members who provide intriguing windows into our worldviews and ways of engaging with cultural ideas, nuanced understandings, and memories.[315] When you begin any journey in life it may take you to places that you do not anticipate and you will receive knowledge that is expansive, enriching, and beautiful along the way. Sometimes research feels like casting a line while you are fishing as you may put tremendous work into the preparation, but what you receive in the process is unknown and often unexpected. As Wherry notes when discussing the layers of knowledge transmission:

> Transmission of knowledge includes deeper understandings and 'ways' that at once guide, emerge from, AND inform the practice. Making a drum is not just making a drum. It also connects to our original languages, stories, songs, dances, identity, and governance models. Like all of our traditional practices, the drum carries protocols about respect, gratitude, working together, and social and spiritual responsibilities.[316]

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[314] Cathi Charles Wherry, "Protocols and Transmission of Knowledge," Primary Colours, August 1, 2025, https://www.primary-colours.ca/projects/56-protocols-and-transmission-of-knowledge.

[315] Please look at the Anishinaabe research approaches of Rasnunah Marsden in "Anishinaabe Research & Bimaadiziwin, or 'the Good Life'," (2013), Dawn Marsden in "Expanding Knowledge through Dreaming, Wampum and Visual arts," (2004), and Art Beaver in "Mnoomini-Gmwin: Nishinaabe Gimmaawin Na Dani-Daapinaawaa Nishinaabe Oodenoo," (1999).

[316] Wherry, "Protocols and Transmission of Knowledge," Primary Colours, August 1, 2025, https://www.primary-colours.ca/projects/56-protocols-and-transmission-of-knowledge.

When I was growing up, my family taught me that for every teaching you learn there are hundreds more to learn and embed into your life. It is not just about the seven teachings or aadsookaanag.[317] If anything, every Trickster story that you hear should tell you that there is always more to learn and re-learn again. A part of my knowledge path has been an inquiry into trying to understand how to repair the clipping and loosening of cultural threads that have occurred through colonialism and embracing the emotional aspects of this process. Just as "making a drum is not just making a drum," sewing and stitching are not just sewing and stitching.[318]

I wish to be transparent in saying that there are points where I deeply struggled on all levels, and it is important to be honest about this part of my research journey. I have been chronically ill and have navigated my neurodivergent thinking since I was a child. This has never been easy, but I have always been able to function and keep moving forward. Idealistically, I did not consider that there would be a day that I would not be able to pick myself up, make a strategy, and push through. The COVID-19 pandemic irrevocably changed me when I developed long COVID in the spring of 2020.[319] Suddenly, I was not capable of quickly bouncing back. All my chronic health issues were amplified, and I developed new illnesses that there were no successful treatments for. Nothing can prepare you for the day when everything changes. The moments in which I was unable to string together my thoughts or even recall everyday

[317] Aadsookaanag are sacred stories in Nishnaabemwin.
[318] Wherry, "Protocols and Transmission of Knowledge," Primary Colours.
[319] This is also known as Post COVID-19 condition. Carmen Robertson authored a wonderful essay called, "Visiting Kin: Indigenous Flatland Beading Aesthetics," (2024) in *Bead Talk: Indigenous Knowledge and Aesthetics From the Flatlands* that discusses visiting, kinship, and beading with COVID-19 as a backdrop.

words were shocking. It took three years for me to recover from some of the neurological damage to my health, but I still have additional illnesses that emerge whenever I have an infection. There are so many unknowns I still face every morning.

Every incremental half-step forward was accompanied by frustrating steps backwards in my pursuit of wellness. Many of my family members and community members passed away during my studies. So many of the beloved people I wanted to sit down and have conversations with both socially and within my research are no longer corporeally here with me. What can you do when only echoes of the people you loved remain? I began to consider if there is space for grief in research. In truth, this took a toll on my wellness and shaped my research process. I was not facing something that is often qualified as 'academic burnout': I was experiencing trauma, re-traumatization, and imbalances in my quest as a Nishnaabe Lucbanin researcher.[320] How we frame our research experiences as Indigenous researchers should reflect our truths and lived experiences and this begins with being honest about the difficult parts or research. When I was discussing how my health challenges impacted my research my friend Alana Sayers, a Hupacasath and Cree Indigenous Literatures scholar, reminded me that I cannot edit out my complicated experiences:

> Our experiences are so crucial to our work and woven into our research makes it so powerful. Also—I think every space we claim as Indigenous people to tell our stories is so important because our fellow Indigenous folks were denied space and humanness and the ability to share what they wanted how they wanted [...]

[320] I think trauma and re-traumatization for Indigenous scholars is common. It emerges in so many ways whether it is through family and community losses, undue stresses from inadequately compensated intellectual labour, and the unforeseen circumstances that arise and cannot be mitigated and neatly fit into a colonial capitalist timeframe.

> and I want our younger generations to know research doesn't happen like pedigreed social media accounts. It's also messy and painful.[321]

The reality is that there is a driving force for research to be curated in a way that smooths out all the raw and messy parts. That is not real though. That is not authentic in describing the spectrum of experiences and struggles that happen in the process.

I have used some elements of autobiography to self-narrate my experiences but have also threaded together my perspective with community narratives to communicate my ideas and processes. The reflective aspects of my work and how I analytically engage with each memory, narrative, and collaboration are an important part of how I have used autoethnography throughout this dissertation. Some aspects of this work and the questions I had are representative of the conversations I craved with my many relatives who are no longer on this side. In essence, I put forward questions to my relatives to capture some intriguing knowledge about how we engage in resurgence in grounded ways, but I also had to be able to interact with these questions myself. The main thread I have always returned to is trying to understand how we return to our ways of knowing and being. I chose to engage in these narrative approaches as well as speaking in a transparent way about my health challenges throughout the process after reading the works of Paulina Abustan, a queer disability justice AuDHD Lucbanin-Kapampangan scholar, and Valdine Alycia Flaming, a Two-spirit Métis scholar who has

[321] Alana Sayers, Hupacasath Nuu-chah-nulth and Kipohtakaw Cree First Nations, interview, March 8, 2022. She is an ancestral relative of mine through her Sayers line.

written about the intersections between chronic illness and beadwork.[322] Abustan and Flaming inspired me to consider innovative ways to share my research and Alana Sayers encouraged me to think about sharing my experiences in a personal way.[323] I considered if my body giving up was a sign that I needed to discontinue completing my work. It was difficult to admit I was not able to efficiently traverse the research process as I had done so many times before. However, my family told me that I needed to have courage and fight for the completion of my research journey. I am grateful to them as well as my communities, co-supervisors, committee members, and community supervisors who supported me along the way.[324] Acknowledging these aspects of my learning journey are crucial and embracing the teachings I have received is powerful. These facets and teachings from my everyday life are fused together in my identity and I see it as a part of what defines my research process.

Indigenous research practices can be rooted in spiritual approaches to redefining our relationships to Creation and provide wisdom on how to reconnect to our Indigenous knowledges. However, one of the challenges I have encountered along the way is delving into critically examining colonial impacts on Indigenous thinking. This self-examination process allows me to consider *how* I engage *in* knowledge and create

[322] Please read Abustan's article, "Surviving and Thriving: Queer Crip Pilipinx Kapwa Dream Worlds in *Animal Crossing New Horizons*" (2022), as well as Flaming's thesis, "Metis Autoethnography: Women's and Two-Spirit Beadwork about Chronic Illness and Disability" (2021). Cree-Métis scholar Deanna Reder has written an excellent work, *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition: Cree and Métis âcimisowina* (2022), for those who may be interested in Indigenous practices around life writing.

[323] Sayers, interview. Please read the intersectional disability, queer, and Lucbanin work of Paulina Abustan in "Recovering and Reclaiming Queer and Trans Indigenous and Mestiza Pilipinx Identities," (2015).

[324] I am grateful to my friend Shelby Blackjack (Northern Tutchone, Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation) for encouraging me to use voice notes and voice-to-text typing as innovative ways to address the challenges that my chronic health conditions present. Chi-miigwech to Andrea Walsh, Jeff Ganohalidoh Corntassel, John Kegedonce Borrows, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, Janice Simcoe, and Sarah Dickie for their support in my work.

relationships *with* knowledge. There were times when I worried about my research not being particularly groundbreaking even if it has been tremendously meaningful and life-changing to me. However, as my sister has reminded me when I have doubted my work: "it's not about reinventing the wheel. It's about understanding the purpose of why [the knowledge] was created, how our ancestors engaged with it, and you sharing your way of how you connect with it. How you do that and what it looks like may not be the same way, but the important parts are your intentions and actions."[325] There are moments where I have felt like much of mainstream academia is centred on the desire to create uniqueness and set oneself apart innovatively. However, the work I am attempting to accomplish is centred on my search to situate myself closer to my origin source, my ancestral sense of being and doing, as well as understanding how other beings in my life engage in this process of coming home. This may not be an exact replication of the ways of our ancestors, but it is about embodying the threads of their heart-centred lives.

5.2 Nishnaabemwin: Learning to Understand in a Deeper Way

A foundational part of my research process has been to deepen my learning of Nishnaabemwin. It was not a choice that was purely driven by language requirements for my degree, but rather because my parents have always said that if I really want to understand my cultures, I must commit to language learning even though it is difficult in an urban context.[326] It is a different way of experiencing culture that I do not think can

[325] Christina J. Whetung, Mississauga Nishnaabe Lucbanin, Alderville First Nation, interview, July 22, 2025.
[326] Please read the urban Anishinaabemowin resurgence work of Carmen Wiigwaas Craig in "Ozaaweshiinh Lək^{w}ənən/W̱SÁNEĆ-aking: An Ojibwe Language and Culture Needs Assessment in Victoria B.C.," (2023).

be completely replicated through other means. In my experience, there is a special resonating feeling that comes through engaging in the language and Darren-ba Taylor describes this similarly:

> In the summertime, my mom and her sisters would sometimes get together. So my mom's name was Virginia […] Her sister Sadie was her youngest sister. Her sister Verna was her older sister, and they would all get together, and they'd sit around, and they'd all speak Ojibwe together, and they'd talk about all the old times that they'd have. And it was really amazing, because I was really little, and I'd sit in the middle of them while they were sitting around talking Ojibwe. I couldn't understand what they were saying, per se, because I was being raised with only English, but it sounded as if those women were singing songs and they spoke so fast and so beautifully. And it was just really quite beautiful to sit amongst a bunch of older ladies who were talking about who knows what in their own language and the laughter that would peel out of them was pretty amazing. So those are some of the more fond memories I have of being a little kid growing up in that environment."[327]

Since childhood, I have been introduced to Nishnaabe cultural concepts through my father and other relatives and I started learning these teachings in the language more consistently in my twenties.[328] While I would have liked to have been able to focus on my specific dialect in Mississauga Nishnaabe territories, I have had the good fortune of being able to participate in learning at the Anishinaabe Language Table led by John Kegedonce Borrows, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, Carmen Wiigwaas Craig, Zofia Rogowski, and other community members in the urban setting beginning in 2014.[329]

Amongst this supportive circle of Anishinaabeg, who are also fantastic friends and relatives, I have had the privilege to learn and share in understanding several

[327] Darren-ba Shilling Taylor, Nishnaabe, Mnjikaning and Curve Lake First Nations, interview, May 8, 2019.
[328] I focused on my father's dialect because my mother's dialect has many fluent speakers comparatively. I have more access to immersion possibilities here and in Lucban as my mother is fluent and my aunt focused on Tagalog language, literature studies, and education.
[329] I made this commitment before I started my PhD studies.

dialects of Anishinaabemowin and I feel like this has been beneficial to me as a learner. Nishnaabe scholar Carmen Wiigwaas Craig (Hiawatha First Nation) echoes this sentiment by saying that “learning multiple dialects enriches ones’ learning experience.”[330] In that space, everyone was in different places in their language learning journeys, and it made me hopeful that I too would gain a deeper understanding. As Craig emphasizes through her urban Anishinaabemowin study, “the route to becoming fluent in an Indigenous language is almost never straightforward and there are almost never two identical routes, [so] it may be useful to have learners explore the routes of those who have come before them in learning.”[331] I found this to be true in terms of how it inspired me as a learner to keep showing up as well as encouraging me to feel confident enough to work on language lesson plans and games for the learning table. One of the most exciting impacts of my commitment to language learning has been that my parents and other family members have become more interested in language discussions and these conversations have blossomed into rekindling memories of language, cultural teachings, and family history.

The nature of Nishnaabemwin is that it often has contracted forms; therefore, as a non-natal speaker it has been a blessing to learn Western Anishinaabemowin as it uses lengthened forms of words in the language. As a result, learning in this manner as a primer has allowed me to experience and see the connections of meaning rather than being confused by the contracted forms. Craig reiterates the importance of this

[330] Carmen Wiigwaas Craig, “Ozaaweshiinh Ləkʷəŋən/W̱SÁNEĆ-aking: An Ojibwe Language and Culture Needs Assessment in Victoria B.C.,” (master’s thesis, University of Victoria, 2023), 64, https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/712e9581-9a0f-4828-bb6d-12777c39db1f/content/.
[331] Craig, “Ozaaweshiinh Ləkʷəŋən/W̱SÁNEĆ-aking,” 144.

approach in Anishinaabemowin learning and reminds learners that our ancestors had the ability to understand multiple dialects:

> When we can learn multiple versions of a word or of a form, we can build a stronger understanding of our language and we can communicate with more people. Our ancestors understood many dialects and could communicate in many places. Another reason it is beneficial to learn multiple dialects of our language, from an Eastern Ojibwe perspective, is if we only learned Eastern Ojibwe, we would not necessarily be aware of what all the underlying morphemes and/or vowels in a word are since we drop a lot of vowels, making it harder to break words apart into pieces.[332]

A number of my relatives worked as language interpreters and community representatives and had an understanding of multiple dialects as they lived in many different areas.[333] While I did not get an opportunity to go to an immersion camp during my studies I was able to go to several online Nishnaabemwin courses as well as study in a weekly Nishnaabemwin grammar course with my relatives.[334] For me, language learning has not been about trying to find equivalent concepts or sprinkling Nishnaabemwin into my writing when it is convenient.[335] It has been a powerful awakening of what it means for me to understand my pathway and has opened up a deeper way of feeling and experiencing the world around me.

Truthfully, there is something beautiful and electric in the moment that your mind can understand the language automatically without needing to ponder about word

[332] Craig, "Ozaaweshiinh Ləkʷəŋən/W̲SÁNEĆ-aking," 120.
[333] These are also Carmen's relatives.
[334] I am committed to going to an immersion camp for language soon. Chi-miigwech to the wonderful Nishnaabemwin teachers and language learners I have had a chance to learn from over the years in courses. I am grateful to Monica Benson and Lee Benson, Carmen Wiigwaas Craig, Showna Smoke, Sarah MacLeod-Beaver, Isadore Toulouse, and Patricia Osawamick.
[335] I do not think there are many truly equivalent concepts from English into Nishnaabemwin.

conversion.[336] I remember being so joyful when I first learned what the morphemes mean in our word for seed beads, manidoominensag—little spirit berries or little spirit seeds. The spirit beings we encounter in our lives provide kernels of wisdom and knowledge for us to be inspired by and draw strength from. Every week that I went to my language classes my parents would remind me how proud my grandparents were of me: this was powerful support and encouragement to give me because I only have the opportunity to speak to my grandparents through prayers and dreams. Of course, there are difficult and frustrating parts to language learning too, but one of the best teachings I have received from my parents is that I should not be afraid of making a mistake. Every mistake is an opportunity to learn and grow in my language learning.

Anishinaabe teachings are exemplified by concepts in our language like mino-bimaadiziwin, also known as the good life, and these are central to how we interact with the world. They teach us to engage in deeper listening and mindfulness when speaking to our relatives. Within our teachings, we see ourselves as "spiritual beings that have a unique and respectful relationship to the land and all of creation."[337] Moreover, within mino-bimaadiziwin is the idea that all beings including those in the plant and mineral worlds around us are alive, related, and spirit-imbued and out of this knowledge comes the recognition of how integral it is for each of us to establish strong relationships with all beings in Creation.[338] This sense of knowing we are all spirits in relation to one

[336] I have had this moment learning several languages, but it felt uniquely special when I was learning Nishnaabemwin.
[337] Nicole Bell, "Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin: Living Spiritually with Respect, Relationship, Reciprocity, and Responsibility," *Contemporary Studies in Environmental and Indigenous Pedagogies: A Curricula of Stories and Place*, eds. Andrejs Kulnieks, Dan Roronhiakewen Longboat, and Kelly Young (Sense Publishers, 2013), 93.
[338] Bell, "Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin," 93.

another allows us to grow and transform in an abundance of ways. Gwich'in Cree Métis scholar Lois Edge (Gwich'in Nation of Northwest Territories) writes about relationships to plants and the land through beadwork, "it is not just a flower. It is not just a pan-Indian flower. It comes from a place and a tradition and a people. There is a reason why they sewed that flower. It is because it is connected to that plant and that land."[339] In order to have respectful relationships with one another, we have to invoke our values around zhawenjigewin through speaking and acting with good hearts, good minds, and good intentions.[340] But first, we must make sure we all engage in self-reflection in finding our sense of balance, interdependence, and wholeness.[341] As a Nishnaabe, mno-bmaadziwin can only truly exist for me as a *lived* aspect of my everyday life in everything that I do, including my artistic practices. It cannot be used merely as a theoretical approach to living.

5.3 Preliminary Research Ideas and Motivations

Initially, I had an interest in concepts around blood memory and studies of Indigenous intergenerational trauma and epigenetics, but early on I realized this was not meant to be the pathway of my research. Although, what drew me to these discussions was my interest in addressing the colonial and systemic harms that have been experienced by and continue to impact my communities. This ancestral hurt is something that has been explored by other Indigenous scholars in interesting ways and,

[339] Edge, "My Grandmother's Moccasins," 103.
[340] I interpret zhawenjigewin as showing loving kindness in Anishinaabemowin.
[341] Bell, "Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin," 96.

as my now passed on relative Darren-ba Taylor emphasized, it may not be a part of my particular journey of resurgence research:

> You're suddenly a historian and you carry the stories, [or] having a beautiful voice and being a singer, and being innovative in looking at things. So you're not a boy or a girl. You're a sacred being that was gifted to the people and they recognized you, and you were raised that way, and you were made aware of things that were beyond what was going on. So those things—those really profound things that happened before contact—I'd like to think that those should be our driving force as opposed to the things that happened after contact. You know, the things that were horrible and hideous are all there, but before that there was something amazing and there was something incredibly intense. We have thousands and thousands of years of history that we created all on our own and I'd rather concentrate on that than 500 years of trauma, pain and suffering. It makes more sense to me to go back and look at the ancient ones and let them lend me their strength.[342]

Even though blood memory did not fit in my research, scholars and curators such as Nancy Marie Mithlo (Fort Sill Chiricahua Warm Springs Apache Tribe) argue that as a concept it can be helpful in providing clarity for Indigenous knowledge that is expressed through art in visual and verbal mediums as well as for making creative spaces for addressing intergenerational trauma.[343]

For Nishnaabeg, mkwendamwin can be defined as a word for memory. One of the ways of describing memory in Nishnaabemwin is to think of it as the action of seeking out the aspects of knowledge that have come to us throughout our lives. For me, colonization represents the unstitching and pulling apart of knowledge that we would have absorbed in our lifetimes if we had never been colonized. It can be argued that colonialism is a disturbing and disruptive act of wanendamowin in the manner that it

[342] Darren-ba Shilling Taylor, Nishnaabe, Mnjikaning and Curve Lake First Nations, interview, May 8, 2019.
[343] Nancy Marie Mithlo, "Blood Memory and the Arts: Indigenous Genealogies and Imagined Truths," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 4 (2011), 106.

has unstitched the knowledge that Anishinaabeg would have come to know from our ancestors.[344] Many Anishinaabeg in contemporary times have trouble *seeing* and *feeling* our ways of being but fortifying our connections to gikendaasowin and izhitwaawin provide an avenue for us to remember the knowledge that colonization has forcibly taken from us.[345] By extension, acts of resurgence are about remembering how we as Anishinaabeg come to live mno-bmaadziwin in all its forms. For Indigenous peoples to come back to our ways of being I believe we must come back to our way of seeing and feeling the world, but it requires each of us to do our part in sharing what we know and providing space for each other to learn in a good way.

When thinking about mkwendamwinan how do we spiritually come home?[346] How do we address intergenerational disruptions in the community context? And how do we talk about the spiritual aspects of Indigenous resurgence? This research was originally inspired by challenging the ways sacred knowledge is perceived by institutions, but it became so much deeper, expansive, and more personal than that. I found out that this process really was not about carving out Indigenous spaces in the academy for me. I began to understand that honouring the transformative power of the sacred teachings meant engaging in the act of showing up and doing whatever I can to help our communities. In many ways, to be present and dedicated to my family and community is my way of creating a foundation for Nishnaabeg and Lucbanin to re-stitch together our connections to our ways of being in the universe. One of the most crucial

[344] My interpretation of wanendamowin is forgetting or experiencing the loss of feelings in the mind.
[345] Gikendaasowin is knowledge in Anishinaabemowin. Izhitwaawin is way of culture in Anishinaabemowin.
[346] Mkwendamwinan are memories in Nishnaabemwin.

goals of this research was to explore how we go through the process of re-spiritualizing our communities and reconnecting to our forms of gikendaasowin in meaningful ways. It was a raw homecoming for me, both spiritually and physically—the disruptions of ancestral knowledge within my family are meant to be re-spiritualized and re-stitched back together, but the process is not easy.

As Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach (Pasqua First Nation) posits, "sacred knowledge is not really accepted in Western research, other than in a peripheral, anthropological exotic kind of way."[347] In many ways, mainstream academia is uncomfortable with "the proposition of integrating spiritual knowledges and processes like ceremonies, dreams, or synchronicities, which act as portals for gaining knowledge."[348] However, as Kovach argues, the sacredness of Indigenous knowing and research "is bound in ceremony, spirit, land, place, nature, relationships, language, dreams, humour, purpose, and stories in an inexplicable, holistic, non-fragmented way, and it is this sacredness that defies the conventional."[349] This research is something I hope will help to address some of the gaps in how we discuss the spiritual qualities of resurgence and to underline the importance of remembrance as a form of resurgence. In this dissertation, I examine how coming back to the spirit that exists within ourselves, our cultures, the land, and waters *is* Indigenous resurgence. This research is about how Anishinaabe concepts of spirit memory and wholeness can act as pathways to resurgence in communities. Anishinaabe teachings around spirit memory provide a way

[347]Margaret Elizabeth Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (University of Toronto Press, 2010), 67.
[348] Kovach, "Indigenous Methodologies," 67-68.
[349] Kovach, "Indigenous Methodologies," 140.

of recovering our sense of knowing and being. When we approach spirituality and resurgence in these ways, we come to realize that the loss we have experienced through colonization has not left us forever untethered. We just need to find the threads that lead us back and work on the process of mending.

The process of recognizing the ancestrally stitched knowledge that exists in our spirits is an act of resurgence. These are the memories that are stitched and imprinted onto our spirits before we are born into the world: it is "the knowledge that enters this world when one's spirit fuses with their physical body [and it helps to form their] spirit identity."[350] In Anishinaabe teachings, our spiritual selves are eternal, so when we go through the process of resurgence we are engaging in a way of remembrance through awakening our ancestral connections. Thus, our spirit selves can be awoken through spiritual acts of resurgence such as attending ceremony and coming together to have experiences as a community. Oftentimes, we talk about that indescribable feeling where your heart is so full of goodness that it is radiating outwards and, in all directions—of how natural it feels to visit one another, speak in the language together, and enjoy culture with one another. Awakening ancestral memories can make you cry uncontrollably and feel the electricity on the hairs of your neck. It makes you feel like the eyes of your spirit are now awake, open, and ready for another layer of life you never knew you understood, but somehow you know you are coming home. This interaction with one's own spiritual bond with Creation is not simply an individual and personal learning experience. It is a purposeful interaction in the sense that it is intended to lead

[350] Rheault, "Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin," 140.

to strengthening our families and communities in Anishinaabewaki.[351] The knowledge that we come to know is envisioned to inform and guide the lives of the next seven generations.

Ancestral memories and storied memories are encoded within our indigeneity, but we have to go through the action of spiritual connection to fully restore that relationship. Scholars such as C. Nadia Seremetakis challenge the audience to begin re-evaluating their ideas about memory, place, and artefact.[352] With the impacts of colonization, we need to consider re-conceptualizing these ideas and relationships. If "meaning-endowed objects constitute [I]ndigenous, regional nets of sensory receipt," then it us up to us as Indigenous peoples to continue decolonizing our conceptions around wholeness and understandings of our fellow beings.[353] Building on ideas of wholeness further, I feel like the idea of accessing ancestral memories through the storied memories that exist in our cultures, bodies, the lands and waters is central to how we repair colonial harms. Seremetakis's work initially intrigued me and compelled me to want to pursue a project that could incorporate research on cultural mnemonic devices when I first read it during my master's degree studies. However, with time I found the discussion of the animacy of 'objects' and 'artefacts' sidetracked me from the direction the threads were leading me in my doctoral research. I realized that while that

[351] Anishinaabe land in Anishinaabemowin.
[352]C. Nadia Seremetakis is a Greek scholar whose work reflects her cultural upbringing between Southern Peloponnese and Athens. I was also initially influenced by Nissa Ramsey's work around agency and 'material objects' as discussed in *Place in Research: Theory, Methodology, and Methods* (2009), by Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie.
[353] C. Nadia Seremetakis, "The Memory of the Senses, Part I: Marks of the Transitory," in *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity,* ed. C. Nadia Seremetakis (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 12.

topic is fascinating it was not the direction my research and spiritual inquiry was leading me. Ultimately, my teachings emphasize that materiality is not separate from life and spirituality; therefore, the 'material' embodying the spiritual is a part of everyday life. The focus on materiality as a separate category in some of the works I was reading about at the time was not drawing me in, so I decided to focus on bead-based knowledges: "beading as a mode of inquiry remains contrary to many Western-based approaches that are hyper individualist and/or material based."[354] When I encountered the works of Lois Edge, Sherry Farrell Racette, Dawn Marsden, and Lana Ray I had an epiphany moment. It was work that resonated with me so deeply—beadwork is a way of stitching together Indigenous cultural wisdoms, knowledge expressions, and collaborative experiences. Beading is art, but it can also be used to create methodology. I began to realize that I did not want to just study cultural mnemonic devices. I knew that I needed to make an ancestral knowledge encodement through beadwork as a way of synthesizing the research. Beading is Indigenous resurgence that connects me to my ancestors.

In scholar Vanessa Watts' dissertation work (2016), she delves into the divide that exists in Western thought between epistemologies and ontologies as well as explicates Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee cosmologies around place-thought. Her work is important because it describes these levels of connection between spirituality and ways of knowing, place-based thinking, and how colonialism has transformed and

[354] Lana Ray, "'Beading Becomes a Part of Your Life': Transforming the Academy Through the Use of Beading as a Method of Inquiry," *International Review of Qualitative Research* 9, no.3 (2016), 365. https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2016.9.3.363/.

impacted Indigenous ontologies.[355] As Watts argues, our ability to exist as Anishinaabeg is defined and "determined by land, and how we operate within the world is through communication with land."[356] The land is a being that thrives in a physical, spiritual, thinking, and feeling manner in the same way that we do.[357] However, we are not just in the process of being physically displaced by colonialism through the ongoing land dispossession, but we are also being undermined in our sense of knowing and being. As Watts puts forth, "our ability to think, act, and govern also becomes compromised."[358] In Nishnaabe teachings, we understand both the land and our physical cultures contain spiritual essences. However, this spiritual connection has been impacted and damaged through colonization:

> We as a whole are not a whole people any longer. No, we're not. The fact that each individual person is shattered by their experience here on Earth, their spirits are broken, changed, and not whole. There are chips and pieces missing. I think that in order to be able to make an effective change within our society as Anishinaabe people, you would have to strip down all of the concepts that you have as individual people and find a way that you can engage with people that would not trigger them."[359]

Yet this is not knowledge that has been forever lost. We can tap into our ancestral ways of knowing and begin the process of reinvigorating our ways of being. This process is not only created through remembrance, but also other acts of resurgence for our families and communities. The acts of remembrance and interpretation of memories

[355] Vanessa A. Watts, "Re-meaning the Sacred: Colonial Damage and Indigenous Cosmologies," (doctoral dissertation, Queen's University, 2016), 2, https://qspace.library.queensu.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/fdc0ad10-741e-4940-a3dc-6ca9e4449145/content/.
[356] Watts, "Re-meaning the Sacred," 2.
[357] Watts, "Re-meaning the Sacred," 2.
[358] Watts, "Re-meaning the Sacred," 64-65.
[359] Darren-ba Shilling Taylor, Nishnaabe, Mnjikaning and Curve Lake First Nations, interview, May 8, 2019.

throughout this dissertation are a form of re-encoding and encoding ancestral knowledge.

5.4 Research Questions: Where I Began Is Not Where I Ended Up

The following questions were used in this research as a starting point for discussion:[360]

- How do we redefine how we look at each of these elements—the spirit that exists in ourselves, our 'material' cultures, and the land—as being part of the whole?[361]
- Can spirit memory be transformed into a manner of strength for Indigenous peoples? In essence, is it possible for us to go beyond the physical understanding of concepts like 'blood memory' and apply that concept to both the land and 'material' aspects of Indigeneity?
- If spirit and memory were once imbued into the essence of our beings, our 'material' manifestations of culture, and the land, then how do we decolonize these aspects of ourselves in a wholistic way?
- What forms of decolonization and resurgence are central to facilitating reconnection with the spiritual?

How do we address intergenerational disruptions of ancestral ways of being? How do we come back to the wholeness of our worldviews? Colonial reconciliation through processes such as museum repatriation, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and land claims have fallen short of addressing our spiritual need to come back to our ways as Nishnaabeg. This is a result of the fragmented way of thinking ingrained into the colonial state:

> We must be attentive to how power structures […shape…] which narratives, modes of understanding our world, and the web of relationships in operation are given primacy. Furthermore, we must untangle how these narratives have ordered *how* we relate to one another and to creation. Too often, conventional

[360] It is important to underline that these questions were intended to generate initial discussions and there were branching questions that were organically developed within each conversation which were more specific to each person who contributed to this research.

[361] At the time, I used this language as I was struggling with the binary separations between the material and spiritual as well as the tangible and intangible.

> Western knowledge is willing to turn to the relational only insofar as this attention to relationships doesn't threaten the stability of the state.[362]

We are aware that the state strives to determine how Indigenous peoples access our own sense of being; therefore, the many acts of decolonization and resurgence can be thought of as a manner of re-instilling that spiritual memory back into our communities. This research is intended to delve into what that means in a wholistic way. Conceptualizations around the body, mind, spirit, land, and material expressions of culture are often thought of as separate entities due to colonization, so my initial goal was to explore Indigenous approaches to our ideas of wholeness in community and to identify what forms of decolonization and resurgence facilitate reconnection with the spiritual. If each act of resistance is indeed made possible by previous acts of resistance, then I hope this research can contribute some inspiration and possibilities for the next seven generations.

5.5 Approaches to Indigenous Research Methodology: Original Research Models

My research was guided by Anishinaabe Gchitwaawendamowinan ("The Seven Sacred Gifts") and was intended to inform my ethics and ability to engage in mno-bmaadziwin in a balanced and wholistic way throughout my project.[363] The seven teachings are: "*Nbwaakaawin* (Wisdom), *Zaagidewin* (Love), *Mnaadendiwin* (Respect),

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[362] Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Towards a Relational Paradigm— Four Points for Consideration: Knowledge, Gender, Land, and Modernity," in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, eds. Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 180.

[363] I would translate Anishinaabe Gchitwaawendamowinan as sacred thoughts or sacred mind-based perceptions/feelings. As we know, there are thousands of teachings and gifts to learn from in life, but seven is a great and sacred number. Vanessa A. Watts uses the term "Seven Sacred Gifts" in "Towards Anishinaabe Governance and Accountability: Reawakening our Relationships and Sacred Bimaadiziwin" (master's thesis, University of Victoria, 2006), vi, https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/items/8c6c34dc-f989-4f1b-87d7-b97b8b23a1e0/. Mno-bmaadziwin is also known as the good life in Nishnaabemwin.

Aakde'win (Bravery), *Gwekwaadsiwin* (Honesty), *Dbadendizwin* (Humility) and *Debwewin* (Truth)."[364] I am always in a process of reflecting on how I interact with each of these gifts because the reality is that teachings "exist on a basis of consistent renewal" and these particular teachings are merely a guide to help us consider how we can relate to one another.[365] When we recognize our spiritual connectivity to the land, waters, and our plant and animal kin we can grow and heal from the impacts of colonization in ways that transform every aspect of our lives. This sense of rootedness is what defines me as a Nishnaabe Lucbanin. This connectivity is what guides my bmaadziwin.[366] It is not knowledge nor wisdom that are solely central to my way of being, but rather the enduring commitment to respecting *life itself* which is the core of my bmaadziwin.

Figure 30. Daawin Research Model. Initial research model that was created for author's master's degree research and was used at the onset of this dissertation research work. (Estrella Whetung, *Daawin Research Model*, 2008).

[364] Watts, "Towards Anishinaabe Governance and Accountability," 38.
[365] Watts, "Towards Anishinaabe Governance and Accountability," 38.
[366] Bmaadziwin can be thought of as conduct of living in Nishnaabemwin.

In the Daawin research model diagram, there are a number of concentric circles placed within one another that describe relational responsibilities (see figure 30).[367] At the centre of the diagram is "Giin/Niin" which shows that we place ourselves in the innermost circle because in order to create responsible relationships with one another we need to make sure that we are healthy people who are committed to bringing goodness and are responsible for the outcomes of our choices.[368] We are strengthened by and responsible to those who surround us in our lives: "we're taught that you're never an entity by yourself".[369] The next circle is "Family/Clan" or doodem and it demonstrates our integral responsibility to our family and how our ethics as well as biases are shaped by family teachings. Within the next circle of responsibility is "Community" and it reveals that the diversity found within each community is a form of strength to be drawn upon. An important Nishnaabe teaching is to listen to what everyone has to say to give oneself context before forming one's own opinions. Our next responsibility is to our "Nation": Nishnaabeg are diverse, and we have many histories, but we draw strength from our varied experiences. We are unified by our origins, language, teachings, and understandings of the cosmos. No teaching can exist without others as all are important and are strengthened by balance. Finally, our outermost responsibility is to all those who exist outside of our nation ("Mayagi-anishinaabeg").[370]

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[367] Figure 30, daawin is community, base camp, and/or village in Anishinaabemowin. This diagram shows the relational and reciprocal flowing aspects of "Daawin." I had originally created this for my master's degree project and was inspired by my cousin Vanessa Watts's work on relational governance modeling in her thesis (2006) as well as circle diagrams I had seen Métis scholar Kim Anderson use.

[368] Giin/Niin is You/Me in Anishinaabemowin.

[369] Majigkwewis (Mary Shingobe Barstow), "Who Was Really the Savage?," in *Star Songs and Water Spirits: A Great Lakes Native Reader*, ed. Victoria Brehm (Ladyslipper Press, 2011), 390.

[370] Mayagi-anishinaabeg are the strange ones in Anishinaabemowin.

As Nishnaabeg, we are taught to have respectful relationships with our neighbours. A part of this process requires a commitment to creating, maintaining, and renewing responsible relationships with our neighbours. I had originally intended to build upon this model and use it to guide my research methodology as an approach that highlights connected and respectful reciprocal relationships. However, as I was going through my initial phases of research preparation, I realized that it did not fit the direction of my research plans. When I reviewed the model, the main shortcomings were that it is far too human-centric, and it lacks the depth of what community can encompass. I realized that the model no longer fit because my thinking had expanded and transformed with age and differences in my approaches to relationships as I grew older.

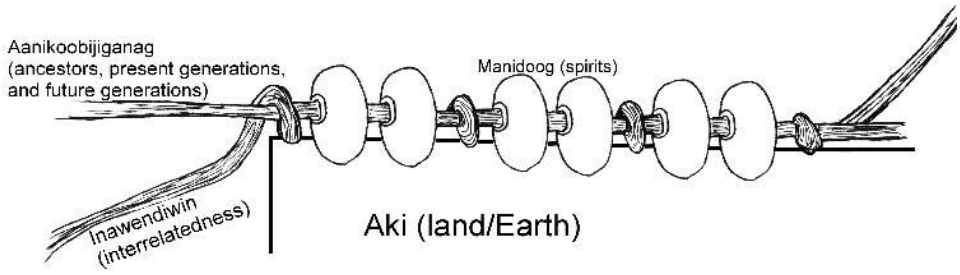

Figure 31. Miigiseyaab (Beaded Chain) Research Model. This diagram became the working concept behind my research design for this project in which I tried to retain some elements of the connectivity and patterns of circularity from the *Daawin Research Model* while also incorporating sewing, beading and thread concepts. (Estrella Whetung, *Miigiseyaab Research Model*, 2018).

Change and transformation can be a natural part of research, and I feel like the evolution of my research project parallels the changes I had in my life as I was learning how to bead and refining my beadwork knowledge at the same time (see figure 30). As I

learned new beading techniques, I began to see that my original research model no longer resonated with me in the same way.[371] Transformation is a natural part of processing as we work, and we should not be trapped into thinking that everything must culminate into a perfect project.

My way of being shifted as I became a beader, so I began to work on a beading methodology and model for the research, and re-examined a concept I encountered at the beginning of my undergraduate degree.[372] When I was in the First Nations Community Studies program at Camosun College, I had a wonderful professor named Francis Adu-Febiri who encouraged me to think about Indigenous conceptions of time, dimensionality, specificity, and regionality.[373] He shared the idea about how Indigenous conceptions of time resemble a helix in that there is a line of time, a spiral that coils around this line, and a circular motion that is enacted through the spiral.[374] He also emphasized that while Indigenous people have patterns of cyclical design such as seasonality we are not repeating the same events; hence, there are added aspects of dimensionality from the experiences we have throughout time.[375] The eventual model I made honours the circularity of my Daawin approach, the helical dimensionality of what

[371] I am so grateful to Jessica Sagaate Day (Anishinaabe, Finnish, English and Irish, Fort William First Nation) for teaching me how to do two-needle beading and being so supportive of my beading journey. She is a phenomenal artist, cultural teacher, and art therapist. She opened my mind to something that somehow felt familiar even though I had never done it before.

[372] See figure 30, *Miigiseyaab Research Model*. A miigis is a shell or pearl and –eyaab refers to a string or a chain in Anishinaabemowin. Miigiseyaab is sometimes used to describe wampum belts from what I have learned over the years in treaty discussions. I had always been interested in the concept of helical experiences and would return to it in my thoughts but had never formally applied it into my work.

[373] He is an incredible teacher who focuses on decolonization, indigenization, and diversity within the context of sociology and draws a lot of strength from his Ghanaian heritage. He encouraged me to consider traditional Indigenous listening practices and to become more comfortable in oral traditions.

[374] Note: this is my interpretation of what he shared in our class in 2003.

[375] This is represented by the helix being shaped through a circular motion.

I learned from Adu-Febiri, my beading journey, as well as concepts I had learned through gaining more fluency in Nishnaabemwin.

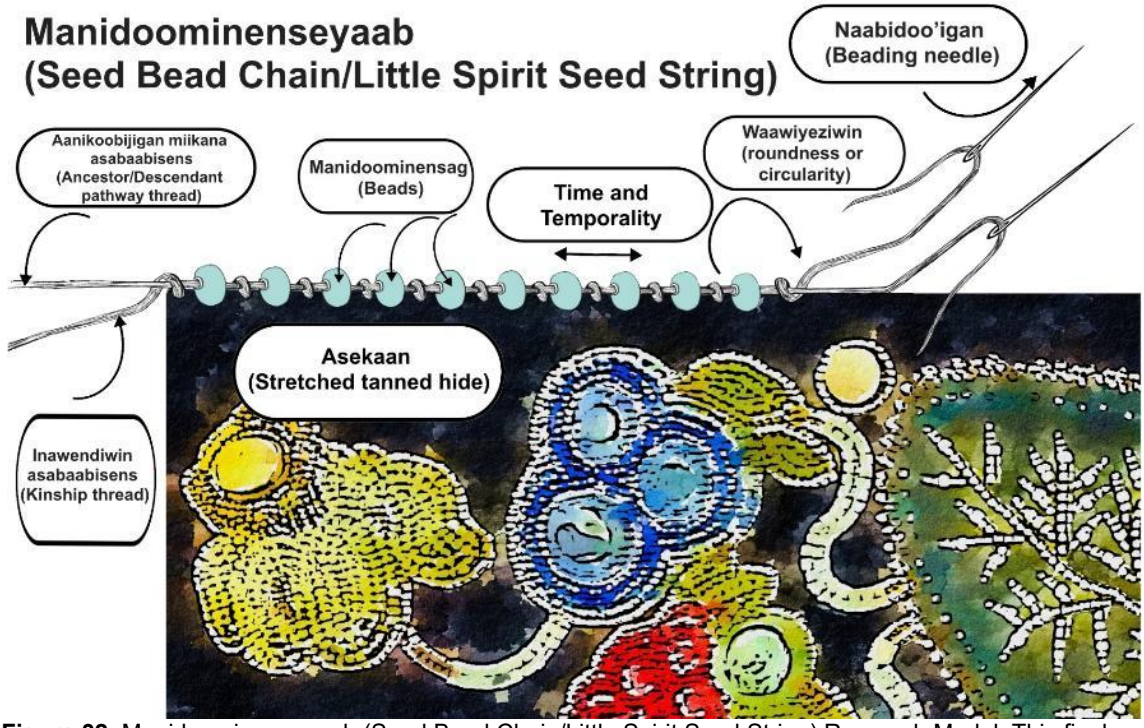

Figure 32. Manidoominenseyaab (Seed Bead Chain/Little Spirit Seed String) Research Model. This final iteration of my model was used as a foundational part of research analysis as well as to deepen earlier understandings of concepts. (Estrella Whetung, *Manidoominenseyaab Research Model*, 2025).

The *Manidoominenseyaab Research Model* (see figure 32) connects with my notions of how spirit memory is formed and made through lines and threads of connectivity that exist in our lives. Each bead holds a place in the same way that each piece of knowledge is the foundation for something more. The finished manidoominensikaanag (things or items made of little spirit seeds or berries) hold the collective and individual uniqueness that is found in the research process. Each aspect is integral to both the foundation and overall impact of what is made. In creating a beading model for research approaches to spirit inquiry and resurgence I considered

how beads are laid in relation with one another spatially in both a physical and spiritual way. Seed beads can be smooth or faceted with multiple sides, layered with different colours, sheens, and levels of transparency, created with traditional older techniques, or made newly in contemporary spaces. The knowledge that we gain in the research process resembles the diversity and dimensionality of beads. Just as no two beads are identical, nor is there a perfect replication of each facet of knowledge. If each bead can represent each spirit being that we have a relationship with and gain knowledge and memories from, then we can consider the various aspects and qualities that exist in each gift we receive in research. While the overall design that is created through knowledge is powerful and important, so is every stitch that makes that design come into being. Beads come together and interplay with one another in similar ways that gained wisdoms do within the research process.

