

**NINDOODEMAG BAGIJIGANAN:
A HISTORY OF ANISHINAABEG NARRATIVE**

by

Niigonwedom James Sinclair

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(English)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

April 2013

© Niigonwedom James Sinclair, 2013

Abstract

Nindoodemag Bagijiganan: A History of Anishinaabeg Narrative is a project interested in how Anishinaabe narratives define Anishinaabeg culture and community. It argues that Anishinaabeg expressions are *bagijiganan*, offerings where unique relationships Anishinaabeg carry enact a dynamic sense of art, identity, and nationhood. Embodying an intellectual praxis called *mino-bimaadiziwin* (“the good life”) from the past to the present, Anishinaabeg narrative artists are defining the processes of Anishinaabeg culture.

I argue that Anishinaabeg narrative *bagijiganan* are embedded in principles found in the Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag, the totemic system. Articulating the specific and interconnected ways circles of Anishinaabeg relationality operate, Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag is formed through two concepts, *enawendiwin* (strands connecting all parts of creation) and *waawiyeyaag* (interwoven systems of circularity). These come together to construct *nindinawemaganidog* (all of my relations), a law found in traditional expressions like treaties, birchbark, and beadwork and contemporary forms like poetry, paintings, and novels. Anishinaabeg narrative *bagijiganan* exemplify how Anishinaabeg relationships grow while continuing an inclusive sense of nationhood through the Nindoodemag.

In two opening sections, “First Thought” and “First Word,” I overview Anishinaabeg Creation narratives, tracing how Anishinaabeg conceive of the universe as constituted by language and how narrative *bagijiganan* gesture towards *mino-bimaadiziwin*. In “Bezbig,” I argue that Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag is the manifestation of this process and Anishinaabeg narratives adopt one (and often more) parts of the totemic system to enact and embody this praxis of relationship making. In “Niizh,” I investigate Mikiniik (Turtle) *Bagijiganan*, demonstrating how narratives provoke and produce relationships forged through the mind and the imagination. In “Niswi,” I examine Maang (Loon) *Bagijiganan*, demonstrating how narratives produce and fortify

relational strands within Anishinaabeg community. In “Niiwin,” I study Ajjaak (Sandhill Crane) and Waabajjaak (Whooping Crane) Bagijiganan to show how narratives provide opportunities for affiliation with other communities. And, in “Naanan,” I look at Makwag Bagijiganan to show how narratives demonstrate the complex ways bodies forge relationships of biology and sustainability within a material world. In the concluding section, “Oshki Nasanaamo, New Breath,” I suggest that Anishinaabeg narratives suggest a radical sense of Anishinaabeg nationhood by offering reciprocal methods invested in responsibility – a path of mino-bimaadiziwin

Preface

A portion of the chapter entitled “Niizh” is forthcoming as “K’zaugin: Storying Ourselves Into Life.” *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories*. Eds. Jill Doerfler, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, and Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair. Ann Arbor: Michigan State UP, forthcoming 2013.

A portion of the chapter entitled “Niswi” was previously published as *The Tragic Wisdom of Kahkewaquonabay, Peter Jones, Anishinaabe Autobiographer*. MA Thesis. U of Oklahoma, 2006.

A portion of the chapter entitled “Niiwin” was previously published as “Trickster Reflections, Part I.” *Troubling Tricksters: Revisiting Critical Conversations*. Ed. Deanna Reder and Linda Morra. Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier UP, 2010. 21-58.

A portion of the chapter entitled “Niiwin” was previously published as “A Sovereignty of Transmotion: Imagination and the ‘Real,’ Gerald Vizenor, and Native Literary Nationalism.” *Stories Through Theories/Theories Through Stories: Native American Storytelling & Critique*. Eds. Gordon Henry Jr., Nieves Pascual Soler, and Silvia Martinez Falquina. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State UP, 2009. 123-58.

A portion of the chapter entitled “Naanan” was previously published as “*Tending to Ourselves: Hybridity and Native American Literature.*” *Across Cultures, Across Borders: Canadian Aboriginal and Native American Literatures*. Ed. Paul DePasquale, Renate Eigenbrod, and Emma LaRocque. Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2009. 239-58.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Preface	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Figures	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Dedication	x
Epigraph	xi
First Thought	1
Our Creation	1
Amidst Change There Was Constancy	4
Voices Arising from the Literature	14
Bagijiganan	18
First Word	25
We are Anishinaabeg	25
“A Spontaneous People”	30
“From Whence Lowered the Male of the Species”	39
How We Live: Anishinaabeg Bagijiganan	48
Aadizookanag and Dibaajimowinan: Narratives for Life’s Sake	54
Marks of Mino-Bimaadiziwin	58
Bezhig: Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag	68
“The Insignia of Their Families”	68
The Heart of Anishinaabeg	77
“A blessing”	92
Nindinawemaganidog	104
Niizh: Mikinaak Doodemag Bagijiganan	111
Dream Shells	111
“I made no discoveries, but came away as I went”	120
“central stories surrounded by smaller peripheral stories, but all are interconnected”	128
K’Zaugin: Anishinaabe Language & Literature	148
Niswi: Maang Doodemag Bagijiganan	164
Home Calls	164
Migrating Communities	168
Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin	175
The Tragic Wisdom of Peter Jones, Kahkewaquonabay	185
“The red man is gone, and a strange people occupy his place”	190
“Brothers and Friends, I arise to shake hands with you”	204
Niiwin: Ajijaakwag zhigo Waabajjaakwag Doodemag Bagijiganan	217
Spontaneous Calls	217
Diplomatic Interventions	226
Wenabojo and the Cran(e)berries	233
A Nation of Transmotion	239
Naanan: Makwag Doodemag Bagijiganan	262
Whole Scratches	262
The Bagijiganan of Wind and Writing	270
“blackened red reddened black”	277

Oshki Nasanaamo, New Breath 297
 “Our Story” 297
 A Nationhood of Our Own 307
 Nindoodemag Bagijiganan 312
 Boozhoo 318
Endnotes 326
Bibliography 336

List of Figures

Figure 1: map of most Anishinaabeg communities	29
Figure 2: The Great Peace of Montreal	76
Figure 3: Dumont and Benton-Benai's representation of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag	102
Figure 4: a Little Boy Waterdrum	103
Figure 5: John King and framework of shaking tent, Lac Court Oreilles, 1942	114
Figure 6: Geographic range of Snapping Turtles	118
Figure 7: the Kaswentha	126
Figure 8: <i>The Great Flood</i>	130
Figure 9: <i>The Creation of the World</i>	140
Figure 10: the seasonal habitations of the Common Loon	168
Figure 11: Sandhill Crane breeding and migration route	222
Figure 12: Whooping Crane breeding and migration route	222
Figure 13: Geographic range of black bears in North America	266
Figure 14: Densmore's photograph	272
Figure 15: The <i>Nswi Ishkoday Kawn Anishinaabeg O'dish Kidway Kawn</i>	299

Acknowledgements

Boozhoo. I would not be here without the gifts of many. These humble words acknowledge a few of them. A huge Aho! to Anishinaabeg and my doodem relatives who forged this trail. In particular, I recognize my Three Fires Midéwiwin family for continuing the ceremonies, the songs, the stories. This project is my humble attempt to contribute to the path you walk.

This work honours my grandparents Jim and Janine, Nokom Eleanor, my parents Jeanette and Don and Murray and Katherine, and nimiseyag Biindigegiizhigokwe (Dené), Gazhegwanabagokwe and Misko. I have too many relatives to list and I recognize you here, especially my Auntie Diane, Uncle Jim, and nimishomis Henry. I love you all very much.

I thank relations like Doris Young, Lorne Fontaine, Alannah Young, Art Leon, Melody Young, Esther Young, Betsy Kematch and others like David Robertson, Maya Fontaine, Scott Richardson, and Phil Fontaine. I acknowledge all from the St. Peter's Indian Settlement who I grew up with, shared stories and feasts, and shaped me. I also want to send out a shout out to my relatives in Ashern, Brandon, Ambalantota (Sri Lanka), Scottburgh (South Africa), and Selkirk.

I want to thank the members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Dory Nason, Dr. Margery Fee, Dr. Linc Kesler, and Dr. Daniel Justice. Dr. Nason: gizhe miigwech for being an Anishinaabe voice and a considerate supporter. Dr. Fee: your stories, positive outlook, and understanding are gifts I will never forget. Dr. Kesler: your respect, setting of high bars, and patience got me through this. Dr. Justice: your tireless support, thoughts, and work is a model.

A special miigwech goes to the University of British Columbia Department of English and Faculty of Graduate Studies for facilitating this work and to my program chairs Dr. Mark Vessey, Dr. Sian Echard, and Dr. Patricia Badir. Words cannot express how important Louise Soga was to this work. I was privileged enough to be funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. Others who also financially supported me: Cordula and Gunther Paetzold, the

UBC Faculty of Graduate Studies, the Province of British Columbia, the Doug Frith Memorial Foundation, the Foundation for the Advancement of Aboriginal Youth, the Peguis First Nations Education Authority, and the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation. I was also part of two great programs at UBC: Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement and Ts'kel.

I learned with and from many incredible professors and community members during my time at UBC: Dr. Jo-Ann Archibald, Dr. Glen Coulthard, Dr. Mary Chapman, Dr. Glenn Deer, Dr. Michael Marker, Elder Rose Point, Dr. Lester Rigney, Dr. Graham Hingangaroa Smith, Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Richard Van Camp, and Dr. Lorraine Weir. I had an amazing mentor in Alyssa McLean and countless fantastic grad students I shared classes with. I also had the privilege of studying with Dr. Cheryl Suzack (U of Victoria), Dr. Daniel Heath Justice (U of Toronto). My Anishinaabemowin language teacher Pat Ningewance deserves a huge miigwech too.

I can't say enough about the support of many individuals throughout my research and a few who deserve special recognition are: Alison Calder, Dustin Gray, Tasha Hubbard, Keavy Martin, Sam McKegney, Brock Pitawanakwat, Deanna Reder, Steve Sexton, and Theo Van Alst. I had the privilege to work closely on projects with Warren Cariou, Renate Eigenbrod, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark and Jill Doerfler. I send miigwech to Craig Womack, Robert Warrior, and members of the Aboriginal Writers Collective of Manitoba – who were all impactful.

A thank you to those who give and have given me so much: Jason, Jill, Heidi, Brendan, Blair, Chandra, Catherine, Tricia, Andy, Rich, Cam, Laura and everyone on Red River Valley AFC. A special thanks to my best friend and brother Kelly.

To Maengun-giizhig: thank you for your tireless support, guidance, and patience. To Niizhien-nibiens: you are my reason for being. I love you.

To any I have forgotten: my apologies, and thank you. To those coming: you're up.

And, finally, to Gizhe Manido: miigwech for life.

Nindinawemaganidog

Stories, you see, are not just entertainment. Stories are power. They reflect the deepest, the most intimate perceptions, relationships and attitudes of a people. Stories show how a people, a culture, thinks.

- “Stop Stealing Native Stories”
Lenore Keeshig-Tobias
(Chippewas of Nawash)

First Thought

Words are sacred. They can transform. Words can change peoples' attitudes, their thinking, their construction of reality, their actions. Words can change the world. As can silence. (169)

- "First Peoples Literature in Canada"
Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm (Chippewas of Nawash)¹

Our Creation

Anishinaabeg² histories tell us that Creation began when a sound inspired a thought. In this time – really, a time before time – there was nothing but emptiness. Then, as Wikwemikong elder Edna Manidowabi narrates: “In this cold, dark, vastness there was a sound, a sound like the shaking of seeds in a gourd. Then there was one thought, the first thought. The thought of the Great Mystery, Creator, Gzhwe Mnidoo” (qtd. in Simpson 37). From this combination of sound and thought emerged a vision: of a beautiful, full, and complete Creation. As Chippewas of Nawash storyteller Basil Johnston describes in his book *Ojibway Heritage*, it was of

a vast sky filled with stars, sun, moon, and earth. He saw an earth made of mountains and valleys, islands and lakes, plains and forests. He saw trees and flowers, grasses and vegetables. He saw walking, flying, swimming, and crawling beings. He witnessed the birth, growth, and end of things. At the same time he saw other things live on. Amidst change there was constancy. Kitche Manitou heard songs, wailings, stories. He touched wind and rain. He felt love and hate, fear and courage, joy and sadness. Kitche Manitou meditated to understand his vision. In his wisdom Kitche Manitou understood that his vision had to be fulfilled. Kitche Manitou was to bring into being and existence what he had seen, heard, and felt. (12)

Gizhe Manido realized that this vision came with responsibilities – it was a gift.

Piece by piece, Gizhe Manido brought this first thought into being. From this came the creation of the sky, sun, moon, and then earth, directions, and the plants and animals. During “Seven Fires of Creation,” Manidowabi remarks, all was introduced into the world (qtd. in Simpson 38). The vision of Gizhe Manido however, was not fulfilled. It was still, unmoving. So, Gizhe Manido gave each entity a gift. “Into each,” Johnston explains, “he breathed the breath of

life . . . [and] a different essence and nature” (*Ojibway Heritage* 12). This breath provoked movement, motion, and, finally, life. This breath “gave each of them purpose,” Thomas Peacock and Marlene Wisuri write in *Ojibwe Waasa Inaabidaa: We Look in All Directions*, a “reason for being, special power, and . . . unique way” (19-21).

As this beautiful vision came alive, the breath of Gizhe Manido also fused the constituents of the universe into a system governed by laws and principles of balance, harmony, and reciprocity. This, the writers of *Diba Jimooyung, Telling Our Story: A History of the Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek* describe, is called *universal order* – a sustainable network governing the “movement and purpose” of all things (9). Everything had a role and meaning in this autonomous and ever-changing system. Even as new, complex pieces were added, universal order was maintained. The network simply made space by reverberating, growing, and diversifying. As Johnston describes it: “Amidst change there was constancy” (*Ojibway Heritage* 12). For a long time, universal order governed the formation of the universe, until it was almost full. The first thought of Gizhe Manido was therefore not only a blueprint for Creation, but a praxis.

The last to be created, after all else, was humankind. “Gichie Manito then took four parts of Mother Earth and blew into them using a Sacred Shell,” Lac Courtes Oreilles and Midéwiwin elder Edward Benton-Benai writes in *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway*, and “[f]rom the union of the Four Sacred Elements and his breath, man was created” (2-3). Like others, human beings were given a unique “essence and nature” – what is often called a *bundle*. This bundle would help them in all parts of their existence and give them tools in which they could live a sustainable and fulfilling life. It included gifts like a mind, body, heart, and spirit – but one special offering in particular. As Johnston narrates: “Though the last in the order of creation, least in the order of dependence, and weakest in bodily powers, man [was given] the greatest gift – the power to

dream” (*Ojibway Heritage* 13). Similar to the complex power of the first thought, dreaming gave humankind a means by which to communicate with all beings throughout the universe and to think beyond themselves. Through this gift humans found empathy, reflection, imagination, and creativity as well as the ability to bring these thoughts into being. In other words, they received the ability to vision and introduce these visions into Creation. Emerging from that first thought, however, this gift came with the same responsibilities all gifts came with – to work within universal order and operate within this praxis.

Introducing their bundle into the universe, the first human beings were unique participants in Creation. They were active and meaningful participants in universal order, communicating clearly and easily with the sun, sky, plants, and others to build a sustainable network of Creation. As Cote First Nation elder Andrew Keewatin explains in *Anishinaabemowin*: “Mi-i ahpi ahko awehsiwak sikwa anihsinapek pesikwan ki-isi-kakikitowak. Poske awehsiwak oki-kaskihtonawa ta-kanonitiwat (In those days, animals and people all spoke the same. Even animals were able to speak to one another)” (24-25). Sharing a common originator and a language, a synchronous Creation was forged for a long time. This would, however, not last.

As Benton-Benai articulates:

I regret to say that this harmonious way of life on Earth did not last forever. Men and women did not continue to give each other the respect needed to keep the Sacred Hoop of marriage strong. Families began quarreling with each other. Finally villages began arguing back and forth. People began to fight over hunting grounds. Brother turned against brother and began killing each other. (*The Mishomis Book* 29)

Desiring more than what they could provide for themselves, human beings began to seek the gifts of others. They forgot how to share, communicate meaningfully, and work within the principles of universal order. They had neglected the responsibilities that came with their bundle. Soon, this fighting spilled over. “Pinihs (Finally),” Keewatin remarks, “anihsinapek sikwa awehsiwak ki-

anikihkantiwak sikwa ki-ani-mikatiwak (the people and animals began to argue and fight)” (25).
Before long all of Creation was mired in mistrust, anger, and violence.

Looking upon a Creation destroying itself, Gizhe Manido saw that the world needed to be re-made. As Johnston explains:

Disaster fell upon the world. Great clouds formed in the sky and spilled water upon the earth, until the mountain tops were covered. All that was left was one vast sea. All men died. All the land creatures perished. All the plants were covered by the sea. Only the water animals and birds and fishes lived on. What was once earth was a huge unbroken stretch of water whipped into foam by the ferocious winds. (*Ojibway Heritage* 13)

This resulted in the destruction of the first human beings and many animals, plants, and others. Covered by a great ocean, the world continued in this way for a long time until a great being named Wenabozho received a vision to salvage a piece of the old world and re-create land. This is the world you and I are standing on – it is the gift we now use create our lives.

Amidst Change There was Constancy

I will pick up the Anishinaabeg Creation story again later and discuss the re-Creation of humanity – and the emergence of Anishinaabeg – in the next section, entitled “First Word.” This story is a part of a greater whole. But I do stop here to gesture to how this narrative embodies several elements that make up something we might call Anishinaabeg epistemology, philosophy, and narrative theory. Simply put, this story is a critical expression that gestures to four primary tenets constituting an Anishinaabeg universe. The first is that Creation began with a sound and a thought, a vision. This was first and foremost a gift – a foundation in which everything in the universe is based. The second tenet is that any manifestation of Gizhe Manido has no motion until breath is introduced. Thought and things created from thought may be beautiful but they are basically static, they carry no life until they receive the gift of breath. The third tenet is that

Creation is constituted by a universal order, a system that facilitates balance, fulfillment, and happiness for all life. Language is the fabric of this universal order and each being carries complex abilities to communicate. This leads to the last (but not least) tenet: that the language which constitutes universal order is a relationship-making structure. Relationship-making practices based in language – like naming, gift-giving, and narrative, to name a few – therefore is how an Anishinaabeg universe operates. For Anishinaabeg, Creation is constituted by language. These are only a few tenets within the Anishinaabeg Creation Story; there are many more. This however is a good place to begin my work in articulating Anishinaabeg narrative history.

In the Anishinaabeg Creation Story, thought results in the formation of Creation but it is, for the most part, a static world. Breath is what makes Creation move – it is what gives it life. Breath gifts motion, giving each entity uniqueness, a purpose, and the ability to communicate, forge bonds, and live with others. Breath is what makes Creation move, forming universal order and an inter-related network connected through forces of energy, expression, uniqueness, and identity. The breath of Gizhe Manido therefore is not only a gift of movement and connectivity to Creation but of communication: *it is language itself*.

For Anishinaabeg, words are everywhere. The belief that language is instilled throughout Creation is an Anishinaabeg philosophical tenet. This is on one hand easy to understand. Words spoken by humans, for instance, are understandable and recognizable – even in different languages. In Anishinaabeg tradition, however, words are expressed by non-humans (by animals, stars, or water, for example) all the time. An infinite set of living beings speak, write, and communicate. Just as Cape Croker Anishinaabe poet Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm points out in the epigraph: even silence carries language. Like the breath Gizhe Manido instills into Creation, words inspire movement. Language forms, shifts, and re-forms into different expressions embodied by an infinite

body of living entities. Like the flood that re-Created humanity, we are immersed in an encompassing, influential, and engaging ocean of words.

Language is of course a communicative act. It takes two or more parties to combine, communicate, and form meaning. This is a well-traveled premise throughout semiotic and linguistic theory. Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, for example, calls this the “dialogic” nature of language – the notion that words engage in a process of describing the world and exist in relation to those things said before and in anticipation of things to be said (*The Dialogic Imagination* 278-300). Language is basically indicative of a relationship based in a time and place and for a specific purpose – a set of terms two or more entities agree upon in order to have dealings with one another. These are always contextual. A word relates to that which is said before and after but some relationships – like those based in time, space, and brought to the table by the speaking parties – are obviously more influential than others.

Anishinaabeg theories of language embody this principle. To cite an example in the above story, Gizhe Manido completes Creation by creating human beings, setting them into motion through the gift of breath. This is for a distinct purpose: to give them a bundle they can use to live, find fulfillment, and contribute to universal order. In return, human beings use their bundle to connect themselves to other entities and share their complexity and uniqueness. It is when they desire the gifts of others that they are destroyed and the earth is flooded. This makes Creation incomplete and, ironically, in need of the re-Creation of humanity. As you will see in “First Word,” this results in a significant change: difference. Human beings split into beings like Anishinaabeg who carry different parts of the bundle. In other words, they speak, communicate, and form communities differently. Begun with the first gift of breath from Gizhe Manido, a string

of independent yet interdependent linguistic markers come to create Anishinaabeg. Each instance of language, spread throughout time, space, and politics, is necessary for this to happen.

Language is much like an exchange, a trade or – perhaps most clear in the above example – a treaty. As I will discuss later, a treaty – from an Anishinaabeg point of view anyway – is a living arrangement that must be re-visited consistently and continually. It is a set of terms that must be re-conceived and re-created every time it is returned to. A treaty is not a one-time exchange, alliance, or sale but a living and ongoing relationship – renewed by a shared set of rights and responsibilities. Most treaties, in fact, emphasize the latter rather than the former. If these rights or responsibilities are violated, ignored, or exploited, conflict inevitably occurs – and often the loss of life. Language operates in much the same fashion. It is a constantly revisited exchange between parties who must communicate responsibly and ethically. Words form all kinds of relationships: intimate or extensive, open-ended or detailed, and/or minimalist or temporary – it all depends on the context. As the terms of any relationship are unearthed and explored, they create different associations (such as family, kin, friends, or enemies). Language can also form ties embedded in notions of power and be ensconced in political and subjective dynamics. The exchange of words also relies on how much one listens and learns as much as one speaks and expresses, or – as I like to think about it – relies on how one commits to the relationship emerging. Every word therefore represents a constantly forming relationship, with every instance of language providing a site for exchange, identity creation, and community. Always contextual (residing even in a time before time), words are sites of multi-dimensional communities forged in times and places and for distinct purposes. They form a platform, a great associative network created from the power of breath. Words are signs of affiliation – gifts marking a long chain of relationships.

This is a foundational principle of what we might call Anishinaabeg literatures. Combined to form expressions like stories, songs, and speeches, words are signs of specific relationships. Elsewhere in this project I speak about stories existing in Anishinaabemowin and English and used to speak predominantly between humans, so a good place to begin might be how Anishinaabeg communicate with non-humans. This might appear an odd place to begin, but I would suggest that these affiliations happen much more than we often think. Anishinaabeg (and non-Anishinaabeg, for that matter) communicate with animate beings like water, air, the wind, the four directions, animals, plants, rocks, and other entities constantly – and perhaps even more than with humans. Questions might be how we make meaning with these entities, how relationships are formed, and what words might be created as a result?

Mille Lacs elder Fred Benjamin, for instance, tells an interesting story of how early Anishinaabeg came up with traditional songs:

The way the Indian people, long ago, made their songs was by looking at what the Great Spirit gave them to understand in their minds; by looking at what God had created for them to look at, to make songs out of what they saw. Like leaves when the wind blows; they are shaking; they make a little noise. That is how they got the idea to put bells on their legs. And sometimes you see a fowl, like an eagle, an owl, a chickenhawk. The Indian people looked at them, the way they'd swing their wings, how they'd go down and up. That is how they'd make the pitch of their songs. The same way with the water; when they'd go in a canoe, they'd drift around. That is where they get the pitch for the songs; when they'd go low and they'd come up high, just like nice little waves coming around. And sometimes they'd go straight in a canoe; then they'd make that kind of pitch on a song, kind of smooth like. And then when they'd see evergreens, they'd look at those leaves when the wind blew. You can tell the leaves are dancing. And that is when they'd make little fast songs, looking at those leaves going up and down.

And everything they'd see; when they looked at the sky, the clouds, they'd make songs out of those. And they'd make words out of the clouds that they saw. And they'd think there's kind of a holy spirit going around, and that is how they'd make their songs. (qtd. in Garte 5)

For Benjamin, Anishinaabeg songs illustrate a deep and ongoing relationship derived from a reciprocal linguistic exchange. By listening and watching “what the Great Spirit gave them to

understand in their minds,” thinking and reflecting on these gifts, and then producing action and movement, a song is produced. The relationship becomes the words. In order for the song to have life and be sung again, this relationship must be re-visited under new circumstances and context. In each instance, meaning is produced in an independent but inter-related way, like an autonomous network attached to another, a circle connected to a circle, a treaty alongside a treaty. Words beget words, in a constant cycle of relationship-making.

Using a more contemporary example, this is also how Ojibways of Onigaming hip hop artist Wabanakwut Kinew produces his music too. Take, for example, the lyrics from his 2009 song “Live by the Drum”:

*There’s rhythm in the water,
from where my life comes.
There’s power in the air,
we live by the drum.*

*Red man live by the drum.
Yellow man live by the drum.
Black man live by the drum.
White man live by the drum.*

*Where I am from
we say the lake is a drum
when you paddle in the night
you can hear the beat hum.*

*Some time ago
rhyme and flow,
always phenomenal,
we lost that rhythm
now it is time to find it yo.*

Inspired by the Treaty Three drum and paddling on Lake of the Woods, Kinew explains in an interview with Couchiching Ojibway comedian Ryan McMahon that the song is not only an echo of the experience of paddling but embodies a philosophy to remain humble, embody a connection with the world, and “to live your life according to the teachings and sound of the drum.”

(Interview). For Kinew, to live by the drum is to embody the language one receives from the land and produce language from this exchange. It is to signify the relationships one partakes in.

This not only is the process that produces Anishinaabeg songs but stories. Basil Johnston describes in his 2010 book *The Gift of the Stars: Anangoog Meegiwaewinan* how Mother Earth is a constant teacher for the Anishinaabeg who “told them the most wonderful of stories without words... open[ing] their eyes to creation, re-creation, life, death, transformation, beauty, good and harmony enacted by flowers, plants, shrubs, and trees... subjects in kinship with other living creatures sharing the same environs” (7). For Johnston, words are created from interactions with beings who tell stories “without words”: “What our ancestors did with their observations,” Johnston adds, “was to make up stories that blended their findings with their notions of the morality of the acts committed by one or more of the individuals under watch” (8). Beings around us, Johnston suggests, are not only inviting us to listen to, feel, read, smell, and touch their expressions but live alongside them in a relationship of mutual responsibility and reciprocity. They are inviting us into a living relationship through the stories we share with them.

Another thinker who has done a great deal of work in this regard is White Earth Anishinaabe scholar and theorist Gerald Vizenor. I suggest that through his novels, criticism, and poetry, Vizenor illustrates how language forms a web of relationships throughout Creation. As Vizenor’s character Almost Browne states in *Landfill Meditations*:

Listen, there are words almost everywhere. I realized that in a chance moment. Words are in the air, in our blood, words were always there, way before my burned book collection in the back seat of a car. Words are in snow, trees, leaves, wind, birds, beaver, the sound of ice cracking; words are in fish and mongrels, where they’ve been since we came to this place with the animals. My winter breath is a word, we are words, real words, and the mongrels are their own words. (8)

For Vizenor, the words found in Creation inspires understanding, interpretation, and consideration in specific places and moments. They are complex invitations that assist beings like Almost

Browne to understand who he is and how he is intricately connected to the world. Language is thus an opportunity in specific circumstances, a “chance moment.” It is also a moment dependent on others, with always more words to hear, to speak, to feel, to live. The trick is to continue to dream, think, and act – receiving and gifting words over and over again.

A belief in the embeddedness of words throughout Creation and the power of them to harness life is a facet of other tribal traditions as well. This forms a basis for what could be considered as a growing – and perhaps inter-related – field of Indigenous philosophies of language. A primary basis for these veins of thought are Indigenous-authored theories suggesting that humanity did not invent nor are the sole creators of language – they are merely participants in a system. This diverges from many anthropocentric theories that posit that human beings are the grand purveyors of language (or, at least *meaningful* language) and complicates monotheistic ones that suggest that there is only one universal language (spoken by God). These trends have been an unfortunate hallmark of much of philosophical and literary criticism for the past few centuries and often undermine many Indigenous theories of language.

Many Indigenous theorists have been at the forefront of arguing that words constitute a primary material in which the universe is made and form the basis in which specific and contextual relationships are forged within it. Indigenous literary critics and authors have often led this movement, such as Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday, who famously stated in his 1969 book *The Way to Rainy Mountain*: “A word has power in and of itself. It comes from nothing into sound and meaning; it gives origin to all things. By means of words can a man deal with the world on equal terms. And the word is sacred” (33). Momaday may be speaking from his cultural teachings but was also making this statement at the apex of a revolutionary counterculture movement opposing 1950s American conservatism – a time when Native Americans were beginning to empower

themselves culturally and politically. In other words, Momaday not only utilizes the valuable gifts a culturally-based Kiowa might exchange with the earth, mountains, and relations, but his work shows underpinnings in ideas that inspired the Sexual Revolution, anti-Vietnam protests, and what is often called “Red Power.” This is similar to poet Simon Ortiz who argues in his 1977 article “Song, Poetry and Language: Expression and Perception, A Statement on Poetics and Language” that language is “more than just a functional mechanism. It is spiritual energy that is available to us all. It includes all of us and is not exclusively in the power of human beings – we are part of that power as human beings” (80). While likely based in cultural experiences, these words are also a tribute to his woodcarver father and his relationship with him.

More recently Muskogee Creek critic Craig Womack – deeply influenced by both Momaday and Ortiz – published his groundbreaking 1999 study *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*. The text argues for “nationalist” readings of Indigenous texts based in community-specific approaches and continues along a similar vein as Momaday and Ortiz when it comes to the power of language and how it relates to the formation of relationships. As Womack argues:

I say that tribal literatures are not some branch waiting to be grafted onto the main trunk. Tribal literatures are the *tree*, the oldest literatures in the Americas, the most American of American literatures. *We are* the canon. Native peoples have been on this continent at least thirty thousand years, and the stories tell us we have been here even longer than that, that we were set down by the Creator on this continent, that we originated here. For much of this time period, we have had literatures. Without Native American literature, *there is no American canon*. (7 original emphasis)

Critics have most often latched onto this quote as arguing for a particular kind of “separatedness” embedded in tribal literature (and have often been uncomfortable with this implication) but what has always struck me about these words is how related this “separatism” is to the rest of Creation. Take, for example, that “the stories *tell us* that we have been here even longer than that, that we were set down by the creator on this continent, that we originated here” (my emphasis). Tribal

stories explain to tribal peoples who they are, how they got to places, and even gestures to where they are going. They are landmarks, life forms, and markings on a map of existence. This juxtaposes well with the Womackian metaphor that tribal literatures are a tree – an independent life form who carries interdependent and specific connections with life forms all around it. It suggests that tribal stories may be planted by tribal peoples but require a host of other contributors – soil, water, sun, and air for instance – to live. According to Womack, recognition of these specific parts is one way to nurture our relationship with ourselves. Ultimately, and if we are lucky, these stories will always tell us who we are by helping us define our identities, ground us in a particular times and places, and help us understand how we came to be. Our engagement with our own tribal literatures is an exercise in relationship-making. Even *Red on Red* is critically embedded in a time and space, assembled during what he calls “seismic shifts” in approaches to Native American literatures and policies affecting American Indians in his essay “A Single Decade: Book-Length Native Literary Criticism between 1986 and 1997” (5).

