mîkistahikâcimo (to tell a story through beadwork)

by

Tara Vanessa Kappo

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Faculty of Native Studies
University of Alberta

Abstract

Presented as a written form of visiting, this thesis draws from nîhiyaw pimâtisowin (Cree life and worldview) to share learning through and with beadwork. Utilizing Indigenous research methodologies, research-creation, storytelling and autoethnography, this work explores beadwork to develop an understanding of what beadwork does, is, and how it is connected to practices of Indigenous (especially nîhiyaw (Cree)) law and governance. In approaching beadwork through nîhiyaw pimâtisowin, beads are understood as animate, other-than-human beings with whom beadwork artists have relationships of co-creation and with whom we (humankind) can gain closer connections to, and experiences of, miyo-pimâtisowin (good life).

Acknowledgements: nanâskomowin (thankfulness and praise)

Inspiration for a new project, coupled with energy, purpose and excitement, can emerge at any point. One evening, under the dark skies of late fall, I felt inspiration bloom and begin to glow with vitality. Over the following years, I would come to appreciate the privilege of having the resources - such as time, space, materials, and knowledge - to engage with inspiration as it emerged. It was neither straightforward or easy, but the work I've been able to do towards this thesis has absolutely been a privilege and a gift. And, as such, it is vital to acknowledge both the privilege and to provide thanks for the gift as the starting point to this thesis. My thanksgiving and acknowledgements are not extra to the work of the thesis but are essential components of the work itself; they are necessary to fully understand what this work represents.

I am grateful to the many human people who have influenced me throughout my life in myriad ways. I consider myself deeply blessed to have the richness of so many lives touching mine that even when it means I cannot identify who they all are or articulate how they have impacted me, I take this as further evidence of a life profoundly blessed with connection. It is my hope that this work stands as both acknowledgment and thanks.

One of the most important insights I developed through my exploration of beadwork was the simple observation that while I often bead quietly by myself, I do not feel alone. Instead, beading is a visiting time, where I am able to keep company with the strong women who come before me whom I am connected to through my physical and artistic lineage. I cannot adequately express my love and appreciation to them so I'll simply say hay-hay nôhkomipanak Mary Kappo, Agnes Cardinal, and Elizabeth Flett; hay-hay nitâniskocâpân Madeline Mihkamoses. For this work, and for so many other blessings in my life, I acknowledge them here first. I draw attention to these women, in particular, as the progenitors of *my* artistic practice. And with that energy of love and appreciation, I want also to acknowledge and offer my respect to the work of all those who have gone before me, those who are working today, and those yet to come, to whom I feel I am also connected through the particular work we do.

My research reminded me that beadwork involves a number of different resources, including the very materials we work with. What's more, the materials themselves reflect untold and sometimes unknown relationships. I ponder this mystery, at times, when I work, but some moments I reflect on the clear love and caring that forms the materials of my life, embodied by my entire family, with particular thanks to: my parents Margaret Kappo and Harold Cardinal; all

of my siblings; their/our children; and their/our grandchildren. I also acknowledge and hold dear the gift of adopted family, which includes my Smallboy/Raine family of Smallboy Camp, nikâwîys Maria Campbell, and my sisters of Walking With Our Sisters.

As a source of grounding and source of my sense of self, I think of the homelands that sustain me and continuously, generously, provide gifts of miyo-pimâtisiwin. Within that land is the Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, of which I am proud to be a member; to my community I offer my thanks for the support I have been provided throughout my life, especially for the support and encouragement of my post-secondary endeavors.

As I reached towards what seemed to me to be a novel subject and approach to an MA thesis, I had many moments of worry that my proposed work would not be accepted. And yet, I found (among many other gifts) whole-hearted support, guidance, acceptance, and encouragement through and within the Faculty of Native Studies. In particular, I hold deep gratitude to my MA supervisor, Dr. Shalene Jobin; committee members Dr. Kim TallBear and Dr. Keavy Martin.

My direction involved a seemingly audacious leap that was made much easier due to myriad support, encouragement, inspiration and collaboration. For this, I offer thanks to: Dr. Tracey Lindberg; Crystal Snyder and the University of Alberta Undergraduate Research Initiative (URI); Charis Auger, Juliana Cortes, Adrienne Larocque; Cheryl Whiskeyjack and Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society; Amber Dion; Carla Badger, Heather Caverhill, Tomas Jonsson, Dion Kazsas, Amy Malbeuf and Jordan Bennett, Jeneen Frei Njootli, Fionncara MacEoin, Tannis Monkman Neilsen, Haruko Okano, Jessie Januska, Olivia Whetung; Renee Beausoliel, Amanda Gould, Elaine Alexie; Dr. David Parent, Dr. Merissa Daborn, Brittany Johnson, Chantal Roy, Javed Sommers; Matt Wildcat, and the Prairie Relationality Network.

Finally, because I see the gift of beadwork I have been given by my grandmothers as one I need to share as best I can, and as the sharing of it also becomes a gift in return I have been deeply enriched by, I offer my thanks to: iHuman Youth Society for welcoming me into the studio to hold space for the young people to connect with beadwork, and to the young people who shared that space with me; and to my lovely friends Alison Sivak and Jessica Thorlakson who encouraged and supported me to establish ongoing beading space at the Buffalo Sage Wellness House, and of course to all who joined our beading table.

ayi-hay. kinanâskomitinâwâw.

Table of Contents

List of Plates

itwîwina (words)

Notes on language

Interwoven throughout my work are nîhiyawîwin/nêhiyawêwin terms. Here, the term 'nîhiyawîwin' follows Art Napoleon's (2014) usage and distinction of this term to refer to the 'Northern Plains Cree' "sub-dialect" of Plains Cree that "is spoken in the boreal regions of Northern Alberta, Saskatchewan and parts of Northeastern BC" (17). This is the language spoken in my home community of the Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation and as such I have borrowed some of Napoleon's spellings and translations as a way of bringing in the nîhiyawîwin that is closest to that of my home.

One of the key ways in which this sub-dialect differs is in an element of pronunciation where we do not use the ê (ay) sound, but rather use an î (ee) sound. I have significantly relied upon online nêhiyawêwin language dictionaries so many of the words I have used are nêhiyawêwin (which can be more easily recognized by the presence of the 'ê'). I have, however, changed the spelling of borrowed nêhiyawêwin terms to signal a connection to my natal nîhiyawîwin where a term was already familiar to me and exists in my being with the sound of the 'î.'

While there are still fluent nîhiyawîwin speakers in my community (and immediate family) we do not use/follow a standardized writing system. However, my own background includes some training in using Standard Roman Orthography (SRO) so this is used except as noted otherwise or where I am quoting from other authors who use other forms of spelling. Using SRO means that terms are not capitalized. I have also elected to not italicize any of these terms as, in my work and thinking, these are not 'foreign' words.

My practices in this work, in support of my personal commitment to ongoing language learning, include not providing a translation either in the text or footnote where the nîhiyawîwin/nêhiyawêwin terms appear; it is my hope readers will make the effort to refer to this glossary and take part of this journey with me as a language learner. The exceptions are: 1) where terms are quoted from other sources, I include the terms as they appear as in the original text including any translations in the original text; and 2) where the terms are used in a chapter title or sub-heading.

I have taken up using nîhiyawîwin/nêhiyawêwin as part of my ongoing language recovery and do so in the spirit of profound love and appreciation for this language. Being a learner, however, means that while I have taken care to be accurate and complete in nîhiyawîwin/nêhiyawêwin, there are likely some mistakes and adoption of terms that might not make perfect sense to a fluent speaker; I ask for the generosity and kindness to recognize those mistakes are mine alone and are an important part of the learning process.

And as I am not a fluent speaker of nîhiyawîwin, I am indebted to the work of others who have made it possible to reach towards my language both in this work and in my life. This includes my mother, Art Napoleon (2014), Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000), Reuben Quinn, and all of the folks who contributed to the online resources on Facebook ('Nêhiyawêwin (Cree) Word/Phrase of the Day' group); Cree Literacy Network (creeliteracy.org); itwêwina: Plains Cree Dictionary (itwewina.altlab.app); and Nehiyaw Masinahikan ᓀᐦᐃᐤ ᒪᓯᓇᐦᐃᑲᐣ Online Cree Dictionary (creedictionary.com). I also acknowledge Neal McLeod for sharing the term on Facebook that I have as the title of my thesis; this is not a term that has shown up in any language dictionaries but as I recall may have been offered as a 'new' term arising from the process of language revitalization and growth.

Glossary

nîhiyawîwin itîwina	âkayâsîwascikîwin (English translation)
acâhkos	little star Another form of 'atâhk;' this is the form I learned growing up and seems to be the term more commonly used.
âcimowin	a story
âcimowina	stories
ahcâhk	soul, spirit
ahcahkowin	spirituality
âhkamêyihtam	s/he continues to think of future deeds/tasks
âniskômohcikewin	the act of connecting; connection
âpisâwâcikan	a patter, thing used as a pattern for cutting; a print model
askiy	earth; land; country, world
atâhk	star
ataskahêw	s/he gives her/him/them work to do
awasisak	children
ayi-hay	thank you Note: This form was learned from Rueben Quinn, and is used particularly in this work for it contains a reference/acknowledgement of the energy of the highest power/great mystery.
cahkipehikanak	syllabics
ê-miciminitômakahki	they are interconnected
hay-hay	thank you. Form used in Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation.
îkosi mâka	that's it; so long, later, I'd better be going
îkwa	and also; and, also; then; now
iskwîw	female adult human
iskwîwak	female adult human, plural
itâcimômakan	it tells such a story, it tells thus about (it), it gives such an account
itâtayôhkawêw	s/he tells someone such a sacred story

nîhiyawîwin itîwina	**âkayâsîwascikîwin (English translation)**
itâtisiwak	their conduct or behaviour is so; they are of such character or disposition; they act thus; they have such conduct; they behave thus
itohtêwin	goal of journey, destination
itwîwina	words
iyiniw sawêyihtâkosiwin	the peoples' sacred gifts
iyiniwminiskâw	there is an abundance of blueberries
kahkiyaw	everyone
kâsispowihêw	s/he retains s.o. from the past for the future
ka-wâpamitin	I will see you again
kihtiyâyak	Elders
kinanâskomitinâwâw	I am filled with gratitude to you all
kîsahkamikisiwin	conclusion, finishing; finishing the event
kiskêyihtamowin	knowledge learning; knowledge, experience, learning
kiskihtamowin	knowledge
kiskihtamowina	knowledges
kiskinohawmatok	teach each other Note: This is the phonetic spelling given to me by my mother when she helped identify the term for me. The term also contains the idea of sharing and being respectful of each other's knowledge and gifts.
kiskinwâswêwitam	s/he speaks in a manner to refer to the teachings of a ceremony
kîspin pimâtisiyânih	if I am still alive
kiyokêwak	they visit together
kiyokewin	the act of visiting
kôhkom	your grandmother Commonly used as "grandmother;" for example, we referred to my paternal grandmother as kohkom, instead of the more correct nôhkom (my grandmother). This particular usage seems to be fairly widespread.
kôhkomak	your grandmothers See note above for 'kôhkom'

nîhiyawîwin itîwina	**âkayâsîwascikîwin (English translation)**
mâmawiniwêw	s/he assembles peoples, s/he gathers people together
mamawihtôhnik	a place to gather Note: This is a term used in Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation. It is also the name of my family "neighbourhood" or area on the Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation reserve, which is also known more commonly as Indian Farm.
manâtisiwin	respect
manitowatâmowin	speech inspired by spirit power
maskisina	moccasins
mihcêtohkamwak	they work together on something
mîkis	a bead
mîkisak	beads
mîkisistahikêw	s/he beads, s/he does beadwork
mîkistahikâcimo	to tell a story through beadwork
miskâsowin	finding one's sense of origin and belonging; finding "one's self" or "one's centre"
miyo	good
miyo- wîcîhtowin (miyo-wîcêhtowin in Plains Cree)	the act of principle of having good relations; the act of living in good relation; living in harmony together; the laws concerning good relations; having or possessing good relations with one another or individually
miyo-pimâtisowin	good life; good behaviour
môniyâw mâmitonihcikanîwin	Western or 'white' thinking
môsom	grandfather (in more common usage)
mwestâs	sometimes after, later, afterwards
nakayâskamohtahitowin	introduction, mutual introduction
nanâskomowin	thankfulness and praise
napîw	male adult human
napîwak	male adult human, plural
naspasinaham	s/he writes or draws something thus
nêhiyaw	Plains Cree

nîhiyawîwin itîwina	**âkayâsîwascikîwin (English translation)**
nîhiyaw	Woodland Cree person
nîhiyaw pimâtisowin	Cree life or Cree way of life
nîhiyaw pimâtisowin	Woodland Cree life
nîhiyaw'skwîw	Woodland Cree female adult
nîhiyawak	Woodland Cree people
nîhiyawak	Woodland Cree people
nîhiyawîwin	Cree language; also, Cree culture
nikâwîs	literally "little mother;" my parallel aunt; my mother's sister; my father's brother's wife; my stepmother; my godmother; my dear mother
nikosis	my son This term would also be used for an iskwîw to refer to her sister's son or for a napîw to refer to his brother's son.
nimâmâ	my mother This is the form we use most commonly in my family, instead of the more formal 'nikâwiy.'
nimis	my older sister In my family and in Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, we use the less formal term 'michichs' (phonetic spelling)
nininâskoman	I am thankful
nistomitinaw	thirty
nitânis	my daughter; my sister's daughter (female speaker) Also, if a male speaker, 'my brother's daughter'
nitânskocâpân	my great-great grandparent
niwâkômâkanak	my relatives
nôhkom	my grandmother
nôhkomak	my grandmothers
nôhkomipanak	my late grandmothers
nôhtâwiy	my father
nôhtâwiyîpan	my late father
nôsisim	my grandchild

nîhiyawîwin itîwina	**âkayâsîwascikîwin (English translation)**
pâstâhowin	transgression, breach of the natural order; divine retribution with grave consequences for breaking vows Also given as ‘a sin. A curse resulting from some wrong doing. Use of bad medicine; sin, evil doings’
pimâtisowin	life
sâkawiyiniw	Woods (Woodland) “Cree” person
sâkihitowin	love
sihcikîwana	ways of doing things; organizing
tâpâhkômêw	s/he adopts someone; s/he takes someone as a relative
tipahtêyimisowin	humility
tâpisinowin	a way of seeing; worldview
tâpwîwin	the truth; speaking the truth or speaking with precision and accuracy
tôcikâtêw	it is done like that; it is customary to do like so
wâhkômâkanak	relatives
wâhkôhtowin	kinship; kinship beyond the immediate family; the state of being related to others; relationship; the laws governing all relations
wîcihowin	consorting together, helping each other
wâhkômtowin	relationship terms; how people relate to each other
wîcîhtowin (wîcêhtowin in Plains Cree)	the act of helping one another; fellowship
wîtaskîwin	peace, truce, alliance; to live in peace and harmony
wiyasowîwina	the laws

Prologue: mâmawiniwêw (s/he assembles peoples, s/he gathers people together)

Ceremony: shaping one's gestures to honour what has not been lost, just buried
— Rita Wong, *Undercurrent*

manitowatâmowin (speech inspired by spirit power)[1]

Plate 1: Locating Myself [Leggings, c. approx. 2001]

ᐊᖕᐊᐤ ᓂᐅᑐᑌᑎᒋᑎᑦ ᑭᐊᑕᒥᖅᑎᓇᐧᐃᓵᐊᐠᐤ ᑲᖕᑮᔾᐤ

ahaw ni-otôtemîtik ki-atamiskâtinâwâw kâhkîyaw

I acknowledge and greet all of you.

ᓇᒣᐢ ᓴᑲᖕᐃᑲᓂᕽ ᐅᖕᒋ ᓂᔾᖕ

namis sâkahikanihk ohci niya

I am from Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation.

Tara Kappo ᓂᑎᓯᖕᑲᓐᓄᐢ ᐁᑲᐠ ᑲᐱᒪᑕᑕ′ ᓂᑎᑲᐃᐢ

Tara Kappo nitisihkâson ekwa aski kapimotatat nitikawin

My name is Tara Kappo and I am called ᐊᐠᑭ ᑲᐱᒪᑕᑕ′.

[1] The first three lines of address follows teachings and instruction from Reuben Quinn in nêhiyawêwin and writing using spirit markers (also known as syllabics). I have, however, transcribed the spirit markers into Standard Roman Orthography and include the rough English translation with apologies to Reuben for not quite maintaining the practice of using spirit markers only.

mamawihtôhnik (a place to gather)

I have been thinking about visiting.

I have gathered around me materials for creation. I sit, seemingly alone, lost in reverie with my fingers poised over my keyboard. Years spent gathering materials, reading and writing, I am focused on drawing everything together into a cohesive whole. And yet, my fingers do not move as I am overwhelmed by the magnitude of the work I have set for myself. I take a breath, and the memories stir.

I remember time spent around kitchen tables with family and friends. I remember voices like music flowing, sometimes low and somber, other times boisterous and punctuated with cacophonous laughter. I remember tea and coffee and different foods offered with generosity. The acrid smell of cigarette smoke I despised as a child that would become comforting reminders of the love that surrounded me as heavily as the smoke filled the air. I remember feeling connected by physical proximity, thoughts and feelings shared with trust. These are memories from throughout my life, the acts that have shaped me in indelible ways I am only now beginning to fully appreciate.

I learned from nimâmâ that visiting is essential. Her insight shared with me is visiting is integral to nîhiyaw-pimâtisowin. She credits this insight, in turn, to thinking about her (late) father – my Grandpa – and how he modeled wâhkôhtowin. From this lineage and my own life experiences, I too believe visiting – sharing time and conversations – is a key way we renew our connections to each other. And, in this way, through visiting, nîhiyaw values and laws are practiced and taught.

As I have lately felt isolated, feeling as if I am very alone in the world, working at my computer, I have been thinking about visiting. Or rather, I have been thinking of how I have not been visiting. In order to keep myself focused on this work, I largely removed myself from

human company. I elected to isolate myself further even in the midst of a global pandemic when social interactions have already been curtailed.

The feeling of disconnect hits me profoundly. I realize I keenly miss the sense of connection and time spent in company where the exchange of our energies is immediate and nearly tangible.

I think about visiting.

Though our individual experiences may vary, the past year and a half has given so many of us across the world the shared experience of being impacted by a pandemic that has necessarily changed how we spend time together. For many, physically gathering with people whom you do not live with was prohibited. And for many, when we were able to go out and about, *how* we did so also shifted so that wearing masks and maintaining a physical distance from other people became the expected behavioural norm. Over the past year and a half, I've witnessed people gathering on social media and other digital platforms. I have also participated in online events and shared spaces and connection.

As I think about visiting, I think about the fact that I am now home. Here, I am not a guest; here I am not a visitor. But I feel, nonetheless still unsettled. Though the timing of my return home was unexpected – not being part of the plans I had made for myself – I believe I am returned home by forces greater than I. I also believe things have unfolded this way so that I could be home to be grounded in my homeland in order to be able to complete this work. So, in believing this, why would I also feel still so very alone and unsettled?

I think it's time to visit.

With the trees surrounding me, the lake close by, I am home. And here, I can invite people to join me at home for a visit. For it is here that I am grounded and it is fitting that it is

here I can complete a work that speaks of where I come from. It would be from this place – my homelands – that the words finally come together to be placed in this thesis. And it is here where I feel most able to offer a welcoming.

This work is envisioned, then, as a form of visiting. Here, I invite readers into conversations exploring beadwork and into this extension of a long collaboration with beads.

Chapter 1: nakayâskamohtahitowin (introduction, mutual introduction)

âcimowin: âniskômohcikewin (the act of connecting; connection)

It was a bright day in early summer. Perched on the couch under the window overlooking the front porch, I was first to see the visitor walk up. I had called out to my Gran that we had a visitor and went to open the door to let him in after he knocked. She came to the door and I returned to my seat and picked up the beadwork I had been absorbed in before the interruption.

Plate 2: Author, beading at the trapline
Photo credit: Deanna Kappo

He was only stopping in for a moment – not a full visit – and so they stood at the door chatting. It was clearly not intended to be a private discussion but I had trained myself to mostly tune out such conversations when I knew they weren't meant for me. Besides, I was in a zone – the space-time-energy when the beadwork flows – and I needed to mostly shut out the talk so I could stay in it.

One part remained alert, though, in case she needed me for anything. At twenty-three, I basked in the time I had with her. I had moved in with my Gran for the summer and enjoyed the incredible luxury of being home with her throughout the day. In exchange for the privilege, I felt it necessary to do what I could to make her life easier without interfering in the work that sustained her; I cleaned but never attempted to take over the cooking that she seemed to love still to do. So, I remained alert in case the drop in turned to a visit and tea was called for.

I tuned in more fully when I heard him comment on how wonderful he thought it was to see a young person doing beadwork. I felt a flush of pleasure when I heard my Gran agree and my heart swell with pride when she added, "And she does such good work too. It makes me happy to see it."

My Gran was an amazing beadworker. It was her example I was tried most often to follow in my own work and so those words were the highest praise I could ever have wanted if I had ever

thought to ask for it. Instead, it dropped into my lap as an unexpected but deeply appreciated treasure.

When we were alone again, my Gran and I chatted for a bit about my beadwork. I don't recall ever actually speaking to her about this part of our lives. But I was happy to share how much I loved doing this work, knowing she would understand. I explained that my mom often said her grandchildren were her medicine and said, "I love those kids so much but I think I'd have to say beading is my medicine."

For a moment, I wondered if I had said something wrong. She looked at me with an expression I don't ever remember seeing before on her face – somewhat stunned and a little distant. And then she told me, "That's what the old lady used to say. Your grandpa's grandmother. She loved to sit outside in the sun and bead. And she would say that, that it was her medicine."

It was my turn to be stunned and overwhelmed. I suspect my expression was similar to what I had witnessed on her. I realized my late nitâniskocâpân would have said those words in nîhiyawîwin and perhaps meant something a bit different by it, the fact we were expressing such similar ideas in such a similar way made me feel powerfully connected to her in a way I had not experienced before.

ê-miciminitômakahki (they are interconnected)

The day my Gran[2] shared with me the memories she carried of 'the Old Woman,' I felt something I still – twenty-five years later – cannot quite find the words to describe. I suspect there is a nîhiyaw word that captures the feeling, but it is not a word I yet know. There is a sadness in the not-knowing but the experience was such that the grief of recognizing there is so much I am likely to never know fades against the brilliance of the profound connection, the feeling of knowing the ancestor I had never met in this physical world.

Her name was Madeline Mikkomusus but nitânskocâpân is known to me as 'nistomitinaw' (which we pronounce more like nischomchinaw). She is something of a legendary figure in my family and community. One of the stories I have heard is of how she, as a young woman, walked hundreds of miles to Sturgeon Lake, alone save for her very young brother she carried on her back throughout most of her journey. She was seeking refuge, but where she came from and what she was fleeing is not certain; what is clear is her strength, determination, and fortitude. Family stories also tell of how she was the first person to cross the Smoky River on the new bridge when it was opened in 1949[3]; in this I recognize a certain adventurousness, a willingness to try and do new things and fearlessly take steps across the unknown.

In the words I had shared with my Gran, the ones that revealed the connection to nitânskocâpân, I came to know there are so many unseen threads that connect us to each other

[2] My Gran, known to many as Granny (or Granny Kappo), was named Mary Kappo (née Moses) and is my late maternal grandmother.

[3] The Herald Tribune report of the event states: "Dressed in blankets and buckskins, warpaints and feathers, and beating the tom-tom, a band of Indians from the nearby Sturgeon Lake Reserve, walked first on to the bridge, singing some tribal song" (http://southpeacearchives.org/tag/the-herald-tribune/page/2/). This account does not contradict our family story, even if it doesn't identify nistomitanaw as the first person in that group. But, it does point to some other interesting things in that perhaps this was a ceremonial event and perhaps nitanskocâpân had a role and responsibility for our people that I do not, as yet, know.

even through time and space. I wouldn't always remember this; in times when I felt alone or in grief it became too easy for me to get lost in my tales of loss. But it would spark in my memories and be the touchstone to guide me back to the knowing that my grandmothers remained with me. That I was not (am not) alone.

Those words also revealed to me I had been mistaken in thinking my expression had been my own, a unique innovation created in my own thoughts riffing off of my mom's expression. Swirling through the deep and complex emotions that emerged from my Gran's words was the immediate understanding that the words nitânskocâpân and I shared were exactly that: shared. I knew then that what I did and thought was not unique nor did it belong solely to me.

It would take me many years before I really appreciated those teachings. They returned to my consciousness as I completed my Bachelor of Arts (Native Studies) and became clearer as I entered graduate school. Through a number of challenges, I would return to those ideas as a means to continue in the work I was doing. Standing strong in those words, I found they helped me push through the near paralysis of depression, anxiety, and stress.

They reminded me my work did not need to always be innovative, cutting-edge, and entirely unique. They reminded me that where I thrived was in sharing and to let go of any thought of needing to impress or fit into any ideas that did not resonate with me. I could learn, I could share, I could create, and I could contribute. And I could do it in a way that honours who I am.

And I am deeply grateful for that. (hay-hay nininâskoman! ayi-hai nôhkomipanak!)

Those words would also return to me when I was in the latter part of my undergraduate studies. I considered 'my medicine' as a method for exploring very difficult subject matter (residential schools and sexual abuse) grounded in love, respect, and healing. It would be also be

the place where I started my graduate research, though I did not know it at the time. But when I found myself feeling confused and uncertain during my first year as a graduate student, they came back to me.

Early on in my graduate studies, at a moment of particular frustration that was heading into despair, I stood alone under the dark early winter sky and thought: "I don't want to do this anymore. I wish I could just bead. Maybe I should quit school and just bead?"

And then I thought "Or, maybe I should do beadwork for my thesis?"

I felt my Gran's presence in that moment. As she had passed away just that past spring and my grief was still a bit raw, the moment was filled with emotion.

And then I could hear her say to me: "Well…why don't you?"

itohtêwin (goal of journey, destination)

I started beading around the age of 10 or 11 years old following lineages of artistic excellence. This includes my late[4] biological grandmothers, Mary Kappo (my Gran) and Agnes Cardinal (Kôhkom), who were both well known for their beadwork, as well as my adoptive grandmother (Granny Flett), a Métis beadworker who first put me on the path to beadwork. I am also strongly influenced by my adopted family (the Smallboy/Raine family of Smallboy Camp) and consider my work to reflect that connection as it is also very much a part of who I am. Now, at this point in my life, I have over 30 years of experience doing beadwork. However, until very

[4] In nîhiyawîwin it is customary to specify when you are speaking of or referring to someone who has passed on. In English, I usually note this as "the late" or (late) and in nîhiyawîwin/nêhiyawêwin this is indicated by adding 'pan' to the relative term or name. So, nôhkomipanak indicates 'my late grandmothers.' I follow this practice in my writing and in my speech but it is a relatively recent practice so there are times when I do not follow this – which is usually not intentional. However, there are times when it is intentional and this takes place here in this work when I am sharing stories or memories in a present tense and to evoke a sense of their living presence. So, in that present tense, I refer to nôhkomipan Mary Kappo as 'Gran,' 'Granny' or 'my Gran'; nôhkomipan Agnes Cardinal as 'my Kôhkom' or 'Kôhkom'; and nôhkomipan Elizabeth Flett as 'Granny Flett' or 'my Granny Flett'.

recently I have never thought seriously about what beadwork is (or could be). It was special to me, certainly, as a practice that gave me a clear sense of connection to my grandmothers and great-great-grandmother as well as to my adopted kin. And, it was definitely something I loved to do and I consider to be "my medicine." But generally, it wasn't something I saw as particularly significant; it was just something I did. "*I bead. That's just what I do*."

However, coming to recognize my work as inextricably linked to generations of Indigenous women, I have developed a deeper appreciation of the actual work of beadwork. And in considering those connections, I began to look more closely at the 'women's work' that has been, and continues to be, integral to the continuation of traditions, knowledge, and governance structures. Through this emerged my belief that fostering recognition of these practices as ongoing expressions of iyiniw sawêyihtâkosiwin is a powerful, everyday act of resurgence that centers respect and equity.