5.6 An Explanation of Manidoominenseyaab (Seed Bead Chain/Little Spirit Seed String) Research Model[376]

> **Aanikoobijigan miikana asabaabisens (Ancestor/Descendant pathway thread)[377]** – The ancestor/descendant pathway thread is what strings all the beads along and provides a direction for the work. This thread is forged and strengthened by the aanikoobijiganag (ancestors and descendants) and helps us to see the connectivity we have to one another through time. Sometimes these

[376] Throughout this explanation please refer to figure 32. I am inspired by Anishnaabe scholar Dawn Marsden's work in the article, "Expanding Knowledge through Dreaming, Wampum and Visual Arts," (2004), in that she acknowledges that the model she worked on is not exclusively hers and can inspire others in their work. I want people to know that they can use the beading model I have worked on if they find it helpful in their work. Perhaps those who use it can think of improved ways of looking at these concepts in Anishinaabemowin.

[377] Ancestor, descendant, great-grandparent, and great-grandchild is aanikoobijigan in Anishinaabemowin. I want to honour the fact that my grandfather's cousin, Murray-ba Whetung, would speak fondly about his dear wife Cobe-ba and talk about how her name Cobe/Koob meant that she was the connector of generations and a middle child. Cobe-ba was an incredible language teacher at Curve Lake and believed in the importance of making sure Nishnaabemwin was a part of the everyday life of Nishnaabe communities. I will always appreciate that he came to visit me on my first trip back home. Miikana can refer to a road or path or a trail. Asabaabisens is a word for small thread, but the non-diminutive form asabaab is used to describe net lines. I could have used other words to describe this, but they are more particularly used for loom bead threads and machine threads for sewing.

threads have become frayed through colonization, so it becomes necessary to strengthen these threads through the emergence of coming generations. I have not found a way to describe **time and temporality** through any single concept in Nishnaabemwin, and I see them as fused parts of our ancestral and descendant pathway threads.

Inawendiwin asabaabisens (Kinship thread) – This refers to the tacking thread that is used to sew down the pathway thread between each bead. When we tack each bead down, we are engaging in the intentionality of doing each stitch, but we are also recognizing the importance of the inawendiwin (kinship or interrelatedness) in this thread. The inawendiwin asabaabisens (kinship thread) fuses together the pieces that exist to create a different being. We use a spiraling motion to sew and tack each bead down. This spiraling motion resembles the **waawiyeziwin (roundness or circularity)** of our bimaadiziwin (way of life) as well as the dimensionality Nishnaabe-gkendaansowin (Nishnaabe knowledge) and mikwendamowinan (memories).

Manidoominensag (Beads) – Each bead (little spirit seed/berry) strengthens us and provides knowledge for our growth. The pieces of gikendaasowinan (knowledges) and mikwendamowinan (memories) we receive in life can be represented by the beautiful and unique value of each bead.

Asekaan (Stretched tanned hide) – The stretched tanned hide provides the foundation and stability necessary for manidoominensikaanag. Asekaan in this way can represent the guidance and grounding force brought to us by Shkakimikwe (Earth Mother) and the lands and waters that are the essence of her being.

Naabidoo'igan (Beading needle) – The beading needle is a guiding force and can represent the dis-nbwaakaawinan (umbilical wisdoms) that shape our lives through intuition and our connections to the universe.

5.7 Akinoo'amaagewinan: Ethics and Bagijiganan[378]

I was guided by the teachings of Nishnaabeg as a basis for my methods and ethics. From my teachings, Anishinaabeg see all of Creation as filled with living spiritual beings who are powerful and can thrive without our co-mingling, but human beings are highly dependent on the graciousness of other beings to help us survive.[379] To live as

[378] Akinoo'amaagewinan are teachings and bagijiganan are offerings in Anishinaabemowin.

[379] Zhawenjigewin explains this as a teaching in that it can mean a blessing or a loving-kindness. I learned about the connected verb zhawenim, to feel and enact unconditional love (can also mean pity) from John Borrows.

Anishinaabeg means that we are embedded within Creation; therefore, the concept of mno-bmaadziwin is essential to my ability to survive and thrive as a Nishnaabe Lucbanin.[380] For me, the balance of our teachings is what defines mno-bmaadziwin. If we accept we are a part of a life that is physical-spiritual foundationally, then we must also acknowledge that these realities are inseparable. The physical cannot exist without the spiritual. It is the harmonious totality we have as beings that defines our link to one another: we live in a space of aabawaadiziiwin (or "the togetherness") with each other.[381] We are defined by our intertwining relationships. My upbringing in our ways has set a clear framework for how I must conduct myself. If I am not acting respectfully in accordance with my nation's teachings, then I am not fulfilling my sacred responsibility to my ancestors, my role identified and nurtured by my family, and my commitment to the next seven generations.

In Anishinaabe teachings we give thanks as well as ask permission through offerings or bagijiganan. This concept acknowledges the enduring reciprocal responsibility we have to all parts of Creation: "a reciprocal relationship with the natural world includes an understanding that 'if you hurt Spirit in other beings in nature, you hurt the very essence of your own spirit.'"[382] When we do not respect these relationships we are both hurting and disrespecting ourselves in the process. For Anishinaabeg, offerings are gifts that act as a responsible and relational gesture toward "people, animals, spirits, and other entities in the universe, given in the interests of creating ties, honoring them,

[380] The good life is a balanced and rooted approach that recognizes and respects all beings in Creation.
[381] Watts, "Towards Anishnaabe Governance and Accountability," vi.
[382] Bell, "Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin," 102.

or asking for assistance and direction."[383] Through this offering, we are making a lasting vow to act responsibly with another being (or beings) through acknowledgment, valuing, and respecting.[384] Offerings are meant to solidify and renew our ties with all beings in Creation and can be found in multiple forms that include: semaa, wiisinawinan, nagamowinan, aadizookaanag and dibaajimowinan, gikendaasowin, and zhooniyaa.[385] For example, semaa holds importance because it is "sacred medicine and is used to recognize Spirit."[386] When we ask for permission, help, and guidance we do so by giving semaa to being(s) to create respectful and responsible relations. Adhering to our bimaadiziwin teachings as Anishinaabe scholars demonstrates our commitment to the ethics we employ, not only in our research, but also in our daily lives.[387]

I engaged in the research process by primarily working within my familial communities, through conversations with community members who have inspired me throughout my life, and by prioritizing the works of Nishnaabeg and Lucbanin. A core part of relational research for me has been to respect those kinship ties and recognize the wealth of knowledge that exists there first and foremost (see figure 33). The bagijiganan I chose for the project to give relatives were mnoomin and mshkikiwan.[388]

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[383] Jill Doerfler, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, eds., "Bagijige: Making an Offering," in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories* (University of Manitoba Press, 2013), xv.

[384] Doerfler, Sinclair, and Stark, eds., "Bagijige," xv.

[385] Doerfler, Sinclair, and Stark, eds., "Bagijige," xv. Semaa is tobacco in Nishnaabemwin. Wiisinawinan is food in Anishinaabemowin, but there are other ways of expressing this. Nagamowinan are songs in Anishinaabemowin. Aadizookaanag are sacred stories in Anishinaabemowin. Dibaajimowinan are everyday stories in Anishinaabemowin. Gikendaasowin is knowledge in Anishinaabemowin. Zhooniyaa is money in Anishinaabemowin.

[386] Kathleen E. Absolon, *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know Indigenous re-Search Methodologies*, 2nd edition (Fernwood Publishing, 2022), 150.

[387] Bimaadiziwin is conduct of living in Anishinaabemowin.

[388] Mnoomin is rice and mshkikiwan are medicines in Nishnaabemwin.

Figure 33. Nawendiwin. Threads of kinship with my relatives. The collection of photographs around the image are some of the beautiful beings who have been in my life and the lives of my human kin, supported me, loved me, visited me, and taught me many lessons that I am grateful for. The centre part of the image is a composite piece of art combining two beaded of my beaded works—a galaxy inspired by Star Wars and a spider's web. I participated in a Bead This in Your Style Challenge that had a spider and made this web as a companion piece. The challenge designs are from Eeyou Istchee Cree artist Saige Mukash (@Nalakwsis on Instagram) and each has been a wonderful opportunity for me to stay creative and gain energy for other beadwork. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage mixing photography and beadwork, *Nawendiwin*, 2025. Original photographs and beadwork by author).

Mnoomin is rice and mshkikiwan are important traditional offerings from both sides of my family and represent how central our relationship to rice is to our way of living. I sewed bags from the hides of moose, deer, and elk to honour my doodem relatives as well as beaded each bag with berry motifs to represent my parents' childhood memories of berry-picking as well as the seeds of knowledge we receive every day. These bags

were offered to the people who supported me in my work through providing me space, making time to tea-visit with me, having conversations with me, as well as those I intended to visit with, but may not have had the chance to yet.[389] The way that we interact with stories through research, from one being to another being, is a way of honouring and recognizing the spirit of each aspect of knowledge shared (see figure 33).[390] I recorded interviews and conversations with family and community members through digital recordings and extensive notetaking, but sometimes it was difficult to go through the process of transcribing when it involved relatives who have now passed on. I had to give myself space to breathe and process that feeling sometimes, but I pushed forward because I wanted to honour everything that has been shared with me. Whether I am beading, writing, or beading while I write, my parents are always encouraging me to do my work, look at it in many ways, and then revise my work. They emphasize the importance of intentionality as well as making sure I am thoughtful with each of the stitches I make to put together knowledge. Throughout my learning I have come across people who have inspired me and supported me to consider the intentions of how I engage in my artistic practices.

When I was at the beginning of my undergraduate studies, I had the good fortune of being taught by the Anishinaabe artist and scholar Cathi Charles Wherry for an Indigenous art history course. She encouraged me to share my artistic practices and

[389] Even though this project is coming to a place of completion I still have many more conversations to have both here and in the Bagone-giizhig.
[390] Jill Doerfler, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, eds., "Bagijige: Making an Offering," in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories* (University of Manitoba Press, 2013), xxi.

some of the work I had been doing since I was a youth. One of the most important things that I learned from her is to embrace the imperfections of my artwork, and by extension my writing, because she said it showed that it was made by human hands. Scholar Lois Edge echoes this integral idea by saying that "just as no work of writing is perfect, I am told no piece of beadwork is perfect."[391] When I met my friend Sarah Dickie (Slavey-Dene and Halqumalem from Fort Nelson First Nation) through college courses, she tried to encourage me to learn how to bead and revealed it is important to put in some differences or 'imperfect' aspects into the beadwork. My upbringing in Nishnaabe Lucbanin ways has set a clear framework for how I must conduct myself. Centring honesty and being truthful about the 'imperfections' is a foundational aspect of my responsibility to my ancestors, my teachings from my family, and the next seven generations.

[391] Edge, "My Grandmother's Moccasins," 9.

Chapter 6: Making Cultural Memories
6.1 Manidoominensikaanag: How We Learn to Mend and Bead[392]

Figure 34. Aunt Mel. My grandpa's sister always had the best styles in her regalia. This image is a digital painting I created based on photographs from her trip to the UK in 1978. I integrated Nishnaabe beadwork imagery I created into the background to tie it together with the digital portrait of my Great-grandma Min in figure 13. (Estrella Whetung, digital portrait inspired by family photographs, *Aunt Mel*, 2025).

Chapter 6 is intended to embody a return to ancestral practices within the context of the dissertation work and describes the general structural elements of the *Ngwaagan Regalia* (2025). A return to ancestral practices is an important aspect of who I am both as a Mississauga Nishnaabe Lucbanin artist and a scholar and this chapter is a discussion of some of the creative ways I have engaged in that journey. Some people may have many beautiful unbroken lines of cultural knowledge from their ancestors, and

[392] Manidoominensikaanag are some things or items that are made from beadwork in Anishinaabemowin.

I think that is so powerful. However, that is not my story. Being born urban and away from my home territories has meant that sometimes the knowledge I have received does not always flow directly from my home communities. A foundational part of my contemporary practice as an artist is the examination of how we are depicted as Indigenous peoples and the innovative ways in which we amplify and engage in the resurgence of ancestral practices. It is not just about defying the colonial gaze, but also about illuminating the pathways our ancestors have provided for us.

My parents, grandparents, great-grandmothers, great-grandfathers, and many of my other relatives such as Evelyn Loft Watts, Melba Whetung Loft (see figure 34), Darren-ba Shilling Taylor, Sue Siwik, Linda Loft Pappenberger, Vanessa Watts-Powless, Carmen Wiigwaas Craig, and Mae Whetung-Derrick have been dedicated to the perpetuation of our bmaadziwin/pamumuhay through storytelling and the sharing of knowledge.[393] Other relatives in my family and community chose to participate in recordings of our history through sharing personal experiences within the format of community dbaajmownan, providing legal testimonies, as well as working with historians and ethnographers in recording community materials. Many of the women in my family have conscientiously spent time engaging in our cultural arts practices as a medium to meticulously encode our histories as well as to come together for the purpose of collaborative work that was social, spiritual, and at times, political. As my Uncle

[393] Please look at an online photograph of her regalia under the following reference, "Melba Loft in London, UK – summer of 1978 with a friend from the Bahá'í teaching team," *Bahá'í Chronicles: Journey to the Past and Present*, July 10, 2021, https://bahaichronicles.org/melba-whetung-loft-and-jim-loft/. Please also refer to Plate 30 and Plate 35 of Aunt Mel in the work of Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge, *Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Baha'i Pioneers* (One Voice Press, LLC., 2011), 174-175. Bmaadziwin/pamumuhay is a way of life in Nishnaabemwin and Lucban dialect.

Meredith has shared, "Grandma had a story that our relationship and treaty with the Wendat people was documented on a hide, similarly to a wampum belt, as an agreement to live in peace on shared territory."[394] Ancestral knowledge encodements such as these shape and define our embodied relational practices.

The *Ngwaagan Regalia* project has been my attempt to create a tangible knowledge encodement that embodies our spirit memories—a membrane that you interact with to feel a connection to those spirit memories. I am using membrane as a term intentionally because I see it as representing the tangible aspects of life. Membranes act as a conduit for sensory experiences whether that be through the form of the amniotic sac in-utero, the skin of a drum, or the hides that beaders use as a foundational element. Moreover, there is a protective and strengthening aspect in each of these examples. Nawendiwinan are the heart strings that tether us to mnidoo forces of Creation and what is felt, seen, spoken, and heard through our experiences forms the aya'aa-weyaan.[395] Nothing can sever your connection to your spiritual inheritance.

It is my belief the intentions of my ancestors were no different than previous ones in our family regarding the importance of carrying forward our beliefs and understandings of the world to future generations through sharing these stories. Moreover, these forms of storytelling serve as crucial forms of ancestral knowledge

[394] Meredith Whetung, Mississauga Nishnaabe, Alderville First Nation, interview, August 31, 2024.
[395] Nawendiwinan are kinships and mnidoo is spirit in Nishnaabemwin. I am trying to say membrane through aya'aa-weyaan, but maybe a being's hide in Nishnaabemwin is not quite the right way. Miigwech to Cherylanne James for gifting the Mnjikaning dictionary created by her great-grandmother as it has helped me in working through some of my ideas in Eastern dialects.

encodements for future generations. In saying this, I have tried to be mindful to not reframe their experiences and perspectives to align with my contemporary understandings of reality and day-to-day life. We are connected through relationality and our ancestral threads, but I want to acknowledge that I live a different life from those who have come before me including more recent generations like my parents. I like to think of this process of reclaiming and renewing ancestral relationships through stories as a way of strengthening and adding strands to our mkwendamwin sabiik/ngwaagnan.[396]

It is important for community knowledge practices, particularly forms that are deemed as rare and unconventional by mainstream standards, to be returned to repeatedly for them to thrive as continuous and living ancestral memories. We are engaging in encoding and re-encoding when we go through this process of return to ancestral knowledge. The knowledge from our communities cannot be relegated to being shelved away without continual care in archives, libraries, and curio cabinets. For us to access these important accounts as ancestral memory it requires us to continuously return to them and incorporate them into our lives as contemporary and future generations (see figure 35). I have chosen to honour this tradition of weaving in the threads of previous generations and connecting it to the future through integrating ancestral mkwendamwinan in the same way that I am including contemporary conversational dbaajmownan.[397]

[396] Mkwendamwin is memory and sabiik/ngwaagnan is net/web in Nishnaabemwin. In some Nishnaabemwin speaking communities the K is a G.
[397] Mkwendamwinan are memories and dbaajmownan are stories in Nishnaabemwin.

Figure 35. The Boxer Codex: My Mother's Regalia. This is my mother in her pre-colonial styled regalia and the illustrations in the background are from an illustrated text *Sino-Spanish Codex (Boxer Codex) [manuscript], ca. 1590* showing the different social ranks of Tagalog and their different styles of regalia. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage of illustrations from public domain and family regalia, *The Boxer Codex: My Mother's Regalia*, 2025. Original photograph courtesy of Everett and Leila Whetung, 1974. Original illustrations from *Sino-Spanish Codex (Boxer Codex) [manuscript], ca. 1590*. Boxer mss. II, 1590).[398]

It has been an emotional journey to recover and reflect upon the memories and experiences of my family members, ancestors, and community members. Having a personal connection to the people that you seek out is markedly different from encountering the words of historical people who may be strangers to you. I have chosen to sit and tea-visit with Anishinaabeg, Lucbanin, as well as ndanwendaagnak from other territories, including the ones I reside upon, because this project is not just about

[398] Full reference for figure 35, Sino-Spanish Codex (Boxer Codex) [manuscript], ca. 1590, Boxer mss. II, 1590, Gold leaf and tempera illustrations on paper, pages 52-58 (111-123 digital version), Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Digital Library, https://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/metsnav3/general/index.html#mets=https%3A%2F%2Fpurl.dlib.indiana.edu%2Fiudl%2Fgeneral%2Fmets%2FVAB8326&page=1.

Anishinaabe-gikendaasowin.[399] This project is also about how my particular Nishnaabe Lucbanin knowledge has interacted with and has been collaboratively shaped by every being around me. My grandparents and other family members may no longer be sitting beside me in a corporeal way; however, through sharing their experiences and memories in my work I am making sure that their voices are heard in what I present to the world.

When considering parallel approaches to my own, there are a number of Indigenous artist scholars who are engaging with ancestral embodied practices around visiting in their work. Cathy Mattes (Michif from Southwest Manitoba) and Sherry Farrell Racette (Algonquin/Métis/Irish, a member of Timiskaming First Nation) have been engaging in their important work as curators, artists, and scholars through the hosting of collaborative cultural spaces known as “Métis Kitchen Table Talks.” As Mattes remarks, some of the main aspects of these table talks "often include individual and collective beading sessions as a strategy to help strengthen kinship, community, and nationhood ties among participants."[400] The act of coming together provides a beautiful space for people to exchange ideas and have conversations. This is reflective of traditional visiting in Mississauga Nishnaabe and Lucbanin communities where we come together as frequently as we can to support one another in loving ways. As my cousin Darren-ba Taylor describes the synergistic feeling of his mother and aunties visiting with one

[399] Ndanwendaagnak are my relatives in Nishnaabemwin and Anishinaabe-gikendaasowin is Anishinaabe knowledge in Anishinaabemowin.
[400] Cathy Mattes, “Wahkootowin, Beading and Métis Kitchen Table Talk: Indigenous Knowledge and Strategies for Curating Care,” in *Radicalizing Care, Feminist and Queer Activism in Curating*, eds. Elke Krasny, Sophie Lingg, et al. (Sternberg Press, 2021), 133.

another in the kitchen: “they would all get together, and they'd sit around, and they'd all speak Ojibwe together, and they'd talk about all the old times that they'd have […] and it was really amazing.”[401] Similarly, Mattes describes how important these visiting spaces are for Indigenous peoples as "kitchen tables are an electric and activated space out of necessity."[402] In the realm of research collaboration with my relatives I tried to have conversations in a open and casual way that prioritized the integrity and unique voice of each relative in terms of what they were sharing. If we are to honour the process of creating an offering of collaborative knowledge together, then we have to take the commitment to ceremony in our work seriously. As Mattes emphasizes, the act of coming together must be meaningful and embody cultural approaches to respect and relationality.[403] It must be thoughtful, intentional, and heart centred.