Theorists based in tribal literary traditions such as Momaday, Ortiz, and Womack (as well as myself) are returning to the notion that Creation speaks and words signify relationships and relationship-building practices. Speaking back to some of the anthropocentric and monotheistic trends that have purported to represent Indigenous words and expressions, many posit that breath, speech, and words form the basis for an animate, multi-communicative and community-centred universe. Some also suggest that narratives like the Anishinaabeg Creation Story carry everything we require to understand ourselves and the universe around us. This project hopes to add to this burgeoning field.

One thing that much Indigenous criticism of the past few decades offers the premise that language is a collectively-forged practice and responsibility. Words existed before humanity did,

spoken by spirits and water and earth and animals. They were then passed onto us. We get to carry them, contribute our sounds and thoughts, and then pass them on to someone else. Words are gifts we have receive, engage, and exchange in our brief time on this earth. They locate and connect us, remind us that we are in places and times with beings and entities we sometimes know very well, sometimes not so much. Words carry the abilities to create allies and relatives, other times enemies and friends. Sometimes words liberate and free us from forces who seek to dominate us, other times they participate in trickery and indoctrination. Sometimes language can be inspiring or hurtful. Words are like guides who we walk alongside, spend time with, and revisit. They are not slaves to humanity – words are interdependent forces embedded throughout the universe. Words are, after all, what give Creation life.

Voices Arising from the Literature

In 1993 White Earth Anishinaabe critic and poet Kimberly Blaeser published “Native Literature: Seeking a Critical Centre” in *Looking At the Words of Our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*, edited by Okanagan writer Jeanette Armstrong. In the essay, Blaeser lamented what she saw as destructive and oppressive approaches to Indigenous creative and critical expressions, what she called “an external critical voice and method which seeks to penetrate, appropriate, colonize, or conquer the cultural center, and thereby, change the stories or remake the literary meaning” (53). Her primary accusation was against work that privileged different historical, ideological, and political tenets than those found in Indigenous intellectual circles and critics who approached Indigenous narratives “with an already established theory [with] the implication... that the worth of the literature is essentially validated by its demonstrated adherence to a respected literary mode, dynamic, or style” (55-56). For Blaeser, it was not that Indigenous narratives did not embody

principles uncovered by these approaches, but that there are theoretical, foundational, and community-specific aspects within the expressions themselves that deserved attention, what she called “critical methods and voices that seem to arise out of the literature itself” (53). Her call was “for a way to approach Native Literature from an indigenous cultural context, a way to frame and enact a tribal-centered criticism... a critical voice and method which moves from the culturally-centered text outward” (53).

The upending of certain theoretical power dynamics stifling Indigenous literary criticism is only one half of “Seeking a Critical Center” however. The second half is an attempt to theorize a “tribal-centered criticism.” Admittedly, Blaeser is suggestive rather than descriptive, stating basically that this theory must be non-oppositional to non-Native discourses, draw upon Indigenous literary aesthetics, and emerge from cultural practices. She also draws upon some emerging tribal theories by Indigenous critics and their allies at the time, such as White Earth Anishinaabe writer Gordon Henry and his notion of a “sacred concentricity,” Choctaw/Cherokee/Irish theorist Louis Owen and his ideas of “centripetal” orientation, Laguna Pueblo/Sioux critic Paula Gunn Allen’s cyclical “sacred hoop,” and American anthropologist Keith Basso and his work with Apache humour and wordplay (58-59). Blaeser cites how Indigenous traditional and contemporary literatures gesture to tribally-based expressions and experiences of identity, intertextuality, kinship, and history, identifying how they offer “much of the language and organizing principles necessary for the construction of a critical center” by utilizing and innovating storytelling traditions (60). For the most part, this “tribal-centered criticism” is in its initial stages, finding breadth in later work. As a result, literary critics often cite “Seeking a Critical Centre” for the call and not the delivery.

Blaeser *does* however gesture to a tribally-centered literary approach in the article. At almost at every opportunity, she positions Indigenous literatures as *living beings*, active and dynamic entities struggling to be heard and recognized. They are not framed as mirrors or shadows but actual life forms in relation to their authorial counterparts. Indigenous literatures therefore are not empty, lifeless, and static objects but subjective, autonomous, and sentient vessels. In fact, the constant and consistent comparison Blaeser makes between Native peoples and Native literatures – and how both are judged according to their “adherence” to an established and external value system – could be said to be the central argument in the article. One could easily replace words like “stories,” “literature,” and “literary” with “cultures,” “communities,” and “claims” and an accurate recounting of colonialism emerges. Like a courtroom advocate for Indigenous rights and tribal autonomy, she accuses critics of pursuing “colonization: authority emanating from the mainstream critical center to the marginalized native text” (55-56). Indigenous words and stories, like Indigenous people, must be nurtured, given support and sustenance, and respected for their uniqueness. Scholars therefore must learn to “protect” and “safeguard” the “integrity of the Native American story” by recognizing both the independence within these words as well as their ability to express a unique tribal aesthetic (61).

What Blaeser is saying is that tribal literatures are evidence of relationships and relationship-making practices by Indigenous peoples. They are evidence of the critical and creative connections Indigenous peoples share with the universe. Scholarship can be part of an ongoing imperialist impulse that denies treaties and treaty-making processes with Indigenous peoples and mistreating tribal literatures resembles the ways America has invaded, displaced, and colonized tribal communities. In other words, misinterpreting Indigenous literatures represents an erasure of the many sites of relationship Indigenous peoples have partaken in and the critical set of

arrangements that constitute America. Denying the “critical methods and voices that seem to arise out of the literature itself,” most literary critics are ignoring “the language and organizing principles necessary for the construction of a critical center.” In other words, America is colonizing its own intellectual history. Of course, this language is set in a politics, a space, and a time. One year previously, the first “Returning the Gift” was held – the largest meeting of Indigenous writers in the Americas – on the campus of the University of Oklahoma. In Oklahoma, the very territory Indian tribes were removed to by the United States in the early 19th century (during most notably the “Trail of Tears”), Indigenous writers joined together to share work, mobilize, and form an organization that could mentor and support Indigenous writing: the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers. Formed out of the continuation of tribal traditions and relationship-making practices, new critical methods and voices rose to provide a critical center. Blaeser later called this a “spiritual and professional” inspiration to her (qtd. in Higgins).

Blaeser’s essay lays the groundwork for a seminal theory. If words are signs of an active and mobile relationship under specified circumstances, new words are constantly required to renew, revitalize, and signify this ongoing interconnectivity. In other words, words forge treaties between communicative parties throughout Creation – they are strands of relation. This facilitates a constant set of opportunities for a shift in the way parties interact and engage with one another. Words therefore provide a series of possibilities for new relationships to be made from the materials of the old. They are gifts and offerings that open a space for beings to communicate on their own terms while recognizing the uniqueness of each presenter. Like the best parts of treaties, words offer the chance of a reciprocal and long-lasting relationship.

Bagijiganan

In this way, Anishinaabe words are best thought of as a concept called *bagijiganan*. Translated often as an “offering,” “presentation,” or a “gift,” a bagijigan is arguably the most important social, political, and ideological interaction in Anishinaabeg life. Referring to it as “gift-giving,” historian Cary Miller writes that this act is “the cornerstone” of Anishinaabeg kinship and community, functioning as a glue that creates relationships between people and other beings, forges agreements, and forms individual identities (*Ogimaag* 32). Anyone who visits an Anishinaabeg community can view this practice today through the laying of tobacco, ceremonial give-aways, and the presentation of blankets, honoraria, and food by Anishinaabeg during feasts and social gatherings. Bagijiganan provide entryways to Anishinaabeg communities, long-term or short-term, while the renewal of relationships are ensured by their ongoing and fair exchange. When accepted, bagijiganan imply responsibilities between parties, a shared relationship, and are used most often to welcome newcomers into communities as relations. They also form the basis in which historical treaties and arrangements were signed, maintained, and forged. Speaking of Anishinaabeg processes of gift-giving in the 19th century, Cary Miller points out:

Deeply ingrained social expectations for respect and obligation framed these exchanges. . . . There was as much a right and obligation to receive as to give, an idea embedded in the ascription of familial relationships to all parties in the exchange. The closer the kin relationship, whether actual or fictive, the greater the implied obligations as well as assumed trust. Anishinaabeg oral tradition makes it clear, however, that as ‘pitiable’ as one may have been [at the outset of a gifting relationship], when one accepted a gift from a human or Manido, one had to fulfill promises made to perform appropriate ceremonies or use the gift in appropriate ways lest the individual become ill or the gift be withdrawn. By the same token, when accepting gifts, whether as a leader receiving gifts from another polity or as an individual getting gifts from the leaders they supported, a recipient acquiesced to the political messages and agreements that accompanied the gifts. Similarly, rejection of gifts demonstrated rejection of the messages proposed at their distribution. (32-33)

Receiving a bagijigan is giving one as well.

Some of the greatest and most dynamic gifts of all, as described in the Anishinaabeg Creation story, have come from spiritual beings like Gizhe Manido. Elder Hartley White explains that giving and receiving gifts from the spiritual realm is a life-long process, a path where one recognizes, “*Niitaa*, we have all been gifted . . . there is something that Spirit gave you to carry with you so you can show the living Indians and their children” (219). White explains this in Anishinaabemowin:

Endaso-giizhig akina gegoo bakaan gigii-kikendaan, mii i’iw endaso-giizhig apane gikendaasowin. Mii i’iw akeyaa bimaadiziyan. Mii gomaa ji-naazikaman ji-noondaman ji-waabandaman. Miiniwaa maada’ookii a’aw Manido. Mii i’iw akeyaa nandawaabandaman wenizhishing. Mii gaawin wii-ani-maanaadak (Every day you learn something different, every day a new piece of knowledge. That is the way you live your life. Then you approach those things a little more to hear them, to see them. And the Spirit shares. That is how you search for the good things. Nothing bad will come of it). (qtd. by Treuer, *Living our Language* 218-19)

I speak more later about the nature of Manidog – “spirits” or “mysteries” – but White illustrates the giving and receiving of bagijiganan demand constant and qualitative engagement with the universe in a reciprocal and responsible fashion. This is only one example. A bagijigan is an offering accompanying responsibilities: a gift with strings.

Bagijigan are given in the hope that the receiver comes to them respectfully and responsibly, with open eyes and ears. “There is a reason,” my Uncle Jim always explains before offering me a story, “that we have two eyes, two ears, and one mouth.” To explain it in another way, the appropriate acceptance of a bagijigan in Anishinaabemowin is *miigwech* – often translated as thank you. A clearer translation comes from the verb *miigiwe* (“to give”). *Miigwech* is therefore to give a gift of gratitude and respect for the gift you have received. In other words, *miigwech* is a bagijigan.

Blaeser continued her search for a tribal-centered criticism in her 1996 book *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*. An examination of the work of fellow White Earth Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor, the book is also an extension of her theory that words are living and autonomous

entities embedded throughout Creation and that together forge communicative threads through agreement and collaboration. The primary argument is that Vizenor forges these relationships by embodying the oral tradition in his writing. To her, Vizenor illustrates “not only the primacy of the word but also its place in the relationships that constitute oral tradition” (*Gerald Vizenor* 18).

Relying heavily on Bakhtin, Blaeser claims that Vizenors achieves “a sense of cultural continuity in his writing” via several ways: by recognizing the ability of language to articulate the relationships inherent between the word and the world; encapsulating methods like silence and non-linguistic sounds; and actively encouraging the reader to take part in a dialogic relationship that involves a “notion of reception and participation” (11, 22-25). Each story Vizenor writes asks the reader to imagine a reality that exists beyond its words in a performance to “bring story and song into being” – incorporate and engage the story while retelling it (26-28). Vizenor does this, Blaeser argues, through uncovering the oppressive nature of the words victims have inherited and adopted, resisting “strategies of containment” in historical and cultural constructions of Native peoples, and incorporating haiku and Trickster narratives throughout his work. Vizenor “invite[s] or require[s] an imaginative response similar to [that] required in the oral exchange” by utilizing rhetorical contexts and establish a connection with reader and place (29-30). In other words, by drawing upon political and social issues in times and places, Vizenor illustrate relationships within the universe through language.

The primary issue, of course, is that the writing of Vizenor – or that of any other writer for that matter – is not exactly the oral tradition. Scholar Susan Gingell calls this kind of work “textualized orality” (285). They are written in ink and on paper, without physical expressions of sound, breath, and gesture. They are not echoes of voices, nor offered in community places, such as at Anishinaabeg ceremonies or gatherings. Instead, the work of Vizenor resides in things like

novels and periodicals in bookstores and university libraries – much like the words I use now. With due respect, Vizenor may use innovative, inspiring, and inviting language but printed words do not replace relationships formed through the spoken word, the silence and non-linguistic sounds, and the “dialogic relationship” that involves a “notion of reception and participation.” Vizenor himself acknowledges the importance of these aspects, writing in *Wordarrows*: “We are touched into tribal being with words, made whole in the world with words and oratorical gestures” (vii). In fact, novels, essays, and poems do not perform, forge communicative strands, or do much of anything – until a reader comes along. Then, what we get is an opportunity for sharing, dialogue, thought and – hopefully – the creation of more words.

Language is the same. Words carry no communicative weight unless other beings are present. In fact, I would suggest that words are not words unless two beings – human, non-human, or whatever in between – are there to exchange them. We are infinitely surrounded by living entities and immersed in the words we share with them. We are filled with and encompassed by the lasting power of the breath of Gizhe Manido – of which we are all a part. As Blaeser cites, Vizenor recognizes the fundamental principle that words are signs of relationships. His writings are a set of offerings where relations can be reified, changed, and revitalized – they are bagijiganan. With due respect to the work in *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition* (and recognizing the contextual purpose), it is not a question of whether or not orality can or cannot be embodied in the writing of Vizenor; it is that his work recognizes the connective nature of language and facilitates opportunities for relationships to form. This is hardly a new practice; these are after all the same vessels Gizhe Manido gifted to all living beings in Creation and allow them to communicate today.

Of course, these theories illustrate moments in an ongoing conversation regarding Anishinaabeg language and literature (and pivotal ones at that). “Native Literature: Seeking a

“Critical Center” posits a theoretical foundation: that language is a living venue, a space where relationships reside and embody a set of reciprocal strands between participants. The essay shows how words are not simply entitlements but commitments. Language is a responsibility, a pathway, and a vessel of opportunity for authors, readers, and their communities to interact. Words are relationships forged between two or more parties – they are treaties. Critical, scholarly, and intellectual processes can therefore either perpetuate cycles of colonialism or provide a forum for meaningful and responsible collaboration. It all depends on how one ethically approaches, analyzes, and recognizes Indigenous words and stories on their own merits. Foreshadowing the call of Womack, criticism which adopts this ethic recognizes that tribal literatures are trees which make forests of stories that tell the history of North America. Understanding Indigenous narratives as relationships one can help facilitate a supportive, nurturing, and nourishing critical environment or, if misrecognizing or misusing them, forge a barren, violent, or colonizing imperialism where Indigenous words are obscured, veiled, and even forced into absence. We get critical “poachers” and “squatters” filling the landscape of Indigenous literatures.³

I propose that the primary argument in “Seeking a Critical Center” is that readers, thinkers, and critics treat Indigenous literatures responsibly and ethically as *bagijiganan* – beings they must come to with good eyes, ears, and a good heart. Doing this opens up the possibility of exploring the beautiful possibilities any word or story or song inhabits. It is to recognize its fullest expressions within its cultural milieu(s), political specificities, and the tribal traditions and histories it draws upon. “Seeking a Critical Centre” calls for meaningful, respectful, and honourable relationships with the knowledge found within tribal literatures, their creators, and their communities – uncovering how all are connected to a plethora of experiences and entities throughout Creation. It

is an important step in continuing the second Creation of humanity and facilitating a happy and harmonious life for all.

Anishinaabeg stories, songs, poems, and other narrative forms – expressions forged from words – are bagijiganan. This concept constitutes a basis for Anishinaabeg literatures as a creative and critical field. Anishinaabeg narratives embody relationships and relationship-building practices that create and define communities, embody ways in which Anishinaabeg express what it means to be Anishinaabeg and form our collective culture. Our narratives illustrate who we are and how we connect to other beings in the universe. In other words, this study posits a way in which to understand Anishinaabeg narratives through the complex ways our relationships and relationship-making practices operate and gesture towards a critical and creative path that has sustained and will continue Anishinaabe life.

This project is interested in how Anishinaabeg narrative forms from the past few centuries draw upon our tribal past, inspire our continued presence on this continent, and influence the world. Following critics like Blaeser, I am curious how something called Anishinaabeg literatures impacts thought, evokes action, and participates in the universe. I want to know how words, images, and graphics written by my relations evoke power and beauty and invoke struggle and action as well as how they can devastate, start wars, and perpetrate violence. I am interested in the mysteries, powers, and spirits within Anishinaabeg words, how narrative forms have energy, and how we are a part of them. I am interested in the meaning of statements like Richard Wagamese in his collection *One Story, One Song*: “We are all story. That is what my people say. From the moment we enter this physical reality to the moment we depart again as spirit, we are energy moving forward to the fullest possible expression of ourselves” (2).

I argue that for Anishinaabeg this energy is embodied in our narratives, our bagijiganan. As I explore in “First Word,” this begins in the word Anishinaabe – a name that encompasses our very way of life, our sense of collectivity, our culture. It is a word that connects and divides us, but also one that gifts to us a complex sense of nationhood. The critical knowledge embedded in Anishinaabe is therefore a microcosm of the knowledge found in our stories, poetry, paintings, and novels. *Nindoodemag Bagijiganan: A History of Anishinaabeg Narrative* is an investigation into these storytelling practices and a recognition of the unique roles expressions play into our political, historical, and cultural lives. It is an exploration of this time, of the second Creation of humanity, and perhaps even the next.

First Word

When you go all the way back to the beginning, the Creator gave us a way of life and that is the way he intended for us to live. We are supposed to keep that going. There is not any other way of life that will come along and replace it. It was given for all time and he did that for all colors of human beings. They all have their original instructions. They all have their way of living on earth and respecting creation and living in harmony with it. Ours is particular to our way of being. We depend on the other colors of man to keep their ways of life going. Our responsibility is to keep ours going. (80)

- “An Interview with Jim Dumont”
Jim Dumont, Onaubinsay (Shawanaga First Nation)

We are Anishinaabeg

Anishinaabe (and its pluralization: Anishinaabeg) is a bagijigan. It is the name we use to describe ourselves, people descended from the second Creation of humankind. It is also an ancient word, with many incarnations. These include *Anishnawbe*, *Anishinape*, *Anicinape*, *Anishinabe*, *Anishnabe*, *Neshnabé*, *Nishnaabe*, *Nishnawbe*, *Anishinaubae*, *Nishinabe*, and several more. The most obvious differences, of course, are in spelling and pronunciation but the most important distinction is that they all emerge from unique communities and collectives. Talking about each word opens up entire epistemologies, experiences, and histories, primarily localized and dependent on time, space, and context. This information is infinite – one could spend a lifetime talking about just one.

One way this is illustrated is through the many definitions and translations that exist. Victoria Brehm in her edited collection *Star Songs and Water Spirits: A Great Lakes Reader* states there are “at least” eight meanings of Anishinaabe (17). A quick scan of the body of historical work surrounding Anishinaabe culture and tradition shows this to be a slight underestimation. Working in the early nineteenth century with communities in what is now northern Michigan, ethnologist Henry Rowe Schoolcraft claimed that “Anishinaba” means “the common people” (*Onéota* 171). A few decades later and in a similar region, Bishop Frederic Baraga defined “Anishinabe” as “Man (human being, man, woman, or child)” or “Indian” (38). In what is now western Ontario and in

the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Reverend Edward F. Wilson wrote that “uhnishenábha” translates into “Indian” (15). In more recent times, Algonquian linguist Carl Masthay translates the word as “Indian” or “ordinary person” (qtd. in Brehm 17). A collective of forty-one elders and language speakers who contributed to *A Saulteaux (Ojibwe) Phrase Book Based on the Dialects of Manitoba* state that “anissinapé” means “an Indian person, a Saulteaux Indian” (Voorhis 51). Michi Saagig scholar Leanne Simpson, in her 2011 text *Dancing on Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishinaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*, states it means “the people” (25 n1). There are many more inter-related meanings. As Nicholas Deleary states: “Today’s usage of the term ‘Ani-shin-a-bek’ conjures many interpretations and closely linked meanings. For example this term is used to make reference to a very ancient past, the beginnings of time and creation itself. In other usage, Anishinabek refers to one or many of the ancestral related and confederated tribal groups. In today’s political arena, ‘Anishinabek’ designates a Native lobby group. In another contemporary sphere, it could mean all aboriginal people of North and South America, a ‘pan’-Indian usage” (12). Anishinaabe represents a spectrum of definitions and none are authoritative.

Breaking the word down continues to illustrate its complexity. In *Ojibway Heritage*, Basil Johnston claimed that “Anishinaubae” means “I am a person of good intent, a person of worth,” and is made up of “Onishishih” (meaning “good, fine, beautiful, excellent”) and “naubae” (meaning “being, male, human species”) (57). John D. Nichols and Earl Nyholm in their *A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe* (published in 1995) claim that: “anishaa” is a particle meaning “just for nothing, without purpose, just for fun, not really” and “naabe” is a lexical stem meaning “male” (10, 94). Lac Seul linguist and teacher Patricia M. Ningewance in her 2004 manual *Talking Gookom’s Language: Learning Ojibwe*, defines “anishaa” as meaning “for nothing, in vain” and

“naabe” as male (227, 269). Leech Lake historian Anton Treuer writes there are several “morphological possibilities”:

Dennis Jones says that one explanation of anishinaabe is that it is derived from anishaa (for nothing) and naabe (mankind), meaning that the Indian is nothing without a spiritual life. . . . According to Moses Tom, anishinaabe originated from the first word elders say when they begin a ceremony, anishinaa, which was also the first word the Indian spoke when he was created. . . . According to Louis Councillor, anishinaabe is derived from anishin (a short form of onizhishi, meaning “he is good”) and aabe (human being). He interpreted this to mean that Indians were expected to lead a good, spiritual life. . . . Peter Kelly, former grand chief of Treaty Council Three in Canada, said that anishinaabe means one who is humble before the creator. The oral history of Manitoulin Island postulates that it is derived from niizh (second, or the number two) and naabe (man or mankind), in reference to the second creation of man (in keeping with the traditional story of Wenabozho and the Flood, where the earth is cleansed with water and humankind starts anew). At Turtle Mountain, North Dakota, oral history provides the explanation that anishinaabe means a void that is filled. The most common explanation is that anishinaabe means original man. (*The Assassination of Hole in the Day* 219)

Other communities translate the word differently but one might begin to notice though that, while unique, each incarnation of Anishinaabe connects in one way or another to the others.

Besides pronunciation, definition, and translation, there are many other ways these words are related. For example, they are names designated and used by localities to refer to their collective, what are known in social science circles as *endonymic ethnonyms*.⁴ These different incarnations of Anishinaabe are the proper names used by communities also known as Ojibwe, Chippewa, Saulteaux, Michi Saagig (Mississauga), Nipissing, Potawatomi, Omamiwinini (Algonquin), Odawa, and others when describing themselves. They refer to a shared origin, ancestry, and tradition stretching from ancient times and into today. As scholar Gerald Vizenor writes: “In the language of the tribal past, the families of the woodland spoke of themselves as the Anishinaabeg until the colonists named the Ojibway and the Chippewa” (*The People Named the Chippewa* 13). In this way these different forms of Anishinaabe describe localities but also how they live in relationship to one another.

There are also linguistic ties. These incarnations of Anishinaabe emerge from languages within a language family often called “Algonquian,” what Henry Rowe Schoolcraft called “Algic languages” in 1839 – referring to geographical ties to the Alleghany and Atlantic regions in eastern North America (*Algic Researches* 12). Algonquian language branches include not only the above communities but also the languages of tribes like the Menominee, Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo, Cree, Miami, Illinois, and Shawnee. Anishinaabe is a term still used within this family, one of many Randy Valentine identifies in *Nishnaabemwin Reference Grammar* that include a range of terms, grammar, and lexicon that, while vary in sound and form, are inter-recognizable (1-22). In other words, these are different and separate languages but exist in an enduring relationship to one another. Amongst Anishinaabeg, these are often considered forms of Anishinaabemowin, the Anishinaabe ancestral language, which contains webs of communicative threads connecting linguistic specificities and dialects. As Anishinaabemowin linguist Pat Ningewance notes of her many travels and discussions with speakers: “Each one is a true Anishinaabe people’s language. . . . You can try to be an Anishinaabe chameleon and try to blend in with the people you’re with, but you can just relax and use your own dialect. It will not cause a big war” (xx). Strands of Anishinaabemowin echo the many cultural, social and political connections Anishinaabe communities share. While each have distinct ideological structures, ceremonies, histories and experiences, scholars have noted deep similarities, especially when used in narrative structures.⁵

Anishinaabe communities generally are distant from one another but are connected through a myriad of means including water, land, and story. As Turtle Mountain scholar Heidi Kwiitenpinesiik Stark notes:

The Anishinaabe . . . comprise distinct, separate bands that span a vast geographic region from the Plains to the Great Lakes. Within Canada, the Anishinaabe homeland stretches from western Saskatchewan to Southern Ontario. Within the United States, they were spread from Montana to Michigan. The Plains

Anishinaabe are primarily found in Montana, North Dakota, Saskatchewan, and western Manitoba. The northern Anishinaabe live between Hudson Bay and the Great Lakes and the Southwestern Anishinaabe reside in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Upper Michigan. Historically, the Southeastern Anishinaabe often formed strong social, political, and kin ties with the Ottawa and Pottawatomie, some forming a confederacy known as The Three Fires, and primarily live in Michigan. (11)

This is better illustrated on a map, showing the location of most Anishinaabeg communities and those in major urban centres (particularly Minneapolis, Toronto, and Winnipeg) (Figure 1). As one can see, these communities cover a land mass spanning almost one-eighth of North America. This is not to forget Anishinaabeg who, for a host of reasons, live with and within other communities throughout the United States and Canada.⁶



Figure 1: map of most Anishinaabeg communities throughout North America (“Ojibwa”)

Anishinaabeg settlement around the Great Lakes is the result of millennia of trade, travel, and migration from homelands in the east (a journey I discuss in Niizh). Over the past few centuries this movement has continued due predominantly to political, social, and cultural reasons. On this last point, the settlement of Europeans and the formation of the United States of America and Canada have impacted many Anishinaabeg deeply, resulting not only in the theft of

homelands but also the loss of community resources, restrictions on movement and trade, the creation of “reserves,” and the imposition of borders that have divided Anishinaabeg families and communities. Today, these and other colonial policies and practices continue to radically influence the cultural, social, and political interactions between Anishinaabeg. Remarkably, and regardless of these issues, Anishinaabeg of the past and present consider themselves for the most part an interconnected community. As Stark claims, Anishinaabeg maintain “a collective identity” (11). Or, as Vizenor writes: “The Anishinaabeg have been divided by colonial, national, territorial and state claims . . . but in spite of these divisions, there exists a sense of common tribal consciousness” (*People Named* 32).

This “common tribal consciousness” is embodied in these very names. Anishnawbe, Nishnaabe, and others do much more than just describe groupings of people. They are mutually supporting terms that together illustrate an ideological web, a great process of Anishinaabe. While migration, movement, and change continues to occur—along with adoptions of new allegiances and communities—there remains a long-standing, complex, and living sense of connectedness. Anishinaabe is a bagijigan, a site embodying this dynamic, innovative, and ever-moving space. The word is reflective of a process that changes over time, space, and context but gestures to a diverse sense of cultural and political unity—a multi-dimensional whole. It is a gift that is renewed every time it is offered. This is perhaps best witnessed through illustrating the ways the word Anishinaabe itself is set in a place and time, embodying a synecdochal process through its many incarnations. In other words, speaking about one definition gestures to all. Here are two examples.

“A Spontaneous People”

One of the oldest recorded and widely respected narrative explanations of Anishinaabe is in *History of the Ojibway People* (1885) by nineteenth-century historian William Whipple Warren,

which he based on time spent with Anishinaabeg he knew and was related to. While scholars like Theresa Schenck may question Warren's Anishinaabe identity, I assert his commitment to understanding and embodying Anishinaabeg discourse in his work is unquestionable.⁷ Responding to "imperfect interpreters" who claim it means "common people" (referring to Schoolcraft), Warren offers a specific definition: "This expressive word is derived from An-ish-aw, meaning without cause, or 'spontaneous,' and in-aub-a-we-se, meaning the 'human body.' The word An-ish-in-aub-ag, therefore, literally translated, signifies 'spontaneous man'" (56). Warren then explains that "[t]he belief of the [An-ish-in-aub-ag] is, as their name denotes, that they are a spontaneous people. They do not pretend, as a people, to give any reliable account of their first creation. It is a subject which to them is buried in darkness and mystery, and of which they entertain but vague and uncertain notions; notions, which are fully embodied in the word An-ish-in-aub-ag" (57).

Within this version are some interesting allusions to the Anishinaabeg Creation Story described in the Preface. Here, there is no mention of a grand Creation, the first Creation of humanity, or a flood (although perhaps alluded to). There is, however, a fairly direct mention of dreams – or at least "notions" – and their abilities to affect things in the real world. Here, we can definitely see some aspects that fit within the story of the first thought of Gizhe Manido and how it finds movement through breath. I will return to this in a moment.

Returning to these few short sentences, Warren does an impressive amount of work. His breakdown of the word relates to those described earlier, but his definition goes a step further, defining "An-ish-in-aub-ag" not only by what the term *means* but *the actions it embodies*. "An-ish-aw," he translates, means "without cause," a somewhat ambiguous explanation clarified when juxtaposed alongside his other descriptor: "spontaneous." Spontaneous is a striking word choice, alluding to motion and movement with purpose. The etymology comes from the Latin *sponte*,

meaning “of one's own accord, freely, willingly” and, more specifically, actions arising or proceeding from natural impulse. To Warren, “an-ish-aw” does not mean activity without *any* cause but rather without *external* cause. I interpret this as Warren directing the reader to conceive that “An-ish-in-aub-ag” motion and movement is internally derived, autonomous, and independent. It is also something constantly being produced as the people act and live by their own means so do their spontaneous nature. Warren then states that the word is joined with “in-aub-a-we-se” (the “human body”), moving his definition from the mental to the physical. This implies that “An-ish-in-aub-ag” have an identity formed through independent thought and embodied through action. It is “spontaneous” thought that make them both *who they are and what they do* – a process that combines mind and body and results in a cycle of creation and re-creation. For Warren, “An-ish-in-aub-ag” means a people constituted by themselves.

Warren then makes an interesting adjoining suggestion, pointing out that none of this leads to a static certainty. As he claims: the “An-ish-in-aub-ag” do not “pretend, as a people” to have all of the answers. They believe in spaces of ambiguity, which Warren calls “darkness and mystery” and “vague and uncertain notions.” Editing a re-release of *History of the Ojibway People*, scholar and biographer Theresa Schenck describes this language as an example of Warren “criticizing” Anishinaabeg culture (xviii). She could be right, or perhaps this language could be attributed to one of his many editors. There is no way to know for sure.