This insight prompted me to wonder: What does beadwork do? I also came to wonder how we, in nîhiyaw tâpisinowin understand the nature of beads and beadwork. Through prior work I had also begun to recognize connections between the practice of beadwork and Indigenous governance and law and set myself to work drawing these ideas together in order to develop this research, which is guided by the following research questions: What do beads, our other-than-human-kin, have to teach us about law and governance? And, how does a relationship with beads help enact nîhiyaw laws and governance?

My research explicates beadwork as a practice of Indigenous governance and "everyday resurgence" (Corntassel 2012) through a discussion of the important principles and laws embedded in beadwork and its practice. This account will also discuss beadwork as a non-human relative in line with nîhiyawak philosophical thinking, as I understand it, which accords with

Káínawa scholar Dr. Leroy Little Bear's (2009) contention that: "In the Indigenous world, everything is animate and has spirit. "All my relations" refers to relationships with everything in creation" (8). This connects with Cree scholar Dr. Kiera Ladner's (2003) definition of Indigenous governance as "the way a people has structured their society in relationship to the natural world" (125) and upon my understanding of nîhiyaw ontology that considers beads and beadwork as non-human relatives we also have relationships with. In turn, my research seeks to develop a nîhiyaw materialist theory that engages with, and contributes to, emerging conversations in new materialisms.

This research, then, explores the multidimensionality of beadwork with an emphasis on how it contributes to contemporary Indigenous governance and decolonial praxis. Drawing from my personal practice as a beadwork artist following in the traditions of my grandmothers and a 2015 Undergraduate research initiative project, my research is grounded in an Indigenous research methodology that prioritizes reciprocity and relational accountability (Wilson 2008) and utilizes research creation and autoethnography (to explore beadwork grounded in nîhiyaw ontology and beadwork traditions. Through this thesis, I present stories and conversations, along with images of beadwork, that speak of the connections between beadwork and foundational nîhiyaw concepts of law and governance I have seen emerge through my relationship to beads.

My research axiology is guided by a "strengths-based" approach that focuses on "resilience" (Crooks et al 2009, 161) and contributes to a richer, appreciative understanding of beadwork as vital "women's work" that has been, and continues to be, integral to the continuation of traditions, knowledge, and governance. Through this I also pay tribute to my family and community – in particular, the strong women (including my mother, sisters, and grandmothers) – who model incredible resiliency evident through the maintenance and

expression of nîhiyaw (and other Indigenous) kinship and land-based practices. Through this work I also draw attention to the fact that "as Indigenous peoples of the twenty-first century, we have much to celebrate. The fact that we still exist, that we are living and working within our own communities after centuries of colonial oppression and cultural genocide, is in and of itself an achievement" (Anderson 2016, 31). It is my belief that fostering recognition of our ongoing practices as expressions of iyiniw sawêyihtâkosiwin (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000) is a powerful act of resurgence that centers respect and equity and offers generative narratives important to decolonial praxis.

Through my Granny Flett's gift of beads came the development of an almost life-long relationship that has come to figure centrally in my academic work. It is fitting that now, when I sit at my desk, beads are usually close to me so that I can hear more clearly when they speak to me of the possibilities of creation. I am thinking here of Mohawk scholar Dr. Marlene Brant Castellano's (2000) contention that "the knowledge valued in aboriginal societies derives from multiple sources, including traditional teachings, empirical observation, and revelation" (23). Of particular interest is the category of 'revelation,' which she defines as knowledge "acquired through dreams, visions, and intuitions that are understood to be spiritual in origin" (24). I am also thinking of what I consider to be the greater project which my work seeks to contribute to - creating space in the academy for Indigenous voices and ways of knowing. And, in seeking to contribute positive narratives to guide our experiences and relationships with each other, I also will more closely investigate how narratives (our stories) operate in relation to beadwork and governance (at least as a mode of communication and theoretical framework).

naspasinaham (s/he writes or draws something thus)

In 2018, I completed and delivered a piece that had been commissioned by the University of

Alberta.[5] Named '*kiskinohawmatok*,' the piece was one I had worked on alongside researching and writing this thesis. At that point, I was already over year behind when I had hoped to finish writing my thesis and I had initially been reluctant to take on a major beadwork project. But I was also excited by the prospect, caught in a swell of creative energy that was irresistible. I justified my acceptance of the commission by seeing it as an opportunity to generate more information on my beadwork practice and as a way to push me forward in completing my thesis.

When I finished the work, I realized that not only had it been generative for my academic pursuits, in effect it was the research *and* the writing of my thesis. However, I did not entirely recognize it as such and I continued to work on a written thesis that follows the guidelines provided to me by my faculty. But, sometime after the piece was completed and was set to be installed in the President's Office, I had an interview that served to reflect back to me the work I had done and what it represented. Article author Erin Prefontaine[6] (2019) notes:

> Tara Kappo's research for her master's thesis is not where you'd expect to find it; nor does it resemble typical research. There are no typed pages or stacks of notes. Instead, a significant portion of her research sits within a simple wood frame, soft velvet and intricate beading, containing and conveying Tara's research on how Indigenous ways of teaching and learning have a place in our education systems. (np)

While I had not intended to give the impression that the finished beadwork had been submitted (and defended) as my thesis, I would soon receive notes of congratulations through social media that seemed to suggest many people believed this had been the case. I was somewhat mortified with feeling that we'd inadvertently misled people but I also took note of how proud and excited so many people seemed to be with the idea that I had successfully pushed the academic boundaries and created space in this institution for work that was insistently

[5] See Chapter 5: mîkistahikâcimo (to tell a story through beadwork) for further details on this work.
[6] The article posted on *The Quad* is credited at the beginning to Hallie Brodie. However, the article ends with the note "Written by Erin Prefontaine" and it was Erin whom I was interviewed by and, to my knowledge, authored the actual article. As such, I've noted her as the author both in this passage and in my Reference list.

Indigenous.

I recalled a conversation with my friend, tattoo-artist and Indigenous tattoo revivalist, Dion Kaszas (Hungarian, Métis, and Nlaka'pamux) where I mentioned I hoped to do work in my MA that was a bit 'unconventional' but I was a bit afraid to try to push the boundaries. He didn't simply encourage me to do so; rather, he was gently insistent that I had an obligation to do so. His own work, as he explained it to me and as is noted in his thesis "is presented using a media rich PDF that is offered as an alternative to transcription, and a step towards honor [sic] the oral nature of Indigenous cultures in academic research" (Kaszas 2018, iv). I had considered the idea seriously but had been at a loss about how to incorporate my beadwork in my thesis in an innovative and boundary-pushing manner.

I want to note that part of the reason I wanted to take an unconventional approach has almost everything to do with a personal commitment to *be* myself as fully as possible, and to demonstrate my deep appreciation for my people and our ways of knowing, doing, and being. As Cree-Métis scholar Dr. Emma Larocque (2015) notes, "today's younger Aboriginal scholars are not so heavily burdened as my generation was to correct misinformation and to deconstruct racist portrayals and language; today's generation can and is moving on to more "positive" and (self)affirmative work" (22), I also thought of the work that had been done in the academy to create space for me to take up my work in this setting and felt an obligation to honour that history by continuing in that tradition. And returning to my conversation with Dion, his words had touched a chord which continued to reverberate when the article was released. The response generated by the idea that I had submitted beadwork as my thesis tempted me to abandon my writing altogether in favour of "borrowing" '*kiskinohawmatok'* from the Office of the President and Provost to present to my thesis committee in defense.

I actually broached the idea with my supervisor, nêhiyaw-Métis scholar Dr. Shalene Jobin, and was not surprised by her support. The challenge was to figure out *how* to arrange this within the institution but she committed to pursuing this if it was the path I chose. For the reasons explained above, and as the beadwork was already done – and I was behind in my self-imposed timeline – I very much wanted to take the leap. But I also remembered a couple of requests I'd received for my writing based on presentations I had previously given.

Nêhiýaw[7] and Saulteaux scholar Dr. Margaret Kovach (2009) shares a reminder from Māori academic Graham Hingangaroa Smith that "those of us engaging in a relationship with Western academic institutions…will be asked from time to time to make 'strategic concessions'" (41). I do view working in this form as something of a strategic concession, and one that is made as a means to uphold my responsibilities to give back and to be accountable. So, in the end, I decided that I *wanted* to complete a full written thesis even though I feel very strongly my beadwork speaks volumes for itself and *does* express what I am writing here. I recognize there is value in *also* providing a written piece. Taken altogether, then, my research and thesis are embodied by both '*kiskinohawmatok'* and this thesis.

I must admit to having some mixed emotions about this decision, even still. I almost feel like I've missed an important opportunity. But I also believe that part of my life's work is to confront and overcome the pervasive "not-enough-ness" that runs too deep in my thinking and part of this work involves letting go of the fear of doing the wrong thing or of doing something that is just not good enough, not innovative enough, not creative enough, not fearless enough, etc. I also want acknowledge that the gifts we carry, while unique to us as we are unique, are also

[7] I follow the spelling convention of the term 'nêhiyaw' (including capitalization) used by Dr. Kovach in her 2009 work *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* and use that form (Nêhiýaw) when referring to her or her work.

often very similar. I have never believed I am the only one in the world who has noticed or come to believe certain things about beads or beadwork (and if I had, my research would have disabused me of that notion very quickly); rather, I have felt empowered to continue in my work in the way I have done it *because* I have heard echoes and seen reflections of it all around me.

So, in re-affirming my commitment to writing this thesis, I shifted my focus back into a mode of creating that seeks to bring what seems, at time, disparate and irreconcilable with my other creative works and ways of being. To facilitate this, I have grounded the written text in a concept of visiting. In my experience of visiting, the most enjoyable visits are ones where conversation flows organically and everyone has a chance to share as they are able and wish to. But this form of visiting – via the sharing of words in this thesis – is one that is deliberately and intentionally mediated. It is clear to me that my voice, as author and mediator, is likely to be predominant although I have worked to bring in other voices so that the larger conversations reflect a diverse gathering.

My approach here considers, as well, the reader as an integral guest and contributor to these conversations. I recognize how I, in so many respects, am speaking from a position of privilege in regards to the access I have had through my life to 'traditional' teachings, practices, ceremonies, and language. I am mindful of this and have approached this work with a degree of love, care, and respect to facilitate an inclusive space. I also ask, following Cree-Métis scholar Dr. Kim Anderson (2016):

> …that the reader consider [their] "response-ability." I take this concept from a talk by Anishinaabe poet and professor Kimberly Blaeser [who] talked about the reader's responsibility to respond to the text. She pointed out that the way any text is read depends on the ability of the reader to respond to it. She related this to traditional oral practices in Indigenous cultures, where it is assumed that the listener has as much a part of the creation of the story as the teller. In this way, the listener also carries responsibility for the knowledge that is transmitted. (28)

In the chapters that follow, I present research that includes particular attention to how beadwork: 1) functions in relation to governance, narrative, and materialism; 2) is a relatively accessible practice which embodies connection, governance, knowledge continuity; and 3) is an example of the "daily acts of renewal" which Tsalagi scholar Dr. Jeff Corntassel (2012) argues "are the foundations of resurgence" (89).

Following the work of Opaskwayak Cree Nation scholar Dr. Shawn Wilson (2008), I incorporate two narrative styles, visually distinguished in the font.[8] Dr. Wilson's work was an important intervention for my work as it provided a model of how I could begin to incorporate my own voice in my academic work in a way that went beyond simply shifting my tense to the first person. In seeking ways to write in a style that more clearly reflect my voice and epistemology, I was also inspired by the work of Rumbold et al. (2008) who presented their work in a series of vignettes that showcased their exploration of "ways of having multi-modal, arts-based conversations that can make a difference, to what we think we know, and who we are becoming" (298). So, in addition to the written text, I incorporate images that complement the narratives and also tell their own stories.

As will be discussed in a bit more detail later on, I took up ideas of autoethnography as a method in my research. This produced short stories (âcimowina) I share at the beginning of each chapter. These are written stories that are also accompanied by beadwork related images that echo, in a visual form, the written forms. These are intended to be short textual 'vignettes' that can stand alone and yet are very integral to this work in voice and vision. But, the rest of the text, intended to follow a more "academic" style, is also infused with a narrative style that reflects my

[8] I am indebted, here, to Dr. Wilson's (2008) work as I am taking up this style to incorporate another personal narrative, as indicated in italicized passages that lead each section.

own way of thinking, speaking, and writing as a nîhiyaw'skwîw who has been trained in the western academy.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2: nîhiyaw pimâtisowin (Cree life) provides the context for this work by presenting a discussion and model of a 'nîhiyaw pimâtisowin' research framework. This provides necessary context for the research and thesis, and also helps clarify my approach to research method and methodology. A discussion of those elements, which bring together concepts of Indigenous research methodology, research- creation, storytelling and narrative as understood through nîhiyaw tâpisinowin, is presented in Chapter 3 âniskômohcikewin (the act of connecting) as 'nîhiyaw sihcikîwana.' The next chapter, mâmawi-kiyokêwak (they visit altogether) was conceptualized as a form of visiting where I discuss key ideas of resurgence, foundational concepts of nîhiyaw/nêhiyaw law and governance, and beads and beadwork in conversation with scholarly literature.

Chapter 5 mîkistahikâcimo (to tell a story through beadwork) is the chapter that presents a work, *kiskinohawmatok*, which was created as I was in the midst of my research. It was not, originally, intended to be the research focus (I had planned a different project for that) but once completed spoke eloquently of my research. I had instinctively incorporated a practice of recording the process (mostly through pictures) as I worked on the piece and so it became clear to me that this work was the research. This is a chapter that is presented a bit differently than the others as I have presented a narrative recounting of the process and pictures of various stages as the piece was coming together. I see the images as the piece itself (and its constituent beads) telling its own story alongside my narration.

I follow the presentation of the research piece with a discussion of lessons learned through that experience of co-creation. This is also a focused discussion as Chapter 6

itâcimômakan (it tells such a story) provides an analysis of the work that considers the connections that emerged from the practice of beadwork on the nature of beads, beadwork as a practice, and nîhiyaw law and governance. I also draw other beadwork pieces into the discussion to further support this analysis. The final chapter, Chapter 7: kîsahkmikisiwin (conclusion, finishing; finishing the event), marks the end of this visit and in this leave-taking, I highlight what I feel is my contribution to knowledge and return to my original research questions to summarize how the work responded to those questions.

Chapter 2: nîhiyaw pimâtisiwin (Cree life)

âcimowin: iyiniminiskâw (a story: there is an abundance of blueberries)

The late summer day is warm and bright. I sit on the ground, a spot carefully selected where the nearly overwhelming abundance of blueberries are near to hand and where my folded blanket does not crush any of the berries. I am quietly absorbed by the work of gathering.

From time to time, I look up. Even while I trust my brother to his duty, I am also responsible to remain aware and ready to move if an alarm is sounded for approaching bears or cougars. In the heart of our traditional territory, we remain attentive to the fact we share this place with non-human relatives who we must treat with a wary respect.

Plate 3: Gifts

I look up for a moment, almost absent-mindedly, and breathe in deeply. I almost sigh as I breathe out, and focus in a moment on the feeling that suffuses me.

"miyo-pimâtisowin. That's what this is!"

Recognition sparks a cascade of connections in my mind.

I glance around again, seeing my family members immersed in their berry picking, my brother standing watch at the edge of the patch with rifle at the ready; I see the mix of low foliage in which we sit, including the blueberry bushes, interspersed with an occasional stand of poplar. Further away, and surrounding us is the predominantly evergreen forest. Not too far distant is the river; not visible or audible, but present nonetheless.

"And this is also wâhkôhtowin! And miyo-wîcîhitowin!"

I feel blessed by this abundance. I think of the tobacco I offered when we arrived, and suddenly worry it is not enough: How can one truly offer enough to balance what we receive?

"I am so grateful" I think, "We are still here. We are still us."

nîhiyaw tâpisinowin (Cree way of seeing; Cree worldview)

I encountered a creation story a few years ago at a conference hosted by Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta. Opaskweyak Cree knowledge holder, Wilfred Buck, presented star knowledge to us. This sparked a significant shift in my perspective.

Elder Buck shared a creation story.[9] In this story, we learn of Atchakos Iskwew[10] (Star Woman) who was our first ancestor. Atchakos Iskwew was an energy being from somewhere in the Pleiades who roamed and explored, seeking new experiences, as was the way of her kind. One day she spotted Earth through a sky portal – Pakone Kiisic (Hole-in-the-sky). Seeing the Earth she decided she wanted to visit. She tried to move through the portal but found she could not and knew she needed help. So, she asked Koko Minakasis (Grandmother Spider); Koko Minakasis controlled the portals and had the ability to transport Atchakos Iskwew. Koko Minakasis agreed to help Atchakos Iskwew on three conditions.

First, Atchakos Iskwew had to take a physical form when she came to this earth. Second, she had to bring a gift when she came through the hole in the sky, to remind her of where she came from. Third, she couldn't stay long.

In his online recording, Elder Buck connects the hole in the sky to dreamcatchers, which sets up a particular visual of the type of web. But soon after I first heard that story, I encountered a funnel web and had a sense that the unseen end opened up into worlds unknown. So, from that point, when I thought of this story, my mind would call forward an image of a funnel web where

[9] I would recall the general shape of this story and had some notes (which I later misplaced) but thankfully I was able to find a recording of Elder Buck sharing this story online (Buck 2019). Here I am presenting a paraphrased version based on that recording.

[10] The spellings of these terms are given in the document by Wilfred Buck, "Atchakosuk: First Nations Education Administrators Short Course 2016" https://mfnerc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Atchakosuk.pdf.

the funnel became the portal through which Atchakos Iskwew traversed. The funnel also described a spiral which had been showing up in various places at that time in my life as an important motif. I did not fully understand the importance of the spiral (just that I felt certain it was) but when I heard this creation story, I wondered if Koko Minakasis had been visiting me to take me to a place in my life where I could understand my responsibilities more clearly.

I had this stitched, in ink, on my wrist by my friend, Cree-Métis artist, Amy Malbeuf, to honour those ancient relations – Atchakos Iskwew and Koko Minakasis – and to place the story on my body in a way that also would help me remember those origins and the power of iskwîwak crafting. There is also a reminder, and a commitment, to remember the gifts that can come from shifting perspectives – the entirely new world that Atchakos Iskwew experienced by being willing to move through dimensions.

So, this work has been a journey in many ways inspired by shifting my perspective and accepting an adventure of exploring thoughts and experiences. And as with the original instructions, I come to this work knowingly immersing myself in a corporeal materiality; I accept I can only be here in this work for a relatively short period of time; and I bring, and offer humbly, a gift that reminds me of where I come from.

This document is a crafting of words and images that have emerged into this world, now, with their specific gifts. While I have taken care, at every step, to ensure this work is skillfully crafted (to the best of my ability), I have given up the idea that my task here is to create something 'perfect.' This aligns with a beadwork teaching I have encountered many times over the years: beadwork is not *meant* to be perfect. In fact, some artists intentionally set a bead of a different colour (a "spirit bead") as a reminder and honouring of human imperfection (Scofield and Briley 2011, 9). The truth, though, is even though that is not a teaching from my lineage that

I am aware of, nor a practice I follow in that exact way, my life lessons have taught me to sit more comfortably in the imperfection of my humanity and to appreciate this is the embodied experience required of Atchakos Iskwew as a condition of her transportation.

Before I encountered Atchakos Iskwew and Koko Minaksis through Elder Buck's story, I had experienced another profoundly influential shift in my perspective. This experience is also integral to this thesis. In late summer 2014 I found myself out on the land picking blueberries with my family. The place we gathered is deep within the heart of our traditional territory. It is well known to many other members of the Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation – my nation – but I feel this is a location of particular importance to my family. This is, I know, the area where my uncles followed in the footsteps of their father – my late grandpa – in hunting and trapping. And it was my youngest uncle who has led us to that patch; as he ranges for moose or elk, he pays close attention to where the blueberries are growing. For the past few years, he has taken up the role of scout and marks abundant berry patches for us, knowing what this means to us.

As I sit amongst a profusion of ripe blue orbs, I feel such a profound sense of gratitude. I think about my late uncle, who had, by that point, been gone for nearly ten years, and how much he would appreciate, as I did, the amazing abundance of blueberries. Surrounded by so much beauty – the plants, the eagles, the river, my family – the sadness of remembrance is nowhere near as strong as the gratitude. This, I realized, was miyo-pimâtisowin – what my mother has taught me is what our nîhiyaw laws guide us to and uphold.

Following this realization, more connections bloom in my thinking; I recognize nîhiyaw law and governance unfolding around me. I recognize miyo-wîcîhtowin in my uncle's care and consideration and how we relate here to each other and to our other relatives – including my beloved blueberries – in this territory. The relationships are centered, as well in wâhkôhtowin

demonstrated not only through the ties that keep our family together but in the presence of my older brother and his youngest son. This child who asks me, "Auntie, are you going to come hunting with us later?" embodies the beautiful system that connects me to him; born as the child of my brother's wife's sister's daughter, wâhkôhtowin allows me to be his auntie, for him to be my nephew. This is also sâkihitowin and manâtisiwin in action.

I gather my berries and will, later, join my brother and nephew on their hunting trip. I will marvel at this five-year-old child's hunting skills and my brother's keen eyesight and hearing. I will feel the land as I travel across it and gather pieces of myself back in that I had thought I lost through living in the city, through the losses of our family members, through the ongoing interruption of resource extraction and colonial interference. I will begin to understand we are still here, and we are blessed, still, with nîhiyaw pimâtisowin.

When I was starting my graduate studies, my research intention at the time was focused on explicating contemporary Indigenous governance practices. I believe the stories we tell shape our understanding and experience and so I was increasingly troubled by what I seemed to hear most often…that as Indigenous people in a colonial context, we have lost our language, our culture, our laws, our ways. But, those years ago, while I was out on the land with my family picking blueberries, I began to hear other stories; these became the foundation for this thesis.

In this thesis, mindful of the limits of time that are a condition of our life on earth as well as a constraint of this academic form, I can only share a limited number of stories. But there is one other that is important to understand the work of my research and writing. As time moved forward from that day in the blueberry patch, I would soon apply to – and be accepted for – graduate study. As I noted earlier, when I first applied to graduate school, I had envisioned my research very differently. But, during the period between developing my statement of intent and

actually starting my studies, I was provided an opportunity to attend a summer intensive visual-arts course at the University of British Columbia – Okanagan. Held in Sylix territory at Kelowna, this course connected me to artists and began a shift in my perspective of myself. I reach back to that period now to help clarify the ways in which I moved towards a different understanding of the work I have felt called to do in this research.

Amongst the Syilx people, I learned that 'Syilx' contains the concept of a weaving together, or process of becoming, part of that territory in a particular way. There is an important recognition of relationships to plant and animal relations as part of that becoming (which best understood through their Creation stories). And also, we were reminded by Syilx Elder Richard Armstrong that at all things come from the earth so that what we think of as manmade (and therefore unnatural) is actually still of the earth.[11] This helped me to reconsider my sense of self in relation to place and prompted me to dedicate time with some newfound friends visiting various places in the territory. I was profoundly conscious of being a visitor and took seriously the idea that I had a responsibility to develop respectful relationships within the territory, including with the land, waters, and all non-human beings. While I had visited other territories in my life, I have spent most of my life within my home territories. So, this experience marked a shift in my consciousness of what it means to visit elsewhere and uphold, consciously, what it means to me to be a sâkawiyiniw îkwa nîhiyaw'skwîw.

Looking back now, I would also describe this development as a shift in the way I was seeing the world and not just in how I saw myself in the world. But it was not a shift into something new; rather, it was a process where I felt things come into a different focus. Following Napoleon (2014), I describe this as perspective as 'nîhiyaw tâpisinowin,' which he loosely

[11] Richard Armstrong, "Guest lecture" (Pedagogy of Place course, University of British Columbia – Okanagan, Kelowna, BC, July 20-31, 2015).

translates as “a belief and value system including deeply entrenched spiritual principles and order of life that describes the nîhiyaw place in the universe” (29) and more literally as “Cree way of seeing” (4). What this means is this was a point where I had a conscious awareness of seeing the world in a particular way that I connected to the nîhiyaw askiy I am from and the way I have been raised in nîhiyawîwin.[12]

I draw these threads together now to try to form a clear picture of how these shifts in my perspective figure centrally to my research. The interlude with my family speaks of both my location as a sâkawiyiniw and nîhiyaw’skwîw, and clarified an important perspective, connecting me to a greater appreciation of how I experience the world through “nîhiyaw tâpisinowin ‘Cree way of seeing’” (Napoleon 2014, 4) and “nîhiyaw sihcikîwana ‘Cree ways of doing things’” (Napoleon 2014, 4). Bringing this into the academy – indeed, determinedly so – positions me to not only be inclined towards taking up an Indigenous methodology, it creates an obligation to do so. My responsibilities to where I come from, to who I know myself to be, requires me to ensure I approach this work in a way that is true to where I come from.

Coming into a recognition of the lifeway I was raised in – to understand myself as having been raised immersed in nîhiyawîwin – was the prompt to reconsider what this meant for myself in my work as a beadwork artist. Considering the beads that I often have near to me, my attention was drawn to how the beads, held in containers, appear static and lifeless in some perspectives. But I know them to be ever otherwise. As I understand it – in nîhiyaw thought – we understand everything in Creation as energy-in-motion. For us, even what we might call inanimate, or non-

[12] As Napoleon 2014 also notes, ‘nîhiyawîwin’ refers not only to the language but also the culture (19) and from this point of understanding, I recognize my upbringing as very grounded in nîhiyawîwin.

living, is simply energy moving in particular ways[13] that shift how we – as humans – engage with it. Animacy could thus be thought of as a quality that allows us to interact with those 'things' in particular ways where 'things' in inanimate forms could be interacted with in others.

My relationship to beads, beadwork, governance and law are enmeshed in the nîhiyaw pimâtisiwin I was raised in. It seems necessary, then, that the research I would undertake would reflect this. However, understanding this and being able to articulate this understanding has been a process that unfolded within and through the research itself. As Dr. Kovach (2009) contends, "researchers have the task of applying conceptual frameworks that demonstrate the theoretical and practical underpinnings of their research, and, if successful, these frameworks illustrate 'the thinking' behind 'the doing.'" (39). Drawing further from her own personal research experience, she shares that "at the time, I could not articulate why, but I knew that no matter how sympathetic the Western methodology, the question I was considering ruled out a research process based solely on Western thought and tradition. Finding a research framework that could accommodate all three of these considerations became frustrating" (Kovach 2009, 39).

My own process of situating my work in this academic context was helped tremendously by the work of Indigenous scholars who have articulated Indigenous research methodology – including Dr. Kovach, Dr. Wilson, Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Māori) to name only a few – and it follows that a clear starting point for me was that my work would employ Indigenous research methodology because of my connection and commitment to upholding nîhiyaw values. In the next chapter, I will expand a bit further on the methodologies and methods I utilized, but I feel it

[13] Here, I acknowledge a brief conversation I had, over a decade ago, with nêhiyaw scholar Willie Ermine on animate/inanimate nouns in nêhiyawêwin. It was this conversation that provided an important seed for what would eventually become this thesis.

is necessary to focus first on the conceptual framework that is the foundation for the work, overall. As Dr. Kovach (2009) explains:

> Conceptual frameworks make visible the way we see the world. Within research, these frameworks are either transparent (i.e., through form) or no, yet they are always present. The rationale for explicit representation of one's conceptual framework is that it provides insight into a researcher's beliefs about knowledge production, in general, and how those beliefs will impact the research project. The content and form of the conceptual framework itself assists in illustrating the researcher's standpoint, thus giving the reader insight into the interpretive lens that influences the research. (41)

Further, she states "an Indigenous research framework acts as a nest, encompassing the range of qualities influencing the process and content of the research journey" (Kovach 2009, 42).