We are the sabkeshiinyak lovingly and carefully spinning our spider webs and reconnecting the strands of knowledge that have been pulled and unraveled by colonization.[404] I can talk about theories of ethical knowledge engagement, but what does that mean as a lived practice? My grandparents' cultural teachings centred on living thoughtfully, with respect for all beings, and to constantly be in the mode of sharing. Every strand you touch in life reverberates out and impacts other strands in the woven structure of the universe, so we must be careful and considerate with each choice we make. I have done my best to respect the integrity of each of the beings who

[401] Darren-ba Shilling Taylor, Nishnaabe, Mnjikaning and Curve Lake First Nations, interview, May 8, 2019.
[402] Cathy Mattes, “Wahkootowin, Beading and Métis Kitchen Table Talk: Indigenous Knowledge and Strategies for Curating Care,” in Radicalizing Care, Feminist and Queer Activism in Curating, eds. Elke Krasny, Sophie Lingg, et al. (Sternberg Press, 2021), 138.
[403] Cathy Mattes, “Wahkootowin, Beading and Métis Kitchen Table Talk,”140.
[404] Sabkeshiinyak are little net makers or spiders in Nishnaabemwin.

shared with me in this project, throughout my life, and before I was born on this side. I have encoded their wisdom into the form of beaded regalia that is filled with designs to represent the mnidook and dbaajmownan of our plant, animal, sky, water, land and celestial relatives.[405]

6.2 Ingikinawaabamaag: Designing Through Observing[406]

I had always wanted to incorporate art into my research project, but I was initially unsure of what form that might take. I began to learn beading the year before I started my doctoral studies and the more I beaded and learned Nishnaabemwin, the more I understood how connected and interwoven my thoughts were becoming. Over the course of my years of learning beading, I was subconsciously gravitating towards all the beautiful imagery of my ancestors wearing elaborate regalia with shawl capes that I had grown up with in my artistic ideas.[407] I grew up with all kinds of capes and shawls in my life such as beaded yokes and alampay (see figure 35) that are common in Nishnaabe and Lucbanin regalia and practical farm clothing such as capes made of anahaw to protect a person from the rain.[408] One would think the answer of making a shawl cape, an integral component of the *Ngwaagan Regalia*, would be obvious. However, I was still unsure and decided to make an offering to my ancestors in the form of an appropriate

[405] Mnidook are spirits and dbaajmownan are stories in Nishnaabemwin.
[406] Ingikinawaabamaag is I am learning and gaining knowledge through observation or imitation of somebody in Anishinaabemowin.
[407] See figure 1, figure 5, figure 6, figure 7, figure 11, figure 13, figure 17, figure 22, figure 24, figure 35, and figure 37 for examples of different kinds of shawl capes throughout the dissertation. Special credit to Sarah Dickie (figure 24) for her wisdom, support, and guidance as I was creating the *Ngwaagan Regalia*.
[408] Alampay is a shawl or scarf regalia in Tagalog. See figure 17 for examples of alampay from Lucban. Anahaw is a palm in Tagalog.

bagijigan.[409] In praying I was trying to embody what I have learned from my parents: "it's really about respect and understanding each other" when asking permission from spirit beings to travel through their territories in cultural teachings.[410] But, in this case I was asking for permission and guidance on in my research journey to navigate spiritual territories. I began to have a recurring dream of beaded shawl capes with fringe and jingle cones, and this manifested in a few different projects such as the *Nindinawemaaganidog: Trickster Tuppie* (2021) regalia of Pashko-ma'iingaans (see associated references for figure 21).[411]

A few years after making that piece, I found a beautiful photograph of my Grandpa Ted's older sister Melba in her incredible long fringed regalia (see figure 34), and it inspired me to push my design ideas. Similarly, my mother traveled back to Lucban to visit with our family during the Pahiyas harvest festival and brought back a wide array of photographs and physical examples of fringed, beaded, and woven regalia for me to examine and draw inspiration from (see figure 36). Then, I received the opportunity to go to the *Mnaajtood ge Mnaadendaan: Miigwewinan Michi Saagiig Kwewag Miinegoowin Gimaans Zhaganaash Aki 1860/To Honour and Respect: Gifts from the Michi Saagiig Women to the Prince of Wales, 1860* quillwork makakoon exhibition to visit my ancestors and that also affected my design ideas. Generally, when

[409] Bagijigan is an offering in Anishinaabemowin.
[410] See "tabi tabi po" teachings in the next section of this chapter, "6.3 Gizhewaadiziwin: Encoding Ancestral Memories into Regalia through Intuitive and Collaborative Knowledge." Leila R. Whetung, Lucbanin, Lucban, Quezon, Philippines, interview, February 6, 2025.
[411] Pashko-ma'iingaans Coyote in Nishnaabemwin. More extensive information and photographs of the exhibition piece are available at the following reference, Estrella Whetung, "Nindinawemaaganidog: Trickster Tuppie," *On Beaded Ground* exhibition website, University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries, 2021, https://legacy.uvic.ca/gallery/onbeadedground/estrella-whetung/3ndrxibg/.

I am in the process of creating beadwork, my initial designs sometimes moderately change, and I may modify the layouts as I am doing the work because I want to understand how each aspect interacts with one another. The design process for the *Ngwaagan Regalia* followed this trajectory of designing, adjusting, and reworking over several years (see figure 36).

Figure 36. Design Inspiration through Ancestral Practices. The *middle* photograph is a digitally adapted layout of the beadwork placement. Clockwise from *top left*: a four petal floral tile in my Auntie Emma's home in Lucban, my drawn pattern of my ancestor Catherine Fawn Muskrat's quillwork, a three petal floral design on Pahiyas regalia, her quillwork in the *To Honour and Respect* exhibition, my drawings for placement and modifications while beading, beaded fringe Pahiyas Festival regalia in Lucban, a lukban (pomelo) fruit flower, my ancestor Hannah David McCue's quillwork, cutting smoked hide fringe in honour of Aunt Mel, a trillium bead design for the shawl cape, abaca (banana fibre) fabric samples from the Philippines, Hannah's quillwork from an alternate angle, and a four petal design based on pre-contact gold jewellery in the Philippines. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with personal illustrations and photographs, and family photographs, *Design Inspiration through Ancestral Practices*, 2025. Original photographs and illustrations by author and Pahiyas photographs courtesy of Leila Whetung).

6.3 Gizhewaadiziwin: Encoding Ancestral Memories into Regalia through Intuitive and Collaborative Knowledge[412]

Intuitive knowledge is an important way of tapping into what you intrinsically feel and know through the strength of your ancestors and collaborative work embodies our teachings. Some things just inexplicably feel right and it is important to follow those threads of connection: “we have to transform the way that we, not just tell the story, but also interpret the story of our lives.”[413] During Pahiyas nearly all of the decorations and artwork on the houses that line the streets are edible and intended to be shared amongst the community as well as with guests in Lucban. The Lucbanin word for this act of “disentanglement” or “untying” of the food to be shared during the thanksgiving harvest is called pagkakalas. Throughout this time, it is encouraged to engage in maganito, or the act of reciprocity and coming together with your ancestors, the mga anito, and mga nuno, through offerings.[414] Mga nuno can mean grandparents, or ancestors, or can also refer to anito spirit beings such as fairies or little people who live in the forests, waters, and in balete trees.[415] Whenever you are walking off trails and/or into forested areas you must ask permission to be there through saying “Tabi tabi po,” which means “Excuse me, please,” or “May I pass through, please?” Similarly, for Nishnaabeg it is important to have bagijiganan to offer other beings out of respect and gratitude. The *Ngwaagan Regalia* (see figure 37) I have made is my best attempt at providing an offering to my relatives, ancestors, and descendants as well as honouring

[412] Gizhewaadiziwin is a kind or generous way of life in Anishinaabemowin.
[413] Jessica Sagaate Day, Anishinaabe, Finnish, English and Irish, Fort William First Nation, interview, November 17, 2019.
[414] Mag is the morpheme that is added to indicate a reciprocal act in Tagalog. An anito is a spirit in Tagalog.
[415] A balete tree is a large Indigenous Ficus tree.

all the stories and experiences that have been shared with me throughout this dissertation work.[416]

Figure 37. Ngwaagan Regalia (full outfit details). This regalia features a fully-beaded (glass seed beads and abalone shells) melton wool shawl cape with smoked hide fringe, seed-beaded hair ties with pearl and abalone shell beads, beaded earrings (glass seed beads), a beaded (glass seed beads and abalone shell) and tufted caribou fur cuff bracelet, and a beaded velvet belt (seed beads, pearl and abalone shell). The hat is a replica woven buntal hat in the style of hats created in Lucban. The shape is based on our traditional domed Tagalog salakot hats; although, we also wear peaked salakot frequently in Lucban as well. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage depicting regalia, *Ngwaagan Regalia (full outfit details), 2025*. Original photographs by the author).[417]

The creation of the *Ngwaagan Regalia* has been a huge undertaking not just spiritually and emotionally, but also in terms of the physical process to bead each piece as separate applique work and then affix them to the shawl cape through sewing

[416] Note: the regalia dress and skirt are a temporary foundation for the shawl cape, belt, hair ties, bracelet cuff, and earrings. I made the ribbon skirt with two vintage batik skirts from Malaysia that I found about a decade apart and deconstructed for the fabric. The fabric is similar to traditional prints from the Philippines.

[417] See footnotes on previous page for details about the ribbon skirt.

techniques. Unfortunately, partway through my dissertation I ended up developing a painful form of neuropathy in my hands which prevented me from being able to do long work sessions of beading and sewing.[418] However, every morning that I began beading I considered how my grandparents continued to engage in their daily ancestral knowledge encodements despite having rheumatoid arthritis.[419] I drew strength and inspiration from these encouraging memories and embedded that emotion into my work process. In my own way, I was disentangling myself from the discouraging feelings I was having and strengthening the threads that connect me to the courage of my ancestors. A part of engaging in knowledge encoding is also the act of acknowledging how you feel during the process, what inspires your choices for pathways, and the narrative of how you gain insights along the way. A foundational aspect of the regalia making in this dissertation has been the reflective process of looking at the spirits and ingenuity of those who have come before me to ground and fortify my approaches. It is important to be transparent about how your work is shaped by the essence of who you are as a person and the journey that you are on.

I do not believe there is a way to be truly objective in the process of research because everything that we bring into the work affects how the research is done and why we are motivated to be a part of it. Therefore, I chose to embed the representation of where I come from spiritually, the origins of my Lucban community, as well as include

[418] People underestimate how much of their bodies they use daily when they do not have disabilities and I found it frustrating to have these sudden changes. I used to be able to bead for ten hours without much difficulty, but having post-viral neuropathy from COVID-19 ended up creating a lot of difficulties and disabilities for me. However, with the support of my supervisors, committee, and relatives I was able to keep going and complete the work as intended.

[419] Rheumatoid arthritis is a hereditary autoimmune condition on both sides of my family.

ancestral art as motifs into the *Ngwaagan Regalia* (see figure 38). For Nishnaabeg, many of us have a belief that we come from the stars and, as star people, the Bagone-giizhig figures prominently in these aadsookaanag (see figure 38).[420] The origin story of Lucban connects us to once having lived south of Bundok Banahaw in a coastal area that was known to have kalayaan (independence from rulers), but people began to move north into the shelter of Bundok Banahaw to avoid raiding and enslavement from nations south of our region.[421] For many years, this was a peaceful place as it was difficult to navigate to, and my ancestors were living in an area named Majayjay in the northern part of Bundok Banahaw. However, with Spanish colonialism came strife and violence which pushed many people out of Majayjay. In the late 1500s, communities such as Liliw and Lucban were founded by hunters as safe areas for our peoples.[422] In Lucbanin culture we have sacred birds who are messengers called tigmamanukan and much like the bneswak they provide guidance and connect the physical world to the spiritual world.[423] The hunters in our oral traditions encountered tigmamanukan in the form of a crow and, a kingfisher in a lukban tree that led to the location of Lucban.[424]

[420] I do not want to speak on behalf of Nishnaabeg who may not share these stories. Bagone-giizhig is the Hole in the Sky in Anishinaabemowin (this refers to the Pleiades). Aadsookaanag are sacred stories in Nishnaabemwin. If you have an interest in star knowledge please read *Ojibwe Sky Star Map Constellation Guide: An Introduction to Ojibwe Star Knowledge*, by Annette S. Lee, William Wilson, Jeffrey Tibbetts, and Carl Gawboy, 2014.

[421] Bundok Banahaw is Mount Banahaw in Tagalog. This is a sacred place. Kalayaan is freedom or independence from rulers: we have had traditional leaders, but nothing like the larger expansive polities seen in the Philippines at the time of contact with Spain.

[422] A hunter named Gat Tayaw founded Liliw. Luis Gamba, Marcus Tigla, and Lucas Mañawa founded Lucban. One of the traditional strategies has always to go further into the mountain for protection from danger.

[423] Bneswak are thunderbirds in Nishnaabemwin.

[424] Southern Tagalog have oral traditions about uwak or the crow as a trickster figure and there are similar Nishnaabe oral traditions about crows providing cautionary lessons. Uwak can signal a change that is unwelcome, whereas an aandek (crow in Nishnaabemwin) can sometimes mark a favourable outcome. Lukban is a pomelo fruit. If you would like to read a short variation of this oral tradition you can find it at the following reference, https://lucbanpahiyas.com/brief-history-of-lucban/.

Figure 38. Origins in Design. Clockwise from *top left*: this is an interpretation of the Bagone-giizhig or “hole in the sky” (Pleiades) as well as other celestial beings such as the Giizis (sun) and Dbik-giizis (moon) and breath and spirit lines from the mouth of a uwak/aandek (crow in Tagalog/Nishnaabemwin), details of the sun and moon, details of a floral design of Hannah David McCue, my interpretation of her work and the three-petal flower from Lucban in the colours of kingfishers, and a detailed photograph of the beaded Lucban uwak. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage of design work, *Origins in Design*, 2025. Original photographs by the author).

I embedded many deeper meaning symbols into the beadwork through creative interpretations of ancestral teachings and visual encodements of knowledge. Throughout the *Ngwaagan Regalia*, I incorporated water flower shapes into the beadwork to represent the three-petal motif that is common in the cultural arts of both Nishnaabeg and Lucbanin and beaded these flowers in the colours of a water bird known as a kingfisher (see figure 38). Water is a sacred being for Lucbanin and Nishnaabeg as they are a giver of life to us, but they are also considered to be powerful and tempestuous as seen through their movements in rivers and lakes. The beaded crow’s mouth has beaded breath of life and spirit lines connecting them to the Bagone-

giizhig beadwork: the lines are done in copper, gold, and silver beads as these are sacred metals in my cultures that are used in ceremony (see figure 38). Shell beads figure notably in the piece for the Bagone-giizhig, the eye of the crow, and the centres of the water flowers, because shells are a form of prestige as well as honour for Tagalog.

Figure 39. Ancestral Patterns. From *top left*: Beadwork pattern design based off of my ancestor's quillwork (*below*) on her makak (box/basket). There are cross patterns in the petals of the makak to represent the constellation of Jiijaak (crane, one of my maternal doodemag). There is also selection of different variations of how I represented mnidoo circles on the regalia pieces. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage of dissertation beadwork, *Ancestral Patterns*, 2025. Original photographs by author).

These sacred metal seed beads and shell beads are a prominent part that ties all aspects of the cultural memory regalia together. One of the central aspects of beadwork that I included are the mnidoo circles which are often depicted in traditional Woodlands art styles.[425] I also inserted some small beaded crosses that represent the shape of the

[425] Mnidoo is spirit in Nishnaabemwin. These circles are throughout the beaded pieces of the *Ngwaagan Regalia* (2025), and they are also included on moccasin vamps that I am making to accompany the completed regalia. Please check out the work of Odawa-Potawatomi artist Daphne Odjig and the history of the Professional Native

Jiijaak constellation into the beaded florals that I based on the quillwork makak of my ancestor Catherine Fawn Muskrat (see figure 39).[426] The constellation patterning is there to respect some of my father's matriline doodemag.

6.4 Mkwendamwinan miinwaa Kidwinan: Maajiibii'ganan miinwaa Biijbii'ganan Memory Quotes[427]

I wanted to be creative in choosing a fabric lining that could generate some ideas around how we clothe and wrap ourselves in our memories both internally and externally, but I was not sure how to start working on my own encodement process. I prayed on it and a pathway emerged. Fatefully, my cousin Sue Siwik posted an amazing quilt from her mother Evelyn Loft Watts's blanket box that was made in 1937. Each quilt square was named by the individual artist who collaborated and was created by our relatives and kin in our communities. I thought it was a powerful way of showing how lasting and meaningful collaborative memory pieces can be and this inspired me to consider how to incorporate memories into my work. When I was constructing the regalia pieces I used some of my old fabric stash that had an 1800s print design around flower seeds and growing. Additionally, I found several patterns of fabric with print designs around settler colonial life from the 1800s onwards featuring advertisements and documents in handwriting and typewriting. I intentionally chose particular pieces of

Indian Artists Association Inc. at the following reference if you would like to know more about Woodlands Art history, Digilabs, "The Impact of Daphne Odjig in Canadian First Nations Arts and Culture," Gallery Gevik, October 15, 2024, https://gevik.com/blog/the-impact-of-daphne-odjig-in-canadian-first-nations-art-and-culture/. Please also read about Citizen Potawatomi Nation artist Woody Crumbo for information on the early development of contemporary Anishinaabe art here, https://ictnews.org/news/lest-we-forget-artist-woody-crumbo/.

[426] Jiijaak is crane in Nishnaabemwin. The Jiijaak constellation is Cygnus.

[427] Mkwendamwinan miinwaa kidwinan are memories and messages (or perspectives) in Nishnaabemwin.

the fabrics that contain words and phrases that connect with my family and communities such as seeds, rice, gold, Drummond, immigration, US border, and so forth.[428] I printed out these memory quotes onto fabric squares that could be inserted into each of the nine pockets and thought about these pieces of wisdom as maajiibii'ganan miinwaa biijbii'ganan or "letters" from my relatives.[429]

Sometimes as Indigenous researchers we come across knowledge that has been published about our ancestors, and I wanted to conceptualize a way of interacting with these memories in ways I find meaningful and subversive. Many years ago, when learning about Visual Anthropology in my undergraduate studies, my teacher Andrea Walsh helped me to consider the different possibilities of how to use Indigenous art to subvert mainstream narratives. She shared innovative strategies in photography and filmmaking for transforming colonial objects and narratives and this gave me the space to explore my own creative ideas and approaches to subversive Indigenous art. When I was engaging in archival research for this dissertation I thought back to these ideas she introduced. There are ways to creatively engage in the subversion of cultural property through the act of reappropriation.[430] As scholars Andrea N. Walsh and Dominic McIver Lopes argue, reappropriation can be innovatively employed by Indigenous artists in a way that transforms it "'for all the better.'"[431] That learning started my journey to critically

[428] If you examine the piece, you will see the connecting points to previous chapters.
[429] Maajiibii'ganan miinwaa biijbii'ganan are outgoing and incoming letters or correspondences in Nishnaabemwin. Biijbii'gan is denotes an incoming correspondence or letter in my grandpa's paternal community.
[430] Andrea N. Walsh and Dominic McIver Lopes, "Objects of Appropriation," in *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation*, eds. James O. Young and Conrad G. Brunk (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 225. Andrea N. Walsh is a visual anthropologist, scholar, curator and artist. Dominic McIver Lopes is a Canadian philosophy scholar.
[431] Andrea N. Walsh and Dominic McIver Lopes, "Objects of Appropriation," in *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation*, eds. James O. Young and Conrad G. Brunk (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 225.

consider how to artistically transform archival documents and narratives that are racist, written from, and/or partially shaped by a settler-colonial perspective with regards to language usage, terminology, and concepts. There are many racist depictions and demeaning representations of Nishnaabeg in archival texts. I became consumed with the task of finding archival and historical texts so that I could remove the colonial language lenses and re-encode them with Nishnaabemwin and Nishnaabe worldviews.