I would like to suggest a different possibility, however. I assert that Warren is a deft and talented rhetorician who not only advocates for Anishinaabeg perceptions of the world but also embeds the very theories of cultural resistance and perseverance he witnesses into his own arguments. As he points out in the paragraph immediately following, missionaries have entered Anishinaabeg communities and “breathed a new belief and new tales into the ears of the wild sons

of the forest,” challenging their notions of the world. In these words, missionaries have “confused” Anishinaabeg as they listen and attempt to “imbibe the beliefs” they hear by “connecting them with their own more crude and mythological ideas” (58). Here, Warren establishes a binary between Christian and Anishinaabeg discourses, with the former positing certainty and the latter uncertainty. Christianity, he appears to be saying, is a repository of unitary Truth claims whereas Anishinaabeg traditions are something quite different: a set of claims regarding truths. As Anishinaabeg attempt to “imbibe” Truth claims, their very sense of themselves and who they are become “confused.” Ambiguous claims simply do not play well with unitary ones. Warren even states: “It is difficult on this account, to procure from them what may have been their pure and original belief, apart from what is perpetuated by the name” (58).

There may be those who may take issue with Warren’s use of terms like “crude” and “mythological” when describing Anishinaabeg “ideas.” I also propose that – while accepting that it is possible that Warren or an editor meant it pejoratively – these terms might mean something else. “Crude” means in a natural or raw state while “mythological” means based on mythology or mythical narrative. Re-framing these terms with his definition of “An-ish-in-aub-ag” we get: a spontaneous people naturally produced through their own stories. For Warren, European advancement (and specifically Christianity) involved a process of industrialization and refinement of not only of land and resources but also of knowledge and narrative – a transformation of cultures themselves. It is here, I suggest, that there is an impressive use of the English language and Warren is including more Anishinaabeg cultural discourses in his work. He appears to be identifying that nineteenth-century European Christians were doing more than just introducing new information and new ways of thinking: they were challenging the very basis of Anishinaabe autonomy – ambiguity – and how they naturally understood themselves through their stories.

Fascinatingly, Warren also uses “imbibe” to describe how Anishinaabe engage missionary belief systems (a verb meaning “to drink”). Christianity not only represented ideological and spiritual challenges but physical ones.

Anishinaabe can, however, persevere. Through his rhetorical abilities, word choices, and definition of “An-ish-in-aub-ag,” Warren gestures to the fact that the people still have and understand their name – and therefore carry a basis for understanding who they are. “An-ish-in-aub-ag” illustrates their independence and will support their minds and bodies to stubbornly refuse to die and assimilate. It embodies the actions the people must pursue in order to be self-determining, spontaneous beings: they must produce their own stories, telling of their multiple, rich, and autonomous existences. As long as “An-ish-in-aub-ag” maintain their name and what it means they will be left with “darkness and mystery” and “vague and uncertain notions.” In fact, what they are really left with is irony: it is “difficult” to “procure from them what may have been their pure and original belief” because *no pure and original belief exists*. In a few short sentences, Warren illustrates how “An-ish-in-aub-ag” embodies methods of cultural self-preservation, autonomy, and resistance to colonial imposition. Explained in English and drawing upon experiences of Christianization – two of the most significant things Anishinaabe “imbibed” from Europeans – Warren articulates how Anishinaabeg can maintain a significant part of themselves and their cultures through their name.

At the same time, Warren does not just describe “An-ish-in-aub-ag” in terms of difference but in relation to others. It is crucial to remember that his definition of Anishinaabeg does not exist in a vacuum. The “spontaneous people” are defined by their distinctiveness and self-determining nature but emerge from connections they make *internally* and *externally* – between themselves, their minds, their bodies, and with other humans and entities throughout Creation. This definition

reminds that while “An-ish-in-aub-ag” is clearly a word that embodies expressions of cultural and political autonomy, these are derived in an ongoing, wide-ranging process of relationship-building with forces throughout the universe. They do this, Warren shows, not by not casting away ideas that do not coalesce with theirs but by engaging and considering them. To use his descriptor again, Anishinaabeg “imbibe” alternative ways and beliefs: they possess abilities to form relationships with new peoples and knowledges through ideological and physical connections. This process may perhaps uncover limitations of Anishinaabeg knowledge, but this is why their claims, identities, and sense of themselves must remain spontaneous as they engage insights and ideas throughout the world. Vagueness and uncertainty are the epitome of this – they are what “An-ish-in-aub-ag” *are* and what they are *becoming*. As a result, Anishinaabe senses of self are only certain insofar as it leads to the next relationship and the knowledge it brings. This uncertainty does not cancel out the validity of Anishinaabeg claims nor the ability to make them (Warren is correcting “imperfect interpreters” after all), but leaves open the possibility that that their claims constitute *a part of Truth* – one piece of a larger puzzle. Even if an ideology (like Christianity) presents universal truth claims, these should not be cast away but meaningfully engaged with. Anishinaabeg, according to Warren, are operating with a fluid sense of what truth is and can be.

Schenck calls the definition by Warren a “very creative analysis of the word *anishinaabe*” (*History* 27n3). I would add that it is a deeply contextual one. Writing in the mid-nineteenth-century shadow of Indian Removal and the formation of the Territory of Minnesota, Warren lived during a period when Anishinaabeg territories were being invaded and the people removed, their claims ignored, and extermination a real possibility. As he writes in his preface of *History of the Ojibway*: “The red race of North America is fast disappearing before the onward resistless tread of the Anglo-Saxon” (23). In her collection called *The Life, Letters, and Times of an Ojibwe Leader*,

Schenck documents how Warren witnessed first hand “colonial intrusion into Ojibwe lands,” “the intensification of the Dakota-Ojibwe warfare,” the devastation wrought by alcohol, and the exploitation by land by fur trading companies who obliterated animal resources and monopolized territories (ix). He was aware that Americans were moving westward, would stop at nothing to expand their nation, and that “the government’s plan to remove the Ojibwe, as well as other tribal peoples, to an area west of the Mississippi would be carried out with certainty and that it was useless to resist” (ix). While in possession of ways to help them resist and survive, the Anishinaabeg faced an uncertain future.

For the most part, assaults on Anishinaabeg were enabled by laws, speeches, treaties and other “legal” documents. These were words that legitimized very material – and devastating – results. As an employee of the Office of Indian Affairs, interpreter for Indian agents, and politician in the Minnesota Territorial House of Representatives, Warren knew the importance of language in advocating for Anishinaabeg within an expanding United States of America. He witnessed how speeches and writing led to the emancipation of African slaves (think of the popularity and influence of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, published in 1852) but, as he writes, “[t]he red man has no powerful friends (such as the enslaved negro can boast)” (*History* 23). This perhaps explains his why he spends most of the opening pages of *History* reminding “readers of their responsibility toward the Indian people and call[ing] upon government leaders to change the nation’s Indian policy” (Schenck xvii).

Warren unquestionably knew that the survival of Anishinaabeg relied on a battle over words – so a primary way he takes on this challenge is by addressing the Bible, which guided the interests and values of his readership and America at large. Christians reading *History of the Ojibway People* might think that Anishinaabeg claims and accounts (such as their name) ignore Biblical

accounts. Warren however asks them not to doubt him but for a moment “[t]hrow down the testimony of the Bible, annul in your mind its sacred truths, and we are at once thrown into a perfect chaos of confusion and ignorance” (29). Subtracting Biblical claims of a unitary Truth, Christians are left with “wisdom and learning, and a knowledge of the conflicting testimony of ages past, descended . . . in manuscript and ancient monuments” while being “thrown at once on a level with the ignorant son of the forest respecting our own origin” (29). By saying this, Warren frames Anishinaabeg and non-Anishinaabeg as equal, and since the *very Bible itself* emerges from conflict, uncertainty, and the “deep mysteries of Nature,” it may be that “the white man” is at a disadvantage when it comes to understanding the Word of God for the Indian “deduces his beliefs from what he sees of nature and nature’s work” (29, 30). In actuality, an Indian who spends a lifetime pondering ambiguity, conflict, and struggle might just know something useful when trying to understand an ambiguous Creation. A people premised on mystery may be useful in understanding it, Warren writes, for: “the word of the Holy Bible . . . will remain a mystery till God wills otherwise” (30). It is not that Warren is saying the Bible is wrong, it is that it provides *a part of truth, not all of it* – a premise based in “An-ish-in-aub-ag.” If Christians opened their mind to this possibility, Anishinaabeg may even provide them with a clearer vision of the infinite possibilities of the Word of God than they could ascertain by themselves. To underline this, Warren follows up this argument by identifying how Anishinaabeg culture and tradition enlightens Biblical claims such as Indians being one of the “lost tribes of Israel,” different perspectives within Christianity itself, and Hebrew ancient tradition (31-41).

Warren also does something else. He demonstrates that Anishinaabeg have both intrinsic value *and* benefit from exposure to non-Anishinaabeg like animals, spirits, and Europeans. This does not mean that he is not condemnatory of the actions of others (one only has to read his

extensive documentation of the wartime actions of the Sioux or encroachments by Americans in *History*). It is that Anishinaabeg offer something interesting, different, and autonomous as individuals, communities, and humanity. And, most of all I argue, by defining “An-ish-in-aub-ag” as a “spontaneous people” Warren is pointing out that they bring complexity, diversity, and “vague and uncertain notions” to an emerging United States of America, a community increasingly relying on universal Truth, the denial of the Indigenous land claims and rights, and is built on a culture of conquest. Anishinaabeg have much knowledge to share – a fact Warren lays bare throughout *History* – such as historical ties with animals, spirits, and the earth, manifested in expressions like their Creation Story, totemic system, birch bark writings, ceremonies, and their treaties. Anishinaabeg are hardly a perfect people, as evidenced in their complicated relationships (particularly with the Sioux and British) but, as Warren also articulates, neither is anyone else. All, however, carry useful knowledge that can contribute to an ongoing, dynamic, and vibrant Creation.

While I agree with scholars like Schenck that some of the strengths of Warren are in his recordings of traditional stories for posterity or, as Maureen Konkle states: his “insist[ance] on the authority of tradition and historicity of the Ojibwes,”⁸ I would argue that his greatest contribution is that he provides an argument as to why Anishinaabeg are valuable on their own cultural and political terms *and how this uniqueness is valuable for all Creation*. I would propose that Warren adopted this model of argumentation as a mantra, constructing his work with rhetorical savvy, innovative arguments, and strong reasoning. This message to the United States is fairly simple but direct: that destroying the Anishinaabeg will not only affect the Anishinaabeg – it will impact humanity. I would go so far as to argue that this insistence of the autonomous value of Anishinaabeg cultural expressions and their worth to others is one of the reasons why *History*

remains so popular and, in the words of Schenck, is one of the “most influential books ever written” about Anishinaabeg people and culture (*History* vii).

This definition of “An-ish-in-aub-ag” is one that describes the “spontaneous people” as a people full of value, possibility, and continuous re-creation. They are a people with a dynamic history and culture who are constantly changing and becoming. They are also a community constituted by open-ended values of ambiguity and irony but also in firm and defined relationships with entities throughout Creation. The Anishinaabeg are an eternally un-finished people, constantly growing. Highly contextualized, this definition challenges the very basis for how a people, a community, and a nation can be defined. It could easily be argued that his definition is a bagijigan but, following his directives of “An-ish-in-aub-ag” being a “spontaneous” people, I wish to consider his definition alongside different Anishinaabe thinkers and see what emerges.

“From Whence Lowered the Male of the Species”

In 1988, just over one hundred years after Warren, Edward Benton-Benai (Bawdwaywidun) published *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway*, one of the most popular books ever on Anishinaabeg culture. Originally produced for a small cultural revitalization program in Minneapolis, the text has been re-published several times with a second edition now distributed by the University of Minnesota Press. It provides a profoundly influential definition of Anishinaabe that many Anishinaabeg use consistently and continuously. At first glance, however, the definition offered by Benton-Benai definition is starkly different to Warren – so much that one could think it is a completely unrelated word. I argue it is innately connected, part of the same story.

Benton-Benai also claims that “A-nish-i-na’-be” can be broken down into word stems. Benton-Benai claims that “ani” meaning “from whence,” “nishina” meaning “lowered,” and

“abe” meaning “the male of the species,” resulting in: “from whence lowered the male of the species” (2-4). He uses a story to frame his definition, beginning by describing the universe as a “family” created by “Gi'-tchie Man-i-to' (Great Mystery or Creator).” He explains that one of its most spiritual and powerful members, “Ah-ki' (the Earth),” was given “Four Sacred Directions – North, South, East, and West,” each that “contribute a vital part to the wholeness of the Earth,” creating the fish, plants, insects, and animals that “live in harmony with each other.” Then:

Gichie Manido then took four parts of Mother Earth and blew into them using a Sacred Shell. From the union of the Four Sacred Elements and his breath, man was created.

It is said the Gichie Manido then lowered man to the Earth. Thus, man was the last form of life to be placed on Earth. From this Original Man came the A-nish-i-na'-be people...

This man was created in the image of Gichie Manido. He was natural man. He was part of Mother Earth. He lived in brotherhood with all that was around him.

All tribes came from this Original Man. The Ojibway are a tribe because of the way they speak. We believe that we are nee-kon'-nis-ug' (brothers) with all tribes; we are separated only by our tongue or language. (2-4)

There are of course spiritual and linguistic elements in this version that echo many of the definitions of Anishinaabe mentioned so far. There are also direct allusions to the Anishinaabeg Creation Story and gestures to the first Creation of humanity through the first thought and breath mentioned in the Preface. *The Mishomis Book* also shares some direct connections with the definition offered by Warren, including the “spontaneous” method in which humans are created.

First are the obvious differences. There is the word stems, for example, suggesting translational and/or definitional choices. The most direct differences, however, are in the rhetoric. Instead of describing Anishinaabe somewhat ambiguously like Warren does, Benton-Benai offers confidently worded truth claims regarding Anishinaabeg culture and history. This is most evident in the very title, in the authoritative use of “The” – and not, for instance “A” – in *The Voice of the Ojibway*. Within the definition offered by Benton-Benai are few descriptions of a people living with

uncertain notions regarding their origin. Instead, he describes a people firmly ensconced in a well understood and autonomous cultural and political trajectory (for instance, there are few references to other tribal cultures, Americans, Christianity, or anything non-Anishinaabeg). While much of the text offers legends, they are full of past tense verbs and details presented as facts. For instance: “Gichie Manido then *lowered* man to the Earth... man *was* the last form of life to be placed on Earth... From this Original Man *came* the A-nish-i-na'-be people” (3, my emphasis). While Benton-Benai does refer to Anishinaabeg in modern, changing, and emerging terms, this is an interesting rhetorical difference.

As with Warren, the work of Benton-Benai exists in context. Evidence of both a traditional Midéwiwin upbringing and the time Benton-Benai spent at boarding school (Wall and Arden 50), *The Mishomis Book* also emerged during “Red Power” in the 1970s and the formation of the American Indian Movement (AIM) in Minneapolis. It is deeply embedded in the waves of cultural and political mobilization and revitalization taking place at this time and the struggle for Native American cultural and political equality after a long period of colonialism and oppression. This is a moment that Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Warrior write about in *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee*: “a season of struggle” where “Indians found a way to be more than a footnote and to force fundamental reassessments of what it meant to be Indian” (278). As a participant in Red Power and the formation of AIM, Benton-Benai was deeply influenced and inspired by these events.

Many (like Gerald Vizenor in *Crossbloods: Bone Courts, Bingo, and Other Reports*, for example) have criticized AIM for the substance abuse, misogyny, and corruption that characterized the movement, but it is important to remember that this time also inspired the revitalization and reformation of Indigenous cultural traditions and communities. While standoffs at Wounded Knee

and actions like the “Trail of Broken Treaties” grabbed headlines, one of the lesser-known and lasting legacies of AIM was the founding of several successful cultural organizations. This was particularly the case in Minneapolis, where community-led organizations such as the Indian Health Board of Minneapolis, the Legal Rights Center, and Migizi Communications intervened in the lives of countless people. One of the most important and influential initiatives of AIM were programs such as The Heart of the Earth Survival School (founded in 1971) and The Red School House (1972), which offered a culturally-based education to predominantly Anishinaabeg students in the Twin Cities area. While suffering from a lack of resources and curricular materials, hundreds of students who passed through these programs became some of the most influential Indigenous artists and advocates today.

Dedicated to “all students of the Red School House – past, present, and future,” *The Mishomis Book*, according to book jacket blurb offered by J.W.E. Newberry, is “written by an Indian for Indians.” Intended primarily for Anishinaabeg, the book is told in first person through Mishomis and Nokomis (“Grandfather” and “Grandmother”), from their cabin on Madeline Island – a place that offers a cultural and political “springboard to the future” for Ojibwe (103). The tone in *The Mishomis Book* is direct and educational, offering a traditional and spiritual way of understanding Anishinaabeg history and culture. Non-Anishinaabeg, and particularly Europeans, are peripheral as the book strictly centers on articulating an autonomous sense of Anishinaabeg knowledge to define – as the title suggests – *The Voice of the Ojibway*. For the most part then, the focus of the text is on explaining ceremonial practices (and specifically principles of the Midéwiwin, or Grand Medicine Society), explaining Anishinaabeg history, and advocating for Anishinaabemowin. Benton-Benai does this almost exclusively by re-telling sacred stories and declaring them full of methods invested in cultural and political autonomy. His stated goal is to

institute a sense of collective Anishinaabe identity by re-building Anishinaabe community, re-articulating Anishinaabe ways, and re-establishing Anishinaabe traditions. As Mishomis states to readers: “I would like to give these teachings to you. I believe that, together, we can begin the journey back to find what many of our people left by the trail. . . . Use them to teach your children about the way life has developed for the Native people of this country. Use them to redirect your life to the principles of living in harmony with natural world” (2).

The translation of “from whence lowered the male of the species” illustrates these motivations. The definition takes the reader on a tour from the macrosomic to the microcosmic, describing a huge universe full of distinct and independent layers that begins in space, moves to the solar system, then travels to Earth, through the outer atmosphere to clouds and finally land. As Mishomis describes the multiple layers one passes through one can see that all of Creation is an interconnected system made up of water, earth, spirits, plants, animals, and other parts. Echoing the definition Benton-Benai is narrating, the reader lowers him/herself onto the Earth, arriving at the creation of “Original Man.”

Created from earth and the breath of Gichi Manido, Original Man splits into other bodies as “[a]ll tribes came from this Original Man. The Ojibway are a tribe because of the way they speak. We believe that we are nee-kon'-nis-ug' (brothers) with all tribes; we are separated only by our tongue or language.” It is somewhat uncertain who Benton-Benai means exactly by “all tribes” (although he does describe “all Indian people” and Europeans and Americans later) but this illustrates an important rhetorical move: “A-nish-i-na'-abe” are a unique but connected segment of humanity – a part of a whole. From the outset of the definition, Benton-Benai is establishing a synecdochal foundation for his explanation of Anishinaabe. Worth also noting here is his emphasis

on the distinctiveness and importance of language, which I will return to. The narrative tour, however, is not finished.

From the formation of Anishinaabeg bodies, Benton-Benai turns his attention to the role of the mind in shaping the body. Namely, he describes language and belief in certain (hi)stories as integral to the formation of the people. It is here that the tone of the book changes from descriptive to directive, making several stern demands and appeals. As Mishomis states: “It is important that we know our native language, our teachings, and our ceremonies so that we will be able to pass this sacred way of living on to our children and continue the string of lives of which we are a living part” (4). It is not enough for Benton-Benai that Anishinaabe physically exist – they must also have specific tools that ensure their own and their children’s continuation and inherit their tradition. They must understand who they are and where they have come from, what they have a responsibility to pass on, and comprehend how an active and broad Creation is connected to them and the choices they make will result in their continuation as a people. Here, Benton-Benai is relatively dogmatic, offering rather stringent directives and resolutions with not much interest in the role and presence of non-Anishinaabeg (and particularly Europeans).

There is arguably a reason for such Anishinaabe-centrism. Benton-Benai is invested in speaking to Anishinaabeg about Anishinaabeg things and inspiring the creation of Anishinaabeg-centred spaces, full of Anishinaabeg politics, perspectives, and people. While it is inaccurate to call the book isolationist (note how many layers it took to form Anishinaabe, for example), the fact that the stories are being told by elders in a cabin on an island is a metaphor for community creation. In the context of Minneapolis during the rise of Red Power, the work of the Red School House, and Anishinaabeg cultural and political struggles in the late twentieth century, these moves make sense. Of pivotal importance in the revitalization of a community is the re-learning of and revitalization

of ceremonies, histories, and languages that celebrate distinctiveness. The work of restoring and rebuilding community must take place amongst that community first. Basically, people must understand themselves as a people. By framing his words as confidently-worded truth claims and in terms of cultural and political empowerment, Benton-Benai produces a powerful discourse. It is arguable whether this is the most effective method to inspire sovereignty but it is undoubtedly impactful and influential – especially in the face of assimilationist and anti-Anishinaabeg educational and societal institutions and other “truths.” Unlike the time when Warren wrote – when Anishinaabeg spaces were under attack and required advocacy and allies – the world Benton-Benai was facing was a largely occupied one for Anishinaabeg – one that required tools for decolonization, revitalization, and resurgence.

After Original Man is lowered and splits into multiple bodies though, the definition interestingly diffuses Anishinaabe. Continuing on along a synecdochal pattern, Original Man becomes Anishinaabe (signified by a re-naming) because this being “is the first of the people that will be coming to live on this Earth... their ancestor” (19). Anishinaabe later becomes “Way-na-boo’-zhoo,” a “spirit who had many adventures during the early years of the Earth” (29). I will speak at length about the many incarnations of this figure later, but here Benton-Benai uses this being to demonstrate to Anishinaabeg the laws, relationships, and practices Anishinaabeg traditionally carry and must inherit. Continuing along a pattern, Original Man/Anishinaabe/Wenabozho joins with a woman and has four “gwe-wi-zayn’-sug” (sons) who travel in each of the Four Directions (22). These sons populate the world and become the first people who destroy one another and the Earth and perish during the Great Flood (29). From the destruction of these beings, the second people of Earth emerge (35) and later become Anishinaabeg (60). *The Mishomis Book* then continues in this fashion for the remainder of the text, in an ongoing

diffusion of migratory patterns, geography, and population – all the way to the present. Speaking to readers, Mishomis states: “We descendents of these great people can gather strength from their strength. We can gather courage for our lives today from their courage of yesterday” (102).

While *The Mishomis Book* poses as re-tellings of ancient beliefs and systems it is, after all, a published text written in the latter half of the twentieth century, in English, and resides in a “modern” cultural and political moment and geographical place. While it is certainly evidence of a shifting and ever-changing people and a product of their intellectual legacy, its context and political subjectivities are very clear. The book therefore is undoubtedly a treatise and a vision for an Anishinaabeg future and how it can be secured. This can be seen in the concluding story, the “Seven Fires” as prophesied by “seven nee-gawn-na-kayg” (prophets) who visited Anishinaabeg when they were living “on the northeastern coast of North America” (89). Narrating a long story about the life of Anishinaabeg community from past to present, Mishomis ends by stating that a “Osh-ki-bi-ma-di-zeeg’ (New People) will emerge,” resulting in “a rebirth of the Anishinabe nation and a rekindling of old flames” (91-93). The path of the “Osh-ki-bi-ma-di-zeeg” will “not be easy” for many elders will have “fallen asleep” and will be unable to guide them, so they will be faced with many choices regarding their future (93). This resembles a path prophesied for non-Native people, where they will “be given a choice of two roads. If they choose the right road, then the Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and Final Fire – an eternal Fire of peace, love, brotherhood and sisterhood” (93). Turning to the reader, Mishomis then asks: “Are we the New People of the Seventh Fire?” (93).

What is left, when one finishes *The Mishomis Book*, is this offering. It is a question that of course spawns other questions, demonstrated through the many times I have shared this book with students, relatives, and my daughter. I recall here a few: If sacred stories and tradition are so

important to remember and know, what is the continuing role of change with new technologies such as the internet and belief systems such as Bah'aa? How are these stories told? What parts of *The Mishomis Book* are centered on the subjectivity of Benton-Benai and how do this influence these versions? What would *The Mishomis Book* look like if written, for instance, in 2011 in Toronto? Would the authoritative position of these stories change? Would the book be as popular? For instance, how would a queer position influence the translation of “from when lowered the male of the species,” if at all? And, the question I am most often left with by readers and students: Does a stringently-worded knowledge of Anishinaabeg tradition, as suggested in *The Mishomis Book*, assist Anishinaabe in the “Seventh Fire” to become a part of the “Eighth Fire”? There are many possible answers here – many of which I believe can be found in the text – but the fact that the book inspires such questions I would posit *is the point*. *The Mishomis Book* is an offering, a bagijigan – on the future of Anishinaabe. Through his rhetoric, Benton-Benai not only educates Anishinaabeg on the importance of understanding their history and tradition but also provokes thoughts around the relevance, use, and potential of Anishinaabe culture. In other words, his gift inspires readers to find out how Anishinaabe can come up with the path to the “Eighth Fire” ourselves.

Interestingly, this is where “from whence lowered the male of the species” meets “the spontaneous people,” where the definitions of Warren and Benton-Benai coalesce. For Warren, thought defines the actions of Anishinaabe and makes them the “spontaneous people.” For Benton-Benai, the diffusing of Anishinaabe provokes possibilities on how Anishinaabe can become part of the “Eighth Fire.” For Warren, his definition moves from mind to body – inward-to-outward – while for Benton-Benai his moves from body to mind – outward-to-inward. Both meet at a physical and ideological relationship, illustrating how Anishinaabeg must determine for

themselves who they are going to be and how they will make it happen in the actual world. Both, most interesting of all, illustrate how acts of self-determination are an intricate part of this process.

What connects these Anishinaabeg thinkers and their definitions of “An-ish-in-aub-ag” and “A-nish-i-na’-abe” is this last point. Anishinaabe is a name and a process defined through relationships amongst one another and the rest of the universe. It is a word that embodies self-determination and is ultimately an offering of possibility, choice, and a future. Anishinaabe is a grand bagijigan, or rather bagijiganan. Coming from radically different contexts and told almost a hundred years apart, these two versions describe the creation of an interconnected and complex community of people who are both “spontaneous” and “lowered.” They are continuations of one another, parts of a dynamic and synecdochal narrative that includes two separate yet related parts of an ongoing story. These incarnations of Anishinaabe gesture to a system, a political, social, cultural, and historical set of chapters, in a never-ending and multi-directional book. These two narratives suggest that stories by and about Anishinaabe are a performance of gift-giving. They are a chorus, a library, and a round dance that others can listen to, learn from, and enjoy. They are offerings – bagijiganan by a rich and dynamic people.

How We Live: Anishinaabeg Bagijiganan

Nindoodemag Bagijiganan is a project interested in Anishinaabe narratives and how they define Anishinaabeg collectivity, history, and ongoing presence. It argues that Anishinaabeg words, stories, and songs are bagijiganan, offerings where the unique relationships Anishinaabeg share in community and with beings throughout Creation can be viewed. I began this project with our Creation story and the interconnected meanings of Anishinaabe to illustrate four points integral to this work. First, that language forms the basis for an Anishinaabeg universe – it not only

constitutes the way the universe is understood within Anishinaabeg philosophy but provides the very basis that holds it together. The study of Anishinaabeg words and narratives therefore provides a culturally-specific way in which to understand how Anishinaabeg view their presence in the universe. Secondly, that Anishinaabeg do not have to look very far to find our ancestral ways of being, knowledge of who we are, or the vessels that will bring us into the future. Creation continues to be a home created from powerful thought and breath of of Gizhe Manido – we need nothing more than this complex, rich, and complete place to find tools for our cultural lives. Thirdly, I began with these stories to illustrate that by reflecting on our past and present cultural inheritances, sharing them amongst ourselves and others, and expressing what valuable and beautiful lessons they bring we can see how Anishinaabeg continue to be a creatively and critically rich even after several centuries of colonialism, contact with Europeans, and the invasion of our territories. With all the subjectivity I can muster, I reject the principle that we are a disappearing people – there is too much evidence to the contrary. And lastly, these stories suggest that it is Anishinaabeg words and narratives of the past few centuries that create and define Anishinaabeg life today. We are a living, thriving, and whole people. Our ancient narrative expressions may be how we have come to be shaped as Anishinaabe but the stories and expressions of today are how Anishinaabe is definable now. These are part of our ever-growing path of Anishinaabeg, offerings on how to become part of the “Eighth Fire.” As Anishinaabe today we speak, continue, and live through our own words. No one can speak for us. We must stand up, speak our names, and breathe our words. We must offer our bagijiganan and live up to the responsibilities of our inheritances – as we have always done.

Stories, songs, speeches, and other formal and informal mediums have always been a primary way in which Anishinaabeg frame experience, communicate, and share our lives with

others. It is simply been the way we have lived and continue to live. As Leon Valliere Jr. has remarked, “[l]anguage and communication have always been among the recorded strengths of the Ojibwe people” (2), a fact that has resulted in countless examples of Anishinaabeg expression. As I have already recounted, there are sacred narratives describing Gizhe-Manido, beings such as *gizhe’giizis* (“sun”), *aki* (“earth”), and other non-human beings. There are songs and poems that honour the wonders of the universe, portray vivid descriptions of dreams, and relate tales of exploits and travels. There are stories of the famous Naanaboozhoo and his adventures, demonstrating teachings embedded in parts throughout the world. There are speeches and prayers of the highest quality and polemics. There are narratives, as William Asikinack points out, used “for a specific purpose: that is, to teach a lesson or moral to the listener/learner... which gives the Anishnaabe their orientation to life itself” (159). There are yarns filled with politics, gossip, and simple day-to-day activities. There are accounts in oral and written traditions that document what James Dumont names as an Anishinaabeg “unique *experiencing* of the world” (“Interview” 79, original emphasis). There are stories passed on by spirits, animals, and plants to Anishinaabeg who take the time to listen, be sensitive, and pay attention to the world around them. There are funny anecdotes and tales – some true, more not – that entertain, tease, and make people laugh. Some narratives include all these elements, and more. And, best of all, many narratives have yet to be shared.

In her 1999 anthology of Anishinaabeg prose, Kim Blaeser remarks: “The Anishinaabe have a long and admirable legacy of both oral and written literature in many genres” (*Stories Migrating Home* 3). She provides a lengthy and useful reference list dating back to Frances Densmore and her two early twentieth-century volumes of recorded and translated song poems entitled *Chippewa Music*. In *Touchwood: A Collection of Ojibway Prose*, Vizenor even goes so far as to

say that the *Anishinaabeg* “claim more published writers than any other tribe on this continent” (*Touchwood*” v). This may or may not be true, but there is certainly a substantial enough body of work to make such claims. This project studies a chip off a huge tribal literary tree – to use the metaphor offered by Womack.

Anishinaabeg narratives have been “published” in the traditional, printed use of the word but there is a long, alternatively written history to look at too. Dumont points out that, “there is a ‘corridor of successive rock paintings, rock carvings, petroglyphs and petroforms stretching east to the Atlantic seaboard and west to the Rocky Mountains” (qtd. in Roseau River Chapter 56). This is not to forget birch bark pictographic scrolls – what Nicholas Deleary calls the “Anishinabe ‘archives’” (16) and images from them that Vizenor places alongside his poems and stories in *Summer in the Spring: Ojibwe Lyric Poems and Tribal Stories*. These texts and how they are used is an important part of a long and wide Anishinaabeg narrative tradition but unfortunately neglected by critics. Reading many studies of Anishinaabeg narrative tradition, one might think that expression began with alphabetical writing. Many scholars simply do not approach Indigenous and Anishinaabeg graphic and pictographic texts with a great deal of vigor or, worse, ignore them completely. Some include them but are unsure of what they do or mean, refer to them vaguely or try to jam them into already-existent theories. These studies exist sporadically in fields like art, history, and education but certainly do not receive the attention novels and poetry written in alphabetic languages get (Foss 213-14).

