

“Bizindan aabajitoon Shkiizhiigoon gaye gitowagan” Listen using Eyes and Ears

Amanda Shawayahamish

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By: Amanda Shawayahamish

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Signed by the final examining committee:

Cathy Richardson Digitally signed by Cathy Richardson
Date: 2023.11.20 10:47:41 -05'00' Examiner

Examiner

Nicolas Renaud Digitally signed by Nicolas Renaud
Date: 2023.11.19 15:52:15 -05'00' Thesis Supervisor(s)

Thesis Supervisor(s)

Approved by _____

Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

Dean Faculty

Abstract

“Bizindan aabajitoon Shkiizhiigoon gaye gitowagan” Listen using Eyes and Ears

Amanda Shawayahamish

Boozhoo, Amanda Shawayahamish ni-di-shin-i-hkaaz, Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek ni-n-doo-jii. Hi, my name is Amanda Shawayahamish. I come from Lake Nipigon Reserve. I am an Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) woman, wife, stepmother, Auntie, bead artist and graduate student at Concordia University exploring reconnection and reclamation to my Anishinaabe identity and traditions through beadwork, storytelling and strengthening relationships with my family and community. I blend autoethnographic and Indigenous Research Methodology to tell the story of my family and myself on this journey. Auto-ethnography in an Anishinaabe context will be a guide to tell my “story” in a narrative research-creation project. I share my experience and journal entries from my and my family’s visit to Ombabika and Auden, Ontario where my ancestors originated. My research collaborators are my family and cherished members of my community, so it is very personal. Sometimes, it feels as if the expectations of the university are counterchallenging what I know, and our ways of being as Anishinaabe. My process is not linear; it’s a circular path. I hope that my experiences will guide other Indigenous Peoples on their pathway. The objective of my MA research-creation project is to challenge academic conventions and demonstrate the importance of Indigenous Research Methodologies and approaches.

Keywords: Indigenous, Anishinaabe women, Anishinaabe, Indigenous autoethnography, Indigenous storytelling, Anishinaabe storytelling, Reclaiming Anishinaabe identity, reclamation, Anishinaabe and/or Indigenous beadwork

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my son, Lohann, my father, Barry, cousin, Robert, Annie, my nieces, Great Grandmother and to future generations in my community.

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Introduction

Acknowledging the Land

I would like to acknowledge the lands and custodians Kanien'kehá:ka of Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal, where I am living and working on my master's thesis and research creation project. I would like to honour the lands of Ombabika, Auden, and Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek. These lands are where my ancestors, and Elders of the community have lived most of their lives. I would like to honour Gitchi Manitou, the animals, waters, insects, and plants from these lands.

Positionality in this research

Boozhoo, Amanda Shawayahamish ni-di-shin-i-hkaaz, Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek ni-n-doo-jii. Hi, my name is Amanda Shawayahamish, I come from Lake Nipigon Reserve. I have been living in Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal for ten years with my spouse, Sébastien and stepson, William. I am an Anishinaabe woman, mother, stepmother, Auntie, bead artist and graduate student at Concordia University exploring reconnection and reclamation of my Anishinaabe identity and traditions through beadwork.

Wilson says, “you need to form your relationship with me as a researcher” and “how and why I decided to research this topic” to self-locate in this research (Wilson, 2008: 22). The history of my family's birth origins, and relocation is part of my story. Gaudet explains that “self-locating is a key part of decolonizing research methodologies” (Gaudet, 2019: 51).

Unfortunately, I only have the partial names of my father's mother, and grandfather. My father, Barry Kitchkeesic Wynn was Anishinaabe, he passed away in 2021 from Covid. He was born and raised on the lands of Allan Water Bridge, Ontario. My Grandmother Lizzie's mother

was Anishinaabe and her father, Andrew Weaver, was Swedish. I do not know the name of my grandfather because my father did not speak about him. I know he was Anishinaabe too.

My mother, Dorothy Shawayahamish is Anishinaabe. She was raised in a few places, Auden, Hillsport and Geraldton, Ontario. Auden is located about a few kilometers from Ombabika, Ontario. On my mother's family side, my Gogo (Grandma) and her siblings were born and raised in Ombabika and Tashota, where my family originally came from. Our community, Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek's present location was established on May 24, 2008. On my mother's side, my Grandpa, Joseph Head, was born outside of Fort Albany on the land. He relocated to many rural locations, including Fort Hope, Ombabika, Hillsport, and Geraldton, Ontario. My Grandpa worked on the Canadian National Railway for many years to support his family and passed away in 2019 of old age and dementia.

My father and Grandpa were taken from their families and placed in Pelican Lake Residential School as children. My Gogo was taken to St. Anne Indian Residential School with many of my Great Aunties, Uncles, and Elders from my community. Today, the impact from Indian Residential School continues to negatively affect my community and the future generations. Some of my generation and youth do not speak or understand Anishinaabemowin and many of our teachings are not being transmitted. My mother's generation can understand our language, but they speak in English to their parents, children, and grandchildren. I did understand Anishinaabemowin as a child, because my father's mother only spoke in Anishinaabemowin to us, but I lost my language after I moved and began living in the city.

Every summer, I visit my family and community with my spouse and stepchildren. My spouse and stepchildren are from Quebec and non-Indigenous. We have different cultures, languages, values, and identities. This aspect plays a role in my research project and

reconnecting to my Anishinaabe identity. I feel I must be the bridge between the western and the Anishinaabe worlds. I am pregnant with my first child during this MA research creation project. This journey has been special and vital for my future son, so I can transfer our Anishinaabe traditions, stories, and knowledge to him and our Anishinaabe ways continue to live.

When I was staying on the land in my community, there was reciprocal recognition of each other (Simpson, 2017:182). I went fishing with one of the community members, and he brought me and my family out on the boat to his fishing spot on Partridge Lake. I caught two fish, and he caught three fish, but my stepson and spouse did not catch anything. He gave his fish to us, without expecting anything in return. This humbleness is rare to see in the city, and in my step kids. I recognized the bridge that I am constantly having to be between my blood family and my spouse's family. It is challenging to deal with this while I am trying to reconnect to my roots.

In the last few years since the Covid pandemic, we lost many Elders in my community, but I am learning through this research process that our stories, knowledge, traditions and Anishinaabe way have not been completely lost. I met several older community members this summer, who continue to live the Anishinaabe way. Reciprocal recognition is one of our values that continue to live within our spiritual and physical bodies (Simpson, 2017: 182).

Research Focus

"Bizindan aabajitoon Shkiizhiigoon gaye gitowagan" Listen using Eyes and Ears

"Bizindan aabajitoon Shkiizhiigoon gaye gitowagan" Listen using Eyes and Ears is the title of my INDI Thesis Proposal. In this research paper, I will be sharing my experiences of reconnecting and reclaiming my Anishinaabe identity and traditions through beadwork, storytelling and strengthening relationships with my family and community. Wilson explains,

“Indigenous peoples in Canada recognize that it is important for storytellers to impart their own life and experience into the telling” (Wilson, 2008: 32).

My research project is the beginning of reclamation, and reconnecting to the community’s traditions, stories, language, and history. The intention of my research question is to contribute to the increasing literature and conversations on the importance of Indigenous research methodologies in the academic world. My research question is “how does the practice of beading open channels of identity reconnection and community relationships in an Anishinaabe community healing from colonial policies of cultural suppression?”.

Dr. Lana Ray’s graduate research is a sharing of her knowledge and experiences in discovering her role as an Anishinaabekwe (Ojibwe woman) in the academy. My work relates to hers in that I am also embarking in research to better understand who I am as an Anishinaabekwe and considering ways of transferring knowledge to other Indigenous women in academia. I want to share my knowledge and make an impact on the way research is being done at Concordia University with Indigenous women there, as well as in my community. I want to learn from other Indigenous women, which was possible by reading several Indigenous women’s Master’s theses and/or dissertations. Ray shares a quote[:] “create Indigenous women-centered approaches that provide space for women’s voices and partnerships” (Basile, 2012; Desbiens as cited in Basile, 2012: 4). Offering a beading workshop for the women of my community has provided a safe space, in which we shared stories, and knowledge.