The following is a list of quotes from relatives as well as accounts about relatives and community members that I have re-encoded into maajiibii'ganan miinwaa biijbii'ganan. Each quote has been printed on 1800s style fashion advertisement fabric and inserted into the pockets (see figure 40) of the lining of the shawl cape as small "letters."[432] The 1800s style seed label fabric lining of the shawl cape pockets connect with the lining fabric design of the belt to create continuity amongst the *Ngwaagan Regalia* pieces. The quotes have been carefully selected to reflect the themes that emerged during the project. I have engaged in a creative method of inserting Nishnaabemwin words into each quote, so I can be reminded of the thought processes of my ancestors as well as turn the lens back on settlers for their use of terminology that was disrespectful to my ancestors. The text is meant to push the reader out of their comfort zones by possibly encountering language that is unknown to them and to recalibrate their senses to think about Indigenous modes of thought. When I look at historical quotes from my ancestors I consider how frequently they may have felt limited by the structure of the English language. My father's parents and grandparents

[432] See more details of the lining in Chapter 7.

preferred to speak in Nishnaabemwin because they felt more comfortable expressing themselves in their first languages. Someday, I hope to be able to translate each of these maajiibii'ganan miinwaa biijbii'ganan in their entirety:

1) This has been the story of a [Gamii]; whispered gently by lapping waves to the hearing ears of the earliest inhabitants who floated nimbly on its bosom in frail craft of [wiigwaas].[433] The [gamii] tells of bewildered voyageurs, of Champlain on the last lap of his historic raid; it thunders its disapproval of wars among the tribes, each decade bringing its change; the coming of the [zhaagnaash], the depletion of the [mtigwaakiin], the ruthless slaughter of [wesiinyik], grunting its disapproval of the lowering of [sabiik] into its bowels to enmesh game [giigoonyik]. 'You were content in taking one at a time,' it whispered hoarsely.[434] – Great-grandma Min writing about the changes in our way of life since the arrival of Samuel de Champlain[435]

2) 'In the north-west corner of the Township of Methuen and about eight miles north-east of Stony Lake, with which it is connected by Jack's Creek, is a lake the real and common name of which is Jack's Lake, although on one map, at least it is called White Lake. It is derived its name from Handsome Jack [Cowie], a [Nishnaabe gimaa], who claimed all the streams and lands in this locality as his fishing and hunting grounds.[436] He was considered the handsomest man among the [Nishnaabeg], then commanded by 'Cap' Paudash, of [Pemdashkodeyaang]; he stood six feet four inches in height and weighed fully 250 pounds.[437] He belongs to the [Cowie] family and among the [zhaagnaashag] was known as Jack Cow. Stony Lake, Loon Lake [, and Chandos Lake] in the Township of Chandos, and all streams south of Loon Lake was claimed by him as inherited property. He was most tenacious of his rights, and would invariably destroy all the traps of [zhaagnaashag] he found set on his streams. But he would allow the pale face to hunt for [waawaashkeshwak] and [bne] or to fish in the streams, so long as no furs were taken. Handsome Jack usually lived in a [wiigwaas-wanagekogamig], which he moved from place to place as circumstances required.[438] Although he never missed an opportunity or rather greedily asserting his right to his streams and hunting grounds, he, nevertheless, was very

[433] Gamii is lake and wiigwaas is birch in Nishnaabemwin.
[434] Zhaagnaash is someone who is of European descent more generally, but specifically English and/or Canadian in Nishnaabemwin. Mtigwaakiin are forests in Nishnaabemwin. Wesiinyik are animals in Nishnaabemwin. Sabiik are nets in Nishnaabemwin. Giigoonyik are fish (plural) in Nishnaabemwin. Mary Jane Muskratte Simpson, "A History of the Rice Lake Indians," *A History of the Rice Lake Indians*, January 10, 2025, https://www.ricelakereserves.com/.
[435] Samuel de Champlain interacted with my ancestors in his 1615-1616 journeys. We were allied with the Huron-Wendat at the time, and these were military missions with regards to ongoing wars with the Haudenosaunee.
[436] Nishnaabe gimaa is a Nishnaabe leader.
[437] Pemdashkodeyaang is Rice Lake in Nishnaabemwin.
[438] Waawaashkeshwak are deer and bne is a partridge in Nishnaabemwin. Wiigwaas-wanagekogamig is a birchbark home in Anishinaabemowin.

hospitable to those who were friendly with him.'[439] – C. Pelham Mulvany et al. writing about my ancestor Gimaa John (Jack) Cow(ie)

3) The Herkimers, and their followers, opposed the initiative of Peter Jones and Joseph Sawyer to discipline all children who 'ill behaved' at the mission. George Copway, a Mississauga from [Pemdashkodeyaang] who visited the Credit Mission on several occasions, recorded his opposition to corporal punishment. In his opinion, 'whipping to learn is brutish and degrading.' The Herkimer group rejected the suggestion that James [Tobico] be required to put away his fiddle. Strict Canadian Methodists regarded that musical instrument, with its association with dancing and merriment, as an instrument of sin. The opposition felt this excessive, and furthermore, James [Tobico] was Lawrence Herkimer's nephew.[440] – Donald B. Smith writing about the opposition my Herkimer-Tobico family in the Mississaugas of the Credit community had to Christian beliefs and punishments

4) That our hearts are grieved for the abuses that are done to us by some white men; our hearts are true and will speak plainly. White men seize our farms and take them by force, they abuse our women and violently beat our people. That your red brothers look for protection. We pray that the late abuses be inquired into. Some white men tell us we have no right to complain of robberies on our hunters and violence on our women. We believe you know; if white men do not understand that red men have rights, that you will declare what our rights are, that bad men may be made to observe them. And that, furthermore, we are poor in lands, and have few places for hunting, much of our hunting grounds are covered by white settlements and the small parts which are left to us are invaded by hunters from Lower Canada. They come upon our hunting grounds and wantonly kill and destroy all the animals, old and young, that come in their way. We have told them of their injustice and urged them to depart; but our words are feeble, and they will not listen to our words. If this Council speak words that are loud and strong, they must obey.[441] – Gimaak of Pemdashkodeyaang, George

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[439] "The Early History: Eel and Jack Cow, Chiefs of the Regions North of Stoney Lake," Eels Lake Cottages & Marina, January 10, 2025, https://eelslake.com/EELS_HISTORY.HTM, (Original text is from the History of the County of Peterborough by C. Pelham Mulvany et al., 1884).

[440] Donald B. Smith, *Mississauga: Portraits: Ojibwe Voices from Nineteenth-Century Canada*, (University of Toronto Press, 2015), 107. Lawrence Herkimer was a leader in the Credit community and disagreed with the impacts of missionizing and colonialism. He was the brother of my ancestor Betsy Herkimer Tobico. The boy, James, in the quote was my great-grandma Bella Howard Whetung's great-uncle through her grandmother Susan Tobico Howard.

[441] Mary Jane Muskratte Simpson, "A History of the Rice Lake Indians," *A History of the Rice Lake Indians*, January 10, 2025, https://www.ricelakereserves.com/. This petition was put forth around 1829 with help from my ancestor James McCue, by representatives from Rice Lake: George Paudash (Pautash), John Crowe (Crow), John Cow (Cowie), John Canua, Peter Naugon (Nogin), and Peter Mason. Doug Williams makes a specific reference to this petition through stories from his elders on page 67-68 of *Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg: This is Our Territory* (2018). I want to provide some clarity through family oral traditions: I am not aware of Oshkiigmong being involved in the petitions documented by my great-grandmother Min. My great-grandmother Bella's grandfather James McCue was an interpreter and community leader primarily based in Rice Lake rather than Curve Lake. His wife Hannah David McCue, a quillwork makakoon maker featured in the *To Honour and Respect* exhibition, was from Rice Lake. His

Paudash (Pautash), John Crowe (Crow), John Cow (Cowie), John Canua, Peter Naugon (Nogin), and Peter Mason[442]

5) The [Nishnaabe] possesses great taste, which is displayed in the carving of his [bwiin], in the shape of his [jiimaanan], in the elegance and symmetry of his [mtigwaabiik], in the cut of his [daasan miinwaa mkiznan], the [biindkomaan] of his hunting-knife, and in all the little ornaments in which he delights.[443] It is almost impossible for a settler to imitate to perfection [a Nishnaabe] cherry-wood [bwi].[444] My husband made very credible attempts, but still there was something wanting--the elegance of the [Nishnaabe] finish was not there. If you show them a good print, they invariably point out the most natural, and the best-executed figure in the group. They are particularly delighted with pictures, examine them long, and carefully, and seem to feel an artist-like pleasure in observing the effect produced by light and shade.[445] – Settler writer Susanna Moodie writing about the artistic perspectives of my ancestors

6) Among these women there was one very old, whose hair was as white as snow. She was the only gray-haired [Nishnaabe] I ever saw, and on that account I regarded her with peculiar interest. I knew that she was the wife of a [gimaa], by the [msko] embroidered leggings, which only the wives and daughters of [gimaak] are allowed to wear.[446] The old [woman] had a very pleasing countenance, but I tried in vain to draw her inter conversation. She evidently did not understand me; and the Muskrat [woman], and Betty Cow were laughing at my attempts to draw her out.[447] – Settler writer Susanna Moodie writing about spending time with my ancestors Catherine Fawn Muskrat and Bridget (Biddy) Sherry Cow(ie)

7) [Gimaa Peter Naugon] had arrayed himself in a new blanket-coat, bound with [msko], and the seams all decorated with the same gay material. His leggings and [mkiznan] were new, and elaborately fringed; and, to cap the climax of the whole, he had a [zhaawshko] cloth conical cap upon his head, ornamented with a deer's tail dyed [zhaawshko].[448] – Settler writer Susanna Moodie writing about the regalia of one of our community leaders, Gimaa Peter Naugon

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grandfather had ties to Port Hope and the shoreline of Lake Ontario from Adoopikaang to around the Cataraqui River. His grandmother had roots in Waaninaawangaag.

[442] Gimaak are leaders in Nishnaabemwin.

[443] Bwiin are canoe paddles, jiimaanan are canoes, mtigwaabiik are bows in Nishnaabemwin. Daasan miinwaa mkiznan are leggings and moccasins in Nishnaabemwin. Biindkomaan is a sheath in Nishnaabemwin.

[444] Bwi is a paddle in Nishnaabemwin.

[445] Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush*, (eCampus Ontario Public Domain Core Collection, 1852/2022), 263-264.

[446] Gimaa is a leader in Nishnaabemwin, and the plural form is gimaak. Msko is red in Nishnaabemwin.

[447] Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush*, (eCampus Ontario Public Domain Core Collection, 1852/2022), 269-270.

[448] Mkiznan are moccasins in Nishnaabemwin. Zhaawshko is blue in Nishnaabemwin. This can also refer to green, but Susanna is describing the regalia in blue. Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush*, (eCampus Ontario Public Domain Core Collection, 1852/2022), 271.

8) They are very skillful in their treatment of wounds, and many diseases. Their knowledge of the medicinal qualities of their plants and herbs is very great. They make excellent poultices from the [wiigob-nagek] and the [zhaashgob].[449] They use several native plants in their dying of baskets and porcupine quills. The inner bark of the swamp-[adoopi], simply boiled in water, makes a beautiful red.[450] From the root of the [bebaamakii] they obtain a fine salve for sores, and extract a rich [zaawaa] dye.[451] The inner bark of the root of the [baakwaanaatik], roasted, and reduced to powder, is a good remedy for the ague; a teaspoon given between the hot and cold fit.[452] They scrape the fine [waabshki] powder from the large fungus that grows upon the bark of the [zhngobiins] into whiskey, and take it for violent pains in the stomach.[453] – Settler writer Susanna Moodie writing about the traditional medicines of my ancestors

9) Mrs. Muskrat has fallen in love with a fine fat [gaazhgens], whom the children had called 'Buttermilk,' and [...] I presented it to her, rather marveling how she would contrive to carry it so many miles through the woods, and she loaded with such an enormous pack; when, low! the [kwe] took down the [dkobjigan], and, in the heart of the piles of [baate-waawaashkeshi-wiiyaasan], she deposited the [gaazhak] in a [kokbinaaganens], giving it a thin slice of the meat to console it for its close confinement.[454] – Settler writer Susanna Moodie referring to my ancestor Catherine Fawn Muskrat

10) We laughed and chatted as we bounded over the blue waves, until we were landed in a dark cedar-swamp, in the heart of which we found the [Nishnaabe] encampment. A large party were lounging around the fire, superintending the drying of a quantity of [waawaashkeshi-wiiyaas] which had been suspended on forked sticks.[455] Besides the flesh of the [waawaashkeshi-weyaan], a number of [zhashkok] were skinned, and extended as if standing bolt upright before the fire, warming their paws.[456] The appearance they cut was most ludicrous.[457] – Settler writer Susanna Moodie referring to the fishing and hunting camp of my great-great-great-great-grandparents

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[449] Wiigob-nagek is basswood bark in Nishnaabemwin. Note: there are a number of ways to say this. Zhaashgob is slippery elm in Nishnaabemwin.

[450] Adoopi is alder in Nishnaabemwin.

[451] Bebaamakii is black bindweed in Southern Anishinaabemowin. Zaawaa is yellow in Nishnaabemwin.

[452] Baakwaanaatik is staghorn sumac in Nishnaabemwin.

[453] Waabshki is white in Nishnaabemwin. Zhngobiins is pine in Nishnaabemwin. Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush*, (eCampus Ontario Public Domain Core Collection, 1852/2022), 281.

[454] Gaazhgens is a kitten and kwe is woman in Nishnaabemwin. Dkobjigan Bundle in Nishnaabemwin. Baate-waawaashkeshi-wiiyaasan is dried deer meat and gaazhak is cat Nishnaabemwin. Kokbinaaganens is a small basket in Nishnaabemwin. Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush*, (eCampus Ontario Public Domain Core Collection, 1852/2022), 442.

[455] Waawaashkeshi-wiiyaas is deer meat or flesh in Nishnaabemwin.

[456] Waawaashkeshi-weyaan is a deer hide in Nishnaabemwin. Zhashkok are muskrats in Nishnaabemwin.

[457] Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush*, (eCampus Ontario Public Domain Core Collection, 1852/2022), 442.

11) We had remained the best part of an hour, when Mrs. Muskrat laid hold of my hand, and leading me through the bush to the shore, pointed up significantly to a cloud, as dark as night, that hung loweringly over the bush. 'Thunder in that [aan'kot]--get over the [gamii]--quick, quick, before it breaks.' then motioning for us to jump into the [jiimaan], she threw in the [bwiin], and pushed us from shore.[458] – Settler writer Susanna Moodie referring to my Great-great-great-great-grandma Catherine Fawn Muskrat

12) Stories of physical prowess have been handed down: Mrs. Susan [Tobico] Howard, [a Nishnaabekwe] of Alderville Hiawatha, while walking along near the track of the old railway saw a [mkwa] emerge from a hole.[459] She killed it with an axe. In a moment, another [mkwa] appeared, and she promptly dispatched that one. Still another, a third, came forth to meet its fate by her trusty axe; three grown [mkwag] killed by a [kwe] after their winter sleep.[460] The animals were skinned, and the meat cut in strips and dried for summer meat.[461] – Great-grandma Min Muskratte Simpson referring to my Great-grandma Bella Howard Whetung's Grandmother Susan Tobico Howard

13) 'Old Moses Muskratte was much more entertaining, he was a very old man. In fact, the oldest inhabitant of the village, and was known the country round. He was extremely industrious and active in spite of his eighty-odd years; and was always fishing, or making [kokbinaagnan], and going over the country where he was mostly always welcome on account of his ways, always very talkative and good-natured.[462] He had a [nimosh] that used to fish.[463] I used to see it on warm days standing for nearly an hour in a pool connected with the lake and as sunfish passed him he would grab at them, but I never saw him catch any.'[464] – Great-grandma Min Muskratte Simpson referring to a colonial account her Great-grandfather Moses Muskratte.

14) On 14th May 1917, Chief Joseph Whetung of Mud Lake told J.H. Burnham, his member of parliament, that he was 'very anxious to obtain for my tribe the same privileges of fishing hunting trapping and selling furs without a license that are granted to Indians north of Mattawa.' In response, Indian Affairs said, once again, that game laws were provincial and that it was there for unable to Grant any special privileges in connection with hunting, fishing, or trapping. The Assistant Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs repeated that 'these Indians have no rights in

[458] Aan'kot is a cloud and gamii is a lake in Nishnaabemwin. Jiimaan is canoe and bwiin are canoe paddles in Nishnaabemwin. Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush*, (eCampus Ontario Public Domain Core Collection, 1852/2022), 443.

[459] Nishnaabekwe is a Nishnaabe woman in Nishnaabemwin. Mkwa is a bear in Nishnaabemwin.

[460] Mkwag are bears and a kwe is a woman Nishnaabemwin.

[461] Mary Jane Muskratte Simpson, "A History of the Rice Lake Indians," *A History of the Rice Lake Indians*, January 10, 2025, https://www.ricelakereserves.com/page29.html/.

[462] Kokbinaagnan are baskets in Nishnaabemwin.

[463] Nimosh is a dog in Nishnaabemwin.

[464] Mary Jane Muskratte Simpson, "A History of the Rice Lake Indians," *A History of the Rice Lake Indians*, January 10, 2025, https://www.ricelakereserves.com/page22.html/.

respect to hunting other than those granted to whites.' He echoed the assimilationist policies of the Crown, saying, 'I may add that it is considered that these Indians should occupy themselves with agricultural pursuits.'[465] – Peggy J. Blair referring to my Great-great-grandpa Joseph III Whetung

15) Joseph Whetung sent another letter to his local Member of Parliament, J.H. Burnham, pointing out that he had written many times to Indian Affairs and had never received an answer. He asked Burnham to 'see the proper persons to try and get the consent of the department to the granting of our petition.' Burnham contacted Indian Affairs to find out what was going on. The Deputy Superintendent responded yet again that 'the making and administering of the Game Laws come exclusively under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Governments.' He added that the department had endeavored to secure 'leniency' for the Indians to enable them to obtain a necessary food supply and that where its efforts had failed, this was due to the fact that 'Indians in certain districts have not confined the killing of game to their requirements.'[466] – Peggy J. Blair referring to my Great-great-grandpa Joseph III Whetung

16) "Q. What was your father's name?
A. [Sandy-ba zhnikaazo].[467] [Ngig ndoodem].[468] We are of the [Ngig doodem]."[469] – Great-great-grandma Sarah Sandy Whetung's sister, Louisa Sandy Johnson.

17) At [Oshkiigmong], during his testimony before the Treaty Commissioners in 1923, [Gimaa] Joseph Whetung produced a letter of 9 May 1922 from J.D. McLean to himself. Whetung had been part of a delegation sent to Ottawa to discuss hunting, fishing, and trapping rights. He had been accompanied by Henlon (Hanlon) Howard and [Gimaa] Robert Paudash of Hiawatha.[470] The three were authorized by band resolution to go to Ottawa and 'interview the proper authorities relative to hunting and fishing rights of the United bands,' and to take with them 'any papers that ex-chief Whetung may have in his possession and proving beneficial to the three united Bands.'[471] – Peggy J. Blair referring to my Great-great-grandpa Joseph III Whetung, my Great-great-uncle Hanlon Howard, and my relative Gimaa Robert Paudash (through my Cowie family lines)

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[465] Peggy J. Blair, *Lament for a First Nation: The Williams Treaties of Southern Ontario*, (UBC Press, 2008), 118.
[466] Peggy J. Blair, *Lament for a First Nation*, 118.
[467] "His name was Sandy," in Nishnaabemwin.
[468] "I am otter doodem/clan," in Nishnaabemwin.
[469] Government of Canada, *Bound Volume of Testimony Given to a Commission, Chaired by A.S. Williams, Investigating Claims, by the Chippewas & Mississaugas of Ontario, to Compensation for Land Not Surrendered by the Robinson Treaty of 1850*, 1923, RG10, Volume number 2331, Microfilm real number: C-11202---C-11203, File number: 67, 071-4A, https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=2079183&ecopy=e005259495/, 165 (171 digital), (statement of Louisa Sandy Johnson, Nishnaabe of Rama First Nation). In the transcripts she is recorded as Mrs. Johnson, wife of Isaac Johnson, but I am familiar with who she is through our family stories.
[470] Gimaa is a leader in Nishnaabemwin.
[471] Peggy J. Blair, *Lament for a First Nation*, 127-128.

18) In April 1931, Johnson Paudash wrote to the Secretary of Indian Affairs also asking for a copy of the 1923 treaty, but he received no response. Later that year, when Arthur Whetung of [Oshkiigmong] was charged with trapping on private lands, he too requested a copy of the treaty from Indian Affairs. He received the astonishing answer that 'the department has no copies of the treaty entered into between the Dominion Government and the Province of Ontario in 1923.' Whetung then wrote to the Indian Lands and Timber Branch clarifying that the treaty he wanted was the one entered into between the Mud Lake Band of Indians and the Dominion of Canada 'and concurred in by the Government of the Province of Ontario ... please send me a copy of the Treaty.' A.F. McKenzie replied, giving the same incredible response--that the Department of Indian Affairs 'has no copies of the Treaty entered into between the Government of the Dominion of Canada and the Mississaugas of the Mud Lake Band of Indians.[472] – Peggy J. Blair referring to my Great-grandpa Art Whetung

19) Dad was a trapper. So I spent my early years on a trapline, moving in March by team and sleigh to the traplines. We would come back to the reserve in time to get the [gtigaan] in. Dad was a guide at the summer resorts. This kept us all in close contact with outside of the reserve. He was a good trapper and well known in that area for his skill in trapping. Mother was the homemaker. From dad I learned to clean [giigoonyik, magkiik kaadan, zhiishiibak, miinwaa weweg] and all the wild game such as [mashkiig-waaboozak, waaboozak, mikwak, waawaashkeshwak] all the [wiiyasan] that were edible. I also learned how to skin fur-bearing animals for the market. It was a must in our family to do these little chores; it helped us all to survive. We had a [chi-gtigaan] and always plenty to eat. With my mother's knowledge of housekeeping, we all learned cooking and canning; name it, we learned it, boys and girls alike.[473] – Great-aunt Mel Whetung Loft

20) Granny Bella believed in discipline...But she didn't expect a white school teacher would begin to discipline her Melba with a stick and forbid her to speak [Nishnaabemwin]. The story goes that little Bella went down to the school and threatened the school teacher. If he ever laid a hand on Melba or any of her children, ‘he would be sorry.’ He never did it again. She was so strong; sometimes I think she would have taken on an army! My mother had that too! It's been passed on and I find that many Native women have got those strong roots from their grandmothers.[474] – Cousin Evie Loft Watts

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[472] Oshkiigmong is the community of Curve Lake’s name in Nishnaabemwin. Peggy J. Blair, *Lament for a First Nation*, 167.

[473] Giigoonyik, magkiik kaadan, zhiishiibak, miinwaa weweg are fish, frogs legs, ducks and geese in Nishnaabemwin. I am trying to communicate marsh hares here, but that may not be a successful translation. Mashkiig-waaboozak, waaboozak, mikwak, waawaashkeshwak are marsh hares, rabbits, beavers, and deer in Nishnaabemwin. Chi-gtigaan is a big garden in Nishnaabemwin. Melba Whetung Loft, interview, in *Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Baha’i Pioneers*, by Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge (One Voice Press, LLC., 2011), 8. Note: this is a reference to her father, Arthur Whetung Sr.

[474] Evelyn Loft Watts, interview, in *Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Baha’i Pioneers*, by Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge (One Voice Press, LLC., 2011), 9.

