

MODERN INDIGENOUS

by

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
Background.....	5
Methods.....	9
Design	
Moose Hide	11
Graphic Prints	16
Fish Leather	19
Cree Syllabics	21
Birch Textile	28
Rainbow Warriors	30
Conclusion.....	36
Appendix	
Appendix 1.....	37
Appendix 2.....	41
Appendix 3.....	45
Primary Sources.....	47
Bibliography.....	47

Abstract

Modern Indigenous is the title of my thesis and is a brand development project that aims to incorporate Indigenous culture, values, symbols and traditional materials with twenty-first century design thinking and product development. Through this process a number of modernized product designs will be developed as a way of addressing the effects of colonization which has forgotten the Indigenous culture and it's knowledge base for over a century. The general public's perception related to Indigenous knowledge and ways of life are predominately negative. This thesis project is an attempt to change existing perceptions about Indigenous culture and allow First Nations people to be positively impacted and redefined through design in a modern way. An additional aim is to enhance cultural awareness for both Indigenous and the general public to strengthen a new Indigenous identity while creating a new visual language.

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Background

The driving force behind my design work is my Indigenous cultural heritage. I am from Whitefish Lake First Nation. My ancestry includes Woodland Cree (Nihithaw), Saulteaux and Cherokee as well as Polish, German and English. I spent the majority of my youth on Whitefish Lake First Nation, later relocating to the urban climate of Edmonton during high school. My Indigenous heritage forms a large part of my identity. It inspired the creation of my design company, LUXX Ready-to-Wear nearly a decade ago where I strive to express my identity and uplift my Indigenous ancestry through the medium of fashion. My diverse background forces me to confront conflicting ideals between Indigenous and Western ways of viewing the world, which I attempt to reconcile in my design process. Throughout this process I make sure to apply core values that I have derived from my Indigenous heritage into my design thinking. I find inspiration in Indigenous knowledge, values, ways of life, symbols and forms of aesthetic. I am highly motivated to educate and enlighten the current community through my design work about Canada's Indigenous legacy.

The appreciation and gratitude I presently possess for my Indigenous ancestry was significantly impaired during my youth. As a child I felt ashamed and embarrassed to be First Nations. The largely negative public perceptions and attitudes related to Indigenous history and culture as well as the negative stereotypes and misconceptions related to First Nations people were the main causal factors in my dissatisfaction. These perceptions include Indigenous people as a primitive group of people, whose knowledge and ways of life are historically inferior

related to their colonialist counterparts. This is even evident in advertising and product branding where one dimensional, monolithic stereotype and racist representations of Indigenous people are commoditized.¹ Through my design work, I hope to convey a multidimensional representation of Indigenous people and culture that celebrates and communicates its depth and diversity, thereby strengthening a new Indigenous identity in the stereotype-dominated mainstream.

Shana Dion, the Assistant Dean of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students experienced a similar sentiment of shame in her youth, which she shared in an interview on August 7, 2017. She grew up on a reservation in Northern Alberta while attending grade school in a local rural town. She gives the following account of her experiences:

“As children, we were only known as dirty Indians and people would spit on us walking through the small towns where we lived. We were bussed in to a predominately white school and then bussed back to our reserve. The things that were said to us were pretty humiliating at the time and there was a lot of shame there. For a long time, we were just dirty little Indian girls. We were dirty because we weren’t bright white and we had brown hair and not blond. We were dirty because we had brown eyes and not blue eyes and that was

¹ Merskin, Debra. "The Princess and the SUV: Brand Images of Native Americans as Commodified Racism" *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* Vol. 34, 2009.

something we knew very early on in our lives of where we stood in society because that is all we knew, was the res life, and this small community where we went to school.”²

Alongside negative misconceptions about First Nation groups, the stark reality of a lower quality of life is evidenced in the demographics of these populations. Indigenous people experience lower educational achievement and income, higher unemployment, food scarcity, poor access to housing and more barriers to accessing health care compared with the general population.³ Furthermore, the mental health statistics are staggering. First Nations in Canada have suicide rates double that of the national average, according to *The Human Face of Mental Health and Mental Illness in Canada*, a 2006 report by the Public Health Agency of Canada. Suicide has multiple social and individual causes, including social inequity such as poverty; history of childhood adversity including physical and sexual abuse; historic and ongoing loss of cultural identity; and psychological distress and substance abuse.⁴ In 2016 Attawapiskat First Nation declared a state of emergency after eleven people attempted to take their own lives in one single day.⁵

² Shana Dion, per comm, August 7, 2017.

³ Dickason, Olive Patricia, and David Alan Long. *Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues*. 3rd ed. Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press, 2011.

⁴ *The Human Face of Mental Health and Mental Illness In Canada*, 2006. [Ottawa, Ont.]: Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006.

⁵ Rutherford, Kate. “Attawapiskat declares state of emergency over spate of suicide attempts” CBC.ca, August 20, 2018.

"I think the shame was there because there was so many addictions in our community, and there was so much profound, I guess... abuse... in many, many ways. So for me, it was trying to search out the answers of 'Why?', 'Why is our community this way?', 'Why is everyone so heavily medicated?', 'Why is there so much abuse?'"⁶

These bleak facts and experiences inspire me to empower Indigenous culture through design by creating desirable products that reinforce Indigenous knowledge, symbols and values. My culture has been left sleeping from the effects of colonization, and I want to explore its rich and diverse facets through product design under the purview of modernity to imbue a sense of wakefulness in it. In the words of Rupert Ross in *Indigenous Healing: Exploring Traditional Paths*, "we need to replace the myth of cultural inferiority with the truth of cultural richness and diversity."⁷ I strongly desire to design products that allow for inclusivity, for people of all races and backgrounds to enjoy rather than solely First Nations.

⁶ Shana Dion, per comm, August 7, 2017.

⁷ Ross, Rupert. *Indigenous Healing: Exploring Traditional Paths*. Toronto: Penguin, 2014.

**“KA-KÍ-KISKÉYIHTÉTAN ÓMA, NAMOYA KINWÉS
MAKA ACIYOWÉS POHKO ÓMA ÓTA KA-HAYAYAK
WASÉTAM ASKIHK, ÉKWA KA-KAKWÉY MISKÉTAN
KISKÉYIHTAMOWIN, IYINÍSIWIN, KISTÉYITOW-
IN, MINA NÁNISITOTATOWIN KAKIYA AYISINI-
WAK, ÉKOSI ÓMA KAKIYA KA-WAHKOTOWAK.”**

CREE PROVERB

luxxreadytowear.com

Realize that we as human beings
have been put on this earth
for only a short time and that we must
use this time to gain wisdom, knowledge,
respect and the understanding for all human
beings since we are all relatives.

Method

In order to better understand my Indigenous heritage, Indigenous pedagogies needed to be embraced. Methodologies for knowledge transmission have been colonized and the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices.⁸ Therefore, it was important to obtain traditional knowledge and Indigenous ways of viewing the world from my community. This was done by seeking out oral recitation of personal stories and experiences from Elders and other Indigenous individuals who have learned their understanding from previous generations, their communities, their environments and ceremonies. Furthermore, learning an Indigenous perspective includes something everyone has in common – intuition. This is comparable to a molecular or cellular memory.⁹

“I lost my language when I went to residential school. But before I went my grandparents couldn't speak English, they spoke straight Cree, and I grew up with that. But after 17, that is when I lost my language. Going back and working with the elders, I start to revive it. The elders tell me that your Cree, your thousands of years of DNA in your blood, is just like a computer, that knowledge and those feelings are stored in your DNA. We are a First Nation people, so they can't make you into something different.”¹⁰

⁸ Smith, Linda Tuhiwai, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Second edition. London: Zed Books, 2012.

