

Ji zoongde'eyaang, To Have A Strong Heart;
Artistic Practice and Language Transmission: A Path to Healing

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ABSTRACT

Ji zoongde'eyaang, To Have A Strong Heart;
Artistic Practice and Language Transmission: A Path to Healing

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"Ji zoongde'eyaang – To Have A Strong Heart" is an Indigenous/Anishnaabe research creation project which illuminates an arts-based process. This thesis explores a framework that embraces an inter-generational tradition of expressing embodied experiences—memories, losses, and reclamation between Anishnaabe artist Lara Kramer and her mother Ida Baptiste. The purpose of this research is to explore the ways in which the creative process facilitates embodied knowledge and contributes to a process of inter-generational healing. This exploration takes place in documenting the use of auto-ethnography, drawing from mother/daughter intergenerational stories and life experiences and the transmission of this knowledge through the Anishinaabemowin language and the creation of blankets as symbols of love, care, warmth and mothering. Furthermore, I describe the creative process of blanket making, working with the historical artifact of trade blankets, together with bias tape and tin jingles, and their connection to Anishinaabemowin history and language transmission. I examine the thread of “strong heartedness” that is woven through the process, and the blankets, in a spirit of relationality, cultural connection and survivance. Ultimately, this thesis provides a model of a holistic approach to healing, by fostering deeper cultural and love-based connections, centering the mother-daughter methodology through collaboration and knowledge sharing.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this THESIS my aunty Judy Goodsky-Lyle as she prepares to travel to the spirit world. Your extensive writing and documentation of our family's lineage has brought so much pride to our family. In your words "We are family, no matter how fractured we were at one time". Through our writing, our painting, our performances we are healing and creating a legacy for our children's children. "It is a healing piece as I am sure many of Lara's art-work does just that not just for her, but for the First Nations people in a whole. I see and have a painting my sister did and in it I see how she painted to create some healing that needed to happen for her. I too do that in my writing I do to honour my family, I know in some way it will give them a bit of insight into our journey and to let them know, they are not alone." Goodsky-Lyle, February 25th 2021

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Figure 1. Photo by David Wong, October 22nd 2022, performance by Jeanette Ktowich

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Introduction

My Anishinaabe name is Waasnoode Niimi Kwe, which translates to "Northern Lights Dancing Woman." I am known as Lara Kramer and belong to the Martin Clan. I embrace a diverse heritage, with maternal roots tracing back to the Anishinaabe (Oji-cree) lineage, to Lac Seul First Nation and my paternal heritage connecting me to the Mennonite tradition. I was born and raised in London, Ontario, within the territory of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron peoples, born to my parents Ida Baptiste (Oji-cree) and Paul Kramer (Mennonite). I hold membership in the Berens River First Nation, situated in Treaty 5 territory, a connection I inherited from my mishoomis Fred Baptiste. My nookomis, Emily Baptiste (Wesley), was born in Lac Seul First Nation, located in Treaty 3 territory.

In this Master's project, I explore the question "In what ways does the creative process facilitate embodied knowledge and contribute to a process of healing"? I addressed this question through the use of auto-ethnography, through mother/daughter intergenerational stories and knowledge transmission, through a creative practice involving blanket creation and through the use of the Anishinaabemowin language. Over the course of the past three years I have engaged in a reflective process to make meaning of these experiences and their relationship to cultural strengthening, Ji zoongde'eyaang/ strong heartedness and to Indigenous healing.

Through my Master's process at Concordia University, I have become more aware of how education has solidified my life's purpose and healing journey. Integrating this knowledge has made me more aware of the strong matriarchs in my family's lineage, including my grandmother Emily Baptiste (Wesley) and Mother Ida Baptiste. I have come to respect more deeply the intergenerational knowledge passed down the female line, teachings that have strengthened me as a person and helped me to embody a 'strong heart'. I also understand that, as an intergenerational survivor of the Indian Residential Schools, I carry a significant weight of responsibility in contributing to inter-generational healing for Indigenous people with this lived experience.

I am a member of the first in three generations of women in my family to NOT have had a child removed and placed in child welfare or the Indian Residential School system, a colonial legacy that has left its mark on my and other Indigenous families (Haig Brown, 2018; Knott, 2018;

Wagamese, 2018). Today, I am still discovering interrupted cultural teachings on a journey towards dignity, well-being, and pride. I have countered cultural erasure and intergenerational suffering by actively creating art and serving as a role model for my children. I have been fortunate to make efforts for this through my practice with art and dance, by being present with my children and involving them in my dancing and culture. I also nurture a strong relationship with my mother and connect to our family's traditional territory and prioritize self-care.

As part of this journey, I moved to Tiohtià:ke/Mooniyang/Montreal to pursue a career in contemporary dance, enrolling at Concordia University in the BFA Contemporary Dance program. I later established my own company, Lara Kramer Dance, in 2012. Since then, my artistic creations have taken various forms, including dance, performance, and installation, and have been showcased in numerous locations, spanning Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Martinique, Norway, Vienna, the US, and the UK. This background inspired me to integrate the arts into my graduate research.

Conceptualizing The Study

Many Indigenous researchers have forged a path of knowledge creation, integrating their artistic practice with their cultural teachings in their graduate research (e.g. Shawayahamish, 2023; McMann, 2019; Mumford, 2016). In this project, I enlist art practices in relation to healing principles. Indigenous healers, authors and scholars have demonstrated that cultural restoration can involve processes such as movement, rhythm, story work, song, tones, drums, and relationship with animals through qualities such as wool, hide, and skins, and relationship to land through basket making, berry picking, medicine walks and gathering (Richardson, 2021; Clark, 2020; Pedri-Spade, 2016; Archibald, 2008). Indigenous Healing involves engaging in processes that connect the heart, body, mind spirit, emotion, and memory, inviting connection, transformation and reintegration through meaning-making. Meaning-making is the engagement in the ongoing learning and healing process, where researchers discover and share meaning. The open-endedness of a creative process and research projects allows for a multitude of meanings to be discovered and felt. What resonates and carries significance can and will vary from one person

to the next in accordance with their life stages and experiences. It fosters an awareness that we are in a perpetual state of learning, understanding, and discovering meaning and depth in our life processes. In speaking to the sharing of meaning within a story, and in its unfolding, each listener is free to discover important lessons for themselves and relate these learnings to their current life situation (Hermes, Engman and McKenzie, 2021). This allows for ongoing meaning making that continues to evolve.