My project is about cultural revitalization and building pride in identity. Gabriel Karenhoton Maracle is Kanien’kehá:ka; his father is from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. Maracle is a Lecturer of Political Science, with a specialization in Indigenous Politics in Canada at Carleton University. According to Maracle, “connections to peoples, places or languages all

contribute to what it means to be Indigenous” (Maracle, 2021:18). In my community, our Anishinaabe identity, traditions, language, and culture have been disrupted since the Indian Residential School, and the child welfare system. One of the goals of my thesis is to stop the cycle of intergenerational trauma. Furthermore, I choose to reject the Anglican and Catholic belief systems that were predominant in my childhood, and follow the teachings of Seven Grandfathers, and the medicine wheel teachings that my late Grandpa shared with me.

Sharing my way of reclaiming my Anishinaabe identity in my MA thesis can contribute to the much-needed change in the Western academic system. The way stories are told in my culture is through sharing your experiences to pass down teachings. We don't directly tell the person what to do, it's up to the person to listen by using their ears and eyes. “Instead of a presentation that includes a theory chapter, methodology chapter, methods chapter etc., I have organized this story into two parts. In part one I discuss my process of preparing for my beading project. The first chapter in part one tells the story of how I created my beading basket” (Ray, 2015: 8). This quote from Dr. Lana Ray connects to why I chose autoethnography, and research creation to lead my MA project. Like Dr. Ray, my approach involves storytelling and my own personal narrative to make meaning. My MA research question(s) surfaced in two separate times, before, and after I learned of both my grandmas' beading history.

My community will benefit by hearing stories from Elders and community members who lived in Ombabika and learning about their ancestors' way of life on the lands. I created a piece of beadwork that incorporates the land, animals, and stories. I shared this with my community through storytelling, transferring knowledge as a practice of reciprocity. This journey is shared experiences with my community, and family.

The land is a place where I can connect to my spirit, ancestors, thoughts, feelings, and memories of my Grandpa. Before the Indian Residential School took my Grandparents, Uncles and Aunties away from the land, they had strong connections, and teachings of medicines, survival skills, and ceremonies. It is challenging to explain with words how I can feel my ancestors surrounding me on our land. Every time that I go back to our land, I am healing my four aspects of being: mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical. As I watch the lake, it encourages me to reflect on my life, thesis, and beading project. I am in a calm state without distractions from the city noises, people, or cars.

My research collaborators are my family and cherished members of my community so it's very personal, and sometimes it feels as if the expectations of the university are counter to what I know, and how we are as Anishinaabe. Respecting the Elders' wishes, I have changed their names, so their identities are anonymous. I shared my experiences and journal entries from my visit to Ombabika and Auden with my family.

I blend autoethnographic and Indigenous research methodology to respect the privacy and to be a bridge between the academic and community worlds. The Residential School system dismantled my community's culture, identity, pride, language, and traditions by taking the Elders away when they were children. I acknowledge the intergenerational trauma caused by it and respect my community's protocols. My ancestors had to hide our traditions, medicines, language, and ceremonies from their children to protect them. I chose to become a bridge and not to bring the academic world into my Anishinaabe world.

Onowa McIvor is maskiko-nehinaw (Swampy Cree) and Scottish-Canadian from Norway House and Cross Lake in northern Manitoba (University of Victoria, n.d.). She is an Associate Professor at University of Victoria. McIvor shares the similar protocol, "this does not mean that I

have an open license to share all family history through my own process—principles of respect for our elders and those who have gone before us still prevail” (McIvor, 2010:147).

My process is not linear, it follows a circular formation. I hope that my experience will guide other Indigenous Peoples on their pathway in the academic world. I hope my MA research creation project will challenge academic conventions and demonstrate why Indigenous research requires different methodologies and approaches.

Schedule for the conduct of the research

I traveled to Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek, Ombabika, and Auden, Ontario in August 2022 to conduct research with my community and family. My last visit to Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek was between July 17 and 21, 2023. I traveled alone to participate in the Traditional Women week in my community.

Between the months of February and August 2023, I started work on beading my large beadwork piece for the creation part of the research. In February, I created the bead pattern of the eye shape, and images to honour the trip to Ombabika and Auden with my family. Part of the planning was choosing the colours, style, and size of the beads for each part inside the main eye shape, and the overall size of the piece. I researched stores that offer good deals on bulk beads, specifically toho style which lays straight side by side.

Literature and Community Knowledge

The intent of this research is to explore and draw from Indigenous authors' methodology of beading in my own research. This literature review is a guide and compilation of Indigenous women reclaiming their Indigenous identity, knowledge, and culture through beadwork;

researching their communities' history by visiting museums that own beadwork from their community; archives; and speaking with community and family members. The list of keywords that I used in my research are: Indigenous, Anishinaabe women, Anishinaabe, Indigenous autoethnography, Indigenous storytelling, Anishinaabe storytelling, Reclaiming Anishinaabe identity, reclamation, Anishinaabe and/or Indigenous beadwork.

Beading identities, communities and life stories are emerging areas of research among Indigenous scholarship. Dr. Lana Ray, Sherry Farrell Racette, Dr. Tiffany Dionne Prete, and Lois Edge are using beading as an Indigenous research paradigm and storytelling medium. Connection of creating beadwork and research is described by Prete, [:] "Indigenous beadwork can be used as a research paradigm; one that would help guide me as I navigated through the research process" (Prete, 2019:29).

Sherri Racette Farrell, of Métis, Algonquin, and Irish background was born in Manitoba and is a member of Temiskaming First Nation in Quebec writes about Indigenous beading methodology. Her article, "Tuft Life: Stitching Sovereignty in Contemporary Indigenous Art" showcases several Indigenous bead artists and the meaning behind their beadwork. The commonalities between the artists' beadwork are the meanings of "beading as an act of silent resistance," a direct quote from Anishinaabe Concordia University Assistant Professor, Nadia Myre (Racette, 2017:115). Beadwork means more than being a craft or piece of art. Sherri and the Indigenous bead artists in this article, explain that beadwork is our way to transfer knowledge and keep it alive. My beadwork is a form of Anishinaabe storytelling of my and my family's experiences on the lands together. The spirit of my beadwork continues to live and may have different meanings to others.

Lois Edge is a member of Northwest Territories Métis Nation, and an Assistant Professor at MacEwan University. Edge explains the process of learning to do beadwork as a way that “our identity and integrity as Indigenous women” become embedded into the beadwork (Edge, 2011:118). Beading as the creation part of my thesis honours my Anishinaabekwe (Ojibwe woman) identity and spirit as embodied knowledge. Noé Préfontaine is a Two-Spirit Métis person, and graduate student at McGill University. According to Préfontaine’s thesis, “Beading is both a symbolic and physical act of living our stories; A person cannot help but be living, reflecting, and storying while working alongside beads” (Préfontaine, 2022:13).

Dr. Lana Ray is an Anishinaabe beader, and an Associate Professor in the Department of Indigenous Learning, Indigenous Research Chair in Decolonial Futures and Director of the Anishinaabe Kendaasiwin Institute (AKI) at Lakehead University. “Accessing knowledge through outlets such as beading provides a way to know with your being as opposed to just your mind” (Ray, 2016: 373). Ray explains that balance of your mind and heart is required when blending beading and research. It is a balance between the two worlds of academic and Anishinaabe way of life. Beading brings me to that place of being with feelings, emotions, thoughts, and spirit. It allows me to be free compared to solely writing a thesis in the academic world.