⁹ Cardinal, Lewis. “What is an Indigenous Perspective?”, *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 25(2) (2001), 180-2.

¹⁰ Twin, Ethan, per comm, November 20, 2017.

Indigenous knowledge is rife with symbolism. The authors of *The Sacred Tree* discuss the purpose of symbols: "Symbols express and represent meaning. Meaning helps provide purpose and understanding in the lives of human beings. Symbols are eternally giving birth to new understandings of the essence of life as it emerges, ever elusive, out of the unknown mist of creation. Every rebirth of the life and purpose of a people is accompanied by the revitalization of that people's symbols."¹¹ The incorporation of symbols important to Indigenous ideologies in my designs was essential in my aims of contributing towards a visually modernized Indigenous culture.

¹¹ Lane, Phil. *The Sacred Tree*. Fourth edition. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 2012.

“Expect guidance to come in many forms; in prayer, in dreams, in times of quiet solitude and in the words and deeds of wise elders and friends.”¹²

Design

Moosehide

A foundational concept of Indigenous knowledge systems is the emphasis on the interconnectedness of all creation.¹³ Among the Indigenous people on Earth today there are spiritual leaders, medicine men and women, tribal chiefs and elders who have, despite more than centuries of bitter persecution and genocide held true to their heritage and traditions, keeping alive their sacred knowledge of this interconnectedness of life. The Indigenous perspective views all things as interrelated and everything in the universe as part of a single whole. Everything is connected in some way to everything else. This worldview believes it is only possible to understand something if we understand how it is connected to everything else.¹⁴ This sense of interconnectedness extends into Indigenous views on justice. Justice is viewed relationally. Offenders are seen as a product of all of their relationships, and therefore are not dealt with alone.¹⁵ In this interwoven worldview, humans are not seen as more important than any other components of the natural world, but rather

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Iseke, Judy, and Leisa Desmoulin. "A Two-Way Street: Indigenous Knowledge and Science Take a Ride." *Journal of American Indian Education* 54, no. 3 (2015): 31-53.

¹⁴ Lane, *The Sacred Tree*

¹⁵ Ross, *Indigenous Healing*

the value in community is emphasized. Each member is an equal part of the system as opposed to an emphasis on individuality, which places human individuals above others and above community.¹⁶ These principles are what I am conveying through my prominence of woven products. Not only is weaving a traditional Indigenous craft, but the aesthetic results embody this unified perspective as each strip of material is essential to create one interconnected and collective whole.

A reflection of this worldview is conveyed in Elder McCallum's story from his youth:

"When I was a kid, our method of travel was by canoe. . . . My mom used to make a little bed for me . . . on the bottom of the canoe. And that's where I would lay in the canoe. And she would be sitting in front, and my dad would be sitting in the back, and he'd be paddling. We'd be going home. And I could hear that water. I could hear the paddles. . . . I remember going through them bull rushes, and as the bull rushes went around the gunnels of that canoe, they had a song of their own— a sound that was so unique, it was just beautiful, because it was synchronized. The wood was synchronized with those bull rushes. Two lives coming together and making a song together. . . . To me it was so soothing. The voice of the water, the voice

¹⁶ Martin, K.J. & J.J. Garrett. "Teaching and Learning with Traditional Indigenous Knowledge in the Tall Grass Plains". *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 30, no. 2 (2010): 289-314.

of the wind, the voice of the bull rushes, the wood, the voice of the paddles, and the voice of the water when the paddle is moving through the water. All of those were so soothing to me— that's Indigenous language. It's much more than the spoken word."¹⁷

This relationship-based worldview includes an individual's relationship with his or her natural world. Human interconnectedness with the environment is a concept related to the idea of respect for animal life.¹⁸ My selection of moose-hide as one medium to weave with was inspired by the traditional and respectful relationship the Woodland Cree had with moose. Woodland Cree hunted moose as a means for survival. Appreciation and gratitude were essential displays during a hunt.

Dustin Twin, a Cree elder from Swan River First Nation in Northern Alberta, shared his personal hunting experience:

"I was taught to respect the animals and not to shoot anything I don't use. When we went hunting I didn't get a big sense of pride of testosterone when I killed a moose. We had a protocol, when we hunted we thanked the spirit of the moose for giving its life to us, for us to eat. That is how we prayed.

¹⁷ Iseke and Desmoulins, "A Two-Way Street: Indigenous Knowledge and Science Take a Ride."

¹⁸ Ibid.

We cut off the tip of the heart, and made prayer, made thank you and left it on a tree or twig. I was taught these protocols and values.”

Today this sense of gratitude for the animal products consumed is generally absent in the Western population, as these products have been commoditized and the end-consumer purchasing meat at a grocery store is very far removed from the process of livestock slaughter. In product design, this familiar disconnect between consumers and the origins of the products they purchase is also present. Aside from a simple tag communicating which country the product was manufactured in, consumers are largely unaware of the manufacturing processes involved to produce the end product and the effects these manufacturing processes have socially and environmentally. Deceptive marketing practices such as greenwashing further this disconnect. My selection of moose hide as a medium serves as a reminder for the importance of gratitude and the reverential relationship my ancestors had with the natural world. The form of a pillow allows these values to be accessed by the modern human being.

The process of tanning moose-hide is organic, not involving any dyes or chemicals thereby leaving out any detrimental environmental effects. The steps are as follows:

How to tan a moose hide by Vina Young, May 1996, Desmarais, Alberta

1. The hide is soaked overnight in water. The next morning you cut holes in the hide where you will tie it for stretching. The hide is then tied to a stretch frame that is made of logs and is about six feet long square frame.
2. The next step is to use a bone scraper to scrape off all the flesh from the moose hide.
3. Next comes the part where you remove the moose hair. This must be done until you can see the little lines (veins). The toughest part is the bottom of the moose hide.
4. The hide now looks like a huge piece of paper. It is then splashed with grease and moose brains and smoked with rotted poplar
5. It is soaked again for at least 24 hours
6. It is now wrung out on a stick. It is rolled from opposite ends to meet the middle, then twisted around the pile until no water drips.
7. Then it is swung over fire until it is completely dry (f you can feel your breath then it is dry). Dry poplar must be used.
8. Then it is scraped again until it looks and feels smooth all over.
9. It is sewn up on two sides and skirted.
10. Finally it is smoked until the desired colour. This process takes approximately 3 days.¹⁹

¹⁹ The Bigstone Cree Nation and Metis People of Kituskeenow, Kituskeenow Cultural Land Use and Occupancy Study, The Arctic Institute of North America, Calgary, 1999.



