Futurities in Anishinaabe Arts Practices: Beading as Decolonial Praxis

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Abstract

This dissertation explores ways of knowing, being, and doing that are made present and possible through Anishinaabe creative practice and the role and value of beadwork as decolonial praxis. This study draws upon framings of desire and theoretical constructs of the future imaginary to de-link learning from schooling and the wider world of educational policy and research that seek solutions within settler colonial institutions and structures. Inspired by concepts of generative refusal, fugitivity, and futurity, this study is guided by three main questions: 1) How might Indigenous creative practice, as a site of learning, offer new possibilities for decolonial thought and action?; 2) How do Anishinaabe art-makers imagine, create, or conceptualize "otherwise" worlds through their work?; and 3) What learning is made present through beadwork?

Using Indigenous methodologies informed by visiting and storywork, and conversation, arts elicitation, and beading circles as methods, this study engaged the experiences and perspectives of eight beadworkers from Northwestern Ontario, Canada. Topics elicited from discussion with participants about their beadwork included relationships to beadwork practices, motivations for learning, material knowledges, socio-cultural and political aspects of beadwork, visions of success, and hopes for the future. Motifs that illuminate the knowledges and learning that occurs within spaces of Anishinaabe creative practice include: art from an Anishinaabe perspective does not conform to the conventions of Western aesthetics; beadwork is an inherently relational practice that reflects Anishinaabe onto-epistemologies; learning is not centered solely on the transmission and receiving of information and is a lifelong process; and beadwork is an intimate practice of care for ourselves, our families, and our communities. This research highlights the importance of beadwork (specifically) and creative practice (more

generally) as one strategy for building Indigenous futurities in the present, shifting conversations away from learning as a neoliberal imperative towards learning as a pathway to personal growth and the creation of vibrant Indigenous futures.

Acknowledgements

Before we begin, I'd like to say "thank you" for everyone's patience. I began conceiving this work before the global pandemic, and I admit it languished on occasion. Life is messy and full of the unexpected, and a dissertation doesn't just magically appear—clean, perfect, and unscathed. This dissertation is marked by grief, loneliness, and frustration as much as laughter, camaraderie, and joy. Reflecting on the process and the journey that brought me here, I am filled with gratitude. This work has truly been a labour of love and I would like to take a moment to acknowledge and thank the people who uplifted and supported me along the way.

This work would not have been possible without the profound strength, guidance, and unwavering support of the Anishinaabekweg who have uplifted and inspired me throughout my journey. They made this work a reality. I am grateful to: my nanny, Florena, for being my first beading teacher; my mom, for all those times she reminded me what it is to be Anishinaabe; my sisters, whose companionship and video game marathons provided much-needed mental breaks and joy throughout my PhD; and all the remarkable women who imparted the creative skills I cherish today—Anne, Carla, Audrey, Helen, Gail, Katie, and so many more.

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Finally, thank you to the beadworkers who made this work possible. Miigwech to Mary, Caitlyn, Ocean, Jean, Leanna, Shannon, Cher, and Anna Fern. Thank you for your generosity, your kindness, your creativity, and the beauty you bring to the world.

Table of Contents

List of Images and Figures

A Note to the Reader

Throughout this dissertation, I do my best to adhere to APA 7 guidelines as the norm for Faculty of Education dissertations. However, there were times I intentionally strayed from the strict formatting and style rules, such as in the use of contractions. That should not be mistaken for lack of sophistication or professionalism, but rather as an expression of myself an Indigenous author speaking in a way that is more familiar to my community. Images and figures are also presented in a way that defies APA guidelines. This choice not only seeks to enhance readability and legibility, but also serves to emphasize visual information in context in a way that APA formatting might hinder. Finally, I chose to single-space direct quotations of participants' words to help the reader to identify and differentiate participant voices from the main text.

Chapter One: Introduction

Boozhoo. Biindigen. Nimadabin! Nindawab. *Hello. Come in. Sit down! I make a space*
for you.

It's hard for me to begin this story because it's difficult to know where exactly to start.
Let me go back to what I remember being curious about. When I was small, my family would
spend summers at my great-grandmother's house. It was a small green house on a hill that
overlooked a small island in White Lake. My granny, Florena, was always baking or sewing or
making something. She worked as a homemaker, cleaning houses for Elders around the
community and she supplemented her income by making crafts or baked goods for sale at church
events or the community powwow. Her house was full of tins and boxes that were filled with
brightly coloured things: thread, lace, ribbons, and beads. As kids, we weren't really allowed to
touch those things but sometimes we would sneak in and pick up little jars of glass beads to
marvel at the colours or steal a bit of lace for our little dolls.

My mother tried very hard to make sure that my siblings and I grew up knowing who we
are as Anishinaabek. We visited our community often, my granny made us jingle dresses to
dance at the powwows, and our home was filled with books, if not by Indigenous authors, at least
about Indigenous peoples. I had a hard time in middle school, which my mother recognized. She
brought me fasting, she took me to the sweatlodge, and when my grandmother moved to the city,
she encouraged me to visit with her often.

During one of our visits together, I asked my granny to show me how to do beadwork. I
asked her how she knew what to bead and she showed me her collection of floral and animal
patterns she'd collected over the years. Some she got from friends, others she found in books,
and later, she would print her patterns from the internet. She told me I could bead whatever I

wanted so I began with a simple drawing of a flower that I drew on a scrap piece of paper. She handed me a needle and thread and some light interfacing. She showed me how to pick up two beads at a time, to tack them down, and to repeat the process. Two beads at a time. Up. Down. Up. Down.

Teaching me how to do beadwork is the greatest gift my granny ever gave me and I was never able to thank her for that. When I look back at the times I visited with her to do beadwork, I remember other small lessons she imparted along the way. Our beading visits weren't just about the craft. It was a space where I was able to be myself. It was a space that encouraged me to ask questions, to hear about family history, to learn Anishinaabemowin, and to express myself.

Several years ago, I came across the phrase "endazhi aanji Anishinaabewiyang" which can be understood as *that place where Anishinaabek go to be who they are*. It can also be translated as *a place where one goes to become a human being*. It's a phrase that tickles me because it makes me wonder if such a place exists and what that might look like. In my imagination, it's a gathering space where we Anishinaabek are able to fully express and realize our own potential. It is a concept that encompasses belonging, kinship, and place. It is something I dream about. At the same time, I like to think of beading at my granny's kitchen table as such a place, where I could ask questions without judgement and tell stories that validated who I was and helped me become the person I am today. What would having such a place mean for us as Anishinaabek and how might it contribute to securing robust futures for ourselves?

This brings me to my research topic. This dissertation explores, through visiting, arts elicitation, and beading circles, the experiences and perspectives of eight beadworkers from Northwestern Ontario, Canada. In this first chapter, I describe the purpose and rationale for this

research. I outline the research questions that drive this study and further outline my positioning in relation to this research.

Purpose and Research Questions

This research explored what kinds of ways of knowing, being, and doing are made present and possible through Anishinaabe creative practice (specifically through beadwork[1]) and the role and value of this process as a form of decolonial praxis. Inspired by scholarship on the resurgence of Indigenous peoples that involves "renaming, reclaiming, and reoccupying Indigenous homelands" (Indigenous Nationhood Movement, 2015, para. 3), I sought to trouble settler colonial framings of what constitutes *education* and *art* to open up new possibilities for decolonial thought and action in Indigenous education. I wanted to explore how Indigenous makers conceptualize and engage with the future imaginary, including how beadwork, as a site of learning, facilitates our ability to imagine an "otherwise" that "announces the fact of infinite alternative to what *is*" (Crawley, 2017, p. 2, emphasis in original). With these goals in mind, my research questions were:

1. How might Indigenous creative practice, as a site of learning, offer new possibilities for decolonial thought and action?

2. How do Anishinaabe art-makers imagine, create, or conceptualize "otherwise" worlds through their work?

3. What learning is made present through beadwork?

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[1] I chose to focus specifically on beadwork because it is a highly recognized and popular art form that has seen a resurgence in recent years. However, I want to point out that beadwork does not exist in isolation as an art form and is informed and shaped by ancillary practices like quillwork and hide-tanning. Quillwork is described as the "grandmother of beadwork" (Monture, 1993, p. 2) and both art forms typically utilize moose or deer hide as a foundation. Within my personal network, I have found that many beadworkers do quillwork and there are many bead and quill workers who have become hide-tanners as they develop their craft and seek out more traditional materials.

Rationale

Decolonization, as a world-building and future-seeking practice, has been embraced by Indigenous scholars and educators who seek to critique and (re)form how culture is created and enacted in our daily lives. In this dissertation, I explore how Anishinaabe artists engaging in beadwork use their craft as a means of resisting colonialism and fostering Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. I am exploring this topic because educational research often conflates schooling with future economic and social success, focusing on ways to raise achievement for students based on Eurocentric ideals (Currie-Patterson & Watson, 2017; Patel, 2015; Smith, 2005; Sojoyner, 2017). Meanwhile, numerous Indigenous scholars have pointed out that schooling remains very much rooted in Eurocentrism that reflects ongoing settler colonialism (e.g., Battiste, 1998; Grande, 2004; Pihama & Lee-Morgan, 2019; Smith, 2012; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013), leading some to question the assumption that Western-based schooling is inherently good for Indigenous students and communities (Auger, 1988; Smith, 2005). Those working in the field of Indigenous education recognize the need for educational reform based in Indigenous epistemologies and resurgent practices (Battiste, 2002; L. Simpson, 2014). Sandy Grande [Quechua][2] and Teresa McCarty (2018) state that Indigenous peoples are united through "our shared experience of negotiating the affective economies of settler colonialism while at the same time, we refused its imperatives. Our very existence evidences ongoing struggles for Indigenous alterities: for *elsewheres*" (p. 165, emphasis in original).

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[2] In an effort to enact a critical citation practice, I endeavour to centre Indigenous voices that have typically been positioned at the periphery of white scholarship. To this end, I include first and last names of all authors and affiliate Indigenous authors with their specific nation the first time they are cited. This practice is meant to highlight Indigenous theorizations and to respect the multiplicity and diversity present within Indigenous thought.

Taking this cue, I am seeking elsewheres in education that exist beyond schooling. I draw upon Unangax̂ scholar Eve Tuck's (2009) framing of desire and theoretical constructs of the future imaginary to de-link learning from schooling and the wider world of educational policy and research that seek solutions within settler colonial institutions and structures. This move is inspired by Elizabeth Ellsworth's (2005) inquiry into "anomalous places of learning" (p. 5) and what Noah Romero [Filipino] and Sandra Yellowhorse [Diné] (2021) describe as "unschooling" (p. 2). Considering learning outside of schooling processes provides space to more fully theorize Indigenous education as a relational, experiential, and lifelong process, rather than a product or a measurable achievement of Eurocentric standards.

A growing number of Indigenous scholars have begun to look at the importance of art and creative practice "for actualizing decolonial knowledge that is always already present" (Edd, 2020, p. 68). Recent work explores Indigenous art as a practice of freedom (e.g., Amsterdam, 2013; Martineau & Ritskes, 2014; Recollet, 2016; Robinson, 2020), but these works typically focus on music, theatre, dance, visual, and media arts. There is little research that explicitly theorizes "traditional" Indigenous art practices (like beadwork) as part of our future imaginary. In my dissertation, I centralize Anishinaabe art practices as sources of agency as well as examples of decolonial praxis in education. This research directly confronts our colonial history of erasure and displacement through intentional and creative ways of enacting Indigenous presence that respect cultural protocols and teachings, and contribute emergent, situated, and creative forms of learning and sharing knowledge.

Positioning

I don't like writing about myself because I often feel like there's not much to say. When I do write about myself, it never sounds right, like I can never find the right words. It's at this

point that various pieces of advice come to me, things like, "Just write what you know" or

"Write from your heart" or the inevitable, exasperated, "Just write any old thing." I know it's

important to talk about places and people and some of my experiences because it not only

grounds who I am as an Anishinaabe person but also who I am as a researcher. It's also

important to talk about these things in the context of my study because it is rooted in my

Anishinaabe paradigm of relationality and kinship. Everything is connected, you know? So, I

guess I'll just tell you about where I come from and why I care so much about beadwork and the

idea of futurity.

I come from Netmizaagamig Nishinaabeg, a small community within the Robinson-

Superior Treaty area. When I was growing up, we called it Mobert. Some of my relatives from

weshkwaj – *a long time ago*[3] - come from further north around James Bay, by way of Longlac.

Most of my relatives are from Biigtigong, but when I was growing up it was called Pic River.

The point is, you can trace both sides of my family to this general corner of the world all the

way back to the 1800s. You could probably go further than that but the Church didn't keep any

records on the births and deaths of "pagans,"[4] which is what you start seeing the further back

you go. Anyway, there is a very clear line connecting me with all these relatives who come

from this specific place.

I grew up moving between Thunder Bay and my home community. My family would

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[3] I purposefully chose to italicize the English translations in an attempt to counter the idea of Anishinaabemowin as "Other." I saw this in someone else's work and they were able to rationalize their choice eloquently, with references (of course), but unfortunately I forget whose work that was and where I found their little footnote. Maybe it's not so important and I should just focus on why I'm choosing to do it for myself, so here it is: I'm deliberately "othering" the English translations in an attempt to normalize the use of Anishinaabemowin because our language should not be considered foreign on our own land. I often find when foreign words are italicized, my brain skips over reading them, so maybe italicizing the English means you won't skip past the Anishinaabemowin.

[4] Of course, this terminology is no longer appropriate and has largely fallen out of use. However, it is common to find this term throughout missionary and early Canadian government documents to describe Indigenous peoples as non-Christian.

drive the four hours between the city and our reserve every summer and most major holidays. I

remember being at my Big Granny, Elizabeth Padgena's, house for Easter while they baked pies

and cakes and bread for the church bake sales. I remember playing with the foil Christmas

decorations on the artificial tree at my Shomis, Mervin Gagnon's, house and having to watch

movies in black and white because they had an old TV. In the summertime, my sister and I

would play down by the lake, catching minnows, or we would ride our bikes up and down the

rez. In the background, the adults were always doing things. My Shomis would be cleaning the

scales off whitefish or going down to the lake to set his net. His wife, my Granny Helen, would

be doing laundry, sweeping the house, or sewing curtains or quilts. Down the other end of the

rez,[5] my Big Granny would be smoking cigarettes, looking out her big kitchen window, and

cooking moose meat and dumplings. It was my Nanny, Florena Brown, who used to do

beadwork. It's hard for me to write about her now because she passed away in 2019 and I guess

I've been thinking a lot about what she meant to me and maybe that's how I got here, doing this

work and asking the questions that I'm asking.

My Nanny learned to do beadwork as a side hustle. She was born in 1945 and only went

as far as grade 8 with her formal education, but she was really smart. She primarily worked as a

homemaker in our community and found that by making things to sell, she could earn some extra

money for herself. She didn't learn how to bead from her granny or women in the community

and she prided herself on being able to figure things out for herself.[6] She enjoyed sewing and

would make quilts, dolls, moss bags, and baby bonnets. One time she even made a plush

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[5] The original community was split by a small bay so you were from either one end or the other. No matter which end you were on, the opposite is usually referred to as "down the other end."

[6] That's not to say that her granny didn't do beadwork. My family has a tikinaagan, or *cradleboard*, that was beaded by my great-great-grandmother in the 1930s for her son, my great-uncle Raymond Padgena. My Nanny eventually made a tikinaagan using the same beadwork pattern. When I started going to powwows in my 20s, I used the pattern for a belt I made to wear with my jingle dress. When I talked with my Nanny, she told me she saw her granny beading, but that she didn't actually learn to bead until later in life.

marionette puppet. Whenever she made something new, she'd show it off and say, "Isn't that teeny?" My Nanny was always making something and she'd sell her work at craft sales in Thunder Bay or at local powwows.

My first tactile experience with beads was in the old kitchen of my Big Granny's house. Sometimes, my sister and I would poke around my Nanny's sewing table or look through her supplies to see what goodies we could find. I remember opening up an old tin and finding old pill bottles full of glass beads. We weren't allowed to open them but I liked the sound they made when you shook them up, how tiny they were, and how they moved almost like a liquid together. And the colours! They were all so pretty. It wasn't until later, when I was around 13 years old, that my Nanny would teach me how to bead like her. By that time, my other grandparents had passed away and my Nanny had moved to the city. Those were hard years for me, experiencing so much loss in such a short amount of time. I struggled a lot as a young person trying to find my place in the world. I think coming to my Nanny's kitchen table helped me in a lot of ways. I remember visiting her one time and asking her to show me how to bead. She showed me her collection of patterns and said I could choose one or I could draw one myself. I chose to draw a simple 5-petaled flower surrounded by leaves. Then she showed me how to thread my needle, form a knot, and to tack down two beads at a time. It was a slow practice and I messed up a few times, but I ended up making a keychain with that first flower. She helped me to do the edge beading because that proved to be too difficult for me at the time.

Later, I went to work as a summer student at a local historical park. I came to value our history as Anishinaabe people and wanted to learn as much as I could. My supervisor at the time, Ann Magiskan showed me how to do leatherwork so I was able to expand my beading practice. I learned how to make moccasins, gauntlet mittens, and leather bags that I adorned with my

beadwork. I eventually came to learn birchbark basketry from Ann, and later, from Audrey Deroy. I also learned how to do porcupine quillwork from Carla Ryynanen and Jean Marshall. Helen Pelletier helped me with my moccasin puckers and pattern-making. I've always loved making things out of seemingly nothing. It sometimes felt like a magic power – to take something abstract and turn it into something pretty and useful. As I picked up these skills, I began to feel physically connected to my history and with who I am and where I come from. I like to think that even if my grandparents weren't around anymore, they'd be proud of the things that I make and those practices that I carry forward.

My life has not been untouched by settler colonialism and the ongoing onslaught against our communities. I've thought about my experiences with schooling and how messed up it was, as a 'nishnaabe kid in a predominantly White, Catholic school. But I'm tired of telling those stories, and, taking a cue from scholars like Tuck's (2009) call for "suspending damage" and what Dolores Calderon [Mexican/Tigua] (2016) calls "strategic evasion," I'm mindful of what stories to tell. Katherine McKittrick (2021) offers a reflection on opacity, stating "opacity is not simply about vagueness, or claiming unintelligibility, but about the politics of sharing ideas carefully" (p. 7). I want to maintain some opacity here, mindful that a certain voyeurism and surveillance exists in these narratives of damage and pain. I think it's important that those stories get told, but I'm done with them for now because I've lived my whole life in settler colonial educational settings, experiencing and being told nothing but doom and gloom. We're always positioned as lacking. We are told that our languages are dying, our culture is dying, our people are dying – and it worries me that some of us have internalized that belief for ourselves. A student in one of my classes asked me recently if I think there will be Anishinaabe people in the future. He was concerned that we would all eventually be assimilated into dominant society and

that one day, we would all just be White. He justified his concerns by talking about how his son was being raised in the city and was further removed from the reserve and from what we commonly perceive as traditional culture (i.e., hunting, trapping, fishing).[7] It's a sentiment I've heard before from family and friends. So, I want to start telling a different story about what it means to be Anishinaabe, because we are not a monolith – we do not all live in the bush, or trap, or hunt, or fish, nor should we be beholden to living in the past to maintain "authentic" identities. We live in cities and go to school and watch movies and play video games and participate in mainstream culture, but that doesn't make us less Anishinaabe. Tuck, along with her frequent collaborator, Wayne Yang (2014) point out, "Pain narratives are always incomplete. They bemoan the food deserts but forget to see the food innovations; they lament the concrete jungles and miss the roses and the tobacco from concrete" (p. 231). With this sentiment in mind, I want to write about joy and desire and hope and the future.

I have found that beading and making things brings me joy. It brings me joy to visit with people and to hear the language being spoken around me, even when I don't fully understand it. It brings me joy to sit around the table, sharing stories, and laughing together. It brings me joy to make something out of nothing with my own hands. It brings me joy to think about and take part in these practices that are still alive and well in our communities. That is really what my research is about. Ultimately, I want to talk about how Anishinaabe art-makers experience joy through their work and how we have carved spaces for ourselves to create, imagine, and express desires. I want to explore the safe havens and refuges present within our creative practices. I want to talk about how we express desire and hope for the future through the things we make and the spaces we cultivate for ourselves.

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[7] As though these outwardly performative and material markers are the only things that constitute Indigenous identity.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

While it is customary in academic work to describe terms as they are introduced, I present this chapter as a non-linear, unfolding of ideas. In an interview with Gregory Younging [Opaskwayak Cree Nation] (2018), Lee Maracle [Stó:lō] has stated, "Indigenous writing is about writing from the center to the edge, to create a circle. We don't say things in a linear way" (pp. 21-22). I thus ask the reader have patience when I introduce some concepts in the beginning and circle back around to them when the time feels right. While this writing style might be a bit jarring for some academic readers, I view this chapter as a way to set the stage, not only in terms of delineating and defining my use of key terms and theoretical constructs, but perhaps more importantly, to explain how I arrived here. This chapter, then, is a collection of thoughts, theories, and ideas that ultimately nudged me towards my research questions and methodological choices.

This work was prompted by my frustration with the literature and discourse in Indigenous education that often seems to seek better integration of Indigenous students into the colonial institution of schooling and renders our students and communities into problems that need to be fixed, rather than interrogating the systems of power that ensure our continued failures (Ahenakew, 2016; Friedel, 2010a; 2010b; Patel, 2015). I was also frustrated by discourse that reduces education to the pursuit of economic success – a framework rooted in neoliberal, capitalist ideals (Wotherspoon, 2014; see, for example, Sharpe & Arsenault, 2010). Finally, I was frustrated that the field of Indigenous education is so often conflated with schooling (Smith, 2005; see also Chartrand, 2012). What did interest me, originally, was Sakaw Cree scholar Dale Auger's (1988) questioning if existing schools were effective educational systems and

Chickasaw scholar Eber Hampton's (1995) vision of a phase of Aboriginal education as "sui generis" – a thing entirely of its own kind.

Pursuing this line of thought brought me to Ivan Illich's (1971) work on deschooling, which eventually opened the door for me to explore radical imagination (Haiven & Khasnabish, 2014; Kelley, 2002) and other writings around education and its entanglements with colonialism (Patel, 2015; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). However, I found that ideas about deschooling as well as the radical imagination conceptualized by Max Haiven and Alex Khasnabish weren't quite right for what I was seeking. Scott Morgensen (2009) points out that we must be wary of settler emplacement, stating that "settler radicals, including anarchists, have proven capable of forming movements that profess to be anticolonial even as they claim Indigenous land and culture as their own" (p. 157). Through this line of inquiry, I was prompted to cast around for "elsewheres" in education. I found myself drawn to the decolonial theories of Walter Maldonado-Torres (2007), Aníbal Quijano (2000), and Sylvia Wynter (2003) who make explicit the ways that colonial power is constructed, maintained, and reproduced in society, and to the critical pedagogy of Grande (2004) who situates Indigenous knowledge and visions of sovereignty within the field of critical theory.

I also was inspired by prominent Indigenous scholars like Marie Battiste [Mi'kmaq], Leanne Betasamosake Simpson [Anishinaabe], and Jeff Corntassel [Cherokee] who have called for and participated in an Indigenous resurgence, that is, the reclaiming and revitalization of our own practices and ways of knowing. Beadwork is one such practice experiencing a rise in popularity in recent years as evidenced by exhibitions like *Beads, They're Sewn So Tight* (Myers, 2019) and *Radical Stitch* (Racette, Lavallee, & Mattes, 2022), and it being the subject of a feature article in *Vogue* magazine in 2019 (Allaire, 2019). A traditional art form, not just for the

Anishinaabe, but for a large number of other Indigenous nations across Turtle Island, each with their own distinct and unique style/aesthetic, led me to want to explore how Anishinaabe creative practices like beadwork, and its closely related practices of hide-tanning and quillwork, act as an educational/pedagogical/epistemological "elsewhere." I also became inspired by ideas about generative refusal (Flowers, 2013; Martineau, 2015; A. Simpson 2014), fugitivity and flight (Boon, 2018; Patel, 2019; L. Simpson, 2017), and futurity and futurisms (Dillon, 2012; Fricke, 2019; Vowel, 2022), and how these concepts may be expressed and embodied within Anishinaabe creative practices.

I acknowledge that there are clearer paths I could have taken to arrive at my research questions, but this meandering line of inquiry was necessary for me to gain better understanding of why I was so frustrated with the discourse taking place in Indigenous education and to find my own flight path out of, and away from, those conversations. This literature review, then, expounds on this line of inquiry, providing the theoretical and conceptual context for this study. First, I contextualize Tuck's (2009) theorizing on desire-based research as a theoretical foundation for my work. This is followed by an overview of colonialism and its operation in Canada through education (i.e., schooling). I describe the decolonial turn in Indigenous education, with specific discussion of Indigenous resurgence as an intervention in the dialectic between coloniality and modernity. Taking my cue from Jarrett Martineau [Nêhiyaw/ Denesųłiné] and Eric Ritskes (2014), I wish "to re-center Indigenous land, communities and cultures as the force that energizes decolonization and provides fugitive possibilities for movement and creative expression" (p. ii). I, therefore, trace theories that contribute to a future imaginary, including conceptualizations of refusal, fugitivity, and survivance within the project

of Indigenous resurgence. Finally, I delve into how Anishinaabe creative practices (specifically beadwork) provide fertile ground to explore these theories and desires.

Desire-Based Research

Damage narratives are the only stories that get told about me, unless I'm the one that's telling them. (Tuck & Ree, 2013, p. 647)

Jaskiran Dhillon (2017) discusses the ways in which Indigenous peoples are repeatedly cast as a crisis in need of state solutions. This discursive production informs both research and policy that contributes to schooling as a site of erasure (Paris, 2019), where Indigenous students, families, and communities are "over-researched, yet ironically, made invisible" (Tuck, 2009, pp. 411-412). For these reasons, I find it important not to tell this story of Indigenous peoples and our education as one entirely centered on a lack of agency, on loss, or on what Tuck (2009) generally refers to as "damage-centered" narratives (p. 409). Damage-based research relies on a faulty theory of change that asks us to tell our pain in exchange for reparations. This type of research has been widely employed in the past (sometimes necessarily), but Tuck (2009) argues that the reparations received are not worth the pathologizing that happens when our communities are consistently presented as broken. Tuck and Ree (2013) have expanded on this point, stating, "listing terrors is not a form of social justice, as if outing (a) provides relief for a presumed victim or (b) repairs a wholeness or (c) ushers in an improved social awareness that leads to (a) and (b)" (p. 647). My intent is not to demonstrate how colonization has broken us, but rather to point out that our current condition is "a problem that has been consciously and historically produced by and through the systems of colonization: a multidimensional force underwritten by Western Christianity, defined by White supremacy, and fueled by global capitalism" (Grande, 2004, p. 19). My work is, first and foremost, an expression of desire.

Rather than adhering to the desires of settler colonialism that wish to see us "go away" (Veracini, 2011, p. 3), meaning to assimilate, to contribute to Canada's economy, and to be absorbed into the body politic, my work seeks to disrupt settler desires with our own. Through her theorizing of desire, Tuck (2009) provides an opening for analyzing: 1) Indigenous peoples' navigations of settler colonial obstacles, 2) the strategies we employ to ensure our own continuity, and 3) the construction of alternative worlds and futures. Tuck and Ree (2013) write that desire "is a recognition of suffering, the costs of colonialism and capitalism, and how we still thrive in the face of loss anyway; the parts of us that won't be destroyed" (pp. 647-648). Further, Tuck (2009) asserts, "Exponentially generative, engaged, engorged, desire is not mere wanting but our *informed seeking*" (p. 416, emphasis added). It is this informed seeking that I am trying to engage in.

As noted, Hampton (1995) imagined a moment in time in which Indigenous education could be defined as "sui generis" or a thing of its own kind, that is, a self-determined education structured by our own Indigenous cultures. Indigenous peoples' desire "to be self-defining, to have their ways of life respected, and to teach their children in a manner that enhances consciousness of being an Indian [sic]" (p. 10). This future-seeking definition of Indigenous education is hopeful and inspires my research. I am excited by work that is rooted in desire, including those that explicate and utilize theories of futurity (Dillon, 2012; Whyte, 2018), generative refusal (A. Simpson, 2017), flight/fugitivity (Patel, 2015; L. Simpson, 2017), and survivance (Vizenor, 1999), all of which speak back to damage-based narratives and emphasize Indigenous agency in seeking alternative futures for ourselves. I will elaborate upon these concepts later on. For now, as Tuck (2009) states, "it is crucial to recognize that our communities

hold the power to begin shifting the discourse away from damage and toward desire and complexity" (p. 422).

Theorizing Colonialism

Lakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr. (1991) stated that any study of Indigenous education has to challenge the ideology behind the education. Maori scholars Leonie Pihama and Jenny Lee-Morgan (2019) have echoed this sentiment more recently, arguing that "in order to challenge, struggle against, and move beyond colonial imperialism, we need to understand its machinery and the ways in which education has systematically been employed to serve the interests of colonial invasion" (p. 26). This section therefore conceptualizes settler colonialism before placing it in conversation with the education of Indigenous peoples.

Colonialism has been theorized variably as a symptom of imperialism and empire (Said, 1994), as a system defined and sustained by violence (Fanon, 1961), and as part of a dialectic constituted by and reproduced through modernity (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Quijano, 2000). These theories of colonialism have largely focused on exogenous domination (Veracini, 2011) and the long reach of empire. Exogenous domination has also been called franchise colonialism (Wolfe, 2006), exploitation colonialism, or external colonialism, all of which refer to small numbers of colonizers subjugating new land and territories in order to exploit both labour and resources. Although these theorizations importantly critique and analyse the ongoing legacy of colonial rule by attending to the ways that "coloniality survives colonialism" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243), they arose (with the exception of Said) out of the subject position of former colonies that were left vacated by European powers following the World Wars, in nations that may now consider themselves to be "postcolonial." Understanding external colonialism and its lingering effects has been the aim of postcolonial studies over the past 50 years.

Indigenous peoples, however, have long recognized that colonial realities are different when settler governments remain in place and Eurocentric imperialism continues to function under, for example, the "new" banner of Canadian and United States nationalism (Barker, 2011). This is what Kahnawà:ke Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred and Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel (2005) refer to as "shape-shifting colonial powers" (p. 601). As Maracle stated in an interview with Jennifer Kelly (1994):

> For us... there has been no revolution in this country. We're still colonized. So postcolonialism has no meaning for us whatsoever, which is why it never comes up in discourse between us. We're still fighting classical colonialism. (p. 83)

Evelyn Cook-Lynn [Sisseton Santee Dakota] (2001) and Jodi Byrd [Chickasaw] (2011) observe that ongoing colonial praxis means that Indigenous peoples in North America have tended to reject postcolonialism and have been wary of theories that position colonialism as "over." Indigenous activism and the work of Indigenous intellectuals in Native and American Indian Studies "arguably introduced the analytic of settler colonialism" (Kauanui, 2016, p. 2) to the academy out of critiques of the limitations of postcolonial theory (Carey & Silverstein, 2020; Kauanui, 2021; see also Barker, 2011; Rowe & Tuck, 2017).

Since the 1990s, a growing body of scholarship has emerged across a range of disciplines utilizing settler colonial theory as an interpretive framework (e.g., Elkins & Pederson, 2005; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015; Patel, 2019). This growth has accompanied the emergence of more analytical work that focuses on the structure and processes of settler colonialism itself (Veracini 2007, 2011; Wolfe 1999, 2001). The emergence of settler colonial theory as a distinct field of study has led to discussions of how settler colonialism is a specific formation distinct from other forms of colonialism (Shoemaker, 2015; Veracini, 2011; Wolfe, 2006). Patrick Wolfe (2006), for

example, describes settler colonialism as an acquisitive territorial project, unlike other

colonialisms that seek to exploit labour and resources. Settler colonialism thus has its sight set on

land, which means, as Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson (2014) elaborates, that "the desire for

land produces the 'problem' of Indigenous life that is already living on that land" (p. 19).

> Settler colonialism, then, can be defined as:
>
> a historically created system of power that aims to expropriate Indigenous territories and
>
> eliminate modes of production in order to *replace* Indigenous peoples with settlers who
>
> are discursively constituted as superior and thus more deserving over these contested
>
> lands and resources. (Saranillio, 2015, p. 284; emphasis added)

While settlers and their relationship to land are often privileged as the site of analysis in many

settler colonial studies (King, 2019), Wolfe's (2006) discussion of "structural genocide" is

equally (if not more) important to understanding how Indigenous peoples become dispossessed

through a "logic of elimination" (p. 387). Settler colonialism may seek to acquire land, but

analyses that do not take up how that land is acquired are missing half of the equation. In her

examination and critique of colonialism in Hawai'i, Kānaka Maoli scholar and activist Haunani-

Kay Trask (1993) defines settler society as that "in which the Indigenous culture and people have

been murdered, suppressed or marginalized for the benefit of settlers who now dominate" (p.

31). In this way, settler colonialism is both a conquest and an extermination that is accomplished

through various means, including "breaking down native title into inalienable individualized

freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religions conversion, resocialization in total

institutions (i.e., Boarding schools)" as well as "frontier homicide" (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388). Using

examples like the policy of Cherokee removal in the United States and the Jewish occupation of

Palestine, Wolfe theorizes settler colonialism as a structure based on its complex social formations and its continuity through time.

Wolfe's (2006) framing of settler colonialism is one of the most cited works on the topic. Josette Kēhaulani Kauanui [Kānaka Maoli] (2016) speculates that this may be because "it offers so much in one piece" (p. 1) as the article distinguishes settler colonialism from genocide and other forms of colonialism, all while showing, through comparative examples, how the logic of settler colonialism is premised on the elimination of Indigenous peoples. Some Indigenous scholars have critiqued settler colonial theory for the way it distances nation-states from their history of imperialism (Barker, 2011) and for the way it erases Indigenous resistance or overemphasizes settler colonialism at the expense of Indigenous theorizing (Kauanui, 2021). However, I find Wolfe's theorizing on settler colonialism particularly generative in the way it "attends to life on stolen land" and grapples with the "implications of ongoing settlement of Indigenous land, the persistent presence of Indigenous life on that land, and the relationships between human and nonhuman lives on that land" (Rowe & Tuck, 2017, p. 6). Understanding settler colonialism as an organizing structure rather than a temporal event emphasizes how the logic of elimination continues to undergird contemporary Canadian society and policy.

Colonialism and Education

The education of Indigenous peoples has been both a target and tool of colonialism, wielded to extinguish and diminish the validity and legitimacy of our own ways of knowing, while replacing it with systems of learning that reflect settler desires (Patel, 2015; Smith, 2012). This system is so insidious that today, contemporary definitions of Indigenous education often do not distinguish between the knowledge practices of our local cultures and the institutional practice of schooling (Chartrand, 2012). Many studies abound that detail the legacy of colonial

education imposed on Indigenous communities (e.g., Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). Métis scholar Tracey Friedel and colleagues (2012) explain that:

> As just one instrument of a complex colonial project, Euro-Western educational systems were implicated in educating Native children as low-class labour and for producing hegemony and enacting oppression through disrupting Indigenous practices of transmitting and renewing cultural knowledge. (p. 1)

Historians have documented the introduction of schooling and discuss the various attitudes and policies that shaped these early colonial interventions (see, for example, the edited volume by Barman, et al., 1986a), which help to expose the logic of colonialism at work, beginning with the imperial expansion of France and Britain, demonstrating how approaches to Indigenous education developed through a constantly evolving colonial agenda.

As political and cultural extensions of their respective mother countries, colonial governments imported the institutions and ideologies of Europe. In France, education was the domain of the church, with little interference from the monarchy and this approach was extended into the colonies (Magnuson, 1992). Beginning in 1620, Récollet missionaries in New France were tasked with providing religious and moral instruction to Indigenous peoples they encountered, prompting the construction of the first schools in the New World (Belmessous, 2013; Jaenan, 1986). These first schools contributed to the program of francization, a policy of assimilation aimed at Catholic conversion and adopting French norms. The Jesuits and Ursulines were tasked with educating Indigenous children in religion, language, and culture in order to build a viable French, Christian colony without depopulating the mother country (Jaenan, 1986). Saliha Belmessous (2013) explicitly connects these early educational endeavours to the French

colonial project, arguing that the assimilative policy of francization "provided both a legitimate title to their [France's] appropriation of American lands and the means of strengthening the colony demographically, economically, and militarily" (p. 15), making it primarily a political, rather than religious, endeavour.

The latter half of the 1700s saw a changeover in colonial power as Britain took over New France following its conquest in 1760. After the 1763 Treaty of Paris, Anglicans, Moravians, and Methodists set up day schools on or near Indigenous communities and focused on translating sacred texts into Indigenous languages to encourage literacy and learning English, similar to the Jesuit schools that had dominated throughout New France (Wilson, 1986). Up until 1815, the British colonial government placed little importance on integrating Indigenous peoples into the colonial world (Beaulieu, 2017). Instead, their main concern was maintaining the loyalty of First Nation peoples to the Crown in an effort to prevent hostility and to gain their help as allies in their wars against France and the United States (White & Peters, 2009).

This changed following the War of 1812, when threats from the United States had been quelled and military alliances between the British and Indigenous groups were no longer necessary. After their usefulness as allies passed, the Colonial Office began to explore alternative policy options for dealing with Indigenous peoples, including enslavement, extermination, isolation, and amalgamation (McNab, 1981). The policy during this time was shaped by 19th-century Romanticism that positioned Indigenous peoples as both "noble savages" and as a "vanishing race" (Bennima & Hutchings, 2005), Christian humanitarianism and liberal philanthropism that promoted civilization through education (Leslie, 1982; Tobias, 1983), and the colonial government's own economic self-interests (McNab, 1981; Upton, 1973) that were spurred, in part, by a declining fur trade and an expanding natural resource economy (Beaulieu,

2017). Leslie Upton (1973) describes the policy that evolved out of these changing priorities as one of domination and paternalism.

By 1830, Britain's new colonial policy could be condensed down to its essence as a "civilizing" program. The Colonial Office had ruled out enslavement and extermination as viable solutions to the "Indian problem" and determined that Britain had two primary responsibilities to the First Nations: to protect and to civilize (see McNab, 1981). Early endeavours to civilize First Nations people as part of official government policy began in earnest in 1837 with the decline of the fur trade and increased White encroachment into Indigenous territories (Beaulieu 2017; Scott, 2005). Dubbed "schools of industry," institutions were designed to teach useful trades "to lead the Indians to a state of cultivation by keeping schools, teaching them to read, write, and cipher, and instructing them in agriculture, etc." (Wilson, 1986, p. 67). These manual labour schools opened across the country following the Bagot Commission in 1842, a report undertaken to survey the conditions of Indigenous peoples within British North America and to consolidate colonial policies that heretofore had operated on a regional basis (Leslie, 1982; Tobias, 1983).

Missionaries felt that attempts at assimilation through these schools were failing due to poor enrollment and what were perceived as the negative influences of parents and families. One government report from 1879 stated:

> Little can be done with him (the Indian child). He can be taught to do a little farming, and at stock raising, and to dress in a more civilized manner, but that is all. The child who goes to day school learns little while his tastes are fashioned at home, and his inherited aversion to toil is in no way combatted" (cited in Kirkness & Bowman, 1992, p. 10).

Soon after the signing of the Indian Act in 1876, the Canadian government began investigating how residential schools were being used in the United States. Nicholas Flood Davin, a lawyer,

politician, and journalist, was appointed to investigate the effectiveness of American industrial schools and later recommended to the federal government that similar institutions be established in Canada (Haig-Brown, 2006).

After two centuries of failed attempts at "educating" and converting Indigenous peoples in the field and frustrated by voluntary enrollment, missionaries petitioned the government to enact laws making education obligatory. Mandatory school attendance would counter declining enrolments and ensure steadier funding for the missionary groups who were tasked with administering and operating these schools (White & Peters, 2009). In 1894, the Indian Act was amended, making school attendance mandatory for ten months of the year for all Indigenous children between the ages of seven to 16 (Grant, 1996). In all, Canada operated 130 residential schools across Canada. At its peak in the 1930s, the residential school era saw 80 schools in operation. Verna Kirkness [Cree] and Sheena Bowman (1992) explain that the education provided in these schools was "a very basic education designed to prepare children for a domestic, Christian life" (p. 10). The school day was structured as a half-day in classroom instruction, and the rest spent doing manual labour, which meant washing, mending, scrubbing, and "domestic" duties for girls and working in the fields, mending fences, or tending to livestock for the boys. The high mortality, poor conditions, and the abuse suffered by children in these schools is well-documented (Carr-Stewart, 2006; RCAP, 1996; TRC, 2015).