As noted earlier, I have a tattoo on my wrist that was lovingly and carefully stitched by my friend. The process of developing the design was one of co-creation, where I shared with my friend Amy Malbeuf the ideas I had for the tattoo. The central form is that of concentric circles that form a spiral viewed from a particular angle. The tattoo depicts a very particular point of view but in speaking of spirals (as a form) and spider webs (conceptually), the tattoo also conveys movement and interconnection. In the process of working to articulate the conceptual framework supporting this research, Dr. Kovach's (2009) statement that "Indigenous epistemologies live within a relational web, and all aspects of them must be understood from that vantage point" (57) helped me see the model my work has been using.

nîhiyaw pimâtisowin (Cree life)

Before I provide a brief explanation of this model, as I understand it, I want to reiterate that I have arrived to certain understandings of nîhiyawîwin through my upbringing and experience. I note that I have chosen, as much as possible, to privilege the nîhiyawîwin in both meanings of language and culture, as this is where I come from. But while I might *feel* grounded in nîhiyawîwin I am very conscious and clear that I am not fluent. What this means is that I can

share only what I know (or believe I know) and I make no claims to exhaustive or authoritative knowledge in nîhiyawîwin. Furthermore, I acknowledge – particularly in terms of language – I do draw on knowledge shared by other Indigenous thinkers and language speakers to enrich my understandings, insight, and discussion.

Respecting our interrelatedness – which I view as a foundational understanding and concept in nîhiyawîwin – I share the belief that "as Indigenous people, we understand each other because we share a worldview that holds common, enduring beliefs about the world. As Dr. Little Bear states, 'there is enough similarity among North American Indian philosophies to apply concepts generally' (2000: 79)" (Kovach 2009, 37). Further, I am greatly indebted to the work of Dr. Kovach for articulating a Nêhiýaw research framework which inspired, informed, and connects with how I have come to understand the research framework supporting my work. Given the close relationship between nîhiyawak and nêhiyawak, and my own familial ties to our prairie kin, I also recognize the close ties between these formations. In particular, I share her words on the nature of this framework and methodology to further explain how this model functions with the understanding that Nêhiýaw and nîhiyaw conceptions of relationality are fundamentally the same:

> As stated earlier, an Indigenous research framework that utilizes a methodology based on Nêhiýaw epistemology is a relational methodology, so while I speak of knowledges (e.g., values, language), it should be assumed that they are nested, created, and re-created within the context of relationships within other living beings. While these relational aspects of Plains Cree culture are represented here in the linear constraints of written text, the elements are fluid and they interact with each other in a weblike formation. Each value represents a strand in a web that is integrated and interdependent with the other strands. (Kovach 2009, 47)

The model I have devised, depicted in Plate 4 (below), is based on the tattoo art co-created with Amy Malbeuf, is an expression of nîhiyaw epistemology, where epistemology is understood to include "beliefs held about knowledge, where it comes from, and whom it

involves" (Kovach 2009, 46). This model identifies four key nîhiyaw concepts which support my research approach. This model expresses movement and interconnectedness and as such it should be understood to be a movement through, and at the same time with, these concepts. This is thus

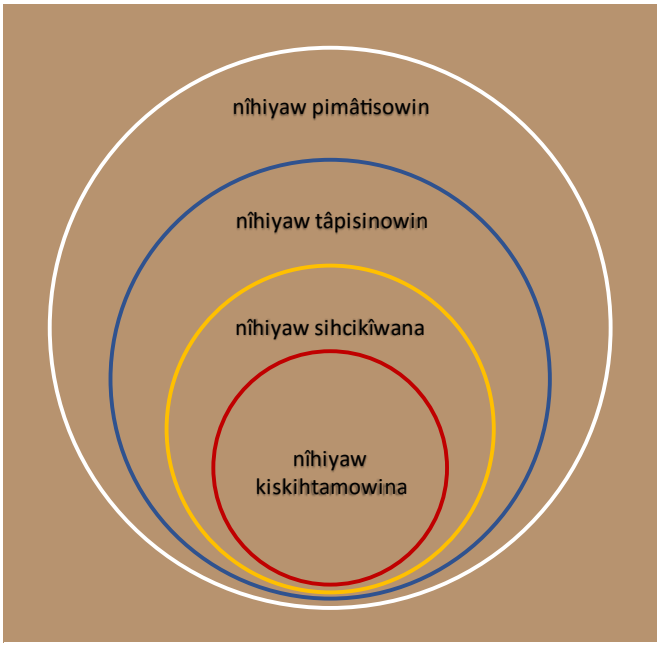

Plate 4: 'nîhiyaw pimâtisowin' Conceptual Framework

a journey where the parts are always connected even while the experience may be more immediately immersed in a particular concept.

In the center, resides nîhiyaw kiskihtamowina as both a starting point and a goal. Napoleon (2014) explains that "The word kiskihtamowin, which translates as 'knowledge or a type of knowledge', may be the closest idea we have to epistemology" (49-50). In this formation, then, the central concept can also be understood as one conveying nîhiyaw epistemology, which then emphasizes the interconnectedness with the overarching concept for which I've named the model. Additionally, here, the knowledges can be understood as the understandings of nîhiyawîwin that support the pursuit of additional knowledges. In my particular research journey, I started out within certain knowledges and walked with the goal of gaining additional, or

expanded, knowledges that I would then share as a form of relational accountability (Wilson 2008).

The next circle, which appears to surround and support nîhiyaw kiskihtamowina in this model, is the level of nîhiyaw sihcikîwana, where "sihcikîwana generally means 'ways of doing things' but it can also describe methods of organizing and leading" (Napoleon 2014, 50). This aspect, which is "nested" (Kovach 2009) is also about methodology and method. I will explain this further in the next chapter, but here I would highlight that my choice of *how* to do this research emerges from my understanding of what it means to do research as a nîhiyaw'skwîw. That is, my responsibility growing out of my location has meant I would instinctively reach towards nîhiyaw sihcikîwana for methods and methodologies.

The third circle, in this web-that-is-also-a-pathway, is nîhiyaw tâpisinowin. Considering my research journey here, the shifts in my perspective (as related earlier) that helped me connect to nîhiyaw tâpisinowin made clear to me this concept was integral to my research framework. In terms of this model, it is understanding that "the closest term to worldview is tâpisinowin, which literally means 'a way of seeing'. In other words, tâpisinowin is a mindset and it seems to cover most aspects of the concept 'holistic worldview' without having to fragment it" (Napoleon 2014, 50) which confirms this is an integral aspect to the conceptual framework I am working with and through.

The fourth aspect is nîhiyaw pimâtisowin (which is the aspect for which I have named the model). nîhiyaw pimâtisowin exists in my mind as a concept that encompasses all of the other aspects even while it holds its own, related but different, meaning. While it is not exactly the synonymous with miyo-pimâtisowin, these terms hold the same resonance in my heart and experience. Napoleon (2014) explains that "pimâtisowin generally means 'life' but can also

mean ‘culture’ or a specific way of living” (50) and in this model both meanings are invoked to reflect the generative power embedded in this model as well as the way in which the approach is part of a way of life.

Chapter 3: âniskômohcikewin (the act of connecting)

âcimowin: kâsispowihêw (a story: s/he retains s.o. from the past for the future)

Granny Flett's beads were contained in a small chest of drawers. Each drawer held beads of a different colour, beautiful and vibrant. But it was the red ones that really captivated me.

Plate 5: Spilled beads

They were a deep, rich red and seemed to flash with a bit of fire. But, when I ran my fingers through them, I was almost surprised to find the ruby sparks did not singe my fingertips. The beads felt neither hot nor cold, but soothingly smooth. What did surprise me was the sound they made; as I stirred the beads, they whispered an echo of the wind rustling through the poplar trees in summer and of the waves of the lake gently rolling onto the shore. These were the sounds of home.

In time, I would gather around me beads in multitudes.

They seemed to draw nôsisim[14] *like a moth to a flame.*

Like Granny Flett, I did not interfere as he made acquaintance. I wondered if he, like me, could hear the sounds of home when he shook the beads like a rattle in their containers. The unmistakable susurration of beads spilling all over the hard floor gave me pause for a moment and I drew in my breath sharply as annoyance spiked through me. And then I remembered how Granny Flett never admonished me for getting into her beads. So, I took another breath – slower and more measured – and smiled at the beads spilled across the floor, wondering if he would one day also pick up beads.

[14] This is Isaiah Gladue, the son of nitânis Mary Kappo, eldest daughter of nimis, Tanya Kappo.

nîhiyaw sihcikîwana (Cree ways of doing things)

Inextricable from my sense of self, and how I would be known in the world, are my familial and community ties. These are, as Métis scholar Dr. Adam Gaudry (2013) describes, the "webs of close personal relationships and even kinship" (118) that I am conscious make me "directly accountable to the community" (118). As previously discussed, my location as a nîhiyaw'skwîw and sâkawiyiniw are foundational to my research, both in topic and approach. I have the privilege of coming from family who maintain strong connections with our territory, of having been raised by an amazing nîhiyaw'skwîw, nimâmâ Margaret Kappo, who provided me a grounding in our traditions and ceremony, and of being the beneficiary of customary adoption practices that extended my learning of what it means for me to be a nîhiyaw'skwîw. Altogether, this has instilled, and continues to strengthen, a profound appreciation for the gifts that are part of nîhiyaw pimâtisiwin, which includes particular ways of doing.

In the previous chapter, I presented a research framework and model based on concepts of, and related to, nîhiyaw pimâtisiwin. In that discussion, I connected the framework to my location as a nîhiyaw'skwîw and sâkawiyiniw, and also described how nîhiyaw sihcikîwana indicates the way of doing that is part of nîhiyaw pimâtisiwin, connected to nîhiyaw tâpisinowin and nîhiyaw kiskihtamowina. In this chapter, I will expand a bit further on how I conceptualized and actualized nîhiyaw sihcikîwana.

In this discussion and in this research nîhiyaw sihcikîwana is used to describe the ways in which I conducted research that are congruent with, and honour, nîhiyaw pimâtisowin. In the terms of the western academy, where this work is also situated, this concept also connects to 'research methods and methodology.' As nêhiyaw scholar, Dr. Evelyn Steinhauer (2002) maintains: "as researchers, the first thing we do when we are going to conduct any research is to decide what type of methodology to use. We try to find something that will accommodate what

we wish to accomplish" (71). This was true in my case, and there were two types of research methodologies that I was familiar with that I believed would best "accommodate" the goals I was aiming towards: Indigenous research methodology and research-creation.

I start this discussion with recounting how I encountered these concepts. While I have come to understand my work as nîhiyaw sihcikîwana, and an expression of nîhiyaw pimâtisowin, I am also a student of the western academy and my work also contains the influence of that training. And, while my mother tongue is nîhiyawîwin, my first language is English so I also know I approach and understand the world through "môniyâw mâmitonihcikanîwin 'Western or White thinking' as the elders call it" (Napoleon 2014, 15). Being accountable in my work means I must acknowledge this openly and honestly; respecting my own work means I must also honour and acknowledge the contributions of others.[15]

So, once I decided I was going to "do beadwork" to explore ideas of nîhiyaw legal principles and governance, I set about trying to figure out what methodology best fit my project. The immediate answer, given my subject matter and my sense of self, was clear and (seemingly) unambiguous: Indigenous research methodologies. From experience and learning preceding the start of my graduate studies, I was already confident that beadwork is, itself, an Indigenous research methodology. This followed the thoughtful and foundational work of Indigenous scholars who have previously explicated Indigenous research methodologies (including Smith (2012); Steinhauer (2002); Wilson (2008); Kovach (2009)) that informed and inspired a research project I completed over the summer before I started my graduate program. That project, in turn

[15] I want to note that I have chosen to explain my work through nîhiyawîwin itwîwina as I firmly believe this is the most accurate terminology and concepts to use, I am also choosing to do so as part of my personal commitment to learning nîhiyawîwin. So, this process was not about starting with a concept expressed and understood in English and trying to translate it to nîhiyawîwin, but rather asking "What am I doing? How would this be expressed or understood in nîhiyawîwin? But, including English concepts and language also is true to who I am.

was connected to an earlier undergraduate course final project where I first did beadwork as part of my research process.[16] This project linked beadwork to research in my thinking.

At roughly the same time I was exploring research-creation, I was also introduced to the concept of 'Indigenous research methodologies' through the work of Dr. Wilson in his 2008 book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Through the framework he provided (the circle, ontology, epistemology, methodology, axiology) I began to think of what this might look like in my own future research. And, I also found myself thinking a lot about the concept of 'relational accountability,' which, for Dr. Wilson, means that "what is more important and meaningful is fulfilling a role and obligations in the research relationship – that is, being accountable to your relations" (77).

These two threads came together in a research project I completed in 2015,[17] which also converged with experience gained during a Community Service Learning (CSL) course I completed in my final year of my undergraduate studies. In that course I had, along with my colleague, Adrienne Larocque, devised a tool intended to support the development and training of staff in the Kahkiyaw program at the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society. Through that placement, I had the incredible opportunity to learn about the work being done by Bent Arrow and to develop a deeper appreciation for the power of storytelling. Here I came to see storytelling as an important component of Indigenous learning/teaching and governance practices, and further, as decolonization praxis.

The real starting point for that research idea, then, was my profound gratitude for what I learned through my CSL experience; it was such a rich experience for me that I needed to give

[16] See Chapter 6: itâcimômakan for further information on this project.

[17] I want to acknowledge that this research was conducted with support from the Undergraduate Research Initiative here at the U of A, and also with the supervision of Dr. Shalene Jobin.

something back, somehow. I understood this as a practice of reciprocity, which connected me immediately to Indigenous research; as Anishnaabe-Métis scholar Dr. Lynn Lavallée (2009) states, "within an Indigenous research framework the principle of reciprocity, or giving back, is essential" (35).

That undergraduate research project formed around the idea of exploring Indigenous governance and law, storytelling, resurgence, and research methodologies. In that project, I took a key story ('Practice Is Ceremony') I had learned at Bent Arrow and created a beaded piece intended to serve as a mnemonic device to further encourage the oral transmission of that story.[18] This project provided me with the foundational connections between beadwork, storytelling, Indigenous research methodologies, and Indigenous law and governance that this current work rest upon.

The process of connecting these concepts and attempting to then articulate how they were deployed in my work presented unexpected challenges. I trace part of the challenge to a growing sense of unease with the work, which I recognize as a common experience in my beadwork practice where, as things come together, I see elements that feel right. While making minor adjustments as I go is fairly easy, there are times when things simply do not come together in ways that result in significant changes that are very costly in terms of time and effort.

The 'why' of the discomfort is very important and helps me decide whether to leave things as they are, make significant changes, start over, or leave the project altogether (and at a future point, dismantle it altogether). This is no small decision when the work itself is something that is particularly meaningful to you and you have made commitments to others for completion of the project. My thesis is one of those such works.

[18] See Chapter 6: itâcimômakan (it tells such a story) for more details on this project.

Holding the concepts of Indigenous research methodologies and research-creation, storytelling and autoethnography, were not, in themselves what troubled me. The way I understood those methods and methodologies meant I easily undertook my work with those ideas (or my understanding of them) guiding my approach. The challenge came not in following them, per se, but in attempting to articulate how they worked in my work, or how I worked with them. Part of what I felt created challenges for me was that alongside and as part of my research ran the ongoing project of learning nîhiyawîwin and deepening my understanding of what it means to know myself as a nîhiyaw'skwîw and sâkawiyiniw. My feelings were very similar to the experience of Dr. Kovach where she shared: "The deeper that I submerge myself into tribal knowledge systems, the more I resist Western ways of knowing as a given for *all* academic research, even though I know this demands a long swim against a strong current" (Kovach 2009, 55).

Reflexivity and honesty with myself, as well as acknowledging the material reality of my beadwork practice, makes clear that this work does bring elements together from different epistemological spaces and that my experience in this world is of both. I am reminded of an observation my adopted mother once shared with me; she explained that while she prayed every night for all of her children, I was her one child she worried the least about because, she said, "You are firmly grounded in both worlds so I know you are able to stand strong." I don't remember what was happening around us when she shared that with me but I expect she understood, as well, that moving back and forth in my life through these different experiences did not make me less (as sometimes I fear) but was, or could be, a strength for me to draw from.

I have carried those words as a reminder that being able to take up the gifts of different traditions can be a strength. In this work, I have taken seriously a responsibility of ensuring my

research contributes to a decolonizing agenda (Kovach 2009) which I tend to take as one which asks me to reject Western thinking, approaches, and ways of doing. But, tâpwîwin will steer me back to the reminder that "like all peoples, Aboriginal peoples are shaped by the contexts that we inhabit and know as the status quo. These contexts make us who they are, whether we want them to or not. We cannot pretend to float above them. We are marinated in the Eurocentric, colonial context" (Henderson 2015, 67). I also am mindful of Dr. John Borrows' (Anishinaabe) salient caution that "we must particularly guard against rejecting everything that flows from those who we regard as having harmed us" (2008, 9).

My work, then, as previously noted, is not an attempt towards perfection or to be everything and all things I would wish it could be, but rather is a reflection on the work I have done as I have done it. Returning again to my beadwork practice, I have come to see that the way in which I conceptualized my research methodologies do not quite fit the work, in the end, and as painful as it is to let go of writing that has already been done, the work calls for a reframing and reorientation of these ideas.

I found myself at a stage where I knew I needed to reconsider my own understanding of these concepts in order to better evaluate their suitability for my project. Here, I am considering these theoretical formations to be both the materials and techniques that constitute the overall piece. And to analogize, again, this path of research-creation, this stage is very like sorting through the collection of materials and tools I think of as my "beading supplies" and considering which best suit the design and purpose of the piece in construction. In some respects, these are the materials that inspired the design but my experience suggests some elements reveal themselves only as a starting point and as the project takes shape they will point the way to other

materials that actually fit better: the sparkly cut beads that caught my eye are later replaced by matte seed beads to offer better contrast and a richer composition.

In refiguring my understanding, and thus the articulation, of my research methodology, I return once again to Dr. Kovach (2009) who clarified that her "work is premised on a belief that nested within any methodology is both a knowledge belief system (encompassing ontology and epistemology) and the actual methods" (26). Immersed as much as possible in nîhiyawîwin as I have been means that while the work I was doing drew on these other conceptualizations of research methodology, the "knowledge belief system" I am grounded in is decidedly nîhiyaw. Further, this re-positioning follows Anishinaabe scholar Dr. Kathleen Absolon (2011) in her contention that "to indigenize is to position your Indigenous worldview as the centre. I see an important distinction here between having an Indigenous perspective within a western research paradigm and doing re-search methodologies within an Indigenous worldview/paradigm" (30).

With all of this in mind, I returned to the fundamental understanding of interconnectedness and relatedness that is the ontological web described by the nîhiyaw pimâtisiwin model. I arrived at an understanding that the overarching approach to my research follows nîhiyaw sihcikîwana. In this conceptualization, as is true for beadwork, the concepts or raw materials that I also employ have origins elsewhere. I take up those other materials as they make the most sense for my work but what I feel is the most critical here is that the *how* I take them up aligns with my nîhiyaw "knowledge belief system." I want to note that, following Dr. Kovach (2009), I have constructed a framework that best aligns with my own understanding of who I am. However, it is important to understand that this *is* a construct that is connected to my particular location. That is, as a member of the Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, I have come to identify myself as 'sâkawiyiniw*,'* and also 'nîhiyaw*.'* In this specificity I hope to avoid, or at

least mitigate, the issue identified by nêhiyaw scholar Dr. Paulina Johnson (2017) in "…how problematic it is to identify the Nêhiyaw as one Nation, or one Indigenous Nation because it obscures the relationships established by the Assiniboine, Saulteaux, and Blackfoot, and especially the Metis" (50). She further notes "by limiting the Nêhiyaw identity to a singular cultural identity we dismiss multicultural and mixed ancestry genealogies that were established through custom and tradition, especially political and social alliances in marriage" (Johnson 2017, 49).

Holding nîhiyaw sihcikîwana as the overall approach, I will now describe the relationships between that concept and those of Indigenous research methodologies and research-creation as they figure in my work. I start with Indigenous research methodologies by first noting that my approach of nîhiyaw sihcikîwana can be understood to be, itself, a more specific form of Indigenous research. That is, the term Indigenous refers to various peoples with distinct histories, practices and belief systems. However, there are similarities, as previously mentioned, that support the formation of a theory of Indigenous research methodology (Absolon 2011; Kovach 2009; Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000). What I am drawing out, in service of tapwîwin, is the move towards a specificity that is more accurate and precise in how I have taken up this other, interconnected concept.

Within nîhiyaw sihcikîwana as a research methodology, I identify the following principles articulated by various scholars (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Steinhauer 2002; Wilson 2008; Kovach 2009; Lavallée 2009; Absolon 2011):

1. Reciprocity

   The practice of reciprocity figures prominently as an important element of living nîhiyaw pimâtisiwin. This principle speaks of ensuring balance through giving and receiving, and

recognizes that "reciprocity extends beyond the immediate research participants. In keeping with the decolonizing notion of an Indigenous research framework, reciprocity also includes the advancement of Indigenous ways of knowing." (Lavallée 2009, 36). Furthermore, it is "…simply the ethics of relationality; it is the concept that informs accountability for one's relationships" (Chacaby 2011, 31).

2. Respect

   Here we understand respect as "an essential pillar upon which good relations (*miyo-wîcêhtowin*) can be brought about" (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 22) and that "respect is more than just saying please and thank you…According to Cree Elders, showing respect – *kiyceyihtowin* – is a basic law of life." In addition, we understand that: "Respect means you listen intently to others' ideas, that you do not insist that your idea prevails. By listening intently you show honor, consider the well being of others, and treat others with kindness and courtesy" (Unnamed Cree Elder in unpublished Blue Quills First Nations College manual, 2001, p. 86, quoted in Steinhauer 2002, 73).

3. Relational accountability

   As articulated by Dr. Wilson (2008), this principle "means that the methodology needs to be based in a community context (be relational) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity and responsibility…" (99) and "an Indigenous axiology is built upon the concept of relational accountability… What is more important and meaningful is fulfilling a role and obligations in the research relationship – that is, being accountable to your relations" (77).

4. Decolonizing Agenda

Following Dr. Kovach (2009), this principle is important because "no matter how it is positioned, a decolonizing agenda must be incorporated within contemporary explorations of Indigenous inquiry because of the persisting colonial influence on Indigenous representation and voice in research" (81).

5. Self-location

   This is understood as both the practice of identifying yourself (cultural identification) in order to clarify your positionality and context within the research (Kovach 2009), and it is also guided by "the following questions: What brought you here? What do you feel you have/need to contribute to your people/community/nation? From what "place" do you speak?" (McIvor 2010, 140).

As one of the key shifts in my research direction was to focus on, and incorporate, beadwork, it made sense for my research to follow an arts-based approach to help me think through what Indigenous governance looks like in practice. I think, in some respects, I was attempting to develop a sense of immersion in nîhiyaw governance that I do not always experience when simply thinking/talking/writing about it. What I was interested in accessing and demonstrating was a way of coming to know Indigenous governance through arts-based practice, with an underlying theory that this type of practice could develop a different way of knowing or understanding. I turned to the concept of research-creation,[19] which was defined on the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) website in 2015 (http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#a22), as:

[19] Loveless (2019) clarifies that "research-creation is a geographically specific term that works in tandem with alternatives such as practice-based research, practice-led research, research-based practice, research-led practice, creative-praxis, arts-driven inquiry, arts-based research, and, increasingly artistic research" (4). In my early engagement I was introduced to this as "creative research" and, following some of the literature I was reviewing at that point I also described my work as arts-based practice. I have since come to use the term 'research-creation' more exclusively.

> An approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation. The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms).

Chapman and Sawchuk (2012) also explain that "Research-creation 'theses' or projects typically integrate a creative process, experimental aesthetic component, or an artistic work as an integral part of the study" (6).

This methodology appealed to me as it provided a framework to "explore ways of having multi-modal, arts based conversation that can make a difference, to what we think we know, and who we are becoming" (Rumbold et al 2008, 298). Further, my early readings identified Research-creation as a developing and still contested concept (Loveless 2015; Chapman and Sawchuck 2012). It is this very nature, I think, that makes this a particularly fitting approach as it seems to offer fertile ground to germinate, in the context of a western institution, an intentionally unconventional approach (Chapman and Sawchuck 2012, 6). I also deeply appreciate that research-creation *"*challenges us to think about what constitutes knowledge, how new ideas, ways of knowing, and forms of innovation draw on deep-seated cultural traditions" (Loveless 2015, 43). This is particularly important to me as it supports a connection between beadwork as a way of creating new possibilities for how we understanding, know, and practice governance today.

Rumbold et al. (2008) produced an account of responding with and through art to each other's work that is similar to the approach I employ – using beadwork as an arts-based method of inquiry – but in my case collaboration is not with another human. Instead, and what shifts my work from research-creation alone to nîhiyaw sihcikîwana is understanding the beads as my collaborators and co-creators. And, in this approach, the beads and beadwork are given space (through images) to share their own stories and provide their own accounts.

My approach of utilizing aspects of Indigenous research methodology and research-creation very strongly encouraged the use of storytelling as a method. Coming to this work I had a deep appreciation for "storytelling as a practice that is part of everyday life and that provides a framework for understanding historical and contemporary issues. Viewed from this perspective, narrative helps us to take in and interpret the world" (Cruikshank 2005, 60)[20]. In particular, I considered my perception of the current status of Indigenous governance to have been shaped by settler colonial discourses of erasure and elimination. In other words, I was committed to work that explores strategies of reconnection to counter the "disconnecting force" of colonization by drawing on resurgence as a means of "reconnecting with homelands, cultures, and communities" (Corntassel 2012, 97).

In and through storytelling I saw a generative potential to help transform thinking around the loss of Indigenous governance. The importance of stories, and thus storytelling, to this work is also reflected in an understanding that "…when externally authorized categories begin to create cleavages based on conflicting claims to language, to land, or to family knowledge, skillful storytellers frequently contribute by demonstrating – in effect performing – how stories can reconnect people *temporarily* divided" (Cruikshank 1998, 12; emphasis added). As part of research-creation, my process was structured through use of autoethnography, which I understood as "...an approach with its foundations in ethnographical research, [which] brings together the study of self (auto) in relation to culture (ethnography)" (Kovach 2009, 33).

Within this approach, self-reflection moves beyond the field notes to having a more

[20] I attribute this appreciation to the influence of Dr. Val Napoleon who profoundly shifted my perspective through a course on oral tradition I took as an undergraduate student some years ago. Even though my studies followed a different path, I can see clear links between Dr. Napoleon's work (see, for example, Napoleon and Friedland 2016) and my own thinking/approach as being profoundly inspired and influenced by Dr. Napoleon's generous and generative pedagogy.

integral positioning within the research process and the construction of knowledge itself" (Kovach 2009, 33). The "self-reflection" element would be short personal narratives that illustrated the art practice and the insights gained in and through the practice. This particular approach is also supported in Indigenous research methodology as "the method of autoethnography is also largely about telling stories, in this case, one's own. As a research methodology, it extends beyond the realm of storytelling for entertainment but, not unlike much Indigenous storytelling, it holds a greater purpose of teaching, learning, and, at times, creating new knowledge" (McIvor 2010, 140-141).

Storytelling emerges as both method and methodology in my research. It also figures very centrally as part of nîhiyaw pimâtisiwin as "[s]tories are an important aspect of Nêhiyaw oral narratives since the Nêhiyaw people are an oral culture whose intellectual traditions are embodied through tellings." (Johnson 2017, 88). Métis educator and creative Chelsea Vowel (2020) identifies eleven distinct forms of storytelling in Métis and nêhiyawak traditions and affirms that "stories are an inherently collaborative experience, and all stories have a purpose" (2). Ultimately, storytelling is, for me, very much nîhiyaw sihcikîwana.

Chapter 4: mâmawi-kiyokêwak (they visit altogether)

âcimowin: itâtayôhkawêw (a story: s/he tells someone such a sacred story)

I sit upon my grandfather's lap
I want to hear a story, I say,
A story of home.
He picks up his drum.
Without words, he tells me a story.

Grandchild, listen…

The water singing,
The wind moving through the trees,
Dancing leaves,
Sun shining bright,
Thunder rumbling low in the distance…
You are home,
And I am here with you.