Graphic Prints

This series of soft goods features traditional ceremonial powwow dancers in a variety of poses. They display a variety of dance types including Men's Fancy Dance, Women's Fancy Dance, Jingle Dance, and Grass Dance. Indigenous people are represented in a non-stereotypical fashion through different hair colours and skin colours, reflecting the diverse appearances of our people. It is important to represent us in this way as they are currently largely represented in a stereotypical and commoditized fashion in the mainstream media, as an "Other."²⁰ The dancers adorn elaborate, colourful and decorated regalia. The illustrations for this series are watercolours that were created in collaboration with the South American artist Artur Paiva. Furthermore, I have instilled Indigenous knowledge and values into quotes and proverbs and incorporated them onto pillows. These quotes are timeless, thereby not susceptible to cyclical trends in style and fashion. All of these prints were produced on polyester textiles through dye sublimation, a digital printing technology that embeds colours into the fabric, rather than simply on the surface. The ink bonds to the textile through the process of heating the polyester polymers.

Traditional ceremonial ribbon skirts inspired the pillow produced from woven ribbons.

²⁰ Merskin, "The Princess and the SUV: Brand Images of Native Americans as Commodified Racism"

“The power of ceremony – it marries the mundane to the sacred. The water turns to wine, the coffee to a prayer. The material and spiritual mingle like grounds mingled with humus, transformed like steam rising from a mug into the morning mist. What else can you offer the Earth, which has everything? What else can you give but something of yourself?”²¹

“Pow wow is about family and community. When a two spirit person dances they are dancing for the communities. We dance for our families. We dance for good health, healthy Spirit, healthy Mind and Mother Earth.”

-Chevi Rabbit

²¹ Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2013.





"KA-KI-KISKÉYHTÉTAN ÓMA, NAMÓYA KINWÉS
 MAKÁ ACIYOWÉS POHKÓ ÓMA ÓTA KA-HAYAYAK
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 KISKÉYHTAMOWIN, IYINISIWIN, KISTÉYITOW-
 IN, MINA NANISITATOWIN KAKIYA AYISINI-
 WAK, EKOSI ÓMA KAKIYA KA-WAHKOTOWAK."

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Realize that we as human beings
 have been put on this earth
 for only a short time and that we must
 use this time to gain wisdom, knowledge,
 respect and the understanding for all human
 beings since we are all relatives.



AFTER THE LAST TREE HAS BEEN CUT DOWN
 AFTER THE LAST RIVER HAS BEEN POISONED
 AFTER THE LAST FISH HAS BEEN CAUGHT
 THEN YOU WILL REALIZE
 THAT MONEY CAN NOT BE EATEN.

-CREE PROVERB-

Fish Leather

The people of the First Nations learned to respect Mother Earth and the riches she provided so generously. Their lifestyles included a deep respect for the mineral world, the plant world and the animal world.²² The land that sustained First Nations groups was revered, and it was considered a gift rather than a commodity.²³ Although the majority of the land in North America was surrendered to the settlers, the meaning of the land was not. Robin Wall Kimmerer explains: " In the settler mind, land was property, real estate, capital or natural resources. But to our people, it was everything: identity, the connection to our ancestors, the home of our non-human kinfolk, our pharmacy, our library, the source of all that sustained us. Our lands were where our responsibility to the world was enacted, sacred ground. It belonged to itself; it was a gift, not a commodity, so it could never be bought or sold. These are the meanings people took with them when they were forced from their ancient homelands to new places."²⁴

Naturally, this reverence for their natural habitats induced a highly respectful relationship between Indigenous people and the plants and animals that provided them with sustenance. For example, First Nations groups supplied their needs using every part of a buffalo killed in a hunt in varying and ingenious ways, wasting nothing. A chart depicting these uses can be found in the appendix.

²² Lane, *The Sacred Tree*

²³ Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

²⁴ Ibid.

“The Buffalo was part of us, his flesh and blood being absorbed by us until it became our own flesh and blood. Our clothing, our tipis, everything we needed for life came from the buffalo’s body. It was hard to say where the animals ended and the human began.”²⁵

26

In this vein I was inspired to incorporate fish leather into my product design, a new innovation in textiles. The fish skins used to make this leather are collected as a cast off waste from fish processing, thereby recycling an item that would otherwise be discarded. This reduces water pollution, as these skins would otherwise be tossed into water bodies. They are obtained from canning fisheries worldwide. The texture of fish leather is reminiscent of reptile leather. It comes in a wide range of colours and finishes. It is stain and scratch resistant, durable, resilient, strong, soft and versatile. During the manufacturing process the odor of fish is removed using a combination of chemicals; one of the downsides, as it is not a fully organic textile.²⁷

²⁵ Fire, John, and Richard Erdoes. *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972.

²⁷ “About Our Leathers” <https://www.sealeatherwear.com/fish-leather-tanning.php?osCsid=aa8a8fb9b90b31044f7713484807f8c9>, (July 20, 2018).

Although, the lime, lye and acids that are usually used to remove hair from skins are not needed in the removal of fish scales, thereby not contributing to atmospheric pollution that these substances release in tanning processes. A woven sunglasses case was the choice in my design process as it is a modern, universal product.



Sample of fish leather weave

Cree Syllabics

The impact of residential schools on the continuity of Indigenous languages was extremely hindering. Children were forbidden to speak in their native tongues, and were punished for doing so. The prevalence of fluent speakers in the modern age has severely deteriorated as a result. As with any culture, language is a very large component as it shapes a way of seeing the world. Leona Makokis, a Cree woman who is president of the Blue Quills First Nations College in St. Paul, Alberta explains,

“The ability to speak an Indigenous language is an indispensable part of our Indigenous identity, as these languages convey a sense of identity, a sense of responsibility, and a sense of spiritual relationship to the universe: plants, animals, Mother Earth, rocks and people.”²⁸

Indigenous languages differ from the common languages spoken today in various ways. The structure of Indigenous languages conveys the highly spiritualized nature and orientation of indigenous groups, as the languages are based on spiritual connections. The structures reveal that people lived in a spiritualized and embedding universe, speaking about the world in reverential, connecting terms, positioning everything with and within everything else, and colouring daily life with a

²⁸ Ross, *Indigenous Healing*.

rich spirituality that almost defies western understanding.²⁹ Leroy Little Bear writes the following about his Indigenous language:

“Our elders repeatedly tell us that our language is a spiritual language. For example, ‘miskisik’ means an eye.³⁰ In this word, ‘mis’ refers to a body part, and the root word, ‘kisik’ means the heavens; it reminds us that our ability to see is a spiritual gift, that we are related to the Creator, and every relationship carries responsibilities...Our languages guide us in our relationships...English words simply cannot convey words contextualized in relationships with the sacred.”³¹

Additionally, a large and very important component of Indigenous languages is animacy. While the majority of the English vocabulary contains more nouns than verbs, Indigenous languages contain more verbs than nouns. This creates greater complexity, as these verbs have to be individually conjugated, and more tenses and cases have to be mastered. The grammar of animacy is extended to plants, animals, rocks, mountains, water, fire and places. Beings that are imbued with spirit, sacred medicines, our songs, drums and even stories, are all animate. The list of inanimate is smaller, filled with objects that are made by people.

²⁹ Ross. *Indigenous Healing*.

³⁰ “Miskisik’ means eye in the Cree language

³¹ Ibid.

In English, however, you are either a human or a thing. This difference between the languages creates a very different way of relating to the world, as kinship with the animate world is inherently communicated. A tree is considered a "someone" versus a "something." Intrinsic in this is familial respect and a moral responsibility not to exploit.³²

Dustin Twin spoke to this:

"Our language, Cree...when we talk about a tree or a plant, it is not an inanimate object like this wall. It is living, it has a spirit and it is living. A tree is not just a tree to us, it is living."