It is clear that this era of Indigenous education was a wholesale attempt to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Canadian (i.e., White) society that was supported by government policy and enacted through the participation of religious organizations. In total, an estimated 150,000 children attended residential schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC] (2015) labelled the Indian Residential School system an act of cultural genocide. That the

Canadian government used residential schools as a vehicle to assimilate Indigenous peoples

demonstrates the politicization of education (Agbo, 2005). As David Perley (1993) argues, the

goals of this schooling were meant to benefit and serve the needs of the colonizer, not the

colonized. By the 1940s, the Canadian government began to shut down the residential school

system. The government formally ended its partnership with the churches in 1969, effectively

secularizing Indigenous education for the first time in its history.[8]

In the aftermath of World War II, the Canadian government began to reassess the Indian

Act and the residential school system. The formation of the United Nations and the new will to

safeguard human rights brought growing awareness to the conditions and general welfare of

minority groups. The dismantling of European colonies throughout Africa and Asia ushered in a

"postcolonial" era that raised global awareness of political hegemony and cultural suppression.

Meanwhile, Indigenous peoples across Canada sought to form a national, political presence for

themselves. Prompted by the restrictive policies of the Indian Act, ongoing resistance to

residential schooling, and the need to assert their rights, Indigenous peoples began to form

national lobby groups, like the League of Indians that brought grievances to the United Nations

following World War I, and the North American Indian Brotherhood that formed in the 1940s.

Eventually, Treaty and status Indians united under the National Indian Brotherhood in 1968, in

what is now called the Assembly of First Nations (2010).

In this rapidly shifting national and global climate, a Special Joint Committee of the

Senate and House of Commons was formed in 1946 to examine and formulate suggestions for

how to improve the Indian Act. The committee noted that residential schools were failing to

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[8] It is worth noting that while the government moved to both shut down and secularize Indian education during this time period, the process of closing down schools actually spanned decades. The last federally-funded Indian Residential School closed in 1996.

assimilate and educate Indigenous peoples and recommended the system be abandoned. In its place, the committee suggested a new policy of integration, whereby Indigenous children would be educated in provincially run schools. These recommendations shifted federal policy away from segregation and assimilation towards normative integration in publicly funded provincial schools (Burns, 1998). The revised Indian Act of 1951 marked the beginning of the Master Tuition Agreement approach to schooling that is still in place today. This agreement was a negotiation undertaken between the Department of Indian Affairs and local provincial school boards on behalf of First Nations. By 1960, about one quarter of Aboriginal[9] students were attending provincial schools (Barman, et al., 1986b). Among the first generation of students to attend public schools, however, drop-out rates were alarmingly high, with approximately 94% of Aboriginal students leaving school before graduating grade 12, compared to 12% of non-Aboriginal students (Hawthorn, 1967). George Burns (1998) argued that overall, this approach resulted in tuition agreement schooling that remained "paternalistic, coercive, racist, discriminatory, and assimilative" (p. 55). Many prominent leaders at the time offered critiques of the colonial system of education, denouncing integration-based schooling as merely a more acceptable term for assimilation (Cardinal, 1969; see also Adams, 1975; Fidler, 1970).

In the 1960s and 1970s, Indigenous peoples throughout North America experienced what has been characterized as a "renaissance,"[10] marked by a florescence of literature, rapid politicization, and cultural renewal (McKenzie, 2007; Nagel, 1995; Warrior, 1995). What has been dubbed "The Red Power movement" was partially made possible by changing

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[9] The term "Aboriginal" was instituted in Canada's Constitution Act, 1982 and has been used to refer collectively to First Nation, Inuit, and Métis peoples. I use it here to retain this collectivity and as a reflection of the original source material.

[10] Some scholars hesitate to describe this period as a renaissance because it offers the suggestion that Indigenous peoples were not engaged in the arts, politics, or society prior to these years (Ruppert, 2005; Tillett, 2013). In using this term, I do not wish to promote this misconception, but it does describe the blossoming activity and renewal that took place during this time.

demographics in Indigenous communities, with a large new generation of Indigenous youth. In Canada and the United States, this era saw an increase in urbanization of Indigenous peoples and a rising number of Indigenous high school and post-secondary students who began to grow weary of First Nation leaders caught up in federal bureaucracy (Cardinal, 1969; Steiner, 1968; Warrior, 1995). In the political turmoil of this period, Indigenous peoples across North America participated in a series of protests and occupations to assert their rights, prompting "a resurgence in American Indian ethnic consciousness" (Nagel, 1995, p. 959). Adding to this unrest were federal policies like the series of termination bills introduced in the United States (Deloria Jr., 1969) and the Canadian 1969 White Paper that sought to eliminate Indian status and convert reserve lands to private property that could be sold (Burke, 1976; Cardinal, 1969).

In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) released a policy statement entitled, "Indian Control of Indian Education" (ICIE) that outlined the principles and goals of education for Indigenous peoples. The guiding principle was to make education relevant for Indigenous peoples by valuing their philosophies, cultural identity, and languages. This landmark document set an agenda for education that supported self-determination, countered colonial practices, and valued cultural identity and pride as Indigenous peoples (Assembly of First Nations, 2010; Longboat, 1987; NIB, 1972). The Canadian government accepted the NIB position paper in principle in 1972, ushering in a new era of First Nation educational policy. For First Nations people, ICIE promised to change Indigenous education to mean "education *by* Indians rather than simply education *of* Indians" (Hampton, 1995, p. 9). However, there was a major flaw in the way ICIE was implemented: "the federal government, namely the Department of Indian Affairs, had a different definition of control than we did" (Pidgeon et al., 2013, p. 7). Indigenous peoples saw this policy as freedom to create a system based on Indigenous knowledge, values, and ways of

being and doing. The government, however, interpreted control to mean First Nation

governments would now be responsible for administering Indian Affairs programs (Pidgeon et

al., 2013; Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal People, 2011). The devolution of

responsibility to First Nations communities resulted in very little actual control over the content

and delivery of education (Goddard, 1993). In the mid-1990s, Hampton (1995) argued, "even

with Native control, most of the structures, methods, content, and faculty remain predominantly

non-Native" (p. 10), listing major obstacles to self-determined education such as using non-

Indigenous standards to evaluate schools and teachers, uncertain funding controlled by outside

sources, and a lack of curricula (see also Battiste, 1998).

Today, public schooling is construed as a neutral, multicultural space (St. Denis, 2011a)

and education is seen as essential for economic and social success (Mendelson, 2009; Sharpe &

Arsenault, 2010). When looking at historical education policies, it is easy to see the colonial

desires manifested there. It is less easy to see settler colonial logic at work in this contemporary

era of "Indian Control of Indian Education" and Ministry of Education commitments to provide

culturally-relevant and inclusive curricula in schools (Cherubini, et al., 2010). But Wolfe (2006)

reminds us that settler colonialism is an ongoing structure, not an event. Indigenous peoples'

encounters with educational institutions are still marked by subtle and overt colonial violence.

Indigenous education research continues to tell the story of poor attendance, achievement, and

success (Baskin, 2007; Berger et al., 2006; RCAP, 1996), language loss (McCarty, 2003;

Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010), experiences of racism and diminished self-worth (Friedel,

2010a; St. Denis, 2007), and cultural loss (Miller, 1996; Milne & Wotherspoon, 2020). This

violence is directly related to the universalization of Euro-Western knowledge (Battiste, 1998;

see also Castro-Gómez, 2021; Quijano, 2000; Smith, 2012), discursive practices that position

settler systems and actors as both superior and benevolent (Battiste, 1998; Donald, 2009; Harris, 2004; Mackey, 2002), and colonial legislation that provides settler governments with the authority to act upon Indigenous lives and territories.

Settler colonial logic continues to be manifested in a number of ways today. One example is the maintained and protected use of Eurocentric curricula and pedagogy (Battiste, 2002; Patel, 2015; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). Indigenous scholars in education have argued that schooling practices remain rooted in Eurocentrism, operating under what Battiste (1986) refers to as "cognitive imperialism." In their study of the role of White teachers in urban Indigenous education reform, Higgins, et al. (2015) posit that schools are the primary site through which Eurocentrism is reinforced and reproduced. They state that this "produces the illusion that a Eurocentric epistemology is 'neutral' and based on 'Truth,' resulting in Eurocentrism often remaining invisible to White teachers" (p. 259). This naturalization of Eurocentric knowledge and pedagogy means teachers (and students) are often resistant when Whiteness is challenged (Dion, 2007) and remain ignorant of mainstream education's Eurocentric foundations (Bagshaw, et al., 2022).

Settler colonial logic can also be found in the overwhelming concern about the disparity in achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and the belief that education is imperative to social and economic success (Mendelson, 2009; Wotherspoon, 2014). These concerns about "closing the achievement gap" arise out of the neoliberal structuring of school as vocational training (Dei, 2008). This has resulted in Indigenous education policies and research that prioritize practical approaches focused on achieving parity with non-Indigenous students, framed within capitalist ideology and neoliberal reforms to education that emphasize education and training to meet labour market needs (Dei, 2008; Mills & McCreary, 2013; see, for example,

Sharpe & Arsenault, 2010). Gregory Cajete [Santa Clara Pueblo] (1994) expands upon the relationship between economic success and modern education, stating:

> economic survival is associated with accessibility to modem education. Economic development is often tied to the capacity of tribes to be self-determined and self-governed. This capacity is always tied to Western education since it plays the role of gatekeeper to contemporary economic survival. (p. 214)

Because neoliberalism frames education as a mechanism for survival in today's modern world, it limits our capacity to develop truly self-determined education for ourselves (Marker, 2000).

In an analysis of Ontario's Aboriginal education policy, Lorenzo Cherubini (2010) argues that the Ministry of Education presents itself as "a benevolent and conciliatory provider of educational services" (p. 14) while framing Indigenous peoples from a deficit perspective:

> These rhetorical constructions within the policy Framework also seem to accentuate the OME's status as provider of the necessary skills and services that will redeem the Aboriginal population and enhance their potential to more meaningfully contribute to a capitalist and market-driven economy – an intention that may not necessarily be too strikingly different from the assimilationist colonial practices of years gone by. (p. 15)

This last sentiment is echoed in the works of other Indigenous scholars who are critical of modern education. Pihama and Lee-Morgan (2019) call attention to the way that residential schooling sought to break the collectivity of Indigenous communities through individualization, similar to Ghanaian scholar George Sefa Dei's (2008) argument about how the neoliberal agenda ensures that education serves individualized, private, corporate market, and industrial capital interests. Suzanne Mills and Tyler McCreary (2013) also discuss how programs that emphasize education and training to meet labour market needs are an extension of earlier approaches to

First Nations education, drawing parallels between these new programs and residential schools as exercises in vocational training.

One final example of the way settler colonialism is manifested in contemporary education is through the inclusion of Indigenous culture and knowledge in often non-challenging and superficial ways (Friedel, 2009; St. Denis, 2011a). The inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and culture in school curricula has become a common approach to improving Indigenous student outcomes (Friedel, 2009). This has resulted in conversations around the need for culturally inclusive curriculum or culturally-relevant pedagogies (e.g., Aguilera et al., 2007; Ball, 2004; Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Little Bear, 2009). Cherubini (2010) notes that Ontario's Aboriginal education policy recognizes the importance of establishing inclusive school cultures that lend themselves to Aboriginal students' meaningful engagement in public schools. However, Cree-Métis scholar Verna St. Denis (2011a, 2011b) challenges the idea that this emphasis on "culture" will result in improved educational outcomes. She argues that this policy orientation is a continuation of numerous unsuccessful policy changes that misconstrue the issues within Indigenous education. Friedel (2010a) builds on this argument, stating there is a lack of research that clearly shows a connection between academic improvement and culturally-inclusive curriculum. She further states, "the way that 'culture' is managed in schools, as something that can easily be appended to the formal curriculum, is largely ineffectual for addressing oppression and resolving educational inequalities" (p. 172).

Though not exhaustive, these examples demonstrate settler colonial logic that remains at work within mainstream education. Through education ideology like liberal multiculturalism and neoliberal education reform, colonial education (both historical and ongoing) aims to erase Indigenous peoples as distinctive populations defined by history, language, and culture. It also

seeks to absorb us into a social class framework – "modernizing" our lives into "compatibility" with Western notions of "progressive economic development and organization" (Grande, 2004, p. ix). Education research and policy continues to be framed within deficit discourse that positions Indigenous peoples as "at-risk," "underserved," "disconnected," and our current lived realities are often described as a "crisis" (Dhillon, 2017).

The experience of ongoing colonialism in education has caused Indigenous communities, leaders, and organizations to question and challenge mainstream education systems across Canada (Auger, 1988; Cherubini, 2010). However, how do we develop self-determining education rooted in our own ways of knowing, being, and doing? Auger (1988) and Grayson Noley [Choctaw] (1981) both argued that to implement a truly Indigenous education system, we cannot merely replace Canadian systems with Indigenous teachers and curricula. This work is not easy and settler colonialism is a stubborn thing. Indeed, Deloria (1991) offers up a word of caution, stating:

> We are led to believe that we are prepared to exercise self-determination because we are now able to begin to compete with the non-Indian world for funds, resources and rights. But we must ask ourselves, where is the self-determination? What is it that we as selves and communities are determining? We will find that we are basically agreeing to model our lives, values, and experiences along non-Indian lines. (p. 56)

More recently, Tuck and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) have critiqued the ways that curriculum studies remains complicit in ensuring settler futurity. They argue, "Anything that seeks to recuperate and not interrupt settler colonialism, to reform the settlement and incorporate Indigenous peoples into the multicultural settler colonial nation state is fettered to settler futurity" (p. 78). Taking these words as a caution, I now turn to examining decolonial theory as it

has been taken up by Indigenous scholars, including decolonization as a discourse within Indigenous education and the possibilities offered through Indigenous theorizing.

Decolonialism and Indigenous Thought

Indigenous peoples have resisted colonialism since it was brought to Turtle Island in 1492. Although we haven't always used the language of "decolonization," "coloniality," or "decolonial theory," we have resisted and railed against colonial powers that sought to eradicate, assimilate, and "civilize" us. It wasn't until recently that we began using this language in academic and educational contexts, under what Maldonado-Torres (2011) and others have dubbed the "decolonial turn." Around the dawn of the new millennium, the discourse in Indigenous education indeed began to shift towards decolonization, demonstrated well by major works like Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999/2012) *Decolonizing Methodologies* and Quechua scholar Sandy Grande's (2004) *Red Pedagogy* as well as in works by Mi'kmaq scholar Marie Battiste (1998) and Anishinaabe thinker Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2001). I am concerned, however, that despite being a dominant discourse in Indigenous education today, decolonization has become a taken-for-granted term that is not so easily defined and, as a project, has been taken up in a number of different ways. When one adds to the conversation the debates around the relevance of postcolonial, anticolonial, and decolonial theory, it becomes an even more difficult concept to pin down.

If we look at historical uses of the term, it becomes clear that the original language of decolonization was borne out of European thought in response to a changing world order and the decline of European imperial centers (Ward, 2016). The term "decolonization" entered the lexicon in the 1930s through the work of German thinker Moritz Julius Bonn (Wesseling, 1987; Ward, 2016), who observed the expansion of national self-determination and economic self-sufficiency within former colonies as a growing inevitability. Bonn's conception of the term was

not concerned with the emancipation of colonial subjects, but rather the consequences of a changing world order for Europe. Historian Stuart Ward (2016) claims:

> Decolonization was pressed into service to address two principal imperatives: to steer mounting pressures for self-determination towards mutually amicable solutions, thereby mitigating the depletion of metropolitan political influence and material advantage; and to explain away the underlying sense of failure that inevitably attended the prospect of imperial decline. (p. 258)

Because of its Eurocentric provenance, theorists in former colonies across Africa, Asia, and Latin America[11] were reluctant to pick up the term. As Ward (2016) explains, at that moment in time, decolonization was interpreted as "a European-inspired programme of incremental change designed to absorb the pressures of anti-colonialism at a minimal cost to metropolitan influence and prestige" (p. 254).

That interpretation changed in 1961 following the publication of Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth.* He observed that while colonialism may have ended, the political theory and economy that sustained it remained intact. Fanon focused his work on what it means to be a racialized "Other" within the colonial project, and, from this vantage point, set out the radical potential of decolonization. Drawing on works from Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, and W. E. B. Dubois, Fanon anchored the concept in a new intellectual foundation based on the lived experiences and anticolonial stance of thinkers from formerly colonized countries. This marks the beginning of the decolonial turn in critical thought that "produces questions about the effects of colonization in modern subjectivities and modern forms of life as well as contributions of

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[11] Nations that were formally colonized are now commonly referred to as "Third World" and "developing" countries. However, this further perpetuates the centering of the West where countries ransacked by colonialism are positioned as "Other." I am cognizant of the contestation of these terms and try my best to be specific when referring to formerly colonized places.

racialized and colonized subjectivities to the production of knowledge and critical thinking"
(Maldonado-Torres, 2007, pp. 261-262). While colonialism refers to the specific practice of
acquiring control over another territory, post-colonial theorists use the term "coloniality" to refer
to the enduring structures of power, including cultural and social legacies, that persist even after
colonialism ends.

Post-colonial theorists posit that coloniality continues to define and give shape to the
modern world, naturalizing specific processes that allow the continued oppression and
exploitation of Indigenous peoples. Specifically, it operates within three configurations. The first
is described as the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000) that refers to the ways that coloniality
continues to produce, inform, and structure modernity. The second configuration is the
coloniality of knowledge (Castro-Gómez, 2021). This is the recognition that knowledge and
culture have been repressed through coloniality, positioning Europe as the epistemic center of
knowledge, or the "zero-point" of epistemology (Castro-Gómez, 2021; see also Quijano, 2000;
Smith, 2012). Finally, the third configuration is coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007),
which is a process of othering that relies on the construct of race in the social classification of
colonizer and colonized (DuBois, 2004; Fanon, 1961; Wynter, 1976). Taken together, these
configurations form the colonial matrix of power.

While colonialism has served to exploit and oppress peoples around the globe, there isn't
one body of theory or one theoretical school to which decoloniality belongs (Maldonado-Torres,
2011). Maldonado-Torres (2006, 2011) provides a genealogy of decolonial thinking that spans
scholarship from Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean (e.g., Césaire, 2000; Fanon, 1961;
Memmi, 2013; Wynter, 1976, 1995, 2003) to the writings and activist movements of Black and
Indigenous peoples in Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand (e.g., Dubois,

2004; Smith, 2012; L. Simpson 2017). Because of the diversity of experiences with colonialism, there are necessarily tensions and differences amongst and between how coloniality is conceived, experienced, and critiqued depending on one's geopolitical location. Many of these thinkers do not even use the language of "decoloniality" to describe their work, but what unites these theories is the view "that coloniality is a problem and that decoloniality is a necessary, ongoing, and unfinished project" (Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p. 2). In this way, decoloniality, as a body of thought, may be considered an umbrella that has come to include theories, analyses, and critiques offered up by subjects of empire across geohistorical locations, including Canada, superseding its origins in the "Third World" experience.

Indigenous Engagements with Decoloniality

What sets Indigenous thought apart from the wider pool of decolonial theory is the way it attends to Indigenous land, life, and sovereignty (Grande, 2004). Tuck and McKenzie (2015) assert that "decolonization within settler-colonial nation states is complicated because there is no spatial separation between empire, settlement, and colony/colonized" (p. 53). For Indigenous peoples, this means writing from the specific subject position of being Indigenous within settler-occupied lands, that is, from within colonialism's borders, rather than outside or beyond it in a "post" temporal frame (Barker, 2011; Byrd, 2011; Kauanui, 2016; Trask, 1993).

Prior to the decolonial turn at the end of the millennium, Métis scholar Howard Adams (1975) used the decolonial theory of Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi to discuss the position of Indigenous peoples in Canada, critiquing what he perceived as the coloniality of the Canadian state. At the time, he viewed decolonization as a transformation in consciousness that would allow Indigenous peoples to reclaim their humanity and to challenge the colonial state, drawing on Paulo Friere's (1970) notion of conscientization to put forth a vision for emancipatory

education. Adams was one of the first Indigenous scholars to explicitly critique the conditions of

coloniality present in the Canadian education system and set an agenda for decolonization.

Since then, other Indigenous theorists have taken up the project of decolonization as an

imperative to securing Indigenous futures. Moving beyond Argentine scholar Walter Mignolo's

(2011) call for epistemic disobedience and discursively "de-linking" from colonial thought, and

even Freire's (1970) call for conscientization (both of which are intellectual undertakings of

"decolonizing the mind" (wa Thiong'o, 1986)), Tuck and Yang (2012) argue that

"decolonization in a settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to

the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently

understood and enacted" (p. 7). Decolonization within the acquisitive, territorial project of settler

colonialism, then, necessitates not only a liberation of the mind, but a material reterritorialization

as well. Decolonization is not only a legal and political struggle; it is an intellectual, social,

spiritual, and structural process (Alfred, 2009) that calls for the "rematriation of Indigenous land

and life" (Tuck & Yang, 2018, p. 9). Decolonization is also more than resistance. Monture-

Angus (1999) argues that resistance is not transformative and only serves as a response to

colonial power that further affirms and entrenches that power. To create a state of being free

from responding to colonial forces is both a goal and an ongoing endeavour that is always

already happening (Monture-Angus, 1999; Tuck & Yang 2018).

The Limits of Decolonization and Indigenization in Educational Discourse

One of the ways that decolonization has been mobilized in educational discourse is

through "Indigenization," that is, the reclaiming of Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and

doing. If Indigeneity describes the quality and experience of being Indigenous and if that identity

also modifies knowledge (Whyte, 2016), then Indigenization becomes necessary as a process for

retrieving, reclaiming, and revitalizing knowledge that has been subjugated under colonialism. Battiste (1998; 2005) sees the reclamation of Indigenous knowledge in education as a vital tool and step towards decolonization and a strategy of resistance against cognitive imperialism.

Battiste understands cognitive imperialism as a particular manifestation of coloniality that characterizes Indigenous clashes with modernity. She argues that cognitive imperialism continues to alter the lives of Indigenous peoples today through "a form of cognitive manipulation used to discredit other knowledge bases and values [that] seeks to validate one source of knowledge and empower it through public education" (Battiste, 1998, p. 20). This parallels Castro-Gómez' (2021) imagining of the zero-point in epistemology and the coloniality of knowledge described by others (e.g., Maldonado-Torres, 2007, Mignolo, 2011).

Battiste argued that this privileging of one particular knowledge base is at the root of colonialism in Canada. Hence, she identifies the need to reclaim Indigenous knowledge practices as well as fostering a transformative consciousness for ourselves as Indigenous peoples, along the lines of Freire's (1970) conscientization. For Battiste, Indigenization as a decolonizing practice entails the reconsideration of what counts as knowledge, an acknowledgement of the "colonial shadow" that has left our communities damaged (which helps shift blame from the personal to the systemic), and a call for the renewal and respect of Indigenous knowledge, language, and humanity.

Smith (2012) similarly defines Indigenizing as a *re*writing and *re*righting of history, couched in processes of "decolonization, healing, transformation, and mobilization" (p. 116). Trask (1993) describes why such Indigenization is so crucial: "Thinking in one's own cultural referents leads to conceptualizing in one's own world view which, in turn, leads to disagreement with and eventual opposition to the dominant ideology" (p. 54), a thought echoed by Smith

(2012) who writes that "to hold alternative knowledge forms is to create the foundation for alternative ways of doing things" (p. 36). For these scholars, Indigenization, then, is an important part of the process of decolonization.

Most work in Indigenous education acknowledges the need for Indigenous knowledges and cultures to be taken seriously and that has resulted in conversations around culturally inclusive curriculum or culturally-relevant pedagogies (e.g., Aguilera et al., 2007; Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Ball, 2004; Little Bear, 2009). As I noted earlier, the valuation of Indigenous knowledges was also a key policy point in Indian Control of Indian Education. That said, critical Indigenous scholars are wary of the ways this project has been undertaken in schooling, from elementary to post-secondary levels. Indigenization has since come to mean the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges within settler-colonial institutions and schooling (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2019) and calls to Indigenize curriculum and the academy now abound in educational research and discourse (e.g., Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020; Findley, 2000; Pete et al., 2013). In Canada, there has been mounting pressure to Indigenize curriculum and pedagogical practices in an effort to close the "achievement gap" (e.g., Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Milne, 2017). In the calls to Indigenize schooling, Indigenization is viewed as a "process of creating a supportive and comfortable space inside our institutions within which Indigenous people can succeed" (Bopp et al., 2017, p. 2). However, critics argue that this process has been taken up in superficial ways and that the current practices of Indigenization remain rooted in the limited discourse of liberal multiculturalism rather than as an empowering theory of change (Ahenakew, 2016; Cooper, et al., 2018; Friedel, 2010b).

As Adam Gaudry [Métis] and Danielle Lorenz (2019) observed, "Indigenization doesn't automatically mean decolonization" (p. 224). Rather, they suggest that Indigenization exists on a

spectrum in education settings, with the least transformative practice of Indigenous inclusion on one end and the most transformative practice of decolonial Indigenization on the other, with notions of reconciliation falling somewhere in the centre. They point out that Indigenous inclusion "does not actually work to make the academy a more Indigenous space, but rather it works to increase the number of Indigenous bodies in an already established Western academic structure and culture" (p. 220). This concern is echoed by others who remain critical of the way Indigenization is often constructed as an "add-and-stir" approach to content within a multicultural curriculum (Battiste, 2002; Marker, 2006).

Bopp et al. (2017) note the many barriers to actually carrying out an Indigenization process in a meaningful way, including power differentials, the "ghetto-ization" of Indigenization as a special initiative or limited undertaking, and a general lack of knowledge about Indigenous peoples, knowledge, and culture. Jeremy Garcia [Hopi/Tewa] and Valerie Shirley [Diné] (2012) argue that the reclamation, valuing, and inclusion of Indigenous knowledge into Western schooling structures is imperative "so that the balance between knowledge systems can be achieved" (p. 78), but Ahenakew (2016, 2017) questions if this sort of balance is even possible, critiquing current efforts to Indigenize curriculum for the way it continues to ignore power imbalances between knowledge systems. Participants in Gaudry and Lorenz's (2019) study of what Indigenization looks like across Canadian colleges and universities following the TRC's Calls to Action warn that Indigenization processes "should not be about ensuring settler access to Indigenous nations' resources. If this is the goal, then Indigenization is just a euphemism for colonization" (p. 222). Such approaches to Indigenization are a far cry from what was originally conceived by Battiste (1998) and later elaborated on by Smith (2012), L. Simpson (2002), and Alfred (2009), departing from a focus on raising critical

consciousness and building alternative ways of knowing and doing things towards gaining acceptance and recognition within settler systems and institutions.

The process of Indigenization should instead strive to rebuild and revitalize Indigenous knowledge practices that have been subsumed by colonialism. Matsunaga (2016) reminds us that "Indigenous resurgence . . . reasserts the connection between land-centred decolonization rather than decolonizing settler's minds and institutions" (p. 33). Critical Indigenous scholars like L. Simpson (2011), Alfred (2009), and Corntassel (2018) recognize the need for a resurgence of Indigenous practices in order to counter colonialism. Riffing on Lorde's (1984) trenchant warning that using the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house, L. Simpson (2011) states that she is not interested in the master's tools nor in the master's house, but rather is seeking Indigenous tools to create Indigenous realities. Alfred (2009) suggests that reclaiming Indigenous knowledge, interpretations, ethics, and processes can refocus our work from trying to transform the colonial outside into a flourishment of the Indigenous inside. L. Simpson (2002, 2014) likewise sees decolonization as the reclamation of Indigenous knowledge, and perceives it as a process of transformation, reflecting on how her own research required working with Elders in her community to unlearn Eurocentricism. Over 40 years ago, Noley (1981) argued, "What we ultimately need may not be a grafting of Indian content and personnel onto European structures, but a redefinition of education" (p. 198), which is one of the things Indigenization, in its most radical sense, strives for.

Future Imaginary

The imaginary is a key site of our material and political struggle for decolonization on

Turtle Island… (Martineau, 2015, p. 58)

In the face of settler colonialism, Indigenous peoples' very existence "evidences the ongoing struggle for Indigenous alterities: for elsewhere" (Grande & McCarty, 2018, p. 165). If

we are to build Indigenous futures and educational elsewheres, we must employ a "decolonial imaginary" that Chicana scholar Emma Pérez (1999) proposes acts as "a rupturing space, the alternative to that which is written in history" (p. 6). She describes such a space further:

> By fusing the words "decolonial" and "imaginary," each term riddled with meaning, I locate the decolonial within that which is intangible. Here the imaginary conjures fragmented identities, fragmented realities, that are "real," but a real that is in question. (p. 6)

Indigenous futurism draws from and pays homage to Afrofuturism, a long-standing cultural movement that envisions liberated and thriving futures for African diasporic communities (Bould, 2007; Dery, 1994; Esteve, 2016).

Anishinaabe scholar Grace Dillon (2012) first conceptualized the term "Indigenous futurism" as a way to describe an emerging movement in art, literature, and media that expresses Indigenous perspectives of past-present-future. Her work explores science fiction as a space where Indigenous authors/creators imagine, articulate, and manifest alternative and self-determined futures. Like Afrofuturism, Indigenous futurism expresses notions of identity, agency, and freedom to both re-imagine history and to invoke visions of thriving futures (Dillon, 2012; Medak-Saltzman, 2017). Urban Cree scholar Karyn Recollet (2016) argues, "Indigenous futurity decolonizes the Indigenous imaginary" (p. 91), pushing back against settler colonial containments and erasures "to create new worlds in the place of the ones that oppress us" (p. 91). In this way, desire and futurity are entangled concepts. Danika Medak-Saltzman [Turtle Mountain Chippewa] (2017) describes the significance of theorizing from within Indigenous futurism, stating that it "provides…our communities with opportunities to explore beyond what is and what has been and moves us toward imagining, creating, and manifesting a variety of

possibilities that better represent our understandings of, our place in, and our responsibilities to this world and to those yet to come" (p. 143).

Afrofuturism and Indigenous futurism allow us to imagine "otherwise" (Crawley, 2014). Ashon Crawley offers the following:

> To begin with the otherwise as a word, as concept, is to presume that whatever we have is not all that is possible. Otherwise. It is a concept of internal difference, internal multiplicity. The otherwise is the disbelief in what is current and a movement towards, and an affirmation of, imagining other modes of social organization, other ways for us to be with each other. Otherwise as plentitude. Otherwise is the enunciation and concept of irreducible possibility, irreducible capacity, to create change, to be something else, to explore, to imagine, to live fully, freely, vibrantly. (para. 11)

In this liminal space of resisting what "is" and desiring what "can be," Indigenous peoples engage in both generative refusal and fugitivity, rejecting and resisting violent, dehumanizing assimilation, while creating, preserving, and transmitting different ways of knowing and being. This future imaginary is a rebellion against the permanence of settler reality.

Refusal

To create desirous futures, we must practice an active ongoing refusal of dispossession and erasure (Recollet, 2016). Audra Simpson (2014, 2017) has developed the concept of "refusal" in her work documenting the Kahnawa:ke peoples' struggle against state apparati. She sees refusal as "an option for producing and maintaining alternative structures of thought, politics and traditions away from and in critical relationship to states" (2017, p. 19). According to Grande and McCarty (2018), refusing settler colonialism and its implications of precarity and crisis represents a paradigm shift towards methodological and pedagogical "elsewheres" (p.

165). Grande (2018) elaborated that refusal is both a rejection of "the (false) promise of inclusion and other inducements of the settler state and an instantiation of Indigenous peoplehood" (p. 181). This is echoed by Martineau (2015) who conceptualizes what he terms as "affirmative refusal," recognizing that refusal contains both a negative and a positive dynamic. He states, "To turn away is always to turn toward: a decolonial Indigenous politics of refusal is thus constituted in a redoubled movement away from the colonial normative order and toward Indigenous alternatives and potentialities" (p. 43). Instead of merely "resisting," a move that operates within the authority of an existing order of things, refusal seeks to preserve and transmit alternative modes of knowing and being. Refusal is a "*becoming other/wise* to power" (Martineau, 2015, p. 43, emphasis in original). This makes refusal more dangerous as noted by Kennan Ferguson (2015) who argues that resistance can be negotiated or recognized and is therefore preferable to capitalist settler states. He elaborates that refusal throws the entire system into doubt, which is what makes it more dangerous.

Flight/Fugitivity

Indigenous scholars have also engaged with the concept of flight and fugitivity when discussing resurgence and entanglements with settler colonialism. Fugitive practices have been extensively explored within the Black radical tradition (e.g., Campt, 2014; Gumbs, 2016; Harney & Moten, 2013; Sojoyner, 2017, etc.), where fugitivity is linked with the flight of enslaved peoples from the plantation into the wild. These freedom-seekers later established their own self-governing communities or "maroon societies" (Roberts, 2015, p. 4). This process became known as marronage, which Neil Roberts describes as "a group of persons isolating themselves from a surrounding society in order to create a fully autonomous community" (p. 4). Black scholars have utilized the concept of fugitivity as a freedom-seeking practice in education (Lyiscott & the

Fugitive Literacies Collective, 2020; Maynard, 2019; Zaino, 2021). Indigenous scholars have engaged with fugitive thinking in our own terms, as a metaphoric flight from oppressive power structures and as a refusal to assimilate (Boon, 2018; L. Simpson, 2017). Leanne Simpson (2017) also notes that retreating to the bush was a common practice for evading Indian agents and the RCMP who sought to control us through various settler colonial policies. In this sense, fugitivity is a politics of refusal and an invitation towards a new way of seeing, being, and thinking (Campt, 2014; Halberstam, 2013; Martineau & Ritskes, 2014; A. Simpson, 2014).

I thus find that generative refusal and fugitivity, as theorized within Indigenous thought, provide "flight paths out of the cage of violence and shame that colonialism traps us in" (L. Simpson, 2017, p. 192). Martineau and Ritskes (2014) state, "the freedom realized through flight and refusal is the freedom to imagine and create an elsewhere in the here; a present future beyond the imaginative and territorial bounds of colonialism" (p. iv). In writing about Indigenous desires for self-determined futures and in an attempt to flee from colonialism, I'm engaging in an "informed seeking" (Tuck, 2009, p. 418). Mvskoke scholar Laura Harjo (2019) says that "futurity means that we do not have to wait to see hopeful possibilities materialize in our communities" (p. 30) and asserts that our communities perform futurity in everyday spaces. Like Michif-settler Max Liboiron (2021), I am looking for things "that are already happening without waiting for the decolonial horizon to appear" (p. 7). Through this line of inquiry, I've come to ask: If schooling (and attending education policies and research) continues to reify and serve settler colonial ideology, what possibilities open up when we de-link learning from formal schooling?

Schooling versus Places of Learning

I want to expand the thinking around Indigenous education beyond "the gravity of conventionally defined education" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 6) and schooling that has historically and

contemporarily served as a technology of domination (Foucault, 1977). Education that took place within Indigenous societies, before the influences of colonialism, is described as a holistic, life-long process based on mutual, reciprocal relationships between one's social group and the natural world (Armstrong, 1987; Cajete, 1994). Cajete (1994) states that "education in this context, becomes education for life's sake. Education is, at its essence, learning about life through participation and relationship in community, including not only people, but plants, animals, and the whole of Nature" (p. 26). Deloria and Wildcat (2001) similarly argue that education is more than just imparting and receiving information. They describe Indigenous education as learning to accept responsibility as a contributing member of a society, to recognize that there is no such thing as isolation from the rest of creation and that we are characterized by our relatedness to all things, and that education occurs by example, not through a process for indoctrination. Education, in this sense, was a process of learning that prioritized "good living" or "mino-bimaadiziwin" (L. Simpson, 2011, p. 13).[12]

Much of the literature describes Indigenous education practices as informal and experiential, typically focused on child-rearing practices (e.g., Hilger, 1992). Rupert Ross (1996), for example, saw traditional child-rearing practices as a three-legged stool, supported by the teaching of responsibilities, the development of skills and abilities, and the habit of non-interference. Children learned through the clan system, ceremony, and daily life, and in this way, were taught "at almost every instant and in a wide variety of ways" (p. 83). Kirkness (1998) states children were taught:

> at an early age to observe and utilize, to cope with and respect their environment.
>
> Independence and self-reliance were valued concepts handed down to the young.

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[12] See (L. Simpson, 2011, p. 13, note 9) for an elaboration of this concept.

Through observation and practice, children learned the art of hunting, trapping, fishing,

farming, food gathering, child-rearing, building shelters. (p. 10)

Other forms of Indigenous instruction include: "oral histories, teaching stories, ceremonies,

apprenticeships, learning games, formal instruction, tutoring, and tag-along teaching"

(Buffalohead, 1976, as cited in Hampton, 1995, p. 8).

The experiential and informal nature of Indigenous education described above is certainly

accurate; however, these two characteristics do not fully encompass the breadth and depth of our

learning practices. More formal processes were also used. For example, Cajete (1994) points out

that the Aztec had a well-established learning system consisting of the Calmecac, a school for

nobles, and the Telpochcalli, a school for commoners. These formal sites of education prepared

citizens for skilled work in trades, medicine, cultural work, and religious life. In North America,

Armstrong (1987) describes methods of teaching that include rituals, recreational activities,

lectures, and work experiences.

Ethnographical accounts also provide a rich picture of what education looked like across

Indigenous societies, even if many of these accounts were written by White anthropologists

throughout the 19th and early 20th century and focused primarily on the ritual and outward

performativity of cultural practices within Indigenous nations (e.g., Boas, 1895; Brown &

Brightman, 1988; Hoffman, 1891). This period reflects White society's preoccupation with

exoticism, primitivism, and the perceived need to record Indigenous cultural practices to

preserve them before they went extinct (Francis, 1992). However, we can glean from these

writings that many Indigenous societies engaged in both formal and informal learning practices,

grounded in traditional governance and religious structures. Anthropologists documented the

various religious, warrior, and dance societies that existed within nations, often described as "secret" in ethnographic accounts (e.g., Boas, 1895; Hoffman, 1891).[13]

Early anthropologists and ethnographers tend not to speak about these practices in terms of their capacity to teach and their role in educating youth, instead focusing on their ritual function in society. However, Armstrong (1987) explains that ritual and ceremony were commonly used to internalize learning of special skills, to strengthen personal resolve, and to provide insight for personal excellence. She further posits that "practices which would seem to be purely ritual are much more in that special context of learning" (p. 18). While the literature in this area is scant, scholars have acknowledged their educational value (Meadows, 2010; Urban & Wagoner, 2014) and their contributions to social complexity within specific communities (Hayden, 2018). These different societies had complex initiation rituals and ceremonies that imparted both general and specialized knowledge to novices. Through these practices, the next generation of healers, midwives, leaders, and warriors became skilled and practiced within their communities.

Hampton (1995) states that traditional Indigenous teaching and learning occurred within cultural settings that were characterized by "subsistence economies, in-context learning, personal and kinship relations between teachers and students, and ample opportunities for students to observe role models who exemplified the knowledge, skills, and values being taught" (p. 8). Indigenous societies focused on learning as a life-long process grounded in experience that fostered participation and relationship within a community comprised of all of Creation. The

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[13] I would argue that these "secret" societies were not so much secret, but rather involved specialized skills and knowledge that were unnecessary for laypeople to learn. An equivalent today would be thinking that those who become dentists are first initiated into the "secret" school of dentistry to learn their trade. To further this point, by reducing educational endeavours to oral and experiential learning that happens in childhood, it diminishes the highly-skilled formal roles and processes that existed within our communities.

purpose of education was, ultimately, to produce good citizens that knew their role in society and functioned well within it (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001).

Today, the concept of learning has largely been replaced by "the concept of education" and conflated with achievement in school (Armstrong, 1987; Patel, 2015). However, learning occurs everywhere and is not just confined to schooling. Definitions of learning help us to see it as an experiential, transformational, relational, and life-long process. For example, social anthropologist Jean Lave (2009) defined learning in relation to participation in everyday life, stating that "situated activity always involves changes in knowledge and action, and 'changes in knowledge and action' are central to what we mean by 'learning'" (p. 201). She furthers this point to describe learning as an inventive, open-ended process of improvisation that utilizes the social, material, and experiential resources at hand. Peter Jarvis (2009), an adult educator, embraces a holistic definition of learning that is not limited to a process that takes place solely in the mind. He defines learning as:

> the combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) – experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person. (p. 25)

In her work on public pedagogy, Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) draws attention to the fundamentally transitional nature of learning, encouraging educators to think about the conditions that make learning possible. She writes:

> Learning never takes place in the absence of bodies, emotions, place, time, sound, image, self-experience, history. It always detours through memory, forgetting, desire, fear, pleasure, surprise, rewriting. And because learning takes place in relation, its detours take us up to and sometimes across the boundaries of habit, recognition, and the socially constructed identities within ourselves. (p. 55)

These various definitions show that learning is "a constant becoming and unbecoming, a constant inquiry and coordinate-taking" (Patel, 2015, p. 77) that happens throughout our lives. In this framing, we may know learning, "even if we may not consistently know success in formal schooling" (p. 76).