According to Metis scholar Cathy Richardson, we can harness the potential of our bodies and the nurturing qualities of our surroundings to alleviate pain (Richardson, 2021). By expressing ourselves and restoring equilibrium, we can alter our energy and improve our sense of well-being and balance. This transformative process is akin to alchemy and can lead to changes on physical, emotional, and mental levels. Activities like laughing, sweating, dancing, and syncing with rhythms mirror the natural processes of energy conversion and change inherent to human existence. (Richardson, 2024). This research-creation project aims to deliver positive insights, primarily demonstrating the cultivation of embodied knowledge and its role in fostering healing processes.

Through Performance, Choreography, Multidisciplinary Art, Sound, Video, Installation, Poetry, and Visual Art, my practice encompasses a range of artistic expressions and healing modalities, including movement. These processes activate the senses and offer an opportunity to re-evaluate the value of Indigenous identity, life experience and strong spiritedness (Belmore, 2022; Myre 2022; Mengesha, 2019; Belcourt, 2017) Over the past fifteen years, my work has been deeply rooted in intergenerational connections, intergenerational knowledge, and in disrupting the violence of the colonizers and the residential school system.

Methodology - Research-Creation Based on Daughter/Mother Interaction

The research-creation project, "Ji zoongde'eyaang," draws from an Anishinaabemowin term meaning "to have a strong heart." This framework embraces an inter-generational tradition of expressing embodied experiences—memories, losses, and reclamation between Anishnaabe artist Lara Kramer and her mother Ida Baptiste.

Through visual art and the "Ji Zoongde'eyaang" research-creation project, I created a series of blankets through a mother-daughter collaboration. Alongside the series of blankets, I produced various other pieces including a short film, poetry, an audio recording and performance. For the dissemination of the Ji Zoongde'eyaang project, we also included older paintings and previously unseen works by Ida Baptiste from the early 1990s, which reflect her memories of attending Brandon Indian Residential School. For the purpose of this Master's thesis, I will specifically focus on the series of blankets. This project contributes to a growing body of knowledge on Indigenous Healing (Ibarra-Lemay, 2024; Richardson, 2024, 2021; Stevens, 2020) and demonstrates what it means to have a strong heart (Bell, 2021; Gross, 2016).

Anchored in my cultural identity, which is rooted in Anishinaabemowin and my ties to the traditional territory of Lac Seul First Nation in Treaty 3 territory, I collaborated closely with my mother. She is both a visual artist and an Ojibwa language teacher. Together, we worked on the "Ji zoongde'eyaang" research-creation project. However, for the purposes of this Master's research, I articulate, through writing and reflecting on the creative process of the visual art, a daughter/mother methodology of research and knowledge creation. I do this by applying an autoethnographic process (Kovach, 2010; Houston, 2007; Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. S., & Smith, L. T, 2008) using embodied experiences that create both the process knowledge and the work of art itself. Within this collaborative endeavor, I focus on relationality, inter-generational transmission, and knowledge co-creation, particularly through our Anishinaabemowin language and the co-creation of blankets. In this process, I actively hear, and reflect upon, oral storytelling shared by my mother, as well as the sharing of Anishinaabe cultural teachings, familiar wisdom and language. Anderson (2000) recounts how traditionally women had jurisdiction in providing spiritual and cultural knowledge to children. Through my personal documentation and reflections I will provide the platform and space for the mother-daughter relationship and ultimately healing.

Indigenous autoethnography provides a method of learning and knowledge building through the process of combining autobiographical storytelling with academic research methods. In "Indigenous Methodologies", Margaret Kovach describes through autoethnographies and autobiographical narrative inquiries, researchers reveal how the intuitive and experiential work constructs knowledge (Kovach, 2010, p.11). Grounded in lived experience, Indigenous autoethnography presents a first-person narrative that is contributes to empowering discourse

within academia. Storytelling that transpires from Indigenous autoethnography brings power and strength to Indigenous experiences, portraying grounded knowledge and nuanced expression. Celeste Pedri-Spade in “The Drum is Your Document” explains “This concept of sharing is fundamental. We share our knowledge and experiences through story and song, and what we share, we have at some point received from and through our relationships with our family members, friends, and all parts of creation.” (Celeste Pedri-Spade , 2026, p395) Historically and on-going, Anishinaabe have their own methods of knowledge transmission that are grounded in ceremony, song, dance, artistic practices, community and family connections as well as land-based activities.

My approach and method is drawn from my own lived experience, integrating my own reflective writing and academic research. It allows me to articulate an authentic experience that is rooted in cultural and familial teachings, enriching the depth of my work.

The mother-daughter methodology between my mother and me is informed by our Anishnaabe way of being. The approach of mothering and the roles we take on are non-linear and come with the responsibility of nurturing and restoring our culture for future generations. Throughout the years, our roles have often been interchangeable, the qualities of mothering and caregiving have always been present in our interactions for as long as I can remember. In our collaborative process, this mutual nurturing was evident, with mothering flowing in both directions. As Renée Elizabeth Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard explains, “Women can be mother in different ways, such as aunties, grannies, or even through adoption. In Anishnaabe culture, mother, auntie, and granny are fluid and interchangeable roles, not biologically-defined identities.” (Lavelle-Harvard, D. M., & Lavell, J. C. (Eds.), 2006, p66). In our practice together, the roles of caretaking each other and my children were evident and reciprocal. My mother and I shared various responsibilities, offered teachings, exchanged humor, prepared meals, engaged actively with my children, participated in conversations and stories, and guided each other in our common practice of creating the blankets together. The mother-daughter interactions became central to our creative practice and naturally expanded to a multi-generational working environment.

Description of the Creative Process

In this project, I worked with the historical artifact of trade blankets, together with bias tape and tin jingles. The materials of the trade blanket and jingles were intuitively selected to come together. The distinct sound and texture of the jingles creates a unique soundscape that contrasts with the softer sound of the blankets and together brought forth a sonic energy. Even when the blankets and jingles were still, there was a sonic renewal energy that was present. While



reflecting on our creative process together in creating the blankets, Anishnaabe Elder Emerson Nanigishki'ing explains, "What I know about those jingles and the healing aspect of it, in our healing we know that the healing of the spirit runs through the air, through song and language. The sound of those jingles are reminding us of the rain, how healing the rain is. This is a special sound being lent to the blankets." (Dazibao, podcast., 2021)

My daughter Ruby was gifted the jingle dress dance from her Kokum, as a toddler having come close to the spirit world. I sought out to work with the materials of the jingles to be connected to the trade blankets as their histories resurfaced during pandemic. According to Prichard (2021) the jingles dress dance, a healing dance, was first visioned during the time of Spanish flu, gifting the Anishinaabeg people with this sacred tradition.