This study attempts to offer a bridge between several genres and open up senses of written language. It posits that Anishinaabeg narrative expressions are offerings that incorporate complex uses of text and authorship alongside spoken word and gesture. They more often than not combine aspects of performativity, audience involvement, notions of orality and the written, subjectivity,

and aesthetics. These veins of criticism have been traveled by scholars such as Gordon Brotherston and Walter Ong but almost none have studied Anishinaabeg literatures specifically. In other words, I am arguing that it may be that European understandings of what is writing and text constrain the study of Anishinaabeg narrative and a more open-ended approach is required. For instance, Wiisaakodewag researcher Patricia D. Mcguire writes that “Anishinaabe were given first instructions on how to live on the earth” through narrative, and have accepted this gift very seriously. Anishinaabeg narratives therefore have tended to embody

a variety of formats and in a range of ways such as in pictures, songs, petroforms, pictographs, design patterns, ceremonial objects, home styles, clothing and geographical markers of land. Stories [can] also be performed. They [can] be described in song using different instruments such as drums, rattles, eagle (and other bone or wood) whistles and voice chants. . . . There are protocols for hearing, telling and learning stories. Other types of stories can only be expressed during ceremony with sacred objects like the pipe, opwaagan. Some stories can only be expressed within ceremonies such as the sweatlodge, *madoodiswan* or shaking tent, *jiisaakaan*. It is through these ceremonies that clan affiliations, adoption and relationships are learnt. Some stories require selected individuals to be taught to tell them only at certain times and in certain ways. Some have societies attached to them such as the *Midewin* and *Wabuno*. . . . Stories are both an individual and collective responsibility based upon our understanding of the world. (7-8 original emphasis)

The ways in which Anishinaabeg narrative tradition incorporates multiple senses of text, writing, and formats suggest a spectrum of expression, not compartments. This project seeks to consider what a narrative history might look like if all of these texts were considered alongside one another.

In this vein, some may notice that I sidestep the term *literature*. Debates have raged since the fourteenth century in Euro-American circles about what literature is, what it does, and what it means. Emerging from the Latin word *littera*, meaning “letter of the alphabet” or simply “letters,” the term “literature” “came into English, via French, in the late fourteenth century. According to Rob Pope, it simply meant ‘acquaintance with books’ and ‘book learning’ in general,” becoming “virtually synonymous with what we now call literacy” (60). Over the next few centuries however,

the term has been remade over and over in the political, religious, and social tastes of the day. “Before the eighteenth century in western Europe,” head editor Vincent Leitch and his co-editors of the *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* point out, “the word *literature* designated all books and writing. Only during the neoclassical and Romantic eras did literature come to be more narrowly defined as belles lettres [beautiful or “fine” writing]” (28 original emphasis).

While some theorists seek a return to the openness of the pre-eighteenth century definition of the literary, the valuation of “writing” – and specifically European language writing – continues to be the linchpin of scholarly and academic perspectives of literature and these carry great weight in the economy of education and society. In essence, views on what constitute literature inevitably accompany certain power dynamics. As Terry Eagleton writes: “Literature... is an ideology. It has the most intimate relations to questions of social power” (20). Dissatisfied with these kinds of trajectories, Eagleton proposes a solution: consider the term as something describing “highly valued writing” – variable, contextual, and subjective as these three words are – and place “literary” and “literature” “under an invisible crossing-out mark, to indicate that these terms will not really do but that we have no better ones at the moment” (9).

While an interesting (albeit distracting) suggestion and acknowledging that some critics have valid reasons for using the term,⁹ I will use *narrative*, a more inclusive term that offers much in describing a wide-ranging sense of Indigenous expression. Its primary value is that it is made up of a verb, *to narrate* - describing the act of storytelling. This is what J. Hillis Miller defines as the most “natural and universal” feature of all “human culture” and an act tied innately to meaning-making and the basis in which communication and culture operates (66). Narrative, Miller argues, involves a constant negotiation over “the meaning of human life” (67). Narratives, in my mind anyway, are closer to the sense of offerings I am interested in utilizing.

Some, like Cherokee writer Thomas King in *The Truth About Stories*, privilege the term *story*. Story comes with much ideological weight too, often implying plot, characters, and structural devices like climax and resolution. While writers like King use it to refer to more than this (including expressions such as poetry and song), the term has become for critics a catch-all expression. “The truth about stories is that that is all we are,” King writes (2) – an interesting and provocative statement but without extensive examination one that is too open-ended for this project. Certain Anishinaabeg cultural expressions and forms like paintings and petroglyphs also present problems that do not fit certain meanings of “story” (where might be the “rising action,” for example?) and convolute things further. At the same time, story is more open-ended than literature and I sometimes default to it. In the end, narrative does not attach itself directly to all of these discourses and there is an open-endedness that includes orality, a sense of performance, and broadly considered understandings of text. In the end this may be just splitting hairs but to me narrative leaves open other possibilities for thought and dialogue.

Aadizookanag and Dibaajimowinan: Narratives for Life’s Sake

As Anishinaabe we, of course, have descriptors of our own. In Anishinaabemowin, two words are predominantly used. *Aadizookan(ag)* are “traditional” or “sacred” narratives that embody values, philosophies, and laws pertaining to existence. Nichols and Nyholm translate the word to mean “traditional story, legend, myth, character of a legend or myth” (16). These narratives are often demonstrated through stories of Wenabozho (often called Naanaboozho or other names), a being who exists to help the Anishinaabeg learn about themselves, understand the complexity of the world around them, and grow. There are other stories that do these tasks too, such as Creation accounts or narratives in mythic spaces and places. Aadizookanag are often considered spirit

beings, entities who work with Anishinaabeg in the interests of demonstrating to them principles necessary for life. Some call them “grandfathers.” Basil Johnston calls them the “muses.” In Anishinaabemowin, they are most often classified as animate nouns, carrying life.

Dibaaajimowin(an), the other word in Anishinaabemowin used to describe narratives, is translated to mean “histories” and “news.” Nichols and Nyholm translate the word to mean “story” or “narrative” (45). They range in time, from long ago to today, and often tell of family genealogies, geographies, and community relationships. They may also tell stories of going hunting, an accident, or the time your cousin ate too much bannock and threw up. Today, *dibaaajimowinan* is often used to describe the many novels, short stories, poems, and other narrative forms Anishinaabe writers use to articulate their ideas and experiences. A good rule of thumb is if a specific time period and geographical place is clearly referenced and evident in a narrative, it is likely considered a *dibaaajimowin*. Interestingly, in Anishinaabemowin these sorts of narratives are often classified as inanimate nouns – but the rules are not always hard and fast. These sorts of narratives undoubtedly demonstrate principles necessary for life, but in different ways.

As I have mentioned, these are not static rules. Some *dibaaajimowin* become *aadizookan* over time and in some *aadizookan* are also considered *dibaaajimowin*. Many elders believe there are spirits in all stories, no matter how small, large, or what they are (McGuire 7). Both embody experiences and knowledges found within Anishinaabe individuals and communities. It is best to think of these two different categories of stories as flexible, overlapping, and fluid bodies of expression. As Simpson states in *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*:

It is my understanding there is not a uniform boundary between the two [categories], or that different Elders and different regions have specific teachings and protocols around which stories are considered sacred and which are personal stories, teachings, ordinary stories, narratives, and histories. There is a relationship between the *Aandisokaanan* and *Dibaaajimowinan* that to me, is like an echo, not a dichotomy. (46 n58)

This is an excellent way to describe this narrative process and does not neglect the fact that both aadizookaanag and dibaajimowinan are told in and for specific circumstances, time periods, and purposes. These stories not only embody relationships but also are a relational process as a whole.

Worth remembering is that Anishinaabeg aadizookaanag and dibajimowinan always have homes – places they come from, beings who tell them, and histories they reside in. They are offerings made in specific places and spaces as well as political, theoretical, and subjective statements of an enduring and autonomous community and their experience, history, and life. They are spoken, written, exist in many media, and proceed in several different directions and for a multitude of purposes. They are just like the description offered by Blaeser earlier in “First Breath”: subjective life forms with abilities to effect, reflect upon, and impact the universe.

If there is one message that Indigenous theorists have added to literary criticism in recent years, it is that Indigenous expressions operate with a vested and range of interest in continuing their own tribal and pan-tribal community and all of its related parts. In “Seeing (and Reading) Red: Indian Outlaws in the Ivory Tower,” Justice puts it best when he writes:

While something of a generalization, I believe it is fair to say that most tribal artists – novelists, poets, singers, painters, dancers, filmmakers, and so on – are creating art not only for themselves, but also for the survival and enduring presence of Native people. . . . In most Native literature, art becomes more than just a vehicle for self-expression, although it is certainly that. It becomes, as Cherokee/Appalachian poet Marilou Awiakta has noted, “art for Life’s sake, as opposed to art for Art’s sake.” (109)

Anishinaabeg narratives embody similar politics, histories, and subjectivities and – while obviously sharing other interests too – are invested in continuing and maintaining Anishinaabeg life and lives in the universe. This project adopts this principle.

In recent years some have used these tenets to devise a critical movement called Indigenous Literary Nationalism (sometimes called American Indian Literary Nationalism), a

trajectory of work responding to calls throughout the 1980s and early 1990s for Indigenous-centered literary scholarship. Because mainstream critical approaches – including those indebted to formalism and post-structuralism – proved somewhat incapable of relating to grassroots Indigenous struggles or of engaging adequately with particular tenets present in Native literatures, calls were made by both Native and non-Native literary critics to consider the specific contexts and aesthetics of Native literary production. Indigenous literary nationalism examines stories, poetry, songs, nonfiction works and autobiographies as processes deeply invested in the continuance of a People. The approach seeks to identify a political (and at times polemical) subjectivity at the centre of Native literary endeavours, while at the same time celebrating the interconnectedness of Native peoples with other cultures and, perhaps, non-human entities. It is also deeply invested in articulating histories, aesthetics, and expressions in political and historical moments while placing Indigenous voices at the core. Following scholars like Robert Warrior in *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (1995), this privileging locates Native peoples not only as storytellers but as intellectuals who articulate and devise complex and sustaining philosophies, theories, and approaches to their own lives, literatures, and laws (xviii-xix).

After several provocative forays by scholars into examining how Indigenous literatures embody these critical and creative fabrics (including an entire book called *American Indian Literary Nationalism* by Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, and Robert Warrior), Indigenous literary nationalism has begun to stagnate. The reasons for this are multiple, ranging from a critical oversight of aesthetics, an American- and male-centric trajectory of the field, and a discomfiting juxtaposition of tribal sovereignty alongside separatism and militancy.¹⁰ Many also feel extremely unsettled with the use of the term “nation” (a term I address in “Bezbig”). I would add that a central reason Indigenous literary nationalism has critically waned lies in the fact that several

theorists use tenets of their own communities and nations – mostly from the American southwest – to interpret the Indigenous world as a whole. So, we suddenly find nations influenced – and even framed – by the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act (which re-established certain measures of sovereignty and formed provisions of Indian governance into the twentieth century) as linchpins for discussion. Or, we find critical and intellectual moments in certain tribal traditions and histories used to consider resistance and decolonization movements outside of those tribes or arguments that assume that policy debates surrounding southern US Indian slavery, blood quantum, and citizenship can be used to frame wide-ranging forms of tribal citizenship and self-determination.

At the same time, this is evidence of a movement in its critical infancy. I assert that there are seminal ideas the field offers in thinking about the political and aesthetic possibilities in tribal approaches and there continues to be dynamic merits within Indigenous Literary Nationalism. While some criticisms are unquestionably warranted, Indigenous conceptions of community, culture, and nationhood continue to be a seminal venue in which Indigenous critical expression operates. This study therefore suggests a narrative sense of Anishinaabeg nationhood in its many complex and specific contexts. Anishinaabeg writers and thinkers are deeply interested in these parameters but their gestures are starkly different than all expressions of Indigenous literary nationalism to this point. This vision is distinctly Anishinaabeg.

Marks of Mino-Bimaadiziwin

This project argues that Anishinaabeg narratives are bagijiganan that forge a path that defines and sustains Anishinaabe life. They are gifts given in the interest of honouring, producing, and maintaining Anishinaabe culture and community (and even perhaps others). Anishinaabeg stories, songs, poems, and other narrative forms are invested in creating, maintaining, and

renewing relationships that honour and continue the uniqueness of Anishinaabeg culture and community. To cite Justice, these narratives are “art for Life’s sake” – expressions that constitute an ongoing stream of Anishinaabeg Kendaasiwin (knowledge) that is unique, intellectual, and meritorious. Broadly, therefore, this study takes up several questions: What are Anishinaabeg narratives? What do these expressions do and what do they explore and embody? What is the history of Anishinaabeg narrative expression and what is its role in culture and community? How can Anishinaabeg narratives be studied in their cultural specificities and what might a critical and cultural-sensitive lens illuminate? And, last but not least: What do they Anishinaabeg narratives contribute to Anishinaabeg, non-Anishinaabeg, and Creation? With these questions at its heart, this project hopes to provide some answers.

I suggest that Anishinaabeg narratives are critical and creative struggles in a long journey of relationship building, embodying a multifaceted process in Anishinaabemowin called *mino-bimaadiziwin*, “the good life.” These narratives teach us, enable us, and maintain our abilities to connect with entities throughout Creation in reciprocal and responsible ways. They guide our interactions and help us forge new ties with beings as we encounter them. This path is never-ending, an ongoing process rather than a destination. Anishinaabeg stories, songs, and other expressions are a continuous set of offerings on the ways Anishinaabeg have walked toward a “good life” and met many along the way. In essence, they are markers that gestures to the places we have been and – if lucky – the new spaces Anishinaabeg can walk. As trails often go, paths can be full of twists and turns, with some more sections more clear and well-travelled than others. Some lead to more difficult areas, others travel in circles and danger. Some lead to safety, security, and sustenance; new things we have never seen before. Others, not so much. This is essentially the journey that Anishinaabeg narratives offer – a path towards *mino-bimaadiziwin*.

To translate mino-bimaadiziwin as “the good life” is somewhat deceptive for the term means much more. A list of the number of Anishinaabeg definitions is in fact quite startling and as long as the list for Anishinaabe. Notice in these following definitions how that, while different, they interconnect, allude to one another, and become a web:

- a. Nichols and Nyholm state mino-bimaadiziwin originates from “mino” meaning “good, nice, well” and the root verb “bimaadizi” meaning “live, be alive” (32, 85).
- b. Nicholas Deleary translates it to mean “life in the fullest sense” (21).
- c. Nagaajiwanaag elder Louis Councillor co-relates the term with “nishin” (“good”) and points out its embeddedness within “Anishinaabe,” arguing that it is the way of life most crucial to Anishinaabeg identity (qtd. in Doefler, “Mino-Bimaadiziwin” 2, 18).
- d. Winona LaDuke states that it means “continuous rebirth” (*All Our Relations* 132).
- e. Leanne Simpson states it means “the art of living the good life” (*Dancing* 26 n9).
- f. Although naming it the “Path of Life,” Johnston in *Ojibway Ceremonies* describes what is basically mino-bimaadiziwin as: honouring life as an Anishinaabe person, inheriting your ancestral traditions, understanding that life holds infinite and beautiful possibilities, having an open and honest engagement with oneself and others, and acknowledging that knowledge is a life-long endeavour (134-36).
- g. Non-Anishinaabe Roger Spielmann, working with Anishinaabemowin speakers in Pikogan, Winneway, and Wikwemikong, states that: “*Bimaadiziwin* is virtually impossible to translate accurately into English” but “some common themes . . . come through in the translation . . . ‘a worthwhile life,’ ‘a long, fulfilling life,’ ‘our walk in life,’ ‘walking the straight path in this life,’ and so on” (159).

Mino-bimaadiziwin is the foundational principle in which laws like the Seven Sacred Teachings (often called the Seven Grandfather Teachings) were formed. They are *Nibwaakaawin* (Wisdom), *Zaagi'idiwin* (Love), *Minaadendamowin* (Respect), *Aakode'ewin* (Bravery), *Gwayakwaadiziwin* (Honesty), *Dabaadendiziwin* (Humility), *Debwewin* (Truth). Like laws for any community, these are subjective concepts embedded in forming specific relationships in an infinite number of specific situations. They are also hardly perfect or easily understood, but paths formed while considering mino-bimaadiziwin have helped ensure that relationships for Anishinaabeg are hopefully spaces where respectful, equal, and mutually beneficial exchanges can occur. Mino-bimaadiziwin is, after all, a bagijigan.

At the best of times, acts steeped in mino-bimaadiziwin have been the central ways Anishinaabeg traditionally formed meaningful relationships within themselves, families and relations, and with entities throughout the world. These formed a basis in which Anishinaabeg families, communities, and nations were built with a host of entities. Working with Ojibwe at Berens River in Manitoba, anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell witnessed it first hand, explaining that it was a daily and life-long practice that meant living “life in the fullest sense, life in the sense of longevity, health and freedom from misfortune. This goal cannot be achieved without the effective help and cooperation of both human and other-than-human ‘persons’ as well as by one’s personal efforts” for “it is within this web of ‘social relations’ that the individual strives for pimadaziwin” (*Contributions to Ojibwe Studies* 559, 561). These “social relations” that Hallowell witnessed were constituted through dialogue, cooperation, recognition, maintained responsibilities, and shared notions of equality and democracy. This process was hardly perfect – Anishinaabe have never been immune from making mistakes, forgetting responsibilities, or selfishness and

dishonesty. Relationships also change over time, which is why processes of mino-bimaadiziwin must be visited and re-visited as time, needs, and desires change.

In *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent*, Leech Lake Anishinaabe critic Scott Lyons makes an excellent point that one should think of mino-bimaadiziwin more in its verb form bimaadizi, “used to describe the general state of someone being alive, and it possesses connotations of movement that can be understood in a physical sense” (87-88). Lyons declares this is evidence of Anishinaabeg “culturing” rather than “having a culture. . . producing more life, living in a sustainable manner as part of the flow of nature – and never separate to it (88). While I appreciate the sentiment, the point made by Lyons is slightly problematic: culture is something that *is* as much as *something that facilitates living*. Aadizookaanag and dibaajimowinan are good examples. These are certainly theories for life, but they are also products of times and places, designed by people trying to figure out how to live.

I define mino-bimaadiziwin as the practice Anishinaabeg narrators engage in to undertake the ethical, responsible, and dynamic process of relationship-making in order to enjoy a healthy life. In other words, the critical act of giving and receiving bagijiganan through narratives in order to travel “the good life.” The process of mino-bimaadiziwin therefore is never eternal – or, ironically, fully achievable – it is always being made. This is why narrative is an excellent place to begin considering how mino-bimaadiziwin is lived. To understand how we can live mino-bimaadiziwin in the present and future it is helpful to look at models of how it has operated – or perhaps even not operated – in the past. This can help us embrace the many gifts of being Anishinaabe and human being as well as embody the responsibilities these roles come with. Like Anishinaabeg narratives, processes of mino-bimaadiziwin did not cease when Europeans arrived. Nor did it stop when territories were invaded, treaties were signed, or Anishinaabeg spoke English.

While colonialism deeply impact these methods, Anishinaabeg are still invested in relationship-making in the interests of maintaining autonomous communities while also engaging all parts of the universe. This is embodied in the very name Anishinaabe and lives in the hundreds of Anishinaabeg narratives that exist and operate throughout Anishinaabeg lives. Anishinaabeg stories, songs, and other narrative forms are beings who embody a process of mino-bimaadiziwin that embodies action, resistance and empowerment, and participate within the universe.

I argue that Anishinaabeg narratives embody this process of mino-bimaadiziwin through a critical lens ascertained from relationships embedded in the Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag, the Anishinaabeg Totemic System. This system illuminates the diverse ways thinkers and writers gesture towards mino-bimaadiziwin in specific spaces and places. These bagjiganan form a large part of what constitutes Anishinaabeg narrative tradition from the past and into the future as well as illustrates the ways Anishinaabeg collectivity and culture operates. Like Nindoodemag, Anishinaabeg narratives are offerings that define, refine, and offer ways of thinking about relationships in ways that articulate practices of sustainability and recognition for Anishinaabe communities and those around them. They are words, stories, and most of all, articulations of the intricate relationships Anishinaabeg share with different entities throughout Creation. They offer methods in which to think of other relationships now emerging and yet to come – gifts of responsibility and affiliation in the interests of critical and creative expression and action. Through close examination and consideration of contexts (specifically histories, subjectivities, and aesthetics) through lenses provided by markings of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag, a long-standing and multidimensional tradition of Anishinaabeg narrative is unearthed.

In Bezhig (Chapter One), I introduce Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag, a system in which traditional Anishinaabeg expressions of identity, governance, and nationhood have been expressed

and ascertained over a long period of time, and argue that this forms the basis in which Anishinaabeg relationships continue to be forged today through narrative. Using treaty markings of Nindoodemag, one of the oldest and vibrant orthography amongst Anishinaabeg, I argue that principles embedded in this system encapsulate an intellectual narrative tradition that gesture to different forms of relationships Anishinaabeg carry with other living beings in their territories. Modeled on animals and fauna in Anishinaabeg environments, these suggest ways in which Anishinaabeg nationhood are expressed and embodied. They also provide a basis, through individual doodems and the specific knowledges they offer their relations, in which Anishinaabeg narratives over the past three centuries can be understood.

In Niizh (Two), I introduce Mikiniik (Turtle), a doodemag which demonstrates to Anishinaabeg through its behavior and physiology how to consider the possibilities of the imagination and how relationships can be creatively and critically constructed. Turtles are gateways to discussions, debates, and the many possibilities within decisions. They are vessels of thought, collaboration, and creation. These are the forums in which things like homes are built. Using three stories, I show how Mikiniik narratives continue, presenting Anishinaabeg with challenging ideas and perspectives surrounding the possibilities of the imagination: one of an Anishinaabeg Jiisakaan (Shaking Tent ceremony) in 1764 near the straits of Michilimackinac; two Daphne Odjig murals from the 1970s; and a 1991 essay offered by Basil Johnston entitled “Is That All There Is? Tribal Literature.” They are Mikiniik bagijiganan, sites of the imagination and exploration that enable human beings to see themselves and the world differently, think critically, and gain entryways into the mobile and adaptive worlds turtles know much about.

In Niswi (Three), I introduce Maang (Loon), a doodemag which demonstrates to Anishinaabeg through its calls and behaviours the many dynamic strands that make up a collective

community. Like Maang who demonstrate the many cycles necessary for community building – from protective and territorial to fluid and migratory – Anishinaabeg form an ongoing sense of nationhood that requires constant re-visitation and re-thinking and is found in multiple instances of Anishinaabeg narrative. Working backwards through time and using three examples, I show how these expressions, like the calls and behaviours of Maang, protect, affirm, and inspire Anishinaabeg to re-create themselves, move, and change collectively via the short non-fiction piece “The Loon’s Necklace” by Richard Wagamese, the traditional story of the *Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin* (“The Seven Fires Prophecy”), and two stories from the Ojibwe missionary Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonabay). They encourage us all to look within ourselves and make choices towards a self-determining future and are Maang bagijigaanan, gifts that gesture to an autonomous sense of Anishinaabeg relationality, community, and nationhood – how it is forged and how it continues through narrative acts.

In Niiwin (Four) I introduce two Nindoodemag, Ajijaak (Sandhill Crane) and Waabajijaak (Whooping Crane), and show how their behaviour and calls demonstrate venues of diplomacy and encounter. While both doodem illustrate signs that call beings together in community and share characteristics with Maang, Ajijaak and Waabajijaak provide opportunities of collaboration and affiliation with beings and situations not of their own making. In other words, they facilitate opportunities for Anishinaabeg to engage and form relationships with those from other cultures and communities in a multitude of ways, providing a spectrum of different paths by their movement and calls. One is a direction where Anishinaabeg needs are stringent and specific, the other is a path where these needs are variable and general – with each relationship profoundly impacted by its specific context. Using three examples I show how crane markings continue to be made today, illustrating inter-cultural and inter-community engagements in the interests of

autonomy, movement, and change: an 1812 speech made by Chief Keesh-ke-mun to British Agent John Askin and the responses of Anishinaabeg leaders Sessaba and Shingwaukonce to United States Territorial Governor Lewis Cass's land claim in 1820; a 1944 story "Wenabojo and the Cranberries" by a man named Tom Badger; and a theory called transmotion by critic Gerald Vizenor.

The final chapter, Naanan (Five), features the doodem of Makwa (Bear). Bears are a well-known trope in Anishinaabeg stories and predominantly demonstrate the dynamic nature of the body through their territorial and protective nature, rich and dynamic understandings of their surroundings, and complex ways in which they forge relationships of sustainability. Makwag bagijiganan are expressions that encapsulate the powerful abilities of the physical to forge relationships and support life. I use three brief examples to illustrate how Makwa bagijiganan are being made today to recognize the multiple sites of Anishinaabeg bodies: a 2006 story called "Giche Makwa" by Alex DeCoteau; the character Fleur Pillager in Louise Erdrich's novels; and an early 1920s recording of storyteller Papa'gine's "Legend of Winabojo and the birch tree" by Frances Densmore. I end with an analysis of poet Marie Annharte Baker and her theory of Coyotisma, suggesting that Anishinaabeg languages and identities are bodies where certain methods of Anishinaabeg agency can be found.

Jim Dumont started off this section by stating: "When you go all the way back to the beginning, the Creator gave us a way of life and that is the way he intended for us to live. . . . There is not any other way of life that will come along and replace it. . . . Ours is particular to our way of being. We depend on the other colors of man to keep their ways of life going. Our responsibility is to keep ours going" (80). Our name, Anishinaabe, is part of this "way of life." It is a narrative that opens a gateway to understanding who we are and how we live as a people. This project offers this

bagijiganan as a beginning into other narratives that illustrate our journey and a path to where we are going. It hopes not to impede on others while recognizing the complexity and beauty of the work I have before me. I say miigwech to you for reading and offer my humble thoughts that I use to honour our way of life.

Bezbig: Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag

The anishinaabe endure in these stories of survivance as the crane, loon, bear, martin, and catfish families, the first ancestors of the earth; the odoodemi, totem or “to have a totem,” is that native presence and trace of the originary. (119)

- *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence*

Gerald Vizenor (White Earth Anishinaabe)

“The Insignia of Their Families”

In the summer of 1671, leaders from fourteen Indigenous communities (including the Miamis, Sacs, Winnebagoes, Menomonees, and their hosts, the Anishinaabeg) met with *Wemitigoozhiwag* (French) representatives of King Louis XIV at Bawaating (what is now known as Sault Ste. Marie). Recounting the meeting, eighteenth-century historian Bacquerville de la Potherie (Claude Charles le Roy) discusses that after distributing customary presents to the leaders in attendance and staking a cedar cross in front of them, French governor Daumont de Saint-Lusson asked interpreter Nicholas Perrot to read aloud a document appropriating the territory on behalf of the King. Perrot then asked the Indigenous leadership “if they would acknowledge as his subjects, the great Onontio of the French, our sovereign and our kind, who offered them his protection” (346-47). La Potherie describes that the assembled Indigenous leadership responded with gifts, agreeing to the alliance by stating that it would “maintain life” for them (347). What happened next is fascinating:

Sieur Perot, at the same time causing the soil to be dug into three times, said to them: “I take possession of this country in the name of him who we call our king; this land is his, and all these peoples who hear me are his subjects, whom he will protect as his own children; he desires that they live in peace, and he will take in hand their affairs. If any enemies rise up against them, he will destroy them; if his children have any disputes among themselves, he desires to be the judge in these.”

The [governor’s] delegate then attached to the stake an iron plate on which the arms of the king were painted; he drew up an official report of the transaction, which he made all the people sign [by their chiefs], who for their signatures depict the insignia of their families; some of them drew a beaver, others an otter, a

sturgeon, a deer, or an elk. Other reports were drawn up, which were signed only by the Frenchmen who took part in the act. One of these were dexterously slipped between the wood and the iron plate, which remained there but a short time; for hardly had the crowd separated when they drew out the nails from the plate, flung the document into the fire, and again fastened up the arms of the king – fearing that the written paper was a spell, which would cause the deaths of all those who dwelt or should visit that district. (347)

La Potherie adds that this “irregular” action resulted in this nameless delegate being removed from further dealings in the area and eventually being sent back to France (348).

These events are remarkable to me for several reasons. First, it lays bare an early critical moment in a long French-Anishinaabeg military and trading alliance that stretched into the following century. It was not a new encounter for Anishinaabeg (agreements had existed with Wemitigoozhiwag for some time), but it represented a renewal of a living partnership with one of the most trusted European partners Anishinaabeg ever had. It was also – evidenced by the declaration by Perrot that Bawaating was in the “possession” of the King – a relationship in its infancy. This land was not something Anishinaabeg would so easily cede. Bawaating had been home to Anishinaabeg for centuries and represented one of the most important cultural, political, and social places in North America. It was a place full of history (the fifth of seven “stopping places” on a great migration path – see Niswi) and a meeting area where thousands of Anishinaabeg converged “to participate in religious festivals, to renew their alliances, and to indulge in the consumption of large quantities of white fish which sustained them during their lengthy meetings” (Schmalz 12). Powerful families flourished and thrived at Bawaating – so much so that the elders of the *ahjijawk doodem*, the crane clan, established an *ishkode* (“fire”) here. Bawaating was, and still is, a place Anishinaabeg drew life from: a home. Wemitigoozhiwag, laying claim to the territory, had a lot to learn about Anishinaabeg – and vice versa.

Still, the “Pageant of 1671” (as the French called it) was a remarkable moment. It provided

the Wemitigoozhiwag an entryway north, south, and west of the Great Lakes. It gave Anishinaabeg a powerful and influential trading and military partner they would draw upon for decades. It also set the tone for future European-Anishinaabeg agreements such as the 1701 Great Peace of Montreal and later, in 1764 at Niagara where the Covenant Chain was forged with Zhaaganaashag (the British). This 1671 meeting was a crucially important moment and holds resonance three and a half centuries later.

The most interesting thing to me however are the competing and interesting discourses of writing, editing, and publication that occurred at this meeting. It is written first-hand by a Wemitigoozhi historian, working from the account offered by Perrot, so there are obviously those voices present – but there are also others. Beginning with the pronouncements by Perrot and his digging into the earth three times, a string of interesting expressions are evident on both sides. Literally penetrating the earth with religious and physical “stakes,” French expressions come across as hegemonic, violent, and a King imposing his will on “children.” This continues when the agreement is written and Indigenous people are “made” to sign it. This narrative is familiar and plays like most historical accounts of European-Indian encounters: full of aggressive Europeans, imposed forms of text, and passive, nameless Indigenous witnesses barely heard from at all.