My grandmother's voice
Joining in harmony,
Without words, she tells me a story.

Grandchild, listen…

The river still flows,
The grass still grows,
The sun still shines,
And all of your relations
Surround you;
You are not alone.
You are home,
And I am here with you.

Plate 6: Story of home (for nikosis) [work in progress, 2020]

wîcihowin (consorting together; helping each other)

I was 16 years old when I was introduced to the work of (late) John Trudell, Lakota activist and poet. I was living in Calgary with my cousin and her mom, and her mom's (then) boyfriend had a cassette tape with Trudell's spoken word. I cannot remember if he simply had it playing one day and I wanted to listen to it again, or if he'd recommended I give it a listen; either way, I remember listening to that tape a number of times on my Walkman.

My art practice at that time was more focused on working with chalk pastels. I had taken private art classes for a period in my pre-teens and I continued working on my own in this medium for a few years after my classes ended.[21] For a relatively short period I had the loan of this cassette tape, John Trudell became a constant companion as I worked with my chalks. And, once I returned the tape, I never had occasion to listen to it again.

I remember, now, having been very absorbed by the recording; the words and accompanying music reverberated profoundly. I remember this so clearly and yet, it never occurred to me to try to track down that recording or look for other work by Trudell. Worse, I would almost completely forget about that interlude. That is, until I heard the news of Trudell's passing. It occurred to me then to try to track down the album and listen to it again. I managed to find it online[22] and texted my sister when I realized how deeply this made an impression on me. I had been stunned to realize how much of my thinking had been shaped by his words as I hadn't heard them in decades and had until then (sadly) forgotten about how important that had been for

[21] I want to take a moment here to note that I had the privilege of attending private art classes. This took place while my single mother was working to complete a Bachelor of Social Work program (which she would successfully do). We were, without question, low-income and yet my mom made sure we had – in addition to food, shelter, and clothing – access to extracurricular activities. I feel I would be unforgivably remiss if I didn't acknowledge how richly my mother provided for us, and to mark her support as foundational to whatever good I have managed to accomplish in this world.

[22] This is the 1983 album *Tribal Voice.*

me in my youth.

What I would bring forward from that time in my life was an intact memory of gifting someone a necktie that had originally belonged to my dad. I remember when I offered this tie, the offer was almost refused; I was advised that since it had been my dad's I should keep it. "You might regret this one day," I was told. I was adamant this offering was the right thing for me to do and certain that I would not come to regret this choice[23]. I would recall that I felt it very important to give something meaningful, but I wouldn't remember why I felt it was needed. In tracking down that album, I would finally recall that it was the gift of that introduction, that sharing of words and sounds that resonated so powerfully for me, that prompted me to look for a gift that carried similarly deep value.

Some years after that exchange, when I was in my later teens, I had asked my (now late) father[24] – nohtâwiyîpan – about the term "nîhiyaw" and "nîhiyawak." I explained I had come to believe that there had to be another meaning – a "real" meaning – other than the commonly given translation as "Cree" or "Cree people" While I have since heard other translations and explanations of what the term conveys, the explanation I was given was that the term 'nîhiyaw' was a less formal way of identifying ourselves as a people and one in which we made a claim to specific knowledges and lifeways in identifying ourselves. Further, he explained there was a more formal name that was more precise in terms of identifying with particular knowledges and

[23] I would recall this after my father passed in 2005. With children who would not know their môsom, it occurred to me that this was the sort of situation I'd been warned of. But, in thinking on it even then, and still today, I do not regret this action. It felt right at the time, and my conviction was from my soul. I do allow, however, that today I am not confident that my family would agree that I was right to give this away as I did. I can only hope that the reason this memory has come forward and why I feel the need to share it is because it contains a teaching that is needed…even if I don't know quite what that is.

[24] nôhtâwiyîpan was known to me as one of the most knowledgeable speakers of nîhiyawîwin/nêhiyawêwin. He was fluent in what I've heard referred to as "High Cree" and as such I absolutely trusted in his authority in regards to my language questions.

lifeways. The term (which I believe was nîwiyaw) meant something like "those who know the four worlds."[25]

This conversation led me to ask him other questions. At that age, I feel I had a very romanticized idea of our peoples and often felt my upbringing had been tragically lacking "true Cree-ness." Perhaps a more (self-)compassionate view is that I was searching for understandings that were necessary for me to fully experience life as myself. At any rate, I asked a number of questions about "how things used to be" and "who we really are."

I remember he grew quiet for a few (rather agonizing) minutes and told me: "My girl, there is so much you need to know before you can ask those questions. I can give you some answers but they wouldn't help you understand what you're asking about. I know you want to know but you need to earn the right to ask those questions by first spending time learning *what* you're actually asking about." I might have internally rolled my eyes as that seemed like a ridiculously cryptic response but I waited until my urge to exclaim "Dad! That doesn't even make sense! And I'm Cree so I have a right to know!" passed and simply said, "Dad, I really do want to know. So how do I learn what I need to learn so I can ask my questions?" He said, "You can start by going to ceremonies. You can come with me this summer when I go to Sundance and you can pay attention and start learning by observing."[26]

I'm sad to say travelling with nohtâwiyîpan to ceremonies and beginning the process of learning with him did not happen. Instead, my path took me in other directions. Along the way, one of things I came to understand was that nohtâwiyîpan did, in fact, give me an important

[25]Because I cannot, unfortunately, make any claim of language fluency, I am not entirely confident in my recall of the term he shared with me but I have since encountered the term I share here a few other times (most notably via my adopted Smallboy Camp kin) so I am inclined to believe this is the term he shared.

[26] While I did not understand it at the time, his knowledge of the language contained considerable "cultural" knowledge as well but what I did know about him and his life was that he'd been deeply trained by kihtiyâyak (Elders) and I expected if anyone could have the answers to my questions, it would be him.

lesson that day. It was the start of a determination to pay attention, to listen, to observe, to feel, and to continue living in such a way to cultivate the knowledge and insights that would lead me to the appropriate questions along with the conceptual tools needed to understand answers as they came my way.

As nohtâwiyîpan had directed, I have spent time over these (nearly 30 years) in ceremonies and have done (and still do) my best to pay attention and to learn by observing. But, where I am now is in a place where I am less concerned about asking questions (though I still ask many questions, and probably still obnoxiously so) and learning (though I am continuously learning and expect I will continue to do so for this entire life), I have shifted my focus to attend to the practice of being. Or, expressed in another way I am focused on embodying the lessons I have learned to date, and in so doing learning to appreciate the gift that is simply being.

I do so, however, with the understanding that coming to know these teachings in this way means I must cultivate the ongoing practice of them. As I seek to be fully in myself and in this world, I cannot, and do not, separate myself from this work. In fact, this is part of the protocol I follow. In the Prologue I dedicated this space to visiting, to sharing stories and space for contemplation; I also offered my thanks which is an important and appropriate starting place. Following this, I present, in this chapter, conversations with other thinkers to more closely examine some of the key concepts (resurgence, nîhiyaw law and governance, and beads) considered through nîhiyawîwin as I understand it today. Before I turn to each of those topics more directly, I bring forward here some of the lessons I've learned to date about nîhiyaw pimâtisowin.

I start with one of the lessons I learned – first taught to me by nimâmâ – about the principle of reciprocity. nimâmâ often speaks of this, to keep us mindful that we are to always

work towards a balanced exchange. I first recall her speaking on this (though she did not name it 'reciprocity' at that time) when we were picking berries and we would be directed to lay an offering of tobacco before we started picking. It then showed up in other spaces as I learned ceremonial protocols; again, I learned to make offerings to carry my prayers and requests (including my thanks). I learned to give, as best I can, and to receive. My hope is that this work contributes generatively to dialogue that has been taking place both inside and outside of the academy (Anderson 2016, 231).

In 'speaking' together, I am mindful of the caution offered by Dr. Johnson (2017), that "understanding Nêhiyaw custom and tradition is only the beginning of the whole experience a researcher will undergo, and often we fail to realize that though we may write a dissertation, a novel, or an article, we may not be leading that project, and the universe has decided what we should or should not know" (86). Here, this shows up in the recurring insistence that the materials I use (both in beadwork and in this written text) may insist this is not the time or place for those discussions. It also shows up in the recognition that, just as learning with my dad in ceremony did not unfold for me, some of the ideas that I had hoped to pursue more deeply – especially in relation to a more specifically nîhiyaw conception of law and governance – will emerge if and when I am ready for those teachings.

I expect that in no small part, that how this work has come to unfold, and the conversations that have emerged, insistently, are foundational teachings that provide the "scaffolding" (Cruikshank 1998) necessary for future discussions and teachings.[27] In the remainder of this chapter, I turn the conversation over to briefly discuss three key topics that

[27] For further clarification, I had envisioned this chapter to feature more in depth 'conversation' with particular scholarly works but this approach did not, in the end, fit this work as I had envisioned. Rather, I felt I was being returned, time and again, to a broader discussion that is, perhaps, intended to serve as a foundation for future conversations.

provide important theoretical scaffolding of my research. That is: 1) miskâsowin (resurgence); 2) miyo-wîcîhtowin (nîhiyaw law and governance); and 3) mîkisak (beads and beadwork).

miskâsowin

A powerful impetus behind this research was the desire to challenge the dominant narratives of 'disappearance' or 'loss' that contribute to what (late) Patrick Wolfe (2006) describes as the "inherently eliminatory" nature of settler colonialism (387). This includes a common narrative I encountered regarding governance which holds that Indigenous (First Nations) governance systems were replaced by the imposed Indian Act Chief and Council system. In terms of my own community, this seemed to be true. However, the berry-patch intervention shifted this belief and have since I come to believe nîhiyaw systems remain strong and guide our lives in real and vibrant ways even if they appear eclipsed by foreign systems.

As previously discussed, this shift in perspective was inspired by my experience with my family's and community's ongoing land-based practices. It was also strongly influenced by the teachings I gained through my involvement with a Walking With Our Sisters,[28] a national arts- and community-based memorial ceremony. Through the latter, as one of the 1300+ contributing artists as well as a local organizer and helper as a member of the National Collective, I learned in an embodied way what it was to practice respect and compassion in relation to the principles of humility, protocol, love, and volunteerism that guided our work (Jobin and Kappo 2017).

This shaped my foundational contention that, contrary to what we might believe due to the dominance of narratives of loss, Indigenous peoples continue to exercise forms of Indigenous governance despite the colonial context. It also motivated me to work, in this research, to counter

[28] See walkingwithoursisters.ca for further information on the project. See also: Jobin and Kappo 2017 and Nadeau 2020.

these disruptive narratives from within our traditions – including turning to our narrative forms that remind us of who we are and where we come from by drawing on "a large, intergenerational, collective memory" (McLeod 2007, 8) – and help rebuild personal and community stories from this source.

The way I approached this was through concepts of decolonization and resurgence. As described in the previous chapter, the former was an important starting point in shaping my research approach; however, my particular focus shifted over time to engage more specifically with resurgence. I was introduced to the concept of resurgence from Corntassel's (2012) work which called for "everyday" action that "disrupts the colonial physical, social and political boundaries designed to impede our actions to restore our nationhood" (88).

While a more extended conversation on decolonization and resurgence may seem warranted, I feel it's more important in the context of this work to share how concepts of decolonization and resurgence came to figure in my work. Encountering the concept of decolonization felt, at the outset, rejuvenating and exhilarating. I had grown up with stories of Indigenous activism and a particular sense of obligation to continue the work of my families.[29] This included a sense that I had a personal responsibility to be "disruptive." Taking up the work of decolonization with this conceptualization, then, felt like a path to fulfill what I believed should be my life's work.

I had, however, also turned my mind to questions of what it means, in practical and tangible ways, to decolonize. Considering my commitment to ensure my research included a decolonizing agenda, I had to take time to consider what that would look like and how, in the

[29] Both my maternal and paternal families were deeply involved with the Indian Association of Alberta and Indigenous activism of the 1960s and 1970s. See Cardinal 1990; Meijer Drees 2002; Nickel 2019; and Pasternak and King 2019.

interest of relational accountability, it could be assessed. That is, in what way could my research contribute to decolonization?

Admittedly, my initial understanding of decolonization was relatively narrow and shallow. I knew I would need to delve more into the literature in deepen my understanding and to connect be able to move from theory to praxis. However, I would soon find myself increasingly concerned about positioning myself and my work firmly within a context of decolonization when, even with the recognition my formulation was only preliminary, it seemed to require me to remain in a consciousness of struggle (Corntassel 2012, 88). In addition, encountering the important intervention of Tuck and Yang (2012) – who examined "what decolonization means, what it wants and requires" – I took seriously their caution to understand "that decolonization is not a metaphor. When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future" (2). I grew increasingly concerned that centering my work on the concept of decolonization could unintentionally also center colonization.

I also found myself returning time and again to other teachings. While not completely eschewing either the term or concept (even narrowly conceived) of decolonization, my growing feeling of dissonance stemmed from considering decolonization-as-a-struggle-against-colonization in relation to my core principles and beliefs. From my family stories, I recognized the work of my parents and grandparents had been guided by kihtiyâyak and teachings that promoted harmony and living together peacefully. While this did not preclude them taking direct action and, indeed, being 'disruptive' in certain contexts, my understanding was that principles of love and respect remained at the heart of their work and actions.

Most importantly, I knew for myself I could not sustainably act against (let alone for)

anything without being firmly but lovingly and gently grounded. Working in the lodges of Walking With Our Sisters demanded a practice of remaining continuously grounded in love, compassion and respect while never losing awareness that the lives we sought to honour were violently taken from us. It was, for me, the example of grandmother-love which provided the strength to serve, as best I could, in my capacity as a ceremonial helper. Love and compassion were tremendous reservoirs of energy that provided the fuel to hold space for grief and loss.

Arriving at the work of Anishinaabe scholar Dr. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2004), who encourages us to consider our focusing our energies towards fostering the resurgence of the practices which support the flourishing of Indigenous knowledges (374), I felt the resonance of a fiercely loving and gentle approach. Perhaps it is the particularly close kinship of Anishnaabemowin and nîhiyawîwin that helped connect me to decolonization in a different way, but Simpson's work helped me to formulate resurgence as practical heart-work that is a decolonizing praxis "accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 35).

I would thus describe my efforts over the course of this research, and more generally in my life, as demonstrating agreement with Dr. Simpson as they are concerned with turning to practices that help maintain a robust connection between Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous peoples. As my research direction was, in a very profound way, initially prompted by experiences with work that I could easily describe as resurgent, I recognized my thinking around the dominant narratives of loss had already been in a process of transformation; what I have been witness to, and personally involved in, speaks powerfully of Indigenous resilience and creativity that is generously generative.

I recognize this process of approaching decolonization and resurgence as one that cycled

through the nîhiyaw pimâtisowin framework where I considered the concepts underlying my work as kiskihtamowina that I needed to develop through nîhiyaw sihcikîwana and nîhiyaw tâpisinowin. However, I could also now describe this process, borrowing from the formulation and understanding of Ininew academic Dr. Jessica Kolopenuk (2020), as that of miskâsowin, where this is taken up as "a critical Indigenous theoretical framework" which, "rather than putting…theorists into argumentative conversation with each other…[looks] for ways that their respective relational analytics are complementary: where they resonate" (5). The process of both arriving at 'resurgence' as an appropriate term to take up in my work and my approach to it by detecting resonances also fits in my understanding of miskâsowin, where miskâsowin is a process of finding your centre (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000). The strongest resonance for me, then, is to understand resurgence as a process of turning within to find a sense of purpose and while an immediate understanding of miskâsowin might appear as limited to one's individual self, nîhiyawîwin also tells us that we are all connected and so our work is never our work alone.

I circle back now to storytelling as an integral aspect of resurgence, to explain, in part, why it emerges so strongly in my work. Considering its connection to Indigenous research methodologies and research-creation (as previously discussed), my work started off reaching towards narratives that could remind us, and help each of us, find miskâsowin. As mestiza (of Nahua and Ñuù savi descent) academic Dr. Kelly Aguirre (2005) notes, "storytelling is not empty repetition but a relational practice – it is where we come alive as peoples. Resurgence is about a reorientation to living from within our own stories once again" (234). In and through this work, I take up a relationship with "the community of scholars forwarding the concept of resurgence" where resurgence:

> …indicates a kind of epistemic shift in storytelling on and of self-determination. By *epistemic*, I mean our approach to sources of knowledge, methods, scope and validity.

> This is a turn away from seeking legitimacy and accommodation through political discourses and structures complicit in foundational and ongoing violences. Yet crucially it is also a move toward once again focusing on those relationships that constitute Indigenous nations and communities, affirming the vitality of their cultural lifeworlds. (Aguirre 2015, 214)

miyo-wîcîhtowin

I have previously traced a particular recognition of the ongoing practice of nîhiyaw laws and governance to a berry patch I visited with my family some years ago. A key part of that experience was connecting practice to theory; that is, I had *heard* about our laws and encountered different ideas of 'traditional' governance but had not, until that moment, truly connected my mind, heart, soul and body in knowing what these concepts were about. It was ineffably profound and I am still – some seven (or so) years later –feeling the reverberations. I also continue to work daily to deepen and expand that understanding.

As powerful as that moment of insight and connection, and no matter how much time and effort I have made since then to expand my knowledge or even to consider my prior learning, I know myself to be very much a beginning learner. I submit as a caution, in line with the law of tipahtêyimisowin, it is important to understand that while I am committed to share what I can (as far as it feels appropriate) as part of the related life-project of resurgence, I do not know very much. I do feel called to share what I have come to understand to this point and to continue the work of gaining kiskihtamowin.

I feel it is vitally important to appreciate that approaching a deep understanding of nîhiyaw law and governance is a life-long project and far beyond the scope of this work.[30] As nêhiyaw legal scholar and activist Sylvia (Saysewahum) McAdam (2015) reminds us, the

[30] For further discussions of nîhiyaw/nêhiyaw law and governance, see Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000; Lindberg 2019; Makokis (2001); McAdam (2015); Jobin (forthcoming); Johnson 2017; Wildcat 2010.

process of learning takes considerable time working with Elders and knowledge holders. With that in mind, it is also very important for me to state that one of the main purposes of this section is clarify my particular (and current) understanding of nîhiyaw law and governance as it informs this work rather than attempt to engage in a comprehensive discussion of nîhiyaw law and governance.[31]

An important starting point, then, in my approach is the understanding that "…the nîhiyaw holistic paradigm does not clearly distinguish between values, principles, ethics, and wiyasowîwina, 'the laws.' Based on the language there is no distinct boundary between nîhiyaw philosophy, worldview, ontology or knowledge" (Napoleon 2014, 51); further, "as Reuben Quinn points out, it's important to remember that not only can languages change or become 'watered down' but that what many describes as values are actually nîhiyaw laws or guiding principles" (Napoleon 2014, 81). My own conceptualization of law and governance, from a nîhiyaw perspective, has long been that these are intertwined in ways that mean to speak of one you must necessarily speak of the other.

Through the work of resurgence in reaching towards nîhiyaw kiskihtamowina, one very quickly encounters the centrality of relationships in Indigenous, and more specifically nîhiyaw/nêhiyaw worldview. This is also manifest in nîhiyaw concepts of law and governance. As expressed by Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000): "Powerful laws were established to protect and to nurture the foundations of strong, vibrant nations. Foremost among these laws are those

[31] I ask readers to kindly approach this work with the understanding that this work is intended to encourage, support, and contribute to resurgence of our legal and governance practices and is offered with the belief and assumption that these systems and practices are valuable and helpful to us in our context today; following McAdam (2015) I am sharing basic knowledge "that should have been shared with my people from the time of their birth to their death" (11). I recognize being necessarily brief runs the risk of losing the nuance, depth, and breadth that helps avoid "romanticizing, generalizing, or essentializing our heritage and traditions" (Anderson 2016, 13) so I also ask readers to accept this work cannot extensively address this topic and instead engage with it in the understanding that it is part of a much longer process of learning. I also highly recommend reading and taking up McAdam's (2015) guidance in the kindly provided in the opening disclaimer of her book (16).

related to human bonds and relationships known as the laws of *miyo-wîcêhtowin*" (15). They further explain:

> It is a concept that arises from one of the core doctrines or values of the Cree Nation. The term outlines the nature of the relationships that Cree peoples are required to establish. It asks, directs, admonishes, or requires Cree peoples as individuals and as a nation to conduct themselves in a manner such that they create positive or good relations in all relationships, be it individually or collectively with other peoples. (14)

I want to take a moment here to turn to consideration of what 'best' might mean in relation to the concept of miyo-wîcîhtowin. To this point, my basic understanding of the term 'miyo' is given by the English term 'good.' The Merriam-Webster online dictionary (merriam-webster.com/dictionary/good) reveals this English term contains a number of meanings, including "something conforming to the moral order of the universe," "advancement of prosperity or well-being" and "something useful or beneficial." I find these helpful when considering the common translation of 'miyo' – and also to connect to what 'best' signifies in terms of governance – but I also feel there is likely a dimension to the term that does not correlate to the English concept.

As I find is often the case (and which I take as a clear affirmation that when I am ready to begin learning in a different, deeper way, answers will start arriving), this very discussion recently arose during an online gathering; nêhiyaw artist and scholar and Dr. Lana Whiskeyjack shared that 'miyo' is cognate with 'miyaw,' which infers a relationship between 'miyo' and the experience of human embodiment.[32] My ongoing quest to more fully understand the ontological understanding of 'miyo' and 'miyaw' figures importantly here as I view this as an important metric to evaluating how we come to know what miyo-wîcîhtowin means in practice. That is, how do we know we are following this central law?

[32] Paraphrased from an active discussion as part of April 30, 2021 'Wahkohtowin Gathering' hosted by the Prairie Relationality Network.

I offer that while this specific line of inquiry is still very preliminary and will not be expanded further here, what it does point to is that part of my approach (in life, generally, but also, of course, in this research) has been to begin to draw out connections between our practices and the ongoing expressions of these important concepts. This necessarily involves seeking to an understanding of the terms – the wiyasowîna – with respect to what it means to practice them. So, for me, the scaffolding needed to approach this involves first coming to know the concepts themselves in a preliminary way.

While I am attempting to understand wiyasowîna from within nîhiyaw tâpisinowin, I return again to the understanding of our kinship to other Indigenous groups and shared understandings. Here, as part of the project of developing an approach to nîhiyaw wiyasowîna, I am grateful to our Anishinaabe relatives for assistance and generous sharing of their teachings. Here, I draw from Anishinaabe scholar Dr. John Borrows (2008) who contends that:

> …the self is best governed through principles such as Nbwaakaawin (wisdom), Zaagidwin love, Mnaadendimowin (respect), Aakwade'ewin (bravery), Dbaadendiziwin (humility) Gwekwaadiziwin (honesty), and Debwewin (truth). Governance is best organized around these principles of goodness because goodness is the foundation for governance. (31)

Affirming our kinship, Dr. Johnson (2017) similarly presents nêhiyaw "teachings to how we should act to one another, not only the human world, but the plant and animal worlds" framed as "the seven Grandfather teachings." In nêhiyawêwin, she provides these terms as: sâkihitowin (the act of being in love); kihceyihtamowin (regard with deepest respect); sohkeyimowin (the act of having strength, courage, or bravery); kwayask itatisiwin (honesty in good clean living); tapâhtêyimowin (humility); kakêhtawêyimowin (to think wisely); and tapwewin (the act of telling the truth) (69-70).

Another important and central concept, understood as a legal doctrine, is wâhkôhtowin (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000).[33] McAdam (2015) explains that "the *nêhiyaw* language has extensive and complex *wâhkôhtowin,* or *wâhkômtowin,* terms that determine how a person how a person is to be addressed and spoken to" and that "these terms created appropriate and respectful behaviour that discourages abuse and creates relationship boundaries" (60). In my understanding, the relationship terms (such as nikâwiy and nikâwîys) carry and describe the ways in which people are to behave towards each other based on how they are related (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000). What I take from this, in the context of this research, is that, at minimum, miyo-wîcîhtowin and wâhkôhtowin provide a system in line with Dr. Ladner's (2003) definition of Indigenous governance as "'the way in which a people lives best together' or the way a people has structured their society in relationship to the natural world" (125).

In drawing together miyo-wîcîhtowin, wâhkôhtowin, and some of the wiyasowîna concepts presented above, I posit that gaining a deeper understanding and kiskihtamowin of nîhiyaw law and governance requires resurgence praxis. In this formulation, we look to the ways in which we can practice, in an everyday way, the wiyasowîna by starting first with an identification of these laws and engaging with them in an embodied way so we can come to know them through the four dimensions of our being – mind, body, spirit/soul, and emotions. Although the body of wiyasowîna is far greater than the seven laws presented here,[34] the wiyasowîna presented here provides a solid foundation upon which to begin the process of following miskâsowin towards a deeper understanding of nîhiyaw pimâtisowin.

[33] wâhkôhtowin is a beautiful, resurgent concept that has been taken up by a number of scholars (see footnote 29, p. 54, for a starting point for further engagement). Following this, I humbly position my work as part of what Wildcat (2020) calls a "wahkohtowin movement" (39).

[34] From recent nêhiyawêwin lessons with Reuben Quinn, I learned there are 44 laws held with each of the major 'spirit markers' in the cahkipehikanak system. This alone points to the extensive body of wiyasowîna.

mîkisak

Being a beadworker, I often take for granted that people generally are familiar with beads and beadwork. Given the academic discipline in which this work is located, I can probably comfortably assume that those who read this work will already have some familiarity with beads, and beadwork. But, it is sometimes that very type of familiarity which occludes developing a deeper, richer understanding, as I learned some years ago in the berry patch.

To help me develop and describe my understanding of beadwork (what it does and how it may be connected to law and governance), I looked first to my own experience and memories. In accordance with nîhiyaw sihcikîwana this was entirely appropriate and necessary as "lived experiences are essential to understanding Nêhiyaw knowledge transfer and worldview" (Johnson 2017, 29). But I also challenged myself to consider my basic understanding of what beads are and to use that as a launching point for this work before moving into an examination of beadwork practice. [35]

Choyke and Bar-Yosef Mayer (2017) provide a useful "common" definition of beads as "small ornaments perforated through their centers and small enough to be worn on the body" that have been "made from a wide array of raw materials" (1). And beadwork they describe as "a craft involving the creation of planar decoration on a flexible surface such as hide or textile clothing or bands from uniting many beads, often of identical size but also frequently of varying size and shape" (1). Perhaps most intriguing to me, is their contention that:

> Beads, beadwork and other kinds of personal ornaments (henceforth beads) are among the earliest known symbolic expressions of modern humans and represent an important tool for identification of thinking and cognition in archaeological sciences. Over the past

[35] This prompt arose in no small part due to a question asked by a colleague in one of my (non-Native Studies) graduate courses. I was nearly stymied by the question and I realized I had never attempted to explain what a bead or beadwork was before. I'm indebted to my colleague for the honest – perhaps even vulnerable – and generative question. It is perhaps a failure on my part to realize I still do not have a simple answer, though I feel that it points to a degree of success that my research has expanded my previously taken-for-granted knowledge.

> decade, it has become clear that beads first appear within the material culture "package" of early modern humans as early as 100,000 years ago. (1)

With those definitions in mind, I continued to search literature for accounts of beads and beadwork primarily focusing on North American Indigenous traditions. My (non-exhaustive) survey of the literature brought me to a variety of works and, from what I could gather, these works were written exclusively by non-Indigenous authors who described and explained, from an outside perspective, the beadwork practices of Indigenous peoples they studied (see Thompson 2016; Johnson 2016; Molinari 2013; Wallaert 2006; Loeb 1990; Duncan, 1989; Schneider 1983). These descriptive works are incredibly interesting to me and broadened my knowledge about the topic of beadwork, more generally, but did not really help me make the connections I was interested in for this work. As Choyke and Bar-Yosef Mayer (2017) attest:

> The history of bead and ornament study is filled with descriptive generalizations based on color and morphology. Beads, beadwork and pendants are visually seductive. They not only had an effect on the people who used them, but on the archaeologists who discovered them. This led to simple description of their raw material, color, and morphology and sometimes context (mortuary, elite construction, etc.); however, rarely were attempts made to study them more deeply. (2-3)

There were works in other disciplines that were quite fascinating to me and were also a bit more generative for my work. Perhaps most significant here was the work of Kathleen Glenister Roberts (2007) which, in categorizing beadwork as a form of "folk/traditional art" explained that these art forms are "often the art of "everyday" and, although folk art's creation requires particularly gifted and talented individuals, it often is also the art of "everyone"" (153). And, very saliently, she explains that "the first element of folk art theory concerns process. A folk art object is easily identifiable because it belongs to a genre, and generic categories for folk art (beadwork, sweet grass basket, etc.) are established through *processes* of creation" (153). And further, she explains, "folk art eschews cultural preservation, recognizing instead that

culture is always performed and always *lived*. Folk art emphasizes two processes: how folk art objects should be engaged by everyday life, and how their methods of creation should be taught and learned" (153; italics in original).