Figure 2. Photo by Lara Kramer, July 13th 2019, Ruby Caldwell Kramer at the Kahnawake Pow Wow

While the Trade Blankets carry their own history, in speaking with Anishinaabe Elder Emerson Nanigishki'ing in a podcast in 2021 he articulates "The trade blankets hold a multi-dimensional meaning, used in ceremony, used for trading of goods, used for warmth. And they were used in the spreading of smallpox for the purpose of eradicating Indigenous communities across Turtle

Island.” (Dazibao, podcast, 2021). The trade blankets are multi-purpose in our contemporary times, they are used in our ceremonies, for gifting, keeping warm and for comfort.

The exploration of the sonic energy of the blankets and jingles further extends the voices, dreams, and histories they represent. And together bring a feeling of recovery, discovery, and reclamation of our traditional and contemporary stories of well-being and survivance.

I design the blankets and co-create them with my mother, as a demonstration of how inter-generational women’s knowledge is shared. More precisely, Ida Baptist’s role in the project involved sewing and preparing the jingles to be assembled on the blanket. Through this process, the transmission of knowledge, family stories, traditions and Anishinaabemowin language converge as research-creation. As such, key aspects of Indigenous methodology are apparent, such principles such as wholeness (Richardson, 2023; Battiste, 2021; Henderson, 2021; Absolon, 2010) stories (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021; Betasamoske Simpson, 2017; Wall Kimmerer, 2013, Wilson, 2008).

In my approach, I adopt a methodology rooted in a Nishnaabeg framework for learning, as articulated by Leanne Betasamoske Simpson in "As We Have Always Done," where she describes activities such as "doing or making, relationship, visiting, singing, dancing, storytelling, experimenting, observing, reflecting, mentoring, ceremony, dreaming, and visioning as ways of generating knowledge" (Betasamoske Simpson, 2017, p 64). This methodology informs my engagement with the creative process, particularly within the context of a mother-daughter collaboration.

Our shared practice, heartfelt collaboration, and cultural relation fostered a sense of strength, honour, and deeper connection. Our interactions and creative expression deepened ties to our ancestors, future generations, and the present generations, enriching our cultural way of being. Coming together in this creative practice was a pathway that allowed us to cultivate further mother-daughter interactions that were previously interrupted, offering us an opportunity to recover our sense of agency and connection to one another.

As expressed by Renée Elizabeth Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard, “As women, as mothers, as aunts, and grannies, our influence over the family, community or nation determines the well

being of the future generations.” (Lavelle-Harvard, D. M., & Lavell, J. C. (Eds.), 2006, p75). This underscores our responsibility “By reclaiming our responsibilities as carriers of our cultures, we resist, we revitalize, and we teach another way is possible” (Betasamoske Simpson, 2006, p 30) to restore cultural knowledge through our mother-daughter interactions, involving my children and future generations.

Intuition, Spontaneity and Duration – A Platform for Story-embodied knowledge

daughter/mother methodology

I began the creative process with my mother by sharing my ideas of designs for the blankets with her. During this process my mother and I often worked in her basement studio on Chippewas of Rama First Nation. Together we explored how my designs would transfer from paper sketches from my journal to the actual materials. We would lay one blanket at a time on a large worktable placing different colored bias tape and lose jingles to visualize the patterns, colors, graphic shapes, images, and design before we assembled the materials together. It always felt magical seeing the bright colors coming together, I felt curious about the shapes and patterns that would transpire and excited by how all the moving parts would manifest together.

My decision-making process regarding the designs, layout, colors, and jingle placement was often guided by intuition, rather than following a strict plan. During these instances, the decision-making evolved into a collaborative endeavor rather than executing a predetermined design. The vision or my early sketches acted more as a guide to build from, a starting off point from where I could share with my mother and work intuitively from. I consistently felt supported and guided by my mother throughout this process which gave me a sense of confidence and pride. The preparation of the materials for sewing offered space for a lot of communication and collaboration. And once the design felt right, together we prepared our materials for assembling.

We worked with different colored jingles; blue, red, silver, copper and gold, and in both small and large sizes. We then attached a 2 ½ –3-inch piece of bias tape through the head of the jingle, securing it by squeezing the head of the jingle with pliers to the knotted bias tape. This created a

means to sew the jingle to the bias tape on the blanket. Over the course of the project, we must have prepared over 800 jingles together. We would often work for an extended amount of time, while my children Ruby and Ocean played nearby. My children's presence added a sense of naturalness, playfulness, and spontaneity to the environment. At times they would help with the task of preparing the jingles or express their curiosity about the work at hand. Their spirits brought another layer to our work, a sense of youthfulness and interconnections with our family during our creative endeavors.

As part of the design and patterning we worked with bias tape in various colors; red, black, white, pink, blue, green, yellow, orange, fuchsia, gold, silver, and purple. The bias tape would first be pinned to the blanket, ensuring the angles and lines remained intact. One side of the bias tape was then sewn to the blanket for security, we would then pin the jingles under the loose side of the bias tape. The spacing and angle of the jingles from blanket to blanket would vary and always be precise to create a specific effect or to convey a story. Sometimes we would make an error and need to start over, reconsider the spacing and length. The arrangement of the jingles on each blanket were always carefully considered. Each jingle held its own narrative, evoking imagery of newly discovered memories, childhood memories, landscapes, or stories. The quantity, placement, angles, as well as the choice of size and color of the jingles, all held symbolic meaning and contributed to the overarching narrative woven into the blankets. Sometimes I would see the jingles as little spirits, or a part of a landscape such as a mountain side or body of water. These images would feed into the development and growth of the blanket, its story and life. As the jingles expressed story, it was within these moments that I would write and draft poetry.

The durational nature of our art practice, which involved assembling the jingles and preparing the blankets for sewing over an extended period, created a rich environment for the embodiment of knowledge. Throughout this process, numerous interactions unfolded between my mother and I, contributing to a deeper understanding and connection. There were moments when my mother would hum a traditional song or recount stories from her childhood, or recent memory permeating the practice with cultural knowledge and family history. She would often take the opportunity to teach me Anishinaabe words associated with the materials we were using, or share

in her own language journey, further grounding our work in language and tradition. This ongoing engagement with the materials and teachings allowed us to embody the knowledge transmitted through our creative endeavor, fostering a profound sense of cultural connection and personal growth.