But this is not the whole story. The Indigenous and Anishinaabeg leaders present are clearly not interested in submitting to an unbalanced and unequal relationship but one of mutual benefit and protection, an alliance that presents opportunities for equal growth. This is first alluded to in the few vague words documented by La Potherie, of Indigenous chiefs agreeing to the alliance because it is beneficial for “life.” This could be interpreted as it being framed within a process of *mino-bimaadiziwin* but the most evident examples of the desire for a mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationship are actually written, in “the insignia of their families . . . a beaver, others an

otter, a sturgeon, a deer, or an elk.” Perrot, having spent much time with Anishinaabeg, would undoubtedly have been quite familiar with what these signs were: markings of *Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag*, the Anishinaabeg Totemic System (sometimes called the Clan System). These identified the relationships these leaders shared with those in their homes and served to introduce Wemitigoozhiwag to the ties of which they were now a part. In other words, they were signing not only on behalf of those they represented but those they shared ties with and were explaining the responsibilities these relationships carried to their new partners. Perrot, as interpreter for Saint-Lusson, must have shared at least some of this knowledge, for these markings could not have been completely opaque (and La Potherie certainly seems to know some of what they mean). Anishinaabeg leaders (and others) were making remarkable statements about the worlds the Wemitigoozhiwag were joining – they were giving gifts, *bagijiganan*.

What is notable next is how Indigenous and Anishinaabeg leaders treat the signed document with the Wemitigoozhiwag: as a sacred, binding agreement. They do not appear, as is so often posited in scholarly accounts of early Aboriginal impressions, to be frightened of writing and text whatsoever. In a complete role-reversal, it is Europeans who treat writing and text rather loosely, attempting to add addendums without the consent of their partners (and perhaps for dubious reasons). In this I suggest that the Indigenous leaders present respected the power of this agreement – this writing – so much so that they resisted soiling of the sanctity of the document by burning the paper they did not sign and agree to. In fact, I argue that Anishinaabeg find these addendums threatening not only to the agreement and the new relationship with the French – but life in the region. Employing stereotypical language around superstition, La Potherie describes Indigenous warnings to Wemitigoozhiwag actions as a “spell.” He might not be so far off: such an egregious dishonouring of a trust agreement would surely spell dispute, war, and “deaths of all

those who dwelt or should visit that district.” Underlining this, I think Saint-Lusson gets the point. He publicly allows the burning of the addendum and punishes the delegate who added it, likely realizing how these actions jeopardized the entire agreement.

In this story Indigenous and Anishinaabeg leaders employ and recognize writing as a method to ensure their claims. They not only recognize the power of the written but also literally burn – some might call it *edit* – Wemitigoozhiwag additions to the text. This suggests that Anishinaabeg knew about the power of writing, signification, and the affirmation of an agreement through “marking” (the fixing of it to a stake is certainly an argument for “publication” if ever there was one). Anishinaabeg appear to know that writing creates communities, sets the parameters of a collective path, and carries great responsibilities – that words on paper create a binding relationship. This is not surprising really, a belief in the power of language goes all the way back to the Anishinaabeg Creation Story. What is remarkable here, I offer, is that they also understood that writing carried this power too. These images, created by Indigenous and European hands, represented responsibilities and actions in the real world. They were bagijganan. I therefore argue that these leaders were not the illiterate savages stereotypically painted in much scholarly work – they knew the power of signs.

Historians and scholars have debated the different discourses present at treaty and land negotiations and suggest the notion that these agreements inherently meant different things for each community. These usually fall along two lines: for Indigenous people they were signs of an ongoing and mutually beneficial relationship, for Europeans they represented a temporary or one-time sale or partnership. This agreement, evidenced by the words of Perrot, appears to be more in the realm of the former, especially via the offer that the French King “will protect as his own children; he desires that they live in peace, and he will take in hand their affairs. If any enemies rise

up against them, he will destroy them; if his children have any disputes among themselves, he desires to be the judge in these.” Admittedly, Indigenous people aren’t characterized as equals but they are still framed as *family*. They are not, for instance, friends (a different and distanced kind of relationship). You simply do not need to protect, share peace, and “take in hand their affairs” unless one intends to continue a relationship with a people – just ignore them and carry on your business. Just as Anishinaabeg are introducing Wemitigoozhiwag to an ongoing and complex relationship (more like set of relationships) the French were doing so as well. Recognizing that not all are the same, I would argue that most early treaty agreements operated similarly along these lines and Anishinaabeg and Europeans had ongoing relationships, not one-time deals, in mind. Take, for instance, the number of times familial kinship terms are utilized. Lawyers and government policy makers of the last century have spent much time trying to retroactively change this sentiment and ‘do away’ with treaties, but it is impossible to ignore these intentions. Treaty-making processes, particularly in early times and with Anishinaabeg around the Great Lakes – were as much about the creation of families than anything else.

The images on this 1671 agreement therefore show distinct signs of communities committing to a long-term relationship, with a shared set of rights and responsibilities. These may not have all been fully understood but there were beliefs, commitments, and principles within these forms of writing and these were agreed upon, regardless of how complex or misrecognized they were. Let me make this clear: I am arguing that there were visions of a relationship within these signatures (in actuality, relationships) and both sides were in some way committing to the signs of the other. The long history of court decisions in North America regarding treaties have reiterated time and time again how Indians have been bound to the discourses they signed. Europeans, I argue, are

bound by their signatures too. The French certainly believed that their new partners were bound to share a set of responsibilities in relation to them; Anishinaabeg did as well.

What Anishinaabeg were presenting to Wemitigoozhiwag in 1671 at Bawaating were bagijiganan, gifts of relationship. They were making remarkable statements about the worlds they inhabited, introducing Wemitigoozhiwag to the relationships existent in a region, and inviting them to join them in various ways. In other words, they were signing a treaty using treaties. By accepting these gifts, the French were bound to the parameters of these pre-existing ties and were expected to find their place within them, not vice versa. In Nindoodemag markings were beliefs, commitments, and principles as well as subjectivities, ideas, and dreams. Wemitigoozhiwag had entered into a relationship with a complex community and their many ties with a host of entities in the universe. These were what these Anishinaabeg signatures signified.

The images on this 1671 document were not new. Dating back hundreds and thousands of years, they exist in what James Dumont has called a “corridor of successive rock paintings, rock carvings, petroglyphs and petroforms stretching east to the Atlantic seaboard and west to the Rocky Mountains” (“Manitoba Petroforms” 56). Historian Heidi Bohaker states that she has found similar archival images on “a range of media including birch bark, paper, wood, cloth, hides, and stone” (“Nindoodemag” 30-31). In her report to the Ipperwash Inquiry, Darlene Johnston writes that they once covered “trees, canoes, houses, and clothing” throughout the Great Lakes (6-10). Anishinaabeg signed using Nindoodemag all the time and in a host of locations.

In a study of Anishinaabeg-European legal documents throughout the Great Lakes, Bohaker documents over twenty-five different and repeated “pictographs” that “predominantly represent the region’s fauna . . . including birds (eagle, crane, heron), mammals (woodland caribou, bear, wood bison, otter, beaver, marten), reptiles (Mizhiike, snakes), and fish (pike, sturgeon, whitefish,

channel catfish, and bullhead)” (“Reading Anishinaabe” 13). She also comments that in some cases trees (“birch, oak, white pine”) “and a half-fish/half-man merman” are used (13). Research uncovers several easily-found documents including the 1701 Great Peace of Montreal, where Anishinaabeg leaders used images of mukwag (bears), ajjaakag (cranes), amik (beaver), migizi/binesi (eagle/thunderbird), and maanameg (catfish), to represent themselves (Figure 2). Amongst these were “les Sauteurs” – Anishinaabeg leaders from Bawaating. Another example can be found in the five animals sketched on the “Selkirk Treaty” along the Red and Assiniboine Rivers on July 18, 1817. Another is found on an 1849 petition carried by Chief Buffalo to Washington, D.C., connecting a bullhead, merman, crane and three martens. Citing over one-hundred and fifty examples from her research, Bohaker comments that, “in nearly every case where Anishinaabe leaders were asked to sign such documents, from the seventeenth century through the nineteenth, each chose to inscribe a pictographic image. . . . the practice also continued into the twentieth century on petitions and other political documents authored by Anishinaabe leaders” (“Reading Anishinaabe” 12-13).

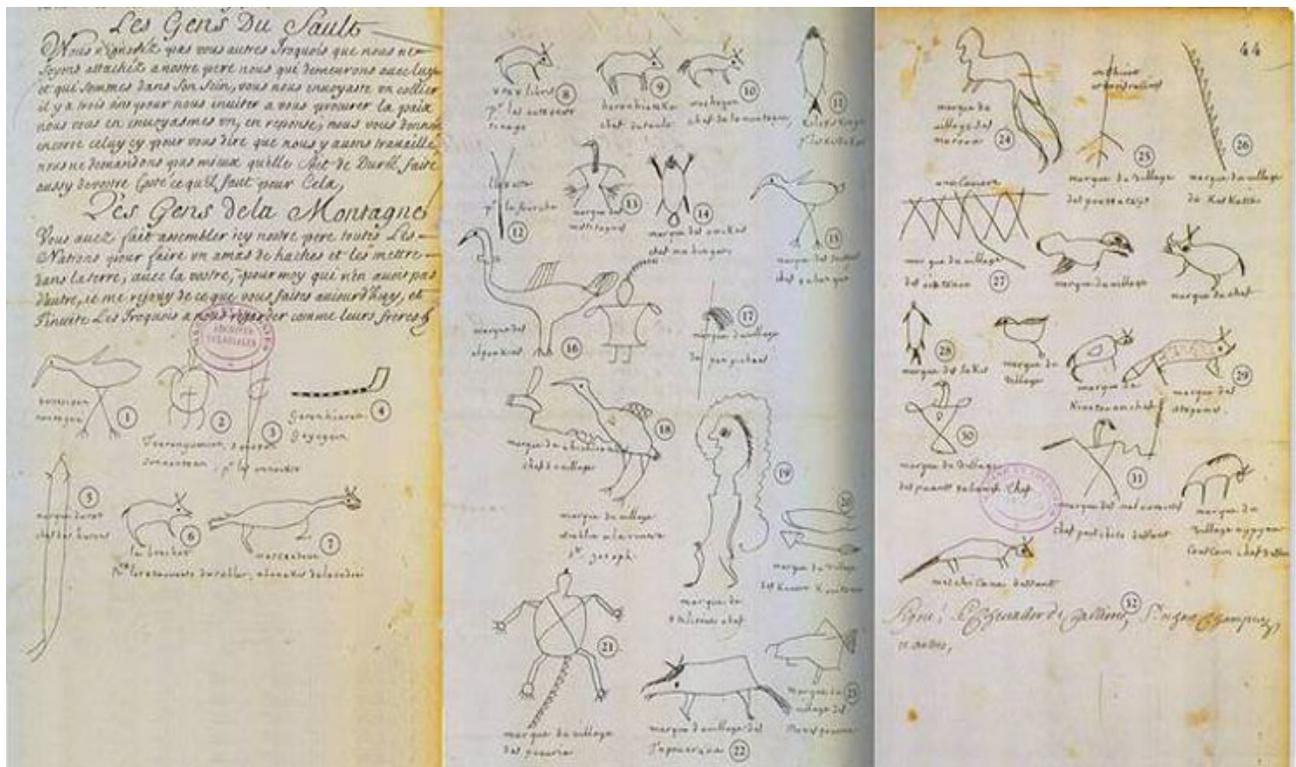


Figure 2: The Great Peace of Montreal (1701). According to Bohaker, Anishinaabeg clan signatures “include three bears, one catfish, one eagle in the form of a thunderbird, one beaver and two cranes” on the top of the middle page.

Treaties and land agreements are also not the only place one can find markings of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag. Many exist today. Midéwiwin lodges re-create markings of Nindoodemag to teach and learn from in and on mediums like sand and earth. Many Anishinaabeg draw and paint them on wood, rock and ceremonial items. Some forge them into beadwork or etch them into temporary and permanent images on skin. Leaders cite them in speeches, youth use them in graffiti, carvers forge them into wood, jewelers shape them out of metal and stone. Anishinaabeg authors like Richard Wagamese and Heid Erdrich or visual artists like Norval Morrisseau or Andrea Carlson use them throughout their writings and paintings. They exist in many more mediums. Ranging from tens of thousands of years old to the present, markings of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag reside alongside texts like Mayan codices and wampum belts, constituting some of the earliest writing in the Americas.

What Anishinaabeg are doing by using these images embodies a complex expressive process and a way of life that has been in operation for a very long time. It is here, in these complex Anishinaabeg markings of Nindoodemag, that I begin my examination of Anishinaabeg narrative expression. First though, it is important to understand more about how these images came to be, what they constitute, and how they signify relationships and relationship-making processes.

The Heart of Anishinaabeg

La Potherie says that the “insignias” on the 1671 agreement represent families, but this is only part of what markings of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag represent. Like other Anishinaabeg words and stories I have cited thus far, these images are synechdochal, gesturing to larger systems and processes at work. To begin with, the word doodem according to linguist Anton Treuer, “comes from the morpheme de, meaning ‘heart’ or ‘center’” (*Assassination* 15). Some draw out the stem “doodoo” – the word in Anishinaabemowin for breastmilk – referring to it in terms of how it represents the formative and sustaining fluid that develops and fortifies Anishinaabeg as a whole (Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage* 59). Simply put then, Nindoodemag is at the physically and ideologically center of all things Anishinaabeg. Johnston calls it “the most important social unit taking precedence over the tribe, community, and the immediate family” (*Ojibway Heritage* 59) and Dumont remarks that “[t]he Clan System [provides] the cultural, education, family, spiritual, political, and social ordering of Anishinaabe society” (“Anishinaabe Izhichigaywin” 25). Some simply call Nindoodemag one of the “Great Laws” of Anishinaabeg community, culture, and life. With such grand definitions, the role of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag cannot be understated. It forms a foundation for how Anishinaabeg families, communities, and societies can form and operate. It provides a way in which Anishinaabeg identify individually, recognize others, and

understand themselves within a network of relationships across the physical and spiritual plane. It represents an intellectual process in which Anishinaabeg can conceive of the complex roles and responsibilities they carry as well as demonstrates how these provide an ongoing and whole sense of Anishinaabeg. These, I suggest, are embodied through narrative and suggest a reading lens for understanding relationships and relationship-making practices Anishinaabeg partake in through creative and critical expressions.

While the system is ancient and wide-ranging, Nindoodemag exists in diverse incarnations throughout many communities. No two versions are exactly the same, varying in detail, structure, and context. There are also debates regarding the the origin of the system. Most argue that Nindoodemag is very old, such as Warren – who claims in *History of the Ojibway People* that it is the “first and principal division [of the people], and certainly the most ancient” (34). Cary Miller agrees with Warren, arguing that evidence is found throughout “Ojibwe oral tradition” (*Ogimaag*, 243 n51). Some anthropologists and historians however debate these claims, arguing that Anishinaabeg totems emerged after European contact and migration to the Great Lakes. Considering the use of totemic images on thousand year old petroglyphs and the sorts of totemic relationships Anishinaabeg share with tribes on the eastern coast, it would appear that the former is closer to truth than the latter. Or, it might just be that the system continues to be created and critics are citing newer clans and incarnations. Regardless, Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag is a powerful, widespread, and deeply held cultural institution amongst Anishinaabeg. It is, after all, a bagijigan.

Today, while a majority of Anishinaabeg communities practice Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag, some no longer do. This is largely due to a history of colonial policies that have attacked and undermined Anishinaabeg cultural and political practices. At the same time, it is remarkable that many of these same communities can either trace it back in their history or point to

institutions formed out of it. Many have attempted to re-institute forms of it, such as the Anishinabek Nation in Ontario, who recently adopted it as a governance model for their constitution, *Anishinaabe Chi-Naaknigewin*.¹¹ Virtually all incarnations of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag however share features that bring them into relationship, constituting one of the most long-standing and active expressions of Anishinaabeg culture operating today.

The intricacies of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag are difficult to explain. Elders have spent their entire lives trying to articulate it while learners like myself spend careers trying to learn it. I will overview it to the best of my ability utilizing not only intellectuals on the subject but my own knowledge and experience from ceremonies and community life. Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag is a system premised on the centrality of relationships and relationship-making as complex methodologies for life. Recall the claim by Treuer that it comes from *ode*, heart – an organ that rhythmically pumps blood throughout the body. Sending blood to other organs, blood is then returned to the heart via multiple entry and departure points – in an ongoing and reciprocal system. If one organ gets sick, or fails, the body is deeply impacted, and may even die. Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag is principled similarly, made up of *odoodeman*, living entities who travel the natural and spiritual worlds while instructing Anishinaabeg on how to live within the universe. Carrying multiple and unique relationships with Anishinaabeg, these beings communicate by demonstrating tools, methods, and behaviours that gesture to laws, principles, and responsibilities in which to live by. They are allies with Anishinaabeg, beings who visit bearing gifts like knowledge, names, and information about the world. In return, Anishinaabeg are expected to receive these offerings in the best way possible, treating them with honour and respect while using them to guide a path through life. Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag is therefore premised on the notion that everything necessary for

Anishinaabeg to live and thrive can be found in the universe – and particularly in the environment around them.

Odoodeman and Anishinaabeg share a very old and complex relationship constantly renewed through interactions. These most often take place through stories and songs. An example of a manifestation has been written down in a publication called *Gdodemonaanik Do Kinoomaagewinawaan (Clan System Teachings)*, one of the *Kinoomaagewin Mzinigas* (Little Teaching Books) available from the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinaabe Culture and Lifeways.¹² Another part of the Anishinaabeg Creation Story, it states that before Anishinaabeg came to the earth the Creator held a great meeting to inform the world that “humans were coming and they would not be able to provide for themselves.” In response, the animals generously accepted the responsibility of caring for Anishinaabeg and showing them how to live on earth. These beings stated that they would give Anishinaabeg everything they would need: sacrificing themselves for food and clothing, teaching them about medicine, and demonstrating ceremonies and practices that would “show them how to love in harmony with all of Creation.” As written in *Gdodemonaanik Do*

Kinoomaagewinawaan:

It was just as the animals had said when the Anishinabek arrived. The animals kept their word and provided the people with all they needed to survive. The Anishinabek were very thankful for the animals and their generosity. The animals were teachers and the Anishinabek watched closely. Our ancestors saw that each animal species had an important role to play and that together the animals achieved an incredible balance between each other. Through these observations, the Anishinabek organized their communities based on the relationships they saw between the animals around them. This social structure is our clan system.

In this story, animals are characterized as independent and active participants in an ongoing Creation, beings that choose to forge ties with Anishinaabeg and enable their entry into and continuation in the world. They gave us gifts of life, knowledge, and experience, and Anishinaabeg have accepted these and carry relationships with these animal relations forever. As carriers of

Nindoodemag, Anishinaabeg carry responsibilities to acknowledge these offerings, continue to learn from them, and renew relationship with odoodeman.

The relationship odoodeman and Anishinaabeg share are signified by totemic markers Anishinaabeg carry – often animals, but sometimes plants and mythical beings exist too. These are most often gained genealogically and patrilineally, but can also occasionally be inherited through other means such as adoption, direction from an elder, or a vision or dream (depending on community). In some cases a vision quest is utilized: an experience where an Anishinaabe lives and fasts for four days, listening, watching, and communicating with all of the beings who interact and visit with him/her in both the physical and spiritual world until one unveils itself as a relation. In special cases, as with inter-tribal individuals, who affiliate with people like the Cree (whose clan system is traditionally matrilineal), Anishinaabeg can carry more than one doodem. For those with a non-Anishinaabeg parent, a doodem is usually obtained through one or more of these methods.

In essence, an Anishinaabeg carrying a doodem *is effectively* that doodem. They are a member of that doodemag family. Given the gift of a totemic marker, Anishinaabeg carry the responsibility to form a lifelong relationship with this being in a variety of ways and incorporate what they learn into their lives. While there are certainly spiritual ways this is performed, it is perhaps easiest to see how this is done in the natural world. Watching, listening to, or engaging with an odoodeman one gets a sense of the specialized abilities, roles, and perspectives that constitute its uniqueness. One can see the way it acts and reacts to its environment, participates within communities and ecosystems, and forms ties in an ecosystem. Aspects like the shell of a turtle, the eyesight of the loon, the call of a crane, or the way a bear hibernates all demonstrate interactions with an environment and the relationships necessary to survive and thrive within it – alongside actions like territorial behaviours, seasonal migrations, and nesting patterns. By

observing odoodeman one quickly notices that they do not operate in opposition to forces they encounter but rather within them, creating and devising relationships and lives in a constant cycle of creation and re-creation. Few flora and fauna are selfish and exploitative for instance, killing for purposes of safety, sustenance, and necessity. Hardly perfect, these beings can also certainly be harsh, unfair, and unforgiving too. Bears, for instance, have been known to eat the young of other bears. The many complex relationships a doodem relative carries however demonstrates the complex and intricate ways in which it lives within the world. Anishinaabeg carrying a particular doodem have the responsibility to learn from these and form a relationship with this knowledge, experiencing life through this physiological and ideological lens. In essence, a doodem carrier must incorporate what their doodem teaches them in whatever way possible. This method of learning behavior and gaining knowledge offers the learner a perspective outside of themselves and a different way to see the world that is both known and unknown to them, directing character, thoughts, and actions. This shapes the path one walks.

At the same time, while Nindoodemag begins with the complexities of the individual, the work of any doodem exists in relation to a diverse community of odoodeman. This begins in the family, which includes two parental odoodeman (mating within the same doodem is a taboo). The system relies on an inherent sense of complexity (and one might recall that sameness is what resulted in the end of the first Creation of humanity). After the family, odoodeman groupings are formed through doodem who share a set of similar behaviours and characteristics – such as the deer and caribou as part of a “hoof” odoodeman. These groups are often represented by a “leader” doodem, such as Mikinik (Turtle), head of Giigon (Fish) and other water creatures, or Migizi (Eagle), head of Benais (Bird) and certain land and air animals. These leaders often are also there to ensure functionality and communicate with other odoodeman groupings. In fact, in older times,

odoodeman groupings lived collectively as a separate community. Describing Anishinaabeg communities in 1847 for example, George Copway referred to these as separate “tribes” whose totemic “sign or mark is the same” and “recognize each other as relatives” (*The Life* 91). While this practice no longer exists, many continue to practice protocols, songs, and stories – particularly in ceremonial work. In these ways, odoodeman remain fairly autonomous bodies today.

Next, the work of any odoodeman group is shared within an entire network of Nindoodemag, operating at the community and inter-community level. At the local, each doodem carries jobs that must be performed and depends on others to fulfill their responsibilities. These interdependent tasks and duties are not only critical to the existence of the community but often life itself. For instance, if one doodem was in charge of maintaining the histories and stories of a community another had to be in charge of protecting them and another to find them food. These kinds of shared tasks reflect values of sharing, community, and interdependence – the same sort of relationships odoodeman embody during their constant cycle of creation and re-creation in the universe. And, like the unforgiving harshness that resides in this universe, a doodem or doodemag grouping could be reprimanded for not fulfilling responsibilities. When disputes inevitably arose, the system would be re-examined and re-invented if needed. In some extreme cases, odoodeman went to war to settle disputes and some even disappeared or abandoned a relationship with Anishinaabeg altogether. In most cases though, Nindoodemag mediated conflict.

While the village historically was the most important “social, political, and economic entity” in traditional Anishinaabeg existence, it was Nindoodemag that communicated identity and “served a variety of important functions within the village and, through ties of kinship, bound villages together” (Miller 38-40). Nindoodemag formed the basis for a localized community identity within several interrelated collectives and together these formed an ever-widening and

overall sense of Anishinaabeg collectivity. Another word for this: a nation. As Copway says, “different tribes” combined to form “the same nation” (*The Life* 91). A leader, representing his/her own clan, would be speaking within a network. Decisions and actions would always impact those who that clan shared a relationship with and had to be considered. In other words, the expressions of one doodem could – and often did – represent many signs of Anishinaabeg collectivity. This found itself in not only single doodem families and totemic groupings but in instances that required the entire Nindoodemag. In these cases leadership and the responsibilities of leadership was often a shared task, crossing odoodeman lines. In an interview, M’Chigeeng historian Alan Corbiere describes how this operated:

The Anishinaabeg always believed we all belong to a clan. And those clans, they always said, had specific attributes or characteristics. Now, in this modern sense, what people are saying instead of characteristics or inclinations, they say they have responsibilities. And that is what is supposed to be governing us. . . . But if you look at the historical record, all the chiefs were not necessarily Crane clan chiefs or Loon clan chiefs; or the speakers who got up and spoke were not always just the Loon clan.

Mind you, they would say that is a clan chief, not the chief of the nation. Well, we didn't really have – nobody got up and pretended to speak for all the Ojibwe nation back then because there was too many bands. You could say, in this area, the Michigan area, all these chiefs would get together and form a confederacy and select a speaker or chief speaker for all of them. That was for that particular council, it didn't last for that chief's lifetime. They had these confederacies and they would select who would be the speaker for each time. (qtd. in Pitawanakwat, *Anishinaabemodaa* 223)

In other words, a doodem leader could act for one or more odoodeman, or perhaps the entire Nindoodemag, depending on the context. An expression of doodem therefore could represent not only the integrity of a single clan and an individual but a family, a community, and a group of Anishinaabeg within a specific place and time. Returning to the description by Copway, a doodem leader could be speaking on behalf of the Anishinaabeg “nation” (which, as Corbiere claims, could

be a fluid confederacy). Nindoodemag declarations are thus a sign of individuality and collectivity often operating *at the same time*.

In her study of Nindoodemag images on treaties, Bohaker notes that:

In some cases it appears that the same hand drew all or some of the images. As well, there was not always a one-to-one correspondence between pictograph and individual. Particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Anishinaabe pictographs were as likely to represent a father and sons, or brothers, or an entire extended family 'clan segment,' as a single individual. ("Reading Anishinaabe" 16)

A totemic marking made by Anishinaabeg hands could be made by anyone within the Nindoodemag but signified the many relationships of which it was a part. They are markings of community multiplicity within a vibrant sense of shared collectivity. In other words, one did not even have to be from a particular doodem to "sign" on behalf of others but one could be tasked with representing several in certain times and places (16). The responsibility of representing the many layers of community within a system remained a part of using a sign.

Bohaker also identifies that markings of Nindoodemag on treaties and land agreements *changed* in image and scope throughout time, often from two-dimensional to three-dimensional and in shape, angle, and perspective – sometimes only including a paw print ("Reading Anishinaabe" 16). None of this is surprising. Not only do leaders, communities, and their motivations and alliances change, but so do the make-up and purpose of their collectivities. And, at the same time, gifts and offerings change as the needs and demands of any Anishinaabeg community shift and move. It might be important, for example, to consider what a paw teaches that is different than the entire body of a doodem. Or, how one learns differently about an animal depending on whether one is looking from above or from the side. In essence, details embody not only different signers and their subjectivities but suggest that there is a multi-dimensionality with signs of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag itself, different ways of expressing the same relationship.

While drawing from ancient traditions, Nindoodemag represents the ongoing formation of relationships and transformation of a people. It provides a forum for Anishinaabe to represent themselves, their community, and their relationships within the world and these are embodied within a series of fluid, interconnected, and representative images found on early treaties. Looking at these early treaties, it could be said that each and every expression of Nindoodemag represents another transformative act of an eternally moving and creating people. This is not a historical, progressivist arch of image-making, it is more a multi-directional and contextual system of writing found in certain spaces and places. What is important to underline about all of these versions is that the Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag is innovation at work: a reflection of the processes, experiences, and knowledges within the people expressing them.

In *History of the Ojibway People*, Warren argues that totemic signs are much like a European “coats of arms” (35). Bohaker adds to Warren, arguing that they were demonstrating a shared perspective that “embodied relationships and kin connection,” something closer to the “equivalent of [European] seals” than individual signatures (“Nindoodemag” 16-17). These two comparisons identify well how heraldic seals represent symbols of community and relationships, but the connotations European seals share with armorial achievement, gender/racial binaries, and certain hierarchies do not quite fit. I prefer to think of signs of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag as an idea Miller suggests in *Ogimaag* where he states that markings of Nindoodemag could be considered as geographic and cultural “maps” to indicate “where persons of certain clans needed to locate themselves” during ceremony and in stories (162). I’d add that markings of Nindoodemag are indications along a path of experience, history, and life – a long struggle to uncover mino-bimaadiziwin – and illustrate where Anishinaabeg have travelled, relationships Anishinaabeg have forged along the way and gesture to where Anishinaabeg might travel in the future. Markings of

Nindoodemag are bagijiganan of information, references to spaces, times, and entities, and descriptions of territories and the networks within them.

I argue that what Anishinaabeg were doing by making Nindoodemag markings on treaties, rocks, and themselves were sharing their experiences, ideas, and stories. In terms of treaties, they were not just adapting to European ways but expressing who they were, what they knew, and expressing their way of life. Markings of Nindoodemag were bagijiganan of welcome, entryways into Anishinaabeg territory and the relational strands within their families, their communities, and the ties they shared with all of these (and more). Signing using Nindoodemag meant that Anishinaabeg were not just “agreeing” to a set of legal arrangements over territory (and sometimes even that is questionable, considering certain barriers of language and political interests), but were also introducing Europeans to Anishinaabeg ways and introducing newcomers to the world they were entering – one full of relationships and agreements in the interests of sharing and reciprocity. Markings of Nindoodemag were not only statements of power and collectivity but narratives given to Europeans from dynamic, innovative, and political communities intended to teach them about the relationships they were joining.

The issue, as it stands in many scholarly characterization of treaty exchanges, is that it is often thought that it was Europeans who were “modernizing” Indians when it is equally possible that it was the other way around. Considering these exchanges as two-way venues where communication, discourse, and ideas were traded illustrates more what these arrangements actually were: the joining together of peoples and their languages. This does not mean power and subjectivities were not at work, for they undoubtedly were. It is that often the Indian side of these arrangements are thought to be without voice – or in a whisper – when this approach ignores the obvious evidence at hand. Let me give an example of what I mean.

Focusing exclusively on how Indians were passive participants in their relationships with Europeans and victims to conquest can lead to some limiting conclusions. In *X-marks: Native Signatures of Assent*, Leech Lake critic Scott Lyons cites “the common practice for treaty commissioners to have their Indian interlocutors make x-marks as signifiers of presence and agreement” (1). Lyons argues that an x-mark represents:

a contaminated and coerced sign of consent made under conditions that are not of one’s making. It signifies power and a lack of power, agency and a lack of agency. It is a decision one makes when something has already been decided for you, but it is still a decision. Damned if you do, damned if you do not. And yet there is always the prospect of slippage, indeterminacy, unforeseen consequences, or unintended results; it is always possible, that is, that an x-mark could result in something good. Why else, we must ask, would someone bother to make it? I use the x-mark to symbolize Native assent to things (concepts, policies, technologies, ideas) that, while not necessarily traditional in origin, can sometimes turn out all right and occasionally even good. (2-3)

Drawing on the work of Jürgen Habermas, Lyons argues that x-marks are signs of Native assent to modernity, “an unfinished project” not antithetical to “traditional” practices but one characterized by “a great number of different, interlocking ‘epochs’ or *durées* at any given moment: multiple modes of production, diversities of belief, contending memories, and competing future visions – in other words, different times unfolding in common space” (12-13). He then spends the majority of his study arguing that Native identities, cultures, and nations are inventions emerging out of this shared time, space, and discourse. The theory offered by Lyons is totalizing. “All Indian texts are x-marks,” he pronounces, acts coerced and influenced by hegemonic (and usually oppressive) forces, “but every so often an x-mark can be seen escaping from the prison house of dominant discourse” (26, 30).