He elaborates on the effect this has on his worldview and perspective:

"When I am with the elders in the bush for a few days, and they speak straight Cree, my attitude changes and I see things, life differently. Our language is more of a feeling or living language. It is not inanimate."

³² Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

The maintenance of Indigenous languages through my design process is incredibly important. This has led me to create a monogram in Cree syllabics that could essentially be applied to any type of product in order to visually communicate my identity, heritage and values. These syllabics read the mantra "We Will Succeed," which emphasizes the Indigenous value in the welfare of the group and the mutual flourishing of all. This stands apart from the self-centered Western values of personal gain and personal interest. I have created both 2D and 3D prints of these syllabics.



The shape of the small accessories bags incorporating Cree syllabics are reminiscent of tipis, which are a strong symbolic representation of Indigenous culture. This was part of the inspiration for the shape. Tipis were sacred for First Nations groups. A microcosm of the universe, the circular floor plans echoed the earth's shape as it stretched out below the heavens. The tipi's floor represented earth, the walls the sky and the poles inside were passageways leading upward to the Great Spirit.³³ These structures were minimally impactful on the environment, and suited the nomadic lifestyles of First Nation groups as they were assembled and dismantled with relative ease.

"I am going to venture that the man who sat on the ground in his tipi meditating on life and its meaning, accepting the kinship of all creatures, and acknowledging unity with the universe of things, was infusing into his being the true essence of civilization."³⁴

Chief Luther Standing Bear, Oglala, Sioux

I was also deeply moved by the Indigenous viewpoints on humans and their place in the world. Western and Aboriginal cultures hold opposite views about the importance of human beings in Creation.³⁵ As Robin Wall Kimmerer explains in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*:

³³ McKittrick, Rosemary. "General Cluster." *Antiques & Collecting Magazine* 114, no. 7 (September 2009): 57.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ross, *Indigenous Healing*.

“In the Western tradition there is a recognized hierarchy of beings, with, of course, the human being on top – the pinnacle of evolution, the darlings of Creation, and the plants at the bottom. But in Native ways of knowing, human people are often referred to as the ‘younger brothers of Creation.’ We say that the humans have the least experience with how to live and thus the most to learn – we must look to our teachers among the other species for guidance. Their wisdom is apparent in the way that they live. They teach us by example. They’ve been on the Earth far longer than we have been, and have had time to figure things out.... Plants know how to make food and medicine from light and water, and then they give it away. In this reverse hierarchy, human creatures are understood to be the least essential and the most dependent – we are not considered Masters of Creation but rather humble servants.”

As the design of the bag also resembles a hierarchy, I feel it conveys the symbolism of this viewpoint and serves as a reminder of this countering worldview.



Birch Textile

Traditionally, the Indigenous groups of Canada have used the birch tree for centuries. The discovery of birch bark artifacts in archeological excavations has revealed the economic and social importance of birch bark technologies to First Nations. Birch bark technologies were important in everyday tasks of economic life such as harvesting, transporting, cooking and storing foodstuffs. The bark also played a special role in women's work and identity as their gender roles assigned to them the tasks of harvesting the tree, manufacturing the technologies and passing down this knowledge to subsequent generations.³⁶ Birch is still important today. It is a hardwood that is commonly used in the construction of toboggans and snowshoe frames. The bark is extensively used in the making of household crafts, ornaments, and canoes.³⁷ Two garments with modern classic shapes have been produced using a satin resembling birch bark; a woman's draped shift dress and a men's short-sleeved collared shirt. These shapes were selected as they are highly wearable by the mass market and are modern classic silhouettes that can be worn by anyone. They are simple, yet elegant and beautiful.

The symbolism of the birch tree is highly significant and embodies the resilient spirit of Indigenous Nations enduring the harsh effects of colonization. Although it appears frail and delicate, the birch is a hardy tree that can survive harsh conditions with relative ease.

³⁶ Croft S, Mathewes RW. "Barking up the Right Tree: Understanding Birch Bark Artifacts from the Canadian Plateau", *BC Studies* 180, (2013), 83–122.

³⁷ Bigstone Cree Nation, Kituskeenow Cultural Land Use and Occupancy Study

Proof of this adaptability is seen in its easy and eager ability to repopulate areas damaged by forest fires or clearings. As the last Ice Age receded it was one of the first species to grace the rocky landscape left behind. The birch is a pioneer, courageously taking root and starting anew to revive the landscape where no other would before. This is a powerful metaphor as it exemplifies strength in the face of weakness.³⁸ It is a symbol of courage and renewal even in times of adversity, and this is what I hope to convey through this selection of textile and product design.



³⁸ "Celtic Meaning Birch Tree," <https://www.whats-your-sign.com/celtic-meaning-birch-tree.html>, (February 20, 2018).



The Rainbow Warriors

The ancient prophecy foretelling of the Rainbow Warriors was recounted by varying Indigenous Nations across North America, including the Hopi and Zuni in the southwest, the Cree in the far north, the Cherokee in the southeast and Sioux Indians from the Plains.³⁹ These Nations prophesied that people of different colours, classes and creeds will unite to spread the wisdom of living in harmony with each other, all

³⁹ "The Prophecy Of The Rainbow Warriors And Future Of Planet Earth" ,<http://www.messagetoeagle.com/the-prophecy-of-the-rainbow-warriors-and-future-of-planet-earth>, June 10, 2018.

creatures and the land at a time when the Earth is ravaged by the powerful effects of greed and destruction. This diverse group of people will be called the Rainbow Warriors and their actions and deeds will reestablish balance in the world, in turn renewing the planet with health, integrity and spiritual prosperity.

Taking into consideration the current state of affairs, it is natural to conclude that the coming of the Rainbow Warriors is imminent. Dr. Jane Goodall speaks to this state in *The Sacred Tree*: "The selfish wasteful ways of modern humans is destroying Mother Earth. Careless use of water has lowered the water tables, unlimited burning of fossil fuels is contaminating the air, burning up the ozone layer, contributing to the gradual but relentless warming up of our temperature around the globe. Thoughtless, mindless use of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and chemical fertilizers is poisoning Mother Earth, destroying the forms that took millions of years to appear on our planet."⁴⁰ She observes the negative effects on the planet: "I hear, as they do, the crying out of the violated forests and prairies and wetlands, the mined, shattered rocks of the sacred mountains, the dying, contaminated streams and rivers, the choking air. I feel the anguish of the animals, the four-footed, winged and finned Brothers and Sisters. Many species are struggling to survive, many have already gone – forever." It is evident that the status quo is not sustainable, and that individuals will have to take personal responsibility in their daily lives to change the course of events. This is what the prophecy of the Rainbow Warriors espouses, and this is the message I hope to advance through product design.

⁴⁰ Lane, *The Sacred Tree*

A version of the prophecy was narrated by a Cree elder named "Fire Eyes":

"One day the greed of the white man, Yo-ne-gi, will cause the fish in the river currents to die, the birds to fall from the skies, the waters to blacken, and the trees to be unable to stand.

In this time, out of necessity, we will need to preserve the traditions, legends, rituals, myths, and the old customs of the original communities so that they show us how to recover our health, restore harmony between people and the Earth, and re-establish respect and love for our peers. Those who undertake this sacred task of remembering and sustaining will be the key to the survival of humanity, and they will be known as The Rainbow Warriors. The day will come when some people will awaken from their lethargy to forge a new world of justice, peace, liberty, and respect for the Great Spirit. The Rainbow Warriors will carry and transmit the values of this new world. They will spread the knowledge that they carry to the inhabitants of the Earth, to the inhabitants of Elohi.