Ellsworth's (2005) investigation of architecture, museums, public and performance art explores the experiences of the learning self in the making. She describes these sites as "anomalous places of learning," that is, "the peculiar, irregular, abnormal, or difficult to classify pedagogical phenomena" (p. 5). She clarifies that these places of learning are only difficult to see when they are viewed from the centre of dominant educational discourse and practices. She argues:

> such places of learning implicate bodies in pedagogy in ways that the field of education has seldom explored. As they do this, they encourage and challenge us to move away from understanding the learning self merely through notions of cognition, psychology, or phenomenology, or as being subjected to ideology. (p. 6)

If we instead prioritize the practice of learning as the primary goal of education, and ask how educational research may serve learning, we may open up new possibilities and new horizons in Indigenous education discourse (Patel, 2015).

Indigenous Creative Practice

In recent years, a growing number of Indigenous scholars have begun to look at the role of art and creative practice in "actualizing decolonial knowledge that is always already present" (Edd, 2020, p. 68).[14] Lauren Amsterdam (2013), for example, explores how Indigenous youth are mobilizing hip-hop to reveal their struggles with violence and to undertake direct action against loss. She argues that for Indigenous hip hop artists, their practice is an act of refusal against settler colonialism, a space for self-representation, and an act of cultural sovereignty. Recollet (2016) analyses a video remix created by Skookum Sound System, a multimedia art collective from Vancouver, to examine how it activates dance, movement, and gesture that mobilizes Indigenous presence and futurity. Through her examination of motion through art, she conceptualizes Indigenous futurity as an embodied, territorial experience. Amber Hickey (2019) analyzes the digital and sculptural art of two Indigenous artists to explore non-hegemonic notions of temporality, particularly how creative practices may support decolonial world-making and rupture what Mark Rifkin (2017) has termed "settler time." These studies have tended to examine contemporary modes of art – music, theatre, visual, and media arts. It is more difficult to locate studies that discuss "traditional" modes of cultural production in terms of futurity and decolonization such as practices I'm interested in like quillwork, hide-tanning, and beadwork.

Theorizing Beadwork

Beading is a significant cultural aesthetic practice for many Indigenous communities. Beads have been used to adorn clothing and both personal and sacred items since time immemorial. Before Europeans found their way to us, beads were made from shells, bones, quills, wood, and other natural materials. The glass beads introduced by Europeans through trade

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[14] See for example, the special issue of *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, & Futurity* on Indigenous Art, Aesthetics and Decolonial Struggle, edited by Martineau and Ritskes (2014).

were later incorporated into this already existing aesthetic practice. The patterns and techniques used to create beadwork are an expression of identity, cultural history, and technical skill. Beadwork often holds important meanings that are unique to those who bead and/or wear it (Belcourt, 2010). That beadwork has endured through so much social, cultural, and political change is a "display of cultural resiliency" (Gray, 2017, p. 24). Oneida art historian Deborah Doxtator (1995) says that the cultural metaphors of "basket, bead and quill" evoke, rather than narrate or dictate knowledge. She says the more meanings a symbol or metaphor can evoke, the more powerful it is, reasoning that we continually engage with beads "for the simple reason that visually these metaphors remain culturally very powerful for us" (p. 17). She concludes that "the power beads hold does not come from a past defined by non-Native societies, but from their continued relevancy and potency as conceptual metaphors that still play an important role in the processes of making cultural 'tradition'" (p. 20).

While beadwork has been a part of Indigenous aesthetic practices since time immemorial, it has only started to gain notice as an art form within the mainstream (i.e., White) art world. When Indigenous peoples create quill and beadwork, it is often not seen as art but as a cultural expression of Indigeneity. Such work has typically been categorized as craft or cultural artifacts with little to no aesthetic value (Phillips, 1994; Walkingstick, 1992). A cursory search of the literature yields a variety of works that were written from an outside perspective by non-Indigenous authors, typically art historians or anthropologists, who describe and explain the beadwork practices of Indigenous peoples they have studied (see, for example, Garte, 1985; Gordon, 1992; Hammel, 1982; Penney, 1991; Phillips, 1998; Whiteford, 1997). These works serve to fix our positions as cultural "Others." Considering creative practices from a historical,

ethnographical position deprives beadwork, quillwork, and hide-tanning of their active and critical functions in contemporary cultural practices.

The few works by Indigenous scholars that take up examinations of contemporary beadwork are most often curatorial essays from exhibition catalogues, like Deborah Doxtator's "Basket, Bead, and Quill" (1995), Carmen Robertson [Lakota-Scotch] and Sherry Farrell-Racette's [Métis] "Clearing a Path: New Ways of Seeing Traditional Indigenous Art" (2009), and Leanna Marshall and Jean Marshall's [Anishinaabe] "Piitwewetam: Making is Medicine" (2021), with some exceptions. For example, Métis scholar Chuck Bourgeois (2018) examined beadwork as an epistemological practice, basing his case-study on the practice of one Anishinaabe beadworker. He conceptualized beadwork as part of an intricate tapestry of knowledge with evocative and intimate connotations. Malinda Gray [Anishinaabe] (2017) explored beadwork as an act of resilience, arguing that Indigenous artists use transculturation to strengthen their culture. She similarly notes the lack of sources that focus solely on beadwork and the cultural value of beads within Indigenous cultures and communities. In her master's thesis, Cree scholar Tara Kappo (2021) sought to understand what beadwork does, is, and how it is connected to Cree law and governance. Finally, Lois Edge [Métis] (2011) explores the aesthetics of beadwork as a multi-dimensional space and practice. Through visual repatriation, Edge demonstrates how Indigenous art forms are connected to modern Indigenous philosophy, education, and worldview, contributing to a deeper understanding of contemporary Indigenous perspectives and well-being.

There also is little research connecting these specific arts practices to processes of learning and knowledge production outside of schooling contexts. Within writing on schooling, math and science curriculum in particular seems to garner the most attention in this regard. Ruth

Beatty and Danielle Blair (2015), for example, examined connections between mathematical content knowledge based on Ontario curriculum expectations and the mathematics inherent in Indigenous cultural practices, specifically loom beading. Their study demonstrated ways of bringing local cultural knowledge that has been excluded from math instruction into the classroom. Anthony Ezeife (2011) used cultural-discontinuity theory to develop and measure the effectiveness of a culturally-sensitive math curriculum. This involved breaking down cultural practices (including beadwork, moccasin-making, and even the burial traditions of Walpole Island First Nation) into math strands (e.g., numeration, measurement, spatial sense) and applicable math concepts (e.g., probability, counting, angles, shapes). Yu'pik scholar Oscar Kawagley, et al. (1998) similarly looked at community-based hide-tanning as an example of how Indigenous culture can successfully be incorporated into science classes and curriculum.

Cultural education (like the examples mentioned above) has been critiqued for the way it often emphasizes "surface" components such as "the creation of artifacts (e.g., beading, constructing a medicine wheel, making drums, etc.), relationships (e.g., working with Elders and other cultural knowledge holders), or activities (e.g., smudging, sweat ceremonies, etc.)" (Greidanus & Johnson, 2016, p. 109) without deeper integration of cultural values, language, or epistemologies (Battiste, 1998). This surface-level engagement with culture has also been critiqued because it does not adequately interrogate or disrupt the systemic inequality present in schooling (Gebhard, 2018; Iseke-Barnes, 2009; Marker, 2006; St. Denis, 2004, 2011b). Buffington and Bryant (2019) examined trends in diversifying education, with particular attention to culturally-relevant pedagogy and arts education. They found that the implementation of lesson plans that may purport to celebrate cultures actually simplifies them and does not advocate for meaningful change.

The lack of attention given to what are commonly perceived as "traditional" art forms in the literature around futurity and decolonization, along with the devaluation of these practices through Eurocentric art values, makes beadwork a fertile site to explore learning that refuses to be contained by curriculum.

Conclusion

This literature review has covered a wide range of topics in order to provide an overview of the guiding theories, concepts, and fields of inquiry I am building upon in my dissertation research. I have contextualized this work within a framework of desire that recognizes settler colonialism as a system that continues to inform educational policy and research for Indigenous peoples and seeks to de-link the process of learning from these educational contexts. I have discussed decolonization from an Indigenous perspective and conceptualized the future imaginary using theories of fugitivity and refusal. I attempted to disentangle learning from schooling and finally, provided a discussion of Indigenous creative practices as a way to further investigate these theories. There are, of course, many ideas and studies that did not make it into this literature review. My intent in writing this review was to point to work that inspired my research and to identify gaps, not as holes that need to be filled, but rather as opportunities for new questions and conversations, some of which I address in my exploration of the learning that is always already present in beadwork and how Anishinaabe makers express decolonial desires and future imaginaries in their work.

Chapter Three: Methodological Process: Eliciting Stories Through Visiting and Beading

As an Indigenous researcher, it is important for me to acknowledge the ways that our communities have been exploited through extractive research practices in the past. Smith (2012) has shown how research is "inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism" (p. 1) and many communities express the sentiment of being "researched to death" (Schnarch, 2004, p. 82). Therefore, it is important to prioritize our own needs through research, framed within our own Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies (Bastien, 2004; Smith, 2012). Part of my intention with this work is to shift the lens from conducting research *on* our communities to researching *with* our communities. I am inspired by the work of other scholars who write about Indigenous methodology (Absolon, 2011; Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008) who are reconstructing tribal paradigms that are grounded in our own cosmologies and ways of knowing. These scholars guide my theoretical foundation in Indigenous methodology and I follow their path in figuring out how research can be done ethically, relationally, and from our own position as Indigenous peoples.

My main research focus was to determine the multiple layers of meaning created through beadwork, specifically illuminating the new, resurgent, and generative ways our traditional art practices are being thought about and named by Anishinaabe makers. As a consequence of this research goal, my dissertation sought to explore the relationship between the values and practice of traditional Anishinaabe art forms and the politics of Indigenous resurgence, refusal, and futurity. My guiding research questions were: *How might Indigenous creative practice, as a site of learning, offer new possibilities for decolonial thought and action? How do Anishinaabe art-makers imagine, create, or conceptualize "otherwise" worlds through their work and practice? What learning is made present through beadwork?*

By inquiring into these questions and working with Anishinaabe makers, I sought to contribute to what Smith (2012) describes as a growing body of research that "attempts to explain our existence in contemporary society (as opposed to the 'traditional' society constructed under modernism)" (p. 39). In this chapter, I rationalize my choice to engage with an Indigenous research paradigm and continue by grounding my study within the practice of visiting (Gaudet, 2020; Simpson, 2014; Tuck, et al., 2022) and the relational principles of storywork (Archibald, 2008). Following this, I provide a detailed description of the research methods and analysis I used in my study, along with ethical considerations.

Indigenous Ways of Thinking About and Doing Research

I have been tempted to describe this research as an ethnography, or phenomenological case study, or even a grounded theory study of Anishinaabe makers because that language is familiar and makes sense to me as an academic formally trained in the Euro-Western university. But then I ask myself, how does that align with what I just said at the beginning of this section? In other words, where is the critical Indigenous lens in "ethnography," a methodology derived from anthropology or "phenomenology" with its roots in psychology, or in "grounded theory," a methodology founded in sociological research? To be congruent, I must ask myself, "Where is the Indigenous in my methodology?" This section excavates developments in Indigenous methodologies that informed my approach to this study.

First of all, my work is informed by critical Indigenous pedagogy that recognizes that knowledge is political and aims to confront the ways colonialism (and its attendant systems of power like patriarchy, capitalism, and Whiteness) has gained a monopoly over knowledge production, that is, what counts as knowledge and what counts as valid research. Smith (1999/2012) first wrote *Decolonizing Methodologies* to interrogate and expose the political context of knowledge and how it has been used to uphold Western research practices at the

exclusion of Indigenous epistemologies. She opened the door for other Indigenous scholars to actively engage with our knowledges within the academy and carry out research that speaks to our communities' priorities and ways of doing things. What has emerged is a robust critique of Western approaches to research and a call to de-marginalize and validate Indigenous epistemologies. Through this process of speaking back, Indigenous scholars have been able to articulate and elaborate on the beliefs, values, and knowledge that characterizes Indigenous approaches.

Second, I recognize that my work is deeply informed by my worldview and how I've come to know the world as an Anishinaabe person. Margaret Kovach [Plains Cree/Saulteaux] (2009) emphasizes that it is this orientation to tribal epistemologies that distinguishes Indigenous methodology from Western research approaches. In an effort to avoid pan-Indianism and homogenizing the knowledge and processes of all Indigenous peoples through my research, I focus on Anishinaabe thought to contextualize my consideration of wider Indigenous epistemologies. While "there is enough similarity among North American Indian philosophies to apply concepts generally" (Little Bear, 2000, p. 79), our knowledges are bound to place and being specific about where these philosophies originate reflects particular ways of thinking about and being in the world (Bang et al., 2014; Kovach, 2009; Marker, 2004). So, while I may speak generally about "Indigenous methodologies" throughout this chapter, my aim is to follow Anishinaabe traditions where possible so that my underlying epistemology may be known.

What Characterizes Indigenous Methodologies?

Kovach (2015) has found that there are four main tenets of Indigenous methodology that are common and generalizable to all. These include: 1) a focus on Indigenous knowledge; 2)

relationality; 3) collective responsibility; and 4) the use of Indigenous methods. This section will briefly discuss each of these tenets in turn.

Indigenous Knowledges

Firstly, Kovach (2015) argues that "it is not possible to engage in Indigenous methodologies without a foundational understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems" (p. 57). Because Indigenous peoples and nations vary widely in their worldviews, cultures, and philosophies, it is difficult to arrive at a universal definition of Indigenous knowledge (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Hart, 2007). However, there are aspects of Indigenous epistemology that consistently emerge in Indigenous discourse and literature.

For many, a distinguishing feature of Indigenous knowledge is its **holistic** nature (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Hart, 2007; Shroff, 2011; Simpson, 2011; Wane, 2008). According to this principle, knowledge cannot be compartmentalized or separated from context (Battiste & Henderson, 2000). The holistic nature of Indigenous knowledge is also reflected in the concept of maintaining balance. Simpson (2011) posits that in order to access knowledge, one must engage one's whole being: mind, body, and spirit.

Another aspect of Indigenous epistemologies is their **relational and subjective** nature. Indigenous knowledge requires creating and maintaining relationships not only with self, family, and community, but also with land and "other living beings and spirits that share their lands" (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 42). Indigenous peoples consider wind, rocks, water, plants, and animals to be equal beings in this world, each with the same capabilities for thought and action as any human being (Deloria Jr., 2004; Overholt & Callicott, 1982). As such, Indigenous peoples have long cultivated relationships with these beings. Whether hunting, fishing, gathering, or praying, activities and ceremonies are carried out with the thought of creating balance and

respecting these beings in the world (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Overholt & Callicott, 1982; Simpson, 2011). This interaction and exchange is part of what allows us to know what we know. Simpson (2011) asserts that knowledge is accessed "through the quality of our relationships" (p. 42), indicating that if any of these relationships are not properly maintained or respected, knowledge becomes limited.

Within our worldview, knowledge is also constituted through subjective experience. In Western epistemology, a theory is created and tested empirically. Indigenous knowledge entails experiential learning, which demands the ability to construct meaning through direct experience. Instead of empirically testing hypotheses, Indigenous peoples reflect on their own lived experiences to determine truths (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Burkhart, 2004; Deloria Jr., 2004). Deloria (2004) acknowledges that for Indigenous peoples, truth is a matter of perception and is arrived at through lived experience. Therefore, Indigenous knowledge allows room for different perspectives built on each person's subjective experience.

The holistic nature of Indigenous knowledge encompasses both the **metaphysical and the pragmatic**. This allows for the inclusion of both physical and spiritual realms "since there is no division between science and spirituality" (Hart, 2007, p. 84) in Indigenous thought. Indigenous knowledge is derived from tribally specific traditional teachings, empirical knowledge, and revelation (Brant-Castellano, 2000; Geniusz, 2009; Simpson, 2011). Traditional teachings are handed down from generation to generation and take a variety of forms including narratives, skills, and technologies. Within Anishinaabe thought, narratives play an important role in helping individuals formulate a view of the world that is relational, reciprocal, and inclusive (McPherson & Rabb, 2011). Our narrative tradition is comprised of aadizookaan (traditional legends, ceremonies) and dibaajimowin (teachings, ordinary stories, personal stories,

histories) (Geniusz, 2009). Unlike knowledge in the Western positivist tradition, empirical knowledge is not acquired through quantitative hypothesis testing. Rather, this form of knowledge is created from careful observations made by many people over extended time periods (Geniusz, 2009; Brant-Castellano, 2000). This intergenerational transmission is another characteristic of Indigenous knowledge. Anishinaabe scholar Wendy Makoons Geniusz (2009) states, "being able to trace the origin of one's dibaajimowin is one part of the personal connection to knowledge that exists within izhitaawin (Anishinaabe culture)" (p. 78).

The Western positivist research tradition does not recognize knowledge that cannot be quantified (such as spiritual knowledge) and it assumes that research and researchers can be objective and neutral. In contrast, Indigenous epistemology includes knowledge derived from revelation as valid. Knowledge that is revealed through revelations usually takes the form of dreams, visions, or intuition and is often described as spiritual knowledge. All these sources of knowledge are considered valid and interconnected within Indigenous ontologies (Brant-Castellano, 2000; Kovach, 2009; Lavallée, 2009; Simpson, 2014).

Indigenous knowledge is also said to **originate from the land**, which is one of its most important distinguishing features. Indeed, one of the main aspects of Indigenous knowledge is that it is centered on localized relationships to the land. Battiste (2002) clarifies that this relationship is "not to land in general but to particular landscapes, landforms, and biomes where ceremonies are properly held, stories properly recited, medicines properly gathered, and transfers of knowledge properly authenticated" (p. 14). Keith Basso (1996), in his study amongst the Western Apache, was told, "All these places have stories" (p. 48), and it is through these stories that relationships are revisited and affirmed. Moreover, specific sites and places are imbued with power that shape and influence human understandings of the world (Basso, 1996; Battiste &

Henderson, 2000). For many scholars, land is seen as "the ultimate source of knowledge" (Hart 2007, p. 84; see also Dei, 2011; L. Simpson, 2011, 2014). Taken together, these framings constitute Indigenous knowledge and epistemology.

Ethic of Relationality and Collective Responsibility

The second tenet common in Indigenous methodology is an ethic of relationality that is mobilized in different ways. Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2001) calls this "relational accountability" and posits that "as a researcher, you are answering to all your relations when you are doing research" (p. 177). One way to enact relational accountability is for researchers to situate themselves in their work (Absolon, 2011). If we understand that everything in the universe is related and interconnected, then we (and by extension, our work) exist in relation to one another and therefore have an effect on each other. Geniusz (2009) states that being able to trace the descent of one's dibaajimowinan (*teachings*) is an essential part of how knowledge is maintained in Anishinaabe culture. Through this lens, objectivity and neutrality do not exist, since all research/knowledge is created through a human epistemological lens (Absolon & Willett, 2005). Self-location, then, is an essential part of Indigenous research, ensuring that researchers are connected with, and accountable to, the communities in which they work (Absolon & Willett, 2005).

Respect is also an integral part of relationality: "Through respect, the place of everyone and everything in the universe is kept in balance and harmony. Respect is a reciprocal, shared, constantly interchanging principle which is expressed through all aspects of social conduct" (Smith, 2012, p. 125). By allowing a principle of respect to guide our research, we demonstrate that we are not only trustworthy, but culturally worthy as well (Archibald, 2008). Utilizing Indigenous methodologies means we are accountable to those involved in the research and to

those who will feel the consequences of the work (Kovach, 2015). This is closely related to the

third tenet of Indigenous methodology that addresses collectivity and reciprocity as an essential

part of the research process.

Wilson (2001) writes that, "Research is not just something that's out there: it's something

that you're building for yourself and for your community" (p. 179). Research, then, is not just an

individual undertaking. Rochelle Johnston et al. (2018) elaborate that Indigenous research

requires "taking responsibility as a human being embedded in a network of relationships" (p. 14).

Embedded in this collective view is the notion of reciprocity and accountability. Indeed,

reciprocity and accountability lie at the heart of collective responsibility. Many Indigenous

people engaging in research thus do so with a view of giving back what has been learned to the

community (Absolon, 2011). Sharing knowledge, producing research that is relevant, creating

relationships that last beyond the research process, and "giving back" are all ways that research

has collective value for our communities.

Methodologies and Methods

The fourth tenet that Kovach suggests focuses specifically on research methodologies and

methods. In returning to my questions at the beginning of this chapter, "What is Indigenous

about my research?", I want to reiterate that epistemology separates Indigenous methodology

from Western approaches. Kovach (2009) states, "Questions about purpose, benefit, and the

protection of research subjects may arise across a range of methodologies; however, it is the

answers to these questions and the standards around community accountability in a collectivist,

relational research model that will be different" (p. 56). So, while the general design of my study

could be categorized as "ethnography" or "phenomenology," those terms and approaches do not

capture the way I am prioritizing my Anishinaabe epistemology and ontology, specifically

through relationality, self-reflexivity, and reciprocity. It is important that my methods remain congruent with this orientation.

In seeking such congruence, Kovach (2009) urges creating space for options that capture alternate ways of knowing when it comes to choosing research methods. As examples, she states that methods like dream journalling, insights gained from nature, and other approaches that capture subjective data are part of the future of Indigenous research. As an Anishinaabe person trying to make sense of the world for myself, these tenets form the theoretical foundation for my research study and inform my choice to blend together two methodological lenses, visiting and storywork, which I next turn my attention to next.

Visiting

In thinking about Indigenous methodology as a relational practice, it is important for me to consider how my research approach aligns with my research topic. To accomplish this, I've looked to Indigenous scholars, artists, and thinkers who have increasingly engaged with the practice of visiting in their work. Visiting is seen as a relational social practice within Indigenous thought and has been approached in various ways. Simpson (2014) writes about the practice of visiting as a relational experience. In her words, "[v]isiting means sharing oneself through story, through principled and respectful consensual reciprocity with another living being" (p. 18) and she further asserts that visiting is at the core of the Anishinaabe political system, mobilization, and intelligence. Meanwhile, Métis artist Dylan Miner (2018) and Stó:lō scholar Dylan Robinson (2020) view visiting as an intervention and disruption of settler-colonialism. Through his art practice, Miner engages with a "methodology of visiting" (p. 132), describing how this practice disrupts colonial constructs of time and productivity, inviting us to slow down, to gather, to create and maintain community. His work arose out of an oral history project with retired

Anishinaabe autoworkers where many elders shared their concern that no one has time to visit anymore. Since then, Miner has made visiting a fundamental component of his practice. In his words, engaging in visiting through his art practice means shifting "away from its general focus on ay'iin/things and instead see how being together and visiting does the work of creating and maintaining community" (p. 133). Similarly, Robinson (2020) sees visiting as "a forum for intergenerational teaching and learning" that "moves us away from normative settler cultures of display and hungry perception" (p. 171). In addition, Tuck et al. (2022) has described visiting as an Indigenous feminist practice that is "queer, anti-capitalist, and rooted in the cosmologies of our communities" (p. 1).

While the practice of visiting has been theorized in various ways by these artists and scholars, it has only just begun to be applied as a research framework and practice. In Cree scholar Leona Makokis' and colleagues (2010) study of Cree language learning, she found that visiting was an essential protocol for building and maintaining relationships within the community with whom she was working. Métis scholar Janice Gaudet (2019) writes extensively on her use of visiting as a research methodology, claiming that visiting anchors a sense of belonging, sense of self, and a sense of responsibility to family, community, and land. In her view, visiting has the theoretical foundation to stand on its own, apart from Western approaches, and she suggests that a visiting methodology offers an Indigenous approach to community-based, participatory research. She is careful to point out that visiting is not to be confused with relationship-building – a process commonly found in Western, emancipatory practices. The act of relationship-building within Western research traditions still tends to assume an external position of acquiring knowledge from others. In contrast, visiting creates more space for empathy, recognition, gender balance, holistic knowledge, and emergent, unscripted, and

unpredictable outcomes (Gaudet, 2019). Métis scholar Sherry Farrell-Racette (2022) has also

articulated a visiting methodology based on "kitchen table logic" (p. 86) derived from Métis

social practices. In this logic, the kitchen table is positioned as the centre of Indigenous kinship,

storytelling, and resistance and it calls for the reclamation of the kitchen table as a collaborative,

radical, and creative space. Farrell-Racette says, "when doing kitchen table as research method,

the essential elements are coffee/tea, food, and attentive listening" (p. 88). This approach

equalizes the relationship between researchers and participants because "at the kitchen table you

are just another person sitting in a chair" (p. 89).

     I chose to work with the idea of visiting because it is a process of coming to know that is

caring, respectful, grounded in place, land, and family. Because it focuses on kinship and

relationality, it naturally extends itself to include the more-than-human and spiritual realms as

well. Robinson (2020) also suggests that visiting means extending an ethics of care that we have

for ceremonial objects, drums, and other-than-human relations. We are able to visit with land and

with objects, just as with each other.[15] This idea of visiting guided my decisions around data

collection methods, including storywork as an ethical orientation to the data.

Storywork

     Tuck et al. (2022) state that visiting is an embodied practice and a medium for

transferring knowledge (that encompasses our histories, family stories, values, lessons, and ways

of life) across generations, time, and space. They also emphasize, "stories invite and invoke

relationships" (p. 2). It makes sense to me, then, to have incorporated the principles of storywork

into my research design, not only because storying overlaps with visiting, but because storywork

provides a guide in how to approach data collection and analysis. Many Indigenous scholars

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[15] Indeed, this is reflected in the Cree language where the word for checking a fish net is the same as "visiting" the net.

indicate the importance of storytelling within Indigenous epistemologies (e.g., Brant-Castellano, 2001; McPherson & Rabb, 2011; L. Simpson, 2014; Iseke-Barnes, 2013) and have explored its use as an effective, culturally congruent research practice (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2009).

Stó:lō scholar Joann Archibald (2008) coined the term "storywork" and asserted "that our stories and storytelling were to be taken seriously" (p. 3). Archibald's (2008) conception of storywork is founded on seven principles: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy, all of which speak to the relational nature of Indigenous knowledges and which differentiates this method from narrative inquiry approaches based in Western thought. Storywork is an Indigenous methodological approach that has been utilized in various fields, including education (see, for example, Archibald et al., 2019). Kovach (2010) posits that stories can be seen as a "culturally organic means to gather knowledge within research" (p. 42). Similar to narrative interviews that are "based less on a previously developed interview guide" (Mertens, 2015, p. 294), Indigenous storywork encourages the exchange of ideas and is inherently more dynamic than interviewing due to the relational and reflective nature of stories. In storywork, the researcher must work as an active listener and participant throughout the entire process (Archibald, 2008). Kovach (2010) indicates that through this process, research becomes less extractive, relationships with participants are deepened, and we can gain access to "highly contextualized, powerful source[s] of knowledge" (p. 46). I have used storywork in the past to explore how one Anishinaabe community makes meaning from mazinaabikiniganan[16] within their territory and found it to be an effective approach to working with Indigenous knowledge (Twance, 2019).

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[16] Commonly known in settler discourse as rock art or pictographs.

In this study, I wanted to work with the expertise that already exists within Anishinaabe creative communities, exploring the knowledge, theory, and critical thought that Anishinaabe artists already engage in through their lived practices of creating beadwork. At its simplest, my methodology centered around visiting and the telling of stories, incorporating the convivial, co-conspiratorial, and generative aspects of visiting, and the Indigenous framing of storywork (Archibald, 2008) to honour and respect the insights shared by participants. Together, these practices reflect relational forms of knowing, doing, and being that are integral to my Anishinaabe paradigm.

Research Site

My work was carried out in Animkii Wiikwedong, known commonly as Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. Because it is the only major city in Northwestern Ontario, Thunder Bay acts as a hub within the region, attracting Indigenous peoples from various territories, including Treaty 3, the Nishnawbe Askii Nation, and the Robinson-Superior Treaty area. The city is home to a vibrant Indigenous creative community, evidenced by artists regularly featured in *The Walleye*, a local community arts and culture magazine. This location was ideal for my study because of its large Indigenous population and because the art produced in this region is officially recognized as distinct from other parts of the province (OAC, 2022a).

Participants

As an Anishinaabe woman from Netmizaagamig Nishinaabeg who grew up in Thunder Bay, I have been building and fostering relationships within the Indigenous arts community here for years. The individuals who make up this community come from different reserves and treaty areas, representing a community of shared interests rather than a specific geographic or political community. I drew from this pool of makers not only because I already have pre-existing and ongoing relationships with many of them, but also because they are recognized within the

community for their knowledge and skill as Anishinaabe artists. This approach fit my methodology well since visiting with makers I already knew served to deepen, and in some cases renew, our relationships.

From May 12-15, 2023, I attended and participated in Fort William First Nation's urban hide-tanning camp where I was able to connect with members of the Anemkii Art Collective and other Indigenous artists. At the time, I spoke with four known beadworkers about my intended research and their possible participation. They positively expressed their interest by asking questions, seeking more information, and stating that they'd be open to participating. Other beadworkers were invited to participate based on word-of-mouth recommendations from other participants and from my own network. My criteria for selection were based on their level of knowledge and expertise and their years of experience with beadwork, loosely following the Ontario Arts Council definition of an established artist, meaning someone with an extensive body of work and who has achieved recognition in the community (OAC, 2022b).

Since I was seeking depth rather than breadth in this study, I focused on visiting with a small group of eight Anishinaabe beaders from Northwestern and Northern Ontario who are, or were, based in Thunder Bay or the surrounding area. I kept the number of people involved small since this project was primarily exploratory in nature and contained multiple phases and modes of data collection, which I will explain in detail next.

Data Collection

Maori scholar Fiona Cram (2013) reminds us that "method" is distinct from "methodology." Method refers to the distinct tools and techniques used in data collection or analysis, while methodology refers to the overarching principles that direct a research project. If my overarching principles are based on Anishinaabe ways of knowing, being, and doing, rooted in the ethical and relational practices of visiting and storywork, then my methods needed to align

with those principles. With this consideration in mind, I decided the methods best suited to my study were those that welcome a variety of perspectives, that consider relationality, that capture embodied theory and knowledge, and that allow for flexibility and emergent ideas to surface. Further, Amy Blodgett et al. (2013) caution that research methods that "rely on language as the sole medium for creation and communication of knowledge" can produce "one-dimensional forms that are not recognizable at the community level," (p. 313). In building a study with collective reciprocity and story in mind, it became important for me to consider holistic, accessible, and alternative forms of knowledge production.

For these reasons, I chose a multi-method approach that blended arts-based research methods with Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. I collected data from three sources: 1) unstructured conversations with participants guided by art elicitation; 2) beading circles; and 3) beadwork and photographs of beadwork as visual data. I used art elicitation and beading circles with the Anishinaabe makers as a form of visiting and a space for the co-creation of knowledge.

Visiting and Art Elicitation

To prepare for our visits together, I emailed participants the information letter (Appendix A) and consent form (Appendix B) in advance and asked them to consider three pieces of their work they'd like to share with me. After gaining consent from each participant, we arranged a mutually convenient time to meet. Most often, these visits took place at beadworkers' homes. One took place at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery and two took place over Zoom due to distance since I was moving back and forth between Thunder Bay and Winnipeg, Manitoba at the time. At the beginning of each visit, I offered asemaa, or *tobacco*, to let participants know what my intentions were and to thank them for taking the time to visit with me. I typically brought food

and coffee to share in the spirit of generosity and gratitude, and before we began I gave everyone the opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification about the project.

Once each participant and I had settled into a space together, whether it was someone's living room, workplace, or craft room, I began by asking participants about their relationship with beadwork, their practice, and insights they had about their work. The length of our visits ranged from one to three hours, respecting everyone's schedules. I sought permission to record our conversations and used my smartphone's built-in recording app. Rather than employing "interviews" in this phase, I relied on conversation as a non-structured, less interrogative, and more emergent form of data collection (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2010). One participant informed me that she was initially nervous to meet with me even though we know one another outside of the research context. She said she became much more comfortable after seeing that I was also participating in the conversation by relating my own stories and perspectives. That alone told me that approaching this work as visiting, storywork, and conversation was the right choice.

To enhance the depth of stories shared in conversation, and to reflect holistic ways of knowing, I also incorporated arts elicitation into this phase of the research process. As mentioned earlier, I invited participants to consider sharing three pieces of their own pre-existing work with me. However, I found artists were often generous and eager to share more than three pieces of their work. Some didn't know where to start so we used their relationship to beadwork as our jumping off point. After they shared their stories with me, they were better able to choose pieces that represented what they were telling me or played some role in shaping their practice. Most of the time, beaders brought up their work as part of our conversations. I asked permission to take

photos of the work that was shared with me and obtained consent to use the photos you will see in the coming pages.

Arts elicitation is a useful tool often used in conjunction with interview projects to enrich and enhance data collection (Leavy, 2020; Pauwels, 2015). Photographs are the most common tools used in elicitation, but increasingly, other forms of visual data are being used to similar effect, including drawings, collage, maps, and graphs (Bagnoli, 2009; Pauwels, 2015; Rose, 2016). Asking participants to share pieces of their work with me during these visits had some advantages. First, it acted as an entry-point into conversations. Even though I had pre-existing relationships with participants, I recognize that sitting down together as part of a research project can be intimidating. Using their own work as a concrete talking point positioned each maker as the expert and made it easier to engage in natural, emergent conversation. Second, using visual work as a focal point in conversation "can elicit or trigger deeper, more abstract perceptions and values of respondents" (Pauwels, 2015, p. 97). Using this type of elicitation can therefore unlock or dislodge knowledge that isn't easily accessed by verbal means alone.

Beading Circles

At the end of each one-on-one visit, I invited beaders to further participate in a series of beading circles. I viewed these beading circles as an opportunity for group discussions to enhance and deepen preliminary themes identified from our initial visits together and generate additional insights, tying together the ideas of visiting, storywork, and art-making. Sharing circles are one method for doing research in Indigenous contexts. As a form of data gathering, it is differentiated from focus groups because of its inclusivity, embracing concepts like learning from one another, incorporating information and knowledge shared into one's own life, and honouring and respecting what is shared in the circle (Fitznor, 2003; Hart, 1996). Lavallée

(2009) explains how this form of discussion reflects a more holistic approach: "In a research setting, although both the focus group and the sharing circle are concerned with gaining knowledge through discussion, the principles behind a sharing circle are quite different. Circles are acts of sharing all aspects of the individual" (p. 29).

Because sharing circles often prioritize interactions through dialogue, I wanted to also consider more inclusive ways of knowing in this study. This informed my decision to utilize the beading circle as an iteration of the sharing circle where the act of making is integrated in the process. Farrell-Racette (2022) discusses the use of beading circles as part of her theorizing on "kitchen table logic" (n.p.). Her kitchen table method is a research process of creation and dialogue where people gather to share food and to make something together. It affords an open-ended data collection method that creates more space both for dialogue and for the creation of art.

Arts-based methods are not as prolific in Indigenous research design despite their applicability to culturally appropriate research. For example, Norman Denzin, Yvonna Lincoln, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2008) "were unable to locate persons who could write chapters on ... arts-based methodologies" (p. xii) for their *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*. More recently, in a scoping review of Indigenous research undertaken between 2000-2015, Chad Hammond et al. (2018) found only 36 studies employed arts-based research methods, the majority of which involved the use of photovoice. Only one study in their review employed the use of what they termed "handicraft." Alexandra Drawson et al. (2018) shared similar findings in their review of Indigenous research methods, indicating that photovoice and storytelling were among the most popular methods employed in Indigenous research.

Arts-based research methods were particularly useful in this study for the way they embrace emotional, sensory, embodied, and imaginative ways of knowing that extend beyond verbal and intellectual modes of thinking (Finley 2008, Leavy, 2020). Engaging in the creative process provides access to different dimensions of experience, which would otherwise remain neglected in simply verbal or language-based data collection methods (Knowles & Cole, 2008). In thinking about the relationality and respect that is inherent to Indigenous methodologies, arts-based research methods "adapt the tenets of the creative arts in order to address research questions in holistic and engaged ways in which theory and practice are intertwined" (Leavy, 2020, p. 4). It can provide participants with a sense of agency in that they are able to share their experiences and thoughts in ways that are personally meaningful, therein allowing individuals to engage as the experts of their own lived experiences (Leavy, 2020; Packard, 2008).

Arts-based research is also valued for its ability to amplify marginalized voices and to disrupt power dynamics between the researcher and the research participants (Leavy, 2020). Blodgett et al (2013) suggest:

> Participants may feel more in control of the research interview when they are given the opportunity to create and discuss an image on their own accord, rather than having to respond to a series of questions that are developed along the researcher's lines of thinking. In this manner, arts-based methods can be used to enrich the interview process as a more participatory experience. (p. 315)

Researchers must rely on the insights of participants to better understand the various meanings being conveyed, and accordingly the research process becomes a "mutual initiative as opposed to a hierarchical, one-way flow of information" (Liebenberg, 2009, p. 445). To me, arts-based research made good sense because of the way it gets at multiple meanings, for its potential to

evoke and provoke dialogue and to democratize the research process, and the way it lends itself to the organic emergence of meanings throughout the research process (Knowles & Cole, 2008; Leavy, 2020).

In this second phase of my research process, we gathered together in a beading circle six times between September 2023 and November 2023. At the end of our initial one-on-one visits, I explained this next phase of the research process, inviting participants to gather and to create a piece of work that reflected on the question "What does it mean to be a good ancestor"? This question was chosen because of its entanglements with the Anishinaabe concept of aanikoobijigan,[17] a term that can mean both a *descendant* and an *ancestor*. Collectively, the term refers to the ancestral link that ties past/present/future together. Potawotami scholar Kyle Whyte (2018) suggests that in this intergenerational, spiraling Anishinaabe view of time, it makes sense to "consider ourselves as living alongside future and past relatives simultaneously as we walk through life" (pp. 228-229). This question was meant to not only inform the creative practice and focus dialogue, but to more broadly address one of the main areas of focus for my research – namely, how do beadworkers engage with notions of futurity in their work?

Our first beading circle took place in person at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery. The staff generously provided space for us to meet shortly after the installation of the *Radical Stitch*, a major exhibition of beadwork from across North America. This first beading circle was an opportunity to socialize and come together as a group. It was also a chance for these beaders to experience the *Radical Stitch* exhibit up close and personal, which served as a source of

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[17] Aanikoobijigan may be translated as an ancestor, a great-grandparent, or a great-grandchild. According to *The Ojibwe People's Dictionary*, the stem of the word is "aanikoobid-" that means to string it or tie it together. The dictionary further breaks this word down into two components: "aanikaw-" that means to link and "-bid" that means to tie it. In this way, our word for ancestor represents a string or a link of people tied to one another, a concept that is literally embodied in the act of beading where individual beads are strung together to make a whole.

inspiration for some in their own works. Due to me being physically distant from Thunder Bay, subsequent beading circles were held over Zoom. Seven beaders participated in this phase of the research process, attending when their schedules allowed. Beading circles typically lasted 3 hours and took place on Friday or Saturday evenings since that worked best for everyone's schedules.

On Coding and Meaning-Making

The principles of holism, interrelatedness, and synergy guided my approach to data analysis and representation. My research questions were exploratory and meant to make meaning from holistic knowledge sources, including verbal, embodied, and visual sources. The synergy between Indigenous methodology and arts-based research means my analysis needed to draw attention to complexity, raise questions, and generate uncertainties. For this reason, my study may be described as inductive, reflexive, and iterative, allowing for the organic emergence of meaning to develop throughout the process. I wrestled with how best to analyze this work while remaining true to Indigenous epistemologies that are non-fragmentary and holistic in nature (Atleo, 2004). Kovach (2009) has noted the challenge of interpreting meaning from stories without decontextualizing knowledge and I felt qualms about how best to proceed. In the end, I chose to look at our conversations and stories through an iterative, reflexive process of coding combined with thematic analysis. I chose to keep participant voices as intact as possible, so much of the findings are presented as extensive block quotes in the coming chapters. These block quotes are single-spaced to help the reader to identify and differentiate them from the main text. This next section will provide more detail about the processes I used in analysis and representation.

Preliminary Coding

When I looked at the data in front of me, I had audio-records of one-on-one visits, audio and video records from six beading circles, numerous photographs I had taken, and a document full of notes, impressions, and written reflections saved on my computer. My first task was to transcribe the audio and video files so that I had text to work with. Once I had transcribed our conversations and stories, I read through each file to get a general sense of the material I was working with.