What first caught my attention here was the discussion of process as a central concern of this type of work. Taking up research-creation as one of the starting points in my research methodology shifted my attention to the processes of my practice and away from considering only the outcome or "product" of my work. In addition, the recognition of the importance of "lived experience" echoes Dr. Johnson's contention (quoted earlier) that lived experience is integral to approaching nêhiyaw understandings of knowledge transfer and worldview. Taken together, these ideas very much support an understanding that beadwork practice involves processes that are resurgent.

In examining Blackfeet beadwork practices, Roberts (2007) also develops an argument that resonated very strongly with my own observations and experiences with what beadwork can do. She notes that "with the advent of reservation life…Christian missionaries, particularly the Ursuline sisters, also discouraged the use of triangles and other geometric designs in beadwork, encouraging Blackfeet women to embroider floral motifs instead," which served to "disrupt Blackfeet artists' ability to communicate publicly about basic Blackfeet beliefs and virtues" (156). But, in an incredible work of resistance:

> When the triangle as symbol of the lodge was suppressed, Blackfeet folk artists "argued" through their beadwork in two clear ways. First, they refused to adopt fully the floral designs of another, more powerful culture. Second, by continuing to employ the motif of the triangle, they utilized argument's ability to negate: Their beaded flowers were *more* triangular, *less* flowery. Their choice of designs could imply what the design *was not* because of the intercultural context in which these choices were made." (Roberts 2007,161)

Here Roberts highlights both an ability to communicate – tell stories – through beadwork and the way in which beadwork, as a process and a form, supports the ongoing transmission of

Indigenous ways of being and doing. In addition, this called to mind the work of my late biological grandmothers as work that not only demonstrated these features but also connected to providing material support to work in political activism[36].

From Robert's work, and in relation to my interest in perspectives in beadwork, I also looked more broadly at visual art, which is a category (in addition to folk/traditional art) through which beadwork can be also be approached. I encountered work by Paul Duncum (2004) who explains: "There are no exclusively visual sites. All cultural sites that involve imagery include various ratios of other communicative modes and many employ more than vision" (252). I felt this was quite effectively gets to the heart of what I had been attempting to articulate in terms of my own experience of beadwork as more than art or a visual experience. As previous discussions have drawn out, what has been challenging is finding appropriate terminology to help advance my own theoretical developments and, ultimately, to describe them effectively. For example, Duncum uses the term 'cultural site,' and while I appreciate I would be best served by considering this concept more deeply before fully adopting it, his discussion using this term more accurately conveys my conception of beadwork as art-but-not-just-art; thus beadwork as a cultural site might be quite apt.

Ruth B. Phillips' (2004) similarly provides a number of concepts that further this. She notes that "many traditional non-Western objects and visual images are embedded in ritual, performative and expressive contexts whose meanings can only be fully apprehended through a multisensory range of experiences" (593). This adds a dimension that is important but not really addressed by Duncum, so adding this to Duncum's discussion we begin to more closely

[36] In both my maternal and paternal families, political activism runs deep. I grew up with stories of my families' work during which included recognition of my grandmothers' beadwork playing a role in providing a source of income to support these efforts. This is examined in the 2021 short film *Beading Red: The Red Paper Through Generations* (https://youtu.be/9Ze2LBdqEUw).

approach what I think of as the 'nature' or 'being' of beadwork. From the Phillips article, I take up, to an extent, a framing of beadwork as a "reconstructive project that entails the recovery of traditional practices of image and object-making that have been lost and/or interrupted by centuries of colonial domination" (593). I would modify this, however to center an appreciation of beadwork as continuity and connectivity (not loss or interruption) and a reflection of resilience and (and not colonial domination).

Interestingly, Phillips is ultimately questioning whether a visual art approach can be truly useful in understanding these forms as she feels "methodologically…projects of recovery often call for techniques of material culture analysis, art-historical connoisseurship, and historical documentation and recontextualization, and necessitate understandings both of the practices of users and the unique qualities of materiality that are only partly visual" (594). So, in one sense she seems to be arguing to remove these forms from the category of visual art because of its "occularcentrism" (594), which is a similar argument Duncum makes in the sense of understanding 'visual arts' as more than visual.

Again, these two articles taken together have been particularly helpful to help me draw into focus how I had – in the early days of this research – in a nascent way, conceptualized beadwork. What I had been reaching towards, though, was an approach that connected more directly and fully with where I was (am) coming from. Returning to some of the type of ethnographic works referenced earlier, there was a glimmer that began to connect with other questions I had been beginning to consider in relation to developing an understanding of what beadwork does. For example, quoting Beaglehole (1967), Duncan (1989) notes:

> When Captain James Cook visited Prince William Sound in May 1778, beads were already established items of barter. Cook observed both blue and green beads in use and described one unidentified native chief as wearing garments 'Ornamented with sky blue glass beads about the size of a large pea; these he seemed to set ten times more Value

> upon than our white glass beads which they probably thought was only crystal which they have among them. They however esteemed beads of all sorts and gave whatever they had in exchange for them, even their fine Sea beaver skins'." (41)

This reflected a recurring observation that while the underlying understanding of, and relationship to beads, is not explained or explored in any depth, many of the ethnographic works on Indigenous beadwork noted that the bead brought in and introduced through 18th century trade were held in high esteem by Indigenous peoples (Orchard 2002; Heinbuch, 1992;) and that beadwork maintained a high level of importance throughout periods of significant social change (Bol 1985; Farrell Racette 2011; Loeb 1990; Molinari 2013; Roberts 2007; Schneider 1983).

I also noted the importance of beads in other contexts (i.e. non-North American Indigenous) emerged from some of the broader archaeological and ethnographic treatments of beads and beadwork (e.g. Choyke and Bar-Yosef Mayer 2017; Baysal 2013; Ewart 2012). This gestured intriguingly to a quality immanent to beads that produces the deep appreciation of beads and beadwork across time and many spaces.[37] Considering this through nîhiyaw tâpisinowin, I wondered what the seemingly extraordinary 'value' associated with beads might be connected to.

In terms of attempting to gain an insight to this through literature, I did not encounter work following nîhiyawîwin. In fact, my preliminary research yielded very little written by Indigenous scholars or artists that could help me follow this line of enquiry. This was a bit discouraging and I had some misgivings about continuing in this direction. I was, however, incredibly fortunate to encounter the powerful dissertation of Métis scholar Dr. Lois Edge.

[37] I also encountered a number of works I mentally categorized as "how to" books written by non-Indigenous persons that clearly expressed an appreciation for (North American) Indigenous beadwork (Gill 1976; Hofsinde 1958; White 1972; Wissler 1922) I include these references here as they were problematic in language and approach; in my opinion, they were incredibly appropriative and while there are important conversations to be had about this type of appropriation, I do not feel this is the time or space for this conversation. However, I hope that this 'genre' will be examined more closely and critically as it is very much connected to current conversations around cultural appropriation.

Although my approach does not read beadwork primarily as art, as does Edge's, her work nonetheless provided me with an important encouragement that my own approach (while still fairly nebulous at that time) could be successfully employed in my own academic work. As Dr. Edge (2011) states: "I could not write this work without beadwork and without beadwork this work would not be written" (297).[38]

Inspired by Dr. Edge's work, I then returned to my own ideas, beliefs, and approach. Returning to my nîhiyaw tâpisinowin, I asked the question: What is the understanding of beadwork in nîhiyawîwin. Turning to the language, the term for bead in nîhiyawîwin is mîkis; beads is mîkisak. It is in the latter term that signals a particular perspective of the *nature* of beads. In nîhiyawîwin, nouns are distinguished as animate or inanimate and one can recognize whether the noun is considered animate or inanimate based on the suffix. With mîkisak, the suffix (-ak) indicates that mîkis is understood as animate.

An immediate implication for me, which is profound, is how this understanding of beads returns us to governance through miyo-wîcîhtowin and wâhkôhtowin. This emerges from considering the insights provided by Dr. Leroy Little Bear as shared in nêhiyaw academic Dr. Matt Wildcat's (2010) MA thesis work. In examining pre-reserve nêhiyaw governance, he begins with the foundational tâpisinowin for the understanding "…that the universe is composed of energy waves which flow throughout all of existence…our material existence is the manifestation of particular combinations of energy waves coming together, and as such, everything is animate, which is to say everything has spirit" (56). This accords with the

[38] I also want to acknowledge that while I was in my early days of developing this research, I keenly felt an absence of academic works that approached beadwork from an Indigenous perspective and insight. Dr. Edge's work was an incredible gift. In the years that followed, I would encounter beadwork-focused work by other scholars (primarily dissertations) and I am beyond excited to realize this is a developing area which I can, through this work, contribute to. I acknowledge, here, and also thank Dr. Lana Ray (Anishinaabe), and Dr. Danielle Lussier (Métis) for their work in which I recognize a kinship.

explanation of the how concept of animate and inanimate, as they are contained in nîhiyawîwin, was once explained to me well over a decades ago by nêhiyaw scholar Willie Ermine. Here, I am drawing from a personal discussion with Willie Ermine where, as I recall it, he explained the animate (living)/inanimate(non-living) distinction used in nêhiyawêwin is not actually a living/non-living dichotomy but rather expresses how energy is moving in that "thing."

Bringing this perspective "into conversation" – as Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate scholar Kim TallBear has phrased it – with the materialist work of political theorist Jane Bennett (2010), my understanding of mîkisak in nîhiyaw ontology can also be described by applying Latour's term of "actant"; that is, beads (and by extension beadwork) are actants, as Bennett defines the term, in that they are "a source for action," and "can be human or not, or, most likely a combination of both" (9). Further, Bennett's work recognizes "things" have a "negative power or recalcitrance" as well as "a positive, productive power" (1). I engage with this primarily as an understanding of agency, where in the materialist thinking described and traced by Bennett, beads can be understood as a 'thing' that "do in fact affect other bodies, enhancing or weakening their power" (3).

Although there is considerably more material I could (and wanted to) engage with from reading Bennett's *Vibrant Matter*, it is the connection between materialism and spirituality I feel needs some expanded attention and development. "Spirituality" became lodged in my mind after reading Bennett's statement:

> What I am calling impersonal affect or material vibrancy is not a spiritual supplement or "life force" added to the matter said to house it. Mine is not a vitalism in the traditional sense; I equate affect with materiality, rather than posit a separate force that can enter and animate a physical body. (xiii)

To help better understand this reference, I refer back also to an earlier statement in her text: "I am here drawing on a Spinozist notion of affect, which refers broadly to the capacity of any body for activity and responsiveness" (xii).

What I have taken from this statement is that Bennett deliberately eschews notions of spirituality. Without myself falling too far into the trap of relying on binaristic thinking to explain this, I cannot help but see this as a departure point where Bennett's theorization of materialism is deeply embedded in a 'western' tradition that is, in so many important ways, different from Indigenous epistemologies. And it is actually on the point of spirituality that I note an important departure point in what and how Bennett discusses materialism and how I would approach it.

I find it helpful to consider the concept of spirituality more directly through nîhiyawîwin where one of the key words for 'spirit' is acâhk. 'Spirituality' is ahcahkowin. There are other terms that show up as well that express these ideas a bit differently but as I understand it, the dimension of our beings that we call our spirit or soul is referred to as acâhk. I have not had an opportunity to speak with any nîhiyaw/nêhiyaw philosophers to better understand what is being expressed, exactly, when we speak of acâhk but I do know there is an important connection – especially for this conversation – to the word for "star." In Cree, star is either atâhk (more formal but less common) or acâhkos (actually, literally a little star, but used more commonly to speak of a star or stars).

Part of what is being expressed in these terms, as I understand it, is that we are pointing to a connection between a core aspect of our beings and the stars; further, we are also saying we are literally made of the same stuff as the stars. I also connect this with a conceptualization of spirituality as a mode of experience through this aspect of our being. What is critically important

for me here is that our spirits are not a separate component at all but is part of the combination that creates a particular human experience. And, in the case of humans (which might very well be the same for non-human beings in nîhiyaw thought) our spirits – being of the same stuff of the stars – is simply energy that moves in certain ways. Further, the other aspects of our human-being (expressed as mind, body, emotion, and soul/spirit) are similarly not separate and are also forms of energy moving in specific ways. I suggest it is through these variations in how our energies move in these aspects is what allows us to "communicate" with beings or things and form relationships in different ways if we are able to engage through those aspects of our beings.

Dr. Wildcat (2010) goes further to explain:

> Since the world consists of energy waves that flow throughout all of existence, it follows that everything is related through the flow of energy throughout creation. It is the idea that everything is interrelated that informs the actions and decisions of Plains Indigenous peoples to interact with the rest of existence on the principle that we are all related. Littlebear explains this here: "If everything is animate, then everything has spirit and knowledge. If everything has spirit and knowledge, then all are like me. If all are like me, then all are my relations." (58)

What all of this also connects back to is my understanding of Indigenous governance. One of the key formulations I have drawn from is Dr. Keira Ladner's (2003) definition of Indigenous governance, which I will repeat again from earlier in this chapter, as "'the way in which a people lives best together' or the way a people has structured their society in relationship to the natural world" (125). In this article, she also discusses how governance structures were taught to Indigenous peoples by non-human relations, specifically on the plains from the Buffalo Nation.[39] I am relating this idea, as well, to the notion of learning from non-human sources, including those that are conventionally thought of as non-living (or inanimate), of which beads and

[39] This particular discussion is grounded in Blackfoot tradition and thought, but I have heard this related very similarly from a Plains Cree perspective in stories shared by the brilliant Glenda Abbot (nêhiyaw) at Wanuskewin Heritage Park.

beadwork are particular examples. I turn now, in the next two chapters, to the beadwork through and with which I synthesized the ideas presented thus far.

Chapter 5: mîkistahikâcimo (to tell a story through beadwork)

âcimowin: tâpâhkômêw (a story: s/he adopts someone; s/he takes someone as a relative)

Part 1:

She opened the door.

She said, "You can call me Elizabeth..or Granny, if you want."
I do not say, out loud, both suggestions feel wrong somehow...disrespectful to call her by her name and weird to call another woman 'Granny'.
I do not know what shows on my face or if it is my silence that speaks of my misgivings.
Then she says: "Or maybe you can call me Granny Flett."
And so she became my Granny Flett.

Plate 7: kôhkomak maskisina

Moccasins made by Mary Kappo, featuring beadwork by Elizabeth Flett

Part 2:

I am into her beads, again.
Drawn in by the mystery of a small chest of drawers, I found myself entranced by the treasure of beads I had discovered when curiosity overcame my reserve. Lost in my reverie, I am startled by her voice: "You really like those beads, don't you," she says.
My fingers freeze in surprise and fear of chastisement for poking into her belongings without permission.
"Yes," I say, in a small voice.
"Ah," she says. "I'll tell you what. They're yours. I'm giving them to you, right now. But, you can't take them home yet. You have to learn how to bead first. And, when you can show me you know how to bead, then you can take them home. But until then, I'll keep them here."
"Ok Granny Flett. I'll learn. I promise."

tôcikâtêw (it is done like that; it is customary to do like so)

My introduction to beads came at a fairly early age and through my Gran's work. In her house she had a spare bedroom where she had her sewing table set up under the south-facing window. The sewing table held a sewing machine that could be folded into the table when she wanted it stored, but I remember her most often working with the sewing machine set up. She would lay out a small cloth on the tabletop and place small piles of beads, with a small spool of beading thread and some extra beading needles. I remember her most often working on moccasins, so the air would be redolent of the woodsmoke carried by the home-tanned moose hide. The style of moccasin featured, most often, a vamp with floral beadwork worked onto felt or Melton cloth.

We had moved in with her for a period when I was four years old – before I would start school at five years old – and I remember being home during the day when my older siblings and cousins were at school. My younger sister was a toddler then and also at home but I remember most often being absorbed by exploring this world; I have amusing memories of dancing with the mop and also using its yarn strands to teach myself how to braid, and of recurringly challenging myself be able to get from one end of the room to another and only stepping on a particular pattern in the carpet. I also remember standing, at times, by my Gran's side as she did her beadwork.

I watched her intently, and I expect I nattered at her as she worked. I would have pressed myself up fairly close to her but would also have maintained enough distance so as not to impede her graceful motions as she stitched. I saw the materials and I have no doubt my fingers itched to try to emulate her, but instead I would observe for stretches of time.

My learning and training started there, but the practice wouldn't begin until I was a bit older and began the next stage of training by taking up the promise I'd made to my Granny Flett.

Like the moccasins my Gran would sew together, my own practice would be formed from the work of both my grandmothers. I would reach towards floral work I remembered from my Gran (first forming flower petals in using concentric loops as she had) and attempt bright combinations of colours. In my early years, I struggled the most with doing floral work as I felt I lacked the imagination and knowledge to put together colours and shapes in the striking ways my Gran did.

I don't actually recall now when that seemed to shift and I found my own voice in the work I did. I know I have picked up different influences over the years and have intentionally incorporated some styles to honour my adopted relations. But, the foundation of the practice is there, by my Gran's side. My work predominantly uses a technique referred to, variously, as bead embroidery, overcast, or two-needle beading. In my early beadwork lexicon, this style was simply 'beading.' It was the way "we" did beadwork, and it would be the first technique I would attempt, and the one I return to most often.

I picked up the beads and other materials my mom had on hand and set myself up at a small metal table and chairs set I had been given when I was five years old. At ten years old I was still small enough to sit comfortably on the small folding metal chair, and the size of the table top (probably around two feet square) was more than generous to place my own piece of cloth (receiving blankets I had also kept from when I would wrap my dolls) that carried small piles of beads, my small spool of thread, and extra needles. From memory, I would pick up the long, thin needles and hold them in the fashion I remembered my Gran doing – needle in the left hand, thread in the right, with both raised up in front of my face to see the eye of the needle more clearly – and practiced threading my needles. I then had figured out how to tie knots (which I

remember as being large and clumsy at first) and then practiced with two sets of threaded needles until I developed the dexterity to bead as I had watched my Gran do.

I would move on, for a while, to working on a bead-loom. This was also something I recall my Gran using from time to time, and I found it a bit easier to work with given I needed only one needle and the threads that formed the warp of the work helped form rows of beads that were more evenly and consistently aligned. In both styles, my goal was to produce work where the beads lay close and tight together, but also overall quite flat. My ability to achieve that would take some years of further practice, but by my mid-teens I did consider myself to be someone who knew how to bead (even if I wasn't terribly proficient or prolific).

From that point until now my actual practice ebbed and flowed. I turned my attention for a while to other media (mostly pastel chalk, pencil, watercolour) in my early teens but I never strayed too far from beads, needles, thread. I learned in elementary school how to do 'lazy stitch,' a Plains style largely employing geometric designs, with a single-needle stitching technique produces beadwork resembling the effect of quillwork. In junior high I learned how to do peyote stitch, a bead-weaving technique where I could create beadwork with only a single needle, thread, and beads. But, in my early twenties I would return to the first style I learned and would begin to bead more regularly and while I would have stretches where I did not bead very often, I would say I became a beadwork artist at that point in my life.

Those long years of practice would lead me to the work I aptly titled '*kiskinohawmatok'* – a nîhiyaw term that can be understood to mean, roughly, learning together through sharing – I completed in 2018 for the University of Alberta.[40] In the remainder of this chapter I present this work as it very much a product of this thesis research. As such, the intention here is to present

[40] This work was first mentioned briefly in Chapter 1: nakayâskamohtahitowin.

the work by recounting its story; that is, the process through which it came to be. Though I mediate the storytelling, this chapter invites the beads themselves to speak more clearly and my invitation to the reader is to move through the stories of its coming into being as an assemblage (Bennett 2010) and so come to learn, for yourselves, some of the stories these beads tell. In developing a particular understanding of beads, through nîhiyaw tâpisinowin, I believe the beads have their own voices and I would like this work to contribute to connecting others to that understanding, as well as fostering relationships between readers and beads.

In the following section entitled 'kiskinohawmatok,'[41] I present the work as a whole, first with an image of the completed work[42] which is accompanied with a written description of the work. This statement describes the elements in the work and the stories that were embedded in the work as I understood them at the time. The outcome – the final piece – is a volume of work that contains elements that will speak to everyone in different ways and it is a piece that I appreciate, deeply, for providing me the opportunity to bring into this world. However, in line with the ethic of research-creation which orients us to focus on the process of creation (as opposed to simply considering the results or outcomes) I shift focus here to describe the process that unfolded in the creation of this piece. I then share stories of the process of creating, which provides some insight into what a beadwork process looks like and provides a version of a creation story which, in nîhiyawîwin[43] contains foundational teachings to support nîhiyaw pimâtisowin.

[41] To help avoid confusion, please note that where the term appears italicized and in single quotes it is a reference to the beadwork piece entitled '*kiskinohawmatok'* but where it appears without italics it is to indicate the meaning of the term (i.e. learning together through sharing).

[42] This image is one I took when I was finished my part. After I handed it over to the U of A, it was professionally (and beautifully) framed. This new element of the overall work does change it slightly, so what I present here is a snapshot from a particular period of time. Also, I highly recommend, if possible, visiting the piece at the University of Alberta (The Office of the President and Provost); to my knowledge, this is publicly accessible and visitors are welcome.

[43] The term "nîhiyawîwin" is used here in the meaning of Cree culture, as explained by Napoleon (2014).

kiskinohawmatok (learning together through sharing)

Plate 8: 'kiskinohawmatok,' 2018

After I delivered the piece to the University, I also provided an artist statement which explained the work as follows:

> This work expresses my idea of Treaty relationship enacted at the University of Alberta (U of A), where Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges and traditions occupy the same space respectfully and harmoniously. As an Indigenous alumnus of the U of A (BA-Native Studies) and current student (MA-Native Studies), I approached this work with the goal of creating a piece that celebrates and honours the U of A while also honouring the vital knowledges and knowledge production of Indigenous peoples. In creating this work, and in imagining it displayed on campus, it is also a way of creating a space where our knowledges are represented and where we can see, and feel, belonging together in a beautiful way. This is my dream for the university.
>
> The work features beadwork depicting the U of A logo encircled with floral work following an Indigenous beadwork aesthetic reflecting my artistic lineage as a s*akâwiyiniw* (Woodland Cree) person. The floral style and other beaded elements represents Indigenous knowledges, pedagogies, and ontologies including the idea of

education as respectful sharing of our knowledges and learning from each other, where that sharing is not only human to human, but amongst non-humans and between human and non-human beings. The plants featured include the wild rose, wild strawberry flowers, blueberries, and sweetgrass – which speak to medicines and plants that also speak to me of identity and connection to place.

The beadwork comprises individual pieces, most finished with a hide backing and edged in embroidery floss, affixed to canvas covered with velvet (dyed to a deep indigo) sewn with a scattering of crystalline beads. This composition speaks to space, and sharing space as well as place. In the logo, we see a representation of Alberta but also a depiction of the land and water. I've interpreted the wave in the logo as a representation of the North Saskatchewan River to honour water, acknowledging our shared human needs, and to our journeys and gathering along the river here in *amiskwaciwâskahikan* (Edmonton), Treaty 6 Territory, where the university is located. The techniques and motifs used are intended to pay tribute both to the Indigenous nations who are also connected to this place – both historically and currently – including (but not limited to) the Cree, Nakoda, Blackfoot, Dene, Saulteaux, and Métis. This homage is also infused in the materials – the use of velvet, animal skin, seed beads, embroidery floss – as part of ongoing Indigenous material culture and artistic traditions.

There is also further and essential honouring and acknowledgement of the gifts of Indigenous women and Two-Spirited (or LGBTQ). It is my way of raising up for recognition the incredible gifts they bring which are far too often hidden, ignored, denigrated, dismissed. This is also my way of expressing thanks for the ways in which I feel I have been blessed and enriched by their contributions.

âpisâwâcikan (A pattern, thing used as a pattern for cutting; a print model)

The development of this work emerged out of long years of learning, practice, and influences recounted earlier in this chapter. In returning to describe the process, though, I mark the actual beginning from around March 2017. It was then that a series of communications took place to set up commissioned work for the University of Alberta. Among the requests was the piece that would become '*kiskinohawmatok*.' The request was for me to bead the U of A logo and while I was happy to agree to do so, I immediately had ideas of incorporating floral beadwork. I set off to do some research on the logo and my first design idea was to incorporate elements of the University of Alberta crest, as I was aware it too had floral elements in it. However, I was also feeling very strongly that the floral work should reflect where I came from.

By May 2017, through further discussion, further research, and trips to gather beads and other materials, I produced a rough sketch (as follows) which introduced the elements I was now envisioning for this work. I described this as follows:

> Essentially, what this is intended to express is an idea of Treaty relationship enacted at the U of A, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges and traditions occupy the same space respectfully and harmoniously. My starting point was the formal U of A crest where I took the central part and would reproduce it in yellow, green, and white. Surrounding it is floral work in a circular pattern that draws together elements of what I consider to be an Indigenous beadwork aesthetic (floral) and other aspects of the crest to evoke the shared space where we mutual respect flourishes. The messily sketched in wavy bit is to represent water in the form of the river (reference to N. Sask) as both the recognition of our shared human needs and respect for water. It also speaks of journeys and gathering points (ref to amiskwaciywaskahikan history). Framing this is a geometric pattern that references mountains, stars, and tipis. Between the floral work and the geometrics, these Indigenous aesthetics are intended to call to all the Indigenous nations who have connections to/with this territory.
>
> The above is also fairly preliminary as I expect other elements in the beadwork and my understanding would develop through the process of making. I am thinking I will want to add also a braided element (maybe running through/with the floral work) to represent sweetgrass (and our medicines, and our plant relations) but I haven't sketched that yet. At this point, the size I am thinking of is roughly a square of 16 in x 16 in. (Personal communication, May 3, 2017)

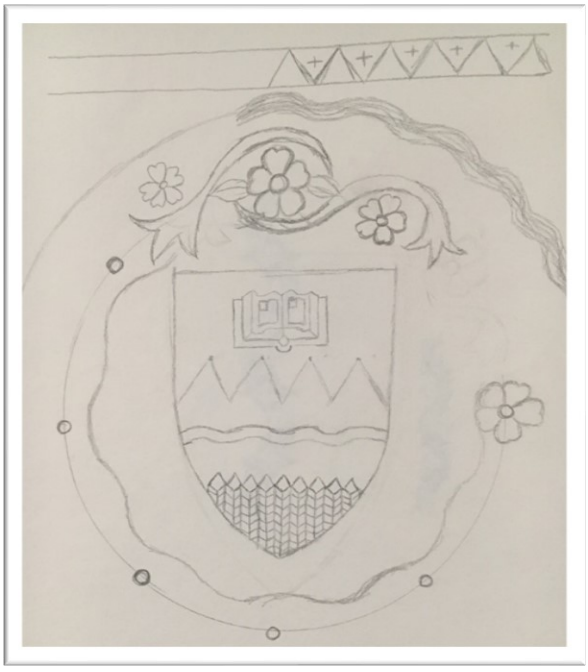

Plate 9: Preliminary design (rough sketch), May 2017

mîkisistahikêw (s/he beads, s/he does beadwork)

Given the size of the work as I was envisioning it, I knew that I would need to use larger beads[44] than I tended to work with at that time. This necessitated a number of trips to bead stores to find beads in the sizes and colours I was looking for. I did, however, turn to my own stock of materials for canvas, silk, and fusible interfacing. The silk, which is a deep, rich, purple dupioni, was from a collection of fabrics I had been gathering over the years with the intention of creating regalia for myself; I chose this for the colour, which was the closest to the deep indigo I wanted to provide the backdrop. It was not quite the colour I felt was needed, nor was the material what I wanted (silk instead of velvet) but I drew on what I consider to be the practical part of my background which has trained me to make do with what you have (as best you can).