In our undertaking to create the blankets, we engaged with our entire selves, including the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical aspects. This holistic approach extended not only to us but also to the materials involved, such as the blankets, thread, bias tape, and jingles. We perceived these materials as alive, having their own spirit, sensibility and qualities, forming dynamic relationships with us in the creative process. This concept of working comprehensively with our own being echoes in Absolon (2010), Indigenous wholistic theory, encompasses spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical aspects of our being, acknowledging the past, present, and future, including seven generations past and future. And in relation with the concept of recognizing the animate nature of the materials utilized in Ji zoongde'eyaang, Anishinaabe elder Emerson Nannigishki'ing shares, "Everything that is connected to the universe, when we talk about our relations we are not just talking about our human relations and ancestors, we are talking about everything connected to our universe. All that is life. We are talking about creation." [Audio Recording]. Chippewas of Rama First Nation member (October 2023).

Additionally, we made a point to honour the stories of the past, present and future that are interwoven within these blankets. For instance, in the creation of the blanket titled *This is the Place Where We Pray*, the aim was to create a family tree that not only rooted itself in past generations but also extended forward to future ones. The series of blankets that served as a pathway to the future; some were designed with future ancestors in mind, while others paid homage to our ancestors of the past.

Our practice together created a creative atmosphere where I was able to further develop generative ideas. This led to the vision of making a short film, *Under Thick Stubborn Ice*, featuring my mother, daughter, and stepfather wearing and activating two of the blankets. It encapsulated the embodiment of the blankets themselves and the shifting from child to elder and elder to child, offering the cyclical nature of life. Alongside four of the blankets; *Ndawenjigewag Waawaashkeshwag / Hunting With The Deer*, *Emily*, *Gorgeous Tongue*, and *She Peeked Through*

the Doorway, I wrote short poems. The poetry was developed simultaneously with the blankets as I sketched, drafted ideas, and composed text and stories. The poetry and blanket creation were closely woven together and accompanied each other when we exhibited the work.

As for the audio, I wanted to share the practice of Anishinaabemowin that I engaged in with my children. The audio clip titled *Gwejtoon ji kid yin e-kidyaanh / Try to say what I'm saying* shares the voices of my youngest child, Ocean and myself conveying the desire to speak and learn Anishinaabemowin and the importance of sharing it with the next generation. The use of audio highlighted the oral communication that exposed the idiosyncrasy of our speech, asserting a humbling and vulnerable process.

During one of our working sessions together, I discovered an old series of paintings that my mother had created in the early 90s. I remembered seeing some of the paintings during my childhood, while others were newly viewed. My mothers shared that they had never been exhibited, although there had been offers. The series of paintings drew from her experiences attending Brandon Indian Residential School and convey powerful story. Without hesitation, I asked my mother if she would consider exhibiting the series alongside our series of blankets. I envisioned our series of blankets enveloping her paintings as a support of warmth and love. After some thought, she agreed to include them in our future exhibition. I was proud and excited for their important contribution and for my mother to have a new opportunity to share them.

During our week of the installment of our exhibition of Ji zoongde'eyaang, I began to choreograph a short 30min performance with Nêhiyaw/Métis dance artist Jeanette Kotowich. She would feature our first draft of a blanket that wasn't titled or planned for exhibition. The idea of this performance was to create an offering and activation of the blankets for my mother during the opening and reception of our exhibition.

Although the film, poetry, audio, and performance works were created by myself, they were deeply influenced by the mother-daughter interactions and the presence and influence of my children and community. These artistic outcomes were deeply rooted in the mother-daughter interactions, reflecting the inspiring, positive, and generative nature of our collaborative creative process.

The direct connection between the additional works (film, poetry, audio, performance and paintings) and our blanket-making series felt significant, as they encompassed additional stories, depth of expression, and lived experiences of my mother's journey, my own and our family's legacy.

Through the weaving of our instincts, thoughts, impressions and spirit, three generations came together, contributing personal meaning to the process. This collective effort involving me, my mother and my children enhanced the strength of our beings, highlighting the interconnectedness of our family. Together, we created something significant, a tangible representation of our shared history, seen and imagined for generations to come.

In reflecting on this experience, I am reminded of the words of Richardson from “Decolonising pedagogy and promoting student well-being”, “We respond with our body, with our mind, with our emotions/feeling body and with our spirit. This framework helps me to remember the holistic nature of our being, human spiritedness and agency.” (Cathy Richardson, 2023, p. 32) This perspective resonates with my creative process and journey towards wholeness.

Stillness and Silence

Sometimes the visual landscape and ambiance of the room was quite involved. I could see the interplay of the objects, materials, colors, sound and light all apart of the artistic environment where my mother and I worked. My children were often deep in play, laughing and teasing, adding color and dynamics to the environment. All our expressions were a part of the interior landscape of the room. In these moments, our connection to our work and practice was palpable, frequently expressed through non-verbal cues. Silence and stillness would permeate the air, allowing the sensations to travel throughout the atmosphere and for the sounds and voices of the materials we were engaged with to emerge and demand my attention. Even when the materials were still, they sang and spoke to me.

I was flooded with memories of sharing silence with my mother, our non-verbal bond that pulled me back to my childhood. I recalled memories of ice fishing with my mother in Lac Seul First Nation during my childhood where we sat in silence in dialogue with our surroundings. In those

moments as a child, I would become aware of the environment around me, heightening my senses and deepened my awareness of my environment. The sensory cues of the land and the language of the ice, the knowledge of the fish all spoke to me, the body language of my mother, her calm demeanor and kind spirit held me.

When listening closely to the language of our environment, we gain a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of all living beings. And it is through our deep listening, we naturally dialogue with our surroundings and recognize the vitality in all things and the possibility of all things. As Kimmerer eloquently states in her novel *Braiding Sweetgrass*, " Water, land and even a day, the language a mirror for seeing the animacy of the world, the life that pulses through all things, through pines and nuthatches and mushrooms. This is the language I hear in the words; this is the language that lets us speak of what wells up all around us." (Kimmerer, 2021, pxxx) The language of our environment has so much to offer if we listen closely, we can hear the stories and knowledge that emerge. It opens us up to a deeper understanding of our living world, and a deeper understanding of ourselves.