Sharing similar challenges of “my learning experience is one of accessing fragmented knowledge(s), a journey of fragmentation” with other Indigenous women’s journey of reclaiming the traditions of beadwork (Edge, 2011:10). It helped me realize that a lot has been taken from Indigenous Peoples and my community. Parts of my identity may never be known, which forces me to accept the fact that my ancestors’ beadwork traditions may also not be

known. I must continue my beadwork in a way that speaks to me the most and feels good in my spirit. This is the meaning of indigenizing research in academia.

In Edge's beading circles with other Indigenous women, they too were limited with the history, stories, and beading techniques behind each pattern. They did not have access to teachers due to not knowing where they were located (Edge, 2011: 121). The beading process was longer with many mistakes, which I can relate to in my own beadwork. This is my first time beading a large, and complex piece with different images sewn together. I beaded smaller pieces using the same technique of using two needles to sew on the beads. I have many years of beading experience and learnt my own tricks to overcome times of mistakes in my beading.

A gap identified in the literature is that Indigenous scholars share little about their personal journey of connecting, learning, and implementing the traditions of beading into their research. It would be helpful to learn about how they began this journey of reclaiming and connecting to their community and Indigenous identity, and gain insights into how their process of beading impacted them on a personal, and spiritual level. This is something that I aim to explore in this thesis.

Methodologies & methods

I do not like the word "research" and do not use that word with my community and family. Instead of using Western research methods of interviewing people, I followed the traditional Anishinaabe ways of sharing my experiences, and personal details of my identity, family, and life. I had conversations about how life was for the person was living in Ombabika, and Auden, before technology, internet, etc. existed. Did they have ceremonies and traditions back then before Residential School took the children? I asked mostly the Elders about

traditional beading and if they knew the background and meaning of it. This process is part of traditional Indigenous research by sharing with each other in conversations, listening, and transferring knowledge to the others in the community. These conversations that I had are not recorded in my thesis, as that would go against the Anishinaabe ways. My beadwork honours these conversations, individuals, and knowledge by telling the stories with each bead.

Research originates from non-Indigenous scholars and/or researchers that has brought harm to many Indigenous communities and/or individuals. This word does not exist in Anishinaabemowin because we share knowledge, experiences, and traditions with each other and without expecting anything in return. Research can be extractive and harmful without values and respect for the individual and/or community.

The Indian Residential School officials took the children far from Ombabika, so it would be impossible for them to escape and return home. The Elders' experiences are horrific, which the nuns and priests were "killing the Indian inside the child" with unimaginable violence (Facing History & Ourselves, 2019). I acknowledge the intergenerational trauma caused by this and respect my community's wishes of separating the academic and our world.

Indigenous methodology includes storytelling, kitchen talk, visiting way methodology and oral history. Several Indigenous scholars, Dr. Lana Ray, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Onowa McIvor utilize auto-ethnography to claim space and tell their "stories" in the academic world (Whitinui, 2013: 9). Auto-ethnography in an Anishinaabe context acts as a guide to tell my "story" in a narrative research-creation project and to respect the Elders, and community members' privacy and anonymity. I acknowledge that community and family members are collaborators in this project, and it could not happen without them.

Indigenous research methodologies are a “process that we engage in and values that are shared amongst many of our communities” (Lee, 2019: 39). This research is following Anishinaabe methodologies specifically adapted from myself and my community. Minthorn shares it is “inserting your own knowledge and epistemologies and honoring who you are as an Indigenous person” (Minthorn, 2019: 39). Research methodologies may differ in each Anishinaabe communities or region, although we may share similar values and traditions. It is important to emphasize this point that I do not represent all the Anishinaabe Peoples of Northern Ontario located around Lake Nipigon and Lake Superior.

The stories and traditional knowledge shared with me strengthened and reconnected my spirit and Anishinaabe identity. Writing my thesis as an Anishinaabekwe (Ojibwe woman), the translation of kwe is woman, but the meaning differs in the Anishinaabe world. “Kwe does not conform to the rigidity of the colonial gender binary”. Simpson’s methodology of “life as a kwe within Nishnaabewin is method” relates to my role and responsibilities to my family and community, while studying in the institutional world (Simpson, 2017: 29). I continue to learn about how to be a kwe for my community and family. I cannot define being an Anishinaabekwe in academic terminology because the teachings cannot be transferred in the institutions. Anishinaabe teachings that were transferred to me will not be included in this thesis.

Wilson explains, “Knowledge itself is held in the relationships and connections formed with the environment that surrounds us” (Wilson, 2007: 87). Leanne Simpson speaks of building respectful relationships with local Elders, and storytellers from your lands to continue the traditions (Simpson, 2013: 5). In strengthening relationships with my family and community, part of my research was visiting, collecting natural objects, and photographing the original lands

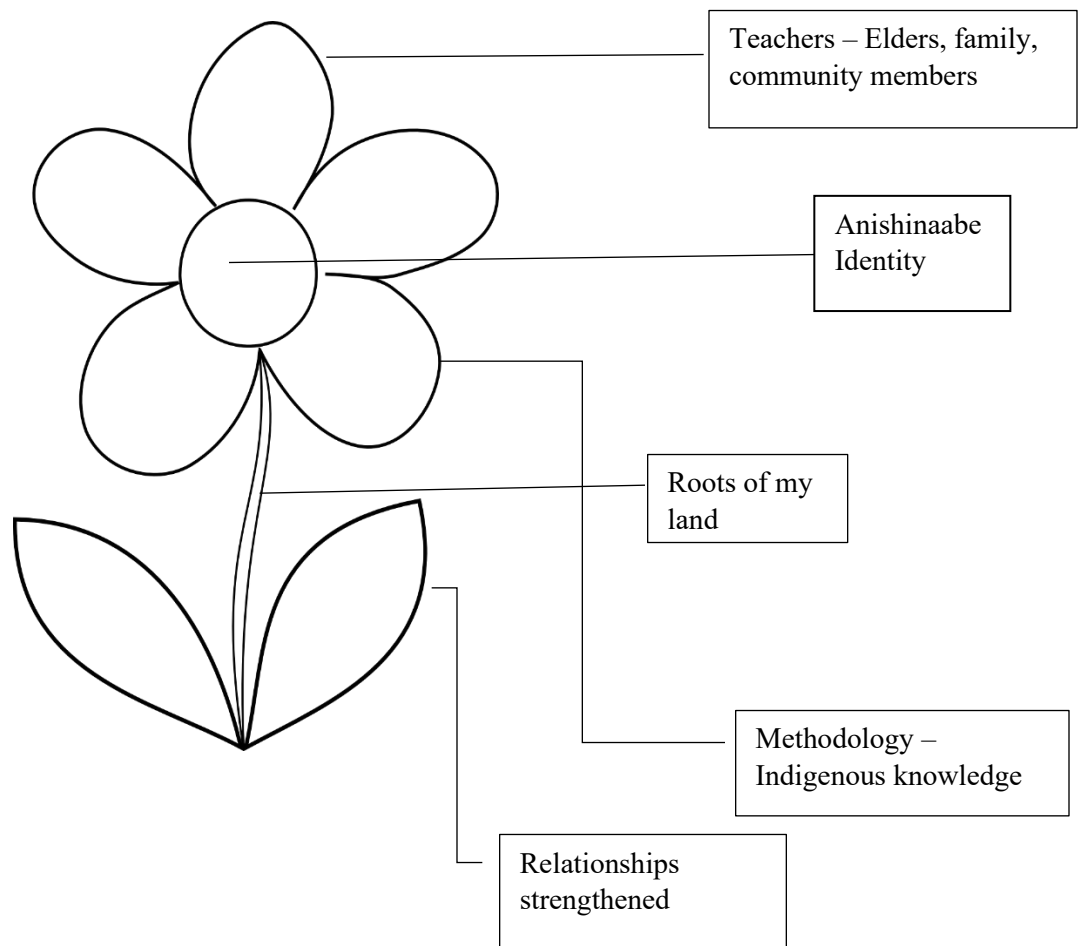
of my maternal family located in Ombabika, Northern Ontario. In the book “The Gift Is in the Making Anishinaabeg Stories”, Simpson (2013) encourages Indigenous people to seek out storytelling traditions from their origins of lands or territory. Janice Cindy Gaudet, a Métis Assistant Professor at University of Alberta, discusses about the “Visiting Way methodology” as it “holds great promise as it aspires to bring all the pieces back together, and lead us back to what is right; it is a relational obligation, a spiritual responsibility” (Gaudet, 2019: 48).