21) Melba said her father worked on a trap line. She said they all learned how to stretch [wesiinh bshkwegnan] on stretchers they made from [zasgobmish] branches.[475] Fur buyers would come to the reserve and buy the [weyaanan] and the [Nishnaabeg] would then buy staples such as flour, raisins, sugar and dried fruits with the [zhoonyaa], she said.[476] Saying that there was a season for everything, Melba told the children that in the spring they had a [chi-gtigaan] with vegetables and fruit.[477] She added that there was also lots of fish. In the winter they ate [waawaashkesh, zhashk, maage mik], which had been smoked or dried earlier.[478] During the winter months, she said everyone helped in the making of baskets. The men prepared the [wiisgaakook] which were found in the [mshkiig], by pounding them into strips, to separate the layers.[479] Then the women would take a knife and smooth them. [Wiigwaasminaatik] wood was sometimes used, and natural dyes from berries were used to dye the splints from which the baskets were made.[480] – Great-aunt Mel Whetung Loft

22) "The children in the family always looked forward to grandma's visit at Christmas because they knew there would be a new pair of [mkiznan] for everyone."[481] – Great-aunt Mel Whetung Loft

23) A story stranger than fiction is our heritage. It tells of a people who were free as the air they breathed, who surrendered the greater part of their possessions for an annuity. Tracts of land which were of little use, except as a place to hunt, were purchased for them. Our ancestors acquiesced cheerfully in the belief that they could hunt where and when they wished – 'as long as the grass grows and the water runs' - so ran the agreement signed by Indian chiefs and representatives of His Majesty's Government. This was the law and promise which our ancestors deemed invulnerable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, but which later proved to be only a scrap of paper.[482] – Great-grandma Min Muskratte Simpson

24) "At the age of 84, he predicted that the winter was going to be 'open.' He knew this because he'd seen snakes, some birds hadn't left, and squirrels were not active. Also, he'd seen sprouts on a lilac in December, and that meant an 'open

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[475] Wesiinh bshkwegnan are animal hides and zasgobmish are willow in Nishnaabemwin.

[476] Weyaanan are skins or pelts of animals and zhoonyaa is money in Nishnaabemwin.

[477] Chi-gtigaan is a large garden in Nishnaabemwin.

[478] Waawaashkesh, zhashk, maage mik is deer, muskrat or beaver in Nishnaabemwin.

[479] Wiisgaakook are black ash trees in Nishnaabemwin. Mshkiig is swamp or marsh in Nishnaabemwin.

[480] Wiigwaasminaatik is a cherry tree in Nishnaabemwin. Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge, Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Baha'i Pioneers,
(One Voice Press, LLC., 2011), 165.

[481] Mkiznan are moccasins in Nishnaabemwin. Melba Whetung Loft, interview, in *Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Baha'i Pioneers*, by Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge (One Voice Press, LLC., 2011), 165.

[482] Mary Jane Muskratte Simpson, "A History of the Rice Lake Indians," *A History of the Rice Lake Indians*, https://www.ricelakereserves.com/.

winter' would follow. He was referring to Rice Lake, that it wouldn't freeze."[483] – Ruth Clarke in reference to my Great-grandpa Al Simpson

25) My father took me on a trip along his trapping line, and showed me how to set up the traps. He would return from a successful run in good spirits. The skinning was next, followed by the drying of the pelt on wire frames. We didn't forget the carcass which was baked and served for supper. He hunted twice a year, always bringing back a deer, which was skinned in the basement and later he took the hide to the local tannery in Hastings Ontario. The carcass was cut up in strips and venison was stored in the freezer. As a carpenter, he was proud of his role as a trades-man because he could provide more than adequately for his family. My mother took on a job as a char-woman in the local town. She also produced traditional First Nations crafts, particularly small birch bark containers decorated with porcupine quills, which added to the family income. My father and mother harvested the local rivers and streams. They regarded the gathering of wild rice as farming. I went with my parents while they canoed through thick fields of beds of wild rice. My dad paddled through the rice beds as mom knocked the rice into the bottom of the canoe. Once home, dad 'danced' the rice in a large iron kettle and used the wind to separate the rice from the chaff. This was a staple and well enjoyed treat.[484] – Cousin Alfred Simpson

26) Granny [Mel] having been raised on a trapline, I once came home from the West and her big freezer was loaded—muskrat and beaver. She taught Ron—my husband—how to cut up a deer, but she did not want me to watch. She said, 'It's hard work, and what you don't know won't hurt you.' Not one part of that animal was wasted! I remember sitting in a canoe as a small child with Granny Mel, Papa Jim, Aunt Lu and Uncle Ev gathering wild rice on Rice Lake. Their son, Alfred, built the most beautiful birch bark canoe.[485] – Cousin Linda Loft Pappenberger

27) "Ozaaweshiinh nimiigwechiwendan noojiikwaagowiing. *I am grateful that ozaaweshiinh visited us*. Ndaanikoobijiganag nimiigwechiwenimaag. *I am grateful for my ancestors* […] Ojibwe anishinaabe-akiing nimiigwechiwenimaag. And I am grateful for Ojibwe people living on our homelands."[486] – Cousin Carmen Wiigwaas Craig

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[483] Ruth Clarke and community members, *What We Hold Dear: Treasured Memories of Alderville First Nation* (A Sweetgrass Studios Publication, 2006), 81.

[484] Alfred Simpson, "A History of the Rice Lake Indians," *A History of the Rice Lake Indians*, January 10, 2025, https://www.ricelakereserves.com/page30.html/. Note: he is referring to his parents, Everett Simpson and Louise Whetung Simpson.

[485] Linda Loft Pappenberger, interview, in *Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Baha'i Pioneers*, by Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge (One Voice Press, LLC., 2011), 98.

[486] Carmen Wiigwaas Craig, "Ozaaweshiinh Ləkʷəŋən/W̱SÁNEĆ-aking: An Ojibwe Language and Culture Needs Assessment in Victoria B.C.," (master's thesis, University of Victoria, 2023), x, https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/712e9581-9a0f-4828-bb6d-12777c39db1f/content/.

Figure 40. Maajiibii'ganan miinwaa Biijbii'ganan. This image is of the memory quotes that were selected to illustrate the intergenerational experiences and knowledge of Nishnaabeg as well as represents an infinite amount of community wisdom. Each quote has been printed onto the cotton fabric using heat transfer paper. This image is from before each relative's letter was cut out to be put into the shawl cape's lining pockets. (Estrella Whetung, photograph of quotes printed on fabric, *Maajiibii'ganan miinwaa Biijbii'ganan*, 2025. Original photograph by author).

My friend and collaborative relative Alana Sayers further inspired my decision to try techniques that challenge people engaging with my work on a sensory level.[487] She encouraged me to think about how I connect with my work and the myriad of ways other people might perceive what I am communicating. We have had many discussions over the years about how to be innovative in disseminating the work we do through the interplay between visuals, text, and cultural motifs. Reading her graduate writing and dissertation drafts impacted my ideas and made me consider the different ways I could

[487] Please experience Alana Sayers's incredible dissertation work in "Revitalizing Hupačasath navigational knowledge: Mapping the waters of settler-colonialism using a critical, coastal, community-based consciousness," (2026). This is truly a deeply exploratory work that uses unique techniques to encourage people to get out of their comfort zones and challenge how they define the world around them.

work on transforming ancestral knowledge encodements into new encoded knowledge.[488] These maajiibii'ganan miinwaa biijbii'ganan from my relatives are one way in which these approaches have guided the creation of the *Ngwaagan Regalia* (2025). We find new layers of dimensionality each time we visit our relatives and sit with their memories.

[488] We went to an inspiring lecture by the Nisga'a poet Jordan Abel and seeing the creativity in formats made me consider different ways of transmitting my ideas as well.

Chapter 7: Beadwork as a Foundation for Storytelling
7.1 Sabkeshiinyak: How the Knowledge of the Little Netmakers Binds Us[489]

Chapter 7 is an in-depth overview of the narratives shared by research collaborators (who I prefer to reference as relatives), provides insight on the orienting memory quotes, discusses overall themes that emerged, and explains how this knowledge was analyzed and embedded into the *Ngwaagan Regalia* (2025).[490] The memory quotes were carefully selected from historical literature and records, family memories, and community narratives. Overall, there were nine themes that culminated in the research: Mshkikiiwan, Miinan, E-waawyeyaag, Debwewin, Nbwaakaawin, Mnidook, Biinjiiy'ii, Miiknaansan, and Zhichgaazowin.[491] All of the knowledge shared guided how the *Ngwaagan Regalia* was encoded and stitched together and, from the inception, I envisioned this as a collaborative process of creating cultural memory art together. I have used tables highlighting core ideas shared by relatives. Further, each table is followed by an analytical summary to thoroughly demonstrate these connections between the themes, memory quotes, narratives shared, and the visual interpretation of data. The tables were created to centre direct quotations as many wished to see their shared narratives in a format that reflected their thoughts and experiences in an unattenuated manner.

The act of coming together is often what brings us back to the threads of Creation and is a defiance of the systemic authority of colonialism. In the first year of my

[489] Sabkeshiinyak are little net makers or spiders in Nishnaabemwin.
[490] Ngwaagan is a spiderweb or net in Nishnaabemwin.
[491] Medicines, berries, circle, truth, wisdom, spirits, pathways, within/inside, and something arranged in a certain way in Nishnaabemwin.

undergraduate studies, I was having a conversation with one of my friends, Audrey Mikkelsen, in the First Nations Community Studies program at Camosun College.[492] We were discussing how to repair the fractures that have impacted Anishinaabe communities—ruptures that have been rigorously designed and systematically enforced. I mentioned an aadsookaan my Uncle Meredith had taught me and said I wondered where the other pieces of the story now resided.[493] She looked at me with a bright smile and told me the other piece of the aadsookaan. She remarked how amazing it was that I had the other piece that she had not known and vice versa. It was in that beautiful moment that it became clear to me that the act of visiting with one another and sharing in our web of knowledge is resurgence for Anishinaabeg.

There are multiple themes that tie together the beadwork in the *Ngwaagan Regalia*, but some of the main thematic beading has been through specific bead finishes and colours. The camas-toned purples represent the territorial knowledge of Shayli Robinson, the crocus-toned purples are for the beading practice knowledge contributions of my beading supervisor Sarah Dickie, and the bright magenta is intended to honour Sarah's Etsoo Adeline (Kotchea) Dickie who exemplified the sharing of knowledge across generations (see figure 41). There are two to four overlapping exact bead colours and finishes between each beaded applique piece. Moreover, the

[492] She is Anishinaabe, Danish, and Finnish, from Rainy River First Nation (Treaty 3). Audrey's sister Kirsten Mikkelsen has also mentored me over the years, and both have been hugely influential in sharing Anishinaabe traditions with me since I was a teenager.

[493] Sacred story in Nishnaabemwin. The specific contents of this story are from closed practices in Midewiwin lodge teachings, so I do not have permission to share it to wider audiences. The original conversation with my Uncle Meredith happened in the early 2000s, but I do not have a precise date.

overall centrality of shells, copper, gold, and silver are to honour the cultural teachings of my parents through our sacred metals and animal kin.

Figure 41. Honouring Through Beads. Specific bead colours and finishes were chosen to honour our ancestors, everyone (including every being) who was a part of this project, as well as thematically coordinate all of the *Ngwaagan Regalia* beadwork. The goal was to incorporate overlapping colours that tied each piece of beadwork together but also honoured the distinctions. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs by author, *Honouring Through Beads*, 2025).

7.2 A Narrative Discussion of *Ngwaagan Regalia*

In this section are the themes that emerged from conversations, family and community narratives, and historical research. In each table, there is a memory quote that I have selected to complement the knowledge that was shared in conversations with relatives who collaborated on this regalia. Following these highlighted quotes are narrative discussions of the beaded and sewn components of the *Ngwaagan Regalia*.

Table 2. Theme: Mshkikiiwan: Thinking About Our Relatives[494]		
Memory Quote: I had been showing John [Naugon], the eldest son of old Peter, some beautiful coloured engravings of celebrated females; and, to my astonishment, he pounced upon the best, and grunted out his admiration in the most approved [Nishnaabe] fashion. After having looked for a long time at all the pictures very attentively, he took his dog Sancho upon his knee, and showed him the pictures, with as much gravity as if the animal really could have shared in his pleasure.[495]		
"Q. You are not answering the question. Did your father used to go hunting every year? A. Every year, Spring and Fall [...] I went with him."[496]	"We'd have the cedar soaking in a tote and we take it out and we'd strip it and we cut it and everything and prepare it for the afternoon. And when we were teaching people how to do the weaving, we would talk about the word for cedar, which is χpeẏ, and the purpose that cedar played and continues to play and how we would often tell our stories through cedar weaving, through carving, all of that kind of stuff.[497]	"We have to be grateful for all of those things including the bugs that pollinated the plants and the ancestors that created the little animal that gave its life up so that we could eat its flesh. I mean we have to be conscious of that sort of stuff. We could think about that sort of stuff more often."[498]
"Without the plant and animal relatives that sacrifice themselves we wouldn't be alive."[499]	"Going on the land is important. I remember in the winter; my dad would go out to dig ginseng (jiis jiibkan) roots when anyone was sick."[500]	"So, for me, the land was the teacher that I didn't have in human form."[501]

[494] Mshkikiiwan is medicines in Nishnaabemwin. I am using relatives throughout this section because each person I had a conversation with is my relative in Creation.

[495] Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush*, (eCampus Ontario Public Domain Core Collection, 1852/2022), 264.

[496] Government of Canada, *Bound Volume of Testimony Given to a Commission, Chaired by A.S. Williams, Investigating Claims, by the Chippewas & Mississaugas of Ontario, to Compensation for Land Not Surrendered by the Robinson Treaty of 1850*, 1923, RG10, Volume number 2331, Microfilm real number: C-11202---C-11203, File number: 67, 071-4A, https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=2079183&ecopy=e005259495/, 196 (204 digital), (statement of Joseph Whetung, Mississauga Nishnaabe of Curve Lake First Nation).

[497] Shayli Robinson, Leey'qsun, Lyackson First Nation, interview, April 18, 2019. Her nation is based primarily on Leey'qsun Island, but their territory goes through parts of Vancouver Island as well, in the Cowichan Valley area. Her lineage also goes to the Songhees, the Snuneymuxw, the Quw'utsun, and the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh people. She has been living with gratitude on her Lekwungen family's territory her whole life.

[498] Darren-ba Shilling Taylor, Nishnaabe, Mnjikaning and Curve Lake First Nations, interview, May 8, 2019.

[499] Jessica Sagaate Day, Anishinaabe, Finnish, English and Irish, Fort William First Nation, interview, November 17, 2019.

[500] Everett Whetung, Mississauga Nishnaabe, Alderville First Nation, interview, August 20, 2025. This is a medicinal plant with clutches of red shiny berries that grows close to trees that they would harvest from for weaving baskets and where they would usually go to collect sap from maples. My grandparents would use this medicine for a number of ailments.

[501] Angela Easby, Métis and Anishinaabe, MNO and Treaty 3, interview, January 13, 2020.

Table 2. Theme: Mshkikiiwan: Thinking About Our Relatives (continued)		
"Then my other favorite part was working with the cedar and stripping it, scraping it, making sure that it was ready to be used, and treating it. That was always very grounding for me no matter what was going on that day or you know whatever I had coming up however stressed out I was. It always was a time of like peace and relaxation and it always centered me and remembered. It made me remember where I came from and as my people are very big cedar people traditionally most of our clothing was made out of cedar the rest was woven from wool. It was always a happy time."[502]	"Q. Do you know of any members of the tribe who had hunting grounds further north than you went? A. That was a public ground that every [Misi-zaagiing/Mshi-zaagiing Nishnaabe] could go out there. Over here every family have limits---[Crowe, Cowie, Paudash]---all up past Mud Lake and Sturgeon Lake and heights of land where the Madawaska runs---from that heights of land to Georgian Bay, and we claim on one side and the Chippewas claim on the other."[503]	"Q. How many years ago did you go there---or will put it this way---how many years did you go? A. Goodness. Once was enough. When we went back North once we never went back again because the white people lifted all our traps up, so I think once was enough [...] Yes, and they take everything---that is, some places they take them and some places they don't. They leave the traps but take what is in them."[504]

Narrative Discussion of Mshkikiiwan Beadwork Components

One of the central ways I engaged with the interweaving themes of relationality was to bead two rounded panels of giizhik branches, a sacred mshkiki, to represent the umbilical cord of the universe, placenta, and breath traditions of my parents (see middle row of figure 42).[505] Relational practices were an important theme in all the conversations and researched memory quotes. As scholar Lana Ray emphasizes,

[502] Robinson, interview.

[503] Government of Canada, *Bound Volume of Testimony Given to a Commission, Chaired by A.S. Williams, Investigating Claims, by the Chippewas & Mississaugas of Ontario, to Compensation for Land Not Surrendered by the Robinson Treaty of 1850*, 1923, RG10, Volume number 2331, Microfilm real number: C-11202---C-11203, File number: 67, 071-4A, https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=2079183&ecopy=e005259495/, 227-228 (235-236 digital), (statement of Robert Paudash, Mississauga Nishnaabe of Hiawatha First Nation).

[504] Government of Canada, *Bound Volume of Testimony Given to a Commission, Chaired by A.S. Williams, Investigating Claims, by the Chippewas & Mississaugas of Ontario, to Compensation for Land Not Surrendered by the Robinson Treaty of 1850*, 1923, RG10, Volume number 2331, Microfilm real number: C-11202---C-11203, File number: 67, 071-4A, https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=2079183&ecopy=e005259495/, 246-247 (254-255 digital), (statement of Madden Howard, Mississauga Nishnaabe of Hiawatha First Nation).

[505] Mshkiki is medicine in and giizhik is cedar in Nishnaabemwin.

"beading is the mechanism to ensure that knowledge production is reflective of the relational nature of Anishinaabe worldviews."[506] I took this into consideration when I was thinking about how the conversations interacted with the memory quotes that I engaged with. The importance of respecting the integrity of our relatives and being thoughtful in how we relate to one other was something that shone through in every discussion.

Figure 42. Mshkikiiwan: Thinking About Our Relatives. Medicines that are found through kinship and our relationships with one another were represented in the beadwork. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs by author, *Mshkikiiwan: Thinking About Our Relatives*, 2025).

The shape of the giizhik branches (see figure 42) is also meant to resemble the airway passages of lungs and the branch tips slightly point upwards to represent the breath of

[506] Lana Ray, "'Beading Becomes a Part of Your Life': Transforming the Academy Through the Use of Beading as a Method of Inquiry," International Review of Qualitative Research 9, no.3 (2016), 368, https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2016.9.3.363/.

life that connects all of us in Creation. I featured animal tracks, in this case those of waaboozak, or rabbits, within beadwork patterns to signify doodem, kinship and spiritual responsibilities.[507] There are several kinds of pollinators such as the Evening Primrose Moth, Hummingbird Clearwing Moth, Northern Azure Butterfly, and Blue Orchard Mason Bee as well as accompanying plant relatives such as orchids, trilliums, roses, and evening primrose to symbolize both sides of my family (see figure 42).

Table 3. Theme: Miinan: On Land and Waters[508]		
Memory Quote: Most of these islands [in Ston(e)y Lake] are covered with huckleberries; while grapes, high and low-bush cranberries, blackberries, wild cherries, gooseberries, and several sorts of wild currants grow here in profusion. There is one island among these groups (but I never could light upon the identical one) where the [Nishnaabeg] yearly gather their wampum-grass. They come here to collect the best birch-bark for their [jiimaanan], and to gather wild onions. In short, from the game, fish, and fruit which they collect among the islands of this lake, they chiefly depend on for their subsistence. They are very jealous of the settlers in the country coming to hunt and fish here, and tell many stories of wild beasts and rattlesnakes that abound along its shores.[509]		
"You know berry-picking—so, so many things can be ceremonies, right?"[510]	"I think having those spaces is so important for us and when I go home to my territory on [Leey'qsun Island] and when I go to [T'eet'qe'] and being able to be there on the beach and see what my ancestors can see or when I go to our other site with t'eqe' with all the salal and that site has so much salal. I've never seen so much in my life. Again, it is a plant that was really important to us and was used medicinally. You know we'd use the leaves, we'd use the bark, and it serves so many purposes."[511]	"Then I got to eat huckleberries and salmon berries and a few other berries that are available, and I still can go out and I'm like, 'Hmm, I wonder if this berry's good,' knowing that maybe it's not. Of course, finding the local people and learning what their medicines were as well, which were different than the medicines we have at home, so learning the stories about them and learning how to acquire them."[512]

[507] See further discussion of this in Table 9, Theme: Miiknaansan: Teachings Through Numerical and Line Patterning.
[508] Miinan are berries in Nishnaabemwin.
[509] Jiimaanan are canoes in Nishnaabemwin. Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush*, 316.
[510] Easby, interview.
[511] Robinson, interview.
[512] Taylor, interview.

Table 3. Theme: Miinan: On Land and Waters (continued)		
“Being able to see that and engage with it: you know what we called it and to be able to call it that, to be able to pray as I harvest from [the salal]. Being able to stand on the cliff and look out and see all the sea lions gathering on a rock that have been doing that for millennia. Knowing where I come from that's always been a thing that we do, so being able to physically be in that space is so important.”[513]	“Those things are really important in any survival situation, and I think that's one of the fundamental building blocks of us as people is going out and being able to forage for food. I think that's a really primal thing for us, and I think we're kind of losing that in the urban areas. Yeah, sure, we all go and pick whatever, blackberries or huckleberries or whatever we can when we're out there.”[514]	"I remember when I was a child I would go berry-picking with my family—red berries that are like a raspberry but shaped like a strawberry called sapinit."[515]

Narrative Discussion of Miinan Beadwork Components

As discussed throughout, beads are spirit seeds (or berries) for Anishinaabeg and, for me, represent the spirit of knowledge that has been revealed throughout this project. In each conversation, berries and berry-picking emerged as important aspects of not only connecting to place within our territories, but also to spiritually connect to our plant relatives. As scholar Sherry Farrell Racette emphasizes, “beads were, and are, generally considered animate and precious” as well.[516] I chose to feature strawberries, blueberries, raspberries in the beadwork to reflect these relationships and the connectivity between place and our spiritual selves (see figure 43).