The very rough sketch was then translated into more precise elements that were created using handmade templates (for the flowers) and making use of protractors and various rulers to

Plate 10: Starting out together

[44] In much of the work I was doing at the time, I tended to work predominately with size 13 charlotte cut beads. For the majority of this work, especially starting with the logo, I needed to use a larger size 10 seed bead both to be able to cover a larger space more quickly and because the selection of colours in size 10 seed beads is more extensive than the slightly smaller size 11 that I would have preferred to use.

place these elements as precisely as I could. The design was drawn directly onto the fusible interfacing, which was then placed over the silk which had been layered atop canvas. Once that was done, I began beading.

I started by working the central element – the logo – as I tend to start in the middle of a piece and work my way outwards. With that, I started with the outline in the deepest green, and and began outlining most of the inner parts of the logo. I soon realized that to ensure the spacing remains the same, I had to do some fill as I went, rather than simply outlining all the elements and then returning to fill them in. I was, however, drawn to the floral work and so I started outlining the wild rose and their leaves as a 'treat' to myself and planned to alternate working on the logo and flowers.

Plate 11: Work in progress (1): Opening Dialogue

Although I made steady progress, it moved more slowly than I was accustomed to. I quickly realized that I needed to shift my approach a little bit. Even with the canvas backing and

stabilization provided by the interfacing, the material was still not quite stiff enough to help the process of affixing beads evenly. I was able to find an embroidery frame that would hold the fabric taut that was large enough to hold the length of fabric; it could also be attached to a floor stand and swiveled so I could turn the work as needed. This was something of a miracle for me as I was imagining I'd have to take up a bit of carpentry (or call on my very resourceful and creative uncle) to build something for this purpose so it was quite a happy day when I discovered such a thing already existed and was relatively inexpensive.

While I would be able to roll up the fabric on the frame so I could more easily access the logo while I worked on it, I started to remove the interfacing from the outer part of the work as it added a bit of unnecessary bulk. Trimming that extraneous fabric revealed the silk underneath and gave me a better sense of how these elements would work together. It was at this point I decided to turn my attention to the logo element and work exclusively on that until it was complete. Anticipating the eventual removal of the interfacing from around the logo, I added a

Plate 12: Completed logo (1)

white outline to create a sharper contrast between the deep green of outer edges of the logo and the purple of the background fabric.

It was around this point that the murmurings I had picked up earlier began to grow louder. The silk was textured, which created an interesting subtle striping in the background. Prior to starting the beadwork I had to consider which direction to have the striping run and settled on vertical stripes. I was not, however, convinced that this effect made sense and would become increasingly convinced the foundation was not quite right. Additionally, the colours of the flowers and the leaves, as they were at that time, were increasingly troubling to me. I could only describe it as also 'not quite right.' Trying to ignore these misgivings, I decided to remove the majority of the interfacing and turn my attention to the floral elements that I had already started.

Plate 13: Work in progress (3) - Unstitching and changing the flow

But I did not get too far before I began unstitching the flowers with the idea of trying different colours. Once I removed all of the beads from the wild roses, I put the whole work to the side for a while. I was unable to shake the feeling that I needed to change direction but I did

not fully trust myself. After all, I had already come so far and invested so much. Did it make any sense to change my approach at this point? Was it really the work that was speaking to me or was it my ego or perfectionist tendencies high jacking this process?

One thing was absolutely clear – I was not going to undo all the work I had done on the logo. But I knew if I was going to use that work but change the other elements, including the background, I needed to make the decision, commit to the change, and take action as soon as possible. I had made a commitment to get this work done and while I had also done my best to make clear that this could be a lengthy process, especially with my other commitments to study and other work, I was feeling the press of time and expectation very keenly.

Deciding to make the leap, I went to find a stretched canvas I could use as my base. I then also visited a fabric store to see if I could find deep blue velvet. It occurred to me that even if I could not find velvet in the colour I felt was needed, I might be able to dye it to get it closer to the shade of indigo I was imagining. Finding suitable canvas, velvet, and fabric dye seemed to signal to me that moving in this direction was, in fact, necessary.

Plate 14: Completed Logo (2) – Just prior to removal from original setting

Taking the step of removing the logo was bit frightening. But, once I made the first cut, and became wholly committed, my confidence grew. Trimming around the beadwork carefully, I then carefully folded the extra fabric and added edging with embroidery floss.

Once that was completed, I turned my attention back to the flowers. As the logo would be affixed to the canvas but could, theoretically, be removed again and stand as its own piece, I knew the rest of the remaining elements would also be crafted as individual pieces that would later be assembled as part of the whole work. So, using the designs already drawn on the interfacing (which had never been fused onto the underlying fabric), I cut out all of the elements individually and then ironed the interfacing onto a stiffened felt.

I started with the wild roses; these were the flowers I had started beading and then undid because I felt I needed to use other beads. But, I honestly hadn't figured out by this point what beads made sense here. I suspected I would be doing a bit of work, un-doing, and re-doing which I knew would take more time than I really wanted to spend. I knew the centers needed to be shades of yellow and orange and the petals would be mostly pink but would also have some red incorporated somehow. I went through the various beads I had (including smaller sizes and types, such as the size 13 charlotte cuts, size 11 delicas, and sizes 10 and 12 cut beads) looking for the beads that "felt" right. I was not afraid to mix bead sizes and types, but I still felt strongly that the floral work needed size 10 seed beads. This project had brought quite a variety of size 10 seed beads into my home but what I had on hand still did not seem quite right.

That is, until I looked into a small wooden chest I had recently been given by my mother. After my Gran passed away, members of my family had gathered at various times to sort through her belongings. I was happy to leave this work to the rest of my family and had shared with my mom how I did not feel there were any material belongings I really needed; the only thing I

could think of that I did want was her sewing machine in its table and the matching stool so that perhaps one day I would find myself sitting at that table under a south-facing window. I did not expect it (or anything else) would come to me, though, so it came as a complete surprise when my mom came over, one day, with the chest.

I recognized it immediately as where my Gran had stored her beads. I realized it had never occurred to me to ask about or for her beads, which struck me as odd given the path I had been following. I know I would have appreciated receiving them if I had asked for them, but the fact that I hadn't and yet still received, was even more meaningful. I had looked through the contents of the chest and decided that one day I would take up a work with which I would use those beads. I imagined making moccasins for family, to continue her legacy, but until I had enough hide and the emotional readiness, I would leave those beads to remain as they were.

But the day I started looking again through the other beads I had, I realized that I needed to also look to that collection. So, I went to the chest and pulled out every vial and looked at all of the beads. There was a pink, a sort of bubble-gum colour that jumped out at me. I then added them to the already selected beads and set to work again.

Plate 15: Wild Roses in progress (1)

It should have come as no surprise that once I had those beads, those elements flowed together almost effortlessly. I will admit, though, I was somewhat surprised. And I also had to push through a feeling of uncertainty about using these particular beads given I'd had some ideas they should be used for work intended to be gifted to my family. The ease with which the flowers came together was enough to allow me to let go of that particular misgiving; I knew that even if I didn't fully understand the why or how they were needed, I did trust the inner knowing that they were.

The next bit of work involved completing the remaining elements of the floral work. Although the design that had been planned and laid out on the original fabric had included leaves of different shapes and styles, and I had also intended to include butterflies, the size of the new canvas suggested I would need to re-consider the amount of elements I could add and remain true to a "less-is-more" aesthetic I have come to view as a nîhiyaw beadwork tradition. This can be something of a complex internal negotiation as I felt it important this work be inclusive and I did not feel I had any clear representation of some of our other important non-human relatives (animals, fish, insects). The butterflies were intended to gesture towards those other forms of life as well as speak of transformation and grace. So I put the idea on hold, and worked on the leaves for the Wild Roses (each of which was beaded, backed, and edged individually), completed the Strawberry Blossoms, and then each of the Blueberry Plants.

I decided to then prepare the canvas. This involved first cutting a square of the velvet slightly larger than the canvas frame and then dyeing the fabric on the stove. This process did produce the colour I had wanted, albeit a bit unevenly, and had the unintended effect of creating a textured effect as the heat changed the pile of the velvet. I had worried this might happen and was a bit apprehensive to start, but I also had enough velvet left over that I knew I could use the

remainder, unaltered, if needed. But I liked the effect in the end as I felt the colouring and texture created a subtle depth and a sort of movement that felt more true to the living night sky. I then secured onto the canvas and began to carefully mark it up with flour paste to ensure the elements would be evenly spaced once they were affixed to the canvas. Once I had my markings in place, I was able to carefully attach the logo and centered it on the velvet-covered canvas as accurately as possible.

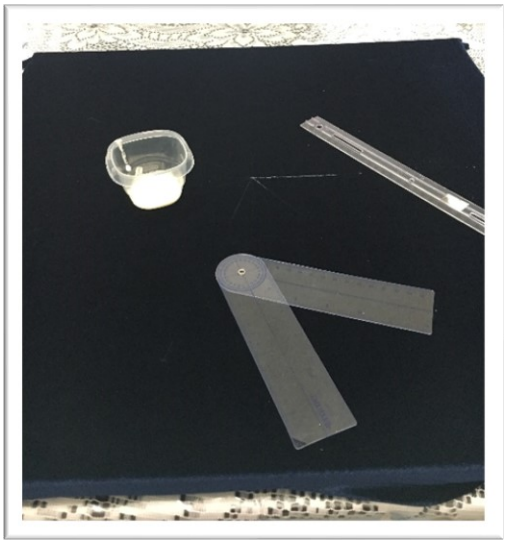

Plate 16: Preparing the canvas (1)

Plate 17: Preparing the canvas (2)

The deceptively tricky part of creating the Sweetgrass Braids would come next. This was a technical challenge I had never encountered and my experience with bugle beads was fairly limited. What I did know was that the sharp edges of the beads could very easily slice through thread so I needed to consider my thread choice carefully. And, I was also thinking of effect; using an overcast technique would produce quite flat work – which is normally my goal – but I felt this needed to be different, dimensionally. In the end – after no small amount of experimenting with different types of threads and approaches – I strung a number of individual lengths on plastic coated wire thread, created individual loops at the end of each strand, and sewed the loops down onto the canvas, slightly spread out. I then began braiding. This part also

took a fair amount of time as I had to braid slowly so I could tack down the braid in a few places as it was forming to ensure it laid securely on the canvas and followed the curve of the design. I then placed a Wild Rose over the ends of each section of the Sweetgrass Braids and then laid out a few of the Strawberry Blossoms and Blueberry Plants.

Plate 18: Gathering the elements

At this point, I knew with certainty this piece did not have the space for the butterflies or any other elements, including the geometric border I had originally envisioned. I wondered how I would be able to incorporate the colours of the rainbow to ensure the inclusion of LGBTQS2+ people as I had thought I each butterfly would feature one of the seven colours of the rainbow; it was very important to me that this be included. But, I knew I would still add a random scattering of crystal beads in the background and decided to create seven small stars with one of the colours at its heart, aligned with each Wild Rose.

These would be the final beaded elements. In completing this, I sat with the piece for a

while before passing it on to the University. I kept it on an easel in the one part of the open plan apartment I had just moved into, unintentionally aligned so that it was immediately visible when you walked into the space. There were times when I would come home and realize I often stopped for a few moments, eyes drawn to the work, in almost meditative silence.

Part of the decision to keep the work for a period before I delivered it on campus was that I kept wondering if the framing I had originally envisioned – a mix of geometric patterns – was still needed. I was still feeling the absence of the butterflies and other elements I had planned to incorporate; it was not quite a feeling of these elements being missing as much as a worry that I had somehow missed the mark. I ran through different options (fully beaded? Ribbonwork? A combination?) to consider what that might look like. Most of all, I contemplated how the addition of a border – which would be a new, additional element – would impact the work as a whole.

The decision point really came when I brought the piece to campus. I met with Dr. Chris Andersen, Dean of the Faculty of Native Studies, with the intention of handing it over. I did feel that it was done but my mind kept returning to the idea of adding more. My uncertainty might have been written on my face but when I was asked "Are you sure you're done? I know from family members who do this kind of work that they'll say it's done and then want to add something or change something. So, are you sure?" I gave it a moment before I answered, taking in the piece again as it sat with us at a table in the Student Union Building foodcourt, "Yes. I am sure. I've done all the work I need to do."

Chapter 6: itâcimômakan (it tells such a story)

kiskinwâswêwitam (s/he speaks in a manner to refer to the teachings of a ceremony)

I arrive beyond exhausted.

I had barely slept. As the sun arose, I was near tears. I texted: "I am not done yet. Maybe we need to postpone."

I could feel my stomach clenching with the fear of censure as I await the response. And then I read: "It's your call. I trust you to make the right decision. It might help to take a shower, to clear your head. Then let me know."

Plate 19: 'Practice is Ceremony,' 2015

The final part of the beadwork is the water feature surrounding the turtles back. It is clear I am not going to finish this ahead of the meeting and my agony is to decide whether to attempt to present the work when it is incomplete and I can hardly see or think straight.

I wanted, desperately, to crawl into bed, cry for a while, and then sleep. But I chose, instead, to take the advice, and under a cascade of water I prayed for clarity, for strength, for guidance, for support. I emerge with a sense of trust that this is the time to present this work, that it is coming together as it needs to.

I arrive at the gathering beyond exhausted. But I am calm, and I share within the circle the story of this work. I share my hopes and offer my thanks.

In response, I hear: "This is exactly what we were discussing yesterday…that we need this story depicted in a special way. Beadwork, we thought. And then here you are today with this gift."

mihcêtohkamwak (they work together on something)

In considering the piece entitled '*kiskinohawmatok'* as a whole, it is clear to me that the work has an overall story that itself tells. In this chapter, I consider the lessons emerging from the process of co-creating '*kiskinohawmatok*'; however, my purpose in this chapter is not to attempt to tell all the stories that piece carries. Rather, I look to connect ideas presented in the previous chapter – which recounted the process of co-creating '*kiskinohawmatok*' – and connect these ideas to the nature of beads and beadwork, as well as beadwork's relationship to resurgence of nîhiyaw law and governance. Images of other pieces of beadwork and beadwork practice are included in this chapter to once again draw more directly on the voices of beads themselves and these images are of works I feel have also provided me with particularly clear teachings to further explore my original research questions: What happens when we do beadwork? How is beadwork connected to Indigenous law and governance?

In the following section (niwâkômâkanak), I first return to further a discussion from Chapter 5: mîkistahikâcimo (to tell a story through beadwork) to draw forward the lessons learned through co-creating '*kiskinohawmatok'* and through other work on the nature of beads as I have come to understand and appreciate them. I then turn to a brief discussion on what beadwork does (or is) when approached as an exploration of the multidimensionality of beadwork. The next section shifts the conversation to discuss what beadwork does by looking at what emerges through the practice of beadwork. Presented as vignettes in sub-sections headed by a title identifying a particular dimension*,* these short discussions reflect lessons I feel were affirmed through the experience of co-creating the piece entitled '*kiskinohawmatok'* and through conversation with other works the discussions are presented with.

niwâkômâkanak

In considering what happens when we do beadwork, I was particularly interested in developing a theoretical account of the nature of beads in order to better understand what engaging with them could mean. Through the research process, I adopted a practice of 'listening' to what emerged when gathered in a shared space and time with the intention of co-creating. Part of what emerged in that (mostly) quiet, (always) contemplative space were stories (some recounted in this thesis) that helped me begin to connect to what I have come to appreciate as a particular nature of beads.

Through nîhiyawîwin, and the framework of nîhiyaw pimâtisowin, this approach recognized and affirmed an inherent being-ness of beads and so my working relationship shifted to recognize the practice of beadwork as one of engaging in a relationship. Here, the concept of miyo-wîcîhtowin is necessarily invoked and returned my attention to Bennett's (2010) "Thing-Power: the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle" (6). In this formation, beads can be understood as a "thing" with its own ability to act – and therefore interact – as a collaborator with me. The practice of beadwork, then, is a mode of relations through which we can consider how we are working together (or not).

Without an understanding of beads as animate, a single bead on its own may appear as an object with no significance. Beads might be appreciated only as they are composed into a work of which they are only one tiny, seemingly insignificant part. But, the attention and care (not to mention time and focus) given to finding a particular bead to fit the work you are doing begins to suggest each bead is significant in and of itself.

Also, it becomes clear that not all beads that may reside in a collection will be incorporated into any piece you make. I think of those beads which may be considered too imperfect and I have heard that some beadworkers will carefully sort through beads to pick out

and discard those irregularly shaped or sized beads. Those are the beads I often prize because it is often those very imperfect beads which fit perfectly in the spaces created by the other beads; they are the ones that allow you to create the effect you are hoping for.

There is a care and appreciation for the beads that is necessary in collaborative work such as this. I saw this also in the medallion and necklace I also created during my time doing research for this thesis. I had been asked to create a gift for the (then) President of the University of Alberta, Dr. David H. Turpin. In contemplating the design of this piece, I was drawn to the image of the bear as it is connected to the University in a number of ways; I drew most strongly from the energy of the "Sweetgrass Bear" sculpture that is installed on campus.

Plate 20: Treaty Bear (2018)

In the unveiling of the statue, it was reported in the University of Alberta blog, The Quad, (https://www.ualberta.ca/the-quad/2016/08/the-sweetgrass-bear.html) that President Turpin

stated “The Sweetgrass Bear reminds us that we are all treaty people,” and that “She is a symbol of our relationships: on her side is an inscription that reads, ‘We are all related.’”

This work, then, contains (amongst other ideas and stories) a reference to treaty relationships which are incredibly important and related to conceptions of nîhiyaw/nêhiyaw law and governance (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000). But here, what I draw attention to is the recognition that the fine detail work here (shown in Plate 21, below) was assisted by the diversity of beads. The work itself, in that mode, becomes one of taking care of fostering cooperation and complementarity, and celebrating the gifts we all carry (Anderson 2016).

Plate 21: Treaty Bear (2018) - In progress

Related to this is the recognition that in their being-ness, beads may have their own ideas and, in service of successful collaboration, that needs to be respected and attended to. This was extraordinarily evident through the process of co-creation of the beaded piece ‘*kiskinohawmatok’* (as was recounted in the previous chapter). It was also something I paid attention to when I made a pair of earrings last year for a fundraising raffle. The earrings were made purposefully for raising money to support family in a loss and as such needed to be made pretty quickly. So, I thought of a simple design and imagined it would not take more than an evening to complete. But there was also a lot of emotion and intention with the work, and it was not a quick process.

This particular piece seems simple. But the detail work is quite fine and required a particular and unexpected finesse. In much of my work, my experience is usually enough to figure out, in advance, the sequence, techniques and approach to bring into being the concept that has formed into my design. But sometimes, I can only see in retrospect: A line of beads stitched just so, almost what I hoped, but not quite right. But in seeing it, coming to see another way of doing it will usually present itself. The choice then can be to undo what has been done, and re-do it with the new strategy. Often, this is what I choose. I often cannot get past the feeling that I have left something in place that is not quite right despite knowing a little time and effort can rectify it. It is not, for me, attempting to achieve perfection (although, to be honest, this is something that this practice started from). But rather, I see it as a form of accountability.

Plate 22: Forget-me-not earring (in memory of Will), 2020

Put in another way, it is a response to the voices of the beads, and to the spirit of the work that is looking to come into being. In this space of choosing, I feel the resonance of what Dr. Edge (2011) so beautifully expresses:

> *The beads speak to us from spaces and places through and across time. They speak to us from spaces and places of distant spaces and places, they resonate and there is an energy that resonates and echoes through and across time so that we imagine, or envision, or*

> *engage or become aware of or sensitive to the grace of the women who sat there and sewed the beads. There are a multitude of beads, patterns and voices that are each complex and unique and distinct. These voices are speaking to us.* (106; italics in original)

Another choice is to leave it as it is. To accept it as it is and apply the learning to another, future, project. To remember how these 'mistakes' are part of the journey and may need to be seen by others, or to recognize they are not mistakes at all, but rather are a reflection of what these materials choose to be. So, my choice there can, and sometimes needs to be, to respect that beingness, and not insisting on shaping something based solely on my needs, hopes, intensions, desires.

Approaching beads with a nîhiyaw tâpisinowin I recognize beads as other-than-human kin. This engages responsibilities to enact miyo-wîcîhtowin which, when combined with principles like love, respect, humility, bid me to seriously consider what the beads ask of me and not simply focus on what I want to "create." I may start off with an idea but the beads themselves often insist upon being arranged in ways that are different than I had intended or even desired. To maintain a respectful relationship, I must accommodate their wishes even when it entails extra time, effort, un-doing and re-doing.

The relationship with beads, then, within nîhiyaw pimâtisowin, speaks to the instructions given through the work of Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000):

> Powerful laws were established to protect and to nurture the foundations of strong, vibrant nations. Foremost amongst these laws are those related to human bonds and relationships known as the laws relating to *miyo-wîcêhtowin.* The laws of *miyo-wîcêhtowin* include those laws encircling the bonds of human relationships in the ways in which they are created, nourished, reaffirmed, and recreated as a means of strengthening the unity among First Nations people and the nation itself. For First Nations, these are integral and indispensable components of their way of life. These teachings constitute the essential elements underlying the First Nations notions of peace, harmony, and good relations, which must be maintained as required by the Creator. The teachings and ceremonies are the means given to First Nations to restore peace and harmony in times of

> personal and community conflict. These teachings also serve as the foundation upon which new relationships are to be created. (15)

The work of Cardinal and Hildebrandt is focused on sharing knowledge gained from Elders regarding treaty relationships from First Nations understandings. But the underlying ontological understanding still suffuses this explanation and I take this to also apply to relationships with non-human kin.

In examining the ideas of responding to voices of beads and respecting their agency, I also must acknowledge that there are complexities to the relationships that arise. After all, their very nature is not something I can say, as of yet, that I fully know. I may be approaching a deeper understanding through my work but this recognition of a being-ness, an animacy, can set up an anthropomorphism that ultimately fails to respect what the beads truly are.

In addition to this, I recall still quite clearly that after presenting a paper in Vancouver in 2017 I was approached by an audience member[45] who raised the idea of 'ownership.' That is, I buy beads in commercial transactions and have tended to speak of "my beads." I had to admit that while I had given this some thought – in fact, I had struggled with the relationship I had to 'my' beads and recognition of them as their own beings – I had not yet come to any conclusion about how to reconcile these understandings.

I had considered, for one, nîhiyaw scholar Dr. Billy Ray Belcourt's (2015) brilliant examination of Critical Animal Studies and what he identifies as a failure "to center an analysis of settler colonialism" (2) where he argues that "we cannot dismantle speciesism or re-imagine human-animal relations in the North American context without first or simultaneously dismantling settler colonialism and re-theorizing domesticated animal bodies as *colonial subjects*

[45] I regret that I do not recall the name of this person, as this was an incredibly important question that I would like to be able to give proper credit as it is due.

that must be centered in decolonial thought" (3; italics in original). Further, he points to a failure within Indigenous Studies where "recognition of animals as colonial subjects has been absent" (7) and that "contemporary decolonial thought has yet to engage with a politics of animality that not only recalls 'traditional' and/or 'ceremonial human-animal relations, but is also accountable to animal subjectivities and futurities outside settler colonialism *and* within a project of decolonization" (7-8).

In agreement with Belcourt, who maintains "that a decolonial animal ethic must…[use] Indigenous cosmologies as frameworks for a non-speciesist and anti-colonial animality" (8), I would draw this forward to include the recognition of the beingness of 'things' as understood through nîhiyaw tâpisinowin. I connect this back to Bennett's (2010) political project of 'thing-power' where she asks "How would political responses to public problems change were we to take seriously the vitality of (nonhuman) bodies?" (viii).

Before turning to that more directly, I want to take care, here, and caution that developing a recognition of beads as relatives should not lead to anthropomorphism, which Bennett explains as "the interpretation of what is not human or personal in terms of human or personal characteristics" (98). I recognize that kinship connotes similarity but the relatedness I refer to is based the notion we are all formed of energy and it is this condition which provides the relational connection. Resisting anthropomorphism becomes important when we take seriously the question of "what imaginaries and subjectivities are foreclosed when our politics of decolonization is always already anthropocentric?" (Belcourt 2015, 9).

From these two conversations, I would connect through my engagement with beads to suggest nîhiyaw wiyasowîna provides an approach that, insofar as we do not also engage in anthropomorphism, helps us take seriously the notion that mîkisak are relatives with an agency

and ability to help us grapple with political challenges. And further, because one way in which we engage with them, in relationships of co-creation, we are also able to expand our ability to respond to the challenges we face.

Returning to the conversation I related earlier, on the ethics and implications of 'ownership' in relation to beads, all that I could offer at the time was my agreement that it was an important discussion that needs further inquiry. More, it presents a line of research and thought which I cannot adequately address in my current work. Rather, I believe it demands a whole, carefully worked, piece of its own. I can offer, though, having given this no small amount of thought, that while I am wary of appearing to suggest, in any way, that turning to nîhiyaw pimâtisiwin, nîhiyaw tâpisinowin, and nîhiyaw wiyasowîna offer a panacea for all our challenges (Anderson 2016; Borrows 2008), I do suggest our laws do provide the means to address our challenges and these thornier ethical questions as they arise in our relational web. As Cree and Dunnezah scholar Dr. Val Napoleon (2007) reminds us:

> Internal oppression and power imbalances are another reality that all Indigenous people – like anyone else – have to consciously guard against. Sexism is a reality. Homophobia is a reality. Ageism (despite the rhetoric) is a reality. Many of our communities are not safe places for our children and other vulnerable individuals. Law is one way to deal with questions of oppression and the abuse of power. If we understand law as an intellectual process that all citizens engage in, then we can use that process to enable people to tackle the uncomfortable issues in our communities. (18)

I realize there is so much more to learn about the nature of beads and what we can learn from them. While I feel that, thus far, I have provided some clear connections between beads, beadwork practice, and nîhiyaw law and governance, I know there are other conversations burgeoning that I wish I could engage in here. But again, as I have also learned through this process of writing speaks, this work contains an energy that speaks clearly of what needs to be discussed, and what doesn't, while we have this time together. What remains clear is there is time and space here to discuss some other lessons that are embodied in the piece entitled

'*kiskinohawmatok*' and connected to other pieces I've co-created that bring forward additional ideas of what beadwork is and what it does.[46]

itâtisiwak (they are of such character or disposition)

As a relatively accessible practice, beadwork can be done every day.[47] My contention here is an important benefit of having a beadwork practice (done fairly regularly, at least, if not every day) is how it connects us, as Indigenous people, to our own ways of knowing and the teachings we hold. Building on this belief, and attempting to further the understanding of the process through nîhiyaw tâpisinowin, I look to connect the nature of beads to the work we may take up in doing beadwork.

Through my research I arrived at a formulation that posits knowing what beadwork does can be approached by recognizing what beadwork embodies, or what its character or disposition is. Building on that, I now describe a character of beadwork as a multidimensionality which contributes to the understanding beadwork-as-everyday-resurgence-praxis. Additionally, embedded in the idea of multidimensionality is a shape-shifting ability that helps us counter what Corntassel (2012) describes as "the tools of shape-shifting colonial entities…" (91).

Over the course of my research, I have identified (and named) a number of these dimensions[48] and hope to continue, in future work, to explore these formations more fully. In this work I have elected to focus on four of these dimensions but where it felt appropriate, I have

[46] I am almost amused here to realize that my care and attention to this thesis, as a document, follows ideas of symmetry that is part of my beadwork practice. But as has been discussed, I don't always get to have my own way and as such I am taking note of the insistence that English sub-section titles feel the most appropriate. I defer to

[47] I consider myself to have tremendous privilege in being able to engage in a beadwork practice while and I recognize and acknowledge that beadwork is not necessarily easily accessible to everyone for a number of reasons, including access to the materials and teachings that help support the practice.