In her book “Decolonizing methodologies”, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) speaks of truth-telling, witnessing, and reclaiming as part of Indigenous knowledge experiences. My visit is part of re-claiming and re-connecting to my Anishinaabe identity through oral storytelling. Dr. Cindy Gaudet is a Métis Assistant Professor at University of Alberta. She explains the methodology of visiting ways, *kecoukaywin*, in this way: “I needed to do the hard work—to slow down, take time, make the effort, knock on the door, sit down, listen, share, go to the land, meditate, empty myself, and be present, as my research on land-based wellness had taught me” (Gaudet, 2019: 48). My visit to my ancestors’ lands is part of my spiritual journey and connecting with my ancestors’ spirits. Gaudet refers to visiting our ancestors to “anchor a sense of belonging, a sense of self, and sense of responsibility to family, community, and land” (Gaudet, 2019: 51). Being on my traditional lands of my ancestors and family I felt connected and Anishinaabe.

Relationships with Elders from my community and my family are based on mutual respect, maintaining relationships and knowledge sharing (Davidson, 2019, pg. 26). I am inspired by Jo-Ann Archibald’s four principles of respect, responsibility, reverence, and reciprocity in my research (Archibald et al., 2019: 1-2), and Shawn Wilson’s writing on relational knowledge, wherein research encompasses relationships with people, the land, the cosmos, and the ancestors. (Wilson, 2008: 74). My reflection process involves speaking to Gitchi

Manitou (Creator), my late Grandpa and ceremony such as smudging, sweats and putting down my tobacco.

Beadwork as research-creation represents the spirit, traditions and Anishinaabe storytelling method. Thesis writing alone cannot transfer the spirit. Cole transfers knowledge and Stl'atl'imx identity by implementing the teachings of the canoe in his dissertation to include places of “spirit and heart” (Cole, 2002: 451). For me, I chose to share the spirit of my experience and teachings received on this research journey through beadwork. After a lot of reflection, the starting point for the beading that made sense to me was flowers that have a lot of significance to the place and relationships. I started with a sketch. The white and blue beaded flowers honour my Great-Grandmother’s spirit and memory of beading white and blue flowers in one of her beadworks. I feel these white and blue flowers may have been growing in Ombabika.



The centre of the flower focuses on the story of strengthening and reclaiming my Anishinaabe identity. One petal represents the Elders, family, and community members as the teachers and collaborators. Another petal represents the methodology and Indigenous knowledge of my community. The stem represents the roots of the traditional lands of Ombabika. The leaves represent the relationships with my family and community that have been strengthened by building trust, respect, and listening. I have been living far from my community for eleven years now in Tiohtiá:ke.

Indigenous research methodologies are a “process that we engage in and values that are shared amongst many of our communities” (Tsinnajinnie et al.,2019: 39). This research is following Anishinaabe protocols specifically from myself and community. Minthorn shares it is “inserting your own knowledge and epistemologies and honoring who you are as an Indigenous person” (Tsinnajinnie et al., 2019: 39). Research protocols may differ in each Anishinaabe community or region. Anishinaabe people and communities are diverse, but we share similar values and traditions.

Process

This journey began with conversations that I had with Elders from my community about who are we as Anishinaabe people and where do we come from. I remember hearing stories from my Grandparents, Aunties, Uncles, and mom about Auden and Ombabika. Not everyone in my generation, and younger generations had a chance to connect to these lands. These are the lands of our ancestors, which connect us to our identity, spirit, and stories.

The community was moved to its present location in the early 2000s (Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek, n.d.). There is no electricity, running water or wifi/cell phone signal in

the lands of Auden and Ombabika, which played a role in the relocation of the community. Many community members live off reserve in cities and towns because of the lack of employment opportunities, education, and health care. It makes it impossible to be together and heal as a community.

I met with Elder Margaret at her place to share stories, knowledge and experiences over drinking coffee together while sitting in her backyard. I feel comfortable with her, the way she speaks and transfers knowledge through storytelling, to “take things slowly” when it comes to the spirit, and to not rush things because it will not work (Amanda Shawayahamish, 2021). It is challenging to be Anishinaabe and walk in the Western academic world, because of deadlines and the fast pace. I remind myself to “take things slowly” in life, and to not follow the Western ways that everything must be done quickly and now. Going back to visit Elder Margaret strengthens my Anishinaabe identity, spirit, mind, and emotions. Our relationship has strengthened by growing together in spirit, and friendship over the years. I honour her by beading a representation of our relationship in my beadwork piece.

Returning to my ancestors’ lands

My process includes visiting my Gogo, and ancestors’ original lands of Ombabika, Ontario located about two hours away from our community’s current location. I brought my Gogo, my mom, Uncle Fred (brother of my Gogo), Sebastien (spouse) and my stepchildren, Annabelle, and William. I intended to connect to the roots of the land through stories from my family. This was my first time visiting Ombabika and Auden with my family.

Gaudet shares similar feelings as I have about being distanced and living far from her community. It is challenging to feel grounded in my Anishinaabe traditions and language when I

live far away from my family and community. I feel the same way as Gaudet, about the requirements of listening and wellness. When I visit my community, Elders, and family, they remind me to slow down and be in the present moment.

Maracle explains that our “identities are active processes” which involve community, and relationships (Maracle, 2021: 18). I hoped to strengthen relations through experiences we would share on the land and experience together that feeling of home and family connection that has been missing for years. I intended to strengthen my spiritual connection to the land, animals, and water through teachings. A Tsalagi scholar, Jeff Corntassel explains “If one thinks of peoplehood as the inter-locking features of language, homeland, ceremonial cycles, and sacred living histories, a disruption to any one of these practices threatens all aspects of everyday life” (Corntassel, 2012, as cited in Maracle, 2021: 19). I agree with Maracle and Corntassel about our Indigenous identities being active processes in our lives. Our identities and wellbeing continue to be healthy and strong through relations with my family and community, and especially with my son, so his Anishinaabe identity grows strong. Our spirits need healing from the family losses of my dad, cousin, and baby niece in 2021.

Simpson refers to “Biskaabiiyang” as meaning to look back, “returning to ourselves” (Simpson, 2021: 49). “Returning to ourselves” can be in relation to ethnography by the sharing of stories between myself, family, community, and Elders. I recognized there needs to be an open and safe space for different generations of my community to come together to learn, share experiences and live our Anishinaabe teachings. My Grandpa always respected and listened when I shared with him, he saw me as an equal person. Part of my process is about finding where my ancestors, family and I come from. There are many untold stories of my community’s original lands. These stories are vital to “returning to ourselves” before the colonization,

Residential School, and cultural genocide (Simpson 2021:.49). My Master's project is much more than research. It is to "think of Biskaabiiyang not just in relation to research, but also in relation to how we live our lives as Nishnaabeg people" (2021, Simpson: 50).

The journey back to my community's original lands is part of "figuring out their own path, or their own theoretical understanding of their life and their life's work based on individual interpretation of our philosophies, teachings, stories and values" (Simpson, 2021:53).

Connection to my community's way of life, teachings, and ceremonies has been disrupted by Residential School, day schools, relocation of the community, the foster care system and the Sixties Scoop. I do not know what clan I belong to, or my spirit's name and colours. As part of the cultural genocide, I was given an English name, Amanda Dawn, by my mother, who was also given the English name of Dorothy. My Gogo's (Grandmother) name is Theresa, and my grandfather's name was Joseph, which are typical Anglican names. In my community, there are no spiritual names, or clan system in place. We have been living in the way of the white society.