Recently, as I sat and sewed with my mother, I was aware of the non-verbal dynamics at play. I was immersed in the present moment, engaging with my senses creating new memories that will continue to live. I can hear, smell, see, and taste the new memories as they speak to me and transport me through time. Drawing on Battiste's (2017) emphasis on the acknowledgment of spirit in learning environments, our mother/daughter methodology provided a space where our spirits could thrive. Our creative practice offered an environment where we could connect freely with non-verbal communication, a highly valuable space for our spirits to be. In describing the importance of silence and connection, Lawrence W. Gross argues in *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being*, "one way to achieve that emotional health-that full heart- and to gain spiritual connection with the world is to immerse oneself in silence especially when working with other people" (Gross, 2012, p. 70)

Transmission of the Anishinaabemowin Language

The Anishinaabemowin language was crucial to this project, by aiming to deepen connections to our embodied experiences and Anishnaabe relations. During our creative process, my mother, an

Anishinaabe language teacher, played a central role in transmitting the Anishinaabemowin language. For close to two years, I had formal lessons from her, however during our creative process she would spontaneously share relevant words or phrases as we worked. This created a more natural transmission of the language in the everyday, fostered a deeper engagement with cultural ways of knowing and being, ultimately contributing to the healing journey.

As Indigenous people we live in both worlds, we are in relationship with both our Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledge systems. One of the core values in our process together was having a sense of agency and well-being. As we engaged in our work together, we navigated our relationship to these diverse knowledge systems.

In reflection to Marie Battiste and Sa'ke'j Henderson, Indigenous and Trans-Systemic Knowledge Systems “Trans-systemic synthesis between Indigenous and Eurocentric Knowledge systems is searching for an enfolded knowledge system that reveals wholeness, rather than fragmentation of logic and causality” (Battiste and Henderson, 2021, p. 8). One way we demonstrated acknowledgment and respect for the co-existence of intricate knowledge systems was through our use of language. By conversing in both English and Anishinaabemowin, we engaged in a dialogue that honoured the insights and wisdom inherent in both Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledge systems. This respect for each system's contributions made the process of learning Anishinaabemowin through art-making meaningful and feelings of wholeness. I am unable to measure each systems contribution as this was not the objective, however I know both systems shared involvement in influencing the feelings of wholeness throughout the journey. The interconnection and interrelation of both knowledge systems was vital to the transmission of language.

Each design I shared with my mom had a name or title to accompany it, as well Anishinaabe phrases or words alongside my sketches. Sometimes a phrase or word would stick with me and feel like it was a component of the blanket's narrative, the underbelly. For instance, when we were creating the blanket titled *Gaabiinjibaa Anangook* from Anishinaabemowin translates as *They Came From The Stars* the word *Naadimaagewin* which translates to “the art of helping” distinguished itself. *Gaabiinjibaa Anangook* was a blanket I designed with my children in mind

and honouring their journey from the stars. My children were helping in the assembling of the jingles, their laughter, rowdiness, and play around my mother and I, the feeling of sharing together, through the generations was evident. The daughter/mother interaction expanded to the involvement of my children, working with loving helping hands through the generations.

Naadimaagewin, emerged under the surface like a hidden spirit. It represents the deeper, reflective narrative of our project that may not be immediately apparent but holds significant meaning. With “the art of helping” it evokes embodiment, feelings of warmth, love, support, wholeness, family, and connection which all contributed to a healing process. Historically the feelings of warmth, love, support, wholeness, family, and connection have been disrupted in our lineage due to the legacy of Indian residential schools.

Because Anishinaabemowin, the language of the Anishinaabeg, is built on verbs rather than nouns, it reflects a worldview centered on processes and events rather than inherent being and objects (Gross, 2016). It felt as though Anishinaabemowin, our cultural teachings, offered us support and courage during our process as we created the pieces and materials for assembling the blanket, all which would become part of our family's legacy. As my mom shared Anishnaabe words and phrases during our blanket-making sessions, it immersed the environment in the language. It gave space for the language to resonate and be a part of this process that we were sharing, feeling, connecting, and embodying knowledge together. Despite having some formal language classes beforehand, the hands-on experience of hearing, speaking, and using the language made it feel more natural. Nick Deleary Professor of Indigenous Studies, Recognized Midewiwin 4th degree leader & teacher, spoke about the importance of reconnecting to who you are. That our languages are embedded in our genetic body memory, our DNA coding (Deleary, *Vision Quest Fasters Spiritual Retreat*, May 17th 2024, Kahnawà:ke). The transmission of language goes beyond simply learning words; it encompasses the sounds, rhythms, and how language affects our bodies, minds, hearts, spirits, and souls. This is how we can feel deeply connected to the cultural ways of knowing, to understanding who we are. In connecting to who we are, our Anishnaabe heart we cultivate a sense of balance, of restoration.

The auditory experience with language and all of its sounds, tones, patterns and rhythms have a direct impact on our physical being, who we are. There is a wealth of knowledge embedded within language, and it informs our cultural perspective and worldview. Language seems to choreograph a dance of sorts, inviting us to move, dream, explore and connect to our heart. Nick Deleary further explains that we are physical beings. That the “A” in Anishnaabe represents the vibrating body (Deleary, *Vision Quest Fasters Spiritual Retreat*, May 17th 2024, Kahnawà:ke). Listening to my mother’s voice as she spoke Anishinaabemowin felt cathartic. With her unique sounds, tones and expressions there was a familiarity for me and a connection to who I am. How she transmitted the language felt very natural, almost childlike, and connected to my heart strings. As she shared interpretation cultural perspectives offered rich knowledge, narratives and stories. “Listening to the sound of our voice means that we need to listen with our full bodies-our hearts, our minds, and our physicality. It requires a full presence of being. It requires an understanding of the culturally embedded concepts and teachings that bring meaning to our practices and illuminate our lifeways” (Simpson, 2011, p. 33)

My mother provided guidance in learning, teaching Anishinaabe language and sharing practical sewing skills, all which facilitated in the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. I contributed by sharing my designs and ideas, with each blanket I set out to honour either a family member or a memorable experience. Together, we shared experiences of wholeness and connection during the creative endeavor, inspired by a shared purpose. This collaboration fostered creativity, sparked imagination and the exploration of possibility. “Rather than viewing ourselves as being in relationship with other people or things, we are the relationship that we hold and are part of.” (Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 2008, p. 82). The emphasis is placed on centering Indigenous self and as whole. Who I am, Where do I come from, Where am I going and What is my purpose, which continues to anchor and present knowledge through experience.