[48] The full list of dimensions I have identified and explored to some degree to date include: Beadwork-as-research; Beadwork-as-storytelling; Beadwork-as-pedagogy; Beadwork-as-connection; Beadwork-as-medicine; Beadwork-as-governance-practice.

included some discussion of the other dimensions. The dimensions explicated here are: beadwork-as-research; beadwork-as-medicine; beadwork-as-pedagogy; and beadwork-as-governance-practice.

Beadwork-as-research

Plate 23: Researching, Creating

As was described in Chapter 3: ânisk**ô**mohcikewin (the act of connecting), which provided a discussion on research methodology, I started my graduate research with an understanding of beadwork as a research methodology that drew from Indigenous research methodologies and research-creation. It may seem redundant to return to this again, but I feel it is worth returning to this to discuss how the research for this project reinforced this position. In particular, I return to the work of Chapman and Sawchuk (2012) who explore Research-creation through four modes.[49]

First, to return to the concept of research-creation, we can understand it as: "a conglomerate of approaches and activities that incorporate creative processes and involve a production of artistic works in the context of academic programs" (Chapman and Sawchuk 2012,

[49] I draw from this particularly as there is a beautiful resonance in how they approach this understanding of research-creation, where they take up the concept of "family resemblance" where they "are looking for what makes particular phenomena similar, as well as how they are distinct, but yet of the same class" (Chapman and Sawchuk 2012, 14).

13). While I do not suggest the beadwork-as-research dimension is to be only understood in the context of this particular methodology, I find it offers a helpful way to solidify this understanding that beadwork *is* research. That is, if we understand beadwork practice as an artistic practice and draw it into academic work, as I have done, it very clearly stands as, at the very least, a method of research-creation.

I connect beadwork-as-research to research-creation, here, through the four modes of identified by Chapman and Sawchuk (2012) as follows:

- "Research-for-creation," which involves "an initial gathering together of material, ideas, concepts, collaborators, technologies, et cetera, in order to begin. This gathering is 'research' in the same way that reading through recent journal articles [etc. is]" (15).

  As was described in Chapter 5: mîkistahikâcimo (to tell a story through beadwork), the preparation for *kiskinohawmatok* included the initial gathering that is, itself, research. And to an extent, this gathering continued at different stages as the work unfolded.

- "Research-from-creation" which "…can also involve analyzing different dynamics that flow from a game or a creative project and may lead to the writing of more formal academic papers that are based on an experimental art practice" (17).

  I believe that this thesis attests to how beadwork figures as a form of 'research-from-creation.'

- "Creative presentations of research" speaks to "the explosion of academic genres in recent years is one clear indication of the liveliness of this dimension of

research-creation across a number of disciplines…" and is the presentation of traditional academic research in a creative fashion" (18).

While I again would draw attention to this thesis as the stories woven throughout emerged from and through the practice of beadwork, I would also refer to the beadwork piece entitled '*kiskinohawmatok'* as another expression of this mode in that the piece, overall, does present and represent the fruit of my academic research.

- "Creation-as-research" is the mode that "…involves the elaboration of projects where creation is required in order for research to emerge" and where "research is more or less the end goal in this instance, although the 'results' produced also include the creative production that is entailed, as both a tracing-out and culminating express of the research process" (19).

  While '*kiskinohawmatok'* does not fit as neatly into this mode given that my starting goal with the piece was not research, it emerged from while I was immersed in my thesis research and I instinctively employed a research approach to the work. Once I was done the piece, it was recognizably research to.

I want to consider this last mode a bit further to consider another work that I think encapsulates this mode more clearly. In exploring creation-as-research, Chapman and Sawchuk (2012) further explain it as:

> …a hands-on form of theoretical engagement at the same time as it acknowledges the processes of analysis and articulation of new concepts that are potentially part and parcel of artistic creation. Knowledge is produced as creative work, and not simply through their analysis and interpretation. It is in this sense that such creative work can be understood as a strong form of intervention, contributing to knowledge in a profoundly different way from the academic norm. (21)

Here, I look to the 'Practice Is Ceremony' piece (see Plate 19, p. 89) and point to how this work emerged from a research-creation project[50] that was grounded in oral tradition and the use of visual media as teaching and memory aids to effectively teaching Indigenous governance practices to employees at the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society (Bent Arrow). The work expresses the organization's 'Practice Is Ceremony' story through the representation of a Sundance ceremony as well as the Bent Arrow governance model. The work itself also contains a multiplicity of stories from the process of co-creating the work, with many elements deliberately incorporated to represent particular ideas and understandings (e.g. the colours in the 'tipi' elements, the turtle shell, etc.).

The co-creation process of beading this work also involved incorporating elements where I could make no connection to any knowledge, intention, or understanding I held. I would attribute this to the agency of the mîkisak, but also how the knowledge is, in this case, clearly and distinctly a creative work. Additionally, this piece contains kiskihtamowina that contributes to knowledge in a distinctly Indigenous form, and stands here (alongside the other work presented) as a strong, but loving and generous intervention within the academy.

I also want to point out that this dimension is, from my experience, interconnected with the dimensions of beadwork-as-storytelling and beadwork-as-reciprocity. The beadwork discussed here ('Practice Is Ceremony') was presented to Bent Arrow as a gift to both further support storytelling practice and to enact reciprocity. As such, the beadwork contains an understanding of how "narratives and objects are portable repositories, or storehouses, of memory and practice. They enable people to draw and hold onto shared and common experiences in specific landscapes and create and sustain connections and thereby community"

[50] Funded by the University of Alberta Undergraduate Research Initiative, this research project completed in 2015 was titled "*âcimostakewin*: A Beaded Narrative of Governance Practice."

(Lyons and Marshall 2014, 497). It also contains the love and appreciation for the gifts shared that activated the powerful call to create reciprocity.

Beadwork-as-pedagogy

Plate 24: nosisim learning to bead (2019)

I have been asked a time or two who taught me to bead. I think this is an important question in that, in my experience, speaks both to my artistic lineage but also to a pedagogy that I would describe as nîhiyaw sihcikîwana. I was taught through a learning process predominantly involving observation (e.g. myself at my Gran's side as she'd bead) and practice (e.g. myself at my little table as a 10 year old and continuing forward), with the occasional instruction couched as gentle advice (e.g. my Gran teaching me about colour and contrast by suggesting things for me to consider). As time went on, I would also be provided some demonstration (e.g. Mrs. Alice Bernard patiently demonstrating peyote stitch technique for us in Junior High) and would have opportunities to sometimes ask specific questions (e.g. me asking my Gran about moccasin-making before I struck off to try it on my own).

This observation-and-practice pedagogy was also how I learned to do other 'traditional' activities – such as how to process moose and to make dry meat, clean fish and birds, pick and clean berries, etc. – which is how I originally came to think of it as nîhiyaw sihcikîwana. But I also had an opportunity when I was asked for the first time to "teach" beadwork to consider the

process of learning beadwork. My 'pupil' observed one day how I don't really ever tell her straight out how to do something but rather tend to offer suggestions along the lines of "Well, I'd maybe do this. But you could also do that. In the end it's up to you to decide how you'll do it." She preferred, she explained, if I could just give her specific, linear instructions because that's how she was used to learning.

I hadn't ever noticed that about my approach. I had explained to her that while I appreciated her perspective and I would try to get closer to her learning style so I could be of better assistance, I was not sure I could provide instruction in any other way. In my mind, I had already shifted from how I had learned to attempt a more direct instructional style and I felt like to change it altogether would move me away from something essential. I could not, then, really articulate what that 'essential' quality was.

After that exchange I would take up further experiences which I now name sharing rather than teaching. I am mindful that there are many ways of coming to know something and every person has their own needs and journey. But my role, as I see it, is to support learning by sharing what I can as best and as clearly as I can while I follow a primarily learning-by-observing-and practicing pedagogy; I provide demonstrations (so the learner can observe) and encourage practice while offering ideas on how certain things might be achieved.

There is, however, another dimension that exists in this approach, which is why I would consider this pedagogy to be particularly a nîhiyaw sihcikîwana. First, I encountered (with great excitement and appreciation) the recent dissertation by Métis scholar Dr. Danielle Lussier (2020) which beautifully presented "Métis Beadwork Practice as an Indigenous Legal Pedagogy" (86). This work was powerfully resonant with both my nîhiyaw identity and my Métis ancestry and artistic lineage. What I draw forward here is her observation that a "regulated and linear

approach to learning and problem solving is in direct opposition to Indigenous ways of knowing and worldviews, including fundamental understandings of interrelatedness of all things" (103).

Connected to this, and particularly helpful to the reaching towards that essential quality of my own understanding of pedagogy in relation to beadwork I expressed earlier, comes from the work of Willie Ermine (1995), who explains: "the Cree word, *mamatowisowin, …*describes the capability of tapping into the 'life force' as a means of procreation. This Cree concept describes a capacity to be or do anything, to be creative" (104). He goes on, explaining:

> For the Cree, the phenomenon of *mamatowan* refers not just to the self but to the being in connection with happenings. It also recognizes that other life forms manifest the creative force in the context of the knower. It is an experience in context, a subjective experience that, for the knower, becomes knowledge itself. The experience is knowledge. (104)[51]

What I believe I was beginning to apprehend was the recognition of the beingness of beads and in the co-creative relationship that is beadwork practice was a way of learning that brings us into "connection with happenings." It is therefore vitally important, and follows another law taught to me by my mother, which is the law of non-interference, that our pedagogy not step over the burgeoning relationship between the beadworker. In other words, we may aid and support as needed (and requested) but not impose or direct in ways that interfere with other people's purpose or life-learning. And, while my way of learning beadwork follows the nîhiyaw sihcikîwana and could thus be understood to be intwined with beadwork-as-pedagogy in the learning of how to do beadwork, I believe that the beadwork itself is a pedagogy that follows mamatowisowin and where we are connecting to knowledge through experience and relationship with mîkisak.

[51] I depart here from including all the nîhiyawîwin/nêhiyawêwin terms in the glossary as I cannot confirm an appropriate translation for either but take contextual clues to suggest these terms may be 'mamâhtâwisiwin' (of a spiritual nature, giftedness; spiritual power talent, giftedness) and 'mamâhtâwan (it is spiritually powerful; it is spiritually effective; it is amazing, it is wonderous).

Beadwork-as-medicine

In an undergraduate course[52] exploring topics related to the Indian Residential schools, "the destructive and disruptive impacts" (Archibald and Dewar 2010, 2), and the concept of 'reconciliation' I engaged with the negative impacts to sexuality and gender stemming from abuses perpetrated in the residential schools that produced "a disproportionate need for healing among Aboriginal people" (Archibald and Dewar 2010, 2). This examination triggered a personal response out of my own experience of sexual abuse and from the recognition of how that abuse can be tied directly to the intergenerational impacts of residential schools. Perhaps counterintuitively, it was very precisely because it was a deeply uncomfortable topic, I knew I needed to examine it more closely. This led to a creative research project using beadwork in which I considered the ways we understand and express our sexuality and gender today in the aftermath of the residential school experience.

Recalling the dimension of beadwork-as-medicine, I set out to explore this incredibly painful and sensitive subject buffered by the healing practice of beadwork. Drawing on some of the course materials along with other literature, I began reading and thinking about the issue and I kept a journal where I recorded responses to those materials and sketched out ideas for an art piece connected to, and emerging from, that investigation. The result of that research process is a mixed media art piece that brings together two artistic traditions in a dialogue that speaks of truth emerging from closely held secrets, transforming the dark legacy of abuse.

[52] This was the University of Alberta English 308 (Winter 2013 term) course taught by Dr. Keavy Martin.

My medicine called forth a floral motif, inspired by the works of my grandmothers, to draw upon a power that remains vibrant despite our losses and tribulations. The piece of beadwork is directly mounted into the center of a painted piece (acrylic on canvas) to represent the painful impacts of abuse being transformed. Called "Returning," the piece also gently invites our spirit to return home in a process of trauma recovery, a process of personal reconciliation restoring a healthy relationship with ourselves as whole beings. The work was dedicated to all the Survivors to honour their courage in bringing their truths to light.

Plate 25: 'Returning,' 2014

Dr. Paulina Johnson (2017) argues that "we cannot enact change without discussing how colonialism does more than impact Indigenous histories, as it also affects mental health and well-being of Indigenous peoples. Acknowledging this harsh reality encourages appropriate responses needed for our healing and resurgence of being" (59). The energy this work contains recognizes those impacts but turns to beadwork as both an intervention – to speak back against narratives that would limit us to our traumas – as well as an expression of the healing that can be found through the practice of beadwork (Archibald and Dewar 2012).

This work also points to the ways in which connection is incredibly important for our very wellness (Archibald and Dewar 2010, 20), which also signals the manifestation of beadwork-as-connection. This evokes connections explored throughout this thesis: through the works that become gifts, through the stories that are told and retold; through relationships transcending time and space. In my Granny Flett's loving home, a transformative connection was made in her greeting an anxious little girl with the words: "You can call me Granny Flett." And another profound connection in the opening of a small drawer containing beads that would wordlessly welcome me into still-unfolding relationships. In my Gran's loving home, I found a profound connection through our beadwork and the expression "beadwork is my medicine" to a near legendary and remarkable woman.

Beadwork-as-governance-practice

Through many of the works presented here (particularly 'Practice Is Ceremony' and '*kiskinohawmatok*') we have encountered various elements of nîhiyaw law and governance. That is, I identified beadwork-as-governance-practice in part from the recognition that through the act of beadwork I was engaging in a form of relationship with my other-than-human kin (beads) in ways that taught and supported the practice of nîhiyaw wiyasowîna and as such felt this was an expression of nîhiyaw governance where we are living and working together respectfully. But in also returning to my original research question (reworded slightly) to consider "how beadwork is connected to Indigenous law and governance," I reached to another work to this discussion as it is an expression and depiction of nîhiyaw pimâtisiwin, which includes our laws and governance.

The piece I turned to, entitled '*miskâsowin'* (Plate 26, next page) was my response to a provocation to "research [our] own indigeneity familial ancestral history and create or perform

an art form that speaks toward [our] own land-based subjectivity under a colonial history."[53] This work speaks to concepts on Indigeneity and colonialism in which I had located myself vis-à-vis Alfred and Corntassel's (2005) contention that:

> "Indigenousness is an identity constructed, shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism…It is this oppositional, place-based existence, along with the consciousness of being in struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization by foreign peoples, that fundamentally distinguishes Indigenous peoples from other peoples of the world. (597)

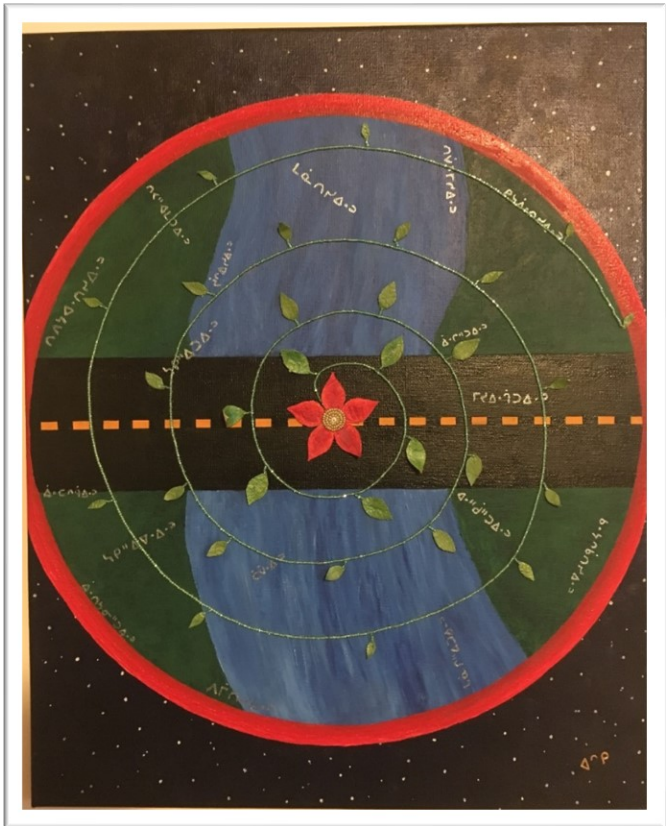

Plate 26: 'miskâsowin' (2015)

This piece was also informed by Corntassel's (2012) argument that: "being Indigenous today means struggling to reclaim and regenerate one's relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization" (88). This thought led me back to

[53] This was an assignment as part of the 2015 UBC-O summer intensive VISA460E course taught by the amazing and generous Tannis Monkman-Nielsen (Métis/Anishinaabe/Danish).

considering the impacts holding loss-focused narratives had on my sense of self and place in the world.

From this space I travelled inward (Ermine 1995) to connect with my fundamental concept of myself: that is, who I am and where I come from. I located myself in terms of my family and territory. Embedded in this is what Henderson (2000) ties to language, relationship to place, and the idea that our "worldview asserts that all life is sacred and that all life forms are interconnected" (259).

Turning to beads to help manifest an expression of that location, the piece I titled '*miskâsowin*' emerged. The central element is a flower, that represents niya*,* comprised of painted deer rawhide with a rhinestone and gold-coloured beads in the centre. This flower alludes to my ancestry and also artistic lineage as a nîhiyaw'skwîw who descends from women renowned for their floral beadwork. The colouring is meant to evoke fire, and connects the term iskwîw, which I have been taught is connected etymologically to the term iskotîw, and expresses the spark of creation and generative power we embody. Connected to, and surrounding, the flower is a vine of pale green cut beads; this represents my ancestors and descendants. It is arranged in a spiral relating to a fundamental form resounding through creation and within our DNA. The vine spreads out across the land to connect the flower (niya) to all of the land and directly to the concept of womanhood.

The red hoop is related to a teaching received from nikâwîys Maria Campbell that conceptualizes a nêhiyaw governance model in the form of four concentric circles. In the centre are the awasisak (the children who embody our future); surrounding the awasisak are the kihtiyâyak (the Elders who embody our past) who protect our future with knowledge of our past; the third circle are iskwîwak who provide nurturing and care and protect the inner circles; and

finally, standing in the outer circle as the first line of protection and provision are the napîwak. It is the third hoop where I placed myself at the time when this work was created and where I still identify my primary role and responsibility.

The central image of the circle is also connected, conceptually, to ideas of ceremony and ceremonial renewal as important acts of connection to our responsibilities under miyo-wîcîhtowin. As explained by Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000), "the circle has come to be recognized as occupying an important symbolic role among First Nations" as it "symbolized the oneness of the First Nations people with the Creator and the spiritual, social, and political institutions of the First Nations" (14). They further draw the connections between the circle in ceremonial lodges, where ceremonies are understood to be an integral part of renewal of "one of the sacred ways in which the nation would continue to possess the capability to nurture, protect, care for, and heal its people" (14).

The rawhide used in this work to form both the flower and leaves was a gift from Syilx artist Cori Derrickson, which was gifted to our class as part of a powerful exercise of cooperative resource sharing. This very exercise demonstrated a practice of miyo-wîcîhtowin and as such the very material of this work carries the energy of what it is and can be to engage in respectful relations together. Metaphorically, water and land depicted in paint together to represent the territory I am from. The river referenced in this work the Waskahikan River which connects to my memories visiting the river for grounding; due to privatisation and then highway twinning, my access to this river changed, and so part of thinking through the impacts of colonialism was this displacement.

Running across the canvas is a highway, representing colonialism. This is related to the displacement discussed above as I was also thinking about how disruptive the highways have

been in my community for some years. It was this particular highway (Highway 43) I am referencing in this work; this is the highway that opened up our territory to extensive settler colonialism in the early-to-mid 20th century. And it is this same highway that was recently twinned through my reserve, which resulted in a number of other places that have been important to me (including a pond) being destroyed. The highway also references loss of life – lives of my family and community members who have died on that highway – and other forms of violence (connecting to the 'Highway of Tears'). I was also thinking of the literal imposition of this form over the land, and how this further extends to thinking of the processes of colonialism, which employ "cognitive imperialism, also known as cultural racism, is the imposition of one worldview on a people who have an alternative worldview, with the implication that the imposed worldview is superior to the alternative worldview" (Battiste 2000, 192-193)

The starry sky surrounding the red circle represents the universe, infinite time and space, and all of creation. When I framed the landscape in the painting with a circle, it suddenly appeared to be a globe (the whole world). It seemed entirely natural to then add stars and try to create a feeling of the endless universe we are also part of in creation. This element also speaks to other spaces, and ways of seeing and knowing.

Representing resilience, the gifts of Creation, and nîhiyawîwin, in turning inward and considering where I come from, emerged ideas of how our narrative can shift from one of loss to recovery and that revitalization is the story I want to tell. This work involved exploring concepts that served to reinforce and reaffirm my identity as a nîhiyaw'skwîw and recognizing myself as related and connected to all of creation. Through nîhiyaw tâpisinowin, as I understand it, my world-view is about wholeness and relationships – not divisions and conflict (Ermine 1995, 110).

And, in accordance with wiyasowîna, my core responsibility is to uphold and enact miyo-wîcîhtowin.

From this perspective, I can find gratitude for the highway that returns me home when I have gone away, the highway that also enhances our ability to reach the traditional lands where my family and I continue to live out nîhiyaw pimâtisowin. It is also a perspective that the beads remind me of through the painstaking practice of careful stitching: I can have patience for people I otherwise would consider agents of oppression and destruction (Henderson 2000, 260) and drawing from patience, I can move back to expressions of nîhiyaw wiyasowîna such as manâtisiwin and sâkihitowin. Ultimately, this is the work of reminding us we do share territory and connections, and we can live together as wâhkômâkanak. And, through this work, as I was thinking about my relationship to the land in my territory, I recognized that part of my own story included deeply rooted narratives of loss including (but sadly, not limited to: loss of access to river and land; loss of language (generationally); loss of family and kin; and displacement and homelessness.

Through this process, I also connected deeply to the understanding that while my life, and my people's lives, have been greatly impacted by the disruptive and disconnecting force of colonialism and we have experienced (and continue to experience) very painful losses, we have truly not lost sawêyihtâkosiwin. This project had reminded me that while the stories of grief, loss, anger, pain, struggle (etc.) are true stories (and part of our full, embodied, human experience), they are not the only true stories of my life – or our lives.

In the December 21, 2020 Indigenous Star Knowledge symposium, Knowledge Holder Wilfred Buck shared a story from From Elder Ken Goodwill (Standing Buffalo, SK); Buck related:

> And one of the things he shared was about the loss of some of that knowledge that has passed on with the Elders, and we haven't had an opportunity to record. And the way this opportunity…the way this knowledge was gained…it was gained through dreams, it was gained through visions, it was gained through fasting, it was gained through ceremony, it was gained through traveling and talking to people, and it was gained through listening. And we still do those things, so all that knowledge that is out there we think is lost, is not actually lost. It is just up to us to reclaim that knowledge again.

A bit more recently, I encountered this idea again in the writing of Dr. Johnson (2017), who notes: "As Nimosôm, my grandfather, Jerry Saddleback explained, our culture was never lost, we simply left it, but we are more than capable to go back to it (November 2, 2016)" (5). These were important and timely reminders that echoed what niwâkômâkanak – mîkisak – had spoken of while we worked on '*miskâsowin*.' The piece contains nîhiyawîwin terms[54] written in spirit markers to express, in our own language and script,[55] legal concepts. Through this work I had felt compelled to visually express the understanding that our knowledges, our law, our language, still exists as it is part of creation, and is there for us to return to.

[54] The terms also indirectly speak of my particular ancestry; the book they came from (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000) was co-authored by my late father and so using this material also brings in an element of communication with him.

[55] In my recent nêhiyawêwin lessons taught by Reuben Quinn, lessons on the spirit markers were shared by Carl Quinn (February 2, 2021). This included a story of how the spirit markers were gifted to the people through the experience of Calling Badger.

kîsahkamikisiwin (conclusion, finishing; finishing the event)

The trees speak,
But their language is hidden deep inside their bark,
They must trust us,
Before they reveal it.
The wind speaks,
But in so many different languages
That it is hard to pick one out.
The stars speak,
But their fiery flares
Make us afraid to know what they say.
All things in the universe have a language
It is not they who must learn to speak,
It is we who must learn to listen.
- Aliya Shanti (quoted in Settee 2013, 8).

âcimowin: ataskahêw (s/he gives her/him/them work to do)

"This was your Granny Flett's. I think she'd want you to finish it."

I had held the fabric, ran my fingers over the beads, my eyes filled with tears. So many questions! But I can say nothing past the lump in my throat, so I only nod in response.

I do not actually recognize what I hold in my hands; the pattern is a mystery to me. But I feel the pull to work on it, to find my way to my grandmother's spirit and bring her vision to life. I realize, though, I am not yet equipped. I decide I will carefully pack it away and trust that one day I would have the knowledge and skills to follow the path she had traced out in flour paste.

Eventually I say: "Yes, I will finish it one day."

Plate 27: Granny Flett's (unfinished) octopus bag

kiskêyihtamowin (knowledge learning; knowledge, experience, learning)

Through the promise of beads I began the development of an almost life-long relationship that has enriched my life in ways far beyond what I can express – here, in this thesis, or anywhere through words. The best I can do, perhaps, is continue to practice for as long as I am able so that each stitch is a prayer of gratitude. And, as I now sit at my desk at home focused on the academic world of reading and writing and drawing this visit to a close, I acknowledge the beads that sit close and speak to me of the possibilities of creation. The containers and the beads they hold change as I move between different works, and the different combinations of colours, sizes, and shapes lends itself to the consciousness of how beading, and the beadwork it produces, are constantly shifting shape.

Through this work, I contribute to an expanded understanding of art-based practice in relation to Indigenous governance and knowledge production that centers generative stories of resilience grounded in nîhiyaw pimâtisowin and honouring the gifts of Indigenous grandmothers. This is coupled with a contribution to the growing body of work on Indigenous research and knowledge. Recognizing beadwork as multi-dimensional, this work offers a "counter-hegemonic discourse" that supports "cultural vitality" (Andersen and Hokowhitu 2007, 43). The thesis pays tribute to the 'women's work' that has been, and continues to be, integral to the continuation of traditions, knowledge, and governance structures. It is my belief that fostering recognition of these practices as ongoing expressions of "iyiniw sawêyihtâkosiwin" (the peoples' sacred gifts)" (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 10) is a powerful, everyday act of resurgence that centers respect and equity which takes up a "grounded normativity" (Coulthard 2014, 172) of contemporary expressions of Indigenous governance.

Part of the gift this research provides is the recognition that the art of Indigenous beadwork can be understood as a vibrant and painstaking act of creation that can link the past,

present, and future in a visual narrative. Drawing from an exploration of the practice of beadwork and my nîhiyaw tâpisinowin, my research advances an understanding of beads as non-human beings with whom we can form relationships and learn important lessons from. I describe this understanding as a nîhiyaw materialist perspective of beadwork.

These conceptualizations work in concert to expand our notions of animacy and inanimacy in ways that can help us respond more creatively, and potentially more effectively, to questions like Jane Bennet's (2010): "How would political responses to public problems change were we to take seriously the vitality of (nonhuman) bodies?" (viii). Here, Bennett's materialist perspective presents a way of thinking about 'inanimate' objects as vibrant, animate subjects that is similar to nîhiyaw thinking. However, as explored earlier,[56] her work does not recognize objects as possessing the animating force we, in nîhiyawîwin, would connect to concepts of 'spirit' (ahcâhk). But, putting these ideas into conversation prompts us to consider other ways of being as we pursue our respectful relationships with beings so very different from us which leads me to advance, through this work, a recognition of beadwork as an other-than-human relation that can help us imagine new possibilities of being in good relations with and in our shared world.

We can be reoriented towards new, creative responses that emerge from our relationships with these other-than-human kin. And, as we learn from our relatives, beadwork can help us develop practices such as patience, respect, and adaptability that center the consciousness of connection and caring and enhance governance responses to critical issues such as suicide (Archibald and Dewar 2010), or family and gendered violence (Jobin and Kappo 2017; Nadeau 2020).

[56] Refer back to Chapter 3: âniskômohcikewin (the act of connecting).