Simpson refers to herself, and other Indigenous Peoples as being the Zhaashkoonh (muskrat) in the Great Flood story. I am a Zhaashkoonh through all the challenges of reclaiming my identity, learning from Elders, and family in my community. Simpson explains that the Zhaashkoonh is the one who brought back earth to create land (2021, Simpson, p.69). I am hoping to achieve my objective of bringing my family, and some community members together to our original lands, and strengthening our connections to each other and the land.

My wishes are that my spouse, Sebastien, and stepchildren, Annabelle, and William will better understand my Anishinaabe family, traditions, and culture through learning on the land with us. They are from Quebec, and our cultures, upbringing, and backgrounds differ tremendously. Their Québec culture and language has been engrained in me for many years, but

they did not have the opportunity to visit my community until now. I was expecting challenges that we will need to learn and grow from together given Annabelle and William are familiar with an urban setting, but not with being on the land. They do not share the common respect, values, and traditions of the land as do I and my family. Sebastien has a better understanding of the land, because he spent a lot of time on the land as a child and throughout his work experience as a helicopter mechanic. We perform ceremonies together on the land by giving tobacco, and food as gifts to Gitchi Manitou. He deeply respects my traditions, family, and culture.

Online beading workshop

Originally the plan was to host a beading workshop in-person during one of the community's summer events to transfer the knowledge of beading, but one of the Elders was severally ill in the hospital. I changed the date and format to hosting an online beading workshop with women from the community in February 2023. It was planned with the community worker, Dorothy as part of her community program. There were a few women, who joined online and participated. I taught them how to make beaded fringe earrings using a brick stitch.

There were challenges involved in hosting a beading workshop online because of the lack of human interaction, conversations, and restrictions of teaching the beading process. All the participants had their cameras closed, so it was difficult to initiate a conversation. I felt like I was talking to empty spaces in the virtual world. It was challenging to know and see which steps the participants are on or what they had challenges with.

Edge shares her experiences of beading circles, and here I learned that when teaching others how to bead, it requires patience, understanding, and not becoming frustrated for both sides. The first challenge of beading is threading the beading needle, where the hole is smaller

compared to regular sewing needles. Everything goes into beading, like getting pain in my back, poking my fingers many times with the needle, emotions, good lighting, and being able to clearly see the beads, needle, and thread. There was a woman, mother and her daughter who had their cameras on, and I could help them with each step. It was empowering for the women to post photos of their finished earrings on Facebook, it was a moment for them to feel proud of their creations.

Women week

I applied for funding from the NIB Trust Fund to contribute to the women's week with community coordinator, Dorothy. Unfortunately, we did not receive the amount requested to help with the costs. Dorothy made this week possible with her community program funds, but I was limited in the amount that I could provide for the Elder. I was very deceived when the Elder asked me for more money than what was originally discussed (money that I did not have). She compared herself to the camp cooks and complained that she should be the one getting the higher wage. This behaviour was the root of the issue and reality that I discovered over the week.

I had high hopes for this week with the women from the community coming together, sharing, and healing. I quickly realized that money and status control the community, a context in which our traditions, language, and identities are not prioritized. This issue is sensitive and resulted from the Indian Residential Schools' objective to erode our Anishinaabe culture and Peoples. The Indian Act and the Canadian government imposing the Band Council system in our community erased our Anishinaabe clan system. There are a few Elders in my community that live the traditional Anishinaabe ways by following the Seven Grandfather teachings. Many members believe in the monetary and political system, which causes lateral violence against each

other. Most of the community members are poor, so when there is an opportunity to gain money, that becomes the focus, not our Anishinaabe ways.

During the women's week on the land, the Anglican beliefs remained in the Elders, first and second-generation children and grandchildren of the Elders. A few women like me, have chosen to go back to our Anishinaabe traditions, language, ceremonies, and identities through resistance of the Anglican beliefs by teaching their children our Anishinaabe ways. We respected each other's traditions and beliefs by accepting, and not judging each other. I am the only one in my close family that rejected the Anglican beliefs. I accepted my family's beliefs by not imposing my beliefs onto them. It is challenging to walk on this journey alone to reclamation of my Anishinaabe traditions, language, and identity. Richardson explains how "self-formation of both Aboriginal people and hybrid people is inseparable from the history of colonization, inseparable from homeland, and inseparable from the broader sociocultural context" (Richardson, 2004: 51). My self-formation of following the Anishinaabe ways in the colonized and Anglican belief system environment of my community and family has negatively impacted the continuance of stories, ceremonies, and traditions. Our Anishinaabe ways are seen as resisting the Anglican beliefs of God, heaven, hell, and Jesus. My Gogo, mother and most of my uncles and aunties refuse to accept our Anishinaabe traditions and ceremonies.

Family and community relationships are the focus in my community, and we all know each other through our families. I speak about identity throughout my thesis, and it has a different meaning of following the Anishinaabe teachings, and values, not validation or self-identifying. Another point to share is that in my community we accept people with different family backgrounds. We do not put focus on members with one Anishinaabe parent, and the

other parent being non-Indigenous. In the women's week, a non-Indigenous mother, and her daughter (one of my third cousins) were welcomed and respected as family.

I learned through hearing others' personal stories that family can have positive, and loving moments, but many types of violence, and harm are also being done to each other. As women, we learned together that we need to take the time to care and be gentle with ourselves. We are not responsible to fix our family's issues and we need to learn to step back from the toxic environment. We are sisters and took care of each other all week by sharing, loving, listening, and respecting each other.

Dorothy planned many activities for us to participate in and learn about our Anishinaabe traditions and stories. We were taught about types of medicines available in the area, how to find, prepare, and use of them. I learned about my Great-Grandmother's tradition of finding, picking, and using cedar from one of my Aunties. It was incredible how I felt my family connections strengthen with my Auntie, and learning how women knew how to live on the land. We walked together on the land looking and identifying medicines, and we found about seven plants. Birch trees are vital to our stories and traditions because back then people tapped the birch for sap and used birch bark as a medicine.

Our relationships strengthened through sharing our experiences, hurt, anger, eating food, and learning through the activities in a safe space that we created together. We created a sister bond with each other by opening ourselves emotionally and healing together. It was the first time for some of the women to speak openly about the trauma and abuse they lived. Listening and honouring the person's courage to share their story had strengthened and built trust for each other amongst them. This was the first time that we had space to share, grow, heal and experience together as Anishinaabe women on the land.

We made rattles, medicine bags, and sang together a travel song with our rattles near the lake, trees, and animals. It was calming and an appropriate end to the week for us. I shared the stories, experiences and meaning behind my beadwork piece with the women. I shared mine and my family's encounters with the Makwa (bear), and eagle in Ombabika. The other women felt comfortable to share their experiences and continue their journey of reclaiming their Anishinaabe identities. My sister's two girls stayed with me and participated in some of the activities. It was beneficial for my nieces to experience this with us on the land. My sister and I did not have the opportunity to learn the teachings as Anishinaabe women when we were children.

Being pregnant with my first child is very special to me because I had the opportunity to learn from our Elder and women on the land. I felt the experiences that I shared with the other women helped me grow as a future mom, and Anishinaabe woman. I am strengthening these connections and teachings that will be transferred to my child.

Colonial policies of cultural suppression

A quote from John A Macdonald in 1887,: "The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change" (Hanson, n.d.). Part of the cultural erosion was the Indian Act policies of banning ceremonies, dance, and traditions in 1895 (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2022: para.8). Elders told stories about how their parents, and great-grandparents hid our Anishinaabe traditions, ceremonies, and medicines to protect their children.