At this time, I used holistic coding to help me make sense of the knowledge being shared by each participant. Ian Dey (1993) writes that holistic coding is an attempt "to grasp basic themes or issues in the data by absorbing them as a whole rather than by analyzing them line by line" (p. 110). Holistic coding is appropriate for studies with a wide range of data forms, including transcripts, field notes, and artifacts and is often seen as a preparatory step to more substantive, detailed analysis later on (Saldaña, 2021). Holistic coding fit my study because of the way it encourages researchers to read and re-read the entire body of data to see the bigger picture before making decisions on what warrants further analyses or closer scrutiny (Dey, 1993; Saldaña, 2021). In practice, this meant me reading through each transcript and identifying the major stories that were being told. That not only gave me a broad view of the subjects covered by each participant, but it also helped me to identify links and common themes shared across participant stories. For example, holistic coding allowed me to see how every beader had a story about their "motivations for learning beadwork," "experiences with colonialism," and "resurgence."

Once I had identified broad categories throughout the transcripts, I began to refine them using in vivo and descriptive coding. In the first phase of the coding process, I had kept data

intact, looking for the broad strokes in our conversations. In this iteration of the coding process, I broke up paragraphs from the transcripts to isolate individual thoughts and ideas and assigned these a code. When there were large pieces of text telling a single story, I broke these into smaller sections to try to encapsulate a single idea.

In vivo coding particularly resonated with my methodological approach because the codes are derived from the data itself, using the words, phrases, and terms of participants verbatim as units of analysis. Kathy Charmaz (2006) notes that this form of coding "anchors your analysis in your research participant's worlds," thus providing "a crucial check on whether you have grasped what is significant" (p. 55). Further, in vivo codes "help us to preserve participants' meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself" (p. 55). Through in vivo coding, I began to identify phrases and ideas that were repeated throughout the data like "not knowing," "sharing," "giving," and "connection."

Thematic Analysis

By the end of the coding process, I felt like I had to go back to the drawing board. I had identified some broad categories of the types of stories being shared and I had assigned codes to different ideas. Admittedly, everything still felt fragmented and it was difficult to make sense of what my codes meant when considered individually. Rather than start the entire analysis over again as I was so tempted to do, I bravely forged ahead, this time using thematic analysis to further organize stories, conversations, and ideas into workable narratives.

Johnny Saldaña (2021) describes the iterative process of "themeing the data":

…themes are discerned during data collection and initial analysis, and then examined further as interviews continue. The analytic goals are to winnow down the number of themes to explore in a report, and to develop an overarching theme from the data corpus,

or an integrative theme that weaves various themes together into a coherent narrative. (p.

176)

While it is often seen as a phenomenological method, Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006)

emphasize the theoretical flexibility of thematic analysis, identifying it as an analytic method

rather than a full-fledged methodology. Thematic analysis has been used successfully by a

number of researchers working with Indigenous methodology. For example, Lavallée (2009)

identified core themes in her research that were then used to weave points and concepts back

together into a collective narrative while retaining individual stories within the text. Laara

Fitznor [Nisichawaysihk Cree Nation] (2003) similarly worked with thematic coding, presenting

individual stories as much as possible in participants' own voices. Kovach (2009) used open-

coding to create "thematic bundles," presenting her research as both condensed conversations

and thematic groupings. In this way, she was able to present her research in a contextualized

form.

By this point, I did have a sense for how different stories fit together. I combed through

the transcripts again to see which codes came up most frequently and which ones could be

grouped together. When I had all the codes in front of me, I could see four broad topics

emerging: Coloniality, Relationality, Materiality, and Futurity. I created four separate files in

Microsoft Word, one for each topic. In each document, I created a two-column table, pasting

chunks of relevant transcribed data into one column, and leaving the second column free to

assign sub-topics and sub-categories. Some stories fit in more than one category, demonstrating

how interconnected these themes really are. When there was overlap between topics, I made

notes in the second column to point out where the overlap was and to note that I had copied and

pasted the data into all relevant files. Once everything had been bulk-assigned to a theme, I was

able to split each topic into more relevant, smaller sub-themes and categories. For example, once I began to differentiate how the beaders talked about connection, kinship, care, family, and reciprocity, I was able to split "Relationality" into three distinct sub-themes: relationships to community, with family, and with self. Further, "Materiality" was broken down into material knowledge, perceptions of materials, and material practice. Through this process, I was able to better see how "Coloniality" influenced beadwork practices, but in line with my interest in refusal, rather than keep it as its own topic I folded it into the remaining categories to consider how colonialism is present without making it the center of my analysis.

Memo-Writing

Throughout this phase of my research, I wrote analytic memos as a way to reflect on what I was seeing in the data. Despite my initial qualms in utilizing "coding" as part of my analysis process, Alasdair Gordon-Finlayson (2010) emphasizes that "coding is simply a structure on which reflection (via memo-writing) happens. *It is memo-writing that is the engine of grounded theory, not coding*" (p. 164, emphasis in original). Barney Glaser and Judith Holton (2004) further clarify that, "Memos present hypotheses about connections between categories and/or their properties and begin to integrate these connections with clusters of other categories to generate the theory" (n.p.). Saldaña (2021) provides recommended topics for reflection during data collection and analysis, four of which I found most useful for my purposes. I wrote memos to define codes, to reflect on possible links, networks, and connections within the data, to consider emergent patterns, and to tentatively posit answers to my research questions. An example of one of my analytic memos around emergent patterns states:

> So far, beaders express a clear indication of WANTING TO KNOW that led them to
> pursue beadwork, quillwork, and hide tanning. They saw something that inspired them or

made them curious. That WANTING TO KNOW provides MOTIVATION for them to

learn more and to become experts at specific skills. There's also WANTING TO KNOW

more about their culture, history, and family out of a sense that these things weren't

taught to them in school or anywhere else. They acknowledge that they don't know

specific things but they all express a desire for knowing, so that's interesting.

I liked the reflective, heuristic nature of analysis involved in memo-writing and, while I did not

engage in grounded theory per se, memo-writing played an important role in identifying what

was relevant, where the common threads were, and how I might begin to answer my research

questions. In this space, I was also able to highlight and reflect on specific moments, stories, and

comments that felt important, regardless of how often they appeared as codes or if they later fit

into themes.

Altogether, this combination of analytical approaches aligned well with my research

questions and theoretical framework since they are holistic and acknowledge the interrelatedness

and synergy between storytellers (participants), the listener (the researcher), and the stories (the

data).

Ethical Considerations

Kovach (2009) states, "an Indigenous perspective finds it impossible to separate ethics

from the totality of research" (p. 142) and I hope that my discussion of methodology here has

already demonstrated aspects of my own ethical positioning. To reiterate, my ethical

considerations are guided by relational accountability (Wilson, 2008), reciprocity and collectivity

(Absolon, 2011; Kovach, 2015), and respect for participants and the knowledge that they share

with me (Archibald, 2008; Schnarch, 2004). Beyond my own ethical considerations as an

Indigenous person, I was also careful to adhere to the TCPS 2 (2022) and received approval for this study from Lakehead University's Research Ethics Board in June 2023.

The risks to participants involved in this study were minimal. While I had informally approached several beaders to gauge their interest in participating in this work, I did not formally contact potential participants through email and private messaging on social media until I had received institutional approval. I provided each participant with the approved information letter, briefing them on the project, including the context behind my research questions and what the project would ask of them. If they expressed interest and were willing to participate, I emailed a consent form for them to read over. I ensured that potential participants had time to consider the information letter and the consent form and to seek clarification or ask questions if they had any. We then arranged a time for us to visit together. I collected signed consent forms through email or in person prior to engaging in our conversations together.

Everyone who participated in this study consented to using their real name throughout the dissertation and in any resulting publications. I informed them of their right to anonymity and the limitations on confidentiality since part of this research would take place in a group setting during the beading circles and since readers may be able to recognize who they are based on their positions within the community. The use of real names is not uncommon in Indigenous research. Wilson (2008) points out that this often goes against the rules of most university ethical research policies but asks, "how can I be held accountable to the relationships I have with these people if I don't name them?" (p. 63). I have found through previous research that this practice of naming does indeed encourage an ethic of accountability between me as researcher and those who chose to share their stories with me (Twance, 2019).

Free, informed, and ongoing consent was obtained at the beginning of our individual visits together, throughout the beading circle process, and at different points of the writing process. During each phase of the research process, I sought permission to make audio and video records of our conversations and to take photographs of people and their work. Any photos included in the dissertation received approval from participants, including Mary and Jean who consented to their appearance in photographs. One-on-one visits were recorded using my Samsung smartphone. Our live beading circle session was video-recorded using two digital cameras positioned at different angles to allow me to see each speaker. I made sure to angle the camera away from the one person who did not wish to be recorded on video but who had consented to recording of audio. One-on-one visits and beading circles that took place over Zoom were recorded using the app's built-in record function and anyone who did not consent to being recorded through video remained off-screen or turned their cameras off.

Participants were provided with original copies of their data in the form of transcripts from our one-on-one visits and any photographs of their work taken throughout the research process. This is an important part of doing research with Indigenous communities as it ensures that participants retain control, access, and possession of their contributions (Schnarch, 2004). In keeping with these principles and my commitment to seeking ongoing consent, participants were given the opportunity to review their introductions in Chapter 4 to ensure accuracy. After this initial review, I emailed copies of Chapters 5 and 6 to participants so that they could review how their information was being used (including photographs), offer feedback, inform me of any changes they wished me to make, and to provide them with the opportunity to withdraw all or part of their data if they wished. All gave their approval of the final write-up that you are reading now. Participants will also be provided with a summary of research findings, a bound copy of the

final dissertation, and an electronic copy to keep for their own use once the final dissertation is submitted.

Outside of institutional ethics, I also engaged in Anishinaabe protocols by giving tobacco to participants prior to our conversations. I also considered reciprocity to be an important part of my research process and enacted this from the beginning by providing food and coffee to share during one-on-one visits and in our live beading session together. I also consider our beading circle sessions to be a form of reciprocity more than a point of data collection. I elaborate on this further in Chapter 6 and in the concluding chapter. Finally, I curated an art exhibition at the Co.Lab Gallery in Thunder Bay, Ontario, featuring the beadwork that participants had created in our beading circles. This gave participants an opportunity to share their work and insights with the general public, and within a community of beaders since this exhibition coincided with the *Aanikoobijiganag Beading Symposium* hosted by the Thunder Bay Art Gallery. I reflect on that experience in the final chapter as well. I look forward to more ways to give and share with this vibrant, caring community in the future.

Chapter Four: Getting to Know the Beadworkers and the Work in Front of Us

The first question I asked when I sat down to visit with the beadworkers was: "How did your relationship with beadwork start?" That question set the tone for our conversations, with each beadworker revealing their initial experiences with the medium and motivations for picking up the skill. I feel this is a good place to start as I begin to share the results of my study. First, it allows me to introduce each beadworker using their own words, providing context and insight into who they are, where they come from, and how they ended up becoming beadworkers in the first place. Second, the narratives presented here touch on all the major themes that I will be discussing throughout the next few chapters, providing a first glimpse into how these themes weave together throughout the data. While this chapter is mostly descriptive, using personal narratives shared through our visits as well as my own observations and reflections documented in my field notes, it sets an important foundation for understanding who these makers are and their experiences as beadworkers.

As I'm writing this, I want to ensure I'm doing my best to represent these beadworkers accurately. I pause and ask myself, "Am I getting their stories right?" To allay some of those fears, I keep chunks of their words intact here so that you – my family or friends or fellow beadworkers or anyone who happens upon this dissertation – may read their stories in their own words as they were shared with me at a specific moment in time under a certain set of circumstances. Their stories might be different if I were to ask them the same questions today as they reinterpret their past experiences in light of new ones, including participating in my research, just as the meaning you get from reading their words might shift the next time you read this. As I sit with the fear that I may be presenting this research all wrong, I remind myself that if there's anything these women have taught me, it's that there are no mistakes. It's all learning.

With that in mind, I would like to introduce you to Jean, Cher, Leanna, Mary, Caitlyn, Shannon, Ocean, and Anna Fern.

Jean

Jean is a well-known beadwork artist and hide-tanner. She is a member of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug and she currently works as a self-employed artist out of her home located on Fort William First Nation. We visited together at her home on the shores of Lake Superior on a sunny day in September. When I arrived, she was tearing her place upside down, searching for hide-tanning tools. She was preparing for another hide camp, one of many that she's facilitated or participated in over the past five years. We greeted each other and she invited me inside. I brought lunch for both of us – takeout from a local organic café we both really like. After we ate and caught up with one another, we got down to talking. Because this was the first visit of my study, I didn't know quite what to expect. I just let the conversation flow organically from one topic to the next as Jean showed me pieces of her work. It wasn't until midway through our conversation that I think to ask Jean when her relationship to beadwork started. This is the story she told me:

> My mom first showed me how to do beadwork …she did some beadwork on her jean jacket, like edge beading, and when I saw that I said, "Mom, you know how to do beadwork ?" And she was like, "Yeah! I'll show you!" And she said, "I don't know how to do it very well, not like your aunties, but I know how to do it," so she showed me how to do the applique and I made a little pouch. A classic first-time project, a pouch…I wasn't really into it when she first showed me…It wasn't until later, like my mid-20s maybe. I quit drinking and it was super helpful to keep my hands busy and my mind occupied and to be productive in a healthy way, I guess…I don't know. It just consumed me and I became obsessed with it, and I needed money and I had no job so I needed to sell it too.

Cher

Cher is Anishinaabe from Fort William First Nation with ties to Lac Des Mille Lacs. I

visited with her in her home on the rez where I was greeted first by her collie, Joji, then by Cher

who opened her patio door to let me inside. I brought over a loaf of zucchini bread I had baked

the night before using some comically large zucchinis that Jean had given to me at the end of our

visit together and Cher sliced a piece for each of us. We sat around her kitchen table and this

time I felt a little more prepared. Before Cher began sharing pieces of her work with me, I asked

about her relationship with beadwork. That's when she told me her story:

> I have memories of being at my grandmother's house, my dad's mom, and just going
> through all her things – digging. My grandmother…she did all the stuff. She had a trap
> line and she skinned – whenever we would go to her house, there'd be animals all across,
> like, in the hallway. All the hunters and trappers, they would bring her their furs and
> she'd clean them. She did that kind of stuff. She worked hides too…So when I was little,
> I was introduced to beading…
>
> But then I think – when did I start? My mom had a friend and she was doing beadwork
> and I think that was a time when I was starting to – I would go to pow wows and I'd just
> be amazed, you know, and then I'd wish. I'd wish I'd had that and I think I must have
> been about 16 or 17. I started going [to powwows], and so my mom had a friend that did
> beadwork, so I had asked her if she could teach me. I went to her house and that's where
> it started. That's where I started to bead. And then I would bead for a little bit, get into it,
> and probably not finish things [laughs]. After that, you know, there'd be a time again
> where I would start beading again, but it wasn't until I had Chloe that I really started to
> bead and I was 26 when I had [her].

Leanna

Leanna is another member of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug. She currently works at

Confederation College full-time as an Indigenous counsellor. She is a performance artist, a poet,

a co-curator, and a skilled seamstress, as well as the twin sister of Jean. We met at her home in

Thunder Bay in the evening, the same day as my visit with Cher. I brought over some snacks and

Starbucks for our visit. Leanna set out the cookies and strawberries on plates and we sat around

her kitchen table. She lit some sage for us before we got started. At first, our conversation was

mostly catching up with one another, talking about work and some of the things we both have going on in our lives. Eventually, I turned the recorder on and asked about her relationship with beadwork. She explained:

> We've always been surrounded by beadwork, so my Auntie made my sister and I some little bags…when we were small and that just kind of hung on our doorknobs. We didn't really use them, but it was always there… my mom would have beaded items around her home…We had beaded moccasins when we were babies made for us, so it was always kind of there…When we were growing up, our mom didn't raise us. We were raised by our dad who's non-native…those days when we were able to go to our mom's house, that's when we'd be able to see more of the beaded stuff and the leatherwork. It was always done on moose hide.
>
> I didn't start beading until I was an adult. Clearly, Jean has a wicked talent for beading, and that was nurtured by my mom at a young age. But while Jean was beading, I was reading. That's what I was doing…Honestly, the first project that I remember making with actual beadwork was beading a pair of moccasins and that was when I had lived overseas in Scotland for a couple years in my early 20s and when I came home, back to Thunder Bay, I was really lonely and I didn't know anybody here. All my friends had moved away, Jean didn't live here anymore, and there was a program out of the Northwest Health Unit. It was every Tuesday night; you could go and bead. So, I did. I went over there and they taught me how to make moccasins and the little vamps. They showed me the stitches and that's how I learned. I made my first pair of moccasins over there and that's how I learned, from a community program. I loved it. I loved going there and just chatting with everybody and it was a nice low-key vibe.

Mary

Mary is from Aroland First Nation and has ties to Lac Seul First Nation. She's not just a beadworker. Her practice includes quillwork, birchbark, cattail weaving, sewing, and hide-tanning. I visited her home in Thunder Bay on a cloudy day at the end of September. I brought some Tim Horton's steeped tea with me as I headed inside. I was greeted by Gunter, Mary's trusty golden retriever, who was really excited to have company. I said "Hi" to her brother who was watching movies on the couch as we made our way past the living room. Mary invited me to take a seat at her dining room table where she had a beadwork project underway. Our

conversation started there as we sat down, but eventually, I got to ask Mary about how she learned to bead. Her story went like this:

> Oh, I love talking about this! [laughs] Because I started when I was like 14, I think? Right when I started around puberty. And I started because my moccasins fell apart and I was trying to get my mom to make me another pair. But then she was like, "You gotta learn how to make your own pair now." …I don't know. She was just really busy, I guess, and it was time for me to enter my role of being a woman and having those responsibilities…like, taking care of yourself and your family and making sure they have what they need, like decorating them. I think that's part of our responsibilities as a mother. Yeah, decorating our loved ones. I think that's a big responsibility as beadworkers. And that kind of falls on us…that's kind of like our love language. That was kind of like my mom's love language, passing that on to me. Because she was taught from my nanny how to do beadwork – on my dad's side, so it was paternal. But my mom was part of the 60's Scoop[18] era so she didn't really get to have that connection with culture until after her marriage.

Shannon

Shannon and her family are well-known on the pow-wow trail. Her family is always decked out in the finest regalia. She comes from Serpent River and is known widely for her Woodland floral designs that she renders in beadwork, embroidery, and applique. I arrived at her home on a warm day in September. She was sitting out on the deck with her husband and some other company who were just on their way out. As I parked my dad's truck alongside her deck, I realized a ditch separated me from the yard. Laughing at myself a bit, I grabbed my gear, including some blueberry muffins and Starbucks, and backtracked down the road to get around. After I said hello to everyone on the steps, Shannon led me through her house and into her craft room. It was a neat and tidy space, where everything seemed to have its place. We sat down at one of her craft tables and got started. Her story went like this:

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[18] The 60's Scoop refers to a historical period in Canada, primarily during the 1960s, when large numbers of Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities by child welfare agencies. These children were often placed into non-Indigenous foster or adoptive homes across Canada and the United States. See Sinclair (2007).

I've always been very creative, but I didn't learn to bead right away. I've probably been beading for like 20 years or something… I've always learned how to do things, not because I wanted to, but more out of necessity, you know? And I think that comes from growing up in poverty and things like that and, you know, becoming resourceful and just learning how to do things on your own, right? Having my own family, my kids, and things like that – I have really learned how to do that. Powwow has always been a part of my life. I met my husband there and then we had kids and we raised our kids in the circle and we used to just go to traditional powwows around here for years and years and years. Eventually it kind of just became so mundane. It's the same people, the same powwow, the same, you know, everything!...

…We started to travel out and go to Minnesota, Wisconsin, and things like that and then we started to get into contest powwows. I feel like the contest powwow scene is something that really put a fire under my butt to learn how to bead because I needed to make beadwork for my kids. We couldn't afford beadwork; it was too expensive, right? That's when I started beading.

Caitlyn

Caitlyn is Anishinaabe with ties to both Naotkamegwanning First Nation (on her dad's

side) and Whitesand First Nation (through her mom). I've known Caitlyn since she first started

beading as a teenager, excitedly making pieces for her powwow regalia. Now, she's an avid

beadworker and currently working as a curatorial assistant at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery. I met

Caitlyn during her lunch break at the gallery near the end of September. At the time, the gallery

was preparing to install *Radical Stitch* and we both felt a sense of excitement about the upcoming

exhibition. I brought us both lunch and Caitlyn met me at the front door. We sat down in the

gallery's small library at a large boardroom table. We caught up for a bit and enjoyed some food

before we got underway. When I asked about her relationship with beading, Caitlyn eagerly told

me:

I began beading at the age of 16 and it was by accident actually…My sister was in high school at the time and was taking a Native language class… there was a teacher and part of her class, she actually had her students do a beading project, and so she taught my sister how to bead. My sister had this project and of course she put it off on my mom who was working on it at home. And it was literally – all of the beads and all the projects that she was working on were on the kitchen table. I didn't really think of beading that much before that, in the sense like, "Oh, I'm going to do it. I want to do it." And I just

remember going to the kitchen, because I was bored, and I saw the beadwork and all the hanks[19] of beads on the table. I was looking at it and I'm like, "This looks really hard." I was just kind of throwing the hanks around, messing up the beads. And then my sister came in and I was like, "What is this?" And so she was telling me it was a project for her class and my mom was doing it for her…I just remember asking her and it was so weird because when we were younger – my sister is older and she's very much like, you know, when you're, "Show me, show me, tell me" and they won't because they're like, "Get away from me!" – I was so surprised because she did. She was like, "Okay, I'll show you." And she just showed me a line and it was the one-needle technique…That evening I drew a circle because at the time medallions were a big thing – beaded medallions with your initials or your name. And so, I put my initials "CB" in them.

Image 1. Caitlyn's Beaded Medallion. This piece represents Caitlyn's first beadwork project, a medallion with her initials.

Ocean

Ocean has ties to both Biigtigong Anishinaabeg and Netmizaagamig Nishinaabeg, the same communities my own family come from. I first became aware of Ocean's work because of the media attention she garnered as a creator for the Welcome Toronto Creators Program (CTV Your Morning, 2023). This program is an initiative started in 2021 by the Toronto Raptors and the brand, OVO. The program is intended to showcase emerging female, non-binary, Black,

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[19] Some readers may already be familiar with this term. For those who are not, seed beads may be sold loose in a plastic tube or in small plastic bags. Most often, they are sold strung together in what's known as a hank. Typically, hanks are made up of twelve loops of strung beads. Depending on the size of bead, one hank holds 3,000-5,000 seed beads.

Indigenous, or other racialized artists between the ages of 16-29. As one of the selected artists,

Ocean's work was displayed throughout the stadium during a Toronto Raptors game and her art

was integrated into the team's City Edition uniforms. One day, my dad was watching the news

and saw a story about her work, pointing out that we knew her family because of our own

connections to Biigtigong and Netmizaagamig. After following her on Instagram for a while, I

reached out to her, inviting her to participate in this study. She currently lives in Toronto while

attending George Brown college for fashion design and she's already making a name for herself

in that world. She was just getting back from Paris Fashion Week where she did a runway show

of her own designs when we met over Zoom at the beginning of October. I asked her if she could

share a little about her own journey and her relationship with beadwork. She began her story

with enthusiasm:

> It's a beautiful story. I was maybe 10 or 12 years old and I was visiting with my cousin, Nicole Richmond…. we were visiting at her house and I remember she was sitting there beading and I just was like, "Wow! What is this?" I was just so amazed at the beauty – like, I just thought it was so beautiful to be able to create something from little pieces and put it all together and make something big, and also connecting to culture too, you know – pow wow and things like that. That was the first time I was ever exposed to it. And I just remember watching her string the beads on her thread and tack them down. For years, I would replay that in my mind, over and over again. Like, that's what she did! She put the thread through the paper or whatever – the pellon.[20] And she put the beads down and I played that in my head. Then one day, I just found beads! I had found beads in my home from my mom. Like, they were from Dollarama [laughing]…The needle I used was just a basic sewing needle. Like, it wasn't even a beading needle…I beaded on a thin cotton – [laughing] ah, it's just such a good story to tell! It's like humble beginnings, you know? So, I made this little flower and it took me a while, maybe like two hours, three hours. I just did one bead at a time and I brought it out and showed my mom. She was like, "Oh my God, you made this in your room?" And, so, after that, my mom would just buy me bead supplies all the time…that was the most beautiful thing ever. I was a young woman, you know, my mom was just so supportive right away of what I was interested in…I didn't really start taking it seriously until maybe like my first year of university,

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[20] Pellon is a popular brand of interfacing used in beadwork. Beads can be applied directly to the interfacing or the interfacing may be sandwiched between the beaded surface and the backing material to add support and structure to the final piece.

because I would just bead on and off through high school…I just couldn't sit there like for hours on end and bead… So that's kind of how I got into beading and forming a relationship with beading…it's kind of been my way to ground myself and also take the time to love myself too.

Anna Fern

Anna Fern is from Keewaywin First Nation in Treaty 5 territory. She currently works for Keewaytinook Okimakanak Board of Education and lives in Thunder Bay. She's been working with beads nearly her whole life and is well-known in the community for her medallions, earrings, mittens, and purses. My time in Thunder Bay was limited, so I was unable to visit with Anna Fern one-on-one as originally planned. Thus, like with Ocean, we met online over Zoom once I had returned to my home in Winnipeg. During our meeting, I asked Anna Fern how her relationship with beadwork began and she launched right into her story:

> My journey started on pretty early. I was probably about four years old and my mom never learned as a child. She lost her mother while she was away for residential school when she was about six. So, she doesn't really remember any type of relationship with her mother – just knowing that she came back from school during the summer and that she was gone. So, a lot of those things that my grandmother did were all lost…a lot of those things are broken and discontinued, things that my mom would have learned, right? And beading was one of them. My grandfather sewed his own moccasins and dog harnesses and bags and things like that. And so it was just basic sewing, you know, those things that he actually used and needed, and she learned how to do that…but she never knew how to do the beading. So, when I came along, my dad really wanted to make sure that I learned. As soon as I was ready for school age, that's when he decided it's time for me to go sit with my grandmother…That's who I went to go with every day after school. Sit with her. I started sorting her tins, sorting, pulling out threads and organizing all her tins, pulling out her needles [laughing]. Because everything she just kept in a tin, right? These big round tins; we all know what they look like, right? Anyways, she had those and then she had me starting to string necklaces and bracelets and things like that…When I was probably about eight, that's when she really started introducing the leather needle, sewing my own moccasins, things like that. And then we did a lot of doilies, beading around leather, making little change purses…So it was a gradual thing, different projects, right?...
>
> …And my dad was always the one, you know, since I started and until I was in my teens, he always made sure I had the beads. I had hide. He was my one that supplied me. He would always, you know, if you need anything, just let him know and he would make

sure I got it, right? And so it wasn't until I really started selling stuff that I would use that then to buy what I needed. But that wasn't until I was probably about, you know, after I turned 18 and into my twenties, when I started purchasing my own supplies.

Setting the Work Ahead

Together, these stories impart defining moments in each of these beadworkers' lives, when they first picked up needle and thread. Initially, I was overwhelmed by the diversity in responses to my question about beginnings. While their reasons for doing so varied from boredom and curiosity about materials to needing money to seeking connection, a common thread in these stories is relationship. Indeed, one of the first themes that jumped out at me was the idea of connection and the importance of naming people who were influential in their practice as beadworkers.

As I read through the transcripts and looked at photographs of everyone's work for the second and third time, I began seeing that the data could be sorted into four main categories: beadwork as a material practice; beadwork as a relational practice; tensions with colonialism; and practices of futurity. The more I sat with this categorization and tried to sort those into sub-themes, the more I realized that everyone was talking about relationships, including relationships to materials and beaded pieces and relationships to self, family, and community. As the beadworkers' stories in this chapter illustrate, these relationships are also entangled with colonialism, which leads to a desire for space to imagine and engage with practices of futurity and the need to imagine otherwise. For example, many of the beadworkers described having a relationship with the materials that go into beadwork, namely beads and moose hide. This relationship began to be forged before they even picked up needle and thread as they described having "always been surrounded by beadwork" or "having memories of my grandmother's house and just digging" through her materials. Each beadworker described the role of mothers, fathers,

grandmothers, aunties, cousins, and/or community in imparting knowledge, revealing the presence and importance of those personal relationships. There is also a relationship with colonialism haunting these stories. For example, Anna Fern described knowledge and skills as being "discontinued" and "lost" when her mother went to residential school and her grandmother passed away. Mary also described her mother as being part of the 60's Scoop and the impact it had on her connection to culture. Despite the ways that colonialism influences, impedes, or is tangled up in beadwork practice, these initial stories also reveal a practice of freedom, that beadwork is an act of self-love, and that it is a practice that allows beadworkers to reconnect and reclaim culture, to fulfill responsibilities as Anishinaabe women, and to create different futures for our children.

The following chapters will delve into these ideas further, as I strive to understand the materiality of beadwork (Chapter 5), and beadwork as both a practice of relationality and a space through which futurity and otherwise are realized (Chapter 6). I decided that I didn't want to devote an entire chapter to colonialism, both as an act of refusal and following the example set by my conversations with beaders – in Cher's words, "I don't really think about it. I'd rather be thinking about all of this [gesturing at beadwork]." That said, colonialism does figure prominently in the stories shared but I've chosen to describe these tensions and entanglements within the chapters as I go along. I have also chosen to weave together findings and discussion in Chapters 5 and 6 so that I can take the conversation in different directions as each topic warrants while avoiding repetition. I present my data in each of these chapters with examples and excerpts from my one-on-one visits and beading circle transcripts as well as photographs of beadwork that I took while visiting with folks. I then conclude the dissertation with a final chapter (Chapter 7) of reflections on the study as a whole and a return to my original research questions.

Chapter Five: Glass Beads and Moose Hide: Beadwork as a Material Practice

My first research question positions Indigenous arts practice (generally) and beadwork (specifically) as a site of learning, so I was interested in what knowledge is being enacted through these materials. As discussed in Chapter 4, each beadworker had defining moments and diverse motivations that led them to picking up a needle and thread. Caitlyn describes how she "learned by accident" and found hanks of beads on her kitchen table that she played around with out of boredom. Jean and Leanna both recall how they were always surrounded by beadwork and moose hides, describing a childhood filled with "little wafts" of smoked hide, or remembering the beaded edge on their mom's jean jacket. Shannon became immersed in the powwow scene, explaining how "we're drawn to it because everything looks so beautiful." No matter the context, each of their journeys began with seeing, touching, smelling, becoming familiar, and coming to know with both the materials and with beadwork as a finished product in physical, tangible ways. No one begins as an expert; rather, expertise grows out of the deepening relationship between humans and materials.

Beadwork is a defining part of Anishinaabe material culture. At its most basic, beadwork can be achieved with a needle, thread, some glass beads, and something to bead onto. Ocean talks about her own "humble beginnings" using dollar-store beads, flimsy cotton, and a too-big sewing needle. These materials, humble though they may have been, allowed her to learn and experience beadwork for herself in the very beginning stages of her learning journey. Over time, beadworkers gain experience and knowledge of what works and what doesn't, which in turn shapes their preferences and influences their overall style. I could (and in fact, initially did indeed try to) write about the minutia of these material considerations: what types of beads are used and why? What material serves as a good foundation? What sort of foundation material is

everyone using? However, I came to realize my work isn't really about defining and delimiting those particulars. I don't want this dissertation to be a technical description of what beadwork *is*. Rather, I'm interested in understanding beadwork as an embodied material and practice, as something we come to know intimately through our hands in the making and our eyes in the perceiving and the myriad other ways we become in relation to the materials and to the work.

In analyzing the data, I could see that many of the beadworkers referenced the idea of "tradition" in their work – that the material and aesthetic choices being made were informed, at least in some part, by a set of established customs. As I will discuss in this chapter, these are reflected in the value placed on antique and vintage beads, the use of brain-tanned moose hide, and adherence to a floral tradition. Many also talked about beadwork as a material object that can be bought and sold or housed in museum and gallery collections. At the same time, many also described beadwork as being alive, using language to describe beadwork that implies agency and power. Some of these ideas contradict each other: How can contemporary artists be "traditional"? How can beads be considered both a raw material and something that has agency? That made me wonder what these tensions reveal about the materiality and embodiment of beadwork.

To help me grapple with these questions, I organized this chapter using four subthemes: 1) knowledge of beads as traditional and contemporary material; 2) moose hide knowledge; 3) aesthetic constellations; and 4) materials as non-human actors. At the end of the chapter, I discuss these material considerations alongside theoretical work by Robinson (2020) and his conceptualization of "hungry listening," Doxtator (1995) on traditional art as cultural metaphor, and Karen A'Llerio (1999) around Anishinaabe art philosophies.

Bead Knowledge

I'm going to take you on a bit of a journey for a minute because it's easy to look at a package of glass beads and imagine they were bought at a local bead shop or craft store, without asking where beads actually come from. And how did they even enter the material culture of the Anishinaabe to begin with? (The short answer is the fur trade; the long answer involves cultural metaphysics.) So, there are a few things I want to explain to better contextualize the findings I want to share in this section. Context is important and I'll be better able to discuss all this if I frontload it here. Believe me, I tried inserting this information elsewhere and none of it fit. So here we go.

Glass beads were first introduced in the Great Lakes region in the early 17th century by early French explorers and traders. The first beads that were traded were large (10mm+) and came in a variety of colours and patterns. These beads were often strung together to make necklaces and other forms of adornment (Armour, 1977; Garte, 1985). Smaller beads, known as "pony" beads (2-10mm) were introduced in the late 17th and early 18th centuries and were often used on finger-woven sashes. For the Anishinaabe, glass beads easily fit within already established creative practices, standing alongside porcupine quills, shells, and copper. Anishinaabe women used beadwork to decorate surfaces like leather, birchbark, wool cloth, velvet, and velveteen (Anderson, 2017).

So, where were these glass beads coming from? Peter Francis Jr. (1979a; 1979b) provides an extensive overview of the history of glass bead manufacturing in Venice and the Czech Republic. Glass beads were being mass-produced in Venice, Italy and what was then known as Bohemia (now the Czech Republic). Bohemia was a prime region for the production of glass beads because quartz from the mountains provided a good supply of silica for glass-making and ample forested land provided both fuel for glass furnaces and potash for the glass-making

process. Around 1550, glass-bead making in Bohemia boomed with cottage industries making beads for larger glass jewelry factories. By 1700, Bohemia was renowned for its glass production and the manufacturing of glass beads ramped up through their direct competition with glass-makers in Venice. Industrial expansion in the early 19th century saw the development of new glass processing methods including the use of molds, machine-cutters, and new glass colours. The region was exporting millions of beads a year and this had direct effects on the material culture of the Anishinaabe.

As Francis (1979a; 1979b) noted, by the mid-19th century, industrialization and technological innovation in Bohemia meant that smaller seed beads (>2mm) in a wider variety of colours began to be exported to North America, replacing the larger pony beads that had been available up to this point. This influx of smaller glass seed beads is credited with the explosion of colour and nation-specific styles that erupted in the beadwork of Indigenous makers between 1830-1920 (Anderson, 2017). Early Anishinaabe beadwork was characterized by cohesion, simplicity, small scale, and the representation of geometric, floral, and animal motifs whereas the beadwork produced in the latter half of the 1800s was characterized as "1) dominantly floral; 2) lacking cohesion and unity; 3) elaborateness; 4) largeness; 5) showiness" (Coleman, 1947, p. 96). It was in this time period that bead embellishment flourished. Beads could be found on regalia, moccasins, belts, sashes, pipe bags, shirt-yoke panels, cradleboards, dolls, knife and awl cases, pincushions, pillows, wall pockets, and more. It also was around this time that the bandolier bag, one of the Anishinaabe's most recognizable cultural artifacts, was born. The sheer volume of beadwork being produced in this era contributed to the creation of a unique style that came to characterize Anishinaabe beadwork (Anderson, 2017).

Both the Venetian and Bohemian glass bead industries declined following World War II. Francis (1989a) indicates that many of the factories in Italy closed down, ending the production of micro-beads (=0.5mm). Meanwhile, factories in Czechoslovakia became nationalized under the Communist party, a move that nearly collapsed the market. It wasn't until the 1980s that glass bead production began to be revived as an at-home, cottage industry. Individual glass makers once again began supplying local factories. Today, Czech beads remain a popular choice for beadworkers and are the most widely available on the market. They continue to be made in a wide range of colours, sizes, and durable finishes but Czech bead manufacturing faces increasing competition with contemporary bead factories in India, China, and Japan. Popular brands include Sheen (India), Miyuki (Japan), and Toho (Japan).

This history is embedded in the work of each beadworker and some of it was reflected in our conversations, implicitly or explicitly. Now that we know a little bit more about the history and manufacture of glass beads, we can dive into what the beadworkers had to say about their materials.

Greasy Purples and Antique Cuts

I sat down with Caitlyn at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery and asked her about the work she'd brought to share with me. She pulled out a beaded purse made with antique and vintage cut seed beads applied onto brain-tanned hide. Immediately, I noticed the deliberate use of "old" materials in her work and was curious about what led her to these choices. As a relatively young person producing work in 2024, what attracts her to these "traditional" materials? When I asked about her use of antique and vintage cut beads, she explained how she was influenced by her proximity to other beadwork artists during her time studying at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe, New Mexico:

Image 2. "My Grandmother Was Born on a Blueberry Patch (2019). This bag was made by Caitlyn, demonstrating her use of vintage seed beads and traditional floral patterns. The bag is constructed from smoked deer hide.

> [Charlotte cut beads are] becoming really popular because they're just so beautiful. And that's how I was introduced to them, in the States. I saw all these artists using Charlotte cut, Size 13/0. And I'm like, I see Joseph Newman[21] using Charlotte cuts so I went out and got Charlotte cuts! I got to – at the time – really see how popular, and how people vie for them, because they're so rare.

Charlotte cut beads are round seed beads with a single facet or flat side. This facet catches the light, resulting in glints and sparkles that add interest and depth to a design. When I asked Caitlyn why she thought vintage Charlotte cut beads were gaining in popularity amongst contemporary beadwork artists, she explained:

> For me, I think it's the quality. You can't find the same kind of quality today. Like, there are so many beautiful beads today. But back then I feel like they put so much time, attention, detail. Whereas now, it's like they're just trying to make it to get it out…for instance, vintage and antique cuts have different colours that you can't find today, different finishes that you can't find today. The quality of those white beads, there's a

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[21] Joseph Newman is a Diné/Inupiaq contemporary beadwork artist who studied at IAIA at the same time as Caitlyn.

little AB [a type of iridescent finish] to them if you look closely and I can never find that in contemporary beads.

Over the years, Caitlyn has been collecting vintage beads for use in her work because of their quality. The finish, the size of the beads (the smaller, the better), and the colours are what she's really looking for. She pointed out some copper beads in her design, stating:

> I don't think it's a real copper, but it's a copper that's not going to fade or tarnish. I notice that with contemporary beads, especially the metallic finishes, they fade or they chip. So, this copper one, I had to make sure this wasn't going to happen. I only have a small amount of it, which is sad. That's the reality of collecting this stuff. You can only get what you can get at the time.

She then mentioned a particular colour and finish of bead that's become exceedingly rare, touching on the cottage-industry nature of Czech bead manufacturing:

> [T]here's this greasy purple, which was another funny story. There is this bead store in Santa Fe called Beadweaver and that's where all the local bead artists went…and I got to know them too. They know me and they source their beads from Czech Republic. But it's not from the factory. I guess there's people who run it out of their garages!... There was this time, like 2016, around the time I got there, they were having loads of this greasy purple cut. And people were crazy for it… I remember at the time, I kept seeing it every time I went in there. I'm like, "Oh, I'll get it next time. I'll get it next time." And they stopped getting it. It was discontinued. They stopped making it.

Because of the nature of Czech bead manufacturing, family operations are highly specialized and masters in one technique who specifically make different colours may end up retiring or dying without passing on their knowledge. The greasy purple Caitlyn describes is an example of this. These glass beads are semi-translucent, transmitting light that makes the surface of the bead appear greasy. This finish is most commonly found in vintage seed beads manufactured in Italy and the Czech Republic throughout the 1800s and early 1900s. Cheyenne pink is another well-known and much sought after colour in the beading world. I talked with her about the scarcity of good quality pinks and purples:

> [Melissa]: I learned how to bead using the beads my nanny used. They're Czech and it's hard to get good purple beads from there because they're dyed or they're painted and then

it comes off. The only purples you could get were really dull…They were more like grayish purple and I never liked that color so I just never used it. But I know because bead manufacturing has changed now, when you get the Japanese beads and stuff like that, it's easier to find colours that don't fade and they don't chip. But I think because it's been so hard for me to find those purple colours that I just don't use them that much.