They will teach the rest of the children of the Earth how the Great Spirit lives and show them how this world has moved away from the Great Spirit, and how for that reason humanity

and Earth are falling ill. The principles of these teachings will be the same ones that the original communities and first peoples lived by. The Rainbow Warriors will teach the people of Earth about unity, love and comprehension.

They will take these teachings of how to re-establish harmony between people to the five corners of the Earth. They will teach the people how to pray to the Great Spirit as their predecessors had, allowing love to flow like the beautiful currents that descend from the mountains in channels that unite with the ocean of life itself.

And once again the joy of being accompanied by loving brothers and sisters and the joy of being alone will be reborn. Those who encounter this joy will be free from the pettiness and ugliness of envy, and they will love their peers like brothers, without regard to the color of their skin, their race, their ethnicity, or their religion. Their hearts will be inundated with happiness as they once again become one with the rest of creation. Their hearts will be pure and will radiate warmth, comprehension and respect for humanity, for the natural world, and for the Great Spirit.

The people of the Earth will once again dedicate their minds, hearts, souls, and actions to the purest thoughts to be able to aspire to the magnificence of the Master of Life, the Great

Spirit. They will call on the strength that lies hidden in the beauty of a heart-borne oration, of prayer, and in the solitary moments of life.

The Earth's children will run free and enjoy the treasures of nature of Mother Earth, free from venoms and the destruction generated by the Yo-ne-gi and his greedy practices.

The rivers will run clear and clean as they once did, the forests will be abundant and full of beauty, and there will be countless birds and animals living as one with the people of the Earth. The powers of the planet and of the animals will be respected, and the conservation of all of the beauty of the world will convert into a way of life. The poor, the sick, and those in need will be cared for by their Brothers and Sisters, and that care will be an integral part of the daily lives of citizens of the Earth.

The leaders of communities will be chosen in the old way; not according to their political group, nor for being the one who shouts the loudest, nor through a process of exchanging insults and mutual accusations: They will be chosen to lead because

their actions are proof of their character and ability to lead. They will be chosen as chiefs and leaders according to how they express their love, their wisdom, their courage, and their values, and they will have acted for the greater good of their entire community throughout their lives. They will be chosen for their qualities and not for the quantity of money they possess. And just in the way that the great chiefs of old did, they will use their love to understand and ensure that the children and young people of the community are educated and raised with love and knowledge of their environment."⁴¹

I have produced a short fashion film feature to communicate awareness of the Rainbow Warriors prophecy to individuals and to inspire them towards personal responsibility. I thought a video was an effective means of communicating this vision as it can be uploaded to the Internet, highly advantageous in reaching many people from all over the world. I strongly desired to take this concept and create a highly visual project; to make it digestible to the viewer, so that he or she can be inspired to make positively impactful choices on the environment and his or her personal relationships. In the near future, I plan to design an entire collection inspired by this story in an effort to bring it into mainstream awareness. The following images are screenshots from this feature:

⁴¹ Vanhove, Jean. "*Warriors of the Rainbow*," <https://www.manataka.org/page235.html>, June 8, 2018.





Conclusion

Overall, I feel that these products enhance Indigenous cultural awareness and incorporate Indigenous values in a visual, playful and colourful manner, using both direct and subtler means. As humans we are highly visual creatures. However, Indigenous ideals greatly value spirit, something that can't be directly seen with the eyes but is something that comes from a feeling place. Throughout my research and product design thinking it became evident that I would have to reconcile spirituality with my design process, something so obviously visual, in a way that all generations can digest it. I feel that my conveyance of important symbolism greatly aided me in this. It is my hope that these products spark a conversation amongst people regarding Indigenous worldviews, and generates an interest. The effects of colonization are certainly a limitation in my work as they are widespread and difficult to escape, including in my own design process thinking. By further emphasizing Indigenous research methodologies and collaborating more with my First Nations community I hope to continue to lessen these effects.

In this thesis my predominant focus was the distinctiveness of Cree First Nations. In continuation, I am eager to explore higher specificity of other First Nations tribes of Turtle Island to celebrate their idiosyncratic aspects, such as what makes each tribe different, special and unique. I would like to continue to collaborate with Indigenous craftspeople and artists and create a network and a platform for them on an international level to exalt their crafts. It is my intention to build a design company that can stand up to design companies around the globe

while incorporating Indigenous values by taking traditional values and extrapolating them to modern times for everyday products. For example, I feel it is very important to keep as much production as possible in Canada even though this may not be as profitable. This is important in order to minimize a carbon footprint and environmental impact as well as to not take advantage of lower standards of living that exist in the global community.

"Only when the last tree has been cut down, the last fish been caught, and the last stream poisoned, will we realize we cannot eat money."

Cree Indian Prophecy

Appendices

Appendix 1:

The following is an interview that was conducted with Shana Dion on August 7, 2017.

Derek: What do you think makes Woodland Cree different from other tribes?

Shana: Well I guess I don't know too much about other tribes to speak on that, but all I know is from my perspective, so, I think you were asking me about how I grew up, and honestly, it was like bush life, it literally was.

I grew up on the reserve my whole life, I didn't know anything else other than living on the reserve and that connection to the land, and to like.... literally, trees. The most vivid memory I have as a child is when we would play with the trees and we would take these trees that would bend, we would wrap them altogether and we knew they bended down. We didn't know what type of tree they were. We would mesh them together, keep them rooted and mesh them together and we would make this springboard. We would all lay there as sisters and it would spring us back up. We would play like that forever. It was just our way of like....and we would spend the whole day out in the bush. We would pick berries, we would find a berry, like a Saskatoon bush, and we would just sit there and eat berries. I remember that, I remember being out there and living off the land in that way, and going out with my Kokum and her teaching us where there were a lot of berries, where the berries grow strong, and I think that was the biggest thing for me, was that connectivity, to land base. This is your home, and now that is being lost in a way if you don't grow up to your community, if you grow up in the city and trying to find that space while I am here, like connecting to the river valley area and walking through the bush just to feel like you are away from the city or going home for ceremony is big for me. I think it's that connection to ceremony that now I have found.

I started sundancing three years ago. This will be my fourth Sundance. It has really brought me back to that childhood place of connecting to the land and to the trees and just kind of having that, safe space of just being able to be youthful and young and full of heart. I don't know how to describe it.

I know with my Kokum, my Dad's side all spoke Cree, and it was a very different dialect from others. So, I remember learning Cree when I was here as a student and when I learned Cree I was really excited about it because I thought I could talk to my Kokum. I remember learning how to sing "Happy Birthday" and I was really excited about learning that song and back then I would drive home with my cassette tape, it was before the new technology so I would put in my cassette tape and I could practice all the way home, which is two and a half hours north east of here. I can remember practicing "Happy Birthday" all the way and when I got to the elders' lodge I ran in to sing "Happy Birthday" to my Kokum and I was really excited, she was really quiet. And then all of a sudden she looked at me and she asked "Was that French?" because the dialect that I had learned in was different from her dialect. I was so sad; I thought "that's not French that's Cree." It was funny at the time, but also a little bit sad because I was so excited to sing to her and thought I knew. But, yeah, I'm sure it's the same for many other tribes but that connection to land and being able to feed yourself, feed your soul off the land. Getting that connection is the best thing that I remember as a child was just that connectivity.