The Indian Residential School significantly impacted the Elders and community by imposing the church beliefs onto the Elders as children. The Elders were severely physically hit by the nuns and priests when they spoke our language. Many of the Elders have been physically, sexually, and emotionally abused by the nuns and priests. "Children as young as 3 were forced,

by law, to leave their families and communities to live at schools designed to “kill the Indian in the child” (RCAP, 1996).

My family were taken to St. Anne’s Indian Residential School located in Fort Albany, Ontario. One of my Great Aunties remembered taking a train and plane to get to the school and wondered, why did they take us so far. I heard horrible stories from my Gogo, and others about what happened to them as children.

Cultural Suppression Impacts

The Greenstone Project started in 2021 which is an open pit gold mining operation located close to my own and other Anishinaabe communities and towns. In the last two years several companies have destroyed and removed many trees and wildlife habitats to develop this mine. There were abundant trees and clean lakes, and rivers, before the development of the mine. Bears, wolves, and coyotes now frequently walk around in town searching for food because their habitat is destroyed. Bush surrounds the town, and my mom and sister’s houses are close to the bush. Bears come during the daytime, they come to the front door and search for garbage to eat. It is dangerous for children to play outside unsupervised, or to sit outside in the yard. In the photos below, there were many trees along the highway. In the first photo, there is a company stationed for removal of trees and sand to develop the mining area.



These mining companies do not respect the environment laws of not cutting down trees that host eagles and their nests. The one thing that matters is clearing the area for mining gold to make a profit. This mine brings in many mine employees from across Canada, and mostly males. Richardson explains that “the situation of unmarried men, far from home and with

disposable income, can sometimes lead to women being sought and then exploited in various ways” (Richardson & et., 2017: 247).

I have heard stories and read Facebook posts to warn young, Indigenous women and girls to be careful of random and suspicious cars following Indigenous women. These warnings are from the victims, who were followed and managed to take pictures of the vehicles, and men. There has been an increase of drug trafficking, sexualized violence, kidnappings, violence, and murders in the Indigenous communities and small towns. It is unsafe in the communities and towns, where everyone has their security cameras set up to catch burglars. Crystal meth is primarily trafficked in Indigenous communities, towns, and Thunder Bay, which makes people even more crazy and dangerous when they are without the drug.

My family told me that Thunder Bay has worsened to the point that they do not feel safe in the city due to the increase of violence and crimes. According to Gwen O'Reilly, the director of the Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre in Thunder Bay, she stated that the city has the highest incidents of intimate partner violence per capita in Canada without sufficient response (Kitching, 2023). Thunder Bay is located two hundred and seventy-six kilometers from the community and Geraldton. This is the closest and only city that everyone travels to for shopping, medical appointments, and other reasons. I have many family members living in Thunder Bay too.

Reflecting on my encounters with racism and violence makes it challenging to focus on strengthening Anishinaabe traditions, identity, language, and ways, while trying to have a safe environment. Being in a safe and open space has been vital to focus and strengthen my Anishinaabe connections, traditions, and life. Many non-Indigenous people in Thunder Bay and the region of the gold mine are ignorant, racist, and undermine the Anishinaabe Peoples. I

attended the C2U Expo conference on community-based research with a focus on Indigenous research in Thunder Bay in June 2023, and could not believe the many lies being told by non-Indigenous residents of the city. I spoke up and told the truth of the Indigenous Peoples' realities of racism, violence, and injustice in the city. Non-Indigenous people chose to ignore the stories, facts, and their own participation in the problems of how Indigenous Peoples are treated horribly in the city.

History of Ombabika and beads

A French trading post, Fort La Maune, was established in 1683 by Charles Dulhut. The fort was located the mouth of Ombabika River which connected to the Ombabika, Ogoki, and Albany rivers (Voorhis, 1930: 100). In 1763 the Treaty of Paris passed, and the British took over the Fort La Maune, it became a Hudson Bay trading post (Wikiwand, n.d., para. 14). My ancestors lived in Ombabika, and near the railroad heading towards Nakina. Ontario, it is near Lake Nipigon.

In the early 1770s, tiny, white seed beads first appeared in the Great Lakes area and traded at the posts. By 1830, seed beads were largely available and used in a generalized geometric style of beading (Edge, 2011:134). The history of beading in my community is a lost tradition. Nobody knows the origin of the beading techniques and patterns. I pieced things together from different secondary sources about the history of beading in the Lake Superior and Lake Nipigon area to explore possible meanings of beading.

My Uncle Fred told me that my Great-Grandmother ordered her beads from a catalogue, and it would be shipped to the only local store in Auden. She used mostly white beads in her flowers. The process of beading uses the available beads and material for each piece.

Thunder Bay Museum Visit Report

August 10th 2022

Prior to my visit, I was in contact with Sarah Silvestri, the museum's Collections Curator at the Thunder Bay Museum. She sent me many photos of beadwork pieces, but mostly all the pieces' origin and nation are unknown. Sarah has been supportive of my project by preparing the pieces before my visit. They are in the middle of cataloguing each beadwork pieces, but mostly all the pieces' origins and nations are unknown.

I brought my mother and sister with me to visit the museum. This was the first time for my sister and mother to visit a museum. Sarah brought us to the storage room filled with all the museum's items from different eras. The large amount of diverse beadwork pieces that the museum has stored was overwhelming. Most of the pieces were donated from a Richard Faries fonds.

Richard Faries was born at Rupert's House in James Bay, Quebec on August 30, 1870. Faries was a missionary at Fort Hope, Marten Falls and Osnaburgh, Ontario between 1895 and 1899 (Richard Faries fonds, p.1). Faries collected about 1,000 pieces of beadwork and embroidery in exchange for services of baptisms, marriages, and medical care (Thunder Bay Museum).

Comparison of Beadwork

In my Great-Grandmother's piece, the flower patterns are similar to the circular formations and beading technique used in the unknown pieces at the Thunder Bay Museum. The Anishinaabeg beadwork patterns have similar circular flower patterns, and the 2 needle sewing of the beads onto the fabric. There was a type of bead in 12 cut form and charcoal that was in several pieces. It stood out in the pieces because of the different form, uniqueness, and colour.

The cost of these beads may have been expensive, when compared to the cost of charlotte Czech beads.



Unknown piece, Thunder Bay Museum



Unknown piece, Thunder Bay Museum



Beadwork piece by Great-Grandmother, Margaret Shawayahamish

Contemporary Beading

Two Chickasaw nation brothers, Jay Roberts, and Ace Greenwood, describe beading as “storytelling with your hands” (Chickasaw TV Video Network, n.d.). The brothers explain they frequently bead a bird and green in their beadwork to symbolize their ancestral clan and family name (Chickasaw TV Video Network, n.d.). I beaded with white beads to honour my Great-Grandmother and the flowers she beaded in her pieces. Through stories from my grandparents about Makwa, I concluded that my family’s ancestral clan is Makwa. I was taught to never hunt, and/or eat a Makwa because they are our family. Later in my thesis, I will explain how Makwa is embedded in the storytelling of my beadwork.

Edge shares that “the activity of beading is described as both creative and spiritual, to hold significance because of the power inherent in the symbolism” (Edge, 2011: 150). I chose beading because I admired the beautiful and colorful beadwork and earrings at the Powwow. I have always been an artist and experimented with different ways to express myself through art, painting, writing, sketching. Beading became my passion because I instantly felt connected to the beads, needle, and thread. The movement of the needle is like a painter holding their brush to canvas.

Here is a quote from Dr. Prete’s thoughts on glass beads, “I felt some inner turmoil over the use of glass beads within my beading projects” (Prete, 2019: 29). Other Indigenous bead artists feel similarly about using beads in the practice of beadwork itself. Because they originated with traded European material, it feels colonized. Nicolas Renaud explains his recreation of the wampum belt, “I feel that what matters most is reviving the spirit of the wampum, the thinking that goes with it, with both political and spiritual dimensions. And from that we can come up with new designs and use new material as I did” (N. Renaud, personal communication, July 7, 2023).