[513] Robinson, interview.

[514] Taylor, interview.

[515] Leila R. Whetung, Lucbanin, Lucban, Quezon, Philippines, interview, July 13, 2025.

[516] Sherry Farrell Racette, “If The Needles Don’t Break And The Thread Doesn’t Tangle: Beading Utopia,” essay, in *Bead Talk: Indigenous Knowledge and Aesthetics from the Flatlands*, eds. Carmen Robertson, Judy Anderson, and Katherine Boyer (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2024), 154.

Figure 43. Miinan: On Land and Waters. The wonderful theme of berries and berry-picking on the land emerged. This was an intriguing and important connecting tie highlighting how each bead of knowledge is like the berries and seeds that provide sustenance. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs by author, *Miinan: On Land and Waters*, 2025).

In each ode'imin there are gold seeds that represent the stars and our other celestial relatives who guide us.[517] There are diamonds and crosses in the larger ode'iminan to reflect the four directions as well as other important cultural beliefs around North as a direction.[518] I beaded a heart shaped flower with three blue petals to represent the knowledge that was shared by the relatives I had conversations with throughout (see figure 43). Moreover, each petal represents a teaching about the self that I received from my Uncle Meredith: what we experience through physicality and spirituality, and through our hearts. Each of the relatives I had tea-visits with reflected these three embodiments of how we come to know the world and live our lives daily.

[517] Ode'imin is heart (ode' is a dependant noun) berry (min) or strawberry in Anishinaabemowin. Please see Theme 8: Narrative Discussion of Miiknaansan Regalia Components for more discussion in these aspects.
[518] Ode'iminan is the plural form of strawberry on Anishinaabemowin.

Table 4. Theme: E-waawyeyaag: Being a Part of Something Greater[519]		
Memory Quote: "Q. Wouldn't that include the Mud Lake Band and Rice Lake and Scugog? A. We are all in one, that would be all of us."[520]		
"If we didn't abide by those guidelines, then we were in trouble, right? I think this shows up in some of our stories around the Sabe, the underwater panther, and the water beings. If you don't have an awareness of everything as a whole and how things interplay with each other, and you don't know how you're walking in the world and your impacts, then you're going have a hard time."[521]	"So since then, it's just been something that for me it's like a stress relief. It's a form of connecting. It's a form of being intentional. I find I have very intentional conversations with people while we're beading or very thoughtful […] It's a way for me to listen better and it's a way for me to not participate in capitalism because so many beaders sell their work, which I think is fantastic."[522]	"Going back to that idea that the spirit, can't really exist […and] doesn't exist in a part. It is always a part of the whole. Obviously, if we didn't have our surroundings we wouldn't be able to survive and we wouldn't be able to like manifest in the world."[523]
"A lot of people who I respect who have cultural knowledge or share cultural knowledge, it's a thing that I've noticed that they do […] It starts out along that path of talking about how one came to know something. And then you kind of end, you end with—it's almost like you end with what you might call like the kernel of information that comes at the end."[524]	"Camas is a plant that is one of our plants that's really important for us. We used it medicinally, it's also one of our food sources, and it's very similar to a parsnip. So it's a really good root vegetable that's got a lot of healthy nutrients, minerals, vitamins, and all that good stuff. It's nice for me to be able to go and have that one little space that'll centre me."[525]	"The land for me is the primary place […] when I understand the whole […] Feeling a connection to land, feeling rooted in Anishinaabe aki, like even if it's a part of it that isn't my family's traditional territory, but Anishinaabe territory more generally, that sense of connection has always been there for me."[526]

Narrative Discussion of E-waawyeyaag Beadwork Components

Diverse types of knowledge and kinship emerge through distinct kinds of webs much like the spiderwebs created by a variety of sabkeshiinyak. This was embodied in the conversations I had during this project (see figure 44).[527] Each web created may be different for each person, but all are equally as complex, powerful, and meaningful in

[519] E-waawyeyaag is circle in Nishnaabemwin.
[520] Government of Canada, *Bound Volume of Testimony Given*, 248 (256 digital), (statement of Howard).
[521] Day (Sagaate), interview.
[522] Easby, interview.
[523] Day (Sagaate), interview.
[524] Easby, interview.
[525] Robinson, interview.
[526] Easby, interview.
[527] Sabkeshiinyak are little net makers or spiders in Nishnaabemwin.

shaping our ways of being. The threads of knowing are not always spun by the exact same sabkeshiinh, but we all belong to a much larger circle together in the universe.[528]

Figure 44. E-waawyeyaag: Being a Part of Something Greater. An important teaching has always been understanding that we are all a part of much greater circles that exist beyond ourselves. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs by author, *E-waawyeyaag: Being a Part of Something Greater*, 2025).

I have chosen to represent this circle of relationships by beading sabkeshiinyak that are both orb-weavers and non-orb-weavers through beaded a Banded Garden Spider (see right side of figure 44) and a Crab Spider (see left side of figure 44).[529] As

[528] Sabkeshiinh is spider (singular) in Nishnaabemwin.

[529] Miigwech to Jade Lacosse for teaching me so much about the many diverse kinds of sabkeshiinyak over the years. Jade is the daughter of Frank Lacosse, granddaughter of Jean Bannatyne, both of Lac Seul/Sioux Lookout. She is adopted Tlingit in Potlatch. She is always seeking deeper understanding and connection to her communities.

scholar Lana Ray describes, “beautiful and innovative pieces of beadwork are constructed that tell the story of the beader in relation to his or her community and culture, enacting a collective framework of interpretation.”[530] The webs that are created through sheet webs by non orb-weavers are no less important than those spun in spirals by orb-weavers (see bottom right of figure 44). Sabkeshiinyak have taught me to be careful and thoughtful in terms of how I impact those around me as we are all beings in the shared kinship of Creation. It is important to me to consider how my choices impact others.

Table 5. Theme: Debwewin: Enriching Life Through Centring Language[531]		
Memory Quote: John […] was conversing with me about their language, and the difficulty he found in understanding the books written in [Nishnaabemwin] for their use. Among other things, I asked him if his people ever swore, or used profane language towards the Deity. The man regarded me with a sort of stern horror, as he replied, '[Nishnaabe], till after he knew your people, never swore-no bad word in [Nishnaabemwin]. [Nishnaabeg] must learn your words to swear and take [Creator’s] name in vain.'[532]		
“The level of complexity and nuance in how you can describe that relationship and how important that relationship is to the whole sentence, to the whole idea.”[533]	“Yeah, it was always really grounding for me […] when I worked as a cultural programming facilitator that were my favorite and that was in the mornings because […] I would go to the Living Languages Gallery and I would sit in the language hut and I would listen to everything and then I would [start work].”[534]	“Colonization and colonial impacts […have] conditioned [us] to think about them as separate and when we attempt to communicate about these things as being part of the whole, the language or the ability to talk about those things in English in a way that makes sense […] that language just isn't there.”[535]

[530] Ray, “‘Beading Becomes a Part of Your Life,’” 371.
[531] Truth in Nishnaabemwin.
[532] Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush*, 267-268.
[533] Easby, interview.
[534] Robinson, interview.
[535] Easby, interview.

Table 5. Theme: Debwewin: Enriching Life Through Centring Language (continued)		
"Did you see that one about weweni? The way that I understood the word, it was like walk safely or be careful in the world. He broke it down and was talking about how it's more about recognizing the impacts that each of our actions and each of our words has as we walk through the world and that those impacts reflect on your community, on your family, and the world as a whole. Yeah, and it makes sense, right? It's this idea of oneness and wholeness. Once again, that how we are in the world reflects on everything else around us."[536]	"So much of the language is just about relationships and how something or someone might relate to someone else or something else."[537] "I was at an Ojibwe language immersion […] I just remember the elder pointing and talking about the water and referring to it as mashkikiwaaboo. And it just sort of like, clicked in my head, I sort of just had this moment of realizing that I did, I knew the word for this for that previously, like I'd heard the word mashkikiwaaboo, but kind of what that word meant and the component parts of it, and then just comparing that word and what's contained within it with the word swamp water and like the connotations that that has, you know what I mean?"[538]	"It's very hard to talk about those things as being part of the whole without sounding like completely out in left field or using the English language in a very strange way. So I think like, and that's one of the things that I started to think about a lot too, learning Anishinaabemowin because that's a thing that is very important to me at the moment is language learning […] It's like when I started to learn Anishinaabemowin, even my super elementary level, even me stumbling along, I can already see that there are ways of communicating in the language that just make it obvious that these things are part of a whole. You don't have to be doing this work that we're doing right now to forge those connections, right?"[539]

Narrative Discussion of Debwewin Regalia Components

As Racette writes, "the first beads were painstakingly hand crafted from shell and small seeds. Indigenous languages remember these ancestors."[540] Every conversation that I had during the visits centred language as an important part of not only identity discussions more broadly, but also as an intrinsic foundational aspect of how each relative in this project connects to culture and nationhood. As discussed in Chapter 6, a selection of memory quotes were chosen to reconfigure the perspective of the

[536] Day (Sagaate), interview. This is a reference to one of the daily videos that Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe educator James Vukelich Kaagegaabaw has shared on the Anishinaabemowin word, "weweni."
[537] Easby, interview.
[538] Easby, interview.
[539] Easby, interview.
[540] Farrell Racette, "If The Needles Don't Break," 153.

audience. Twenty-seven quotes were chosen to show how my ancestors have been represented in literature and documents and how my relatives have represented us in their work.

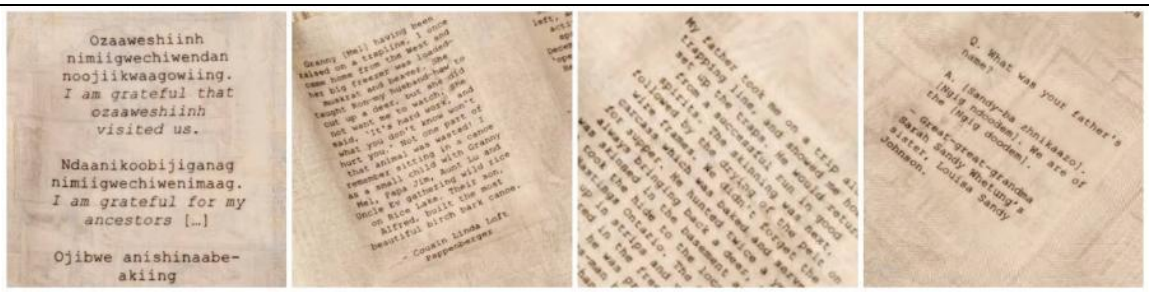

Figure 45. Debwewin: Enriching Life Through Centring Language. Language shapes everything in our lives. My north star in life that guides me are my languages and this is thematically something that was common in conversations. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs by author, *Debwewin: Enriching Life Through Centring Language*, 2025).

I rewrote many of the quotes partially in Nishnaabemwin to encourage the audience to consider the impacts of the English language on my ancestors as well as the limitations of English in terms of describing the lived realities of my relatives (see figure 45). Each person contributing to this work spoke about language as a grounding force and strengthening part of their lives as well as how it shapes their perspectives. As Angela discussed: “it made me think about the Anishinaabemowin language circle at UVic and starting to go to that. And honestly, I think that the reason that I thought of that was that phrase in the question of ‘reconnection with the spiritual.’ For me, what's been most important for allowing that to happen is having inclusive culturally grounded spaces.”[541] Each of the twenty-seven rewritten memory quotes that I chose were printed onto fabric using heat-transfer printing and then were slotted into the nine pockets in the lining of the shawl cape. This is to represent how memories may not be seen by people around you, but you keep them close to you, and they envelop your heart and spirit.

[541] Easby, interview.

Table 6. Theme: Nbwaakaawin: Knowledge Through Women, Two-Spirit, and Gender Diverse Community Members[542]		
Memory Quote: There was the years of picking cherries, apples and wild strawberries that grew on our property, so Granny could stock up on her winter desserts. And the time she gathered cherry bark and pulled burdock root to steep in a tea mixture as well as the many mustard plasters for healing purposes.[543]		
"If you really want to know something in life, ask a grandmother. She will know."[544] “Fishing is great for you because it allows you to relax your mind—especially if you are on calm water. Water is supposed to calm you down. They think it’s about the fish, but it’s the water. Water is calming and connects all of us.”[545]	“Just being able to be there with it and feel that I am standing where my great-great-great-grandmother may have stood or even my great-grandpa because he lived on the island for a good chunk of his life and his family before him. Being able to be engaging with plants that they engaged with. Obviously, it's not going to be the exact same leaf, but it comes from the same roots, and it comes from the same place.”[546]	“Blood memory is just a piece of the way that we're manifesting in the world. The way that we were carried in our mothers, for example, as it was, they were carried in their mother.”[547] “There's […] exclusion of our people who are non-binary. Ceremonies: so, I think we have to start there first.[548]
“So, memory making—my people are really big storytellers, both orally and through our art, and that's always been our primary method of passing that on. The role of being a storyteller is almost always been a female one, so women have always been really important in keeping those stories alive and therefore keeping memories alive.”[549]	“I think there is a certain amount of people out there who, at certain times in their life ask for help from the universe, or the Creator, or whoever, whatever, and if you are in the right space, that person will come, and it will change your life.”[550] “Recognizing [patriarchal and Christian effects] when someone says, ‘Oh, you can't come into the ceremony because you're not wearing a skirt.’”[551]	“My favorite part of that entire gallery is the [Cradleboard Theatre]. It's woven from cedar from the outside and the idea of it is tying it to be like how babies are on cradleboards and in baskets. You know, they would be […] wrapped up lovingly from their mother or, you know, grandmother […] The idea was to kind of replicate that feeling of being wrapped with love on the inside because it's very cozy and it's very intimate.”[552]

[542] Wisdom or Learned in Nishnaabemwin.

[543] Linda Loft Pappenberger, interview, *in Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Baha’i Pioneers*, by Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge (One Voice Press, LLC., 2011), 96.

[544] Divina R. Sianen, Lucbanin, Lucban, Quezon, Philippines, interview, June 21, 2023.

[545] Leila Whetung, interview.

[546] Robinson, interview.

[547] Day (Sagaate), interview.

[548] Day (Sagaate), interview.

[549] Robinson, interview.

[550] Taylor, interview.

[551] Day (Sagaate), interview.

[552] Robinson, interview. Note: the lullabies and prayer songs in the Cradleboard Theatre play in a loop without English and there are several Coast Salish recordings as well.

Narrative Discussion of Nbwaakaawin Beadwork Components

In the words of my cousin Evie Loft Watts, “the grandmothers have never left us. We sometimes forget to call on them. The ancestors are watching.”[553] Every conversation had moments in which relatives focused on the stories of women, two-spirit, and gender diverse community members as well as how spaces have been changed through colonialism. My cousin Darren-ba Shilling Taylor shared a tremendous amount of deep knowledge throughout our conversation and one aspect that he really impressed upon me are my responsibilities in community and how that connects me to all the grandmothers who came before me.[554]

Figure 46. Nbwaakaawin: Knowledge Through Women, Two-Spirit, and Gender Diverse Community Members. Indigenous knowledge is lovingly passed down in families and has lineages that connect us to everyone who came before us and will connect us to those who come after. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs and digital painting by author, *Nbwaakaawin: Knowledge Through Women, Two-Spirit, and Gender Diverse Community Members*, 2025).

[553] Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge, *Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Baha’i Pioneers,* (One Voice Press, LLC., 2011), 85.

[554] This teaching echoes the many beautiful teachings I have received on ancestral knowledge from my friend Kirsten Mikkelsen (Anishinaabe, Danish, and Finnish from Rainy River First Nation).

The wisdom of the grandmothers in our lives has been represented through intentional beadwork choices and fibre arts techniques. I have emphasized these connections through the aspects of culture that bind me to my mother and Creation as a whole (see figure 46).[555] I have stitched and beaded together lukban fruit flowers on the beaded belt, four-petal flowers on the hair ties, the parol caribou tufted bracelet cuff, and blue rose earrings.[556] I incorporated blue caribou hair into the tufting after seeing deer hair cone decorations on historical regalia and because I wanted to honour my doodem relationships. These deer pieces were dyed red, but I was instinctually more drawn to blue fur and followed that thread of intuition. In later stages of my research, I encountered a quote from Susanna Moodie's historical memoirs of Pemdashkodeyaang and one passage describes Gimaa Peter Naugon having a regalia hat that was decorated with blue deer hair.[557] The blue rose earrings incorporate a three dimensional beading technique named cocho commonly used in Quezon Province for decorating traditional footwear called bakya: roses were chosen because they are the favourite flower grown by my Nanay.[558] I consciously chose heavily blue motifs for each piece to represent the sacred connections that exist between water, women, and Creation on both sides of my family.

[555] The drawing in figure 46 is an interpretation of a photograph of gold earrings from the Philippines. Please refer to the following reference for the original photograph, *Large Square Quatrefoil Earrings*, 2021, Photograph of pre-colonial gold jewellery, Museo Ng Bangko Sentral Ng Pilipinas, Manila, Philippines. Bangko Sentral Ng Pilipinas, https://www.bsp.gov.ph/Pages/AboutTheBank/Facilities/BSP%20Museum%20Collection/Pre-Colonial_Gold_and_Pottery.aspx#/.

[556] A more expansive discussion of Lucban regalia is in Chapter 6. Parol are traditional star and floral holiday lanterns made of capiz shells in the Philippines. This cuff was started at the Bead, Hide, and Fur Symposium (Whitehorse) in 2022. Miigwech to Gwyneth Williams, Laura Suthherst, and Vashti Etzel for the inspiration.

[557] See memory quote #8 in Chapter 6.

[558] Grandmother/Mother in Lucban.

Table 7. Theme: Mnidook: Experiential Knowledge through Spirit[559]		
Memory Quote: He [...] possessed that first great attribute of the soul, a deep reverence for the Supreme Being. How inferior were thousands of my countrymen to him in this important point! The affection of [Nishnaabe] parents to their children, and the deference which they pay to the aged, is another beautiful and touching trait in their character.[560]		
"You need to do your spiritual component of [harvesting from the land]."[561]	"It's like the experience of recognizing something that you already knew in a way."[562]	"Pulling cedar—very physically intensive and also very spiritual. You don't just go up to a tree and start pulling […] You pray, you offer your medicines, and you do that work."[563]
"When we're talking about this concept of like otherness and when people use lateral violence or patriarchy and ceremony—those people that I really would consider true spiritual leaders […say], 'Well, everyone comes from somewhere. You have a right to know your culture.' You have a right to know where you come from and they're wholeheartedly encouraging of your involvement in it."[564]	"Until you experience a vision yourself or until you experience something like a relative coming to talk to you when they're not here anymore you can't explain it in words."[565]	"Our way of being in life is very spiritual […] We're very aware of that—it's not just us and it's not just what you can see that's there. There's so much more that you can't see. The land has spirit, and plants have spirits, and they have voices."[566]
"I think people need to start looking at things like that and going, 'This is a sacred thing that I'm doing. I'm going and choosing what's going into my body and choosing those things that I'm doing right now.' They're transforming themselves into something that's sacred."[567]	"I think all of those things were sacred at one time and I think we lost that ability to see that. I think that's one of the things that we could reclaim. I think that if we started doing that more consciously, then I think it could change the way that we look at the world and I think it could change the way that we interact with each other."[568]	"I'm trying to define what ceremony is. Is it a destination? Is it a place card? Is it a concept that is too far away for people? Is it something that an individual needs to practice every day? What are your everyday ceremonies? How do you make your everyday things ceremonial?"[569]

[559] Mnidook are spirits in Nishnaabemwin.
[560] Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush*, 267.
[561] Robinson, interview.
[562] Easby, interview.
[563] Robinson, interview.
[564] Day (Sagaate), interview.
[565] Day (Sagaate), interview.
[566] Day (Sagaate), interview.
[567] Taylor, interview.
[568] Taylor, interview.
[569] Taylor, interview.

Narrative Discussion of Mnidook Beadwork Components

I encoded mnidoo circles into every regalia piece that I beaded, but it may not come across as obvious unless deeply examined (see figure 47).[570] All of the relatives I had conversations with spoke about the importance of spirituality in their everyday lives. As Shayli shared, "anytime [she] engage[s] in ceremony of any kind and, [she] know[s] for most people when they engage in ceremony, it's an emotional thing. It's not that you're just doing this thing and then you compartmentalize it."[571] Each person did not speak about this abstractly or about theories around spirituality, but rather how they have experienced what it means to feel and engage with spiritual beings in an enmeshed, present, and embodied way.

Beading as a process, as well as other traditional creative practices, are meditative and profound. Many beading artisans speak of this aspect of how time feels different as you are beading as if feeling "the sensation of entering a state of suspended concentration where time stops […where] 3 hours can seem like 5 minutes."[572] As Oshkiigmong elder Dorothy Taylor shares with scholar Lana Ray, "this happens because beading provides a means to access altered states of being and knowing, evoking a meditative state."[573] I think that engaging with ancestral cultural practices such as beading and weaving strengthens bonds of knowledge that cannot be quantified or easily understood in materialistic ways.