The Concept of Strong-Heartedness

I experience strong-heartedness when I feel confident, grounded and have a sense of support and connection to the world around me. That feeling of completeness that comes from within that is

interconnected to the universe, anchors me and opens that feeling of a strong vibrating heart. According to Anishnaabe scholar Lawrence W. Gross, emotional wellness and attaining a deep spiritual rapport with the world involves immersing oneself in silence, especially when engaged in collaborative endeavors, to achieve a sense of full heartedness (Gross, 2016). The state of strong heartedness embodies qualities of tenacity, courage and compassion. It's not reliant on external validation but stems from a feeling of wholeness, self-love, security, and well-being. The beauty of this state of being is that it enables me to care for others and maintain a positive attitude, even in challenging situations.

The purpose of examining the creative process allowed for the dissemination of embodied knowledge, sharing inter-generational creative processes providing others with insights and experiences that contribute to the healing journey. Through visual art and the storytelling that emerges, the creation project aims to create a platform for connection and to inspire others to explore their own path towards restoring balance through creativity. Gross expresses, “Storytelling and the lived experience of the Anishinaabeg mutually reinforce each other so that traditional values become etched on the heart of the people”. (Gross, 2016, p. 8)

By sharing what it means to have a strong heart, in the Thanksgiving Prayer, Lorraine McRae, an Elder from Rama First Nation, expresses in Anishinaabemowin Wiidookwishnaang ji mshkogaabwiyaang Miinwaa ji zoongde’eyaang miinwaa wewena ji nishnaabemyaang enso giizhigak which translates to: Help us to stand strong and to have a strong heart and to speak our language every day. The Ji zoongde’eyaang project contributes to collective empowerment and Indigenous well-being by weaving together the transmission of language from mother to daughter through the creative process of blanket making, creating, and building feelings of self-esteem and dignity towards oneself and one's cultural relations.

Method and Timeline

I created nine blankets in collaboration with my mother reflecting on the creative process together.

I first collected the materials needed to create the designs of nine blankets. I begin a scrapbook for sketching and designing ideas, incorporating Anishnaabe language.

Between March - September 2022 I travelled to my mother's home three times to work in her studio for a period of one week at a time. I started off by sharing with my mother sketches of my designs and ideas for the blankets, as a blueprint of sorts. The designing process of the blankets continued spontaneously in the creative process, both on my own and during my time with my mother. In addition to sketching the designs, I used the scrapbook for writing the Anishinaabemowin language, naming the blankets, and writing stories and poetry.

Together we prepared the jingles for sewing with ties pinning them to bias tape sewn on the blanket. Laying the blanket on a table we pinned the bias tape and jingles on before we finalized our markings and sewed. My mother taught me how to prepare the jingles, sew the pinned jingles and bias tape onto the blankets. Out of our practice of blanket making, I developed a film, poetry, audio and performance which were all connected to the mother-daughter interaction and creative practice.

Once the blankets were completed, we shared all of the work in an exhibition (see Appendix) at the MAI (Montreal arts interculturels) from October 22nd to November 19th 2022. We documented the work through photography and video.

Outcomes

Through the creative process of the Ji zoongde'eyaang research-creation project we deepened cultural connections, strengthened the mother-daughter bond, and nurtured embodied knowledge, all integral to our process of healing. The hands-on manual practice of blanket creation fostered relationality within the mother-daughter relationship, while the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and learning of the Anishinaabemowin language contribute to cultural restoration and a deeper sense of belonging. Our voices gained strength and courage from the embodiment and expression of our stories, which enabled us to share our work with a wider community.

This project instilled a sense of empowerment and dignity within the mother-daughter collaboration, while also serving as a model for younger generations to exercise their agency in voicing their experiences. According to Mengesha (2019), Indigenous women in Canada often face dual forms of dispossession – being displaced from their land and, in certain circumstances, experiencing challenges in asserting their Native identity or autonomy. The mothering and care surrounding the Ji zoongde'eyaang project increased self-esteem and helped establish a greater feeling of self-worth. Our stories unfolded and came into manifestation as a result of our own sense of agency in the self-directed process.

My mother shared medicine wheel teachings that were embedded within the language lessons and cultural teachings. The medicine wheel serves as a tool for achieving balance across different life cycles and stages. Many of these teachings, along with language, were integrated into our process of creating blankets and continued to act as a tool for restoring balance.

Beyond the transmission of cultural traditions and knowledge, my mother and I engaged in meaningful conversations supporting the processing of our experiences and emotions. This open dialogue fostered a deeper connection to our heritage and facilitated a process of healing. Through our shared creative exploration, we not only strengthened our bond but also embraced our cultural relations and collective history.

In the process I felt a level of trust between my mother and me. Although I felt vulnerable and perhaps intimidated by the ambition of the creative project, and nervous of my lack fluency as a beginner Anishinaabemowin speaker, the trust in the creative process and desire to work together in the mother - daughter approach softened my nervousness and timid nature. In time, I developed a sense of feeling grounded, more confident and further connection to our project and journey together.

Conclusion

The Ji zoongde'eyaang research-creative project significantly deepened my bond with my mother, providing us with a platform to engage fully with our shared experiences. Through activities like sewing, sketching, speaking Anishinaabemowin and sharing family stories, we connected on multiple levels, involving our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual selves. This holistic approach to our interaction allowed us to tap into embodied knowledge, where our emotions and experiences were deeply intertwined with our creative endeavors.

Working with my mother on the blankets created a thread of memories from my childhood and generated new ones for my children and future generations. We spent time together sharing stories, language, songs, laughter and memories while developing the work, all that contributed to our sense of belonging, our personal growth and well-being.

While creating the blankets together, it revealed layers of our connection. Many stories unfolded through our work together, the growth of our relationship to the artistic process expanded as well as the boundaries of our creative imagination. The coming together of the trade blankets and jingles became transformative much like our own narrative, life stories, and how we navigated through a fragmented mother-daughter relationship. It felt as though the sewing of jingles was symbolic of the mending and care needed between our mother-daughter bond. We discovered the means of transforming our connection via deepening our interpersonal relationship through a creative process and restoring balance. All which lends further knowledge, love and care for my children and future generations.

The blankets themselves became a symbol of a metaphorical bridge between the past, embodying historical legacies and present realities. Ultimately it strengthened the mother-daughter bond, facilitated a healing journey and the sharing of embodied and traditional knowledge for future generations. Together, we wove together a thread of generations, caringly crafting a family legacy for the future.