A community member explained to me that his mother stopped moosehide tanning when the local store was built and sold clothes. It was easier and more practical for her to purchase clothes for herself and family. My Gogo explained through stories about the challenges and hard work to survive on the land, relating these challenges of survival and preparing quills from porcupines to easily purchasing beads from the store. It was a different way of living for my Gogo and ancestors compared to today’s society with everything being available to us. The use of beads represents my effort in decolonizing my work by embedding Indigenous methodologies, knowledge, experiences, and theories.

Establishing my beading technique

The first time I learned to bead I used brick stitch to create fringe earrings with size 11 seed beads and bugle beads. I self-taught by watching Youtube videos posted by Indigenous women from across Canada. My Aunties, mother and Grandma do not bead, so I did not have anyone to teach me. My love and passion for beading arrived later in my life when I was beginning my sober journey. It became a serious part of my healing journey when I was determined to stop the cycle of alcoholism about four and a half years ago.

I connected with Elders in Montreal for guidance on healing ceremonies such as the Sweat lodge, and women:s sharing circles. They invited me to water and moon ceremonies with other urban Indigenous women. I found it was healing for my spirit, mind and body to share, and listen to others' life experiences. At this time, I was beading frequently and enjoyed creating beaded fringe earrings. I felt calm, connected, and artistic while beading, and it became my time to meditate, and reflect on life. Beading grounded me in my search of reconnecting to ceremonies, identity, traditions, and other Indigenous bead artists. I built relationships with other Indigenous bead artists through powwows, markets, and social media. We share similar journeys of why and how we started beading. Beading opens spaces to build relations, share knowledge, or stories together.

My beading journey has been “continuous and broken lines of descent” meaning that I self-taught by mastering different stitches, including styles like the bead artists in the article, Tuft Life: Stitching Sovereignty in Contemporary Indigenous Art but never knowing the history, significance or origin of each stitch (Racette, 2017: 115). I met other urban Indigenous bead artists and learned about other beading techniques through beading together. I learned the two-

needle flat stitch technique from one of my friends and improved my technique over the years. I used this technique in my beadwork piece to create and tell the story of each image that has a teaching and meaning.

Simultaneously improving my life and beading techniques, I recognize the positive changes in the way I bead, the tension and quality of the beads in each piece. These improvements reflect the moments in my life of healing and strengthening relations with my family, and our territory. Many years of beading experiences have prepared me to complete this large, and unique piece of work.

I appreciate my talent, patience, and the creativity of beading. It is more than a piece of beadwork; each of my pieces tells a story. I have made many beaded earrings, and jewelry for others over the years. I begin a project by knowing more about the person, their likes and dislikes, choice of clothing, and personality, and then I create.

The progress of my beading interconnects with experiences of strengthening my Anishinaabe self. This knowledge is embedded in my beading piece. It is honouring the spiritual growth and my connections with my ancestors. When I look at my beaded pieces, I can remember where I beaded and what I was doing at that moment. It is like watching old home videos for me. My beaded pieces tell a story of my experiences and feelings in each bead and the tension of my thread attached to each bead. I watch old tv shows that I saw with my mother or grandparents while I bead my pieces. It gives me a familiar and calm feeling which is transferred into my beading.

I learned along the way when beading this piece that if some rows of beads are not straight, I must accept it and move on. This is part of life, and my healing journey which comes

up while I bead. It is a time of reflection. Beading has given me the space to self-reflect on issues from the past in my family and community.

Land and Beading Connections

Land connections, and stories of my ancestors become part of the beading, and spirit of my beadwork. Cree activist Lewis Cardinal explains, “The land is paramount for all Indigenous societies. Their relationship to that land, their experience on that land shapes everything that is around them” (Robertson, 2017: 14). Each image, and pattern in my beadwork connects to my ancestors’ lands, which shapes my beadwork. I improvise while beading, and available beads are related to being on the land and planning the trip out to Ombabika and Auden, which didn’t go as planned. Edge explains that Indigenous artisans are “...an important dimension to oral tradition, recording the beliefs of their people in a visual language of motifs and symbols,” (Edge, 2011: 136). I feel it is my responsibility to record the Anishinaabe traditions, stories, and experiences of my family, community, and myself and to preserve them and pass them on to my son, and future generations. We lost so much because of the Indian Residential Schools, foster care, and colonization, which needs to stop now so we can continue healing, and learning from our Elders.

I found similarities to Ray’s story about beading being part of her “process”, because I discovered my way of doing this type of work that interconnects to my Anishinaabe identity (Ray, 2015: 7). I am not an expert of the Anishinaabe ways, stories or traditions. Ray quotes Simpson, and she suggests that there are other methods of storytelling such as pictographs, drawings, paintings, beadwork, carvings, dancing, and oral tradition (Ray, 2015:11). Storytelling is based on my beadwork and process, which tells a story of returning, and honoring my parents’ lands and stories. I had a few ideas that I want to implement in my beadwork pieces to honour

the women in my family, including the birth, and loss of my sister's baby, and loss of my father, grandpa, and cousin. They are part of my journey in my MA courses, and life, I will honour them.

I am the needle; it is like a pen and the thread is my ink. As I bead I think about my Great Grandmother and kokums, before me. I ask myself, why did they bead, where did they learn it from, how did this spirit of beading continue in me.... when I didn't see or learn from the women in my family about beading. I feel like it's a spiritual journey, it's my reconnection to my Anishinaabe identity life and ancestors. Nicolas Renaud explains the storytelling in Wendat wampum belts, saying "it is deep because shell beads used in wampum are already charged with meaning in very old Wendat and Haudenosaunee stories, about how they have power to heal and carry speech and memory. There is an undefined space I'm navigating between tradition and re-invention. The specific meaning of some visual shapes and some old wampum has been lost in Wendat culture" (N. Renaud, personal communication, July 7, 2023).

The Pellon acts as the foundation of the beaded piece, like a canvas for an artist. In this type of research, self-location is crucial for the audience to acknowledge and recognize where I am coming from which connects to my project. The next step is choosing the pattern to represent the story that I want to tell in my beadwork. The pattern can be seen as the research question(s) that I wish to explore through group experiences with my family and community. The pattern of my beadwork guides and forms the story and experiences, and my research question guide my project.

I went through a few ideas before choosing the shape of an eye with four images inside of the pupil. The first idea was a bridge with images that represent the Anishinaabe and academic worlds on each side. The bridge was representing a metaphor of how I feel being in both worlds

and completing my Master's research creation project. At times I feel stuck in the middle and overwhelmed by the responsibilities in both worlds. I must separate myself from the academic way of thinking and doing research when I visit my community and family. I feel like my true self with my community and family on the lands.

I felt awkward and colonized while I was recording myself on our trip to Ombabika together. My family did not quite understand why I was recording myself when we are supposed to be present on the land. I chose my moments to record myself and take pictures when I was far from my family. I explained that I needed to do this for my school project. I felt this idea did not embody the knowledge and stories of my research.

The next idea was an eagle feather that represented the moment when I found my first eagle feather with my Uncle Fred and Sebastien on the way back. My plan was to bead different images along the main line of the feather to represent our journey together at Ombabika. The images would honour teachings from the lands, family, and community. Again, I felt this idea was incomplete and told only part of the story.

The third idea of beading a shape of an eye with four images inside the pupil felt complete and embodied the knowledge of these shared experiences. I returned to the beginning of this journey with Elder Margaret and Elder Mary (changed names of Elders for privacy). They passed down the teaching of listening with my eyes and ears when I first started to meet them. I asked them if I could record them, and they said no. Then I asked if I could take notes while I was visiting and listening to their stories and experiences, and they both said no. They explained that we as Anishinaabe Peoples pass down teachings orally, and we did not write anything down. I realized I was bringing the academic and colonial world into the Anishinaabe world. I respected them and accepted these teachings in my life.