The theory in *X-Marks* is an important one but – as just demonstrated – carries a glaring gap when one turns to the many documents Anishinaabeg “signed.” If markings of Nindoodemag are so widely used, it is puzzling why he chooses to leave them out in such a carefully written study. It

could be that x-marks came to become the recognized signatory method by Canadian and American settlers (such as the 1850 Robinson Treaties at Bawaating, for example). Or, it could be that early Indigenous leaders were often considered by negotiators to be functionally illiterate and their signatures, no matter what they used, were interpreted as x-marks. It could also be that totemic signatures reduced over time and Lyons is admittedly interested in delineating a line between Indigenous “traditional” and “modern” practices.¹³ As signs of the “durées” he’s most interested in and the “contamination” and “coercion” of Indigenous expression, x-marks certainly fit the goals of his study. Markings of Nindoodemag might not incorporate what he thinks are Indigenous “modern” practices – like he finds in Anishinaabemowin and the Anishinaabeg migration story in his study. It is hard to tell, since Lyons does not refer to markings of Nindoodemag, but in this case *X-marks* begins to resemble the “pure vs. tainted” framework Craig Womack describes in *Red on Red*, a problematic and progressivist set of binaries that much of Indigenous Studies becomes cast in (65).¹⁴

It also leads Lyons to pinpoint the x-mark as the venue in which Indigenous peoples survive. “All Indian texts are x-marks,” Lyons sweepingly pronounces. For a study so invested in articulating how Indigenous identities and cultures should be opened up, inclusive and based on values like creation and openness, this act is somewhat exclusionary and limiting. While a provocative attempt to recover an oft-cited instrument of colonization and perhaps even a way to open them up for consideration, the x-mark offered by Lyons is somewhat one-dimensional. While it may be true that Europeans exerted a great deal of oppressive power and influenced relationships through their own reductive view of treaties, one wonders if “escaping from the prison house of dominant discourse” is all Indigenous expressions are and can be. So many questions emerge, like why then do treaties hold such resonance for Indigenous peoples? Are treaty signatures always

indicative of contamination, coercion, and an inevitable march towards a European-dominated modernity? How does thinking beyond a traditional/modern binary help us conceive of Indigenous expression, writing, and narrative? In other words, are x-marks *X-marks*?

For instance, Lyons frequently makes Womack a foil in his study, arguing that his claim in that Muskogee Creek texts cultivate a nationalistic “sense of Creekness... told for the purpose of cultivating a political consciousness” is problematic due to the fact that Indigenous “traditional” concepts do not frame culture as a “noun,” “pure at the root,” nor are able to systemize “a definitional component of a politically distinct civilization” (89-90). The claims about Womack are built on a conclusion that he “speaks more of an underlying European system of thought than a traditional indigenous one” (90). Womack, according to Lyons, neglects Indigenous identities, cultures, and nations as inventions emerging out of a shared time, space, and discourse with coercive, influential, and oppressive Europeans. None of these inventions – in their modern sense anyway – exist without European arrival. There are lots of issues with the sweeping claims Lyons makes about Womack and his work and situating a Muskogee Creek theorist’s claims about his tribal culture obviously could not simply apply to Anishinaabeg concepts – but I digress. I would suggest instead that markings of Nindoodemag problematize the claims in *X-Marks* that Anishinaabeg expressions carry no “essences” (53), embody “a discrete body of meanings abstracted from actions” (89), and reflect a sense of literature that begins with “x-marks” (132). As expressions full of ever-widening senses of relationships, signs of multiple subjectivities, and images encapsulating fluid – but somewhat fixed and noun-like – senses of identity, culture, and community, the finger-pointing at Womack seems to reflect three fingers pointing right back.

Focusing on the entirety of the images Indigenous people “signed” with at treaty time - instead of just how their signs were interpreted – would bring Lyons closer to the “realist

nationalism” he calls for in the second-half of *X-Marks*. I agree with him that Indigenous notions of citizenship should embody the dynamic nature of Indigenous identities, cultures, and nations – but it seems to me that cultural liberation and empowerment might begin by looking at the entirety of ancestral expressions in all of their complexity. This does include the possibility of “insider” and “outsider” expressions of community, stringently conceived subjectivities, and cultivations of political consciousness. Europeans, while undoubtedly influential, have been *a part* of the formation of Indigenous identities, cultures, communities, and nations – but just a voice, *not the dictators*. In other words, “modernity” – whatever that might be – is as much influenced by Indigenous peoples as anyone else. It is, after all, a concept, a story, a word. It may be that “modernity” was in fact foreseen by Anishinaabeg (see the Anishinaabeg Migration story later) and it is hardly the assimilationist, coercive, and contaminating force it has been constructed to be. While x-marks are important, *so are* the actual expressions our ancestors made and these instructed, explained, and committed settlers to a set of responsibilities Indigenous peoples conceived for them – and not just vice versa. In fact, studying markings of Nindoodemag would illuminate one of the most interesting arguments in *X-Marks*: that Native nations are constituted by an ethnics and are, in turn, modernized by innovating it through processes of identity formation and collectivity (114-21). Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag could add a sense of rights, responsibilities, and kinship to somewhat vague articulations of how Indigenous citizenship could be shaped (186-88). Still, *X-Marks* is an important book that provoked much thinking in this study.

Markings of Nindoodemag are vessels of knowledge, meaning, and narrative in the interests of relationships and relationship-making. In the signatures on the treaty with the Wemitgoozhiwag in 1671 – and elsewhere – I argue that Anishinaabeg were making signs acknowledging the gifts they inherited and the rights, responsibilities, and future directions that come with them. They

were creating a map with signs, indicating where they had gone and where they were going. They were articulating their own and the perspectives and politics of their community - their histories, hermeneutics, and relationships with land, animals, and spirits. They were affirming and honouring the ties they held, perhaps even reminding themselves about their importance and maybe even articulating these to kin and others – acknowledging their place within this. The leaders making these markings were telling stories, explaining where they came from, who they share territories with, and how they would like their future to look there. They were articulating the principles of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag, the basis in which they formed relationships within the universe and giving gifts as they themselves had received them, offerings from the many communities of which they were a part. They were presenting gifts full of the ties Anishinaabeg shared with beautiful, complex, and mysterious beings throughout the universe.

A “blessing”

Animals and other relations within Nindoodemag carry mysterious abilities that naturalists, scientists, and hunters and trappers continue to study and learn about. For instance, our understanding surrounding the physiology surrounding how mukwag (bears) hibernate without feeding remains somewhat of a mystery to humans (see Niiwin). The same could be said of the eyes of loons, how turtles benefit an ecosystem, and the complexity of crane calls. Humans continue to wonder how animals endure during the harshest of circumstances, find ways to live, adapt, and resiliently grow. We wonder why some disappear too – and almost always discover that humans are the biggest threat to any ecosystem.

This is part of why odoodeman are considered to be mysterious beings onto themselves, with abilities to communicate with what are called *Manidog* – a word usually translated to mean

“spirits” or “mysteries.” This is imprecise, Johnston explains in *The Manidou: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway*:

Mystery is but one of the connotations of the word Manidou. The word has other meanings as well: spiritual, mystical, supernatural, godlike or spiritlike, quiddity, essence. It is in these other senses that the term is often used and is to be understood, not just in the context of Manidou beings.

Manidou refers to realities other than the physical ones of rock, fire, water, air, wood, and flesh – to the unseen realities of individual beings and places and events that are beyond human understanding but are still clearly real. (xxi-xxii)

Manidog therefore refers not only to beings but an entire plane of incorporeal existence that shares unique relationships with the “real” world. Just as humans carry unique abilities to communicate with the spiritual world, such as the ability to dream, odoodeman carry specific relations with Manidog. Odoodeman therefore are not only animal and plant beings but are gateways to a spiritual plane for Anishinaabeg. Communicating with an odoodeman relation therefore embodies a connection with a realm full of rich knowledge, perspectives, and life. Being given the gift of a doodem is thus a great inheritance and a relationship demanding a process of learning not only from a doodem relation but the world in which it is a part.

The Manidog world that odoodeman are deeply connected to, Johnston explains, is not without a sense of “reality.” Manidog inhabit a complex and subjective plane full of politics and personalities and – like the physical world we know – the relationships produced with this world are complex, mobile, and require constant renewal. This is why relationships with odoodeman must be constantly re-visited, re-considered, and re-imagined. In other words, beings in the Manidog and the physical worlds interact through the exchange of words, offerings, and gifts and these are not permanent and fixed relationships. Old relationships can fall apart and fade away while new ones can emerge. This is why Anishinaabeg may have doodemag different to others and/or reflective of specific geographical, temporal, or spiritual contexts. This complexity is

represented in the markings on the 1671 agreement, which are not only signifiers of relationships with animals but with Manidog from specific places, times and politics. Not unlike most markings of odoodeman, these images indicate a host of ties across time, space, and expression.

For more it helps to hear a story. Like breath explored earlier, narratives are the intellectual incarnation of relationships and relationship-making practices and they clearly articulate the bagijigan entities offer to one another and how they understand their lives. As mentioned, there are many stories of how the Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag came to be – *Gdodemonaanik Do Kinoomaagewinawaan* is only one. As cited earlier, one of the most well-known and respected versions is in *History of the Ojibway People* by Warren. This version is so often cited by scholars, in fact, Cary Miller argues that it may be now “over-generalized to represent the doodem organization of all Ojibwe villages” (39). This is not my purpose in citing Warren here – in fact, quite the opposite. Recall the argument offered by Miller in *Ogimaag*: that markings of Nindoodemag are geographic and cultural “maps” that indicate “where persons of certain clans needed to locate themselves” (162). The version in *History of the Ojibway People* is precisely this kind of map – marking a time, place, and political moment. His version illustrates that the contexts and subjectivities of stories – even when framed in wide-ranging theoretical, communal, and systemic ways – matter. This is particularly true if one is talking about Manidog – who unveil knowledge in specific circumstances and for distinct purposes all the time. Mysteries, I argue, are understandable only when specificities are uncovered – even if only partially.

In *History of the Ojibway People*, Warren offers a creation narrative of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag. Reciting a story he received from elders he received “verbatim,” he narrates: “When the Earth was new, the An-ish-in-aub-ag lived, congregated on the shores of a great salt water. From the bosom of the great deep there suddenly appeared six beings in human form, who

entered their wigwams” (18). The people, receiving the first five, noticed that the last being would not show his eyes. When coaxed to reveal them, all who stared into the sixth fell instantly dead, “as if struck by one of the thunderers” (18). Not wishing ill will to the Anishinaabeg, the first five beings coaxed the sixth to return to the water. “The others, who now numbered five,” Warren continues, “remained with the An-ish-in-aub-ag, and became a blessing to them” (19).

What these “blessings” offer is complex and worth brief analysis. The first is that these beings emerge from water, an element framed as mysterious, mobile, and transformative. In fact, it is “a great salt water.” The Anishinaabeg who Warren heard this story from (in Minnesota and Wisconsin) are drawing upon knowledge located in a specific time and geography: namely, the ocean. As I note in the Preface and Introduction and explore further in *Niswi*, this story is yet another part of a great Anishinaabeg Creation Story that connects Anishinaabeg with their origins. It refers to a time when Anishinaabeg lived in on the eastern coast (in what is now the Abenaki Confederacy) before receiving the vision of a great Miigis shell and taking a great western migratory journey, resulting in settlement around the Great Lakes. Warren, speaking to Anishinaabeg far away from “a great salt water” due to this migration, is referencing a moment in space and time. While the arrival of mysterious beings is mythical, the story is locatable in a real-life history and geography. The narrative attaches a people to a place, a time, and all of the beings in that place. It is a claim of presence and a definable moment in the creation of Anishinaabe.

The next point worth mentioning is that as these beings enter the homes of Anishinaabeg, crossing a bridge between their watery existence and the Anishinaabeg world. Literally and figuratively, they are connective strands between the Manidog and the human world. At the same time, their arrival demonstrates a limitation on what Anishinaabeg can know and see. While Anishinaabe share many elements with these beings (for instance, they are beings born and made

out of water too) and the visitors appear to want to present gifts to them, Manidog are unable to share everything they carry. What they present to Anishinaabeg is incomplete, signified in the departure of the sixth being. The sixth being represents constant and consistent mystery on one hand, and that Anishinaabeg always have more to learn than what the remaining five Manidog can offer on the other. The existence of the sixth being epitomizes how much Anishinaabeg have yet to know, if ever they can.

Next, it is interesting that the sixth being hides her powerful, and apparently deadly, eyes. The eyes, of course, are primary sensory organs and one of five humans carry (touch, hearing, taste, and smell are the others). This suggests that there are limitations to what kinds of gifts humans can receive from these Manidog. Some could argue that this is proof that human beings are inherently limited. I'd like to suggest a different possibility: that if Anishinaabeg want to receive completely all of these gifts, they must use something other than the senses they know. They must find another way. More on this in a moment.

In this brief description, Warren has constructed some extremely interesting characters: mysterious ocean beings who not only connect Anishinaabeg to an incorporeal realm but to a physical place and time. They are also beings that demand a dynamic lens in which to be understood. Regardless of the inability to humans to fully communicate with them – or the fact that their first impression literally resulted in death (a bit of a sour note in any first meeting) – Anishinaabeg and Manidog forge a relationship, with these beings becoming “a blessing” to them. As in his other work, Warren shows a mastery of the English language and chooses a distinctive word to describe a specific relationship. A “blessing” is a gift or favour bestowed in the interests of divine protection. Warren is framing Nindoodemag as bagijiganan, a set of sacred gifts in the creation of a people. He is arguing that there is a divine reason why they exist – the precise kind of

argument you make to a Christian audience indoctrinated with truth claims and carrying the ability to intervene in the ongoing assimilation and invasion of Anishinaabeg communities and territories. Warren is not only making a political statement regarding the makeup of the Anishinaabe but is also constructing a narrative American settlers can support and understand. The markings of Nindoodemag are signs of a divine connection with a spiritual realm. Anishinaabeg carry a relationship with Gizhe Manido, the Creator, or God.

At the same time however, this definition is distinctly Anishinaabeg. The “blessing” of these Manidog is that they are gifts of relationship with not only spirits but also another world, another reality. Thinking back to the definition offered by Johnston and juxtaposing it with the story in *History of the Ojibway People*, to describe Manidog as spirits is a bit like cupping a handful of the ocean: holding the water gives you a sense of its fluidity and texture but not the waves, currents, or the many beings who live within it. It is an experience also quickly lost, as the water drips between your fingers. A much better way to think about Manidog is the ocean itself, a spiritual and mysterious realm of which the five beings are a part. In the case of these Manidog they are literally *born in salt water*, embodying not only a geographical place but also echoing the process humanity experiences at birth. While mythical entities, they exist within a reality Anishinaabeg draw their political and cultural history from and a physical realm which includes things like subjectivities, politics, and experiences – and this can shape our ties with them. In other words, Anishinaabeg, by forming a relationship with these Manidog, have made a historical and living agreement – a treaty – with an entire world. This comes with roles, responsibilities and the duty of a living partnership. The “blessing” of odoodeman is this treaty, not only giving Anishinaabeg, a historical moment in their ongoing creation, a venue in which to learn and communicate from, but also a way in which they can see themselves – a mark. Nindoodemag marks of Anishinaabeg identity are therefore

much like the marks made on treaties, representing who Anishinaabeg are, where they come from, and embody a system in which they view the world. Sharing the gift of this “blessing” with others is like giving someone a taste of a vessel full of water you carry, letting them enjoy it, and acknowledge that it comes from a place and a time of which they are now a part. Later, this gesture might be also be a request to the new partner to share in carrying the vessel too.

Nindoodemag relationships with Manidog are not eternal for Anishinaabeg or without responsibility, however. They are, like other bagijigan, gifts with many responsibilities. From the five beings who remain, writes Warren, “originate the five great clans or Totems, which are known among the Ojibways by the general terms of A-waus-e, Bus-in-aus-e, Ah-ah-wauk, Noka, and Monsone, or Waub-ish-ash-e” – “cognomens” for the totemic groupings (19). During the time of Warren, these five grew into “fifteen or twenty families, each claiming a different badge.” He lists twenty-one he knows of, such as “Muk-wah” (Bear), “Mong” (Loon), and “Ne-baun-aub-ay” (Merman), and some from families he has never met, “known on the remotest northern boundaries of the Ojibway country” – including animals like “Ude-kumaig” (White Fish) and “Gy-aushk” (Gull). According to Warren, the “crane, catfish, bear, marten, wolf, and loon are the principal families, not only in a civil point of view, but in numbers, as they comprise eight-tenths of the whole tribe” (19-20).

As Warren writes, “grand families” are “known by a badge or symbol, taken from nature; being generally a quadruped, bird, fish or reptile” (42). These form individual, family, and community identities, he argues, that have been maintained over time, space, community, and genealogy. Citing stories he has heard and people across Anishinaabeg country, Warren writes that “A-waus-e family” is very wise and “physically noted for being long lived and for the scantiness and fineness of their hair” (46). The “Bus-in-aus-e” family “is noted as possessing naturally a loud,

ringing voice and are the acknowledged orators of the tribe. . . . They claim, with some apparent justice, the chieftainship over the other clans” (46-47). The “Ah-ah-wauk” family also claim chieftainship but through their ceremonial and historical knowledge and “royal” descendency, a fact that is often “denied by the Cranes and other totems” (48). The “No-ka” family are the “war-chiefs and warriors of the tribe, and are keepers of the war-pipe and war-club. . . . They are ill-tempered and fond of fighting” (49). The “Monson” and “Waub-ish-a-she” family are a balance of volatility and temperance, people who demonstrate values of justice, mercy, help, and protection (51-52).

From his experience and location, the five “principal” animal totems he cites were well-known to Anishinaabeg and had important roles and relationships with others there. Some are directly connected to the original five beings who became the Nindoodemag (like Waub-ish-ash-e) but others are derivative, such as “Man-um-aig” (Catfish) from the “principal family” of “A-waus-e.” The descriptions by Warren of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag is steeped in local politics and histories. Miller even goes so far as to say that his version is fraught with some nepotism as he “may well have been interested in promoting the political role of his bloodline for his own ends” (39). This could also be attributed to “Esh-ke-bug-e-coshe, the old and reliable head of the Pillager and Northern Ojibways” (20) – a primary source of cultural knowledge for Warren (and a signatory to the 1855 Treaty of Washington which created Leech Lake reservation, where scholars like Lyons come from). Warren names members where each community’s “badge” can be found, documents some inter-totemic disputes, and even derides a few chiefs along the way. Still, while undoubtedly favouring certain totems, he leaves room for the inclusion of others. None of this undermines Warren – it illustrates how politics and subjectivities form a part of Nindoodemag.

This operates similarly in other creation narratives of Nindoodemag and the version by Warren, while different, operates in a wide-ranging and inter-subjective conversation. The *Gdodemonaanik Do Kinoomaagewinawaan*, for example, also signifies notions of gift-giving with animals and a process derived from watching the way odoodeman live. A 1972 version told in Shoal Lake, Manitoba by James Redsky, incorporates aspects of the Anishinaabeg original Creation Story, telling of a time when Anishinaabeg were living all together in a far off place and begun living disrespectfully through incest and war. It resembles the migration and movement offered by Warren, stating that after a long time Anishinaabeg split and the Creator gave them different languages and “a choice of family marks for each family to choose from . . . Caribou; Moose; Elk; Crane; Sturgeon; Pelican; Lion; Bear; Lynx” (100-01). Redsky interestingly draws upon the notion of choice being a part of a relationship with odoodeman and includes animals that can only be found in and around Shoal Lake (and which are absent in Warren). A version written by Johnston, published around the same time as Redsky, describes “six great creatures [who] emerged from the sea” and locates totems in different groups than Warren does, representing “the five needs of the people and the five elementary functions of society”: leadership, defense, sustenance, learning, and medicine (59-61). The version by Johnston, in fact, appears to be a blueprint for Anishinaabe governance and a pathway to cultural and political autonomy.

The system in *The Mishomis Book* is also different from Warren, citing “seven original clans” and “seven spiritual beings” who appeared to the Anishinaabeg in order “to clarify how the Clan System was to be used and to amplify the meaning of many gifts often taken for granted in life” (74-78). Benton-Benai adds Wa-wa-shesh'-she (Deer) and Be-nays' (Bird) to Warren but interestingly identifies the importance of sensory perception in understanding the system, arguing that seven “senses of man” are a part of understanding the gifts of the System (touch, smell, taste,

hearing, sight, and two often misunderstood by humans: intuition and “the ability to see into the future”) (78). This is precisely the kind of alternative sense I believe Warren gestures to the sixth Manidog carrying, encouraging humans to try to understand this gift (or perhaps gifts). Overall, the version by Benton-Benai is the epitome of how a complex mystery is embedded within Nindoodemag and certainly a powerful reflection on a political and social moment in which he was writing (see the Introduction).

A 1999 manuscript written by James Dumont called “Anishinaabe Izhichigaywin” builds on Benton-Benai but connects the totemic system to Anishinaabeg nationhood,¹⁵ the “Seven Fires of Creation,”¹⁶ spiritual values, and morality (13-94). He (along with Benton-Benai – with whom he shares a personal and professional relationship through the Three Fires Midéwiwin Lodge) is credited for coming up with a model in which to think about Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag visually and consider its interconnected parts, interdependencies, and relationship to ceremonies (Figure 3). It embodies the way a Little Boy Water Drum is tied, for instance. This model therefore gestures to not only a governance model but also a way of viewing Creation through a web of interconnected relationship with each doodem given a specific role and purpose in relation to community: Crane (Chieftenship), Loon (Chieftenship), Fish (Teaching and Scholarship), Bear (Protection and Medicine), Hoof (Emotional Development), Marten (Hunting and Warriorship), Bird (Spiritual Leadership). In this model, doodem are individual bagijigan connected in unique strands with others, forming a wide-ranging and order in the universe. More on this in a moment.

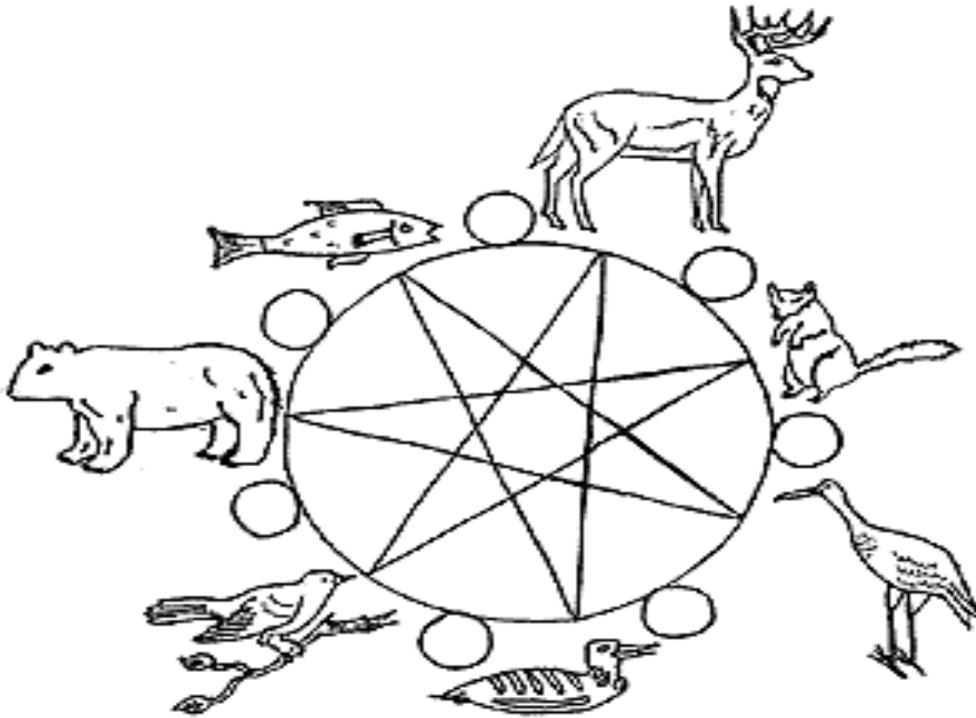


Figure 3: The visual representation offered by Dumont and Benton-Benai of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag.

Looking at this model, one can see principles that go all the way back to Warren and his “blessings.” The entire image looks like a set of animals surrounding – and creating – and identifiable shape. Each animal accompanies a circle, a sort of being unto itself, and these are connected to one another through direct and indirect straight lines. Overall, the entire system is constituted by one large circle, a network with discernable and individual sections yet a communal and interconnected system at work. If one continued the analogy of a Little Boy Waterdrum – which is almost exactly how they are tied and represent a view from the bottom and where it sits on the earth – this would be like looking up to the sky, where layers of the Manidog world resides. The connective strands would represent where water would sit in the drum, with circular stones sitting on the top and underneath the hide, wood making up the large overall circle, and the rope as the lines (Figure 4). Inside the drum would be not only be blown air and medicines but a shell called a Miigis – drawing connections all the way back to the place where the drum first appeared

to Anishinaabeg in our eastern coastal homelands. *The Mishomis Book* tells a story of the coming of this drum to Anishinaabeg through a little boy who arrives to help the second people of the Earth find direction, a sense of themselves and a way in which they can live in this new world (60-66). Visiting with “Seven Grandfathers,” the little boy receives several gifts including instructions on how to live by the Seven Grandfather Teachings (see the Introduction), an explanation how “the four races of man” have been placed throughout the Four Directions, and seven mysterious “substances” from a great vessel that holds beauty, peace, and music. Escorted back to the people by Nigig (“Otter”) and stopping “seven times” along the way, the boy receives a final gift – the Miigis – which completes his bundle. He returns to humankind as an old man, teaching them about the power this new physical existence and how it they now have a “me-ka-naynz’ (path)... for the development of the spiritual side of life.”



Figure 4: a Little Boy Waterdrum from *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway* (70).

All of these stories are definitions of Nindoodemag and all are unique and reflective of specific histories, people, geographies, and communities but each incarnation of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag can, and does, stand in relationship to each of the others. Some include different animals and plants (usually from local fauna), some insects, and mythical beings like Mermaids and Bagwajiwini (Sasquatch) but, as Warren identifies, Nindoodemag represents distinct and

different aspects of adaptation, innovation, and change over time and geography. New totems, he claims, can be “easily classed” in the “subdivisions of the five great original totems” (44-45). While some versions could be conceived as “closed” systems, if thought of as interrelated parts gesturing to a larger system, a wide and dynamic Nindoodemag is viewable. No version is transferable out of its context; each is a contribution to an ongoing conversation. Just like so many of the expressions of Anishinaabe we have encountered thus far, Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag is an inter-related process incorporating all beings in Creation into a complete and whole network, with each carrying unique and valuable roles and responsibilities. This is indicative of not only a belief but an Anishinaabeg praxis that finds its way into stories, a way of life called *nindinawemaganidog*.

Nindinawemaganidog

Nicholas Delaery remarks that, “the Anishinabek world view is said to be a ‘Great Family of Relations’” that encompasses every part of the universe (19) – a concept in Anishinaabemowin called *nindinawemaganidog*. This, amongst many things, forms the underlying basis for Nindoodemag. *Nindinawemaganidog* is, for many Anishinaabeg, the understanding that the universe is made up of a family with many different but interconnected parts with many responsibilities shared between one another. It forms the universe in physical and metaphysical ways, resembling a shape similar to the Little Boy Waterdrum. As in the Preface, I find the metaphor of the tree by Womack useful. *Nindinawemaganidog* is like tree rings, with ever-expanding layers leading to bark but rings that also join together to create the body, branches, roots, leaves and – even beyond that – seeds, an ecosystem, and air. All of these things need each other in order for the tree to operate and live. *Nindinawemaganidog* suggests that everything in the universe has a place and is relatable to one another in a complete system. Articulated by Nanapush

in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* by Louise Erdrich, “In saying the word *nindinawemaganidok*, or my relatives, we speak of everything that has existed in time, the known and the unknown, the unseen, the obvious, all that lived before or is living now in the worlds above and below” (360-61). *Nindinawemaganidog* is the principle that the universe is a multidimensional web with entities that rely on each other to live.

Nindinawemaganidog is not the vague romantic chant of “we are all related” found in new-age books but is a binding, critical philosophy. It is, for most Anishinaabeg, a law devised through interactions between two Anishinaabeg philosophical principles: *enawendiwin*, the spiritual and material connections Anishinaabeg share with entities throughout Creation and *waawiyeyaag*, a law of circularity that gives shape, meaning, and purpose to the universe. These principles may be seen as part of the bundle given to the Little Boy from the Seven Grandfathers and constitute a method the second humanity has used to ensure their survival and continuation. These terms also articulate a basis in which Anishinaabeg understand how the universe moves and is tied together in a great network of *nindinawemaganidog*. To continue the metaphor of tree rings, *enawendiwin* would be the veins and fibres that connect and hold the tree together and *waawiyeyaag* would be the organic and rounded shape that is created. Together, these are the ideological and physical methods that constitute an Anishinaabeg universe.

The first, *enawendiwin*, are the strands of relationship that tie Anishinaabeg and all living entities together in a colossal universal network. As described by the Seven Generations Education Institute: “Anishinaabe *Enawendiwin* is our way of relating to each other and to all of Creation. It is an all-inclusive relationship that honours the interconnectedness of all our relations, and recognizes and honours the human place and responsibility within the family of Creation.” (4) These strands ground any relationship Anishinaabeg commit to, grounding it and locating it in a

place and time with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and rights. Enawendiwin therefore is manifested in all communicative practices between beings and entities – talking, listening, touching, and other engagements – which constitute a universal and complete order.¹⁷ To have a relationship of any kind, enawendiwin must be present and must be discernable in some way. The creation, exchange, and acceptance of stories, songs, and other narrative forms is a primary way in which this is accomplished.

Enawendiwin is also what grounds Anishinaabeg to their territories and living things within these lands. It is what defines relations between beings, gives them a sense of a shared “home,” and demonstrates how they agree to live alongside one another. These define and explain how one carries certain rights, but it is more accurate to describe these in terms of the responsibilities one carries in relation to others. Principles of enawendiwin ensures, says Wendy Djinn Geniusz in *Our Knowledge is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabe Teachings*; “that we do not waste the lives of other beings. One does not just kill a buck for a trophy set of antlers or a bear for an ornamental rug. If one takes the life of an animal, then one makes use of the usable parts of that animal . . . the same protocols apply to [plants and trees] as apply to any other living beings” (59). Enawendiwin therefore forms a basis for how one inter-relates in the communities one is a part of as how one acts and interacts in foreign places.

Acts of enawendiwin manifest themselves throughout virtually all Anishinaabeg bagijiganan. They are the connective strands described when relationships are talked or sung about. They reside in the makeup of Anishinaabemowin, constituting the connectivity within words. They exist in acknowledgements and calls to Manidog in prayer and speech and defined intricately in songs and stories (particularly in aadizookaanag, which, do not forget, are beings onto themselves). Further, they are also embedded within markings of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag on things like

treaties. Descriptions and demands of enawendiwin change as relationships, time, place, and participants change, but the principle that these connective strands form a dynamic and fluid sense of nindinawemaganidog does not. For instance, take Anishinaabeg who call out “Nindinawemaganidog!” at the beginning and end of prayers, songs, and stories. This is not only a call to attention but also an affirmation of the rights and responsibilities one shares with all relations – connecting what has just been said with these beings. It is a sign of recognition, a re-commitment to this relationship, and an understanding of the roles and duties within an agreement to relate. This also reminds Anishinaabeg and others that they also share responsibilities of enawendiwin, inviting them to take part in forming a healthy system of nindinawemaganidog. Markings of Nindoodemag are not unlike calls of “Nindinawemaganidog!”-- they are gestures of recognition, acknowledgement and invitations to interact through enawendiwin.