The additional pieces (video, poetry, audio, performance, and paintings) that were created and rediscovered as a result of our collaborative approach opened our hearts and minds to new paths

of storytelling and expression. And by sharing the many works, different crossing storylines, timelines, and generations could be brought together.

This project contributes to the context of Indigenous scholarly research by incorporating Anishinaabemowin language learning and blanket-making furthermore centering the mother-daughter methodology through collaboration. It provides a model of a holistic approach to healing, by means of fostering deeper cultural connections, strengthening the mother-daughter connection and a shared creative collaboration.

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Appendix A.

Blankets

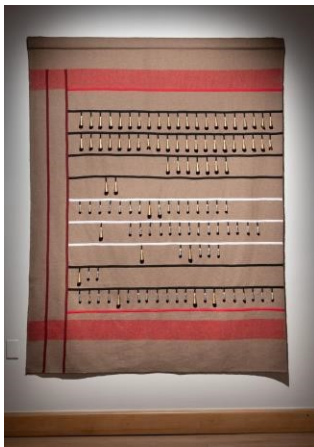
Description: A series of 9 blankets presented in the exhibition of ji zoongde'eyaang at the MAI (Montreal arts interculturels) October 22nd – November 19th 2022.

1.

Concept and design by Lara Kramer, created in collaboration Lara Kramer and Ida Baptiste

Description: Trade Blanket, Bias Tape and Jingles, 63.5" x 88.8", 2022

Name: This Is The Place Where We Pray



2.

Concept and design by Lara Kramer, created in collaboration Lara Kramer and Ida Baptiste

Description: Trade Blanket, Bias Tape and Jingles, 63.5" x 88.8", 2022

Name: Emily



3.

Concept and design by Lara Kramer, created in collaboration Lara Kramer and Ida Baptiste

Description: Trade Blanket, Bias Tape and Jingles, 62.4" x 84", 2022

Name: Gaabiinjibaa Anangook / They Came From The Stars



4.

Concept and design by Lara Kramer, created in collaboration Lara Kramer and Ida Baptiste

Description: Trade Blanket, Bias Tape and Jingles, 63.5" x 88.8", 2022

Name: Gorgeous Tongue



5.

Concept and design by Lara Kramer, created in collaboration Lara Kramer and Ida Baptiste

Description: Trade Blanket, Bias Tape and Jingles, 62.4" x 84", 2022

Name: My Memory It Sings



6.

Concept and design by Lara Kramer, created in collaboration Lara Kramer and Ida Baptiste

Description: Trade Blanket, Baise Tape and Jingles, 63.5" x 88.8", 2022

Name: She Peeked Through The Doorway



7.

Concept and design by Lara Kramer, created in collaboration Lara Kramer and Ida Baptiste

Description: Trade Blanket, Bias Tape and Jingles, 63.5" x 88.8", 2022

Name: Ndawenjigewag Waawaashkeshwag / Hunting With The Deer



8.

Created by Ida Baptiste

Description: Trade Blanket, Bias Tape and Jingles, 62.4" x 84", 2022

Name: Nishwasswi Eko bimaadziing / 7 Generations

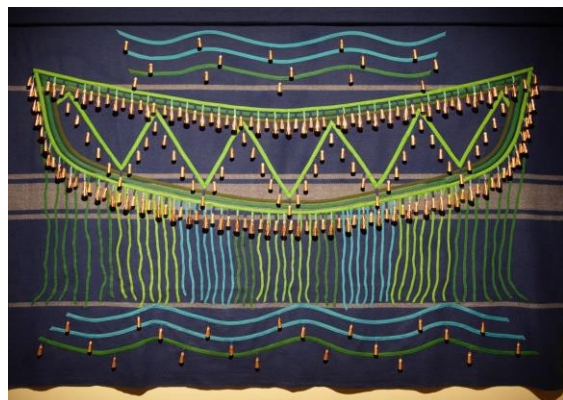


9.

Created by Ida Baptiste

Description: Trade Blanket, Bias Tape and Jingles, 62.4” x 84”, 2022

Name: Mishkokmi Kwe Moozhiwe-niigin / Mother Earth’s Shawl



Appendix B.

Visual Art – Paintings

Description: A series of 7 works, oil paintings on canvas. Presented in the exhibition of ji zoongde'eyaang at the MAI (Montreal arts interculturels) October 22nd – November 19th 2022.

1.

Created by Ida Baptiste

Description: Oil Paint on Canvas, 31.8” x 42”, 1992

Name: Nibi / Water



2.

Created by Ida Baptiste

Description: Oil Paint on Canvas, 6 paintings 18” x 18”, 1992

Name: Persistent Memory



3.

Created by Ida Baptiste

Description: Oil Paint on Canvas, 25.9" x 45.8", 1992

Name: Brandon Indian Residential School

Image N/A

4.

Created by Ida Baptiste

Description: Oil Paint on Canvas, 18" x 18", 1992

Name: Unbroken Spirit



5.

Created by Ida Baptiste

Description: Oil Paint on Canvas, 30" x 40", 1992

Name: Doodem



Nibi / Water - on the Left, Doodem - on the Right

6.

Created by Ida Baptiste

Description: Oil Paint on canvas, 10 paintings 18" x 18", 1992

Name: Fragmented



7.

Created by Ida Baptiste

Description: Oil Paint on Canvas, 30" x 40", 1992

Name: #64



Appendix C.

Film

Directed by Lara Kramer, Dancers Ida Baptiste, Ruby Caldwell Kramer and Emerson Ninigishki'iing

Description: Super 8 Camera and Kodak 7213 200t Super 8 Colour Negative Film, 4:54mins
March 5th 2022. Presented in the exhibition of ji zoongde'eyaang at the MAI (Montreal arts interculturels) October 22nd – November 19th 2022.

Name: Under Thick Stubborn Ice



Appendix D.

Audio

Created by Lara Kramer in collaboration with Ocean Wesley Petersen-Kramer

Description: Audio Recording on i phone 12, 3:40mins, created September 12th 2022. Presented in the exhibition of ji zoongde'eyaang at the MAI (Montreal arts interculturels) October 22nd – November 19th 2022.

Name: Gwejtoon ji kid yin e-kidyaanh / Try to say what I'm saying

Appendix E.

Performance

Choreographed by Lara Kramer, Performed by Jeanette Kotowich

Description: Performance for the opening Vernissage of Ji zoongde'eyaang at the MAI (Montreal arts interculturels) October 22nd 2022.

Name: Untitled



Appendix F.