The language, the land, the connectivity, being able to know how to survive, like we used to hunt snare rabbits. I remember always running into snare rabbits and learning how to snare, how to do a snare and going to check on the traps, like we never killed big wild meat, it is something we didn't do as a family, but definitely like, we'd always go out snares in the trap line. Yeah, it was fun.

Derek: Do you remember any elders that touched you in a certain way? That told you a story that really set your brain to a different wavelength at the time.

Shana: I really think it was my Kokum. Even though she didn't speak English, I just felt a connection with her that I miss a lot. It took me a long time to say her name without crying. It is a loss I will never, ever really get over, in a way. With her, it was just that respect and kindness. It was just like to always be respectful and to always be kind and it's going to be okay. Always reassuring me that no matter what was going on in my life, that everything was going to be okay. I remember her always saying to me "My girl, it's going to be okay," even though again she spoke predominately Cree, she did speak some English, and having that, and being humorous was another thing for her too. Humour was a big way of healing, and a big way of connection. If we laugh together, we can eat together and we can live together. If we have those things, this is a good relationship.

Over the years, it's been connecting with those that have lead me to ceremony, are probably my biggest game changers for me and a shift in who I am....understanding "?" and what that means, and being proud of that. As children, we were only known as dirty Indians and people would spit on us walking through the small towns where we lived. We were bussed in to a predominately white school and then bus back to our reserve. The things that were said to us were pretty humiliating at the time and there was a lot of shame there. For a long time. We were just dirty little indian girls. We were dirty because we weren't bright white and we had brown hair and not blonde. We were dirty because we had brown eyes and not blue eyes and that was something we knew very early on in our lives of where we stood in society because that is all we knew, was the res life, and this small community where we went to school."

For the longest time there was a lot of shame there, and I think getting to know elders and getting to know to be proud of who we are came way later for me, unfortunately, because we grew up on the reserve and we knew what reserve life was like. I think the change that shifted for me was...I think the shame was there because there was so many addictions in our community, and there was so much profound, I guess... abuse... in many, many ways. So for me, it was trying to search out the answers of "Why?" " Why is our community this way? "Why is everyone so heavily medicated?" "Why is there so much abuse?" Those were questions in my mind a long time and it wasn't until I went into Native Studies and learned about residential schools, but I was well into my twenties when that happened when I went back to school. Then I started asking questions of how does that impact my family? Because I have held a lot of shame, and I have held a lot of judgment over my father for whom he was, for how he conducted his life. I literally was weeping because I couldn't believe I felt that way about my own father, but it is just because I did not know his story. Until learning about residential schools, it was shame on me for ever judging anyone because I just did not know. I didn't know. Nobody talked about it. Until people started talking about it, our eyes and our hearts started opening up to understanding this shame and this blame and this guilt that we all historically carry. We all historically carry it whether we know it or not. We hold that with us. I thought, through connecting with elders and regaining our pride, it is shame on me first, I acknowledge that, and secondly, it is like you can never treat me like that ever again because you can never take that power. So much power was taken. The elders always say you don't know where you are going unless you know where you come from. Connecting you back to ceremony, connecting yourself back to where it all really lays I think is really important. One of my elders passed away this past summer and he was the one who got me into Sundance. * begins to get emotional *

I guess the biggest message he said to me was And why I got into Sundance was... for that healing. He always said too, and I will always remember him saying "Just dance, my girl." It may seem small, but, when you go through that ceremony, it is about sacrificing your body, your mind, your spirit, and your family. And in those moments, where I didn't think I could go on... on the second day I really started judging myself that I could not do this, I just kept him and all my ancestors that have passed on in my spirit, because I stand on the shoulders of very strong women, and I know that. I guess that is what keeps me going, is knowing that, and knowing that forgiving people and letting go of the shame and moving on was the biggest thing from my Kokum to my elder Gabe, and from all the elders I have met over the years, who have taught me so many things, whether it was at ceremony or just sitting around having tea. Those are the best times for me. I think the biggest one is Gabe and reconnecting me to ceremony and to know I am stronger than I think I am....spiritually and emotionally. I think is probably my biggest accomplishment thus far. Above anything else is just being able to do that for myself and for my family.

My son is going to start dancing. I will finish my fourth year this year. My last Sundance will be .. so he passed away this year, so we will have a Sundance with his family. His family is still going to pursue the Sundance this year. And then my son is going to start. So he will dance across from me this summer which I am pretty excited about.

Derek: I have never really gotten into pow wows very much, I have been to a few of them. It is beautiful how everyone makes their costume and it is about them. I would always wonder what is the teaching behind that?

Shana: PowWow is different from Sundance. Powwow is the dance, the performance part of it. The Sundance is the ceremony part of it, in the bush where they build the lodge. There are protocols that have to happen before you commence in a Sundance. Have you ever heard of a Sundance?

Derek: Kind of.. I have heard snippets.

Shana: So we prepare our own dresses, our own skirts. It is not at all like a powwow. Powwow is more like a performance where everyone is performing in the middle and there is a grandstand and everybody is watching. This is something on the total end of the spectrum. It is a ceremony that used to be banished. We couldn't Sundance for a long time and it went underground. People started doing it in far off and remote areas where if you didn't know where that area was you didn't know where that Sundance was. So a Sundance is....you

prepare for a whole year. You start picking your medicines, you start preparing your regalia. And you start getting ready, physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally. So when the day starts, you fast for four days. You don't eat, you don't drink. You don't drink water, you don't eat. The men build the lodge and it is pretty big. There is usually on average...these are just the Sundances I have been to.... 20 women on one side, 20 on the other, and the elders in the middle. And you dance, in one spot, and you dance for three days with no food no water. It is sacrificing, literally, yourself. Literally, your body, your spirit, your mind for your family, for the healing, for the community, it is really, really spiritual and it is really connection between yourself and to me, the spirit world. You are focused. One of the biggest things is....there is a lot of different teachings behind this, I wouldn't say that I can teach about the Sundances. If you want to know anything you should definitely seek it out. You are focused on the centre pole. It is about focus and determination and strength and resiliency. It is very powerful, and if you can ever go to one and you can be a spectator and you can watch and support. They are called supporters that sit on the outside of the lodge. You can't really see what is going on within the lodge, that is for the ones in there. But, if you are spectator and you support you can go on a Sunday, there is a round dane and they wrap up at around one or two o'clock they do a really big celebration to acknowledge the ones that have danced. It is pretty beautiful.

Our regalia is different from a powwow. So I make simple dresses. I didn't even have a pattern. I just went with it. I used to sew back in my days. I can show you what they somewhat look like.... they are quite simple. A lot of people wear a ribbon skirt and a shirt over top. These are my dresses I made.....This is my Sundance I first went to. This is my second, and third...It was pouring rain so we just got out of there. We do very simple, nothing too flashy. This is the only thing I really want to learn how to do, I don't know how to make a shawl, so I want to learn how to make a shawl for this year. That is my Kokum's scarf that I wore in the ceremony. It is simple, but you are supposed to make your dresses for the Sundance. That is what I heard, and that might be someone else's teachings, but that was my teachings, is you prepare in that way. And then you dance for those three days and you fast the whole time you are there. Some people do eat a little bit, if you are diabetic....you eat a little bit at night to sustain yourself, but for the most part you are supposed to just fast and not eat at all. At the end, it is a celebration of getting through that. It is really amazing, very powerful, really amazing.