[Caitlyn]: Yeah, and that's like the same thing with Cheyenne pink, right? There's a whole history with that colour. Even today, it's so hard to find a pink that's not just painted on and won't fade or chip. So when I find vintage pink cuts, or just any vintage pink of any finish, I grab it.

Caitlyn's not just sharing her own personal preference for a certain type of bead. This preference is shaped by her peers (being influenced in Santa Fe by other artists), by experience (noting the difference between contemporary and vintage beads), and by forming relationships with bead sellers (on Etsy, in Santa Fe, etc.). She's sharing deep knowledge about quality and that's reflected in the work she does.

Ojibwe Floral Redux

Shannon also uses antique and vintage cut beads in her work. Many of her pieces incorporate materials often seen in historic Anishinaabe beadwork that was produced over one hundred years ago. Her material choices are informed by a deliberate consideration of Anishinaabe cultural traditions. I recall seeing Shannon's work for the first time at a powwow in Grand Portage, Minnesota. Her family's regalia was always impeccable and immediately recognizable for their bold use of colour, geometric patterns, and just for the sheer quantity of beadwork. Her work has evolved over the years and today, Shannon's work distinctly reflects "old Anishinaabe style" (Marshall, 2021, p. 10) through the use of vibrant floral designs and vintage, greasy glass beads. Shannon's work draws on historic Anishinaabe beadwork produced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for inspiration. In our conversation, she spoke about traditional versus contemporary beadwork and how she reinvented herself, shifting from

contemporary, geometric designs to the elegant and simplified florals of historic Anishinaabe beadwork.

She started out doing beadwork for powwow regalia and was very much influenced by the Northern Plains style that seemingly predominates in this arena:

> I started beading but the beadwork that I created was really just based on what I had seen there in the circle, and not really understanding or being able to recognize certain tribal-specific beadwork. I think that, over time, you know, the floral traditions of the Anishinaabe, it kind of went away for a while. Even in this area, you know, people never wore flowers…It was always like the geometrics and things like that…so when I started beading that's what I learned how to do and I did the lazy-stitch[22] and it was all geometric…

The lazy-stitch and geometric patterns are very much a feature of Plains beadwork and are easily recognizable within both the powwow and beadworking community.

Shannon went on to describe how she came to bead floral patterns and reconnect with Anishinaabe beadwork traditions. She explained:

> I was making beadwork for people on top of my family. I do orders and things like that. Then there was a woman. She's Lakota but her husband is Ojibwe…so she had asked me to make floral beadwork for her daughter. And I was like, "Wow!" I said, "I've never done any flowers" and she just had this complete faith in me…I started to do research and look at things and I had some books that had some designs in there and I made a design based on my research. But I remember feeling almost a little bit ashamed that I didn't know how to bead flowers.

This encounter motivated Shannon to learn more about Anishinaabe floral beadwork. She began to work with vintage and antique beads 10 years into her beading career when she began to reinvent her style. She received a Chalmers Arts Fellowship through the Ontario Arts Council that allowed her to travel throughout the Great Lakes region, providing her with time to study

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[22] Racette, et al. (2024) call this technique the "Sioux stitch" or "Paha stitch," presumably to avoid negative connotations associated with the term "lazy." They define the Sioux stitch as "the technique of laying vertical stitches of 5-8 beads in horizontal rows, pulling them into a gentle arch. The rows are used to adorn large areas such as pipe bags and dress yokes" (p. 217). Growing up, I knew this technique as the "lazy stitch" because it was quicker to fill in large spaces and didn't require every bead to be tacked down.

historic Woodland-style beadwork and to develop new patterns. She explained the impact this had on her practice, stating:

> I was looking at the beadwork that I was doing at the time and I was like, "This is not what I want to be remembered for!" Basically, I had to reinvent myself as a beader, and that's what I did…I just got rid of everything that I used and I started from scratch. And so I started buying vintage beads. You know, I look at the materials that things were made out of, so it's a lot of research in terms of our history and the things that our ancestors left here for us, you know?

Shannon went on to describe the difference she sees between contemporary beadwork often seen at powwows and the historical beadwork she was researching. As she says:

> When I started to bead florals, there seemed to be this trend of beadwork – and it's still like that – where the florals were very contemporary. Even the materials used – like the beads, you know, the three-cut beads,[23] the two-cut beads.[24] Everything was shiny and you're using the Swarovskis… I can go on Facebook and look back on my beadwork and it was just very flashy, you know? Flowers had 11 colours! Who needs 11 colours in one flower? It's totally absurd, right?

I think what Shannon is saying here is that contemporary aesthetics value complexity in both colour and design, on the pow-wow trail at least. This was made possible by the availability of new materials, new bead types, and new trends in Indigenous fashion. As she began researching more about the historic Anishinaabe floral style and as her practice evolved, she had to learn to simplify both her designs and her colour palette. She continued:

> People ask me about colour combinations. So, when I first started to do the more traditional floral work and going from 11 colours in a flower to, like, two or three, it was really challenging for me, just breaking it down and just totally simplifying the design, right? …I would look at something like this [indicating a historic bandolier bag] and I would be, "Oh, I love all those colours in there" and I would use that as the inspiration for my colour scheme…I think about it even in terms of the old beads, right? They only come in so many colours. I think about that when I do designs.

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[23] Three-cut beads are produced in Czech Republic and are short-cut hexagonal tubes with randomly placed facets. The random cutting of these facets gives each bead a unique shape.

[24] Two-cut beads are cylinder-shaped beads (short tubes) with five equal, long facets that run from hole to hole.

For Shannon, using traditional materials is a way of reviving and reinvigorating a long-standing cultural, aesthetic tradition, one that is rich with knowledge, history, and learning. Her work is very much part of expressing a cultural identity as well as honouring and upholding the integrity of Anishinaabe floral traditions. She spoke to me about what she noticed in her travels, stating:

> The bandolier bags are something that is very – you know – the iconic beadwork pieces of our tribe, right? And so, when I started to learn about things like that, there was nobody around here that knew about them. People don't even know what bandolier bags are. People don't even know that they belong to our tribe and so, for me, I think really what made me change the way I create is identity, right? Not just like Indigenous identity but tribal identity, because, you know, we travel all over. We powwow all over and you know you can go to a powwow and you can see what people – where they come from, you know? What tribe they belong to based on what they wear. When I think back to when I first started beading and I had all these geometric things, people thought we were Lakota or Dakota, you know? It just made me think, "Well, what does it look like? What does being Anishinaabe or Ojibwe – what does it look like? What does a regalia look like?" So then we started to do research on the regalias and things like that.

So, when we talked about beadwork as a site of learning, Shannon described how it's so much more than just a finished object and directly connects the materials with her own learning. She showed me a small pouch she had created (see Image 3) and explained its significance to me:

> When you look at something like this, it's a pouch, right? If you don't know the connection…you're just going to see a piece of beadwork that's really beautiful. But, for me, when I created this, I made it for myself…[F]or me it's about learning about these old flower patterns and incorporating these sequins on there. The sequins, that metal, is something that we put into our work before because it was about attracting spirits or letting spirits and all that know that we're here, you know? And so, you're incorporating these and – even the edging on here, this is what's called Fox Brand braid.[25] And so, this was an edging that was historically used to edge beadwork and I had to learn about this, you know? So, it's like learning about all the little things and the use of velvet or velveteen…[T]o me, there's so much that goes into this and it teaches me so much when I have the opportunity to create something like that.

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[25] Fox brand braid is a brand of military braid sold today. One seller, famous for selling materials for Indigenous artisans and historic re-enactors, describes this edging material as: "The original type military braid. Ideal for binding capotes, leggings, moccasins, bags" (Crazy Crow, 2024).

Image 3. Small Medicine Pouch Made By Shannon. This medicine pouch was created by Shannon for her own personal use. It features brass sequins, Fox Brand braid, hawk bells, and Woodland floral designs. While small, it encapsulates historical, material, and cultural knowledge.

Moose Hide

Beadworkers need to apply their beads to something and employ a variety of materials as their canvas. Historically, beadwork was most often applied to woollen textiles including stroud, broadcloth, and melton (a type of felted wool). Arguably, woollen textiles were the "most important commodity in the fur trade market" (Willmott, 2005, p. 202), valued both economically and culturally. Later, in the early 1900s, black velvet and velveteen became a popular material in Anishnaabe beadwork around the Great Lakes region (Anderson, 2017). These materials continue to be used amongst contemporary beaders, as evidenced in Shannon's bandolier bag. However, brain-tanned moose hide has seen a resurgence in recent years with more and more beadworkers seeking it out and incorporating it into their work. Variously called smoke-tanned, brain-tanned, and home-tanned hide, the leather produced in this way is significantly different from moose and deer hides that are processed in commercial tanneries.

Not mincing any words, Jean said, "Commercial hide has no emotion. It stinks." Commercial hide tanning involves chemical processing using tanning agents like formaldehyde, phenols, chromium, acidic salts, and acrylates. Brain-tanning a moose hide is a labour-intensive process that utilizes the fat-rich brain of the animal and punky wood smoke to produce a soft, breathable material.

The revival of hide tanning is gaining momentum. A quick browse of posts and images on Instagram reveals numerous camps, groups, and artists committed to this traditional craft in various regions of Canada. Renowned establishments such as the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity and Toronto's Indigenous Fashion Arts Festival have started integrating tanning workshops into their offerings. Additionally, hide camps have become a regular fixture for many communities, both urban and rural, who are embracing and revitalizing local hide-tanning traditions. A few examples include the Buckskin Babes Collective who organize moose hide tanning in Montreal, Dene Nahjo, a collective of artists who are revitalizing moose hide tanning in Yellowknife, and Niizh Manidook Hide Camp (NMHC), a cultural revitalization initiative based in Southern Ontario that supports Two Spirit/2SLGBTQQIAA+ by offering hide camps and apprenticeships for the two-spirt and Indigiqueer community. Fort William First Nation is another community engaged in the revitalization of hide-tanning, thanks to the efforts of several of the beadworkers I spoke with, particularly Jean, who has devoted the past five years to learning and revitalizing hide tanning in her own practice.

Because hide-tanning kept appearing in my conversations with the first few beaders, I began to purposefully ask about brain-tanned hides in my subsequent visits. Some mentioned the gap in knowledge surrounding hide-tanning and how that impacts their material choices. Others described the sensual qualities of brain-tanned moose hide, most notably its smell and its texture.

And others described how learning about moose hide strengthened their cultural identity, and how its use added value to their work. Engaging in moose hide tanning represents a significant step towards reclaiming cultural identity, decolonizing narratives, and actively contributing to the resurgence and rejuvenation of Indigenous traditions.

The Material Knowledge Gap

The re-engagement and reclamation of hide-tanning is necessitated by a generational gap in material knowledge. While many of the beadworkers spoke about being around brain-tanned hides or knowing people in their families who took part in this tradition, until relatively recently the women in this study did not have first-hand knowledge when they began their practice. Despite this gap, there is a real thirst for this knowledge. Jean took up hide-tanning over five years ago because, as she explained to me:

> I've been super unsatisfied with beading on – or using at all – commercial hide, so I've always wanted to learn how to tan hide for as long as I can remember… Ever since I wore those little moccasins when I was probably three, I've been around home-tanned hide my whole entire life; I've been around beads all the time; I've been around this smell all the time, you know? Little wafts all the time. So I've always wanted to learn how to make the leather.

We didn't directly talk about the impact colonialism has had on knowledge practices, but it often came up indirectly through our conversations, particularly around moose hide tanning. For example, in my conversation with Anna Fern, she described:

> My granny used to do it and my grandfather. And that's how they got the hide, you know? And then from Muskrat [Dam], my auntie Esther was the one that always did it. And then it was my uncle Jake that would often – he would trap the beavers and tan those as well because then she had the real beaver fur too, right? Not the commercial beaver. It was always – when you go to their trap line, up against their cabin you'd always see the rings of beavers hanging everywhere and on the trees. You know, oftentimes there'd be a moose, a couple moose, going at different stages, right?...we were always part of the scraping, right? [laughing] Cleaning it up. That's what we were part of. But I know when we would leave for school, it was always like we missed the home tanning part. We just knew when it was done, right? And I'd get all [my aunt's] little bits and scraps.

While it was once a thriving practice in her family, she observed, "I just don't see it as much anymore." Today, Anna Fern beads directly onto commercial hide, noting that despite the difficulty, it's still worthwhile:

> I'll still bead right on the hide. That's what my grandmother did…. The thing is it will last forever.

Caitlyn related her own experience with brain-tanned hide, a story that closely reflects my own experience:

> Growing up, that's [commercial leather] all we had access to. Smoked hide at the time…was not really popular as it is now. It wasn't really practiced…There's been a big resurgence with smoked hide, I feel, but at the time we were poor. We didn't have access to hide that was smoked or people who did the hide tanning. So, we had to use commercial…

The choice to use commercial hide in early work reflects the availability of materials at the time as well as the adaptability of Anishinaabe beaders. Not being connected to people who practiced hide-tanning had a major impact on whether one could access the material. Caitlyn also remarked on "being poor," indicating that brain-tanned hide is more expensive, putting it out of reach of many beaders. Similarly, when I asked Shannon if she ever uses brain-tanned hide in her work, she jokingly remarked, "When I could afford to buy it!" For Mary, too, it is a precious commodity. She has been working as a hide tanner for several years and recently completed her first hide; the length of time it took to get to that point should indicate how much of a learning process this can be! Excited at the opportunity to work with this material, she felt hesitant to use it because it's so special and represents a big moment for herself as a hide tanner reclaiming this knowledge. In our conversation, she told me:

> I have this bag full of moose, smoked hide. I don't know. I'm just like, it's so precious to me that I need to find the time where I could just sit and be in Zen and just focus on it. But that's what I'm excited for…

Despite the break in knowledge, beadworkers like Mary and Jean have picked up the

practice and are reconnecting with ancestral knowledge that continues to run deep in families.

Leanna tanned her first hide with the help of her sister, Jean. Leanna mentioned her family's

connection to moose hide and the meaning it holds for both of them:

> We didn't find out until literally three years ago that my gookum tanned hides. When she
> was in Sioux Lookout, we visited her before she passed…my gookum never spoke
> English and when we were talking with the translator at the health place, my sister asked,
> "Can you ask gookum if she ever tanned hides?" and that lady translating was also from
> K[itchenamaygoosib] I[niniwag] and was like, "I can answer that question for you and
> yes, she did tan hides and she would scrape in the winter and I remember being a little
> kid watching her. And she would work-work-work so hard. Once it was done and
> smoked, she would take that hide [makes a whistling noise and an over-the-shoulder
> motion], put it over her shoulder, go inside the house, and she would start making her
> moccasins." Me and Jean had no idea. So, that was really emotional…It's just really
> beautiful that she's picking up this work that she was instinctively led to do – or maybe
> not so instinctively, but it kind of chose her – to get that validation to know that this is in
> our blood to do this, you know?

These conversations highlight how brain-tanned moose hide was once the norm in Anishinaabe

creative practice. Today, its use is limited because of the gap in material knowledge, highlighting

issues of access and affordability. This drives the motivation to learn and take up the practice for

some beaders, while for others, the extensive time and labour involved in processing hides

remains a deterrent. Still, all beaders recognize the quality and value of brain-tanned hides,

making it a highly sought after and prized material.

Sensuous Experience

The process of tanning a moose hide is labour-intensive and full of sensory experiences. I

want to describe it as sensuous because you're working with what was once a living animal,

essentially removing its skin, scraping off excess meat and fat, and using brains to process the

hide into workable leather. There are sights, sounds, smells, and sensations that are naturally part

of this process and not all of them are pleasant. At a recent beading symposium, a hide tanner

shared her experience of finding maggots and ticks while working with hides, making some

people in the audience squeamish. As a hide tanner, Jean has experienced this firsthand, but she

explained:

> I learned that I'm way stronger than I thought. I mean, like, I couldn't even handle the
> smell when I first started and now I'm completely immune to moose anything. Like, if
> there's some guts here or there's some maggots there, I'm good. Ticks? I'm completely
> fine with the entire process.

> My own first experience with scraping a moose hide was at Fort William First Nation's

4th annual hide camp. I had been invited by Jean and I spent three days observing the practice at

first and then helping to scrape and soften moose and deer hides. One of the things that surprised

and intrigued me as I was scraping this moose hide was the smell. With every pull of the scraper,

bits of skin and hair would be sent floating and for a moment, I considered how the smell came

from breathing in bits of moose. Being that close to the hide, you can see outlines where its veins

had been and where the spine met the skin. Working so closely, it is unmistakable that this

material came from a living breathing being. In my conversation with Jean, I mentioned my

experience and the intensity of working with an animal so intimately. Jean exclaimed:

> Absolutely it is! I'm scraping the inside and outside of an entire moose. You can't help
> but think about it. Where did it walk? What's it eating? You actually think about if it was
> a bull or a calf or a cow. Did it have babies? How old was it? You kind of imagine where
> it was in the water and the dogwood and the swamp…it's something special, that's for
> sure.

There is an intimate relationality happening through this process, where hide tanners and moose

are both transformed in the process. Although it's difficult to describe, she explained to me:

> I think this moose is doing work with me even though it's travelled somewhere else.
> There's stuff going on that I don't understand and I don't know how to put words to it but
> there's inner workings with hide tanning that are super strong.

As someone who has shifted her practice towards learning how to tan hides, Jean now feels an

intimate connection with the animal and its spirit.

Along with this spiritual or metaphysical aspect, there is an embodied knowing that takes place when tanning moose hide. Tanners know by sight, by feel, and by sound when to keep scraping and when to stop. At the end of my visit with Jean, we were standing in her studio space where she had multiple hides stacked in a corner (see Image 4). As she went through the stack, touching each hide, I asked her how a hide transforms from rawhide into leather. She described the sensory knowledge involved in this process, stating:

> You need to scrape. Wherever you feel it's really hard, you need to scrape the membrane off. It's like a glue so it'll keep your hide hard and if you don't scrape it all off, you're not going to get a soft hide. It's hard to tell but there's definitely a few places that still need to be scraped. This one needs scraping all over. I did this last winter. I freeze scraped it. This one is almost done – one more softening. You can hear that sound [she crinkles the hide in her hands], that cardboard-y kind of sound.

The final stage in hide tanning, after softening, is to smoke the hide using soft, crumbly, punky wood. Punky wood smoulders as it burns, providing an intense smoke, an important

Image 4. Jean In Her Studio. I took this photo of Jean at her home studio during our visit together. Her table was covered with an assortment of hide-tanning tools that she was organizing for an upcoming hide camp. In the corner, she had a pile of moose hides in various stages of the tanning process. Some needed softening and some were waiting to be re-smoked. During my visit, she pointed at the pile of hides and said, "This is all learning".

element in preserving the hide and ensuring it maintains its suppleness over time. It is what gives

brain-tanned hide its signature scent. During my visit with her, Jean tells me about a medicine

bag she had made for herself. She asks me, "Do you want to see it?" as she gets up from the

couch. On the way over to her workspace, she laughs and asks me, "Do you want to smell it? It's

really nice…" The scent of brain-tanned moose hide is both intensely familiar and hard to resist,

intoxicating in its pungency. Everyone I spoke to loves the smell of brain-tanned moose hide.

Cher, for example, commented, "It's beautiful. It smells so good." Mary spoke about being

reluctant to cut into her moose hide because it is so precious to her, and she says, "I just open the

bag and then I just end up sniffing it. That's as far as I get." For some, their experience with

brain-tanned hide is directly linked to childhood, memories, family, and home. For example,

Leanna told me:

> We've always been surrounded by beadwork. My Auntie made my sister and I some little
> bags…We didn't really use them, but it was always there…those days when we were
> able to go to our mom's house, that's when we'd be able to see more of the beaded stuff
> and the leatherwork. It was always done on moose hide… so you could smell, you know
> – the smell would just be really comforting and really nice.

What makes moose hide such a valued material is not just its smell or its ability to transport

makers to another time and place. It's in the feel, the pleasure of pulling a needle and thread

through it. Because Anna Fern has limited access to brain-tanned hide, she often uses

commercial leather in her work and, as she described, "beading on commercially tanned leather

is very difficult." She mentioned, "it's harder on your fingers and you break a lot of needles."

Beading or sewing with moose hide is a completely different experience. Cher told me that

sewing through moose hide is "like butter." Caitlyn was able to sum up well the reason why

brain-tanned hide is so highly valued amongst beadworkers:

> With commercial hide, it's limiting. It's so hard to put your needle through. So, imagine
> how much that limited the designs you did or the effort you put into it because it was hard

to do a flower. But with smoked hide, it's like butter. So now you have this whole canvas to be creative on and it's not limiting you. And so now with smoked hide, I can appreciate that. You have the freedom to explore, to do all these crazy cool things on, whereas with the store-bought ones you can't. And then also like with smoked hide, man, just the idea of where it comes from, the traditions, the practices, it makes it that much cooler.

These conversations demonstrate that brain-tanning a moose hide is an intimate, relational, and transformative practice between the animal and the hide tanner. Likewise, the fact that beaders have fond memories of this material linked to their childhood and loved ones shows how brain-tanned moose hide is more than mere material. It is a powerful marker of love, attentiveness, and care.

Surface and Symbol[26]: Technical and Symbolic Aesthetics

Part of the materiality of beadwork are the aspects that make it pleasing to behold. These aspects are present in the final beaded object (surface) and the imagery (symbol) it contains. The consideration of these two elements reflects both the technical nature of beading (creating surface) and its ability to communicate cultural metaphors and meaning (creating symbolism). This section focuses on both sides of this equation. First, I will share responses that consider what counts as "good" beadwork, or rather, responses that indicate the technical skills that define quality in the surface. Second, I will share responses that describe meaning and symbolism contained in beadwork. In my conversations with beaders, I often asked directly about how they design patterns and where they drew their inspiration from. The land was a common answer, reflecting the use of floral imagery that was common among all the beadworkers. Responses that specifically reflect relationality and personal meaning will be discussed in the next chapter, but

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[26] This subtitle is borrowed from a solo exhibition of Jean Marshall's work, curated by Suzanne Morrisette at the Craft Ontario Gallery in Toronto, ON in 2013.

here I wanted to describe, more generally, responses that dealt with meaning and metaphor found within Anishinaabe aesthetic traditions.

Surface as Technical Knowledge

During one of our beading circles, I asked the group: "How can you tell when a piece of beadwork is good?" and the unanimous answer was "flat, tight beads." Surface knowledge of beadwork as a completed object and knowing what qualifies as "good" beadwork is really about embodied knowledge. Anna Fern hints at this when she describes her grandmother's response to her work:

> When I actually started doing it on my own…she'd look at my work, you know, she'd just sit there and run her fingers over it. And, you know, she's seen how I started, right? And then she'd seen some of my work when it was done. Well, she was happy.

Here, Anna Fern indicates that quality beadwork can be discerned through touch, not just in how a final product looks. Mary shared that when she was first learning how to bead, her mother taught her more about the "technical part" of beading, stating:

> I redid my moccasins. I did my beadwork and she showed me really step-by-step and one-on-one. I'm really lucky for that one-on-one time with her because I was really able to learn and to really know what I'm trying to do with beads. Like, "Make sure your beadwork is nice and flat!" she's always reminding me. "You're still trying to squish your beads in there!"

Too many beads create bulges so the beadwork won't lie flat. It can also crowd the design, pulling patterns out of alignment. Beadworkers can be overly critical of their own work in this regard. For example, Mary described her grandmother's view of her own beadwork:

> She was super-humble about her beadwork. She never thought her bead work was – I don't know – I just remember wearing a pair of her moccasins that she beaded and she's like, "You still wear those? Just look at my beadwork! It's just all loose," and she was just really pointing everything out. I was like, "No, Nanny! Your beadwork's beautiful!"

I think this story is interesting because Mary described her grandmother as "super-humble" so her granny's description of her own work may not be true or accurate. In Anishinaabe teachings,

humility is important and it's undesirable to brag about one's own work or accomplishments, so I

wonder if that's what is happening here. Regardless, Mary's granny's description of her

beadwork as "loose" indicates that this is undesirable and not something to be proud of.

Another technical aspect that marks "good" beadwork is durability. Anna Fern mentioned

the quality of items being sold at craft sales, noting how some people will take shortcuts by

sewing decorative ribbons or trim onto fabric rather than beading onto leather to save time and

cut costs. As she stated:

> You see them now sewing with material, you know? Not doing the beading. And I've had
> to repair those. When they're sewing it onto hide and they don't understand the material, it
> frays. Then it starts splitting away from the hide, you know? Whereas that mitt would
> have lasted a lot longer if they hadn't used the fabric the way they did.

Implicit in this statement is the notion that handcrafted items should be made to last. Because

beadwork is often used to adorn functional pieces of clothing (i.e., mittens, moccasins, bags,

etc.), it's important that the completed item is able to withstand regular wear and tear. Anna Fern

continued:

> If you're changing your material like that, then you need to learn how to properly prepare
> the fabrics so that it won't fray on you…they need to be more aware of what happens to
> fabric over time. It won't last as long. So, I don't buy those…and I won't sell my stuff like
> that. If I'm making a pair of mitts, it'll be all hide or with fur. Some people will still want
> to sew on the melton and then add it on, whereas I'll still bead right on the hide. That's
> what my grandmother did. The thing is, it will last forever…Like, I had my
> grandmother's – I haven't lost one single bead off of her beading. And that's over 40
> years old! Right? And so if you're buying something now and people are trying to change
> their craft and make it more modern, sometimes those modern techniques aren't as
> durable.

Symbol as Cultural Knowledge

Anishinaabe beadwork is recognizable for its depiction of floral imagery. Scots-Lakota

scholar Carmen Robertson (2017) states, "interconnections between land, culture, and

community shape art process and aesthetics" (p. 14). This is evident in my conversations with

the beadworkers. For example, Ocean described drawing inspiration for her beadwork from her

home territory of Biigtigong:

> I have a lot of pictures of flowers from back home. Like, even when I'm in the bush, I'm
> always taking pictures of leaves, taking pictures of flowers that I come across. But I
> always try to reference back to the leaves and the flowers that I see at home. When I was
> starting this set though, I was a little ignorant. Like I didn't know what this flower was.
> So I was just beading it and it's – it's actually a lady slipper and I did it in blue, but that's
> because my colours are blue. So, I want to say it's 100% ignorant but it's also me
> represented as a lady slipper.

She admitted to not knowing the names of specific flowers, but her patterns reflect stylized

versions of wildflowers specific to her home community. Jean also takes inspiration from plants.

She showed me a bandolier bag she was working on and I asked about some of the floral patterns

she was incorporating into the design. She said, "It's not exactly looking like anything at all, but

it's all plant-inspired for sure," pointing out how some shapes remind her of rosehips and another

shape makes her think of both an apple and a vagina (see Image 5). Mary also finds inspiration in

nature but takes a spontaneous approach to her work:

Image 5. Example of Stylized Beaded Florals. This is a detail photo of Jean's work-in-progress, featuring a stylized flower pattern she said reminds her of "an apple and a vagina."

I didn't even plan any of the colours and plan the design. I just went as I went along…I'll be mostly inspired by just different stuff that's going on in my life or something I've seen on a trail from harvesting or walking around, visiting.

For Shannon and Caitlyn, their exploration of Anishinaabe floral designs is directly tied to Anishinaabe identity and relationships to land. Caitlyn explained to me:

When I started with powwows too, these other tribes seem to have like a hold on identity. In the sense that they knew who they were. They knew where they came from and they represented it so well in how their beadwork came out or their regalia or designs.

[In Santa Fe] …seeing like the strength that they had in there or the connection that they had to their culture really inspired me to do the same. When I went out there, it was only then that I could appreciate Anishinaabeg floral – that I could appreciate the evolution of it and how it came to be for Ojibwe peoples because of our land, right? They were inspired by what they saw around them and that informed their art practices. And so, seeing those connections of beadworkers out there, I was like, "Oh God, I feel so lucky. Maybe I should dig deeper into my culture," you know, where I come from and so forth.

Caitlyn is describing aesthetic traditions that are grounded within specific geographies of place. Having recently moved to the Prairies at the time of this research, I understand how specific territory influences and shapes artistic practice. Caitlyn described her own experience with relocating to a landscape vastly different from the boreal forest she was raised in. When friends asked her if she'd permanently move to Santa Fe, she told me:

My answer is always going to be "no" and it's literally because of the landscape. It's a desert there. It's in the mountains. There are no trees. Well, there's trees, but not like here…I didn't see any lakes because they're really dried out there. Even the air quality is different…Even if you offered me a house, I still wouldn't feel comfortable living there. It wouldn't feel like home to me.

It makes sense, then, that each beadworker is inspired by the lands they call home. This extends beyond simply being inspired by local plants and includes Anishinaabe cosmological beliefs and symbolism derived from other parts of nature. For example, Shannon described creating a sense of balance in her work when designing floral patterns. She explained how she tries to incorporate four distinct elements in her work to create sense of balance and stated:

They talk about how there's four components to beadwork and so floral beaders, you have your vines, you have your flowers and you have your leaves and then you have your buds and berries. So, when I create a design most times…I always think about those four components when I design beadwork and try to incorporate it all in there together.

Image 6. Example of Beadwork Incorporating Flowers, Buds, Leaves, and Vines. This medallion made by Shannon shows the balanced use of flowers, buds, leaves, and vines in the design

Shannon went on further to discuss the history of Anishinaabe beadwork patterns, describing how balance between natural elements was an inherent part of Anishinaabe aesthetic practices:

what I learned was that, pre-contact, we were weavers and so a lot of our designs were actually very geometric because of that, right? When they created things, like…anything woven. It was often done in three components so we have the water, the Earth, and then the sky. So, everything that was created always had those things in mind. There is a sense of balance in the things that were created…

One of the patterns that is frequently used in beadwork is known as an otter slide or an otter track pattern. It is one of the oldest line motifs found in Anishinaabe beadwork (Anderson, 2017). It's a series of diamond and elongated hexagons strung together that mimic the imprint of otter tracks in the snow (see Image 7). Zigzags are another popular motif used in linework. These patterns are nearly always done with white beads. Shannon described how these patterns relate to one another and explained to me:

If you look at the otter slide, this design came from seeing an otter slide in the snow. This [zigzag] design here represents thunder, and this [wavy line] here represents a serpent or water being, like a water panther…So, if you look at these, you would have your water represented down here. And then you have your otter slide which is the land and then the sky is the thunder… they talk about those three tiers. So, all of these designs, you can see them in the really old work.[27]

Image 7. Side-By-Side Comparison Of Two Bandolier Bags. The image on the left is in the public domain (Rhode Island School of Design Museum, 2024) and is an example of a historic Anishinaabe bandolier bag made between 1875-1899. The linework around the edge demonstrates the ottertail motif or "otter slide" that is common in Anishinaabe beadwork. On the right is one of Shannon's pieces utilizing a mix of vintage and contemporary Czech seed beads. Her beadwork is done on brain-tanned hide and the bag itself is constructed using black velveteen.

Shannon also discussed how there are specific teachings associated with these patterns. She

stated:

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[27] For more examples of the patterns Shannon describes, see Anderson (2017) and Willmott (2021).

> if I wanted to bead this image, there are teachings out there that say that I should pair it with something to do with the Thunderbird…so again, it's like creating that balance because these two, they work together. And so like, it's more than just flowers…there's also all of this that connects to beings and spirits and things like that.

These conversations demonstrate that while many of these patterns are informed by close relationships to land, they also reflect Anishinaabe philosophies about order, balance, and power in nature.

Sociocultural Construction of Beads and Their Material Agency

The word for "bead" in Anishinaabemowin is manidoominens. In the plural, beads are manidoominensag. The literal translation of this word is "*little spirit berry*." The word is also considered to be animate within Anishinaabe grammar rules. This makes me think about beads and their agency as a material. When I visited with beadworkers, they often described beads and beadwork pieces as living things. If I go back to my original question around what we learn from beadwork, I think this perception of animacy must be part of that learning. This section focuses on responses that describe the agency of beads, moose hide, and beadwork, first by sharing findings that describe beadwork as "alive," then by looking at responses that describe taking care of material objects, and finally, by sharing results that speak to intuitive or spiritual ways of knowing with and through beads.

"The Piece Becomes Alive"

In creating a piece of beadwork, the physical object takes on a life of its own. When I sat down with Caitlyn at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery where she works as a curatorial assistant, I shared with her a story from when I was working on my Master's research with Batchewana First Nation. I told her about a traditional healer and Elder in the community who visited with items in the Royal Ontario Museum. He described that experience as "heavy" from the weight of

all those material objects. I asked her if she ever experienced that feeling while working with

gallery collections. She replied:

> I can appreciate that feeling that he felt. Even in this collection – we can go in this collection and still feel that heaviness and it's just because we understand it different. We know better.

She contrasted the way Anishinaabe people understand beadwork with Euro-Western

perspectives, saying:

> We have a different understanding of these items. It's not just an item that was made. There's so much more. The land that it came from, the materials; they kind of are alive.

> This idea of objects being alive was reiterated by others when I spoke with them. Leanna

explained some of her thinking behind this perspective by stating:

> I don't know if you ever feel this when you're making, but whenever I make things, I'm usually by myself and, of course, I could sit around and bead with other people, for sure, but for the most part I'm by myself and I really like that. Everything becomes quiet inside my body and in my mind and it's almost like what I'm beading becomes this way of communicating with our ancestors and *the piece becomes alive* [emphasis added]. It becomes a part of me but it's not a part of me and maybe I'm the thing that's making it and I don't really know why.

There are several things happening here. First, she describes how a piece becomes alive through

connection and communication with ancestors. Second, she describes herself as a conduit

because she is "the thing" that's making it, hinting that there is some force working through her

when she is creating and that sometimes things are made without understanding why, but the

reason may be revealed later. Leanna continued:

> …a lot of the items I've beaded have been for giveaway or ceremony and it's like, "Should I be documenting it?" When you make it, it's just like, "Okay, bye!" But there's something about when you make something. There's life in it and I think that's why it feels so good to give it away. I'm hoping I'm giving something good to someone else.

> Leanna and I also discussed how the act of creating is about more than assembling string

and glass beads together and how it's really putting a piece of yourself out into the world.

Leanna agreed, saying: "There's so much of people's own energy that goes into the work and I think that really gets felt." Mary also described how a person's energy gets put into the work. As she finished talking about a hide-tanning camp she had completed with Pays Plat First Nation youth, she stated:

> that's what I told those kids in Pays Plat. When we're working on this moosehide, we have to be careful with our feelings and our thoughts. While we're working on it, you have to put good vibes in your work because you never know who's going to have it next. Because your energy is going to be put in that work and it's going to be carried on and passed on.

"To Be Maintained, Tended to, Cared for"[28]

Hand in hand with this idea of beadwork possessing a life of its own is the notion of needing to care for and tend to material objects. Shannon described how items used in ceremony are treated, saying, "We treat them as if they're alive. We care for them and things like that." As an example, Leanna was heavily involved with *Walking With Our Sisters*, a collaborative, community art installation that honoured murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls (MMWIG). The installation was composed of over 1500 beaded moccasin vamps that toured across the country, bringing awareness to the issue and providing space for communities to witness, grieve, and heal. Each installation included ceremony as a way to care for the vamps and the work that they were doing. Leanna described what that looked like:

> when we did *Walking with Our Sisters*, I would always dance for the vamps. So we would set them up – like four days of installation and then before the opening ceremonies, I would dance for them. Usually, it would be by myself or with one or two other people there. But it was just super-super-private. In Batoche, at the last installation, it was outside and they had the vamps going from the top of the hill down to the Saskatchewan River and I danced all the way down and all the way up for those vamps.

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[28] Tuck, et al., 2012, p. 11.

This orientation towards objects as "alive" departs from Euro-Western understandings of art and artifact. This is where colonial hauntings come into play because so much Indigenous cultural history is housed in museums and gallery spaces. For Caitlyn, understanding that things have spirit within Anishinaabe worldviews often bumps up against Euro-Western values in how collections are managed. She described her own experience:

> I'm always in informing mode. I'm always stepping in on things when I feel like it's not true to these values that we have. So, there's a lot of that, but then also for me, I try to go into these collections with a different mind frame. Like, I'm going to say "hello" to these items or I'm going to advocate as much as I can for these items. So that's a way that I bring those values here. I'm always in some form of fighting mode where I'm just advocating and making sure that they get the respect that they deserve and need…I'm learning a lot as I'm working in these institutions. I'm learning how to use my voice to be strong in my convictions, I guess. It's a learning experience.

Caitlyn also expressed a hesitancy in using items she has made due to what she calls "that museum mind frame." I asked about the original purpose behind the bag she shared with me (see Image 2), if it was created solely for display in a gallery or if it was intended for someone to carry. She explained:

> The idea was obviously for display because Jean had asked for an exhibition, but I knew I wanted to keep the bag in the family…part of me is like, "I used all this old stuff! I have to protect it!" but I have to get out of that museum mind frame, right? Like it can't be touched or it can't be used. So again, it goes back to me saying I have to leave what I learned at the [museum] door and that this deserves to be used.

Part of caring for these items, then, is using them for what they were intended. Beadwork "deserves" to be used. On the other side of that conversation is how beadwork is cared for within gallery settings. As an assistant curator, Caitlyn shared some behind-the-scene details about the installation, *Radical Stitch*, the biggest exhibition of contemporary beadwork from across North America that was set to open a few weeks after we met and explained:

with *Radical Stitch*, I think all of them are plinthed[29] and it's because people want to
touch it. They have that natural gravitation. Like, they've got to touch it. There's nothing
wrong with that but for this show, because these are really expensive works and the
artists aren't nearby, they're going to be covered which is unfortunate. Especially because
I feel like plinths have a weird layer where you can't see detail…you can appreciate [the
work] but not so much as it would be [out in the open] ...that's another museum thing.

Intuitive Knowing

Indigenous scholars acknowledge that physical and spiritual realms are indivisible within

Indigenous thought and that knowledge can originate from dreams, visions, and ceremonies

(Geniusz, 2009; Hart, 2007; L. Simpson, 2014). That there is some spiritual or intuitive element

happening when a person sits down to bead was evident in my conversations. I call this section

"intuitive knowing" because the conversations revolved around the idea that the beader is a

conduit, mediating this flow of energy through their work. This idea was already hinted at when

Leanna described herself as "the thing that does the beadwork" and I wanted to explore that more

deeply in this section.

As described earlier by Leanna and Mary, there is a belief that beaders should bring

positive thoughts to their work because that energy becomes part of the created object. Cher had

a different take on this teaching by acknowledging how the act of creating beadwork helps to

process difficult emotions and can help move a person from a negative place to a more positive

one. As she shared:

> When you're by yourself, especially doing beadwork, you can notice your thoughts more.
> And so, I was never told to sit down and think positive. It's just the goodness of it that
> brings out inspiration; it brings out the good thoughts. But also…it's part of your healing.
> So, I think it's okay to be in your negative space and to have this help you. I think the
> intentions – like I said, that one night I was beading and I was thinking about my
> daughter. I was so inspired and it was through that beadwork and through the thoughts
> about beadwork, that it came. It's not something where I said, "Okay, tonight I want to

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[29] A plinth is a column or platform used as a base to display art objects in gallery spaces. Displaying works of art on
a plinth dictates how people view and interact with a piece. For this exhibition, pieces were displayed on plinths not
only to elevate the work to eye-level, but also encased in plexiglass as a protective measure.

think of something positive," you know? It just came. It's part of a process…. I bead through it because it's going to help me get out of that feeling.

Cher later stated, "When you think about it, [beading] just does what it's supposed to do."

There's an element of "trusting in the process" in Cher's approach. She also described not seeing or not knowing what she's going to make but trusting her hands will know what to do and letting her body be a guide in the making:

I like exploring with my hand because a lot of times I don't see what I'm going to make. It's my hand that does it. [When I come up with] a design that I do for my beadwork, I just start drawing and it's not something thought up most of the time.

Leanna made similar comments when she showed me a skirt she had created for Derelicte, an arts-fashion show organized by Definitely Superior Art Gallery in Thunder Bay (see Image 8):

Image 8. "Her Body is Ceremony" (2018). This skirt was created by Leanna and the beadwork is meant to represent a womb. Red beads that run down the front symbolize menstrual blood. Much of Leanna's work is concerned with Indigenous women and exploring relationships with the body as a sacred vessel.

When I'm doing it, I'm not really aware sometimes of what or why I'm doing it. I just instinctively know, "This is red or this represents the sacred blood coming out."