Poetry

Written by Lara Kramer

Description: 4 poems that accompany the series of blankets with the same name. Presented in the exhibition of ji zoongde'eyaang at the MAI (Montreal arts interculturels) October 22nd – November 19th 2022.

Name: Ndawenjigewag Waawaashkeshwag / Hunting With The Deer

They gifted so much laughter and met my hands with purpose.
Night speaking of my risk and the intentional path forward.

Remember that time we met in the future? Where seedlings fell like starlit dust draping over our strong ground lines. You told me of its birth as my knees unashamedly bent wider to the earth. We found heart in her old ways. In that place, our guttural voice reminds us of them marks. My babies playfully crawled to your landscape in the way the watershed finds all cracks. Our bellies so full of deep dreaming awake/awake. We found love in her ways. We fell mad with her song. Past soiled curtains of dirty stories that shattered us apart. We found grace in the mud pies that I stirred with conviction out the back of my childhood home.

She, who walks with the wolf. They, whom dance with the storm. And us travelling to the future back future in rays of fluorescent pink light.

Name: Emily Wesley

Walls change form and form/forms revisions/reversion those walls in the play of transmogrifying. We see this exchangeable dance in all shades of darkness and light. I can still see her in those smokey halls, and how she came to be. Where voices were summoned. The corridors where voices were summoned and called and cried. My dance brought me closer to her voice.

My Nokomis, my mother's mama use to hover over my bed, endlessly crying to me, weeping to them. Weeping to them in a song I did not understand. But I understood, through the temporality of her calls and cries that she was searching. That she was treated inhumanely. And among her came a tidal wave of piercing tenderness. I was the age my eldest daughter is now the first and only time I met my Nokomis. I had overheard a handful of times the fragmented exchange my mother would have with her over the phone. She birthed my daughter from her womb. The mapping of family

lineage is the groundwork my mother paved for us. For her future beat. Soaking in my Nokomis's face, I drank in the stomach of the beast. It was like a painting, that spoke of soft lips and dead buffalo. I felt the cruelty of the world. Eating bones and licking bread, she birthed my daughter from her womb.

It was soon after meeting her that she would come to me. And shake me in the moon night. To the chamber and shake me in the moonlit night igniting me to my bone. She would speak to me in a language I didn't understand. I did understand. I shared my heart and compassion. Rarely spoken words back to her. I spoke through my body in a language I understood. I carried her mass with me for so long. I carried her mass for them for so long. At times I would levitate off my bed and feel her crawling close to my skin as if to fall onto me searching for their home. I understood. She taught me of profound loving, of my purpose to do more. I see heartbeats. Taste heartbeats. From the vast belly of the mother.

In my early twenties, Nokomis would visit more frequently bringing with her a chorus of children's voices. The cries, chants, and lullabies that were sung were forever hungry. In migration past/amongst/ bones and seeds. It was a scream for love awake. It was around this time that my dance changed. Dances Dancing with the invisible. I see in indigo.

Name: Gorgeous Tongue

My dad taught me how to hunt out the dented tins of soup and cans at our local grocery to save an extra ten cents. Pennies were always accounted for. On weekly trips to the Sally Ann, I'd watched my dad climb into a dumpster to source out enough old bread and sugar-dusted doughnuts for the week. I would rebirth myself in the clothes racks. That distinct smell of *good/god will*, it's a stench that jerks me. It's not possible to remove the aroma from the walls of my frame. It's forever inside me.

This is the story of a hunter's daughter, who spread her legs for men of crime. Of leashed children and circus clowns that carve the memories for empty arms. Of baloney sandwiches and shameful gum.

When her wildness jostled it shook the earth, leaving me on high alert. She was talking through sooty faces. Fruitful flattery and sniffing pleasure spread throughout the atmosphere. I stood my ground waiting for her to return. Hard future of fucking crosses and demons with a pungent odor that leaves no trace. I was like a baby deer.

This is a story of thirsty mouths. Flew/Fled/Fly. Her beauty flowed outwards like a gushing river and never returned. Cold hand gets stiff and forgets that it needs to be held. It pushes hard against the surface and contact to avoid the slow thaw that brings

on anguish. I don't think I have ever let anyone hold my hand long enough for the thawing to become established.

This is a story of waking up from dreams. The warriors warned me. They whispered at me and smoked me out.

I was pregnant in the womb, the belly of the earth. Her spirit entered upon cedar and smoke.

Like the flames of fire moving in waves. We fill it with new knowledge of lived experience. Our wisdom, looking into the future. And now telling, with newly filled breath and old found breath. Oxygenating what become our living canvases amongst all the debris left there for us to look through. Immersed in turbulence left there for us to discover through.

Somewhere amongst all these strands we are weaving our imagination. Dreaming for hard loving and future journeys, transporting in gorgeous soft tongue.

Name: She Peeked Through The Doorway

I was washed by nonsensical limits.
Three years young. Dancing girls, twisting and twirling.
Of arching backs and bottomless tails.

The house was slanted. It was a dream. The kitchen table was secured even though walking on the floors was nearly impossible. The white-haired elderly woman reminded me of a postcard, she was flat and carried an aroma that stifles you to your core. We spent the night trying to get through this distorted house where floors took on new geometric shapes. This often happened in my childhood. Vivid dreams where I was with my mom and it's like we were living something from the past and future, bradding inwards together. The territory was never one of ease, rather metric puzzles, paths, tunnels, and barricades that presented me with always trying to figure out *how to get us through*. Then I learnt to fly.

I remember vividly the day I decided that I was going to fly. My mom said she put us in dance so no one would touch our spirit, so that no one would touch us. I didn't have the awareness that my stepping into the dance world was set up for me. Rather I believed that I chose it.

My mom taught me how to be lucid while dreaming and creating. While floating on frail sheets. Encouraging what already was. How to speak to the spirits that visited me. When I flew, flying became the axis on which escaping paradigms bordered apocalyptic disasters and futuristic worlds. I would fly. And firmly grip the hands of

my mom, sisters and brother with determination to find our way out. Up. Inward.
Sideways. The technique of this would strengthen and become a practice of
embodiment, manipulation of body against air pressure. To air. To air. To air. To Air.
And core belief in the levity of our fight/flight.

The crossover/cross between the dream world and waking life was nuanced by hues
and shift of magnetic landscapes. My guts and heart remained the same. My guts and
heart remain the same. My guts and heart remained the same. My guts and heart
remain the same. My guts and heart remain the same. My guts and heart remained the
same. My guts and hearts remain the same.