If you can ever go to a Sundance...they usually happen in the summer and there is preparation the whole year leading up to it for men and women, and there are different teachings for that...if you can ever go, you should go. It is pretty amazing.

Appendix 2:

The following is an interview that was conducted with Elder Ethan Twin on November 20, 2018.

Derek: What I wanted to interview you about is memory. The smells that you remember as a child, what is prevalent in your memory? And what you feel makes Woodland Cree different from other tribes?

Ethan: I was thinking about that today after I talked to you a couple of days ago, was it? I remember as youth, as a child actually, I was raised by my grandparents who were very traditional. I was raised in a house without running water or electricity. I remember her cooking of all things fried bologna. It would fill the air. Her cooking, and that whole maternal grandson bond. We would have a breakfast at the Treaty 8 office once a month and they would call it "Dusty's Bologna Breakfast." It's amazing, we would cook it and people would come from up north our territory and it clicks a memory in them too, of their childhood, so it is relative to my childhood and to others

The other thing I remember, we used to go camp in the summer in the bush, in a tent. Younger children would pick berries with their aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Then they would go hunting. I remember sleeping in the tent and the smell of spruce bough, that is what we would use on the floor in the tent....smelling the spruce boughs and sleeping out in mother nature like in the bush, that was really the smell that sticks to me. The cleanliness of the territory. My grandfather and grandmother, my grandmother was at the treaty signing when she was 16 years old (Treaty 8).....my grandfather was forty. My great grandfather was one of the signers of the treaty. They grew up with Mother Nature, which is how they passed on their teachings to me about Mother Earth and going out to the bush. It smelled so clean, going to the muskeg.. I don't know if psychologically all the pollution has gotten into my mind. The place, the experience of going in the bush and picking blueberries and muskeg, it smelled so clean.. the air and the muskeg ...

Derek: That is where people used to get there water from?

Ethan: Yes. Clear aside a little area. It was like a filter. Put their pails in there and get the water

Other smells ...

I was in a residential school for 8 years. It was such a period where my senses seemed to be dulled by being disciplined so much that I was like robotic. I couldn't think for myself. The smells were of the church, I distinctly remember smelling the incense. It was a different experience compared to my experience as a child with my grandparents.

As an adult when I came out of residential school I was 17, my grandparents had gotten a house by then with electricity and running water. It changed the game. The smell of the house was different than growing up without electricity and propane and fire (*?indistinguishable*) . it wasn't the same.

Derek: It is always very interesting....if they had that a long time ago, they would have used it...Running water and all that kind of stuff. It's interesting, like with time, what is it to be a Native person today versus a long time ago. What's really the difference?

Ethan: I was happier when I was a child, before I went to residential school obviously. We didn't have no technology, no radio, no nothing and we enjoyed life more. We lived life more, there was no artificial amusements or entertainment

Derek: Like Instagram or Facebook or that kind of stuff?

Ethan: No, no.....We enjoyed life to its fullest, to me. We enjoyed the peace and quiet of living on a reservation. It was just a total different experience. We used to get water from the river, which was a quarter of a mile away, we had to get it by pail. We walked down the riverbank to the river. Dip in your buckets, I would have two of them. Carry the buckets back. There was a sawmill close, and we had to walk by. The smell of the sawdust, even that smell of spruces being cut into lumber was fresh. It felt good, that type of smell. After a rain, I remember going out into the bush, because we lived close to the bush, everything smelled so fresh and clean. The air seemed cleaner, I don't know maybe it was my imagination....

To distinguish Woodland Cree from other tribes, my grandfather was reliant on fur trapping for an income because they didn't have socialist systems or any social programs back then.. So he would go trap and hunt for food, for wild game, like moose, deer, fish. We ate the healthiest when I was a kid. There was no processed food, except for maybe margarine and bread and ... bannock products. My grandfather lived to be 108 and I think it was because of his diet, which was wild game, potatoes and rolled oats. He didn't do much sweets. His mental attitude about life, he was a leader for a year or two and he just didn't like the politics. He was at the treaty signing and he knew what was said at the treaty signing and

what was implemented after, so he got discouraged pretty quickly and he said that the thing that bothered him the most was our inability to live our life the way we did before the treaty was signed. To go anywhere in our treaty territory, like the Indian agent told me "You can't leave the reserve you need this green piece of paper and a pass just to leave" and he said "no, this is my land. And I always went when I wanted to leave. There is no line there, no imaginary reserve line. This is my country. I'll go. If you want to come get me you are welcome to come into the bush and find me." The spirituality, my grandfather never went to residential school so they practiced traditional ceremonies. My mother told me my grandfather would go into the bush and do the ceremonies and leave their sacred ceremonial items in the bush, they wouldn't bring them out. It was against the law to practice our traditional spiritual ceremonies.

My grandmother went to residential school until she was 16 or something. She was basically domestic duties, she learned how to pray in the Catholic way and Cree, so she taught us how to pray in Cree. My grandfather wasn't affected by other religions being put on him. Our priest used to come to our place and he would pass my grandfather and he would say "you should come to church next Sunday, Mr. Twin." He said " I don't have to go into a building one day a month to pray to my Creator, I can pray any day and anywhere, he said." He said "I don't have to go into a building and put money in a basket to pray to my Creator."

His philosophy was sharing and caring for family. When he was on his deathbed he told my aunts and my mom that the most important thing in life is your family. Keep your families together. That was his philosophy about life. One thing the elders tell me that is lacking in our communities now with all the trauma and all the impacts on us, especially residential school....the thing that's lacking the most is kindness towards each other. They say, "The people aren't kind." He also told me "We're Woodland Cree, we are kind people, so don't try not to be kind. It is in our DNA. We are kind people and even though sometimes it hasn't been beneficial for us to be kind, like obviously sharing our land and the terms of the treaty which aren't being implemented and respected by the other party to the treaty." He said "We are still kind people, so don't try not to be kind." I believe in that as one characteristic of Woodland Cree that I feel is a strong characteristic of us.

In my travels to other tribes ...to Arizona, to the Navajo. I don't know if it is assimilation or if they are behind, the Navajo tribe, or if it is because we live in the Woodland, the bush....but I feel that we are more connected...for lack of a better word, to Mother Earth. We are more connected. It seems like they are more domesticated, or assimilated. Our values of the Woodland, a lot of it is based on the land and the animals. I know that is slowly going away,

the animals are less. There are less moose, deer and wolvesthere is a connection there, I respect the animals. I was taught to respect the animals and not to shoot anything I don't use. When we went hunting I didn't get a big sense of pride or testosterone when I killed a moose. We had a protocol, when we hunted we thanked the spirit of the moose for giving its life to us, for us to eat. That is how we prayed. We cut off the tip of the heart, and make prayer, make thank you and leave it on a tree or twig. I was taught these protocols and values. The other thing... our language, Cree, when we talk about a tree or a plant, it is not an inanimate object like this wall. It is a living, it has a spirit and it is living. A tree is not just a tree to us, it is a living.

Derek: It is showing respect for everything..

Ethan: In English, it is very cold.

Derek: Like, objects are objects. They are not living things.