What Cher and Leanna shared here could be described as creative freedom, but the specific use of phrases like "instinctively knowing" and "the hand just goes" indicates that something beyond intellect is guiding the creative process. As previously mentioned, Mary learned the technical aspects of beadwork from her mother, but she says the more spiritual side came from her own engagement with beadwork as a practice. Cher also described spirituality as an inherent part of beadwork, stating:

I also believe that when we do this kind of work, it's a spiritual thing too. It's like spirit. There's that full aspect of it, right?

Whether we call it spirituality, "intuitive knowing," or material agency, these conversations indicate that beaders come to know with and through beads.

A small comment that Cher made during our visit revolved around beads and their ability to communicate with us. At the time, she stated: "The beads will let me know by making a mistake." This comment was couched within a larger exchange when we discussed beads and meditative awareness:

[Melissa]: You know, that spiritual side of it, right?... I found that when I have talked with other beaders about it, that's a common thing that people say…And I think part of that's because you're making things for other people and it's like you can feel the energy that you put into it. And I know too, sometimes I'll be sitting there beading or it's like I'll find sometimes I'm going to sit down and bead and then everything goes wrong. Like, your thread tangles. You can't find your needles – one time, I dropped so many beads and I was like, "Okay, I get it. I get the point! I'll stop now."

[Cher]: Yeah. Isn't that something! Isn't that cool? ...Is it because it's meditative and you're more aware when you're beading? …beading is meditative, it's like you're sitting with yourself… when you're in meditation, you're in awareness.

In their own way, then, beads demonstrate an agency that allows beadworkers to know when to stop or when to take a break. Cher describes this as meditative awareness and sitting with

intention in this exchange, pointing out how beadworkers and beads communicate with one another.

Discussion: "Even When You Look At That Bag, There's So Much More…"

At the beginning of this chapter, I stated that I wished to explore beadwork as an embodied material. I wanted to know how we, as beaders, come to know through our engagement with materials and how we *become* in relation to the work itself. Interestingly, two publications came out in 2024 at the same time as I was writing this research that explored related ideas and came to similar conclusions that I had drawn on my own. The first is an exhibition catalogue for *Radical Stitch*, edited by Farrell-Racette et al. (2024). The second is a new book, edited by Carmen Robertson, Judy Anderson, and Katherine Boyer (2024), containing conversations and essays that examine perspectives, understandings, and philosophies about beading on the Prairies. In many ways, I feel like these editors, artists, and authors have beat me to the punch. Nevertheless, my work remains important because it supports many of the conversations taking place within these texts, adding insights from an Anishinaabe context.

There are many ways in which embodied, sensory, and relational engagement are evident in the conversations I had with each beader. This discussion synthesizes the common threads woven throughout this chapter that helps us better understand: 1) beadwork as a sensory/embodied experience that pushes against Euro-Western understandings of art; 2) the role that "tradition" plays in contemporary beadwork practice; and 3) how beadwork becomes animated through a network of relational knowledges.

Beadwork as Sensory/Embodied Experience

In the early spring of 2022, the MacKenzie Art Gallery opened its newest exhibition titled, *Radical Stitch,* curated by Sherry Farrell-Racette, Cathy Mattes [Michif], and Michelle LaVallee [Anishinaabe]. I mentioned previously that this was the largest exhibition of

contemporary beadwork to date. It was also the first to include beadwork artists from across North America, and the first to tour internationally. I was privileged to be able to attend the opening when the exhibition travelled to the Thunder Bay Art Gallery in the Fall of 2023, shortly after I had visited with all the beadworkers involved in this research. When I walked into the gallery, I nearly wept at the sheer amount of beadwork present in that space. It was the first time I was seeing a gallery full of beadwork with names and affiliations of artists properly attributed to their work. So often, beadwork has been viewed as an ethnographic curiosity, collected from our communities by collectors, anthropologists, and the like, only to display it without acknowledgement of its maker or its story. My immediate reaction was wanting to touch all of it, but pieces were kept on pedestals, behind plexiglass, or cordoned off in such a way that it was clear touching was not welcomed. As Caitlyn had said, it was a protective measure given the value of pieces within the exhibit. While the exhibition was a first and important in many ways, this treatment of beadwork as a primarily visual medium is reflective of a wider Euro-Western approach to art objects.

Robertson (2024) states that museums and galleries still tend to emphasize art objects as finished products, viewed through a Western lens that values fixity and ownership. Stewart (1999) observes that museums are essentially realms dominated by sight, rarely attending to other senses. Consequently, artifacts on display are predominantly viewed as visual symbols, diminishing recognition of their other sensory dimensions. Robertson (2024) asserts that this "nearly universal" (p. 124) perspective, rooted as it is in Western philosophical traditions, can often overlook Indigenous perspectives that emphasize relational, and more expansive, ways of understanding art. What we don't often pay attention to as observers are the threads, both physical and metaphorical, that connect and give shape to the final piece.

Writing about "the sensorial dimensions of Indigenous artifacts and the sensorial typologies of European collectors" (p. 199), Classen and Howes (2006) interrogate the sensory values of an artifact. They argue that these values "do not reside in the artifact alone but in its social use and environmental context" (p. 200). This dynamic web of sensuous and social meaning is broken when an artifact is removed from its cultural setting and inserted within the visual symbol system of the museum" (p. 200). In the museum, the artifact is situated within a different visual and interpretive framework, which often fails to capture the full range of its original sensory and cultural experiences. By framing beadwork using Euro-Western conceptions of "art" that emphasize the primacy of visual perception, we lose out on expansive relationality and other ways of knowing through these objects. This privileging of the visual also comes with baggage related to colonialism and concepts of ownership. Wrightson's (2015) examination of the role museums play in perpetuating and opposing settler colonialism in Canada found that:

> Once objects are wrapped in the languages of commodity, preservation and cultural property, it is difficult to disentangle them and resituate the objects within traditional frames of collective property, sacred ritual, or kinship relations. (p. 72)

This was evidenced in my conversation with Caitlyn when she describes "getting out of that museum mind frame," reminding herself that these items "need to be used." Beadwork thus becomes a "contact zone" between Indigenous and Western conceptualizations and valuations. Removed from the context of living, breathing communities, beadwork within the popular imagination becomes something for others to consume (visually) without understanding or appreciating the work it does within Anishinaabe worldviews.

Robinson's (2020) scholarship on hungry listening is one of the few works that deal with sensory perception from an Indigenous perspective. He conceptualizes hungry listening through

the Stó:lō word for "settler" which can be translated as "starving person." He uses the term "shxwelitemelh" to refer to "a settler's starving orientation" (p. 2) to juxtapose settler colonial perceptions with Indigenous sensory engagement. He attempts to trouble what he understands as extractive listening practices, and I want to extend this thinking to the visual extractivism taking place with art and craft material objects. In an interview with Naomi Klein (2013), Leanne Simpson described the extractive nature of settler colonialism, stating: "Extraction and assimilation go together. Colonialism and capitalism are based on extracting and assimilating. My land is seen as a resource. My relatives in the plant and animal worlds are seen as resources. My cultural and knowledge is a resource" (para. 11). The reason extraction is significant in this conversation is because "the act of extraction removes all of the relationships that give whatever is being extracted meaning…extracting is stealing – it is taking without consent, without thought, care, or even knowledge of the impacts that extraction has on other living things in the environment" (para. 11). If we consider sites like museums, galleries, and art collections as sites of learning, we also need to consider how works housed in these institutions have been extracted from the communities and contexts that give them meaning. We also need to consider how the presentation of Indigenous art within these spaces shapes what we learn, how we understand, and, ultimately, value objects like beadwork.

In discussing extractive listening, Robinson (2020) suggests shifting towards understanding listening not just as a passive reception of sound, but as an embodied and deeply felt experience that involves encountering differences in power dynamics. He argues that listening is not merely auditory, but also involves tactile (haptic) and spatial (proprioceptive) dimensions that highlight how listeners physically engage with and respond to the sounds they hear. The moment of contact between listening body and listened-to sound is where listeners

experience and negotiate power imbalances that may be embedded in those sounds. I feel a resonance here and hope I have demonstrated that beadwork is not just a visual medium meant to satisfy the hungry gaze of settler spectators, but rather, a multi-sensory experience rooted in expansive relational-materiality. It has a smell. It has weight and texture. It has movement. It gains meaning through engagement, interaction, and touch. To better "read" beadwork we need to understand that it too involves tactile, olfactory, and spatial dimensions that extend the visual interface, shaping how viewers engage and respond to the completed work.

The Role of Tradition in Contemporary Beadwork Practices

The findings presented throughout this chapter demonstrate that the material world of beaded objects remains embedded within and responsive to cultural knowledge that continues to inform their meaning and relevance in contemporary Indigenous communities. It is true that some of this knowledge has been impacted by colonialism. For example, my conversations revealed a significant generational knowledge gap when we discussed moose hide tanning and smaller gaps around the meaning behind certain designs, motifs, and patterns. Shannon, for example, expressed feeling shame when she didn't have deep knowledge about Anishinaabe floral designs. Despite these gaps in knowledge, beadworkers I spoke to demonstrate a commitment to learning and engaging with historic practices. For Jean, this resulted in a years-long learning journey with moose hide. Shannon has dedicated years to researching Woodland art and rekindling Anishinaabe floral designs. Caitlyn studied as a contemporary beadwork artist but her practice is deeply informed by Anishinaabe traditions.

What was interesting to me was the way beadworkers often described their work in terms of a binary between "traditional" and "contemporary." Some materials were considered traditional while others were not. Some patterns or designs were considered contemporary

because they strayed from historic or "traditional" aesthetic considerations. Beadwork may be considered a "traditional" practice because it reaches back hundreds of years. However, Doxtator (1995) argues that the traditional/contemporary binary is false in that all "traditional" work is really an expression of cultural change. She asserts that tradition is the repetitive engagement and interpretation of cultural metaphors through collective community and individualized processes. Beadwork, and the technical and aesthetic skills that go into creating it, therefore exemplifies significant cultural knowledge that unites generations of makers. Doxtator explains how objects retain knowledge, stating:

> I have been given baskets, and like many other Native women I have relatives who have made these things as part of their economic survival. In many families the knowledge of the processes involved in making baskets, beadwork, quillwork and other "traditional" activities have been passed down from one generation to another. Each object contains memories of the person who made it, the knowledge of how to gather and prepare materials, the prayers and songs, the philosophies and metaphors for making sense of the world. (p. 15)

This retention of knowledge is clear in my conversations with each beader as their memories, stories, histories, and teachings were shared with me. When beaders create work using "traditional" materials like moose hide, velveteen, and antique beads or design patterns that incorporate "traditional" motifs and aesthetic choices, they are doing more than re-creating or connecting to the past. Rather, their work asserts the ongoing, lasting, and vibrant cultural and physical presence of Anishinaabe people.

Doxtator (1995) states that beads are metaphors that:

can evoke many meanings for those who create and view them and they are both

grounded in the idea that thought is primarily spatial, that is, that ideas like spiritual

power can be embodied and exist in concrete physical form such as in objects, signs,

animals, plants, trees, people…if "tradition" or valued knowledge is made up of these

visual and concrete metaphors and our varied interpretations of them, then continuity

depends not upon exact sameness of form or interpretation, but on the process of

continued interaction with these powerful cultural metaphors. (p. 17)

The beadworkers included in this study are therefore simultaneously "contemporary" in the way

they interpret the world that is here and now and "traditional" for their continued engagement

with the metaphors embodied in beads and beadwork.

Beadwork as an Animated Force

A'Llerio (1999) explored the meaning of Anishinaabe crafted objects using

transformative philosophy as a methodological framework in her Master's thesis. From her

interviews with artists and craftspeople, she similarly found that crafted objects are perceived as

living entities within the spiritual matrix of the Anishinaabe life-world. Moreover, these objects

bear cultural significance, and artisans create with a heightened spiritual awareness. Echoing

Jean's experience of working with moose hide, one of A'Llerio's participants described his own

feelings about how "the deer is there helping him, giving him directions" (p. 106). Another of

A'Lerio's participants described beading as a flow of energy, stating: "It's the flow of energy

from the hide, the design, and through me—circular—that lets the design flow. From the leaf

comes something else and it moves outward" (p. 106). This too resonates with sentiments shared

in my own conversations with the beadworkers, particularly Cher's words about how "the hand

just goes" and Leanna entering a flow state when creating. Nêhiyaw artist Judy Anderson and

Métis artist Audie Murray (2024) make similar statements that reflect the animacy and agency of beads, like "the beads claimed me" (p. 47) as an act of agency and that "the beads will let them know they should walk away" (pp. 48-50) when negativity impedes the creative process.

Understanding art or craft as an embodied, sensory experience is important for disrupting dominant Euro-Western perspectives of what art *is*. Approached in this way, the material world of beadwork becomes more than an aesthetic practice but encompasses an act of co-creation and reciprocal creativity. As mentioned previously, both the hide tanner and moose are transformed through the process of hide-tanning. Beadworkers similarly are shaped by and give shape to their beaded creations. Robertson (2024) says:

> Knowing beads as active agents – as kin we visit with – opens fresh ways to contemplate beadwork for many who encounter it in the gallery for the first time. Setting aside associations of finished objects, the process of sharing knowledge through the communal ceremony of making and visiting shifts beads from things to beings. (pp. 123-124)

Conclusion

Part of my reasoning behind choosing art-based methods for this research is because of its ability to reveal/open/consider other ways of knowing, beyond the intellectual. I wanted to pay attention to the ways that beadworkers talked about their practice, including the emotions they experience while working, the sensations, sounds, smells, and sights that are inherently part of this practice, and the material considerations like why they choose certain materials or techniques over others. Because the end result is a material object, it's easy to focus on the physical and technical aspects of learning, but how do you get from beads and thread and a needle to a completed project and what is experienced along the way? I wanted to consider more than just intellectual ways of knowing. I wanted to know about physicality and sensuousness. I

also wanted to know if spirituality and emotion played a role in how beadworkers think about, understand, and make sense of their work.

In this chapter, I've reported on material expertise and considerations that involve the physical aspects of beadwork. My conversations with the beadworkers reveal that there is a wealth of knowledge contained in beadwork as a practice. There is the material history of beads and how they are tied to Anishinaabe aesthetic practices informed by metaphysical beliefs and philosophies. There is the practical knowledge involved in hide-tanning that is being reclaimed within Indigenous communities and the sensory experiences that go along with that. There are the stories and teachings embedded within traditional motifs and a connection to land expressed through floral designs. There is an adherence to "tradition" even when contemporary techniques and materials are used. While the material expertise is a significant part of beadwork, there is also an emotional and spiritual element. It is also important to note that knowing beadwork in this way comes through repetitive engagement and intentional practice. Sherry Farrell-Racette (2024) states that:

> the emotional and spiritual aspects of beading could not be experienced by students struggling to manage their thread and pick up beads. Skill development was a prerequisite, and we had to move beyond frustration and the desire to give up. (p. 152)

There cannot be an emotional and spiritual understanding without material expertise. These knowledges co-exist together and beadworkers are in a state of always-becoming-expert by learning with and through beads. The emotional aspect of beadwork will be explored more fully, along with considerations of relationality and futurity in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Love Languages and Otherwise: Beadwork as Indigenous Futurity

My second research question asks how Anishinaabe beadworkers engage with conceptions of "Otherwise" worlds through their work. I wanted to know if, and how, colonialism played a role in their practice and what future dreams, visions, and realities were being manifested through their work. The previous chapter dealt with the material aspects and cultural knowledge of beadwork. In this chapter, I explore some of the emotional and political aspects through two overarching themes: "relationality" and "embodying otherwise." I present these themes together in one chapter because I believe they inform one another and overlap in many ways.

First, I begin by considering how beaders understand and engage with the concept of colonialism. I do this in order to provide context for the conversations that will be shared throughout this chapter. Second, I explore the theme of beadwork as a relational practice. I examine how beaders view their work in relation to their families, their communities, and themselves. Third, I explore how beaders engage with concepts of otherwise through their practice. That section shares responses that describe acts of resurgence and refusal by beadworkers that point towards Indigenous futurity. At the end of the chapter, I discuss the findings in relation to literature to further expand upon themes of righteous anger, refusal, and practices of intimate care as important tools for resurgence and resistance.

Contextualizing Resurgence and Futurity

Overwhelmingly, a sentiment expressed by beadworkers was that they lacked knowledge or understanding, or felt like something was missing and had to actively seek it out. I originally labelled this as "not knowing" and "wanting to know," two codes that I thematically categorized under "colonialism's impact." Thus far in my data-based chapters, I've largely managed to avoid discussing colonialism, but it's important to contextualize it in relation to the conversations

shared throughout this chapter to move from an individualistic to a systemic analysis. After all, there are larger reasons for "not knowing" than simple ignorance or personal failings, and there are more complex motivations behind "wanting to know" than individual curiosity that ought to be named. Martineau (2015) asserts that:

> we cannot conceive Indigenous creativity apart from its embeddedness within specific regimes of power and sociopolitical and historical contexts that continue to be shaped by continued colonialism, neoliberal capitalism, and Empire. Our creative practices…offer us strategic techniques to engage and respond to the colonizing logic of systems that seek to subjugate and dispossess us of our lands, agency, culture and ways of being. (pp. 279-280)

Engaging with colonialism becomes necessary here to demonstrate why the actions taken up by beaders are significant and shows why attention to Indigenous futurity is such an imperative.

A Serious Transmission Problem

It's well-documented that assimilationist policies like residential schooling, the 60's Scoop, the imposition of religion, Eurocentric education systems, and the purposeful attack on First Nation languages has greatly impacted the transmission of Indigenous knowledge today (Barman, et al. 1986; Battiste, 1998; RCAP, 1996; TRC, 2015). Simpson (2004) makes it clear that: "The forces of cultural genocide, colonization, and colonial policy perpetuated over the last several centuries by successive occupying settler governments is responsible for the current state of Indigenous Knowledge" (p. 375). In Chapter 5, I describe the material knowledge gap when discussing moose hide tanning, but it was also prevalent in my conversations around cultural knowledge, identity, and community.

Every beadworker spoke about a lack of knowledge within their families, attributing that to various reasons. Mary explained that her mother was part of the 60's Scoop and that her mother didn't have a connection to her cultural identity until after she married as a result of that experience. Shannon described growing up in a community that was heavily influenced by Christianity and that this translated to a lack of cultural practices like powwows and ceremonies. These policies and influences led to a lot of disruption in the transfer of knowledge, leading to the beadworkers' sense of "not knowing." For example, Cher stated:

> I've always been curious, not curious, but interested in doing the things that our ancestors have done. Because, you think about, like you said, colonialism, right? We don't get to do those things. We don't know those things. We lost a lot. The drive is always there to learn new things and to be a part of new things.

Another example is when Anna Fern described the intergenerational disruptions that happened within her family:

> my mom never learned as a child. She lost her mother while she was away for residential school when she was about six. So, she doesn't really remember any type of relationship with her mother – just knowing that she came back from school during the summer and that [her mother] was gone. So, a lot of those things that my grandmother did was all lost… a lot of those things are broken and discontinued; things that my mom would have learned, right? And beading was one of them…So when I came along, my dad really wanted to make sure that I learned. So as soon as I was ready for school, that's when he decided it's time for me to go sit with my grandmother.

Several beaders framed this gap as knowledge being lost, as lines of transmission being broken, or traditions being discontinued, and they are not alone. Simpson (2004) points out that the lack of cultural knowledge and search for identity has often been described in the literature using words like disconnection and loss. However, in one of our group conversations, Jean cautioned against describing our knowledge as something that is lost. She and Mary had recently come back from a hide-tanning camp in Biigtigong, along with another hide-tanner. Jean recalled the conversation with her mom that took place on the drive back:

> We need to be really careful about when we're talking about these things. When people say to you, "Oh, you're practicing a lost art form. Well, good for you for bringing it back." You know, tell them to fuck off because it was never lost. People say it to me all the time – "It's a lost art form." Nothing about our culture has been lost at all. I don't think anything has been lost. It's just that we need to work really hard to bring things back to life. Things just went to sleep and my mom said the word "dormant." Things have just been dormant. It's like a housefly, how they kind of go to sleep for a bit and then they wake up and they come back to life. I feel like that's what's happening to our people right now.

If we believe that these knowledge practices are broken, or discontinued, it is easy to lament their loss and not take further action. Considering our knowledge practices "dormant," however, changes the narrative to one that centers both our right and our responsibilities to cultural knowledge.

Refusing Colonialism

As I mentioned earlier, when I went to visit the folks who participated in this study, I had it in mind to ask each of them about their own understanding of colonialism in relation to the work that they do. My intention was not to focus on colonialism-as-damage, but rather to explore whether beadworkers consider its implications and what significance it might lend to their work. In most cases, the response was simply, "I don't think about it." That's not to say that they aren't aware of colonialism or the ways it influences our lived experiences. The narratives shared above are clear demonstrations of how colonialism is woven into the fabric of their lives. During one of our conversations, a relative joked with us, saying, "Don't forget to talk about your intergenerational trauma!" We all laughed at the time because this sort of humour is recognized as part of being Anishinaabe.[30] We are all aware that colonialism exists and that it colours our

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[30] Paula Gunn Allen (1986) writes: "Humor is a widely used means of dealing with life among Indians. Indian gatherings are marked by laughter and jokes, many of which are directed at the horrors of history, at the continuing impact of colonization, and at the biting knowledge living as an exile in one's own land necessitates" (p. 158). See also Leddy (2018) for the use of humour in Indigenous pedagogy.

existence. However, when it comes to their creative practice, most beadworkers simply chose not to explicitly engage with the concept.

Some of the reasoning for this refusal to centre colonialism in their work is that it is a foreign concept that has been imposed upon us. Anna Fern talked about colonization as just one of many labels that have been applied to Indigenous peoples over the years:

> When I think about those words, colonization or even decolonization, I don't see it as being a part of my work or as an act of anything, because the way I learned was from my grandmother. And I just think that to me, I started learning to bead before those words were even on the radar, right?...To me, it just doesn't apply.…I think basically that's how I view it. I don't see it as a real act of trying to place my work in that frame; that way of thinking.…I find that we're using very academic and, you know, white man's words to describe an act that is not grounded in there… We're just being the way we are.

The same is true for Jean. During our conversation, she said she doesn't know how to talk about colonization, but she does know how to talk about the resurgence of moose hide tanning and other creative practices being taken up in the community. She elaborated:

> This is the ultimate act of Anishinaabe life. This is just how we did things before "colonization," right? We don't *need* to do this work anymore. We can just go and buy something. Everything about this entire process and that relationship to the moose and the teachings that its giving to me, and what I'm giving to it, and then what happens when the work is done and the work that we've done together for ourselves and for whoever it's going to – that doesn't happen when you go and buy something at the store. It doesn't have a connection, so this work has that connection – it has that piece of identity…as Indigenous people, we all have a time in our lives where we question who we are and where we're from and this is the answer for me. This makes me feel fulfilled. It makes me feel like I know my place in the world and that's why I do this work and that's why I think it's important to do this work. It's medicine, doing this work. I hate the word colonization. I feel like this [beading] is us going in the right direction to get back on track where we need to be.

What these perspectives suggest then, is that Anishinaabe ways of knowing, being, and doing are more important than any direct analyses of colonialism and its effects. Many of the beaders I spoke to were more interested in talking about the meaning and significance of their work from an Anishinaabe perspective.

Wanting to Know

Despite this refusal to centre colonialism, beaders and their work remain inherently political because they are producing within the ongoing context of colonial domination and the enduring struggles of Indigenous survival, resistance, and resurgence. "Wanting to know" was a powerful motivator for beaders on their learning journey. The more they learned about their own cultural identity and history, they more they wanted to know. Learning became a source of empowerment for many of the people I spoke with. Caitlyn, for example, discussed how engaging in beadwork fueled her passion to learn more about Anishinaabe history and culture. She explained to me:

> beadwork kind of opened the door to exploration in the sense of bringing me back to my culture. And with that bringing back, bringing me back to my culture, it opens the door to [other things]. I want to learn my language now. I want to learn what my people did back then, how they lived off the land, how they used these items in our works, or incorporated these ideas into our works. It really brought me back to my culture and it brought me back to having pride in who I was. And I say that because I grew up going to Catholic white schools and that really did some damage to me.

Caitlyn's identity as an Anishinaabe woman was not affirmed in her white, Catholic school education. Instead, she found space for herself through beading that made her want to learn more.

Shannon also described the significance of resurgent practices and being able to connect with Anishinaabe teachings and the land itself and explained:

> In terms of decolonization or however we want to view that…our young people are making really like amazing changes and impacts in our communities, like hide tanning. You know, there's one of my relatives reseeding the lakes down in southern Ontario for [wild] rice and that's our young people doing all of that and it's taking them back out onto the land and being able to reconnect. That's sort of how I feel even with my beadwork. It's helped me to reconnect with the land and to learn about flowers and plants and medicines. I take a lot of interest in that because it's a part of who we are. Anything artsy is, I don't know, I feel like it's something that helps us to reconnect. Even powwow! We're drawn to it because everything looks so beautiful. You know, the sounds and

everything like that. We're drawn to it and when I think about gateway drugs or things like that, I think powwow is like the gateway drug to the rest of it all because it's only this little, tiny piece of what we're all about, right? But when you look at the larger scheme of things, it's like everything is all interconnected.

Shannon equated decolonization with resurgence, and while Caitlyn didn't explicitly call her own learning journey an act of decolonization, the actions and sentiments they each share clearly reflect a response to the impacts of colonization, demonstrating how Indigenous peoples are actively working towards healing and revitalization. These stories show a deliberate effort to reclaim cultural practices, language, and Indigenous identity that have been disrupted or suppressed by colonialism. This desire, or "informed seeking" (Tuck, 2009, p. 416), serves not only as a form of resistance against colonialism but also as a pathway towards ensuring Indigenous futurity.

Beadwork as Relational Practice

When I was working through the findings, I kept coming across the idea of relationships. It started when Jean said, "I feel like makers always give everything away," which made me pause and think about the act of giving because it is fundamentally a relational act. Beadwork can certainly be viewed as a solitary practice, and indeed, many of the beadworkers talked about enjoying their solitude while beading. Ocean, for example, has "beading marathons" where she'll work for hours at a time while binging her favourite tv shows. Leanna likewise mentioned that she enjoyed working alone because it gives her time to think. Indeed, during our second beading circle, Jean stated, "We're all kind of loners, you know? We kind of do our own thing all day long" and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to gather together through the circles I organized for this study. However, through our conversations, I could see that beadwork is also activated through relationships.

If we revisit the stories shared in Chapter 4, we can see how everyone came to beadwork through their relationships with others. Some were inspired and encouraged by aunts and cousins. Others were given knowledge from mothers or grandparents. Their practice is part of a web of relationships connecting them with their teachers, their families, the people they pass their own teachings on to, and the people who benefit from their work. This relational aspect reflects not just a present practice but also a future-oriented commitment to cultural continuity and revitalization.

"Beading Is Our Love Language"

When I sat down with the beadworkers and asked them to share pieces of their work with me, more often than not they would pull out pieces of work that were either made specifically for family members or made to honour them. As Anna Fern talked about her grandmother and how she learned to do beadwork, she pulled out a small beaded medallion on a chain made of woven beads (see Image 9). She explained:

> A tradition that our family always did in the area I come from is that you take the belly button that drops off the baby and you put that in a beaded pouch, in a rosette, right? And then oftentimes it's attached to the dakobizin[31], the tikinagan[32], and sometimes you're even buried with them, right? …That's one thing that I kind of kept going on with. I did this one for my niece.

Not only is it a family tradition, but it is also an act of love towards her grandmother who taught her in the first place and towards the nieces and nephews she creates them for.[33]

In the previous chapter, I discussed the significance of cultural symbolism in beadwork as a means of conveying meaning and embodying cultural aesthetics. Beadwork not only draws

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[31] A dakobizin is a cloth bag used to swaddle babies. It's also commonly known as a moss-bag.
[32] A tikinagan is a cradleboard used to carry babies.
[33] My own family follows these same teachings. My mother still has my belly button, wrapped up in tissue and stored away somewhere, and when my nephews were born, I made each of them a small beaded pouch for my sister to keep their belly buttons.

Image 9. Beaded Rosette Created By Anna Fern. This beaded rosette is meant for keeping a baby's umbilical stump. It can be fully enclosed between the beadwork and the backing material or a small pocket can be sewn onto the back for the stump to be tucked into. Anna Fern made this particular medallion for her niece using techniques taught to her by her grandmother.

from these aesthetic conventions but also acquires meaning through the use of deliberate design elements such as symbols and colours that are used to tell stories about our families and the people we care about. Mary described beadwork as "our love language" because it is a way to demonstrate care for our loved ones. In Chapter 4, she described learning how to bead from her mother who encouraged her to fix her own moccasins. This simple act let Mary know that this was part of her picking up the responsibilities of being both a mother and beadworker:

> it was time for me. It's time for me to enter my role of being a woman and having those responsibilities…Like taking care of yourself and your family and making sure they have what they need and decorating them…I think that's a big responsibility as beadworkers.

During my visit with Jean, she had to think about what pieces of work she had on hand to show me. She admitted that she rarely keeps things for herself. One of the works she's held onto over the years, however, is a set of drums she created to honour family members who attended

residential school and to reckon with the ongoing impact this has on herself and on her family. She took one of the drums off the wall where it hung and brought it over to where we are sitting on the couch. As she sat back down, she caressed the face of the drum and explained:

> I made seven drums and each of them have an image silk-screened on the front of it…Once I made the drums, I sewed some beadwork onto them…Each drum represents a generation. I started with my great-grandfather, Jeremiah Sannaiwap, and then I put his daughter, my gookum, Eliza Childforever. I also have my dad and my mom and my sister, my cousin Robin, and my niece, Violet…
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> So, for each image – like my gookum for example, she always wore purple, like *all the time*, and she would always talk about that colour and how the colour purple is a gentle colour that's known for healing. She'd say it's the colour of healing. So, that's why I just put these – just something symbolic of her – these little highlights of purple on her scarf. So, for each drum, I put something on there.

Image 10. Hand Drums Made By Jean. These drums depict Jean's great-grandfather, Jeremiah Sainnawap with a beaded copper thunderbird (top) and her gookum, Eliza Childforever with her beaded purple scarf (lower).

> I didn't even really know what I was doing until it was hanging in the gallery space and I was asked to talk about it and the best thing that I could say was like, "This is my work and it's helping me to understand how residential school impacted my entire family and how it funneled down to me, even though I didn't even go to residential school." I think for me that was a total revelation in understanding who I am and understanding the fucked-upness of it all and [asking], "How come I'm suffering when I didn't go?" Right? I actually feel the direct pain that they felt and I just find that super fascinating and how the damage that they [the colonizers] did to us still continues to thrive.

Through this work, Jean is able to connect with her family members through small, beaded symbols that reflect parts of their identity; purple for her gookum, a copper thunderbird for her great-grandfather, and so on. In reckoning with this piece of her family's history, she is also expressing love for generations of her family who have been hurt through colonial processes and using this work as a medium for healing. In this way, it connects past, present, and future generations.

Leanna and Cher shared similar stories about specific pieces of their work. As I sat in Cher's dining room, she brought out a set of beaded regalia she made for her daughter (see Image 11). She described the symbols used throughout the work and how each one represents something significant for her daughter, like her clan and her spirit name. She told me:

> My daughter has had a big impact on all the things that I do with beadwork when I think about it. At the time, throughout the years, I never really made anything for myself. It was always something for her or something to gift for her.

As I was visiting with Leanna, she also shared something she's been working on for her own daughter (see Image 11). She told me it's meant to be a gift to celebrate the end of her daughter's berry fast next summer and explained:

> I wanted something to represent her and to help her in her life because it's a medicine bag so I hope she puts her special items in there…I wanted it to remind her of who she is.

Image 11. Beadwork Created By Cher And Leanna For Their Respective Daughters. On the left is a regalia set made by Cher for her daughter, incorporating symbols and imagery that are personally meaningful. The set consists of two hair ties in the shape of sturgeon, a bone choker with a medallion depicting a thunderbird, and a beaded headband with lightning and floral elements. On the right is a medicine bag created by Leanna for her daughter. The bag was constructed using a hide that Leanna tanned herself and beaded elements that represent different teachings.

The berry fast is a year-long fast from berries that begins when a young woman starts their menstrual cycle and ends with a coming-out ceremony. During that year, young women spend time with aunties, grandmas, and female role models to learn about womanhood. The bag was constructed using the first hide Leanna tanned on her own, adding to the specialness and significance of this work. Each element Leanna included on the bag symbolizes a teaching for her daughter. Brass sequins represent the Seven Grandfather Teachings and an eighth one represents life. Red beads symbolize a connection to the spirit world. Even imperfections in the beadwork represent a teaching about love and acceptance, as Leanna explained to me:

> I'm not a master beader…Because mine is never perfect I've learned to really accept that and to really anticipate that I'm going to make a mistake. So, this was going real good and then I was like, "Aww," but then I was like, "No, I'm going to love it. I'm going to love it anyways." So, this is to kind of represent that, right? There's going to be challenges and she's always going to have choices to make but she's going to make that in the context of our ancestors. She is never, ever, ever going to be alone.

Through these pieces, these artists are giving and expressing something special to their families.

Their work also speaks to relationality and the idea that all things are connected.

Reciprocity and Responsibility

When I was engaging with the beaders, and later when re-visiting our conversations, I

noticed how they were careful to name others who were influential to their practice and to name

specific communities that people they mentioned were from. This naming is significant because

it demonstrates the relationships beaders have with, and within, their communities. Everyone

traced out who they learned from, the communities they came from, and how they were

connected to these people and places. These perspectives indicate that beadwork and related

practices aren't just undertaken as an individual practice, as Mary stated:

> I wouldn't be where I am without the support of the community. It's definitely
> community work. Like, ever since I started learning, that's what's always been reiterated
> again and again. It's community work…it brings people together.

> Like other beaders, she shared a sense of responsibility towards the knowledge that she

holds. Mary's family is well-known in the community as experienced craftspeople. This

knowledge was passed on to her, and now, Mary explained:

> Just preserving those teachings is kind of like my main focus and my main goal because I
> just feel like someone's got to do it. Someone's got to keep those teachings around and I
> feel that responsibility.

Jean also described the importance of Elders who share their knowledge and how that has

impacted her own sense of responsibility to the community. She talked about the connections

she's made through hide tanning and the inspiration she gets from seeing the generosity of

certain Elders:

> I met so many new people, so many hunters. I've met so many Elders who are so willing
> to be helpful with hide tanning – Cathy McGuire and Edna Skunk being two Elders of
> particular interest to me. They're teachers. They understand the importance of being an

Elder. They're loving and kind and just want to share. I think that's how I try to be or want to be or aspire to be as open and sharing as them.

These examples show that knowledge, especially in the context of resurgence, is meant to be shared as part of our responsibilities and obligations to our communities, both past and present.

In terms of reciprocity, beaders also acknowledge the importance of giving back to the people and communities that have helped them. Often, they use their skills to create handmade items to show their gratitude. Jean, for example, wanted to create a series of gifts for people who have shared knowledge and helped her with her hide-tanning journey. Shannon talked about the importance of gift-giving in Mide[34] ceremonies that exemplifies this idea of reciprocity:

> When we initiate into Mide we have to give gifts. The gifts are actually to represent all of your burdens and your hurts and your trauma that you carry. So your gifts that you bring with you through that ceremony is symbolically giving it away and letting it go, right? And the people that do the work for you are the ones that receive the gifts and so, symbolically, they are giving you life and in return, you're giving them a gift…All of my items are hand-made. You know, all that learning and creating beadwork and to just give it away?...When they talk about those gifts, like sometimes people will take like a whole year to work on and prepare their gifts….I think that when we do that, it's like the work that goes in, you get from it what you put into it, and so that's the way I think when it comes to going through Mide. Everything that you expect to get out of it, you have to put into it… I always go really extra when our family members have to go through a different level…It was a big thing, you know, where we would come together and work on blankets. We had to make quilts together and it was something that you do, again, maybe not out of necessity, but just to put that work into it, right?

Our creative practices evidence an ethics of care, rooted in acts of giving and sharing. These stories demonstrate the role artists play in enriching and enlivening our communities. Knowledge is meant to be shared and is an essential part of our resurgence.

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[34] Midewiwin, or Grand Medicine Society

"Don't Forget To Love Yourself"[35]

Image 12. "Don't Forget to Love Yourself (2024). This beaded piece was created by Jean, serving as a reminder to slow down and take time to care for oneself.

This beaded piece was created by Jean who worked on it during our beading circle visits together. She named it *Don't Forget to Love Yourself*, which serves as a fitting title for this section. What's funny about this piece is that Jean expressed some frustration and annoyance with how the project was coming along, unhappy with how the fabric behaved beneath the beads. So many conversations I had with beaders contained criticisms and doubts about their work. Mary expressed feeling like an "imposter," sometimes asking, "Why me though? Like, there's so many other good beaders out there" when she's asked to create work for people. Others admit to being perfectionists, wanting to rip out their work when flaws arise. I also noticed a trend of comparing oneself to others in negative ways. Caitlyn, for example, recalls seeing the beadwork

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[35] This subtitle was borrowed from a piece of Jean Marshall's beadwork of the same name.

of others when she was younger and remembers thinking at the time, "I could never achieve that." It seems that beaders can often be their own worst critics. That can hardly be said to be a practice of self-love but these sentiments reveal the complexities of what it means to be a beadworker. They do work that is well-recognized within the community in a way that fosters notions of care and reciprocity. They provide beautiful pieces for their families that carry on cultural knowledge. And yet, they can still feel critical of the work they produce.

The other side of this self-doubt and criticality is the way beadwork can be an act of care for oneself, contributing to personal growth and healing. Every beader talked about the way beadwork practice encourages positive behaviors like sobriety and holistic self-care that supports mental, emotional, and physical well-being. This was expressed well by Caitlyn, who stated:

> There's so much bad. There's so much intergenerational trauma. But it was beadwork that really kept me safe, that really helped me on my journey. And again, beadwork is attributed to our culture. So it's our culture, right? So, I guess that's how I'm getting over a lot of my generational traumas, even to this day, is beadwork. It's keeping me on that path.

This sentiment of beadwork as a safe space was also echoed by Cher:

> when I think about my beadwork and what I've gone through in my life as a young person and then just what beadwork has done for me and how it's helped me, oh my goodness. But it's going through those hard times and then being able to sit and to have those kinds of ideas and thoughts. Really creative thoughts come while you're doing it, right?…Yeah, beadwork has been super healing for me.

In the previous chapter, I described how beadwork can be a space for processing difficult emotions, like grief, trauma, and anger. Beadwork requires focused attention and the repetitive motion of picking up beads, stitching them down, and repeating this process over and over again; this action is repeated thousands of times. This gesture becomes meditative movement that can help a person to focus and achieve a flow state; as mentioned in the previous chapter, "the hand just goes." This meditative aspect of beadwork is also described as relaxing. For example,

Shannon stopped taking on custom orders and now beads solely for her family because, in her

words:

> When you talk about even the act of doing it, right? It's calming and doing beadwork, for
> me, is like having a day at the spa. It's self-care. It's something that I do to relax. And
> now, because I don't bead for other people, it's kind of like something that I do for self-
> care.

> The beadworkers I spoke to are mothers, aunties, sisters, working professionals, full and

part-time artists, and active members in the community. Each role comes with its own set of

responsibilities, commitments, and tasks. In this context of always caring for other people

(children, aging parents, siblings, friends, etc.) and fulfilling commitments to work, community,

and life in general, some beaders emphasized the necessity of prioritizing self-love and self-care.

Throughout our conversations together, they described feeling "overwhelmed with work,"

feeling tired from hectic schedules, and having to "get work things done." They thus often feel

they are rushing as they try to keep up with life's demands, which results in the feeling that time

seems to pass too quickly. Leanna stated:

> We can get so lost in the busyness of life, that colonial way of thinking. I'm often trying
> to remind myself of that. It's like, "Oh, I don't have to rush around." I'll see those Elders
> just sitting there watching and it's a good way to be; to just visit.

Because some of these beaders rely on their creative practice either for part or all of their

income, they feel added pressure to "be productive." During one of our beading circles, we were

catching up with one another after another busy week. Jean had just finished an intense three

weeks of hide-tanning camps and had taken the day off to rest. She shared with us:

> Today was a break for me. But I had a moment in the day…it was like two in the
> afternoon. I'd been working in the morning and I just wanted to lay down…I feel like we
> live in this world where we have to always be doing something. I always feel like I have
> to be productive or, because I don't have a nine-to-five job, I'm always constantly
> thinking about how I'm going to make ends meet. How am I going to help pay the bills?
> You know, the next thing, all the time, right? It's really different when you don't have a

> nine-to-five job and the stability of an income…we kind of fly by the seat of our pants and we work our asses off whenever we can, basically, right? It's kind of nuts.