Nindinawemaganidog is not without shape, meaning, and purpose -- something called waawiyeyaag (translated to “it is round” or “circularity”). As illustrated in the narrative of Creation in the Preface, Gizhe Manido breathed the “breath of life” into all things and gave them a distinct character and being – instituting the first instance of motion and movement. This is believed by Anishinaabeg to be in the form of cycles and repetitions, departures followed by inevitable returns. Evidence is found in the orbit of stars, the return of the seasons, the migration of animals, and the path of life humanity follows from birth to death and then again and again. All parts of Creation – ranging from the largest deviation to the most unifying of actions – has a role in this cyclical and reciprocal system. Everything follows a pattern and a journey that tends more towards balance and mutuality than anything else. A similar principle is found in the Chinese Tao belief of Yin and Yang, the idea that all forces in the universe are interconnected and

interdependent. For example, good is tied to bad, water relies on fire, the sun needs the moon, and vice-versa.

Waawiyeyaag is a beautiful gift. It is what gives Anishinaabeg expressions their independence but also connects them with other words and stories. What makes a word is defined as much by what is said as it not said. In other words, when a relationship is formed through offered and accepted bagijiganan, this connection operates specifically but within the laws and principles of a complete system. Echoing major twentieth-century philosophers of language like Michel Foucault, nothing exists outside the system of language: all are a part. This is how and why many Anishinaabeg believe we are immersed in words and they make up the fabric of the universe (see “First Breath”). Waawiyeyaag frames the universe as a circular network formed through relationships of words, forming a unitary whole. The use and exchange of words in this way is a fulfillment of the original gift Gizhe Manido gifted human beings with at Creation. As Dumont states in “Anishinaabe Izhichigaywin,” waawiyeyaag is:

the primary pattern by which all things begin, have being, change and grow toward fulfillment – and eventually begin again. Within creation, all life maintains itself and operates within this circular and cyclical pattern. Human beings, amongst other beings, are in harmony with the life flow and grow to their greatest fulfillment when they too operate in a circular fashion. . . .

In the Anishinaabe view, life is a circle, history is a circle and the eco-system is a circle. All that can be known of the Earth and our life here is also a Circle. It is the all-embracing principle, perfect and complete, including everything. (30)

This means that parts within Creation hold meaning in relation to one another, enacting universal tendencies towards sustainability, balance, and relationships that tend toward dynamism and long-term growth more than anything else. This is not to say that they cannot also be destructive, antithetical to growth, and violent too – for these negative forces are also a part of waawiyeyaag. As Dumont suggests, however, it is through the formation of healthy strands of enawendiwin that

the fullest potential of waawiyeyaag is possible. It is how the most beautiful nindinawemaganidog is made.

Many Anishinaabeg thinkers have written many bagijiganan articulating these very principles. Basil Johnston, for example, has spent books articulating how Creation is made up of a circular and dynamic network of unique and interconnected entities and these distinctions must be respected in order to life to be lived in its fullest form. *Ojibway Heritage* and his other books are illustrations of this principle. *History of the Ojibway People* by and *The Mishomis Book* by Benton-Benai contain other examples. There are also many Anishinaabe critics who have adapted these philosophical principles into their critical lenses, such as Joanne DiNova, who theorizes in her *Spiraling Webs of Relation: Movements Toward an Indigenist Criticism*, that “[t]he Aboriginal worldview, as often noted, is characterized by an emphasis on connectedness, the idea that all of existence is connected and that the connectivity encompasses, infuses, and constitutes everything” (6). Anishinaabeg writers using signs of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag in 1671 at Bawaating, on treaties throughout the eighteenth nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and on rockfaces, skin and books all articulate enawendiwin that express forms of waawiyeyaag within an active nindinawemaganidog – and perhaps even articulate relationships of mino-bimaadiziwin that could change the world.

Markings of Nindoodemag represent these acts and are intricate markings invested in describing complex notions of relationality. Most often, these articulate ways that life can be sustained, continued, and created in meaningful ways and in particular moments. They come from many directions and contain many purposes throughout time and space but all are invested in forging a diverse sense of nindinawemaganidog with many significant parts. These are found most easily in the many incarnations, the markings, of Nindoodemag, which represent a map of spaces

and places Anishinaabeg have traveled and made their presence known. Over the next four chapters I illustrate how these markings of Nindoodemag, spoken in many voices and through text, are unique bagijiganan that both lead from and to a path of mino-bimaadiziwin. Through examples of four odoodeman, Anishinaabeg have made, and continue to make, markings of their totemic relations in the interests of articulating relationships that form a sense of Anishinaabeg kinship, community, and nationhood. Found in these markings throughout time, space, and text, these gesture towards a universal and connected sense of Creation that is active, reciprocal, and hopeful for those we share this universe with.

Niizh: Mikinaak Doodemag Bagjiganan

*Maukinauk k'gah mizhinawae / ik,
Tchi mino-dodomun, k'bawaudijigae.
Through the turtle will you speak,
For good will you dream. (50)*

- *Ojibway Ceremonies*

Basil Johnston (Chippewas of Nawash)

Dream Shells

Almost one hundred years after Anishinaabeg leaders met with Wemitigoozhiwag at Bawaating and signed using markings of Nindoodemag, Zhaaganashag (British) arrived in the spring of 1764 at an Anishinaabeg settlement near the straits of Michilimackinac. It was a tense visit. Since the conclusion of the Seven Years War and the defeat of their Wemitigoozhiwag allies, Anishinaabeg had struggled with their new neighbours and their insatiable desire for more land and resources. In fact, for many Anishinaabeg, the war with the British had never ended. Still, these Zhaaganashag carried an offering, symbolized by wampum, and an invitation to a summer meeting with Sir William Johnson at Fort Niagara. Their bagijigan presented an opportunity, a chance to have their claims recognized and for peace to exist. But it was also suspicious – as any invitation from an enemy would be. As Neyaashinigming Anishinaabe scholar John Borrows has written of the period, it was “a pivotal period of choice and decision-making” where Anishinaabeg were faced with what to do with the British after being allies with the French for almost a century (“Wampum at Niagara” 169). In other words, this was a crucial time, a critical choice.

The meeting was also in a turbulent space. The geographical and political territory between Bawaating and Michilimackinac had become a strategically valuable site to Zhaaganashag. As a part of the military and cultural alliance led by Pontiac the previous summer, Anishinaabeg had re-taken Fort Michilimackinac (at the southern doorway of the region) in a

surprise attack. Staging a game of lacrosse and inviting British occupants of the fort to watch, Anishinaabeg re-took the site by force and expelled them on June 2, 1763. Amongst those spared was a fur-trader, Alexander Henry, an adopted “brother” of the leader Wawatam, who went on to live with Anishinaabeg and record his experiences in a journal later published as *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories, Between the Years 1760 and 1776*. Witnessing the invitation of Johnson, Henry states that Anishinaabeg agreed to send “twenty deputies,” but that much anxiety existed regarding the meeting (158). Concerned, they prepared a *jiisakaan*, a “shaking tent” ceremony. As Henry writes, “the occasion was of too much magnitude not to call for more than human knowledge and discretion” (158).

Before continuing, it is important to discuss the practice of *jiisakaan*. This is not an easy task – many are delivered using spiritual-, community-, and practitioner-specific protocols and knowledge not shared publicly. There are many layers of meaning and parts to witness as well. Many have spoken on the intricacies and knowledge in the ceremony, including thinkers like Norval Morrisseau, Benton-Benai, and Johnston. The ceremony is as much a dialogical act of community as an innately individual experience. I therefore encourage anyone who is permitted an opportunity to see and/or participate in one to do so in order to understand this complex intellectual tradition.

No two *jiisakaan* are precisely the same but – like Anishinaabe and Nindoodemag – each incarnation shares elements that bring others into relationship. Using research like Christopher Vescey’s *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes* and my own experience, I would describe a *jiisakaan* as an ancient, intricate, and remarkable ceremony that celebrates and honours knowledge. It is an act that opens a gateway to communicating with Manidog – which, as described in *Bezbig*, are not just individual spirit beings but an interconnected spiritual community,

a world. Usually held at sunset in a small rounded lodge in a public setting, the ceremony is conducted by practitioners called *jiisakiiwinini(wag)* (who are often male but if female are called *jiisakiiwikwe*). Jiisakiiwininiwag are spiritual leaders in a community, hand-picked and trained from their youth for their unique abilities to communicate with Manidog. Partaking in extremely complex knowledge-gathering ceremonies, jiisakiiwininiwag are mentored by other practitioners and learn protocols and ancestral information, spend time with spiritual teachers, and fast and meditate about their work. The job of a jiisakaan practitioner therefore is vast, involving abilities to listen, interpret, and communicate with the complex world of Manidog.

To show readers what a jiisakaan looks like, I include here an example of one out of ceremonial context and photographed with elder John King of Lac Court Oreilles (Figure 5). In ceremony, a jiisakaan is generally covered with animal skins save for a small entrance which is covered after the ceremony begins. Entering the lodge and closing the doorway, a jiisakiiwinini states prayers, delivers appropriate protocols, and calls on Manidog to enter the space. After some time – and if done well – Manidog enter the structure – a momentous arrival that literally “shakes” the “tent.” At this point, the Manidog world is connected to the jiisakaan and an audience is given the privilege and responsibility of being exposed to knowledge from this sacred place and the beings found there. One must be careful with this information however. Manidog can be very political, subjective, and complex.



Figure 5: John King and framework of shaking tent, Lac Court Oreilles, 1942. Photo by Robert Ritzenthaler.

Among the Manidog who enter the jiisakaan is one who community members often recognize by her distinctive voice and personality. She is known usually as *Mikinaak* or *Mishikenh*, terms usually translated to mean “Snapping Turtle” – but also mean “Mud Turtle,” “The Great Turtle,” or simply “Turtle.” In other words, this Manido is contextual and locally conceived so it is, like most Anishinaabeg terms, a word reflective of a broader network. For purposes of description, I will use *Mikinaak*. Simply put, the role of *Mikinaak* in the jiisakaan is to relay knowledge she has obtained via her powers, abilities, or communications with humans. Initially, she may do this through songs or pronouncements. Sometimes she likes to share stories or jokes. Other times she is accompanied by other Manidog who are sometimes helpful, sometimes less so. While other Manidog may speak in the jiisakaan, *Mikinaak* usually translates for them and speaks a language recognizable only to the jiisakiiwinini (who translates her words into human speech). After sharing any information she wishes to, and when ready, *Mikinaak* will usually pronounce that she will answer questions the audience has. *Mikinaak* is a conduit and a facilitator.

At the same time, Mikinaak is part of Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag, a sign within the system that constitutes Anishinaabeg identities, cultures and communities. As discussed in Bezbig, individual Manido are like cups of water in an ocean of Manidog. They are inter-related and interdependent, with each giving a perspective on a piece of the whole. In other words, the Mikinaak in this jisasakaan is directly related to the turtles found in markings of Nindoodemag. These are different perspectives of the same sign, the same spirit. Another way of understanding markings of turtles are by observing them in the natural world. By watching, engaging, and learning from the bagijiganan Manidog offer humanity through animals – like physical features, behaviours, and migratory and nesting patterns – one gets a sense of the specialized abilities, roles, and perspectives that constitute odoodeman and the ways these beings participate within communities and ecosystems. By looking at these offerings and the way any doodem being forms ties within its homes, provides for themselves and their families, and hunts and feeds one gets a sense of how specific relationships are embodied and defined. In this case, one gets a sense of what turtles offer Anishinaabeg, illustrate specific ways of relating, and how the Manidog who invoke them can help them live in the universe. This forms a basis on how to be a responsible and ethical Anishinaabeg and fulfill the responsibility to honour the gifts odoodeman provide and incorporate them into our lives. It is also a way nindinawemaganidog is embodied and lived through ties of enawendiwin and a full and complete waawiyeyaag. Identifying how animals operate in nature uncovers bagijiganan they offer and a way to understand certain stories in this tradition.

Turtles are some of the most ancient and complex animals on the planet. According to Carl Ernst and Jeffrey Lovich in *Turtles of the United States and Canada* there are “320 species of turtles in the world” (and more being “discovered” all the time) with the earliest recognizable relative dating “over 200 million years ago” (3, 5). They tend to live for a very long time, longer than most

amphibians, reptiles, and even humans. The majority live in freshwater rather than seawater but they are flexible creatures, known for travelling and utilizing both if needed. They are one of few beings who require earth and water to live –using the former for nesting and feeding and the latter for hunting and migrating. “All turtle species lay eggs,” Ernst and Lovich write, and “it is this trait that draws females of even the most aquatic species to land for at least a brief period” (3). They also often utilize watery environments to hibernate, usually burrowing into mud. On land, they are perhaps not the fastest creatures, but in water their speed exponentially increases, giving them abilities to hunt, migrate, and escape. The “single feature that most defines living turtles,” says Ernst and Lovich, “is their bony shell” (3). It is “divided into two parts: an upper part, the carapace, and a lower part, the plastron... joined on each side by a bony bridge or a ligamentous connection” (9). This both protects them and provides a home they carry at all times – making them one of the most mobile and adaptive creatures in North America.

At the same time, turtles are innately tied to their environment and carry unique roles within ecosystems. Ernst and Lovich for instance, claim that they “occupy a ‘keystone’ role” in the health of the plants and animals, not only in their uprooting of plants when travelling across land (so that other animals can feed) but performing a role in what is called “mineral cycling” – an ecological cycle that stimulates and circulates growth in an environment. Turtles, through feeding, passing through water, and processing organisms, are eco-machines of “mineral cycling” as well as enhance seed dispersal and soil growth through ingestion and expulsion, nesting and burrowing, not to mention serving as food for other creatures (19-21). Due to their intricate ties to their environment in fact, Whit Gibbons and Judy Greene argue in *Turtles: The Animal Answer Guide*, turtles are illustrative how water pollution, global warming, and industrialization introduce fundamental changes to an environment (99-104).

Snapping turtles are “among the oldest of turtle families” in North America (Ernst and Lovich 111). There are two snapping turtle species in North America, the “Alligator Snapping Turtle,” residing in the southern United States, and the “Common Snapping Turtle,” which encompasses a much larger area and is familiar to Anishinabeg. Known in Anishinaabemowin as Mikinaak(ag), in scientific circles common snapping turtles are called *chelydra serpentina*, referring to their powerful head, neck and jaws, which scientists liken to those of birds and snakes (hence the “serpent” in serpentina). They are characterized by Ernst as having “large bodies, large heads . . . and slightly emarginated skulls” (“Systematics” 6). In other words, their plastron and carapace are small so they cannot withdraw into their shell. Reaching an average length of 20-40 centimetres, a weight of 10-35 pounds, and living up to fifty years old (Ernst and Lovich 114-15), snapping turtles are recognized for their aggressive behavior if the situation demands it, but are generally shy and choose usually to retreat when threatened.

The range of snapping turtles is vast, covering all of the Great Lakes and most Anishinaabeg communities (Figure 6). While primarily freshwater inhabitants, they at times can travel and live in brackish (partially salt) estuaries for hunting, traveling, or safety reasons. Extensive travellers, they virtually always make their homes near waterways, rivers, and swamplands. Mating at approximately four to eight years old, females lay eggs in summer (June and July) in sand in places like shores or (if necessary) man-made roads, gravel shoulders, and dams. Nesting times depends on climate and geography (for example, in Pennsylvania it takes place in the evening and Virginia in the morning) and sex is determined by the heat provided during incubation (studies suggest cooler temperatures produce males) (Ernst and Lovich 124). Even if disturbed, a female will most often “return to the same site year after year” and “make considerable migrations from their home ranges to a suitable nest site” (126).

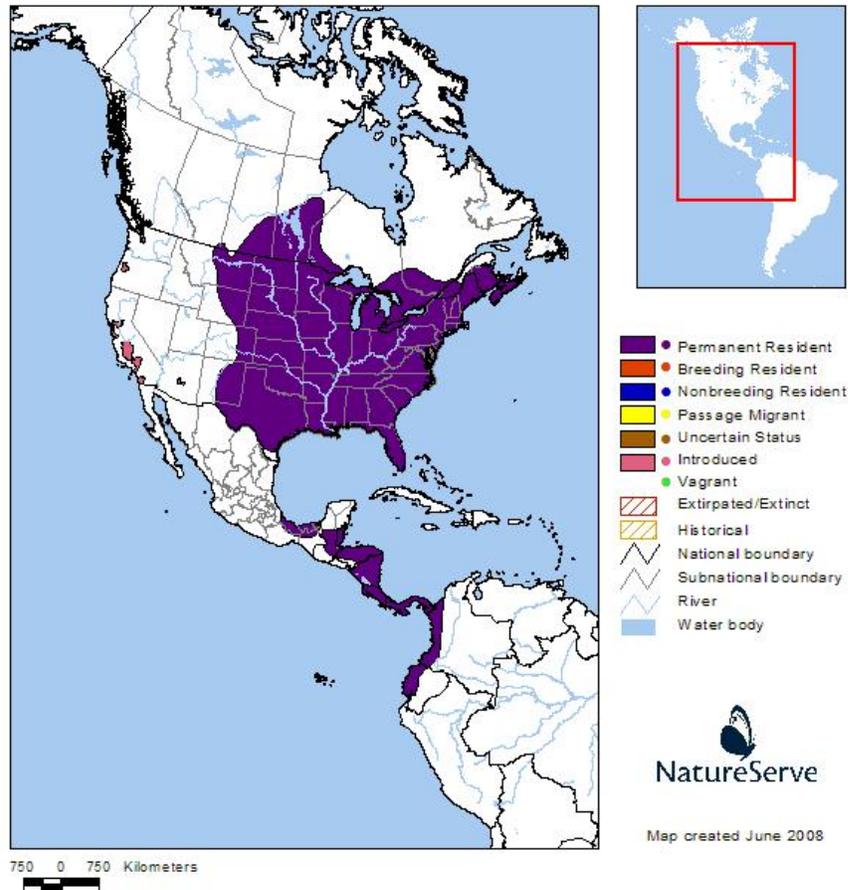


Figure 6: Geographic range of Snapping Turtles from the Montana Natural Heritage Program and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (“Snapping Turtle”)

Primarily nocturnal, snapping turtles enjoy floating or sitting at the bottom of shallow lakes and streams, often for a long time (even allowing algae to form on their bodies) and exposing only their noses above the water. Their lung power is vast and some, according to scientist NH West and his colleagues, exhibit “nonventilatory periods of some 18 minutes . . . interrupted by short breathing periods (4-5 mins) in which five breaths were taken” (as cited in West 55). These powerful lungs are enhanced by a keen sense of smell, helping snapping turtles hunt fish, frogs, and even some birds. Assisted by long tails and strong and energetic webbed legs, they are somewhat slow on land but in water are very swift, precise, and able to travel extremely far distances.

Like other turtle relatives, snapping turtles are resilient and versatile beings who have witnessed and endured a great deal of change. Intimately tied to the territories they inhabit and beings they share spaces with, they have overcome obstacles and adjusted well, illustrating their persistence and intelligence. They are creative and intelligent beings, manifested in their dynamic abilities to travel, live, and hunt on land, in water, and even seawater. Traits such as their sharp and powerful mouth, strong legs and lungs, and wide and resilient shell have made them a formidable and independent being who provides for and supports itself. Forging unique relationships within the waterways and territories of North America, snapping turtles are in many ways an archetype on how to create a home in this place. They are the custodians of knowledge on how to live and thrive here.

Returning to the jiisakaan ceremony, it is no surprise that Mikinaak carries a central role and their counterparts in the natural world illustrates and demonstrates much about the knowledge turtles carry. Just like Mikinaak, snapping turtles are ancient travelers, intermediaries, and have much experience about the land, the water, and all of the beings who reside in North America. These beings are centrally positioned to carry knowledge about the relationships that reside here as well as demonstrate how a self-determining and intricate being connected closely with its environment acts. Mikinaak know how to create, adapt, and forge a home and embody practices how to live in specific circumstances, places, and times. They therefore would be *precisely* the being one would want to consult about the meeting with Johnson. Not only would a turtle know the way to Niagara well, but would carry experiences on how to navigate life through relationships in a variety of contexts and circumstances – an particularly in the face of adversity. Considering all of this, I turn back to Henry.

“I made no discoveries, but came away as I went”

Like any recounting of a jiisakaan, the account by Henry is full of personal experiences, interpretations, and conclusions. While Henry spoke Anishinaabemowin and had spent time amongst Anishinaabeg, aspects of his version are limited by a lack of cultural fluency and a foreign bias that constrains the full meaning of the jiisakaan and those who participated in it. At the same time, Henry’s presence at the ceremony is not an intrusion or invasion for the assembled Anishinaabeg would not have allowed him there if he could not be a part of it. While he may not have completely understood everything he was witnessing, Anishinaabeg would have recognized him as a friend and/or acknowledged his presence at the event. In other words, Henry’s perspective forms an important part of the jiisakaan, and there are parts he calls attention to that give us glimpses of the complexity of which he is a part.

For instance, he describes that the jiisakaanini entered the lodge and

was scarcely within side, when the edifice . . . began to shake; and the skins were no sooner let fall, then the sounds of numerous voices were heard beneath them; some yelling, some barking as dogs; some howling like wolves: and in this horrible concert were mingled screams and sobs, as of despair, anguish and the sharpest pain. Articulate speech was also uttered, as if from human lips: but in a tongue unknown to any of the audience. (160)

Here, Henry’s account is clearly marked by his cultural distance. The man is clearly influenced by confusion and fear. It is possible that he had not seen a jiisakaan before and his reaction could be attributed to this. At the same time, I argue that the intensity and urgency Henry notes is due to his sense of what he calls the “magnitude” of the situation. We cannot forget that Anishinaabeg are doing this with survival in mind.

Soon enough, the Manido everyone is waiting for arrives. The “horrible concert” is then followed by “a perfect silence; and now a voice, not heard before... manifest[ing] the arrival of a new character in the tent. . . a low and feeble voice, resembling the cry of a young puppy” (160).

Many Anishinaabeg in attendance, Henry states, recognize “the TURTLE, the spirit that never lied!” declaring that the other voices belonged to “evil and lying spirits, which deceive mankind” (160). A succession of songs follow, interrupted by the jiisakaanini who “addressed the multitude, declaring the presence of the GREAT TURTLE and the spirit is readiness to answer such questions as should be proposed” (161).

The first question, as expected, was about the meeting at Niagara. Henry describes that a leader, after placing an offering of tobacco at the doorway of the lodge, instructed the jiisakaanini to ask Mikinaak: “Whether or not the English were preparing to make war upon the Indians? And, Whether or not there were at Fort Niagara a large number of English troops?” (161). In response, the tent shook, followed by fifteen minutes of silence. Then, the shaking abruptly resumed, followed by the voice of Mikinaak. The jiisakaaninini interpreted:

The spirit, as we were now informed by the priest, had, during his short absence, crossed Lake Huron, and even proceeded as far as Fort Niagara, which is at the head of Lake Ontario, and thence to Montréal. At Fort Niagara, he had seen no great number of soldiers; but, on descending the Saint Lawrence, as low as Montréal, he had found the river covered with boats, and the boats filled with soldiers, in number like the leaves of the trees. He had met them on their way up the river, coming to make war upon the Indians.

The chief had a third question to propose, and the spirit, without a fresh journey to Fort Niagara, was able to give it an instant and most favourable answer: “If,” said the chief, “the Indians visit Sir William Johnson, will they be received as friends?”

“Sir William Johnson,” said the spirit, (and after the spirit, the priest), “Sir William Johnson will fill their canoes with presents; with blankets, kettles, guns, gun-powder and shot, and large barrels of rum, such as the stoutest of the Indians will not be able to lift; and every man will return in safety to his family.” (162)

This solicited a joyous and relieved response, convincing many that the meeting should be attended. The night concluded with more questions for Mikinaak, ranging from the health of friends and to the activities of family. Henry, asking if he would return home safely, received a positive response that solicited “an additional and extra offering of tobacco” from him (163). To

Henry, the words of Mikinaak are legitimate. Without a word of skepticism, the fur-trader states that while on watch for “fraud,” there “such was the skill displayed in the performance, or such my deficiency of penetration, that I made no discoveries, but came away as I went” (163).

The words of Mikinaak, however, do not only have power in ceremony but are the catalyst to a journey. Soon after, a traveling party of Anishinaabeg departs for Niagara, with Henry in tow. During the trip, Henry encounters a rattlesnake on a riverbed. Fearing for his safety, he tries to kill it until his Anishinaabeg traveling partners intervene. Calling the snake “grandfather,” they apologize to it for the behavior of Henry and hold a pipe ceremony, “beseeching it to take care of their families during the absence, and to be pleased to open the heart of Sir William Johnson, so that he might show them charity” (167). Later, Anishinaabeg reveal to Henry that “this was the first time that an individual of the species had been seen so far to the northward and westward,” leading them to believe “that this manito had come, or been sent, on purpose to meet them . . . [and] to stop them on their way” (168). The next afternoon, the party continues on, encountering a huge and dangerous storm while canoeing on a lake. Blaming Henry, Anishinaabeg make sacrifices to “the god-rattlesnake, or manito-kinibic” and assure it “that I was absolutely an Englishman, and of kin neither to him nor to them” (169). As if in response, the storm abates for the party, and they arrive safely at Ft. Niagara.

The visitation of these Manidog illustrate a central point: that Anishinaabeg political and spiritual practices are deeply intertwined and embedded throughout all parts of life (and not, for example, restricted to ceremonial circumstances). It is a good reminder that there is little divide between lodge and governance. The arrival of Mikinaak in the jiiisikaan was therefore not a solitary visit by one Manido, but precipitated the arrival of (at least two) Manidog with competing notions about attending the meeting at Ft. Niagara. And, even though Anishinaabeg leave for the meeting,

their belief that the appearance of the snake relates to the decision to follow the words of Mikinaak indicates some doubt. In other words, the reasons, outcomes, and effects of the jiisikaan ceremony did not really end the night Henry asked his question but continued for days after. In the world described by Henry, there is little separation between spiritual and everyday actions for these Anishinaabeg. All are a part of a wide and ongoing spectrum of communicative relationships between themselves, Manidog, and the world around them. The shaking tent is one way they communicate with forces outside of themselves – on the banks of a riverbed and in the middle of a lake are others. Any one ceremony relates to these other communicative acts, resulting in a fluid and continual process of give and take with subjective beings always surrounding Anishinaabeg.

In his account, I argue that Henry illustrates how Manidog present to Anishinaabeg two complex but grand bagijiganan. As I have stated before, Manidog often offer complicated gifts – which sometimes demand more than the typical human set of senses if they are to be understood. Sometimes it takes a long time to comprehend these offerings even if they first appear as quite simple. The bagijiganan these Manidog present could be understood as two pathways. The first, presented by Mikinaak, is that the meeting with Zhaaganashag is a positive move and a step towards security and safety. The second, presented by “manito-kinibic,” is a warning against collaborating with Zaaganashag and that continuing in this direction will bring disastrous consequences. These are, of course, contradictory gifts – which one should Anishinaabeg choose?

I suggest that Manidog only present bagijiganan, they do not tell Anishinaabeg which path to travel. They are facilitators of possibilities, not advocates for any single direction. Still, it is interesting to see the ways the two Manidog are characterized. Mikinaak appears like an elder statesmen and social realist, suggesting that there are possibilities in the Niagara meeting and a relationship with Zhaaganashag. The rattlesnake is somewhat of a revolutionary who views the

British (and even Henry) as a threat, a “kin neither to him nor to them” – perhaps even an enemy. Both Manidog give Anishinaabeg strong and different messages but in the end it is Anishinaabeg who must decide on how to use these gifts. In this story, the Manidog world is not an altruistic utopia but a place full of complex and contradictory ideas, personalities, and politics who try to influence Anishinaabeg – but ultimately cannot control them.

At the same time, I would also suggest that both Manidog are political manifestations of the pathways Anishinaabeg faced and ultimately traveled in 1764 at Michilimackinac. The decision to meet with Johnson was profound and momentous and Anishinaabeg knew this. As Henry describes it, ““the occasion was of too much magnitude not to call for more than human knowledge and discretion.” Mikinaak – as a trusted and known voice in the jiisakaan – may be the Manido Anishinaabeg listen to but it is not without some doubt. This is evidenced by the fact that Anishinaabeg immediately recognize the arrival of the rattlesnake, greet it, and hold a ceremony. It is almost like they *expected* this arrival. In fact, even if this Manido was one of those “evil and lying spirits, which deceive mankind” they heard accompany Mikinaak into the jiisakaan, Anishinaabeg acknowledge the message of resistance it is delivering. The snake’s arrival is so important, I would argue, that Anishinaabeg appear to require it. The snake’s appearance sparks an emotional and political catharsis, as if they want to make completely certain that following the Mikinaak’s path of collaboration is the right choice. Twice Anishinaabeg make offerings to the snake, asking for permission to continue on their journey and that it brings them good tidings. They also appear to need to demonstrate that their choice is uncoerced and that Henry’s presence with them does not mean they have decided to join with the Zhaaganashag. These are all declarations that the meeting with Zhaaganashag is an independent choice made on Anishinaabeg terms and for Anishinaabeg reasons – they are exercises in *self-determination*. Over three days, and begun by Mikinaak’s arrival

in the *jiisakaan*, Anishinaabeg undertake a critical and thoughtful process in coming to a collective decision. Even in the words of Henry, this story illustrates to me that Anishinaabeg were traveling to Fort Niagara as an autonomous people and were determined to remain that way.

What happened after Anishinaabeg arrived at Niagara is well documented but it follows this vein. Joining over two thousand chiefs, the meeting resulted in the Twenty-Four Nations Wampum Belt and the creation of a political, military, and social relationship between the British, Anishinaabeg, *Kanien'kehaka* (Haudenosaunee), and other First Nations. It also, John Borrows recounts in his article “Wampum at Niagara: The Royal Proclamation, Canadian Legal History, and Self-Government,” established “the Covenant Chain of Friendship, a multination alliance in which no member gave up their sovereignty” (161).¹⁸ Presenting these gifts and speaking of the Twenty-Four Nations Wampum Belt, Johnson promised on behalf of the British Crown:

I now therefore present you the great Belt by which I bind all your Western Nations together with the English, and I desire that you will take fast hold of the same, and never let it slip, to which end I desire that after you have shewn this Belt to all Nations you will fix one end of it with the Chipeweighs at St. Marys [Michilimackinac] whilst the other end remains at my house, and moreover I desire that you will never listen to any news which comes to any other Quarter. If you do it, it may shake the Belt. (qtd. in Borrows 163)

Borrows states that when Johnson had finished speaking, “a two-row wampum belt was used by First Nation peoples to reflect their understanding of the treaty of Niagara” (163). The two-row wampum – traditionally called the *Kaswentha* – according to Haudenosaunee scholar Taiaiake Alfred is a “peace” agreement embodying,

a context of respect for the autonomy and distinctive nature of each partner. The metaphor for this relationship – two vessels, each possessing its own integrity, travelling the river of time together – was conveyed visually on a wampum belt of two parallel purple lines (representing power) on a background of white beads (representing peace). In this respectful (co-equal) friendship and alliance, any interference with the other partner’s autonomy, freedom, or powers was expressly forbidden. So long as these principles were respected, the relationship would be peaceful, harmonious, and just. (52)

A replica of the original Kaswentha can be seen here (Figure 7). It has been called by leaders such as Ovide Mercredi and Mary Ellen Turpel as the “grandfather of all treaties,” a law governing interaction in North America, and the foundation for a “relationship of mutuality” based on “equality, respect, dignity and a sharing of the river we travel on” (35). As Borrows writes, the Kaswentha reflects a diplomatic convention recognizing the unique relationship of settler and First Nation societies “founded on peace, friendship, and respect, where each nation will not interfere with the internal affairs of the other” (“Wampum at Niagara” 165).