Ethan: Exactly. When I am with the elders in the bush for a few days and they speak strict Cree, my attitude changes and I see things, life differently. Our language is more of a feeling or living language. It is not inanimate.

Derek: I find that really interesting. There are different programs, like whatever you speak out of your mouth, it is almost like bringing it to value. This is one of my bags, it is Cree syllabics. It says "We will succeed" over and over again. In the Native tongue it is more powerful because it comes from a powerful place. English is obviously powerful because it is a language as well, but it's a different power...

Ethan: Yup, it is. It is. I lost my language when I went to residential school. But before I went my grandparents couldn't speak English, they spoke straight Cree, and I grew up with that. But after 17, that is when I lost my language. Going back and working with the elders, I start to revive it. The elders tell me that your Cree, your thousands of years of DNA in your blood, is just like a computer, that knowledge and feelings are stored in your DNA. We are a First Nation people, so they can't make you into something different.

Derek: 100%. What I want to do is to almost modernize Native culture to show the world our views and values. It has been lost. The fusion of tradition and technology mixed together is one thing that is missing in Woodland Cree and I feel that I want to revive that. So, I am talking to people...I'm going to go through everything and see the similarities in everyone's

stories, and see what is really prevalent. I know that there is like, sage. And la boume I feel is a very Woodland Cree thing and It hasn't been made into an amazing product that can be sold. Or Saskatoons.....Things like that that are very Woodland Cree.....

Ethan: Ohh... medicine..... Alsi (?)

Derek: Yeah, exactly. It is very strong and from the Earth. That is what I want to portray in these products that I want to be making. It will be good not just for Native people but for education for other people as well because people don't really see the value of Native culture because it hasn't been cultivated to 2017.

Ethan: I have been working with the elders for 15-20 years and a lot of the elders I worked with along the way are passed on, some of them are from your nation, some are from Woodland, some from Pierre (?) All Over Treaty 8....our language is obviously the same language as Woodland. The teachings come from them, the values of kindness and respect. This elder from way up north, Paul Creek. He told me once that I have to work everyday on being kind. It is not like a jacket, I can't put it on, turn the switch and be kind. It has to be part of me, I don't have to try to be kind. Everyday I work on being kind and work on being respectful. If I am finished being kind and I think I am a kind person, I keep working on that value... He was eighty when he told me that. I was surprised. I knew he was a kind person.

Derek: He probably just realizes that fundamentally everyone is like yin and yang, like in the Asian tradition. Good and bad. In Christian theology you have to be like good angel. Do we have something like that, like good and bad? People are not perfect

Ethan: No, no. One of the teachings they taught me, this road of life is not like this. Our road goes.. you go off the road once in awhile. As long as you don't stay off too far, like addictions or you don't go become a murderer. If you go off the path you get back on it.

Derek: There was this one Cherokee teaching. This old man was talking to his nephew. He said that inside of me there is this good wolf and this bad wolf and they are always fighting and he said which one will win? The one that you feed the most. It is so true, if you do bad things you get more evil. If you do good things, you get more good. I see all the parallels of not just Nations but people and the humanity of people.

Ethan: Another teaching that an elder taught me was not to rely on the power of medicines. Take the best of Western medicine and Eastern medicine. Health is important. Health is our

most important thing. Without it we have basically nothing. Money can't buy health either. He said "Take the best that the world has to offer."

Derek: That is fundamentally what I do with my stuff. I am a fashion designer. I do womenswear; I am starting to do menswear which is exciting. I go to school for Industrial product design. I want to start this modern native products line, I always felt it was a dream to do.

Ethan: I was thinking about design, and how traditional moccasins. The design, you can tell Cree from....

Derek: The Alberta rose is very prevalent.

Ethan: Yup, yup.

Derek: I don't know where I put my phone. I will show you a photo of the pattern I am doing this season coming up. It is the Alberta rose

Ethan: My grandmother used to make moccasins.

Derek: So, it is going to be the Alberta rose with the Cree syllabics behind. It might be black behind, I am trying to figure out which one. A lot of the patterns we have, it is mixing tradition with technology and I love that

Ethan: That is a great idea, with the syllabics in the middle.

Appendix 3:

"What Part of the Bison was Used?" <https://allaboutbison.com/what-part-of-the-bison-was-used/>, August 20, 2018

BONES	BUCKSKIN	HAIR	RAWHIDE	PAUNCH (Rumen)	HORNS
Knives	Winter Robes	Pillows	Containers	Wrappings (Meat)	Arrow Points
Awls	Tipi Liners	Medicine Balls	Shields	Buckets	Cups
Quirts	Tipi Covers	Doll Stuffing	Buckets	Collapsible Cups	Fire Carrier
Tableware	Tapestries	Ropes	Moccasin Soles	Basins	Powder-horn
Tools	Sweatlodge Cover	Hair Pieces	Drums	Canteens	Spoons
Shovels	Shirts	Ornaments	Splints		Ladles
Scrapers	Quivers	Moccasin Lining	Mortars		Headdresses
Pipes	Moccasin Tops	Pad Fillers	Cinches		Signals
Sleds	Leggings	Halters	Ropes		Toys
Saddle Trees	Dresses	Bracelets	Sheaths		Medication
Fleshing Tools	Cradles	Headdresses	Saddles		Scoops
Paintbrushes	Bridles		Saddle Blankets		Combs
Splints	Belts		Stirrups		
Arrowheads	Bedding		Bull Boats		
War Clubs	Bags		Masks		
Game Dice	Backrests		Parfleche		
Toys			Ornaments		
Tools			Lariats		
Sheilds			Straps		
Fertilizer			Caps		
			Quirts		
			Snowshoes		
			Shrouds		
			Water Trough		

CHIPS	TEETH	TAIL	HOOVES & DEW CLAWS	MUSCLE	SCROTUM	HEAD HIDE	HEART	CALF	BLADDER
FUEL	Ornaments	Medicine Switch	Glue	Glue	Containers	Bowl	Sack (for dried meat)	Fetal Calf (stew type dish)	Medicine Bags
Smoke Signals	Jewelry	Decorations	Rattles	Bows	Rattles		Special Treat		Pouches
		Whips	Spoons	Thread					
		Fly Brush	Wind Chimes	Arrow-Ties					
		Game Wheel		Cinches					
				Webbing Snowshoes					
				Jerky					

TENDONS	BEARD	SKULL	TONGUE	GALL	HIND LEG SKIN	BLOOD	BRAIN
Sewing	Ornaments	Sun Dance	Prime Meat	Yellow Paints	Preshaped Moccasin	Soups	Hide Tanning
Bowstrings	Dolls	Medicine Prayers	Comb (rough side)	Bile/Condiment (mustard)		Puddings	Food
	Mittens	Rituals	Special Treat			Paints	

MEAT	LIVER	STOMACH	KIDNEYS	STOMACH CONTENTS	INTESTINES	FAT	STOMACH LINER
Immediate Use	Tanning	Eaten Raw	Fat Source	Medicines	String	Tallow	Water Containers
Sausages	Eating	Boiled	Medicine	Paints	Jewelry	Hair Grease	Cooking Vessels
Cached Meat		Roasted			Eating (fresh)	Cosmetic Aids	
Jerky		Parts Dried			Storage Containers	Soaps	
Pemmican/Wasna					Sausage Skins	Pemmican/Wasna	
Trade/Money						Lubricant	
						Candle Tallow	
						Back Fat (Special)	

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