My work affirms that nîhiyaw ontology conditions recognition of our kinship to beads, as is signaled through the language, and invokes miyo-wîcîhtowin – a responsibility to pursue or maintain good relations – and wâhkôhtowin – a relatedness that "signifies a kinship not just to humans but also to all other living entities and spirit beings" (Napoleon 2014, 85). A nîhiyaw perspective teaches us beadwork is an other-than-human relative and through our relationships – active, reciprocal, respectful engagement – we can imagine new possibilities of being in good relations with, and in, our shared world.

To clarify, 'grounded normativity' "refers to the ethical frameworks provided by these Indigenous place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge" (Coulthard and Simpson 2016, 254). I firmly locate myself and my work in nîhiyaw pimâtisiwin, which evokes the place-based connection as a people Indigenous to this land (currently known in dominant society as North America). Further, in approaching beads and beadwork through nîhiyaw tâpisinowin and understanding my practice of it as nîhiyaw sihcikîwana, beadwork operates as grounded normativity as it:

> …houses and reproduces the practices and procedures, based on deep reciprocity, that are inherently informed by an intimate relationship to place. Grounded normativity teaches us how to live our lives in relation to other people and nonhuman life forms in a profoundly nonauthoritarian, nondominating, nonexploitative manner. (Coulthard and Simpson 2016, 254)

The inspiration of time spent with my family in our territory connected with a recognition of how vibrant our traditions remain, and how these are enactments of Indigenous – and more specifically nîhiyaw - governance. It also connected with an idea that being caught up in a focus of narratives of loss perpetuated by settler colonialism obscures this reality. And, perhaps, work to counter this can be taken up from within our traditions – including our narrative forms that remind us of who we are and where we come from, by drawing on "a large, intergenerational,

collective memory" (McLeod 2007, 8) and rebuilding personal and community narratives from this source.

What this work has also fostered is the recognition that each and every bead holds incredible potential. I suspect any beadworker, regardless of their worldview, has a genuine appreciation for beads that is not simply instrumental. I also suspect that many of us could easily and eagerly find commonalities in our appreciation. In starting from a place of feeling connection to my grandmothers through this work, my research has also provided me with an expanded feeling of connection and kinship to all the people, especially my Indigenous kin, who continue this work in the traditions of their people.

Over the past five years, I have imagined, envisioned, sketched, written, prayed, and agonized over the shape and elements that would comprise my thesis. Fittingly, focus began to return when I remembered how to let go. To be clear, in the end I have elected to give up the idea that what the work ends up being must be exactly what I imagined it to be. More specifically, that it must explicitly incorporate all the ideas and elements I've believed to be 'essential' through these past years. Instead, I return to one of the hard-earned lessons my beadwork practice has taught me – how to let the work become what *it* needs to be. The hard-earned part is accepting, with grace, that I am not in control.

This piece, as it currently sits, speaks to me of trust. As with my beadwork, it is a choice I have, to trust in my practice and to remember that it involves a process that builds on decades of experience and is connected to the creative legacy of my grandmothers. It is about choosing to trust an insight which holds that beadwork is a practice of co-creation that also asks me to respect those other beings involved in the creative process and to work as harmoniously as possible as we call into being some form that is imbued with its own idea of what is essential to

its being-ness. It was about choosing to trust this will also emerge in my writing, as writing is a creative process for me that is close kin to my beadwork practice. They might, in fact, be identical twins.

This piece, as it currently sits, also reminds me that part of my vision will remain incorporated in the work, even though it will not be visible. It is not merely the fact that the process itself has left traces of work placed and then undone, the thought-threads that crossed through, over and behind the material; it is also in the rough designs laid out and then overwritten by the designs that come to be. Those designs will remain underneath the work that will eventually cover it and, like a palimpsest, retain other stories of this piece.

In the end, what this thesis attempts to capture is a particular rendering of beadwork using words and images in a document. It is a translation, in ways, in which there may always be gaps because sometimes some words cannot be translated into another language. It is also a mediated presentation of stories and as such it should be understood that some parts of the stories – and even some stories altogether – may not be told. The work may still be lovely, or powerful, or any other superlative, but at the same time it has become something else that does not contain quite the same energy or meaning, and our ability to engage with it also is different. However, and perhaps more importantly, utilizing beadwork transforms this approach – this written form – into what Garroutte (2003) calls "Radical Indigenism," which "is a scholarship in which questions are allowed to unfold within values, goals, categories of thought, and models of inquiry that are embedded in the philosophies of knowledge generated by Indian people, rather than in ones imposed upon them" (144).

âhkamêyihtam (s/he continues to think of future deeds or tasks)

My understanding is that there is no "goodbye" in nîhiyawîwin. I was taught years ago, in nêhiyawêwin, that when we take our leave of one another we say: "ka wâpamitanasamena." I've also heard people say "mwestâs." But my mom says we would likely say, in our nîhiyawîwin, "îkosi mâka" to signal the ending of a visit. In none of these terms is a sense of finality (as I hear them) but rather an acknowledgement that something has drawn to a close, for now.

My mom taught me that her môsom used to say "kîspin pimâtisiyânih." This was a lesson that we are not promised a tomorrow and so need to do all we can in the time we do have (only now). I would say it's a reminder to be grateful for that time, and to not waste it in regret for what it could have been or what you feel it should be. With this, though, lives the understanding that doing all we can do in the here and now is to be mindful of your responsibilities and obligations for those who may follow. This is also a promise for tomorrow, to use our knowledge and wisdom to work towards a future that can hold us all in love and care, in miyo pimâtisowin.

There is a (not-so-gentle) lesson I've learned over my life. As much as I want to create all of the things in response to any inspiration that arises, I do not truly have the capacity. There are times when I simply do not have the energy or the strength take up the work. The reminder I have been given, the lesson I am learning now to embody, is this is my humanity. However, there is also a loving, grandmotherly lesson that rest is necessary, balance is essential and, sometimes it is the better choice (not a capitulation or even a compromise) to leave things be for it serves a higher purpose that I might not see at the time (or ever).

In other words, I have had to learn to get out of my own way.[57] Doing so opens the space for other work to be done, and especially to create space for other people to share their gifts.

[57] It may be more accurate to say this is a practice I try to adhere to. The learning process, which is ongoing, is being able to discern when I am actually standing in my own way and when I am standing strong.

Visiting reminds us of this, also, where the exchange is balanced and respectful. There is also the clear reminder, in both visiting and in doing beadwork as I have come to know it, that we are not called upon to do everything, be everything; to operate so is a path to pâstâhowin,[58] where we transgress against others by not honouring their voices, their contributions, their gifts.

Recently, I recalled one of my early beading projects. I was about 11 years old and had taken up loomwork. I had made a set of small barrettes in pastel shades of blue, yellow, and pink. I chose the colours mainly because I thought they were pretty and the beads were silver-lined, so they had a bit of an extra shine I found appealing. The pattern was very simple: yellow and pink open diamonds with a blue background. The challenge for me had been removing the beadwork from the loom and then affixing it to a backing that I then attached to barrettes. I felt quite pleased when it was done.

My Gran had come for a visit and I was excited to show her my work. She examined it closely and smiled to show her approval of my work. And then she suggested, gently, "Perhaps next time consider using colours that have more contrast." I had not really noticed how the pink and yellow almost disappeared into the blue background until she pointed it out. I saw colours that I liked and mostly felt proud that I had managed to figure out how to take the beadwork off the loom and successfully sewed it onto factory-tanned hide. But I took in what she said, and looked again at my work.

I have often been very vulnerable to criticism; I was especially so at that age. But I did not feel her words as anything other than loving. I would later come to deeply appreciate her rare intervention (it would be one of the only times my Gran ever provided me with such a direct

[58] McAdam (2015) explains that *pâstâhowin* means "the breaking of a law(s) against another human being" and is also "has been described as going against natural law," pointing out that "breaking these laws can bring about divine retribution with grave consequences" (43).

lesson) and I would take that lesson and apply it in my life. I also kept the barrettes, though I think I only wore them once and then put them away with what would become a collection of partially beaded items. There is love attached to those barrettes.

I often pass along that advice when learning together with people starting their own beadwork practice: contrast is an element that can be really important to how the work turns out. I also will offer my belief that in the end you will have to decide for yourself what colours work best and note that, sometimes, a lack of contrast *is* a powerful design choice. But, for myself, in most cases, this is an important aspect of how my work comes together.

In this work, as much as possible, I focused my intention and energy on bringing together elements that spoke of joy, of hope, of promise. This is the sparkle, colour, shine that I love so much. My beadwork is a conscious working of materials that speak to the love in my heart and the fire of my soul (ahcâhk). In a relationship with the materials – in recognizing and celebrating the animacy of the beads (mîkisak) – I am mindful that what emerges is not a matter of my will and work alone. So even while I have composed these words with care, shared images thoughtfully, and edited this work to attend to the project of producing a document that shines in celebration of where I come from, I arrive here, remembering a lesson on contrast, the recalcitrance of beads, and woodland flowers.

I am reminded that the darkness of a background provides an exquisite contrast to amplify the sparkle of beads. The dark velvet of my Granny Flett's (as-yet) unfinished octopus bag comes to mind, as does the vibrant colours of the opaque seed beads she had worked onto the material. I call this to mind now because, as I come to the end of this work, I am considering the work that feels like it has been left undone, empty spaces I am seeking to fill.

In speaking of the vulnerability attendant with Indigenous research and autoethnography, McIvor (2010) notes that this approach "with exposure, private details are shared, bringing with it an open invitation for judgement and scrutiny" (142). She shares the hope that "through sharing some of the intimate details of one's spirit, that it also opens possibilities for compassion, kindness, and greater levels of understanding" (142). In some respects, attempting to approach my research and writing with "objectivity" in mind seems like it would have been easier for me. But I return to the Wilson's (2008) relational accountability and also, the "dual responsibility" McIvor also identifies as something often carried by Indigenous researchers and keep in mind that in my work I recognize I too will be "…held accountable to Elders, wisdom-keepers, leaders, family members, and fellow community members…" (142).

Those spaces, I have come to understand, are not for me to try to fill here and now as I also seek to remain true what this work has chosen to be. It may be they are works I can take up at a later time. And, it also may be works that other people may take up, in their own way and time, and gift us all with their creative and insightful work. In thinking of the work that I can do today, but being mindful of a responsibility towards tomorrow. I take comfort in the reminder that "now I know there is no "there," only the journey which will never end. I have had to let go of the black and white thinking of neat beginnings and clear ends. …Do it for them, those who are coming, those who deserve better and have a right to ancestral knowledge and knowing" (McIvor 2010, 142)

I am thinking of visiting.

I am thinking of what visiting looks like, feels like, sounds like. Or what it has been in my experience. The sharing of stories and ideas in this thesis follows my understanding of the importance of visiting – kiyohkêwin – in nîhiyaw pimâtisowin. The form of this visiting, though,

is one I cannot quite recall ever engaging in before and as such I am not entirely sure how I expected it to look, feel, and sound. What I do know is that the hope and promise in visiting lies in the opportunity to foster connection.

In this, I feel this work has done that.

And I am so very grateful to have had this time to share here with you.

îkosi mâka

References

Absolon, Kathleen E. (Minigiizhigokwe). 2011. *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know.* Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

Aguirre, Kelly. 2015. "Telling Stories: Idle No More, Indigenous Resurgence and Political Theory." In *More Will Sing Their Way to Freedom*, edited by Elaine Coburn, 213-240. Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

Alfred, Taiaike and Jeff Corntassel. "Being Indigenous: Resurgences Against Contemporary Colonialism. *Government & Opposition*, 40 (2005), 597-614. https://www.corntassel.net/being_indigenous.pdf

Andersen, Chris and Brendan Hokowhitu. 2007. "Whiteness: Naivety, Void and Control." *Junctures* 8: 39-49. Retrieved from http://go.galegroup.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA166351111&v=2.1&u=edmo69826&it=r&p=LitRC&sw=w&asid=9d2563a6f5ed6c67df241ff3c24e1a33. May 27, 2016.

Anderson, Kim. 2016. *A Recognition of Being, Second Edition: Resconstructing Native Womanhood*. Toronto: Women's Press. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ualberta/detail.action?docID=6281996.

Archibald, Linda and Jonathan Dewar. 2010. "Creative Arts, Culture, and Healing: Building an Evidence Base." *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health* 8(3): 1-25. https://www.academia.edu/5872881/Creative_Arts_Culture_and_Healing_Building_an_Evidence_Base_1_Background?email_work_card=title.

Battiste, Marie. 2000. "Maintaining Aboriginal Identity, Language, and Culture in Modern Society." In *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, edited by Marie Battiste, 192-208. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press. ProQuest ebrary.

Baysal, Emma. 2013. "A tale of two assemblages: Early Neolithic manufacture and use of beads in the Konya plain." *Anatolian Studies* 63: 1-15. DOI: 10.1017/S006615461300001X.

Belcourt, Billy-Ray. 2015. "Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects: (Re)Locating Animality in Decolonial Thought." *Societies* 5: 1-11. DOI: 10.3390/soc5010001.

Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. DOI: https://doi-org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/10.1215/9780822391623.

Bol, Marsha Clift. 1985. "Lakota Women's Artistic Strategies in Support of the Social System." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 9(1): 33-51. DOI: http://dx.doi.org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/10.17953/aicr.09.1.ul5144521k71234p

Borrows, John. 2008. “Seven Generations, Seven Teachings: Ending the Indian Act.” Research Paper for the National Centre for First Nations Governance. National Centre for First Nations Governance/Centre National Pour La Gouvernance Des Premieres Nations. https://fngovernance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/john_borrows.pdf.

Brant Castellano, Marlene. 2000. “Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge.” In *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World*, edited by George J. Sefa Dei, Budd L. Hall and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg, 21-36. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. eBook Academic Collection, EBSCOhost.

Buck, Wilfred. 2020. “Adisokan: Winter Solstice, Stars and Storytelling.” Indigenous Knowledges Symposia: A series of local and international gatherings, on the land and online, from Ingenium – Canada’s Museums of Science and Innovation/Institute of Indigenous Research and Studies, University of Ottawa, online, December 21, 2020. https://spaces.hightail.com/space/ByUNqSQjbE/files/fi-e45b41f1-8274-4f1a-bc0f-718e0c5a0084/fv-87a43c62-8183-462f-9715-8ed4b274929a/ISK%20-%20Dec%2021,%202020.mp4

Buck, Wilfred. 2019. “Wilfred Buck Tells the Story of Star Woman.” SciFri, Soundcloud, 6 September 2019. https://soundcloud.com/scifri/wilfred-buck-tells-the-story-of-star-woman.

Cardinal, Harold. 1990 (1969). *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada’s Indians*. Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre.

Cardinal, Harold and Walter Hildebrandt. 2000. *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream Is That Our Peoples Will One Day Be Clearly Recognized As Nations*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

Chacaby, Maya. 2011. “Kipimoojikewin: Articulating Anishinaabe Pedagogy Through Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe Language) Revitalization.” MA Thesis, University of Toronto. https://www.academia.edu/3480224/Kipimoojikewin_Articulating_Anishinaabe_pedagogy_through_Anishinaabemowin_Revitalization.

Chapman, Owen, and Kim Sawchuk. 2012. “Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and ‘Family Resemblances.’” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 37 (1): 5–26. doi:10.22230/cjc.2012v37n1a2489.

Choyke, Alice M. and Daniella E. Bar-Yosef Mayer. 2017. “Introduction: The Archaeology of Beads, Beadwork and Personal Ornaments.” In *Not Just for Show: The Archaeology of Beads, Beadwork, and Personal Ornaments.* Bar-Yosef Mayer, Daniella, Clive Bonsall, and Alice M.Choyke, Eds. Oxford and Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, Limited.

Corntassel, Jeff. 2012. “Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous Pathways to Decolonization and Sustainable Self-determination.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1(1): 86-101. http://decolonization.org/index.php/des/article/view/18627/15550.

Coulthard, Glen Sean. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Coulthard, Glen and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. 2016. "Grounded Normativity/Place-Based Solidarity. *American Quarterly*, 68(2): 249-255. https://muse-jhu-edu.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/article/622080/pdf.

Crooks, Claire V., Debbie Chiodo, Darren Thomas, and Ray Hughes. 2010. "Strengths-based Programming for First Nations Youth in Schools: Building Engagement Through Healthy Relationships and Leadership Skills." *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction* 8(2):160-173. DOI: 10.1007/s11469-009-9242-0.

Cruikshank, Julie. 2005. *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, & Social Imagination.* Vancouver: UBC Press. Canadian Electronic Library/desLibris.

Cruikshank, Julie. 1998. *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory.* Vancouver: UBC Press.

Duncan, Kate C. 1989. *Northern Athapaskan Art: A Beadwork Tradition.* Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre.

Duncum, Paul. 2004. "Visual Culture Isn't Just Visual: Multiliteracy, Multimodality and Meaning." *Studies in Art Education* 45(3): 252-264. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1320972.

Edge, Lois Elizabeth. 2011. "My grandmother's moccasins: Indigenous women, ways of knowing and Indigenous aesthetic of beadwork." PhD diss., University of Alberta. https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/dissertations-theses/my-grandmothers-moccasins-indigenous-women-ways/docview/902747715/se-2?accountid=14474.

Ewart, Elizabeth. 2012. "Making and Unmaking Panará Beadwork – Or, How to Overcome the Fixity of Material Things." *Anthropology and Humanism* 37(2): 177-190. DOI: 10.1111/j.1548-1409.2012.01127.x.

Farrell Racette, Sherry. 2011. "Historical Overview: Stitching Beauty: Métis Beadwork." In *Wâpikwaniy: A Beginner's Guide to Métis Floral Beadwork,* Gregory Scofield and Amy Briley, 3-5. Saskatoon, SK: Gabriel Dumont Institute.

Garroutte, Eva Marie. 2003. *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost).

Gaudry, Adam J.P. 2011. "Insurgent Research." *Wicazo Sa Review* 26(1): 113-136. DOI: 10.1353/wic.2011.0006.

Gill, Ann E. 1976. *Beadwork: The Technique of Stringing, Threading and Weaving*. London: B T Batsford Limited.

Heinbuch, Jean. 1992. *A Beadwork Companion.* Liberty, UT: Eagle's View Publishing Company.

Henderson, James (Sa'ke'j) Youngblood. 2015. "The Split Head Resistance: Using Imperial Law to Contradict Colonial Law for Aboriginal Justice." In *More Will Sing Their Way to Freedom*, edited by Elaine Coburn, 67-85. Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

Henderson, James (Sákéj) Youngblood. 2000. "Ayukpachi: Empowering Aboriginal Thought." In *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, edited by Marie Battiste, 248-279. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2000. ProQuest ebrary.

Hofsinde, Robert (Gray-Wolf). 1958. New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc.

Jobin, Shalene. Forthcoming. *nehiyawak Narratives: Upholding Indigenous Economic Relationships*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Jobin, Shalene and Tara Kappo. 2017. "'To Honour the Lives of Those Taken From Us': Restor(y)ing Resurgence and Survivance through Walking With Our Sisters". In *Surviving Canada: Indigenous Peoples Celebrate 150 Years of Betrayal*, edited by Kiera Ladner and Myra Tait, 131-148. Winnipeg: ARP Books.

Johnson, Michael G. 2016. "Some observations of plateau floral beadwork." *Whispering Wind*, 44(4), 8-11. https://search-informit-org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/doi/epdf/10.3316/informit.211557199891200.

Johnson, Paulina R. 2017. "E-kawôtiniket 1876: Reclaiming Nêhiyaw Governance in the Territory of Maskwacîs through Wâhkôtowin (Kinship). PhD diss., University of Western Ontario. https://ir.libuwo.ca/etd/4492.

Kaszas, Dion. 2018. "Embodying the Past in the Present for the Future: Practicing, Supporting and Highlighting Indigenous Tattoo Revivals Through Indigenous and Creative Research Methodologies. MA thesis, University of British Columbia. https://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0365997.

Kolopenuk, Jessica. 2020. "Miskâsowin: Indigenous Science, Technology, and Society." *Genealogy,* 4(1:21): 1-17. https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy4010021

Kovach, Margaret. 2009. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Ladner, Kiera. 2003. "Governing Within an Ecological Context: Creating an AlterNative Understanding of Blackfoot Governance." *Studies in Political Economy* 70(1): 125-152. https://doi.org/10.1080/07078552.2003.11827132.

LaRocque, Emma. 2015. "Foreword: "Resist No Longer": Reflections on Resistance Writing and Teaching." In *More Will Sing Their Way to Freedom*, edited by Elaine Coburn, 17-37. Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

Lavallée, Lynn F. 2009. "Practical Application of an Indigenous Research Framework and Two Qualitative Indigenous Research Methods: Sharing Circles and Anishnaabe Symbol-

Based Reflection." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8(1): 21-40. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.

Lindbergh, Darcy. 2019. "Wahkotowin, Corporate Separateness and Potential Futures for Indigenous Laws." *Environmental Challenges on Indigenous Lands Series.* Centre for International Governance Innovation. https://www.cigionline.org/articles/wahkotowin-corporate-separateness-and-potential-futures-indigenous-laws/?fbclid=IwAR0qNOS_4pgSuD3BoYQtjK9rglBdGX2AajbV9-vnNj3Y1RyxX_IPLh50tRQ.

Little Bear, Leroy. 2009. *Naturalizing Indigenous Knowledge, Synthesis Paper.* Saskatoon, SK:. University of Saskatchewan, Aboriginal Education Research Centre and Calgary, AB: First Nations and Adult Higher Education Consortium. https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/21._2009_july_ccl-alkc_leroy_littlebear_naturalizing_indigenous_knowledge-report.pdf

Loeb, Barbara. 1990. "Crow Beadwork: The Resilience of Cultural Values." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 40(4): 48-59.

Loveless, Natalie. 2019. *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation.* Durham & London: Duke University Press. https://doi-org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/10.1215/9781478004646.

Loveless, Natalie, ed. 2015. "*Polemics*: Short Statements on Research Creation" in *RACAR: Revue d'art canadienne/Canadian Art Review*, 40(1): 41-54.

Lyons, Natasha and Yvonne Marshall. 2014. "Memory, Practice, Telling Community." *Canadian Journal of Archaeology/Journal Canadien d'Archéologie* 38(2): 496-518. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.

Makokis, Leona. 2001. "Teachings from Cree Elders: A Grounded Theory Study of Indigenous Leadership." Ph.D diss., University of San Diego. https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/dissertations-theses/teachings-cree-elders-grounded-theory-study/docview/304796281/se-2?accountid=14474.

McAdam, Sylvia (Saysewahum). 2015. *Nationhood Interrupted: Revitalizing nêhiyaw Legal Systems.* Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing Limited. ProQuest Ebook Central.

McIvor, Onowa. 2010. "I Am My Subject: Blending Indigenous Research Methodology and Autoethnography Through Integrity-based, Spirit-based Research." *Canadian Journal of Native Education,* 33(1): 137-151, 155. https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/scholarly-journals/i-am-my-subject-blending-indigenous-research/docview/864885228/se-2?accountid=14474.

McNally, Conor, dir. 2021. *Beading Red: The Red Paper Through Generations.* YouTube. Video, 15:17. Wahkohtowin Law & Governance Lodge. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Ze2LBdqEUw.

McLeod, Neal. 2007. *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times*. Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing Limited.

Meijer Drees, Laurie. 2002. *The Indian Association of Alberta: A History of Political Action*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Molinari, Kiley E. 2013. "Adapt and Adopt: Apsáalooke (Crow) Beadwork and Regalia from the Nineteenth Century to Today." *Journal of Northwest Anthropology*, 47(2): 203-213.

Nadeau, Denise M. 2020. *Unsettling Spirit: A Journey Into Decolonization*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. https://search-ebscohost-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=2399466&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Napoleon, Art. 2014. "Key Terms and Concepts for Exploring Nîhiyaw Tâpisinowin the Cree Worldview." MA diss., University of Victoria.

Napoleon, Val and Hadley Friedland. 2016. "An Inside Job: Engaging with Indigenous Legal Traditions through Stories." *McGill Law Journal/Revue de droit de McGill*, 61(4): 725-754. https://doi.org/10.7202/1038487ar.

Nickel, Sarah. 2019. "Reconsidering 1969: The White Paper and the Making of the Modern Indigenous Rights Movement." *Canadian Historical Review* 100(2): 223-238. doi:10.3138/chr.2018-0082-2.

Orchard, William C. 2002. *Native American Beadwork*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications Inc. Reprint of *Beads and Beadwork of the American Indians,* second edition (1975), originally published in 1929.

Pasternak, Shiri and Hayden King. 2019. *Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper*. Toronto, ON: Yellowhead Institute. https://redpaper.yellowheadinstitute.org/.

Phillips, Ruth B. 2004. "Making Sense Out/Of the Visual: Aboriginal Representations in Nineteenth-Century Canada." *Art History* 27(4): 593-615. DOI: 10.1111/j.0141-6790.2001.00439.x.

Prefontaine, Erin. 2019. "kiskinohawmatok – A Beadwork Thesis and Treaty Context at the U of A." *The Quad,* March 14, 2019. https://www.ualberta.ca/the-quad/2019/03/kiskinohawmatok-a-beadwork-thesis-and-treaty-context-at-the-u-of-a.html

Roberts, Kathleen Glenister. 2007. "Visual Arguments in Intercultural Contexts: Perspectives on Folk/Traditional Art." *Argumentation and Advocacy*, 43: 152-163.

Rumbold, Jean, Jan Allen, Loris Alexander and Carla van Laar. 2008. "Knowing Together Differently – Intersubjective Responding." In *Knowing Differently: Arts-Based and*

Collaborative Research, edited by Pranee Liamputtong and Jean Rumbold, 297-325. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

Schneider, Mary Jane. 1983. "The Production of Indian-Use and Souvenir Beadwork by Contemporary Indian Woman." *Plains Anthropologist*, 28(101): 235-245.

Scofield, Gregory and Amy Briley. 2011. *Wâpikwaniy: A Beginner's Guide to Métis Floral Beadwork.* Saskatoon, SK: Gabriel Dumont Institute.

Settee, Priscilla. 2011. *The Strengths of Women: Âhkamêyimowak.* Regina, SK: Coteau Books.

Simpson, Leanne R. 2004. "Anticolonial Strategies for the Recovery and Maintenance of Indigenous Knowledge." *American Indian Quarterly*, 28(3/4): 373-384. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4138923.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, Second Edition*. London and New York: Zed Books.

Steinhauer, Evelyn. 2002. "Thoughts On An Indigenous Research Methodology." *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 26(2): 69-81, 201. https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/scholarly-journals/thoughts-on-indigenous-research-methodology/docview/230309895/se-2?accountid=14474.

Thompson, Scott. 2016. "Fully contoured beadwork: a definition of the technique." *Whispering Wind*, 44(3): 8-2. https://search-informit-org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/doi/epdf/10.3316/informit.082225746388033

Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang. 2012. "Decolonization is not a metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1(1): 1-40. https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630/15554

Vowel, Chelsea May. 2020. "Where No Michif Has Gone Before: The Form and Function of Métis Futurisms." MA thesis, University of Alberta.

Wallaert, Hélène. 2006. "Beads and a Vision: Waking Dreams and Induced Dreams as a Source of Knowledge for Beadwork Making. An Ethnographic Account from Sioux Country." *Plains Anthropologist*, 51(197): 3-15.

White, Mary. 1972. *How To Do Beadwork.* New York: Dover Publications Inc.

Wildcat, Matthew. 2020. "Weaving Our Authority Together: Transforming the Prairie Indigenous Political Order" Ph.D diss., University of British Columbia. https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0390914.

Wildcat, Matthew. 2010. "Miyo Wahkotowin: Self-determination, Colonialism and Pre-reserve Nehiyaw Forms of Power." MA thesis, University of Victoria.

Wilson, Shawn. 2008. *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

Wissler, Clark. 1922. *Indian Beadwork*: *A Help for Students of Design.* New York: American Museum Press.

Wolfe, Patrick. 2006. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8(4): 387-409.

Wong, Rita. 2015. *Undercurrent*. Gibsons, BC: Nightwood Editions.