Two summers ago, I brought my stepson to visit my family and community for the first time. He enjoyed being out on the lands and fishing with his dad, me, and my family. This was an important milestone in both our lives because he was experiencing the Anishinaabe way of life and how I grew up. He witnessed the ups and downs of living in a small community, but he did not judge anyone. I understand these experiences may impact and unsettle him. I felt the circle of the pupil honors the cycle of life and survival, family, loss, happiness, spirit, teachings, and love. William is part of this circle, and journey, so I thought it was appropriate to include his experiences in my beadwork.

In the middle of the eye, I glued a heart shape cabochon to honour that planning may not go as I wish when being in the community. It is a different way of life and thinking compared to the city when everything must be planned and executed on time. The heart cabochon impacts the design and sewing of the beads. The black beads were supposed to be following a circular pattern but have been improvised to line up as a heart shape. The feelings of being with nature, and those moments of peace on the lands are in my heart and spirit. The state of being in silence and listening to the lands is embedded in the heart shaped rows of beads.



Black heart shaped cabachon

The estimated number of beads is 55,000 in my beadwork piece. My beadwork has the beaded images of Makwa, an eagle feather, blueberries, and daisies inside the pupil, which represents experiences and teachings that I received on the land. I beaded Makwa, who is located inside the eye to represent our interaction together out at Ombabika. When we stared at each other in the eyes, Makwa reminded me of my Grandpa and that we come from the land of Ombabika. It felt like I was home at peace with my ancestors, family and Gitchi Manitou (Creator). Along the way, many animals came to share their teachings: a migizi (eagle), makwa (bear), and three crows (aandeg). It was beautiful to watch the eagle spread its wings and fly away and land on the top of a tree. I felt at peace and whole again as an Anishinaabe person.

The eagle feather represents my first time receiving the feather as a gift from Gitchi Manitou with my Uncle Fred. On the way back home, I asked Fred to stop where we saw an eagle and three crows flying away in front of the truck. We looked on the road, and I found my first eagle feather. My Uncle told me to put tobacco down to thank the Creator for this gift. This moment strengthened my relationship with my Uncle Fred.

Blueberries represents the moments that I spend with my Gogo picking berries and listening to her stories. It is good medicine for us when we pick blueberries together. We laugh, share memories and experiences. Daisies represents and honours my Grandpa, he loved daisies so much. Four white and four purplish flowers outside of the pupil honours my Great-Grandmother and her passion for beading.

My beadwork is embedded with my spirit of feeling Anishinaabe again and strengthening family relationships. Beading is part of my medicine bundle, and it taught me how to express and transfer knowledge, experiences, and stories to the future generations. I intended to share my beadwork journey with my community and the future generations of my community to strengthen their Anishinaabe identities, traditions, and experiences. Beadwork is storytelling, grounded in the collective and in the importance of sharing knowledge to the next generations; it is our way of transferring knowledge and keeping it alive (Farrell, 2017).

My choice of sewing my beadwork on a piece of moose hide is to ground my work and honour hunting traditions of the mooz (moose) every fall. I have memories of my Grandpa traveling out on the land with his brothers for a few weeks to hunt mooz. My mom and Gogo prepared the meat in my grandparents' house, in which I helped. It was a time of sharing, caring, and working together as a family to prepare meat for the winter. We only hunted what we

needed, ate, and used everything of the mooz. We respected the mooz for offering their life in return for us so we could eat during the winter.



Amanda Shawayahamish

I learned that I needed to be okay with letting go of my plans and time limits. I went with the flow and put it in Gitchi Manitou's spirit and teachings. I realized that I was acting like I do at the university with the mentality of continuing and making it work no matter what it takes. The heart shape cabochon symbolizes my heart and spirit being embedded fully into this challenging work. It can be emotionally, physically, spiritually, and mentally exhausting when doing this work of searching for answers about my ancestors' history.

Daily life in the community differs tremendously compared to the urban living demands of education, employment, and personal responsibilities. The reality of the community issues can

be challenging for me to concentrate on my project's goal because it impacts me personally. I need to balance the two worlds to avoid burning out.

I felt after that I needed to be understanding and not keep hard feelings towards my sister for canceling last minute on me. I improvised a lot for this trip to Ombabika because my Great Auntie needed to cancel to being our guide. One of the Elders became very ill in the hospital, so my Great Auntie was helping the family. There was miscommunication between me and my mom which became disruptive to our relationship.

In the end, I asked my Uncle Fred if he could be our guide and I paid him to compensate his time. He is the groundskeeper in Ombabika, he removed bushes to make a path to the Ombabika cemetery. Uncle Fred is very knowledgeable about the lands, survival, and our teachings.

We also visited Auden, a location where my Gogo, and her family were relocated before 1969. Uncle Fred showed me the location of the former Anglican church. He shared with me that he was one of the Altar boys at the church, and he would spend a lot of time there. I felt the church is a symbol of colonization and loss of our culture because of the priests' tactics of spreading the Anglican beliefs unto my family. The Anglican religious beliefs continue to be part of community members' lives.

The original structures of the buildings are only visible in the fall or spring when the trees and bushes are sparse. It strengthened connections with my family to visit where they lived because I remember hearing stories from my mother, older cousins, Elders, and grandparents about Auden and Ombabika. I always felt left out and wondered where these places are and how it looks.

After our visit, we ate supper and Uncle Fred asked me to place food offerings in the bush for our ancestors. Makwa (a bear) came to visit us, while we were relaxing around the fire. We looked at each other in the eyes, and I felt some kind of connection with him and did not feel scared. Makwa became a part of my medicine bundle: as I'm reconnecting with the Land, Makwa is reminding me that I'm from here and that my ancestors are with me everywhere. "Animals teach us to be aware, to learn, to know things about ourselves, not all of us can see it, observe and be aware" (Amanda Shawayahamish, 2021).

Conclusion

My Master's research-creation project cannot be described as a Western typical research project. It is embedded with living knowledge, experiences, and Anishinaabe spirit. These group experiences with my community and family live within my beadwork and myself. I cherish and respect the community and family members as my collaborators, who supported me during this journey and continue to inspire me.

This journey began with many questions about the traditions of beading in my community and grew into learning more about the history of my ancestors and strengthening relationships with my community. These group experiences opened my spirit, mind, and emotions of how valuable family, relations, stories, and traditions are to my Anishinaabe identity and life. Healing is a place of self-care, forgiveness, and the start of strengthening my Anishinaabe identity. Beading opened the door for me to tell my story of reclamation and being proud to be an Anishinaabekwe again. Strengthening my identity has built my confidence in resisting the racism, colonial and religious ways of thinking about my Anishinaabe teachings.

I learned to accept that my family are not like me and are on a different path regarding connecting and living with our Anishinaabe teachings. There are only a few family and community members that I know who are trying to pursue our traditions and teachings. They provide me with the gifts of strength, love, wisdom, and inspiration to continue learning about our ancestors, and traditions.

A story from the Mishomis Book about Waynaboozhoo returning to the people reminds me of the teachings that I was gifted from Elders, family, and community members whom I visited in the past three summers. Waynaboozhoo's encounter with Bay-bee'-mi-say-si' (whirlwind) passed on the teaching of "life was truly a balance between joy and sorrow-times to be carefree and times to be careful" (Benton-Banai, 2010: 54). This reminds me of the moments that I laughed, cried, and felt like giving up during my Master's with Sébastien, my mom, Gogo, William, Uncle Fred, Auntie (Gogo's sister), sister, and nieces.

It was challenging and painful to continue with my Master's project when I lost my dad, niece, and cousin in a period of four months. As Waynaboozhoo learned the balance of joy and sorrow, he realized mah-wee' (crying) would come with joy (Benton-Banai, 2010: 54). This year, my family and I were gifted with my sister's baby girl in April, my first child coming in November, and family relationships being strengthened through experiences, and stories.

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