This shows how practicing artists can often feel pressure when financial concerns and future planning are constant considerations, leading to guilt when they choose rest. Here, Jean is highlighting the importance of allowing oneself to rest and recharge, despite colonizing societal pressures to always be active and productive. This sentiment eventually became expressed through her piece featured at the beginning of this section. She completed the work after our beading circles had ended but I can see how some of these conversations informed the finished product.

One final aspect of self-love shared by these beadworkers was about taking the time to create work for themselves. Jean noted, "it's pretty rare, you know. I feel like makers always give everything away and they never keep anything for themselves." This sentiment was expressed by nearly every beader I spoke with. Most often, they create pieces of work for others, either as gifts for friends and family, or as items intended for sale. I found it noteworthy that only one beader created work explicitly for herself; Ocean explained her relationship to her beadwork practice:

> It's kind of been my way to ground myself and to take the time to love myself too…I do a lot of beading for myself, like, when I do those beading marathons, a lot of the times it's never for anyone else. It's always for me.

During our conversation, she showed me a regalia set she had been working on (see Image 13) and explained how she was excited to wear it for an upcoming powwow:

> I'm excited to see this whole outfit come to life and for me to be able to wear it because it's also going to be so much healing too. I found so much healing in beading and especially when I'm honouring myself and taking care of myself. It's taking care of my spirit too.

Image 13. Beaded Regalia Set Created by Ocean. Ocean created this set for her regalia as a gift for herself. The blue flower in the center is a lady slipper, meant to symbolize Ocean. Image courtesy of the artist.

Creating this beaded set for herself has been therapeutic and healing for Ocean because it was undertaken as a way to honour and care for herself. It signifies more than a garment; it's about nurturing the spirit and finding personal healing through creativity and self-care. Ocean also showed me a beaded bag she had created as a way to commemorate her fasting ceremony that Fall. At the time, she said, "it doesn't have more meaning than that," but the fact she created a piece of work as a reminder of her spiritual growth speaks volumes. Ocean is younger than the other beaders, but at this point, it is unclear if her prioritization of self signifies a larger generational trend amongst Anishinaabe women or if it is her own personal orientation towards her practice. Regardless, she views her beadwork practice as a way to honour, respect, and show love to herself.

Relational Self-Care

As I wrap up this section, I wanted to address the type of supportive learning that happens in Indigenous spaces. It might seem odd to place that under considerations of self-care,

but I wanted to move from individualistic to more relational and systemic-attuned practices of self-care. Sarah Ahmed (2014) writes:

> …in queer, feminist and anti-racist work self-care is about the creation of community, fragile communities, assembled out of the experiences of being shattered. We reassemble ourselves through the ordinary, everyday and often painstaking work of looking after ourselves; looking after each other. This is why when we have to insist, I matter, we matter, we are transforming what matters. (para. 25)

In framing self-care as the creation of community, Ahmed pivots away from the neoliberal tradition of only looking out for ourselves as individuals. Instead, it centers a relational practice of fostering spaces of care for/within/and in service to our communities.

I found this same relational orientation towards care in my conversations with beaders. Ocean and I spoke about the stress and pressures of schooling. She was preparing for a test and explained:

> I don't mind tests, but when the tests are meant to trick you or to undermine you or make you feel stupid, I think that's a very colonial way of educating or teaching in a way. I don't really think it's teaching. You're not teaching me anything. You're just teaching me how to answer your questions and it's not really setting me up for the real world…. when I fail, I shut down. I'm like, "Okay, fuck this. I'm out of here. I don't want to do this anymore." You know? I almost dropped my course because I was just so triggered.

This conversation highlights the differences between Euro-Western models of education and learning environments in Anishinaabe contexts. My conversation with Mary helps to further illustrate this point. She had been working on a cattail mat and proudly showed it off to her mother, who is a skilled cattail weaver (see Image 14). In Mary's words:

> I was like, "Look, mom! Look at my weaving. It's so good." And she's like, "You're pulling really tight on the side. It's all wonky." I was like, "What?!" I think you need those kinds of teachers though, because if you're not going to have a teacher like that, who's going to tell you shit? No one's gonna tell you! [laughing]…I think there's really a time and place for that. You gotta be careful with who you're straight up with because

there's still a lot of people who are reclaiming [these practices]. And I feel like it really depends on where each of us are at. So, if it was a wonky mat with someone who's just learning and just starting to reclaim that, then yes. It's a beautiful, wonky mat. But for me, I was born into this!

Image 14. Mary's Cattail Mat. Here, Mary proudly shows off her completed cattail mat at home in her studio.

Later, I brought up these conversations at one of our beading circles. I asked the group their thoughts on how we allow ourselves the grace to make mistakes while learning. I share my question here and Jean's response to convey the full point:

[Melissa]: When you're learning how to do beadwork, and you make a mistake, no one's on your ass giving you shit and no one's grading it. You don't feel bad about it – you just learn from it and get better. Jean, when you're working on a hide and you make a mistake, how do *you* move past it?

[Jean]: We all cut ourselves. It's not really a mistake. Something happened and you just need to be more careful and there's the teaching. And you learn from others – like Andrew's around all the time and he'll say, "Try it this way." I love that. I love when someone suggests, "Why don't you try this?" or "Maybe this will work better" or "Have you ever tried doing it like this?" Cathy McGuire is a really gentle teacher and that's how she functions…she just watches what's going on and she waits. She won't say, "This is how we do it." She'll say, "I want to show you something." She doesn't come and say what you're doing is totally ridiculous. She watched us literally wrangling a giant bull hide that was massive and big and thick and heavy when it was wet and she was like,

"Why don't you just cut it in half?"…I don't know why I didn't think that was okay, but now I see those two halves and I think, "Let's turn them into quarters." She asked me, "What are you going to do with a whole hide? Aren't you going to cut it up and make little moccasins and things like that?" She's coming from the perspective of doing things solo and making thing easier for yourself.

If we circle back to my initial view of relational self-care, it's easier to see how Anishinaabe learning contexts fit within this frame. Euro-Western education models prioritize individual learning against a standard measure of performance. Anishinaabe models of learning, as demonstrated by Mary's mother and Jean's hide-tanning teachers, emphasize contextualized learning rooted in care. Rather than judge a beginner's mistakes, they are praised for their efforts and rather than enforcing "the right way" to do something, Anishinaabe teachers provide gentle guidance that makes the learner consider their own knowledge, abilities, and common sense. Self-care comes through building a community with other learners, helpers, and knowledge holders who can assist us on our learning journeys.

Our beading circles themselves became spaces for this type of relational self-care. At the beginning of this section, I described how beaders were often critical of their work. Our beading circles became spaces where beaders could express those vulnerabilities, knowing they would be accepted and validated in their experiences. The beading circle was more than a social activity. It was a space to come together for advice, for insights, for affirmation, and for debriefing our day or our week. I offer several short examples from the beading circle transcripts that demonstrate this convivial atmosphere:

[Melissa]: Mary, what are you working on?

[Mary]: I'm working on earrings that I just started. No pattern. Just freestyling. I like freestyling because you never know where you're going to end up.

[Melissa]: Do you do that often?

[Mary]: Yeah.

[Jean]: Mary, I love that about your work.

[Mary]: Miigwech [*thank you*]. Look at this gunmetal [flexes her piece of work so the metal piece in the centre catches the light].

[Everyone]: Oohs and aahs

[Melissa]: I'm learning so much about myself.

[Anna Fern]: How much you get in the way of yourself?

[Jean]: Yeah, right?

[Mary]: Oh my god, same! Your own thinking? Overthinking?! That's my thing!

[Ocean]: Shannon, I have a question for you. When you are beading on velvet and you're using tracing paper, how do you tack it down so it stays down nicely? Because this is really driving me nuts. It keeps moving. I stapled it but it's not staying nice.

[Shannon]: It depends on what I'm making. So, if I'm beading on velvet that's a big, long strip like this – Oh, here I'll show you this thing. I decorated my otter finally and I did it all in velvet, but I'll show you my otter. Here's his eyes. They're like little laser beams. Just kidding…So what I did for this tail, because it's really long, I put my tracing paper with my pattern on there and I literally just sewed down the middle on my sewing machine.

[Ocean]: Oh, okay.

[Shannon]: And then I sewed across like on these areas where my stitching would be hidden and I beaded over my stitch lines. Otherwise, I would just sew it. You can hand sew it on. And it's important to pay attention to the direction the grain is going. The pattern paper will push in a certain direction.

[Ocean]: Okay. That makes sense.

[Shannon]: You know what I bought right here? I'm actually going to try this out. I bought this white transfer paper because I heard some people use it. I don't know if it'll work, but I'm actually going to try it out tonight.

[Jean]: I finished my bag!

[Melissa]: Nice!

[Anna Fern]: Cute!

[Jean]: I'm going to put a snap in the middle there. I think someone would wear it like this. What is this thing I just made? Does that look weird?

[Melissa]: No, that looks great.

[Anna Fern]: You can put a little tassel in the middle. A beaded tassel or something. I bet somebody would wear that.

[Jean]: I didn't think about a tassel but that would be cute, eh?

[Melissa]: I'm learning to accept. I don't love it, but it's fine. I did this light and dark pink together.

[Jean]: That looks nice.

[Anna Fern]: I think that looks nice. Just keep going! I don't even lay out all my colours. I just started with these. Look.

[Melissa]: Ooh! And then you just let the colours take you wherever they want.

These excerpts from conversations in our beading circles, filled with encouragement, humour, and caring. Taken together, all the ideas expressed by beaders in this section demonstrate why beadwork is really about relationships. Expressing love for their families, upholding responsibilities to their communities, and taking the time to show love and care for themselves in individual and relational ways are powerful acts being undertaken by these Anishinaabe beaders that support Indigenous resurgence and futurity.

Embodying Otherwise

The last big theme I will explore in this chapter is the idea of "Otherwise" and how it is manifested or embodied in different ways. When we talk about art as a transformative practice, often we are talking about the ways that art itself communicates. Martineau (2015) posits that:

In the context of Indigenous art, figured as resistant…it is often presumed that the representational inversion of colonizing images and narratives is sufficient, unto itself, to subvert domination and effect social change. (p. 110)

During my visits with beadworkers, however, it was less about the message their work was trying to communicate and more about the processes and thinking that activated the beadwork that pointed towards subversion and social change.

It was hard to find overtly political messages in their work. Leanna was an exception because so much of her practice revolves around themes of colonial violence and the strength of Indigenous women. It's even hard to say that beaders saw their work as an act of futurity. No one used that specific language, although some did talk about resurgence and the actions younger generations are starting to take in reclaiming their identities, cultures, and languages. In terms of their own work, many spoke about passing on knowledge, reclaiming cultural identity, reframing success, and wanting to provide something better for future generations. I thus called this section "embodying otherwise" because that's what I see in these conversations. These beaders are creating space for alternative ways of doing, being, and knowing that extends beyond simple visual communication. That already can be seen in the narratives woven throughout this dissertation so far: the reclamation of hide tanning, the preservation and maintenance of traditional knowledge and skills, and the seeking out of knowledge and cultural identity. In this particular section, I offer three sub-themes to explore the ways beaders specifically embody the concept of "Otherwise" in their work right now. I use several narratives to show how beaders: 1) are reframing success for themselves; 2) how beaders want to offer something better for succeeding generations; and 3) how beaders see resurgence as an expression of love and rage.

Reframing Success

Some beaders don't equate success with high levels of formal education or a "good" job that leads to financial wealth. Shannon discussed her perspective of education that is not rooted in Euro-Western or neoliberal notions of schooling. She's spent years researching Anishinaabe

textile and beadwork traditions, reinvigorating cultural art forms like the bandolier bag,

tikinagans, and Woodland-style regalia. She said, simply:

> I feel like education is important to some people, but it's not important to me. I have a
> different kind of education. That's just as valuable.

As an example related to perceptions of what constitutes a "good" job, when I asked

Mary her thoughts about colonization, she was in the middle of completing an order of beaded

logos for a local organization (see Image 15).[36] Some beaders don't enjoy taking on this type of

commissioned work, referring to it as "slave labour" or feeling "like a machine" when they

produce it. They recognize that this work is often undervalued by the communities and

organizations that commission the work and that it doesn't allow a lot of creative freedom since

the design is already determined. Despite the negatives, Mary acknowledged how this type of

Image 15. Beaded Logo Created By Mary. This was Mary's current project she was working on at the time of our visit together: a beaded logo commissioned by a local First Nation organization.

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[36] Mary's brother called it "making that moccasin money."

work provides her with a certain level of freedom that she values. Further, she considered her

non-participation in the wage economy as an act of decolonization and explained:

> I'm always rebelling against the colonizer by doing this. I don't want to work a nine-to-five job because I'm working on decolonizing my perspective and everybody around me [laughs]. I've been through, you know, "You should get a job" or "You need to go get a job" and I feel that pressure too…But this *is* work. Like, I'm always working. I barely take time off. I mean, I don't have benefits but this is the decision I'm making…And it feels really good to be able to make my own money in my own way and to be able to provide for my kids this way. I wasn't happy when I was trying to do the real job…I feel successful. I feel like I'm doing something purposeful, like there's a purpose behind what I'm doing every day…I don't have thousands in the bank, but my kids are fed. They're happy, and that was also something for me to take back, I guess, or reclaim, was being able to be fully available for my kids. I felt like when I was doing the real job thing I was just answering to my job and making sure I was at work on time every single day…When I left my job it was really nice to be able to drop my kids off every day at school. Make sure they have everything. I felt like me and my kids are better off.

Securing Better Futures

I've already established that beaders create work for their families and that they feel a

sense of responsibility to their communities. The motivations for taking up beadwork or for

creating gifts for loved ones comes from wanting to provide something positive and better for

younger generations. Cher, in particular, demonstrates how her practice is really about securing a

better future for her daughter. When her daughter was approaching puberty, Cher began to think

about the kind of future she wanted for her:

> I wanted to do something special. I wanted to do what my grandmothers had done, right? I asked my aunts and asked the older people in my family, "What do you know? What do you know the grandmothers had done, when a girl got their moon time?" And so, my aunt just told me, "This is what I remember." So, what would happen is, they would take the girl and they would seclude her in a way and she would be given special care. Other women would come and spend time with her…So, I began to prepare soon after that…I had another two years to prepare until she had actually gotten her time. I started to make bags and I thought about 13 ladies, to represent the 13 moons. Each bag would be given to somebody that has helped me in my healing, but also has been a part of her life so that they could be there for her when she needs and share with her a teaching. I made 13 bags within those two years and I was ready when she got her time…We had a beautiful gathering for her.

> I didn't want her to have the stuff that I had. I wanted her to have aunties that tell her something that I wasn't told because of colonization, you know? So, I know that's why I've done what I've done. It wasn't just because I want to find out who I am as Anishinaabe or explore that more. It was because of a fear, I think at first. A fear that my daughter would go through what I have gone through. So, I felt like if she had had this and if I had lived this way, then she wouldn't. She would have a different experience. A better experience.

When her daughter came of age, she was surrounded by women who loved, supported, and cared for her. Cher was able to reciprocate the care and support provided by these women in ceremony through the gifts she had prepared.

Others also expressed wanting to leave behind something better for succeeding generations, although in a much less personal way than Cher described. Jean's work with hide-tanning is part of her vision for a future where communities and youth are engaged with hide-tanning, so that it's no longer a resurgent practice, but one that is firmly established and taken up by everyone who is interested. Shannon's work, too, is tied to the idea of securing better futures for younger generations as she works with her husband to facilitate workshops in First Nation communities and with community organizations to revive the tradition of tikinagans (see Image 16). She described the efforts they make together:

> I was telling [my husband] about this because we were talking about different areas and how things are still occurring in specific areas…Why are they so knowledgeable with ceremonies and things like that, you know, in a time where all of that had to be hidden or went underground or some of it disappeared for a bit. It was probably one person that took it upon themselves to carry that and keep it going and then it just impacted the whole thing after, in a good way…Maybe that's what we're doing. You know, we're just two people and we're going all over the place and hopefully it'll change the way we raise children or bring children into the world, you know? Because those are important parts of child rearing and families. We've traveled, I think, to well over 50 First Nations all over.

Through her engagement with Anishinaabe traditions and culture, Shannon is maintaining and caring for generations of knowledge so that these practices and ways of knowing may continue to be used in the future.
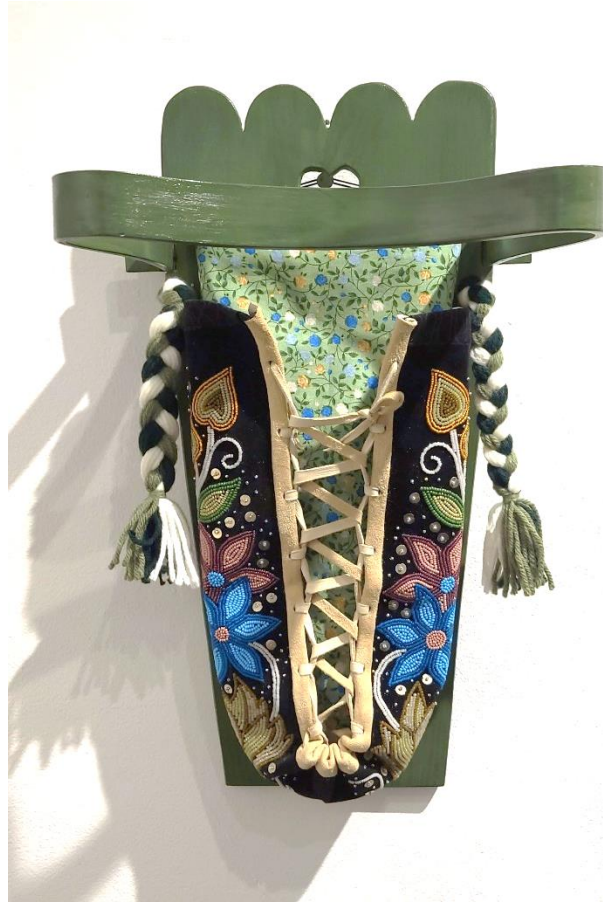
Image 16. "From The Stars" (2024). This is a doll-sized tikinagan made by Shannon. When she presented this work at Co.Lab Gallery in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Shannon described how children began learning parenting skills by emulating what they saw adults doing. Therefore, this tikinagan is more than a toy. It is also a teaching tool. Her work contributes towards the reclamation of traditional child-rearing practices.

In her curatorial work, Caitlyn spoke about her hope of empowering future generations of Indigenous curators within museum and gallery environments. While her actions are having an immediate impact by representing Indigenous artwork with respect and care, they are also about creating lasting pathways for others to follow and succeed. She shared with me:

> I'm always stepping in on things when I feel like it's not true to these values that we have. There's a lot of that, but then also, for me…I try to go into these collections with a different mind frame…I'm gonna advocate as much as I can for these items… I'm always in a form of fighting mode where I'm just advocating and making sure that they get the respect that they deserve and need…I'm learning a lot as I'm working in these institutions. I'm learning how to use my voice to be strong in my convictions, I guess. It's a learning experience.

I think it's good to acknowledge too…we are doing super important work and it's hard. It can be draining. There are days I go home and I always feel drained somehow, like exhausted, and sometimes I feel like I'm constantly saying stuff that should already have been implemented…So, yeah, it definitely is important work, but it's hard. I'm still trying to navigate through it…I'm realizing this happens everywhere. I'm having these conversations with people who've been here before me and other places, but they're experiencing the same things. So, I get to have these discussions and I get strength from that too, or inspiration for me to keep going because it's going to add up to the bigger picture, right? So, 20 years down the road, I may not be here, but there might be another Anishinaabe woman who comes and works at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery and it's going to be the little things. I don't say I'm going to change the system. No, I'm just saying…I hope that my work now will help that same young Anishinaabe woman or man or two-spirit someday.

The actions, visions, and hopes expressed through these stories demonstrate forward-thinking as beaders proactively shape futures for themselves, their loved ones, their communities, and generations yet to come.

Love and Rage

When I arrived at Leanna's house for our visit together, she lit a smudge for the both of us and prepared a small spirit dish using the cookies and berries I had brought to share. We chatted throughout this small ritual activity, catching up with one another as we prepared for our visit together. In our casual chatting, Leanna mentioned an art performance she was preparing for the following day as part of the College's Truth and Reconciliation programming. She told me how the performance was going to be a collaboration between herself and two other artists she frequently works with, with them creating a nest to symbolize the creation of a caring community. The nest would be composed of garbage bags, tarps, cloth, and natural items like rocks, twigs, cedar boughs, and feathers. The community would be invited to show care for anyone laying in the centre of the nest, which might include covering them with blankets, leaving handwritten messages of care for the land or affirmations for each other, or offering loving gestures to the person. In our conversation together, Leanna drew parallels between these

acts of love and care to the current realities of Indigenous peoples and the land, reflecting on recent news of Indigenous women's bodies being disposed of in a Winnipeg landfill (CBC, April 2023; CBC, August 2023). As with all her artistic endeavours, this performance confronts deep-seated social injustices, the legacy of colonial violence, and the power of reciprocity and community care.

When I asked Leanna about her understanding of colonization in relation to her work, her response was emotionally charged and she made an explicit connection between feelings of rage and needing to channel it into positive, constructive actions. She was the only person who explicitly named anger and rage when discussing concepts behind her work. I found her comments so compelling that I wanted to include them here, even though they weren't explicitly reflected in others' stories. I've quoted our conversation at length here to capture the nuances of the conversation:

> [Melissa]: …When I think about my own work – when I started doing beadwork, I was an angry teenager because I didn't feel validated in who I was. I didn't know who I was. I was good at school but I knew that there was something missing. It was when I was sitting around with my Nanny and learning about who she was, where she comes from, our community, our family, all that kind of stuff, that I was like, "No, I get it. That's the piece that was missing." That was never validated for me in school…It wasn't until I started going to ceremony with my mom or doing beadwork with my Nanny and I found these spaces where I could find that for myself. With my beadwork it's not always in reaction to – but it started as a way to turn away from the things that were trying to deny my existence, a way for me to validate myself. So, I don't know if your work and the stuff that you do is the same. Your skirt is about women and the violence against us and your experience in working with *Walking With Our Sisters* and your performance with the women in the landfills. What's going on there?
>
> [Leanna]: Lots! I feel like as a creative person, I can understand the academic part of it. I can understand the intellectual part of it. For me, I need to understand the spiritual context of things and with the jingle dresses, that series I made, that was like in a direct response to everything you just said. That was a direct response to the energy of colonization. It was an expression of my anger that wasn't violent towards myself, or violent towards my children, or the land, or the people that I care about. How do I express this rage in a way that won't hurt?

Without realizing at the time…the process of making those dresses with the beadwork, with the sewing, that kept me alive. That's what kept me here and above without sinking. I think, when I look back now and I hear the teachings in the lodge, and just being around cool aunties and gookums, that's our way. Our way is to not bring harm to people. To not bring harm to ourselves. And as Indigenous women, we've had to internalize so much. I don't know why that is, but it is. That's been my experience and there's been so much that's been passed through the lines. That was just really important for me. When I do my creative practice, that's the context it's coming from. I see the craziness. I live in the craziness…so when I try to process what's happening to family members, to community members, to our people, it boggles my mind. So, part of my creative practice is helping me understand and helping me to heal. I hope that when I'm doing any –especially with the performance – that whatever I'm trying to process is going back into the earth and it's going to be transformed into something else. That's always my intention, to provide something that's going to help and not take away our harm.

Image 17. Jingle Dress Created By Leanna. Several years ago, Leanna created nine jingle dresses as part of her Zaagi'idiwin project. Through this work, she examined the complexities of her family's history in the context of Canadian history. The jingle dress pictured here was specifically for her own private use in ceremony. Although it is hard to see in this photo, she included wavy white lines on the sides to represent water and the water spirits.

When it comes to the colonial violence and our existence? Like, holy fuck. The fact that we can bead? And talk? And cry and laugh and figure shit out? I got a sister who's like, "I want to learn how to tan moose hides" and she did it. She went and got mentors to help her. And you, being like, "There's something missing and this is what helps me feel whole"? Like, jingle dresses? I didn't know what the hell. But that was the only time I felt quiet. That was the only time that I felt totally connected is when I was dancing and that's why I chose that vehicle to work with. Because I'm like, "Okay, if I can be connected when I'm dancing, when I'm wearing that dress, then that's what I need to do to help me with this rage and to help me understand all of that stuff." And the poetry is also a part of that. It helps me get it out of my head! In a way that's hopefully a little bit more cohesive.

In sum, the women I spoke with intentionally avoid focusing on colonialism in their creative work, preferring to highlight their own cultural stories and traditions. They critique capitalist norms of productivity and profit and neoliberal visions of success, which, in their view, are misaligned with their values and experiences. Instead, they choose to prioritize their own health and well-being, and that of their families and communities. Although they experience profound anger towards the ongoing impacts of colonial violence, the beaders I spoke to use this rage to fuel positive and transformative actions. This approach allows them to build empowering spaces that affirm their identity and resilience, rather than being defined solely by the oppressive systems they oppose.

Discussion: Righteous Anger, Refusal, and Intimate Practices of Care

While I was working on this dissertation, I found myself uprooted from my home and living in Winnipeg, Manitoba. At the time, national media outlets were covering news about the murders of four Indigenous women (e.g., Coletta, 2023; CBC News, 2023; Prentice, 2023). The remains of two of these women are believed to be buried at the Prairie Green landfill site, just outside the city. Searching the landfills for their remains was initially deemed unfeasible by police and became a political issue in Manitoba's last provincial election. In July 2024, Jeremy Skibicki was convicted on four counts of first-degree murder for the deaths of Rebecca Contois,

Morgan Beatrice Harris, Marcedes Myran, and a fourth unidentified woman who has been referred to as Mashkode Bizhiki'ikwe (Gowriluk, 2024a). Manitoba officials plan to search the landfill beginning in Fall 2024 (Gowriluk, 2024b). I thought about those women who were so easily disposed of, like garbage, as I was sitting with the beaders. These women are friends of mine. They are part of my community, but so are those women who are still waiting to be found in a Winnipeg landfill. This is the context in which this dissertation takes place so it seems fitting to discuss the role of righteous anger, refusal, and intimate practices of care in Indigenous resurgent practices as I work to understand what the beaders shared with me in this chapter.

Righteous Anger

One of the findings that I could relate to on a personal level was the anger and rage expressed directly by Leanna. Other beaders described anger in less explicit terms alongside experiences of grief and trauma. I want to consider anger and rage alongside love as motivators in resurgence. As Indigenous women, we are prime targets of colonial violence (Williamson, 2014) and that violence is well-documented in Canada (Amnesty International, 2009; Dhillon, 2015; Flowers, 2013; Razack, 2016; A. Simpson, 2014). Hunt (2014) states that Indigenous women "know that systemic neglect, racism and violence of legal indifference within a society largely run by white men have contributed to the normalization of violence against us" (para. 8). It is no wonder Leanna talks about feeling angry. Indigenous women have every right to be, and yet our relationship with anger is a complicated one.

Berglund (2003) points out the particular difficulties of expressing anger as Indigenous peoples because we are expected to either: "(1) shut up and put up, or (2) be viewed as angry and militant, a prickly rabble-rouser" (p. 83). Indigenous peoples, especially women, are conditioned and taught to not express anger. Gloria Bird (1993) has stated that:

As Indian women, we are taught through stereotypes in literature and pop culture to

believe that "traditionally" it is our duty to be longsuffering, to not complain. Possibly, it

is most damaging that we are not allowed to express our anger (p. ix).

If we do express anger, white society tends to use it against us. LaRocque (1993) states, "Our anger, legitimate as it was and is, was exaggerated as 'militant' and used as an excuse not to hear us. There was little comprehension of an articulate anger reflecting an awakening and a call to liberation" (p. xvii). Expressing anger and rage is often dismissed as inappropriate, misguided, and counterproductive, and our fury is muted to make us appear irrational or illogical. And yet, our anger is righteous and justified in the face of colonial injustice and violence (Lorde, 1984; LaRocque, 1993; L. Simpson, 2014b).

I have described the relationality of beadwork, how it is both a responsibility and a love language. By expressing love to our families and communities, we are affirming and validating our existence as Indigenous peoples. I would even argue that love provides the impetus for Indigenous resurgence. The idea of women quietly making beautiful things as an act of love is such a gentle, caring image, but make no mistake, there is rage seething beneath its surface. I see Leanna's anger as another expression of love. After all, to be passionate about injustice requires one to care deeply about whom the injustice is happening to. Leey'qsun scholar Rachel Flowers (2013) has expounded on the connection between love and anger, cautioning that:

to separate love and rage portrays our rage as merely reactionary to external forces and

only through love can we transcend those structures. Indigenous women do not desire to

overcome our anger for love and, indeed, we are not limited to one or the other; many of

us are often limited to feelings of sadness, mourning, and remembrance, rather than

anger. (p. 41)

We beadworkers aren't simply trying to get over our anger through love. We're allowed to feel both.

It might be tempting to view this anger as vengeful, as a need to strike back against those who impose harm upon us. However, Leanna framed her anger from within her understanding of Anishinaabe ways of knowing, being, and doing. She says, "our way is to not harm" and so she expressed wanting to find ways of channeling her anger that weren't harmful to herself, to her children, to the land, or to her community. She found an outlet through her textile art, performance, and poetry. Burman (2016) says, "if rage is galvanized in the service of political and spiritual resurgence, it ceases to be other-directed, or vengeful, and instead directs energy toward regeneration" (p. 366). This desire to not perpetuate harm, couched within Anishinaabe ethics of relationality, directs energy away from vengeful thinking and *refuses* violence. Leanna's engagement with jingle dresses as a form of healing and performance as a way to show care in spite of colonial violence demonstrates how "Indigenous women's rage can be a conducive and generative feeling, and an important part of doing necessary decolonial work" (Komorowski & Peacock, 2023, para. 9).

I also see expressions of beaders "wanting to know" as part of that generative feeling that comes from rage. Leanna was the only beader who explicitly named anger in our conversations together, and yet, I can see how love and anger are inextricably intertwined in the resurgent efforts being made by all. It's part of Jean's exploration of the impact of residential schooling in her family and the fucked-upness of it all. It's part of her admonition to tell people to fuck off when they praise someone for reviving a "lost" practice. It's part of Caitlyn's journey in learning to navigate white settler institutions like Catholic school and the art gallery. It's part of Shannon's reclamation of Anishinaabe cultural symbols and textile traditions and her refusal to

take on custom orders for beadwork. Flowers (2013) states: "Resentment cannot be removed from the colonial relationship, as love cannot be separated from our resurgence" (p. 44).

Refusal, Commodification, and Desire

Although I was curious about it, I remember not quite knowing how to ask about colonialism in relation to the work the beaders were doing. Perhaps this "not knowing" was my own realization that the conversation I was trying to have was a very academic one that was not necessarily rooted in how beaders inherently understood their work. This became increasingly clear to me the more I talked with everyone, especially in the ways that they refused to centre colonialism in our conversations. I could tell that the question had bothered Jean but I wasn't sure why at the time. A day or two later, she messaged me on social media and shared a short clip from a podcast. The podcast featured Maori educator, Amelia Butler who described decolonization as a concept that still centred the colonizer (Kapea, 2023). Butler advocated, instead, for centering Indigenous peoples and our ways of knowing, being, and doing. She termed this re-orientiation towards Indigenous peoples and practices as "reindigenisation," preferring to its use over decolonization. Jean told me about her journey with hide-tanning and the value it has brought to her life, saying, "I think associating the word colonization in relation to it is a disrespect just because it is such a highly sophisticated way of life that we, as Anishinaabeg, have always practiced since time immemorial." I had meant no disrespect, but I can see that examining how terms like colonization and decolonization are understood within Anishinaabe thought is an area that requires further investigation. Maori scholar, Graham Smith (2003) has written that:

> the term "decolonization" is a reactive notion; it immediately puts the colonizer and the history of colonization back at the "centre." In moving to transformative politics we need

to understand the history of colonization but the bulk of our work and focus must be on what it is that we want, what is that we are about and to "imagine" our future. (p. 3)

I think this is what the beaders are asserting in their refusal to centre colonialism both in our conversations and in their practices.

This isn't the only place where I noticed refusal being present. There is also a refusal to conform to capitalist norms and neoliberal values. I mentioned how beaders are reframing success for themselves, seeing cultural education as valid as, if not preferable to, Euro-Western education, and envisioning how labour can be reorganized to prioritize our needs and wants. These reframings offer alternative understandings of success that often fly in the face of capitalist and neoliberal understandings of economic prosperity. The potlatch was one of the first ceremonies to be banned in Canada because it played a central role in the facilitation of community affairs, governance, and the redistribution of wealth (Bracken, 1997; Hopkins, 2016). De Loggans (2021) states, "It is no coincidence that our inherently anti-capitalist ceremonies are seen as a threat to the colonial status quo: they prove that alternative lifeways are possible" (para. 12). I think about what Shannon says about making things not for profit, but to give away as an act of reciprocity and relationality through ceremony. That's a major "fuck you" to capitalistic modes of production and accumulation. Making things just to give them away doesn't make sense under colonial capitalism and instead represents how beadwork, and other Indigenous creative endeavours, can be a fundamental refusal of Western art practices.

Refusal is also present for beadworkers who choose self-employment in order to prioritize their own wants and needs. What struck me about my conversation with Mary was how she framed her beadwork as an act of decolonization. Kim Anderson [Cree/Métis] (2000)

describes how women are stressed trying to balance paid work, caring for children, and domestic household tasks, pointing to a need:

> to build environments where childcare is respected for the work that it is…it means creating a workforce that gives some leeway to men and women who wish to make time for their children or to care for their aging parents. It means validating the ones that nurture rather than dismissing them as "not working" or "not contributing to society." (p. 256)

By, for example, taking on bulk orders for beadwork from local organizations and First Nation communities, beaders are able to generate an income for themselves outside of colonial notions of "success." In fact, most of the beaders spoke about how older generations relied on beadwork to support themselves and their families when they didn't have the education or prospects for more conventional forms of work. Rather than relying on full-time wage employment, which is so often at the heart of capitalism and neoliberalism, Mary, like other self-employed artists, is able to prioritize what matters most to her. In this case, it's her children and their well-being.

However, interesting complexities emerge when we think about beadwork as an object or commodity that can be bought or sold while simultaneously considering it as "kin" as established in Chapter 5. Can we participate in capitalist exchanges and still be decolonizing? I think part of this answer lies in recasting the question away from damage-centered narratives (i.e., Indigenous peoples are all victims of capitalism and internalized colonialism) towards those of desire. Tuck and Ree (2013) state, "Desire is complex and complicated. It is constantly reformulating and does so by extinguishing itself, breaking apart, reconstructing, recasting" (p. 648). Tuck (2009) also argues that "desire reaches for contrasting realities, even simultaneously" (p. 418) and that "we can desire to be critically conscious *and* desire the new Jordans, even if those desires are

conflicting" (p. 420). I also look to nêhiyaw/Denesųłiné scholar Jarrett Martineau's (2015)

consideration of Indigenous art and resurgence. He argues that creative practices (as opposed to

its commodity forms) offer Indigenous peoples a language of expression with which to create

new pathways of resistance and resurgence, and that:

> Art is inseparable from other aspects of life and consciousness. As a result, Indigenous
>
> artists, even when they produce commodified works or aesthetic objects, are guided by
>
> cosmological, epistemological and ontological alterities that frame creative expression
>
> according to its alignment with our own ways of seeing, doing, being and living in the
>
> world, rather than in terms of its aesthetic content. (p. 103)

Self-Love and Intimate Practices of Care

Woven throughout the conversations shared in this chapter is the sentiment of being tired,

overwhelmed, and busy. But there are also conversations that touch on notions of rest and the

importance of self-care. I find writings on rest from within Black thought useful to understanding

fatigue and exhaustion from a marginalized perspective, illuminating how rest is an important act

of resistance (Hersey, 2022; Sharma, et al., 2017). The idea of self-care as a political tool was

first formulated in 1988 by queer Black feminist poet Audre Lorde during her battle with cancer.

Lorde (1988) wrote, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is

an act of political warfare" (p. 131). Self-care has since been picked up in the work and writings

of Indigenous scholars, although I would argue it remains under-theorized.

Nêhiyaw poet Erica Violet Lee (2016) expounds upon rest as a necessary intervention

into the ways that the Canadian state weaponizes fatigue and exhaustion against Indigenous

peoples, stating:

> We are deprived of the basic necessities of life: food, clean water, safe housing. We are

kept poor and we are kept out of school. We are locked in jails, raped, and stolen. We are

monitored in our homes. We are deprived of sleep. This is what a failing colonial empire

does to people whom they are afraid will rise like a full moon if we are given the chance

to think about something more than survival. (paras. 18-19)

When the beaders and I came together, either in my visits to their homes or as part of our

beading circles held over Zoom, more often than not people would express how busy they've

been, how tired they feel, or how they've been overwhelmed by work. Sharma (2014) reminds us

that "everyone might be sick and tired, but this fatigue feels radically different depending on who

you are and how you labor" (p. 6). The feelings of exhaustion expressed by the beaders must be

analyzed in light of capitalistic notions of productivity as well as the toil of having to navigate

the lived realities of colonial experience, particularly as women.

Indigenous women are often described as the backbone of our communities. In traditional

societies, "[Women] were responsible for the establishment of all the norms—whether they were

political, economic, social or spiritual. [They were] the keepers of the culture" (RCAP, 1996, p.

18). This role is one the women I spoke with still take on, evidenced by our conversations around

responsibilities and the work they're doing to maintain, preserve, and pass on knowledge.

However, it is important to also note how women in general bear a disproportional amount of

labour; we are often too busy caring for others to take the time to love and care for ourselves

(Hersey, 2022). That's why Jean's piece, titled *Don't Forget to Love Yourself* is such a powerful

statement and reminder, not just for beadworkers, but Anishinaabe women engaging in the hard

work of resurgence. Again, I turn to Jean's comment about how makers are always giving

everything away and I wonder if, and how, this may be a gendered phenomenon. Since all the

beaders I spoke with identified as women, I would find it interesting to hear men's perspectives

to determine if they orient themselves to their beadwork in the same way these women do. Do Indigenous men feel the same pressures and responsibilities to their families and communities? Do they also make everything to give it away?

One of the ways that Indigenous scholars have theorized about rest is through discussion of menstrual traditions. Métis scholar Janice Gaudet and settler-scholar Diane Caron-Bourbonnais (2015), for example, have explored the role of menstrual teachings in restoring holistic well-being within Indigenous communities. Also writing about menstruation, Anderson (2000) states that nurturing ourselves is "a responsibility that many of us are slow to learn because of societal pressures on women to be self-sacrificing. Acting on responsibility to family or nation doesn't mean that we deny our own needs or undermine our responsibility to take care of ourselves…there is a distinction to be made between 'giving it all away' and 'nurturing'" (p. 230). She continues: "Perhaps we are lucky in that we come from traditions where menstruation is understood to be a time for rest, seclusion, and contemplation" (p. 231).

By reinstating ceremonies like the berry-fast in their families, and passing on important teachings through their beadwork, these women enact intimate practices of care for their daughters. Anderson (2000) asserts that "girls who pass through these ceremonies have a better chance at understanding the sacredness and power of womanhood" (p. 166). Cher and Leanna's actions to bring back this ceremony as a rite of passage for their daughters serves as an affirmation in the context of colonial violence and gendered politics that serve to disempower Indigenous women. They are creating an environment that shows their daughters they are cared for, nurtured, and supported which is a powerful statement when set against colonial society where Indigenous women's lives are treated as disposable and our bodies are so often marked by violence. In the face of this reality, rest, self-nurturing, and care become powerful tools for

resistance and resurgence. They are essential to Indigenous well-being and future-building, ensuring that we have the capacity to carry on with the important work set before us.

Relationality means "we are all implicated and responsible for the self/other/world" (Bivens, 2021, p. 108). This is reflected in Anishinaabe teaching approaches that contextualize learning based on care for the student's autonomy and personal growth. When we approach notions of care through the lens of relationality, it becomes much more than the neoliberal view of investing in and supporting oneself that is often deeply intwined with consumerism. Ahmed (2014) points to building community with others as an act of relational self-care. The conversations and exchanges that took place within the beading circles I hosted evidence that gathering together in community is a form of self-care that extends beyond the individual self. By beading together, we strengthened relationships and created a safe space to express ourselves as Anishinaabe women. We were able to discuss a wide range of topics that felt important to us. We talked about the latest tv shows and movies, the climate crisis, the possibility of retirement someday, Buffy Ste. Marie, work stresses, and what makes the best backing material when beading onto velvet. We laughed and we ate snacks together, virtually. We offered each other advice, listened to each other's stories, and uplifted one another when we could. Participating in these beading circles became a way for us to bond and create our own caring community, providing us with renewed energy and support for our own resurgent tasks.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I've reported on beadworkers' orientations towards colonialism, considering the relationality of beadwork practice and the different ways beadworkers embody otherwise for themselves in the here and now. I found that most of the beaders refuse to centre colonialism in their practice, instead choosing to focus on resurgent Indigenous practices. This

includes learning cultural knowledge, reclaiming Indigenous language, and participating in practices like hide-tanning and the revival of Anishinaabe creative traditions.