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[570] See Chapter 6 discussion of this.
[571] Robinson, interview.
[572] Farrell Racette, "If The Needles Don't Break," 162.
[573] Dorothy Taylor, quotation, in "'Beading Becomes a Part of Your Life': Transforming the Academy Through the Use of Beading as a Method of Inquiry," by Lana Ray. *International Review of Qualitative Research* 9, no. 3 (2016), 375, https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2016.9.3.363.

Figure 47. Mnidook: Experiential Knowledge through Spirit. Spirit symbology is a significant part of how I was raised and many relatives spoke of this in our conversations, so I encoded some of these beliefs into the beadwork. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs by author, *Mnidook: Experiential Knowledge through Spirit*, 2025).

Through conversations, many relatives spoke of how full their hearts felt when they were in a creative space that connected them with their ancestors. It is partly about the level of focus that is needed to process traditional materials like cedar, but one of the deeper meditative elements becomes the act of lovingly weaving this relative into cultural pieces that provide for the community. This is a powerful and spiritually resonating embodiment of relational practices with our more-than-human kin. Connecting with the experiences of ancestors through the inspiration gained from their creativity is a foundational piece of Indigenous artistic practices. When we tap into our ancestral knowledges we are making sure that these relationships remain alive and continuous for future generations.

Table 8. Theme: Biinjiiy'ii: Resurgence Practices in Everyday Life Start Within[574]		
Memory Quote: Having ceremonies banned, not being able to speak your language, and having to have permission to leave the reservation [,…] so every scrap of knowledge that we have, every little tiny bit of knowledge that we have from those times, we need to hang onto and we need to bring forward. We need to remember that those things are really important—that any little bit of cultural knowledge that you have comes from the ancient ones. It was preserved somehow through all of those times and I think that's something that we should be putting on, covering ourselves in, wrapping ourselves up, wearing our robes, and holding ourselves too. Right down to academia, you know, right down to challenging academia.[575]		
"Decolonizing means we are beginning to come back to ourselves and […] that means being your true self […You] reach your full potential and you're supported in doing that and you're loved for doing that […] It means re-looking at all those things that have been imposed on me—looking at them, giving them space, grieving, and transforming them so I can learn and be different in the world."[576]	"It's an individual's responsibility to go and look for what they need, and it's very much that. I think that part shouldn't ever change […] There needs to be a way for—you know when you're starting out—there needs to be a clear way for people to go and find the teachers that they need."[577]	"What we're facing right now is unfortunately a very deep disconnection from our ability to communicate our feelings, like our inner world to our outer world, and relate our outer world to our inner world. I think we used the [artistic expressions], and we used the ceremony, and the singing, and the stories as a way to guide how we were in the world."[578]
"There's got to be some sort of way for people to gather, to be able to feel that that connection is there, to feel that they are still very much a part of their community, and that their community exists and is coming back to itself. So there's physically being where you come from, and then where you come from isn't just a physical place it's our sense of being, it's our spirits, and it's our culture."[579]	"Everyone's in a different place in their life…And I think, for me at the moment, the key to moving toward that whole is to acknowledge your story, acknowledge where you're coming from, and acknowledge what you know, and then also acknowledge where maybe you need to do work, or you need to learn more, you need to connect with other people."[580]	"The way that we raise our children is to let them realize their gifts […] I keep thinking back to those stories and the ways that in our philosophy and our language—that's what guides the principles […so] we can be in the world in a good way."[581]

[574] Biinjiiy'ii is within or inside in Nishnaabemwin.
[575] Taylor, interview.
[576] Day (Sagaate), interview.
[577] Taylor, interview.
[578] Day (Sagaate), interview.
[579] Robinson, interview.
[580] Easby, interview.
[581] Day (Sagaate), interview.

Narrative Discussion of Biinjiiy'ii Beadwork Components

A common discussion formed around the many tangible ways of engaging in resurgence; however, many relatives spoke of how an internal shift is required for resurgence. While inspiration can be a catalyst for the journey of resurgence, overall, there was an understanding that it is a process that starts within each of us and grows. As Racette discusses, for many people "picking up the needle [in beadwork] was a reconnection and reclaiming that addressed broken bonds and family trauma."[582] I reflected these ideas by focusing on lining the shawl cape and belt intentionally with fabric that has references to seeds, planting, growth, and blooming (see figure 48).

Figure 48. Biinjiiy'ii: Resurgence Practices in Everyday Life Start Within. These images depict the fabric lining of the regalia and represent our inner selves. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs by author, *Biinjiiy'ii: Resurgence Practices in Everyday Life Start Within,* 2025).

[582] Farrell Racette, "If The Needles Don't Break," 153.

The lining represents the internal selves of Indigenous peoples and the potential for growth through the planting of seeds of ideas and knowledge and the blooming of resurgence from this. The shawl cape lining has fabric prints that encapsulate some of my family's history in terms of time periods, working abroad in the United States, styles of communication, and references to place names in our territories. Ultimately, I wanted to consider how the impacts of colonial policies have been profoundly internalized as well.

Table 9. Theme: Miiknaansan: Teachings Through Numerical and Line Patterning[583]		
Memory Quote: "[It] would not have been mistake if we could read that white writing. The Indian has a good head you know. And south of Simcoe, there was a reserve there for hunting---seven or eight townships not ever surrendered [...] Seven or eight townships, that is our hunting ground.[584]		
"Even just the act of going for a run along the lakeshore, being able to see the lake, and being able to go and touch it if I want to or just sit beside it. That washes the static away so effectively."[585]	"Folks who care take of the lands […] remember to show their gratitude, I think those are all things that will contribute to mino-bimaadiziwin for the next seven generations because there needs to be a place and there needs to be conditions for our people to live in seven generations, right?"[586]	"I do use intuition. I use a lot of my own spirit to drive myself forward when I'm in ceremony […] I know that everything that I have and everything that I've been taught in my life doesn't belong to me."[587]
"I keep thinking back to those stories and the ways that in our philosophy in our languages [are…] what guides the principles of the seven teachings [as…] another concept of guiding ways in which we can be in the world in a good way."[588]	"That sense of cultural humility […] is also an important part of beading too […] In terms of thinking about the designs that you're beading and why you're beading them and not taking other people's designs and […] what different designs mean to different cultures […] It was helpful for me to learn about those things in the context of beading too."[589]	"There's one song in Halq'eméylem. There's the W̱SÁNEĆ 13 moon prayer in SENĆOŦEN, and there's […] another prayer […at the Cradleboard Theatre in…] Halq'eméylem or Hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ which are both dialects of Hul'q'umi'num."[590]

[583] Miiknaansan are pathways in Nishnaabemwin.
[584] Government of Canada, "Bound Volume of Testimony Given," 230 (238 digital), (statement of Paudash).
[585] Easby, interview.
[586] Easby, interview.
[587] Taylor, interview.
[588] Day (Sagaate), interview.
[589] Easby, interview.
[590] Robinson, interview. Please listen to the beautiful lullabies in the languages mentioned here: https://soundcloud.com/royalbcmuseum/songs-from-the-cradleboard-theatre/.

Figure 49. Miiknaansan: Teachings Through Numerical and Line Patterning. Spirit lines, tracks, and pathways embedded into the beadwork. There are specific numerical counts based on teachings were incorporated into the regalia. Thirteen pieces of applique beadwork representing flowering plants with spirit circles and blueberries representing teachings around three (please see blueberries on belt in figure 43). (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs by author, *Miiknaansan: Teachings Through Numerical and Line Patterning*, 2025).

Narrative Discussion of Miiknaansan Regalia Components

As Racette notes, beadwork has the power to be an embodiment of "prayer and devotional labour."[591] Discussions with relatives often spoke about spiritual connections, life pathways, but also about the importance of experiencing physical trails. The beaded branching white spirit lines connect all pieces of the work and represent the pathways that connect us to our ancestors and descendants through kinship and knowledge. The lines are also inspired by the central role of fishing for my ancestors and my contemporary relatives. There are traditional rabbit tracks embedded in the ancestrally

[591] Farrell Racette, "If The Needles Don't Break," 156.

inspired beadwork to represent my grandfather's knowledge around tracking and providing aid to others who are in search of food and water through marking symbols onto the trail (see figure 49). In life, we need threads of guidance, inspiring directions, and sustenance on our knowledge journeys. I beaded gold vee shapes into the heart flowers to represent the inverted triangles used to mark pathways in art, but also on trails (see figure 49). When my father was growing up my Grandpa Ted would mark hunting and trapping trails by modifying trees to have forked branches: this is knowledge that was passed down by many generations before my father and is also something that was recognized by other relatives in the community when they were on the land.[592]

The themes that were discussed with relatives often circled back to cultural ideas around teachings and prayers that reflected spiritual understandings that have numerical and celestial components. I encoded these beliefs around numerical spiritual elements through beading petals on flowers that flow from one to seven as well as by beading seven mnidoonsak (see figure 50).[593] I chose five kinds of pollinators as well as two protectors that are common in my home territories.[594] This is meant to represent seven generations ahead as well as the seven teachings for Anishinaabeg. The number of beaded applique pieces on each front piece of the shawl cape is seven, while the back piece has thirteen flowering plant relatives and the belt has seven shells beaded as celestial bodies (see figure 49).

[592] The trees would then grow in this manner from that point onwards.
[593] Mnidoonsak are little spirits in Nishnaabemwin. This is a way of talking about insects but includes other beings.
[594] Discussion of specific types of pollinators in Theme 1. I chose moths because my grandparents always used to say that moths are my spirit relatives returning to visit me. Discussion of specific types of protectors in Theme 3.

Figure 50. Miiknaansan (continued). Flowers with petals ranging from one to seven throughout as well as diamond crosses for teachings around four. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs by author, *Miiknaansan (continued)*, 2025).

The thirteen applique pieces reflect the thirteen-moon lunar calendar that was shared among relatives discussing their celestial relationships in these conversations. There are three beaded blueberries in each cluster as well as the three-petal heart floral shape on the belt to recognize the heart self, spirit self, and embodied self (see figure 43). There are crosses and diamonds in the beaded strawberries to represent teachings around the four directions, four seasons, four Anishinaabe stages of life, and so forth (see figure 50).

Table 10. Theme: Zhichgaazowin: Embodying Connectivity Through Creativity[595]		
Memory Quote: In earlier days much of the work fell to the women; who, in addition to their regular duties, braided corn husks into doormats, peeled strips of ash to the desired thickness and wove them into baskets. They made boxes and small canoes of birch-bark, with intricate designs embroidered with porcupine quills. These were bound with a sweet-scented grass.[596]		
"But we should be looking as well towards how those things made us more resilient, how those things made us stronger and made us who are living right now have the ability to pull ourselves out of distressing times."[597]	"We're working through so much as well as just trying to survive like in the day-to-day and, in a modern settler colonial society, so I think we have to […] look back on artistic forms of expression to guide us through that."[598] "Beadwork has been super, super instrumental in deepening my understanding, mostly as a form of a gateway activity […] like a gateway to understanding, you know."[599]	"We all have different ways of expressing that creativity and I think when we think of it in an Indigenous context it's very much influenced by land and the way that our environment is, and how we interact with our environment […] Another core thing is […] looking at how we can use our ceremony and tradition, and also how we individually express ourselves artistically to bring us forward to reconnecting to ourselves."[600]
"By keeping the knowledge of what those plants did, you keep those memories of how we lived our daily lives. With our artwork, our artwork exists in so many different ways […] There are house poles, ceremonial poles, memorial poles, lots and lots of different kinds."[601]	"So I think for me, what I try to do in my work as much as possible and in my life and in just my way of being is to help people, to help myself, and to help people understand what connection to land means, why it's important, [and] what it could look like—all of those things."[602]	"Our masks tell stories, and we tell stories with those masks. Of course, there are songs and dances that tell those stories and keep those memories alive, and those are passed on through generations."[603]

Narrative Discussion of Zhichgaazowin Regalia Components

Thematically, most conversations returned to the idea that creative practices are essential to connecting in a community context. This was discussed not just in a human way, but also in terms of making space for knowledge and spirit beings in our everyday

[595] Zhichgaazowin is something arranged or made in a certain way in Nishnaabemwin.
[596] Mary Jane Muskratte Simpson, "A History of the Rice Lake Indians," *A History of the Rice Lake Indians*, https://www.ricelakereserves.com/.
[597] Taylor, interview.
[598] Day (Sagaate), interview.
[599] Easby, interview.
[600] Day (Sagaate), interview.
[601] Robinson, interview.
[602] Easby, interview.
[603] Robinson, interview.

lives. As Jessica emphasizes, there needs to be an openness to seeing and experiencing in a spiritual way, or else “you're not going to see it.”[604]

Figure 51. Zhichgaazowin: Embodying Creative Ways of Making Space. The *Ngwaagan Regalia* is the overall embodiment of everything that I have learned along the way, not only through this project, but during my life. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs by author, *Zhichgaazowin: Embodying Creative Ways of Making Space*, 2025).

Being intentional in our living embodiment of our teachings requires us “to be in a good mental space as your energy and your spirit and what you're putting out there affects what you're taking.”[605] She discusses how important it is to reinvigorate our teachings around listening and learning: “you'd sit and you'd listen, and you'd absorb. You'd be taught and mentored how to do things and then when you were ready you

[604] Day (Sagaate), interview.
[605] Robinson, interview.

would do them yourself."[606] I chose to represent creative connectivity through the regalia pieces as a whole and how each piece interacts with one another (see figure 51). The relatives that I have had conversations within this section have inspired, informed, mentored, and taught me how to be a better being and a more creative relative.

[606] Day (Sagaate), interview.

Conclusion
Daadkogwaazowin: Picking Up the Threads[607]

> Bella sewed the children's clothes. She also made baskets to sell to tourists. When they weren't on the trapline, the children were at home helping Bella with basket making and quill work. They participated in basket bees, like quilting bees, something Melba beloved. Sometimes they would peddle the baskets door-to-door. Bella was known to work until midnight on beadwork.[608]

When I speak about spiritual aspects of resurgence I am talking about how I live these relationships: I honour these relationships through recognizing my responsibilities to Creation and engaging in the spiritual nature of the beings around me whether that be with the land and waters or my plant and animal relatives. In truth, I have a complex relationship to space and place because I was born and raised thousands of miles away from my homelands, but everyday I find a way to come home to my origins.[609] Layered histories exist in the land, but colonization has impacted these relationships in countless ways. *How* we approach resurgence is crucial.[610] As Anishinaabe artist, jingle dancer, and art therapist Jessica Sagaate Day puts forth, "a good life starts from within. That's the first place we have to start, then once we have got a grasp on that we can look outwards [,…] see how we relate to others and help them live a good life."[611] If we see all beings as our relatives, then we cannot abandon them in favour of only focusing on divisive pursuits such as accumulation and materialism. Questions around the complex

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[607] To be sewn together as a verb in Nishnaabemwin and -win as a nominalizer to turn it into a noun.
[608] Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge, Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Baha'i Pioneers, (One Voice Press, LLC., 2011), 8. My great-grandmother Bella Howard Whetung was often working away on her beadwork into the early morning hours, and I share this approach.
[609] Miigwech to Evann Lacosse for generously providing me with a loving home in Whitehorse while I was living there.
[610] Miigwech (which I believe connects to the verb miigwe or to give away and the adverb -gwech for enough in Nishnaabemwin) to the Indigenous academic who told me I would "never find [my] intellectual community among [my] own people" because they partly inspired my desire to share the powerful nature of community knowledge.
[611] Jessica Sagaate Day, Anishinaabe, Finnish, English and Irish, Fort William First Nation, interview, November 17, 2019.

reality we live in forced me to examine my personal commitment and approaches to resurgence in real and embodied ways rather than focusing on the theory of resurgence with perfect land and waters and with beings who have not been harmed by colonization.

An imperative part of Indigenous resurgence is having the willingness to be brave and creative in terms of how we envision our futures as nations.[612] As Cherokee Nation scholar Jeff Ganohalidoh Corntassel emphasizes decolonization and resurgence act as starting points for Indigenous nations to reconnect with traditions, whether that means physically through "land-based and water-based cultural practices" or spiritually through ceremonial living.[613] Therefore, an integral aspect of the foundation of resurgence is how we gain and interact with our ancestral knowledge: "however different [our] lives may appear from the old ways […the] resurgence or renaissance of today is the fruit of the accumulated labours of our [grandmothers and] grandfathers. It was always there beneath the surface."[614] For Anishinaabeg, many of us strive to revitalize our conceptions of gikendaasowin because we want these ways of knowing exist for the next seven generations.[615] As Indigenous scholars, to be committed to coming back to

[612] Miigwech to the many folks who provided me with creative supplies in this project: Kim Muskratt (Wiigwaas Crafts Supplies and Gifts), Maria Rose Sikyea (Caribou Woman Creations), Craft Shop Ltd. (Whitehorse), Bearpaw Gifts (Whitehorse), Dänojä Zho Cultural Centre (Dawson City), Carmen Miller (Carmen Miller Art), Linda Jean (BeadAndDestash), Sarah Dickie, Aunty Skoden Studio & Trading Post (Victoria), Gala Fabrics (Victoria), Victoria Beadtown (Victoria), Black Sheep Quilt Shop (Victoria), Justin A., Robert P., Boonslick Trading Post (Kansas City), and Prairie Edge Trading Co. & Galleries (Rapid City). Jeff Corntassel, "Re-envisioning Resurgence: Indigenous Pathways to Decolonization and Sustainable Self-determination," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no.1 (2012): 89.
[613] Jeff Corntassel, "Re-envisioning Resurgence," 89.
[614] Mary Lou Fox Radulovich, "Native People's Cultural Resurgence," *Canadian Children's Literature/Littérature canadienne pour la jeunesse*, (1976): 70.
[615] Knowledge in Anishinaabemowin.

our way of being means that we must also concentrate on the way in which we form relationships with knowledge to make sure that it thrives forever.

Figure 52. The Work Continues. *Top* row (*left* to *right*): I started these mkizin (moccasin) vamps in these photographs at the beginning of my degree in 2015 with the intention of having them prepared for my graduation. The design is based on Sabkeshiinh (the little net maker in Nishnaabemwin, also known as a spider), but I chose to make her body out of flowers and gave her seven eyes to represent that sacred cultural number of Nishnaabeg. I made a promise to myself to not complete these vamps until I had come to a completion of my PhD studies, so I postponed their completion until Summer 2025. The symbology is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7. *Bottom* row (*left*): this is a beadwork applique patch that I have created for a bracelet cuff to thank my beading supervisor and beautiful friend, Sarah Dickie. It represents the bursting and flowing aspects of knowledge through a garden of flowers and berries. *Bottom row* (*right*): the mkizin vamps in their current iteration. (Estrella Whetung, digital collage with photographs by author, *The Work Continues*, 2025).

The work I have gathered and put forth is meant to show that we can challenge what we have learned in Western institutions and to remember our ancestral teachings—to tap into our sense of rootedness and access our ancestral threads. Colonialism has affected our ability to engage with our ancestors in meaningful ways. One way of showing this ancestral connectivity is that it is possible to use creative ways to translate community stories into Indigenous research approaches. Spiritual

engagement is through the acts of embodying and doing. In essence, the traditional teachings embodied are a foundation that learners can use to inform their way of living everyday life—to see themselves as whole beings who are connected to so many other beings within the beautiful cosmos. This sense of oneness and support for one another across differences is not unique to Nishnaabeg or Lucbanin, but I would say these are enduring cultural strengths that have allowed for cohesion and resistance to colonization. Anishinaabeg and Tagalog are larger groups that have distinct histories, experiences, and dialects across the vast territories that we live upon, yet we still embrace one another through our languages, core cultural teachings as well as shared ways of knowing and living.

While I may recognize my understanding of the world as uniquely shaped by Mississauga and Bundok Banahaw territories, I also feel a deep kinship and a relationship with the people, beings, and territories that are not Nishnaabe and Lucbanin. The idea that a person may know as much as they do with a different lineage of understanding from another being is not just accepted—it is honoured as a defining value of everyday life. A difference in understanding is not necessarily seen as oppositional, but rather as a chance for possibilities to grow and an opportunity to connect and collaborate. It is the action of coming together continually and sharing with one another in goodness and loving kindness that keeps those ties strong. As my great-grandmother Min wrote in her history work, this “has been collected and compiled so that future generations may read the story of their origin, and that a better

understanding may exist."[616] Every day we are constantly in a state of learning and each aspect of this project has made an impact on how I live as a Nishnaabe Lucbanin.[617] I hope the work, which is always continuous, in this project can be like a manidoominens in the cosmos of our manidoominensikaanag: "persevering through to completion is one of the most powerful medicines of beadwork."[618]

[616] Mary Jane Muskratte Simpson, "A History of the Rice Lake Indians," *A History of the Rice Lake Indians*, https://www.ricelakereserves.com/.
[617] See figure 52.
[618] Manidoominens is a bead in Anishinaabemowin. Manidoominensikaanag are Beadwork pieces or beadwork item in Anishinaabemowin. Sherry Farrell Racette, "If The Needles Don't Break And The Thread Doesn't Tangle: Beading Utopia," essay, in *Bead Talk: Indigenous Knowledge and Aesthetics from the Flatlands*, eds. Carmen Robertson, Judy Anderson, and Katherine Boyer (University of Manitoba Press, 2024), 156.

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