Beadworkers also shared insights into the relational aspect of beadwork. Most often, pieces are created to be given away to family members, loved ones, and community members. This can be interpreted as a powerful act of refusal against capitalist norms of production and accumulation. It also speaks to the significance of beadwork in maintaining relationships through reciprocity. I also considered beaders' conceptions of beadwork as an act of self-care and discussed this in relation to literature around rest as an important tool of resistance.

I appreciated the ways that the beadworkers are reframing success for themselves, often through a refusal of conventional wage employment, seeking instead opportunities that allow them to maintain priorities to their art and to their families. Their work is also motivated by wanting something better for future generations. This is manifested in the way beaders are seeking out knowledge for themselves and providing their children and others with cultural teachings, knowledge, ceremonies, and practices that beaders themselves didn't have an opportunity to experience for themselves. Anger also provides an impetus for taking up artistic and creative practices as a way to channel negative emotions into something productive. I consider anger to be an appropriate reaction to colonial violence and as a further expression of love that is vital to the resurgence of Indigenous lifeways.

Overall, then, this chapter considered the emotional and political aspects of beadwork. In the end, it was less about beadwork as a communicative form and more about the thoughts and perspectives that beaders bring into their practice. I wanted to know how futurity and otherwise were conceptualized, embodied, or envisioned by beaders. Their stories show how the future is being created right now, centered in Anishinaabe ceremonies, teachings, ethics, and ways of

knowing. It is informed by love and rage, care and refusal, not knowing and a deep desire to

know. Indigenous futures exist despite and in spite of colonial violence.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The act of creating beadwork is messy but the end result is tidy, neat, straight, flat rows of beads that create a finished piece. Loose threads, heavy knots, skipped stitches all get tucked in behind the work, present, but unseen. Work surfaces are covered with the remnants of creation: needles, scraps of thread and hide, vials and jars of beads, worn out beeswax, torn bits of paper, coffee cups, headphones, cookie crumbs, laptops, and your favourite pair of scissors. The work remains present long after it's finished in the form of loose threads that gather in the corners of rooms, beads that have worked their way between the floorboards and in the scrap pieces of hide too precious to throw away that bear the outlines of the objects they became. The act of creation is messy business, and I offer this as a preface because the answers I offer here have arisen out of a messy process of assemblage and I am sure I will continue to find threads and pieces of this work long after my PhD journey has ended.

I frame my conclusion on the idea of messiness not to discredit the work found within these pages, but rather to disrupt the idea of needing to tie things up in a pretty bow and calling it finished. It precludes the idea that our task is complete and that no further inquiry is necessary. Messiness in this study looks like complexity and answers that are not straightforward. It looks like methodological intentions and the reality of how it played out. It looks like unexpected detours and new questions that spring up. And it looks like the refusal to offer this research as an answer to how we can do culturally responsive curriculum or Indigenization in colonial contexts better. Instead, it offers a vision and an example of the way things are, the way things can be, and the work that remains to be done.

In this final chapter, I first reflect on the methodological considerations and limitations of my study, providing insights into how these aspects have shaped the research process and outcomes. Next, I discuss how the findings contribute to existing literature and suggest potential

implications for Indigenous pedagogy and practice. Rather than viewing these findings as an extractive exercise for later application in educational (i.e., schooling) contexts, I emphasize them as examples of what community-based, relational learning entails. Finally, I outline my research questions and respond to each one, drawing connections between the findings and the broader themes explored throughout the study.

Methodological Considerations

First, I want to talk about some of my methodological choices and how effective they were in my overall project. I found that framing this research around visiting helped to orient this project around considerations of relationality, responsibility, respect, and reciprocity. Because visiting is such a community-oriented approach, it really underscored the idea that research should not be an extractive process and reinforced my own accountability, not just as a researcher, but as someone being entrusted with something precious in the form of knowledge. In the end, because of this methodological choice, I felt much more connected to the beaders I spoke with. It reinforced my own connections within the beadwork community and the entire process came to feel mutually beneficial. I also found art elicitation to be a useful tool in entering into conversations with people. Even though some initially expressed doubt about how much beadwork they had readily available to show me, everyone had plenty of examples and stories to share with me when the time came. And what they shared I found to be particularly insightful as the work they retained for themselves was often very personal, enabling them to discuss its significance in relation to themselves and their families, not just as an individual undertaking.

One of the things I had initially set out to do with this research was to use beading circles as part of the data collection process. This proved to be challenging in some ways and generative in others. Between September and November 2023, we came together as a group for a total of six

beading circles. I had asked beaders to consider creating works that centered around the theme of what it means to be a good aanikoobijigan, as I described in Chapter 3, and had planned to use this work as a springboard for conversations and more data. Beaders did create pieces of work in answer to my prompt, but I found they needed much more time than the beading circles allowed to both conceptualize new work and to execute their visions. Most artists completed their pieces on their own, up to two months after the beading circle phase of the research had ended. While the beading circles did not work out exactly as I had envisioned, I found they did yield a wealth of data, but I was unable to fit it all within the scope of this dissertation. In the interests of time and to set boundaries on what to address in this dissertation, I made the decision to focus my analysis primarily on our one-on-one visits and to draw on the data generated within the beading circles primarily when it supported or added perspective to other conversations and stories that were shared individually.

Despite these challenges, I found that the beading circles had other benefits beyond data collection, which is an important consideration when working with Indigenous peoples and knowledges. Kovach (2009) describes a history of problematic research related to Indigenous peoples because of "smash and grab" methods whereby data is gathered in quick, in-and-out interview sessions. That approach is highly extractive, leaving little to no room for relationality, reciprocity, or even researcher accountability. In the end, I did not rely on the beading circles so much for the data they were able to yield but for the contributions they made towards building community and fostering connections between beadworkers. I found that the circles reinforced my methodological orientation, situating the work within "a nest of relationships" (Kovach, 2009, p. 99), which made the beading circles generative rather than extractive spaces.

Most importantly the beading circles provided me with opportunities to reciprocate and to ensure that this project was mutually beneficial to everyone involved. One of the first examples of this comes from our first beading circle together. The Thunder Bay Art Gallery generously provided space for us to meet, facilitated in part by Caitlyn. It gave beaders the opportunity to experience the *Radical Stitch* exhibit more intimately since we met after gallery hours and had the space to ourselves. I also found that beaders were grateful for the opportunity to socialize together. As Jean expressed, "as beaders, we all spend a lot of time alone but we also have that need to be social with each other." Not only were the beading circles a chance for beaders to get together, they also provided space for support, encouragement, and affirmation. I found that while beaders could feel doubtful or critical of themselves and their work, the beading circle provided a space for that vulnerability to be expressed and extended into forms of relational self-care.

Finally, as beaders completed their works they had started within the beading circles, I organized and curated a small exhibition to showcase their work at Co.Lab Gallery in Thunder Bay, ON in February 2024. The show was titled *Aanikoobidoon: Stringing Together Past, Present, and Future*, acknowledging that the work we do as beadworkers extends beyond us in the present to include our ancestors and future descendants. This exhibition coincided with the Aanikoobijiganag Beading Symposium hosted by Thunder Bay Art Gallery, so it became even more special to share their work with a community of people who truly understand this craft.

While I am content, in the end, with what the beading circles contributed to this research, if I could go back in time and conduct this study over again, I would likely hold the first beading circle *after* all the conversations from one-on-one visits were transcribed and initial themes were identified. That would have required more time than the constraints of a PhD program or funding

deadlines allowed, so this thought experiment is more useful for consideration when planning this type of research in the future. One of the factors that slowed me down was the amount of data I had gathered from the first phase of the research project. Transcribing hours of conversation was time-consuming, even with the assistance of Microsoft Word's transcribing tool, and often required a second, and even a third pass, to ensure accuracy. Hiring a transcription service or employing more accurate AI transcription apps would likely make this process easier, but there is also something to be said about the intimacy associated with a researcher spending time doing their own transcriptions. My takeaway here, then, is simply that more time between phases of research and more time for the overall study would have allowed me to focus each beading circle discussion to make them more relevant to the scope of the study.

Answering the Research Questions

When I began this dissertation, I set out with an idea of beadwork and its function in Anishinaabe culture. I wanted to interrogate our future-making practices and to trouble notions of learning and education that are often conflated with schooling. I wanted to learn more about the spaces we create for ourselves that exist outside of (but also within) colonial structures. To that end, I initially set out to answer three interrelated questions:

1. *How might Indigenous creative practice, as a site of learning, offer new possibilities for decolonial thought and action?*

2. *How do Anishinaabe art-makers imagine, create, or conceptualize "otherwise" worlds through their work?*

3. *What learning is made present through beadwork?*

In returning to these questions now, I ask myself if and how this study offers new insights into Indigenous creative practices and what implications it may have on both a scholarly and practical level.

More Than Just a Bag

> *If something exists*
> *it is in motion*
> *and if there is motion*
> *there is life.*
> *Everything that exists is in motion*
> *Therefore, everything that exists,*
> *is alive.* (Cordova, 2007, p. 92)

My first question asks, *How might Indigenous creative practice, as a site of learning, offer new possibilities for decolonial thought and action?* This question was perhaps the messiest to answer. First, because beaders often refused to centre colonialism in our conversations, it made me rethink the focus I put on decolonization in the first place and there were times when I felt uncertain about my theoretical explorations of coloniality. Their refusal forced me to confront the tensions between postcolonial and Indigenous thought and engage with the notion of decolonization from a different perspective — not as the transformation of colonial society, but rather as nurturing the conditions that will allow Indigenous peoples, cultures, and communities to flourish. This reorientation offers space for new possibilities and new ways of thinking away from colonial normativity. Second, this question could be answered in any number of ways and so I had to untangle a lot of threads to arrive at a satisfactory answer. Even now, I consider there is more that can be gleaned from the conversations and stories shared within these pages. In reflecting on this question now, I discuss Indigenous acts of creation in relation to decolonial aesthetics, a branch of philosophy concerned with decolonizing arts practices as a way to

theorize and offer Indigenous perspectives to this growing body of thought and consider the ways that beadwork always-already contributes to decolonial action.

Decolonial aesthetics are a critique of Western aesthetic categories and how these have come to dominate and define discussions of art, beauty, and sensibility. Decolonial scholars theorize that this domination is made possible through the colonial matrix of power that subjects and molds everything from politics to culture in Western society (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Elsewhere, Indigenous scholars have referred to this as cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 1998) and it is this structure of control that "constantly reaffirms the West's view of itself as the center of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of 'civilized' knowledge" (Smith, 2012, p. 66). This same logic extends itself to Indigenous art practices. In the Western canon, some work is legitimized as "art," while other creative expressions like beadwork, quillwork, and basketry have been confined to labels such as "craft," "folk art," or "ethnographic curiosities," therefore positioning it low on the hierarchy of Western definitions. This division between high and low art also contributes to "the relentless reproduction of colonial tropes of the so-called "traditional" and contemporary" — art-making that relegates Indigenous creative forms to predetermined positionalities within the colonial gaze" (Martineau, 2015, p. 13). Decolonial aesthetics, then, pushes back against these tropes and contests the universality of Western standards of art and beauty, showing how these standards have suppressed and sidelined other ways of knowing and different forms of creative expression. The goal is to change how we perceive and feel about the world, not just to appreciate art differently (de la Fuente, 2024; Transnational Decolonial Institute, 2013).

Recognizing that much of the theorizing within decolonial aesthetics focuses on liberating the mind in postcolonial contexts, Martineau and Ritskes (2014) argue that our

engagement and consideration of decolonial aesthetics must also include the aesthetic and onto-epistemic imperatives of Indigenous resurgence, including material struggles for decolonization centered on land and place. This was echoed by beadworkers throughout this study who refused to centre colonialism in their work, and instead focused on the importance of creative practice in the context of resurgence. Their work does not exist to satisfy the colonial gaze but is meant to engage our own ways of knowing, being, and doing, ensuring that these aesthetic practices are maintained for future generations. Luam Kidane (2014) similarly argues that decolonial aesthetics must not just delink or disobey the colonial gaze, it must break space and interject imagination. She posits that decolonial aesthetics become decolonizing through creative practices that "inquire, map, ignite, incite, disrupt, transform, build" (p. 189). Viewing beadwork as an expression of decolonial aesthetics within Indigenous thought makes us consider the ways it refuses/disrupts the colonial gaze while mapping/transforming/building art as a holistic, relational, cultural expression within Indigenous ontologies.

Rather than attempt to elevate or prove that Indigenous creative practices belong in the Western art canon, decolonial aesthetics "refuses the struggle for better or more inclusion and recognition and instead chooses refusal and flight as modes of freedom" (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, p. iv). Indigenous knowledges are rooted in a world constituted by relationships rather than objects, and as such, it is full of movements, happenings, bodies, and senses (Cordova, 2007; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; McPherson & Rabb, 2011). Our art practices reflect this worldview and are, by this very fact, multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. It is not just a material practice, as evidenced by my conversations with beaders. It also encompasses the social, the spiritual, and the emotional, all aspects that make the world "a fulsome place" (Cordova, 2007, p. 106). Therefore, our art practices defy easy categorization and organization under Western aesthetics.

Our knowledges and worldviews stand in stark contrast to Euro-Western abstractions of thought, that paint the world as emotionless, neutral, measurable, and objective.

Further, Indigenous cultural traditions do not separate art from everyday life. Beadwork embodies decolonial aesthetics in the way it fuses artistic excellence with utility in ways that do not conform with Western aesthetic notions. When a beader says, "even when you look at that bag, there's so much more," they are referring to meaning beyond the finished product, beyond the visual plane, and beyond Western aesthetics. A bag might be created to hold things but that is not its sole purpose. It communicates relationality between the maker, the user, the land, and other relationships that coalesce into a finished product.

In Anishinaabemowin, there is no word for "artist," a fact that was repeatedly brought up in my conversations with beadworkers. Ceramic artist KC Adams [Ininew/Anishinaabe] (2024) instead offers the term "relational maker" to refer to Indigenous artisans, craftspeople, and artists. She explains that this term came to her in a waking dream and she has come to define a relational maker as "an Indigenous person who creates skillfully made objects, articles, or performances that imply kinship, a relationship to land, nature and the cosmos" (p. 2). Not only does this definition refuse Western categorizations of thought, it also helps to reconcile the divisions between traditional and contemporary practice by focusing on the making process itself. Adams elaborates: "The making process holds Indigenous cultural worldviews and a bonding experience with the people who came before me and the knowledge they carry, regardless of whether the material is land-based or new technologies" (p. 2). The term "relational maker," then, stands as both a challenge to and a refusal of Western definitions of what an artist is and does.

The beadworkers that participated in this research are relational makers. Their stories and their beadwork exemplify the complex web of knowledges, relationships, and processes that constitute Anishinaabe creative practices. Beadwork always-already contributes to decolonial action because it is inherently relational. If our worldviews tell us that the universe is alive and that all beings are related, then those relationships form a moral imperative, focusing our attention on the consequences and results of our actions (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). More poetically, philosopher Viola Cordova [Jicarilla Apache] (2007) writes: "Because we are not alone / there are no meaningless actions" (p. 94). The Anishinaabe beaders I spoke with reflect this awareness and understanding in their own practice. They described considerations of how energy may be passed through their work, "doing things in a good way," feeling a sense of responsibility to knowledges they have been entrusted to carry, and wanting to provide something better for future generations. These actions are meaningful simply because they are rooted in relationality. In this way, beaders envision and embody alternatives for future-being in the present. As creators, they literally co-create the world everyday through their practice.

Through this study, I wanted to expand possibilities within Indigenous education, not to improve achievement outcomes based on neoliberal values, but to consider other ways of learning and what that may contribute to our well-being as Indigenous peoples. Vine Deloria [Lakota] (2001) states: "Education today trains professionals but it does not produce people" (p. 43), positing that professional skill is emphasized over personal growth in Western education. According to Indigenous thought, however, a person learns to be a person through relationality. Cordova (2007) elaborates:

"I" become "I"

when I have learned

> my place in the group
>
> when I become aware
>
> of the fact
>
> that my actions
>
> have consequences
>
> on others
>
> on the whole
>
> only then
>
> am "I" a person

A WHOLE PERSON (p. 140).

In this context, beadwork can be seen as a site where we learn to become whole persons according to the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin. It imparts a personal and particular worldview and embodies a dynamic relationality that spans time and space, teaching us that our actions have consequences and that we are always, in every moment, in relation to all beings.

Desirous Futures

I began this dissertation by engaging with theories of fugitivity, refusal, and futurity as a way to understand and conceptualize decolonial praxis. My second research question allows me to place these theories in relation to Anishinaabe creative practice, asking: *How do Anishinaabe art-makers imagine, create, or conceptualize "otherwise" worlds through their work?* These themes became most prominent in Chapter 6 as I teased out the various ways that these Anishinaabe beadworkers perceive and orient themselves in relation to colonialism while engaging in future-seeking practices. After doing this research and engaging with the findings, I am better able to conceptualize the relationship between fugitivity, refusal, and futurity as

movements towards decolonial praxis. Figure 1 visually demonstrates the interconnection of these concepts, illustrating how each figure of thought influences and guides the others, contributing to actions that are essential for creating desired futures. While I've outlined much of these theoretical foundations in Chapter 2, I rearticulate them here to more fully develop their interrelatedness and to further contextualize the findings shared in Chapter 6.

Figure 1

Futurity Activated From an Indigenous Perspective
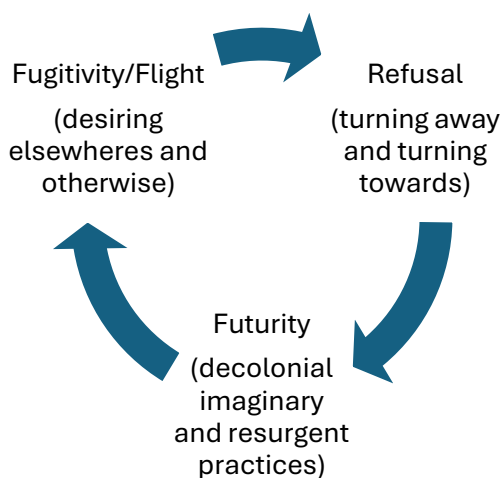
This model I developed shows how fugitivity, refusal, and futurity inform and relate to one another in the pursuit of otherwise and robust Indigenous futures, representing the processes involved in seeking and building towards otherwise futures.

Activating futurity requires starting with fugitivity, that is, acknowledging that there is a problem in the present situation. This awareness of the undesirous conditions in which we find ourselves provides the impetus to flee, to escape, and to run towards something better than the conditions we currently find ourselves in. Thus, fugitivity is both the initial moment of ignition that prompts thought and movement and the fuel that leads to action. In the Black Radical Tradition, fugitivity is linked to the experiences of enslaved peoples who refused the plantation and the conditions of their oppression, seeking freedom for themselves in an elsewhere that may not be within actual reach but is sought after as flight (Campt, 2014; see also Gumbs, 2016;

Harney & Moten, 2013).[37] Indigenous scholars have similarly theorized our resistance as a metaphorical "flight" out of and away from colonial power structures (L. Simpson, 2017). Fugitivity as an act of flight, then, is a constant movement away from the conditions that seek to oppress us. Because coloniality is so ubiquitous, underpinning as it does our current society and modern world, it may seem impossible to escape its gravity. Fugitivity, when considered as an act of flight, provides the escape velocity needed to activate refusal as both a rejection of and as a turning towards something other than coloniality.

Refusal itself can be theorized as an affirmative action. Coulthard (2014) argues that Indigenous resistance is both reactive and proactive in that it challenges and disrupts colonial systems while simultaneously creating and affirming Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. Refusal, then, becomes a dual process that involves rejecting colonialism as normative and affirming Indigenous resurgence as desirous. This generative aspect of refusal (A. Simpson, 2014) or "creative negation" (Martineau, 2015, p. 43) is what makes refusal a dynamic and transformative act and why fugitivity alone does not account for the creation of desirous futures. To flee from something, one must be moving towards something else. In Black theorizing, fugitivity is fleeing from enslavement and moving towards freedom, but what does freedom look

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[37] I don't wish to appropriate theories that are deeply rooted in the Black lived experience. Nor do I wish to equate the oppression of slavery as equal to our oppression as Indigenous peoples. I want to acknowledge that some Black scholars have argued that Indigenous and Black experiences arise from fundamentally different contexts and conditions, and therefore are not directly analogous to each other. Most notably, Wilderson, et al. (2016) argues that Indigenous peoples are a category that is distinct from the positions of the 'White' and 'Black" in his analysis of the structure of U.S. civil society. He states: 'In some ways, American Indians are a liminal category, and in other ways they are more profoundly on the side of "junior partners" and antagonistic to Blacks' (p. 14). Because of this structural distinction, Wilderson argues that Indigenous peoples have room for negotiation in civil society vis-à-vis land, whereas Black people are positioned entirely outside of humanity and, therefore, civil society. I want the reader to know that I have given some thought to whether my use of theories derived from Black experiences are extractive and possibly problematic. Suffice to say this isn't an argument about whose oppression should be taken more seriously, or that the structuring of society under white, male, heterosexual, Christian, capitalism presumes Black and Indigenous solidarity. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that theories borne out of the contextually specific experience of coloniality in North America are more useful for engaging the decolonial imaginary than any writing that occurs outside of it.

like for us? Flight/fugitivity from an Indigenous perspective is an expression of our own refusal to assimilate into the body politic of whitestream Canada. This refusal becomes generative by turning towards resurgent practices and articulating or enacting our own desires.

Cumulatively, fugitivity and refusal set the trajectory towards manifesting desirous futures. By engaging with the decolonial imaginary to envision possibilities beyond the present, we move away from systems that seek to assimilate or negate us, while actively engaging in, manifesting, rebuilding, and affirming practices that support our existence and aspirations. When I ask how beaders embody, conceptualize, or enact alternatives in their work, I am really asking: How does beadwork represent a path away from colonial normativity? What are Anishinaabe beaders refusing in their practice? What futures do they envision for themselves, their families, their communities, and their craft? What role does Indigenous creative practice play within the decolonial imaginary?

What I found through my conversations with beaders was that "not knowing" was often the catalyst for learning beadwork and engaging in other cultural practices for themselves. This dissatisfaction with "not knowing" drives us away from colonial power structures that have historically restricted and limited our knowledge. It motivates us to seek spaces where our cultural identities and knowledge can thrive, as seen through beadwork and other resurgent practices. This movement from a place of "not knowing" to "wanting to know" becomes a fugitive act.

In our discussions, refusal emerges in the turning towards resurgent practices. Beaders practice generative refusal by rejecting colonialism as normative and focusing instead on their own cultural practices and ways of thinking. They also enact generative refusal by challenging capitalist norms of productivity and profit, viewing beadwork as a relational and reciprocal act.

This perspective prioritizes family, community, and care over economic gain, demonstrating how refusal can foster cultural resurgence and autonomy.

Throughout our lives, we are often taught about the types of future we "should" want. In Canada, this is often framed through neoliberalist ideals that position success in the form of what we can contribute to the economy. This entails getting a "good" education so that we can later secure ourselves a "good" job. However, this messaging forecloses other possibilities, particularly for Indigenous peoples who must contend with stereotypes, prejudice, and lived realities under colonialism that preclude them from achieving success within Western frameworks. I don't want to say that success isn't possible for Indigenous peoples under neoliberalism but, rather, that there is a swirling world of privileges and access that extend inclusion to some and exclusion to others.

Education is frequently described as "the new buffalo" (Stonechild, 2006) to signify its role in supporting and sustaining Indigenous peoples, similar to how the buffalo once sustained Plains nations. The assumption behind this phrase is that many of our traditional ways of living are gone, so adaptation is necessary. Not content with this approximation, Métis writer Chelsea Vowel (2022) asks, "Instead of accepting that the buffalo and our ancestral ways will never come back, what if we simply ensure that they do?" (p. 21). In this way, beadwork (and attendant practices like hide-tanning, quillwork, basketry, and weaving) is an act of world-building. Not only do beaders reject foreclosed futures (i.e., accepting that knowledge is lost and can't be regained), they intentionally have turned towards traditional practices to uphold responsibilities to future generations, ensuring not only that these practices come back, but that they will be maintained for the future.

In our conversations, beaders voiced their anxiety about the future, especially when considering global issues like climate change, divisive politics, and ongoing conflicts. They worry that their children might face similar hardships and traumas that they themselves have endured. Our love and our rage drive us to seek alternatives to the current state of the world. These two emotions, combined, are central to Indigenous resurgence and have inspired the learning journeys and creative expressions of these women. As Indigenous women, we seek safety, love, value, and care. We also yearn for these same things for our children, along with a sense of community, connection, and validation. That is how beaders engage with and embody otherwise.

What It Is To Be A Good Ancestor

My final question serves as a summation of sorts, asking *What learning is made present through beadwork?* I pose this question not to try to fit these findings into existing educational models or make them conform to traditional ideas of pedagogy, but to push at the borders of what we may know and what we may learn through engaging with Anishinaabe creative practices. This question is meant to tease out the nuances of learning in Anishinaabe creative contexts and community settings and to further reflect on the contributions of this research and implications for pedagogy and practice. I wish to state that this dissertation represents only one perspective on beadwork and its implications as a site of learning. The stories shared here represent a small group of Anishinaabe beaders and there are many stories that are left out of this telling. There is still much work to be done, including taking on a more gendered analysis of beadwork and creative practices, incorporating a greater range of perspectives including those of youth and Elders, and theorizing about our educational needs and desires as Indigenous communities.

In considering how best to answer this question, I wish to return to Ellsworth's (2005) exploration of anomalous places of learning for a moment. In her examination of museum spaces, architecture, and art, she finds that learning isn't just about absorbing predefined knowledge but involves a dynamic process where the learner's identity and understanding emerge and evolve through their engagement with the learning experience itself. Beadwork, as a form of learning, offers a different perspective on education that is often overlooked in Euro-Western discourse. While conventional views of education tend to focus on cognitive, psychological, or ideological frameworks, beadwork and similar unconventional creative learning environments, challenge this notion by emphasizing that the learning self is not a fixed entity but something that emerges through engagement with the learning process itself. Hide-tanners transform moose hide into a precious and valuable material but hide-tanners are simultaneously transformed in the process in ways that transcend language. Beadworkers engage in a process of creation when they pick up needle and thread but beadworkers themselves are created through this gesture. As learners, they are always-already in a state of becoming. This study shows that being an expert is not an end to learning. Learning is always happening in beadwork practice. No one *is* an expert but all are in the process of becoming expert.

Further, the learning that is present in beadwork practices is not imparted through a set of directives given by a single authority. Rather, learning emerges through being-in-relation. Anishinaabe concepts of relationality mean that beadwork, and other creative learning, occurs within a framework of care and support, and learners are intrinsically motivated through a sense of personal accountability to improve their skills and a larger responsibility towards the knowledge that is shared with them. As Hebert-Spence and Robertson (2024) note, "It's not about telling me what to do or what I was doing wrong, it was about showing and having that

activity present" (p. 85). Overall, learning in beadwork is relational, supportive, and driven by personal and communal responsibilities.

At the beginning of this dissertation, I critiqued the use of beadwork in school settings as a form of superficial Indigenization. Viewing beadwork as a decolonial aesthetic practice reveals its true transformative potential, as well as its expansive possibilities. The learning derived from beadwork practice extends beyond teaching students how to count or spatially orient themselves. It encompasses a deeper transformation of consciousness, from a fragmented existence to a constitutive whole, from ignorance to curiosity, and offers a flight path out of and away from colonial normativity towards Indigenous futurities. As a site of learning, beadwork teaches us that knowledge is not solely an intellectual pursuit but also arrives through dreams, lived experiences, practice, engagement with the world, and our senses. It has the capacity to impart a rich array of knowledge, including cultural traditions, family histories, material understandings, technical skills, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and a sense of relational responsibilities to family, communities, and oneself. These knowledges are affirmative and positive, creating space to imagine, envision, and embody otherwise for ourselves.

Like Ellsworth (2005), the goal of this dissertation was to study unconventional practices without trying to fit them into existing educational definitions or frameworks. Rather than transform them into something familiar and extractive, designing future pedagogies based on what I found, my aim was to explore beadwork just as it is in order to better understand and recognize new, unforeseen, and unexpected processes or ideas that Anishinaabe creative practices might reveal. By examining beadwork as an anomalous place of learning, I wanted to consider new ways of teaching and learning that have not yet been fully developed or defined. In light of these desires, I offer the following: If we view decolonizing education as a goal, then our

creative practices suggest moving beyond education systems that prioritize the mind over the body and the individual over the collective. Similarly, if we consider Indigenizing education as a goal, it is less about transforming colonial institutions and more about ensuring that our communities have access to meaningful learning opportunities rooted in our own languages, lands, identities, and ways of knowing. That is precisely the vision offered by the beaders I spoke with. They were less interested in interrogating colonialism and more interested in creating spaces for their own learning as Anishinaabe-kweg.

Defining Indigenous education needs to go beyond schooling contexts to consider the learning and ways of knowing that are always-already taking place or being engaged within our own communities. I think an important question to ask ourselves as Indigenous peoples is: What do we want Indigenous education to do? If all we want is for children to grow up and be successful according to neoliberal ideals, then we need to continue upholding Euro-Western education as the means to achieve that, as fraught as it may be. However, if we want our children to grow up as whole persons, accountable not only to themselves, but to the legacies set by past generations and to the futures of generations to come, perhaps this points to new possibilities, new visions, and new approaches in how we think about teaching and learning. The stories shared within this dissertation represent a break and a disruption in typical Indigenous education discourse, offering a different perspective on how we learn and what we learn through the act of creation, as a sensory, embodied experience.

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Appendix A: Letter of Information for Participants

Faculty of Education

Information Letter

Boozhoo!

My name is Melissa Twance and I am a PhD Candidate in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University. I am Anishinaabe and come from Netmizaagamig Nishinaabeg. I am studying Anishinaabe beadwork as a site of learning and I am inviting you to participate in my study. The title of my study is: *Futurities in Anishinaabe Arts Practices: Learning as Decolonial Praxis*. The purpose of this study is to explore how Indigenous makers imagine the future and foster spaces of learning that express our desires as Anishinaabe people.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. Before you decide whether or not you would like to take part in this study, please read this letter carefully to understand what is involved. After you have read the letter, if you have any questions or want clarification about anything, please ask me.

 Before you make a decision you will need to know the purpose of the study, the possible risks and benefits of being in the study and what you will have to do if you decide to participate. I am going to talk with you about the study and give you this letter and a consent form to read. You also may ask to have this letter read to you. You do not have to make a decision now; you can take the letter and consent form home and share it with friends and family if you would like. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign the consent form. Keep this letter as it contains contact information and answers to questions about the study.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research is being done for my doctoral dissertation in Educational Studies at Lakehead University. Academic research related to Indigenous education has largely focused on how to improve schooling for students and their families. In this study I want to know how Anishinaabe creative practice offers new possibilities for decolonial thought and action in education. My research questions ask how Anishinaabe beadwork artists creatively imagine futures for themselves and how they may foster spaces for learning outside of schooling.

What information will be collected?

I will collect information through one-on-one visits with beadworkers and also through active participation in a beading circle with these beadworkers over the span of 4-5 weeks. In our oneon-one visits, I will be asking for background information such as your age and years of practice as a beadworker, what community you are from, and about your experiences with beadwork and other Anishinaabe arts practices. In the beading circle, I will be documenting the process and I will ask questions related to beadwork, learning, and culture. I will ask your permission to take photographs, audio-, and video-recordings.

Why was I asked to participate in the study?

You are being asked to join this study because you are recognized within the community as a skilled and knowledgeable beadworker. What you have to share is important to this study because it will help me to document local Anishinaabe perspectives concerning beadwork and its value as a site of learning.

How long will I be in the study? How many other people will be in the study?

This study is expected to take place over 5-6 weeks in the Fall of 2023. I will be inviting 7 other people to be part of this study.

What is requested of me as a participant?

I would like to visit with you in your workspace, if possible. We will arrange to visit together at a convenient time for you. If you do not wish to visit in your workspace, you may choose a quiet, private place that is comfortable for you. During this visit, I will ask you to share pieces of work that are particularly significant to you. I also will ask questions about your creative practice and experience as a beadworker. Each visit/interview will take approximately one hour. With your permission, our conversation will be audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of the data transcription. With your permission, I will take photographs of your workspace and of the pieces of work that you have shared with me to document your creative process and practice.

 I would also like to invite you to take part in a beading circle with other participants in this study. The beading circle will meet up to 5 times during the month of October. During these beading circles, you will be asked to create a piece of work that reflects upon the Anishinaabe word "*aanikoobijigan,*" a term used to refer to both a grandchild and a grandparent, and the question, "*What does it mean to be a good ancestor?*" I will also introduce other questions for us to reflect upon as a group while we each work on our pieces. With your permission, I will use audio and video-recording to ensure accuracy of the data transcription. If you do not wish to be recorded using video, I can angle the camera away so that you are not physically in the shot. With your permission, I will take photographs in the beading circle and of the work being made to document the process of working and creating together. I may also take notes in a notebook throughout the beading circle.

 In our last beading circle together, I will ask you to share the works that you have created with everyone in the circle. I also will ask the group for input and feedback about if and how the works should be represented and disseminated later.

 Once interview transcriptions are complete, I will give you the opportunity to review them to verify that they are accurate and I will make changes to them at your request. I will also provide you with an overview of my observations and ask you if those seem accurate to you and give you an opportunity to discuss these if you would like.

What are the risks?

There are no known risks for participating in this study. However, if answering some of the questions makes you uncomfortable or triggers a painful memory, please let me know. If needed, you can skip a question, or we could stop our conversation and I turn off the recording for a few moments or you can decide to stop participating altogether. I also will have contact information for community support (i.e., local counselors, psychologists, or other mental health support) that I can give to you if you feel the need to talk to a professional.

How will I benefit from the study?

There are several potential benefits to this study. You may appreciate the opportunity to come together in a community of beadworkers to share and critically reflect on your experiences and perspectives. If you give permission for me to photograph your work, you will also receive photographs of these. There may also be opportunities for you to exhibit your work in an art gallery at a later date if the group decides to pursue this idea.

 This study also will increase our understanding of Anishinaabe arts practices as culturally-based ways of knowing, learning, and doing. It will help us develop a community-based understanding of decolonizing education and provide insight into how well different research methods I use in this study work with Anishinaabe ways of knowing.

What happens if I do not choose to join the research study?

Your participation is voluntary and there is no obligation for you to take part in the study.

When is the study over? Can I leave the study before it ends?

The study is expected to end after all participants have completed one-on-one visits with me, the beading circle has concluded, and all of the information has been collected. You have the right to drop out of the research study at any time. There is no penalty if you decide to do so.

 If you no longer wish to be in the research study, please contact me, Melissa Twance at (807) 356-1244. There will be no consequences whatsoever if you withdraw from this study. Any of your individual data that has been collected up to this point will be destroyed. Please note, however, that because of the collective nature of the beading circles, your contribution cannot be easily deleted from those audio or video-recordings without losing the input from other participants. For this reason, your contributions to the circle will be kept in the data but I will

take care to anonymize and make you unidentifiable where possible. If you choose to withdraw, your input in the beading circles will not be used in the final analysis.

How will confidentiality be maintained and my privacy be protected?

There are limitations to maintaining anonymity and confidentiality within this study. We will be gathering together for the beading circles so anonymity and confidentiality cannot be maintained within that space. The participants in this research project have been selected from a small group of people, all of whom are known to each other in some way.

Outside of the beading circle, it is possible that you may be identifiable to other people in the beadwork community based on what you have said. You may also be identifiable through photographs of your work and workspace that may be shared in the final dissertation.

I will make every effort to keep all the information you tell me during the study strictly confidential. During the data collection phase, data will only be shared with my PhD committee. Although I will report direct quotations from our conversations in the dissertation, you may choose a fake name (pseudonym) for yourself to be used in the transcripts, notes, and final report unless you tell me that you would like me to use your real name.

I also will not share any recordings or photographs that identify you without your written consent. Your face may appear in pictures and videos taken during fieldwork since I will be documenting the beading circle process. However, for publication purposes (like my dissertation, journal articles, and conference presentations), you may choose whether you would prefer to be unidentifiable. (This would be done through blurring your face in any images or me selecting images that do not show your face or other identifiable features).

What will my data be used for? Where will my data be stored?

Data from this study will be analyzed to look for common themes, stories, and connections associated with Anishinaabe beadwork practice as a site of learning and to better understand how Anishinaabe makers assign meaning to their beadwork. The results of this research will be used in my PhD dissertation, in presentations at academic or professional conferences, and in written articles for academic and professional audiences.

 During data collection and analysis, typed field notes, photographs, and videos will be carefully kept on a password protected computer in my home office. A backup copy of the data will be stored on an encrypted, password protected external hard drive. Following the study, I will send the hard drive to my supervisor, Dr. Connie Russell who will store it in a locked file cabinet in her office for a period of 7 years, after which it will be destroyed.

Will I be able to see a copy of my data and the research results or the final report? Yes. You will receive copies of photographs that specifically depict you and your work that I have been taken throughout the study. You also will be provided with a summary of your contributions that will be used in the final dissertation.

 You may request a research summary or an electronic copy of the full dissertation by indicating so on the consent form, and I will email the documents to you.

Who can I call with questions, complaints, or if I'm concerned about my rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me, Melissa Twance, at (807) 286-2212 or mktwance@lakeheadu.ca. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Connie Russell at (705) 330-4008 or crussell@lakeheadu.ca.

This study has been approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8010 Ext. 8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

 Miigwech for your interest in participating in this research.

Sincerely,

Melissa Twance

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

Faculty of Education

Informed Consent Form

Title of the Research Project:

Futurities in Anishinaabe Arts Practices: Learning as Decolonial Praxis

Researcher Information:

The research is being conducted by:

Melissa Twance, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education
Lakehead University, 955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, ON, P7B 5E1
Email: mktwance@lakeheadu.ca   Tel: 807-286-2212

With supervisor:

Dr. Connie Russell, Professor, Faculty of Education
Lakehead University, 1 Colborne St. W., Orillia, ON, L3V 7X5
Email: crussell@lakeheadu.ca   Tel: 705-330-4008

☐   No, I do not consent to participate in the research.

☐   Yes, I agree to participate in the research as outlined in the information letter.

By signing this form, you confirm:

☐   I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.

☐   I understand that this study involves a one-on-one visit with Melissa and that it will be audio-recorded with my consent. I understand that Melissa may take photographs and quote parts of our conversation in her dissertation.

☐   I understand that this study involves a community beading circle and that it will be both audio- and video-recorded with my consent. I understand that Melissa may take photographs and quote parts of the beading circle conversations in her dissertation.

☐ I understand that I can remain anonymous in any publication or public presentation of this research and I can choose to use a fake name (pseudonym), or I can choose to use my real name. If I choose to use my real name, I waive my right to anonymity.

☐ I agree to participate in the research project and understand that my participation is voluntary, that I may refuse to answer any question, and that I am free to withdraw my participation without having to give a reason and that doing so will not affect me now or in the future.

☐ I understand that my privacy and the privacy of all data will be protected and that only Melissa and her PhD committee (Drs. Connie Russell, Leisa Desmoulins, and Fiona Blaikie) will have access to the information gathered and that all data will be kept secure for 7 years after the study, at which time it will be destroyed.

☐ A copy of the Information Letter has been given to me for my records.

I agree to be audio-recorded   ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to be video-recorded   ☐ Yes ☐ No
If no, I agree that Melissa may use video but I do not want to be seen in the video   ☐ Yes ☐ No

I permit Melissa to take photographs of:

Myself ☐ Yes ☐ No
My work ☐ Yes ☐ No
My workspace ☐ Yes ☐ No
The beading circle ☐ Yes ☐ No

I allow my real name to be identified in any publications resulting from this study.   ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, I want Melissa to use this fake name (pseudonym) to identify me:

_____

I would like a copy of:

My data (including photographs) ☐ Yes ☐ No
The research summary ☐ Yes ☐ No
The full dissertation ☐ Yes ☐ No

These should be sent to me at the following address:

_____

Name of Participant: (Please print): _____

_____   _____
Signature of participant   Date

(Please retain one copy of this consent letter for your records and return one copy to Melissa.)