Figure 7: the Kaswentha (“Culture”)

The Zhaaganashag-Anishinaabeg alliance formed at Niagara is embodied by three different yet inter-related bagijiganan: the Covenant Chain of Friendship; the Twenty-Four Nations Wampum Belt; and the Kaswentha. This multi-faceted agreement is arguably the most significant settlement since the 1701 Peace at Montreal, setting the basis for a set of relationships that stretches to today. At the same time, this partnership was controversial. Not all Anishinaabeg agreed to this relationship with Zhaaganashag – especially those west of Bawaating – and many continued to feel isolated and misunderstood, dividing Anishinaabeg in ways no agreement had ever had before. For Anishinaabeg who formed a relationship with Zhaaganashag at Fort Niagara though, they received a powerful social and military ally which would prove pivotal to their future, especially

during the American Revolution and War of 1812. It also provided access to a rich trading partner and promises of annual presents and assurances that their land and resource claims would be recognized. Simply put, the events at Niagara in 1764 laid the foundation for treaty-making processes and trade and resource partnerships throughout the Great Lakes and the creation of Canada. For a short time, the bountiful vision facilitated by the words of Mikinaak was present and possible.

Unfortunately, the reality became something quite different. Johnson and Zhaaganashag fulfilled promises to Anishinaabeg for only a short time. The treaty at Niagara in fact gave Zhaaganashag a foothold into a crucially important geographical, economical and strategic area and they exploited it. From the end of the War of 1812 (and arguably before that), Anishinaabeg land and resource claims, self-determining practices, and other assurances made at Niagara would be ignored, denied, and violated for centuries. Oppressive and violent policies seeking Indigenous assimilation and erasure were pursued and enacted. The British, it turned out, were not the kin they presented themselves as. As a result many Anishinaabeg have grown to question whether the agreement at Niagara was a good choice and suggest that perhaps the gestures of the rattlesnake towards resistance should have been followed. I posit that North America would look very different if Anishinaabeg had traveled this path.

Perhaps most remarkable to me is that the hopeful vision prompted by Mikinaak in the *jiisikaan* endures. Many Anishinaabeg work tirelessly for the promises at Niagara to be fully enacted and for the Covenant Chain of Friendship, the Twenty-Four Nations Wampum Belt, and the Kaswentha to be fully realized. I suggest that Mikinaak opened this pathway. She facilitated a site where a process of collaboration, decision-making and debate regarding the future of Anishinaabeg could take place. Without Mikinaak's *bagijigan* in the *jiisikaan* in 1764, in fact, the

landscape of the Great Lakes takes on a very different shape for Anishinaabeg and Zhaaganashag. Some say it would be better, some say worse. the bagijigan from Mikinaak is a very complex gift, with unexpected outcomes – and a journey that has perhaps never been fully understood.

Turtle bagijiganan are gifts, offerings that facilitate opportunities to imagine the possibilities in relationships and the knowledge available in these pathways. They are sites of thought, collaboration, and creation, gesturing to intellectual possibilities where decisions can be considered before they are enacted. Turtles are gateways to discussion, debate, and opportunities to understand the trails that beings can take together. This is found in their behaviours, their life patterns, and their very shells, made up of rounded lines, waawiyeyaag of enawendiwin, that form a series of independent and interconnected webs, nindinawemaganidog. Through their communicative powers and abilities, turtles provide sites for stories to be imagined and interpreted, presenting Anishinaabeg with challenging ideas and perspectives. The narratives emerging from Mikinaak bagijiganan are tremendous gifts of communication, thought, and knowledge, enabling human beings to see themselves and the world differently, think critically, and gain entryways into the mobile and adaptive worlds turtles know much about. Turtle markings have been given many times and in many places but consistently suggest specific relationships invested in mino-bimaadiziwin – such as in the following examples. Embodying the behaviour and practices of turtles, one can see that Anishinaabeg encapsulate these in our very narrative practices.

“central stories surrounded by smaller peripheral stories, but all are interconnected”

In the exciting and tumultuous years of early 1970s Canada, during some of the most politically and culturally engaging years for Aboriginal peoples in modern history (what is often called “Red Power”), Potawatomi/Odawa artist Daphne Odjig was commissioned to create two

murals in Manitoba, Canada. For Odjig, an emerging professional at the time, it represented a tremendous opportunity for they would be some of most widely viewed – and certainly largest in form – in her career. Works created at virtually the same time and unveiled within a year of each other, they have been restored a number of times and stand in the same communities they were installed in nearly four decades ago. Hundreds of thousands of viewers have experienced their wisdom.

The first is the 7'x10' three-panel mural entitled *The Great Flood* (Figure 8), installed in 1971 at Peguis High School on the northern Peguis Indian Reserve near Hodgson, Manitoba. Fully restored in 2008, it now stands in foyer of the all-grades Peguis Central School in Peguis First Nation. The work features a being I discuss later named Nanabush (recognizable due to the similarity to of her 1969 paintings *Nanabush and the Beavers* and *Nanabush and the Ducks*) standing alongside what looks like a painted turtle, *Miskwaadesi* (but some also call her Mikinaak). The face of Nanabush appears stressed, almost worried, staring upwards at the waves of turbulence emanating from the sun. Nanabush holds what appears to be an intertwined and twisting three-lined, purple and white strip that resembles the waves and appears to run off the painting, towards the viewer.¹⁹ Beside Nanabush, *Miskwaadesi* motions from right to left with his mouth open – as if in the act of speaking. Surrounding them are thirteen other animals: *Waagossh* (Fox), *Esiban* (Raccoon), *Gwiingwa'aage* (Wolverine), *Gookoko'oo* (Owl), *Amik* (Beaver), *Ajidamoo* (Red Squirrel), *Waaboos* (Rabbit), *Zhiishiib* (Duck), *Waabizheshi* (Marten), *Ma'iingan* (Wolf), *Mukwa* (Bear), *Migizii* (Eagle), and *Mooz* (Moose). Like *Migizii*, who is beginning to fly, most are in motion. Some are flat, staring at Nanabush, while others gaze directly at the viewer in realistic and three-dimensional form. Meanwhile, water seeps onto the ground below.



Figure 8: *The Great Flood*, Peguis Central School, Peguis First Nation

All of the images in the mural are interconnected and fluid, with bodies bleeding into and forming parts of the shapes of other animals and the landscape (such as the head of Miskwaadesi forming part of Ma'iingan or the body of Mooz melting into the surrounding earth). It is hard to tell where images of land ends and animals begin. All seem to be as much a part of the landscape as the landscape is of them. The action is constant. The frame is filled with overwhelming vibrancy, motion, and colour embodying a dynamic and diverse universe. As my colleague and art historian Sherry Farrell Racette points out: “the sense of movement and unfolding and continuous action is remarkable” (49).

With many of the images in the work somewhat easy to discern and arguably not as abstract as in her other work, one can see Odjig is drawing from imagery from Anishinaabeg birch bark scrolls, rock paintings and other traditional aesthetics. While many critics tend to focus on “her

stylistic affinity with Cubism or Surrealism,” Bonnie Devine points out, and “her tendency toward abstraction would tend to justify the comparison,” it is “instead the rich pictorial tradition and carefully preserved metaphysical structure of the Anishinabec that inform and underpin her style” (25). Many scholars like Robert Houle have documented how Odjig has spent a career remaking Anishinaabeg traditional stories and classical imagery and attribute this to the influence of her grandfather Jonas Odjig and her sister-in-law Rosemary Peltier (“Odjig: A Pictorial Style” 39-42).²⁰ Most group Odjig, Norval Morrisseau, Blake Debassige, Jackson Beardy, Kelly Church, and Cary Ray as progenitors of the famous “Woodland School” of art,²¹ a group of painters who focused on their tribal “sacred and secular pictorial tradition” and “carried it into the present” (Devine 18).²² Further evidence of this emerges when one notices that all of the animals present in *The Great Flood* are widely-used images from Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag and the aesthetics found in writing on treaties, birchbark scrolls and rock paintings.

It should come as no surprise then that, while undoubtedly complex, *The Great Flood* appears to convey a narrative. Story is a feature critics have noted in much Odjig work and particularly her murals, including the renowned *The Indian in Transition* (1978) and the triptych *Roots* (1979).²³ In fact, R.M. Vanderbergh and M.E. Southcott in a collaborative book written with Odjig categorize this time period in her career: “Story-teller and Teacher.” Of *The Great Flood*, Elizabeth McLuhan remarks:

It is a vibrant image combining the artist’s narrative line with a full palette of primary colours and earth tones. Wave after wave assaults the eye from the undulating blue of the water to the sky’s green and the sun’s ripples of gold . . . The work establishes a “mural” style of segmented colours, and an epic cast of characters. The narrative moves right, with a masterful line that ripples, curves, waves, embraces, uplifts and generally sweeps the viewer along in its wake. (27)

Such a narrative within the work fits a trajectory that has been called her “legend painting” period, a period when the artist was embedded in cultural revitalization movements sweeping Indian

country in the 1960s and 1970s (see the Introduction). Interested in retelling and re-making aadizookaanag, Odjig states: “If you destroy our legends you also destroy our soul” (*Paintbrush* 12).

While I acknowledge that other possibilities exist, the most apparent narrative in *The Great Flood* is the well-known Anishinaabeg story of the re-creation of the earth, the “great flood,” or sometimes: “the deluge.” It is a narrative told in many spaces and places, both inside and outside of Anishinaabeg communities and a significant part of a very extensive and expansive Anishinaabeg narrative of creation. It tells of the events following the destruction of the first human beings (see the Preface). With many versions available (specific to community and time) and the difficulty in knowing precisely which details Odjig might be referring to – not to mention the sheer size and complexities of these narratives – I will produce a summary here using other versions.

In most stories, the great flood occurs after human beings had been on Earth for a long time. As described previously in this project, Benton-Benai narrates:

I regret to say that this harmonious way of life on Earth did not last forever. Men and women did not continue to give each other the respect needed to keep the Sacred Hoop of marriage strong. Families began quarreling with each other. Finally villages began arguing back and forth. People began to fight over hunting grounds. Brother turned against brother and began killing each other. (29)

Or, as Andrew Keewatin remarks: “anihsinapek sikwa awehsiwak ki-anikihkantiwak sikwa ki-animikatiwak (the people and animals began to argue and fight)” (25). These first human beings, it appears, were unable to ethically and responsibly handle the gifts of the breath of Gizhe Manido – which gave them the ability to dream, communicate clearly with all beings, and imagine, learn, and create. Instead, they destroyed, fought, and killed, forcing Gizhe Manido to see that the world needed to be re-made. As Johnston explains:

Disaster fell upon the world. Great clouds formed in the sky and spilled water upon the earth, until the mountain tops were covered. All that was left was one vast sea. All men died. All the land creatures perished. All the plants were covered by the sea. Only the water animals and birds and fishes lived on. What was once earth was a

huge unbroken stretch of water whipped into foam by the ferocious winds. (*Ojibway Heritage* 13)

This event precedes the creation of a second, new and related humanity, and the Anishinaabeg.

In many versions of the Great Flood story, it is not only the actions of human beings that leads to the flood but those of *Nanabush*, the primary half-Manido/human being of Anishinaabe narratives (who also goes by names such as *Naanaboozhoo*, *Wenabozhoo*, or sometimes vaguely: “Trickster”). This being is one of the most important, extensive, and wide-ranging in all of Anishinaabeg narrative tradition. Like other incarnations of Anishinaabeg culture, she is inherently diverse yet related – so coming up with any exhaustive definition is difficult. As Gerald Vizenor makes clear in his short story “Ice Tricksters” for instance: as soon as you figure Nanabush out, the definition melts and becomes something else. What can be said is that this figure teaches, demonstrates, and engages the universe with a vibrant, active, and dynamic spirit. While often referred to by many storytellers as a “he,” Nanabush is genderless and in fact is a shape-shifter (often a Rabbit) who can communicate with all beings in Creation. In this spirit, I will often flip back and forth between both gendered descriptors. The presence of Nanabush in narratives usually ensures that something interesting, divergent, and/or potentially world-altering will occur. Taking *The Adventures of Nanabush*, a traditional story collection edited by Emerson Coatsworth, Nanabush not only participates in the re-building of the earth after a great flood, but also gives woodpeckers a red crest, initiates peace with Waub-Ameek (“Giant Beaver”), and imparts medicine to the red willow. In narratives of Nanabush, creation is a constant theme, and her curiosity, desire, intelligence, playfulness, stubbornness, anger, and foolhardiness lead to provocative moments of growth. Perhaps put best by Vizenor in *Manifest Manners*, “Naanabozho... is an ironic creator and, in the same instance, the contradiction of creation” (170).

Perhaps echoing the turn to violence by the first human beings, it is often the contradictory actions and characteristics by Nanabush – usually tricks, obstinacy, and acts of disrespect – that results in the flood. In an 1888 story told by “an Otchipwe named Ozhawashkogezhik” and cited by anthropologist Alexander F. Chamberlain in *The Journal of American Folk-lore* for instance, “Nana-bo-zhoo’s brother” is captured by a great “sea-lion” (in Anishinaabe often called Mishubishu, the “Great Underwater Lynx”) and imprisoned because he over-hunts. Searching for his brother, “Nana-bo-zhoo” bribes a kingfisher into revealing where he is, murders “the biggest” sea-lion, kills and transforms into a toad, travels to an underwater prison holding his brother, tricks the other sea-lions, punishes the captor, and escapes. As Chamberlain records, “The sea-lions chased him, and when they got to the edge of the lake they made the waters rise and follow [Nana-bo-zhoo] and his brother, who kept running farther inland, pursued by the sea-lions and the water, and accompanied by all the birds and beasts” (196-98).

Whether allowing it to be flooded or flooding it alone, Gizhe Manido is clearly concerned about the future of Creation and how humanity and Nanabush have made it in disarray so it becomes covered in water and much life perishes. Calling together all of the surviving animals to join her on a raft she makes, a large log, or the top of a tree, Nanabush receives spiritual direction (often from Gizhe-Manidou or Giizhigo-kwe, Sky-Woman) that she requires a grain of sand or earth to create land. Nanabush, unable to do this task herself, asks her animal relatives for help. As The version by Chamberlain attests:

After some time N. called to him the best divers to see which of them could find bottom. After the beaver, the otter, and the loon had gone down, and after a long time risen up to the surface dead (Nanabozhoo breathed life into them again), the muskrat tried, and after a long time came up dead. But N., upon examining him, found that his fore-paws were clasped together, and in them he discovered a little bit of mud. (198)

Placing this on the back of a turtle, Nanabush blows into the soil and creates land for all to live on.

Although employing Giizhigo-kwe instead of Nanabush, Basil Johnston narrates a version in *Ojibway Heritage* that sums up this final part of the story well:

the spirit woman painted the rim of the turtle's back with the small amount of soil that had been brought to her. She breathed upon it and into it the breath of life. Immediately the soil grew, covered the turtle's back, and formed an island. The turtle had given his service, which was no longer required and he swam away. The island formed in this way was called Mishee Mackinakong, the place of the Great Turtle's back, now known as Michilimackinac. (14)

Johnston writes that the animal beings brought grasses, flowers, trees, and food-bearing plants to the sky-woman” and “[i]nto each she infused her life-giving breath” (15). Gifting the “breath of life” into all four directions and the land in these directions, the world is re-created. In some versions, Nanabush rides Mikinaak and recreates all land throughout the world, in others animals like Ma'iingan and Migizii are sent to explore them and let Nanabush know if it is large enough. Regardless, it is here, on “Mishee Mackinakong” or “the place of the Great Turtle's back,” that life for human kind and Anishinaabeg – re-created with new hope and possibility – continues.

Worth noting is the continued theme of breath, which we encountered in the Preface and the Anishinaabeg story of creation. In that story, Gizhe Manido blew life into all of creation and therefore unique gifts. As Johnston recounts: “Into each he breathed the breath of life... [and] a different essence and nature” (12). This time, it is Nanabush gifting creation her breath, an important difference. As a half-spirit/human being, Nanabush is the Creator of the second earth, infusing it with everything she is. Using the soil from the first earth, Nanabush creates a new world from the different essences and nature of the old but injected full of her actions and characteristics. In other words, Creation itself is now a tricky, ironic, and messy place – an embodiment of contradiction.

In *The Great Flood*, the first part of this narrative is fairly evident. In the mural the floodwaters are on the periphery, threatening the old world. While perhaps not evidence of what

caused the flooding, the facial trepidation by Nanabush suggests he may have had something to do with it. In front of such uncertainty, Nanabush and many of his animal kin look to each other – and perhaps to the viewer – for answers to this problem. Amongst these collaborations, there is perhaps none more important than between Nanabush and Miskwaadesi, who is gesturing and speaking directly to him (evidenced by the reverberations in her throat). While solutions are not easily found in the work, it appears that through multiple instances of collaboration and communication (for instance: animal-animal, Nanabush-animals, animals-viewer, etc.), some are being worked out. Meanwhile, surrounding all is an active and turbulent world, full of colour and hue, struggle and unease. This scene is about opportunity and re-beginning, perhaps even hope. Many challenges – namely a great flood – await.

A more direct possibility to what these challenges also might be is available in the work: in the hands of Nanabush. The purple and white intertwined and twisting strip, which runs off the centre of the *The Great Flood* (and perhaps into the hands of the viewer), resembles a twisting and turning Kaswentha, a two-row wampum belt. To recap, Alfred defined the Kaswentha as a “peace” agreement, a “metaphor” for a relationship embodying “two vessels, each possessing its own integrity, travelling the river of time together... In this respectful (co-equal) friendship and alliance, any interference with the other partner’s autonomy, freedom, or powers was expressly forbidden. So long as these principles were respected, the relationship would be peaceful, harmonious, and just.” Surrounded by turbulent waves and an oncoming flood, this Kaswentha appears to be shaking, echoing the 1764 warning given to Johnson by his Indigenous partners at Niagara over three centuries earlier when they first agreed to the Kaswentha. In fact, the belt is twisting right into the hands of the viewer. In *The Great Flood*, a longstanding partnership, agreement, and treaty is about to be washed away, perhaps even destroyed.

Considering this, it should come with little surprise that the career of Odjig, while a testament to retelling traditional stories, has also been one immersed in activism and politics. She is keenly aware of the long history of colonialism experienced by Indigenous peoples of the Americas and interested in doing something about it. This interest was fostered by her grandfather Jonas who, alongside traditional stories, narrated ancestral histories to her while she was growing up. As recounted in her own words in *Daphne Odjig: A Retrospective 1946-1985* by Elizabeth McLuhan and R.M. Vanderburgh, Jonas told her about her Potawatomi ancestors who faced brutal retribution from the United States government and forcible removal to Kansas and Oklahoma in 1838 during the famous “Trail of Tears” (due to their close ties with the alliance led by Tecumseh and the British during the War of 1812). He told her about how many fled northward to Ojibwe lands in southern Ontario, with Odjig’s descendents finally settling in the Christian, Walpole, and Manitoulin islands. Jonas may have even shared with her the story of how he became Chief at Wikwemikong in August 1918 until being forcibly and illegitimately removed by the Department of Indian Affairs in 1920 due to his resistance to their policies.²⁴

Odjig also experienced acts of colonialism as a residential school survivor and young Aboriginal woman during draconian and assimilatory Indian Act policies that controlled all parts of Indigenous life in Canada. After “spend[ing] more than half her life trying to forget she was a Native woman,” Bonnie Devine recounts, it was on a 1964 visit to a powwow at Wikwemikong that she states that she “awakened” from this legacy (20). Presented with an eagle feather and invited to dance, Odjig states she felt nervous and uncertain, “[b]ut I began to dance to the drum. And I became an Indian” (qtd. in Devine 20). With movement and motion, Odjig woke up, took action, and began a new chapter in her life.

At the time of the creation of *The Great Flood*, Odjig was also immersed in a geographical space deeply impacted by colonialism. While her artistic interests began as a child, it was not until she moved to Manitoba, Canada in 1964 (with husband Chester Beavon) that her professional career emerged and expanded. In 1966, as a governmental community development officer, Beavon was assigned to work with the Chemahawin Cree who had been removed from their home at Cedar Lake in northern Manitoba to the town of Easterville after a hydroelectric dam flooded their territory. Odjig, accompanying Beavon, witnessed the devastating effects of this removal, manifested in cultural and political atrophy, poverty, substance abuse, and a way of life drastically altered. She also remarkably found a resilient, proud, and rich people struggling to maintain their community and overcome a flood of violence seeking to eradicate them. In response, Odjig completed a series of drawings depicting Cree life at Easterville, simple but highly detailed sketches that became a gateway to her popularity.²⁵ As Barry Ace remarks, “[a]ngered by the adverse social problems plaguing the Cree of Chemahawin and the wanton destruction of their traditional lifeways, Daphne fervently began to sketch the pathos of the people.” (119).

One of these sketches, *Chemahawin Cabin*, was given to my parents as a wedding gift and I saw it every day while growing up in Selkirk, Manitoba. Echoing the events at Easterville are the experiences of my Cree/Anishinaabe ancestors at the St. Peter’s Indian Settlement, a few miles north from where I grew up. Do not bother to look: you will not find St. Peter’s on any map. In 1907 my community was removed in an illegal “surrender” vote held by unscrupulous local officials, the province of Manitoba, and the Canadian government.²⁶ Stealing and then selling the rich and fertile farmland we had built our ancestral homes on to settlers, my ancestors were forcibly removed to flood-prone swamplands in Manitoba’s Interlake. These lands are now called the Peguis Indian Reserve – where *The Great Flood* sits – and, like the Chemawiwini Cree, our struggle

to make a home in this place has not been easy. In fact, historian P. Paul Borrows recently named the St. Peter's removal an instance of Canadian "ethnic cleansing," a "crime against humanity," and compared it to the "Trail of Tears" (160). Some – like my family – stayed at St. Peter's, squatting on stolen land while resisting and watching our home fill with settlers.

Considering the obvious themes in *The Great Flood* – flooding, struggle, and survival – and the cultural and political "awakening" of Odjig, it is not hard to see these works as operating politically to articulate the experiences of Indigenous peoples (and especially Cree and Anishinaabeg) in Manitoba during the 1960s. In other words, *The Great Flood* – while drawing upon a very old story -- resides in a specific place and time not so long ago. It represents a formative moment for Odjig. Barry Ace comments that "[m]any of the experiences and imagery from this period would resurface and culminate in her seminal work *The Indian in Transition*" (119). Describing *The Indian in Transition* but very fitting for describing this mural as well, Devine states: "The sentiments emerging from Odjig's confrontation with history are evident... History blends with legend to slake the growing thirst of Indian people for a story to call their own, to explain their sense of displacement and belonging, and to honour the greatness and dignity of their past" (24). Indeed, history, place, and politics matter in *The Great Flood*.

These points are fascinatingly enriched by juxtaposing *The Great Flood* with *The Creation of the World* (Figure 9), what McLuhan refers to as a "direct relative of the Peguis mural" (27). Both works, in fact, were created at the same time. Of similar size and shape, *The Creation of the World* was commissioned for the 1971 Province of Manitoba centennial. As just recounted, Manitoba has been a place of deep struggle for Indigenous peoples. It not only became a province following the repression of the 1869 Red River Resistance (often misnamed a "Rebellion"), but also in subsequent years was the scene of some of the most brutal and devastating acts of violence

removing Native presence from the Canadian landscape. Now, one hundred years later, a Native artist was asked to make a statement honouring the history of the province – an interesting opportunity.

Unveiled in 1972, *The Creation of the World* is installed on a steeply curved wall at the entranceway to the Earth History Gallery in the Manitoba Museum and is viewed by hundreds of thousands of visitors yearly. A biography of Odjig accompanies the work, as well as a story entitled “Creation” – which museum staff compiled from anthropological sources. Tour guides also use the mural to explain geographical history: as the bottom of a North-American-wide Ice Age glacier that melted and became the great Lake Agassiz (eventually becoming Lake Winnipeg, Lake Winnipegosis, and Lake Manitoba). The work is not only a metaphorical image for the original name of Manitoba, “Manitowapow” (“Mysterious Life Water”), but also is an explanation of the cultural and political basis on which this community is built.²⁷



Figure 9: *The Creation of the World*, The Manitoba Museum.

The similarities of the murals are striking. In *The Creation of the World*, Nanabush is present again, virtually in the same place as in *The Great Flood*, but this time is quite studious and focused, working with a mound of mud or sand on the shell of what appears to be a snapping turtle, Mikinaak. With it, Nanabush creates mountains, hills, and earth that run off the painting, from left to right. One of the mountains has morphed into a female face with eyes closed and looking downward, as if in the act of praying. Around Nanabush and Mikinaak are three animals, Amik (“Beaver”) and Nigig (“Otter”) who both gaze at Nanabush, and an immobile and what appears to be dead Wazhashk (“Muskrat”) with outstretched paws. Whereas in *The Great Flood* water was creeping onto the scene, it now encompasses the bottom and left side of the frame in *The Creation of the World*, with large (and somewhat threatening) waves. The two biggest waves, in fact, appear to gesture to the viewer to look at the dead muskrat. As opposed to *The Great Flood*, the colours in *The Creation of the World* are subdued, what McLuhan and Vanderburgh call “brilliant primary colours of red, yellow, and blue amid the somber earth tones of brown, green and ochre’s” (29). This colour difference could be attributed to a setting sun, which – while still emitting black and white waves – has moved to the horizon. The moon emerges where the sun sat, suggesting the onset of dusk. Above all, the colourful head of a bird watches the happenings of the world below. Racette sums up the two works as representing “a complex narrative with central stories surrounded by smaller peripheral stories, but all are interconnected” (49).

Sequentially, it would be simple to point out that if *The Great Flood* tells the story how Nanabush and the animals prepared for the oncoming waters, *The Creation of the World* tells of what they did to remake the world. Many of the actions started in the first mural are completed or have continued. Motion remains an ongoing theme, particularly in the waves of turbulence and in the setting of the sun and rising of the moon. Amik and Nigig appear rather pensive, watching or

nursing a dead Wazhashk, who has just brought the pawful of earth to the surface. Nanabush is busy recreating earth on the back of Mikinaak while floodwaters remain a presence and somewhat of a threat. There are a few interesting changes, such as the presence of two spirits: one that seems to be new – the female face in the mountain – and another reminiscent of *The Great Flood* – a colourful and spiritual echo of an eagle, Binesi (Thunderbird). Interestingly, the mouth of Nanabush continues to be open but the animate beings appear to be communicating with each other too in some way or fashion (either through touch, speaking, or watching). Most animals from the first mural are gone, the landscape is more prominent, and the Kaswentha has disappeared – or perhaps has become a part of the floodwaters. If in *The Great Flood* a dynamic world is presented with a problem – the flood – in *The Creation of the World* an outcome is presented.

Most striking of all, *The Creation of the World* is almost exclusively two-dimensional, with the viewer external to the main action. In fact, the only animals facing the audience – the dead muskrat and the otter – have their eyes closed. The viewer of *The Creation of the World* is simply not invited into a same kind of dialogic and conversational relationship as in *The Great Flood*, but into a somewhat more witnessing role. This might explain why, visually and logistically, the audience in *The Great Flood* stand on land with Nanabush and the animals while in *The Creation of the World* they are a part of the floodwaters. Keeping these two points in mind, it is important to consider who might be viewing these works. Unlike many works of art – where artists may not know who their audience may be – Odjig would have known this in advance. *The Great Flood* is installed at Peguis, in a school on an almost exclusively Anishinaabe/Cree reserve, and to be viewed by students, families, and teachers of this community. *The Creation of the World*, meanwhile, is installed in the largest museum in Manitoba, and to be viewed predominantly by tourists, historians, and citizens of the city of Winnipeg – individuals who are, for the most part, non-Indigenous and part

of a mainstream Canadian society that continues to benefit materially and politically by a history of colonialism in Manitoba. It is not as simple as drawing a line between these two audiences, of course, and both communities of course diverge and mix, but this is an important distinction.

Considering this, the images in the murals and their relations to their audiences take on an additional meaning. In *The Great Flood*, floodwaters are on the periphery of the land, encroaching, but just outside. If the school at Peguis is classified as “Indigenous space” (to ignore the ideological question of whether First Nation reserves are “Indigenous spaces” for a moment), the work suggests a place where certain community-specific teachings and discussions take place – much like meetings and ceremonies and homes – where dialogue and topics can be tied to membership. It is a space made possible by ongoing critical and creative communication amongst Indigenous peoples and the beings they share territories with. It is a vessel possessing a measure of integrity, autonomy, and freedom in action. It is a place full of dynamic and rich relationships but a place where one the “shaking” of one relationship in particular – the Kaswentha – can result in a flood, threatening the life of all. This is why relationships in Indigenous space must have integrity and strength, to withstand threatening forces like a flood.

In *The Creation of the World* though, these principles continue in a more culturally heterogeneous setting, and a different experience is offered to the viewer. Here, the world is in the process of re-creation – and the viewer is very much a part – but in a different, more self-reflexive and distanced way. This positioning may provoke a viewer to consider things such as their own role and location and their relation to the narrative they are seeing. It offers the opportunity to consider how one can engage a group of individuals as they re-make the world and participate alongside them in its re-creation. In other words, the viewer perhaps is being invited to take part in

a relationship by considering the implications of a community re-creating their world and how they can meaningfully participate.

These two murals illustrate how important place, audience, and history are in Anishinaabeg narratives. While a part of one grand story, these two parts address specific discursive communities in, in turn, do different kinds of work. I argue that these murals show how narratives interact with communities in different ways, provoke them to consider different things, and inspire them to take action in different paths. They can also lead to some uncomfortable questions and suggest equally discomfoting answers, particularly surrounding history, land, and humanity. The artistic choices indicate a broad narrative at work, with separate and teachable parts. To use the words of Racette, it is to see “a complex narrative” with “central stories surrounded by smaller peripheral stories,” reflective of communities and the places they come from but in the end are “interconnected.”

Each and every narrative I have uncovered in *The Great Flood* and *The Creation of the World* is about relationships: Nanabush and the many animals around him, Odjig and Anishinaabeg traditions, the two-row wampum, Nanabush and Gizhigo-kwe, Peguis and Easterville, Odjig and her grandfather, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Manitoba, and so on. The waves of turbulence bring the two works together in lines of enawendiwin and appear in patterns of waawiyeyaag. There are unique and different ties with ndinawemaganidog everywhere. All of these ties however are centred on one key relationship in the murals: *Nanabush and turtles*. Without these, other relationships are impossible. In *The Great Flood*, Nanabush not only converses with Miskwaadesi, but also receives verbal and physical direction from her words and gestures. In *The Creation of the World*, on the other hand, land is being formed on the back of Mikinaak: her body is the prototype for the new world. In *The Great Flood*, her words form the basis for a relationship. In *The Creation of the World*, her body supplies the site where it is forged. Without Mikinaak, there are

no words, no dialogue on what to do, no place to make land, no solution to the flood – there is no life. This is not a single relationship either. Miskwaadesi and Mikinaak are very different species of turtles who live in very different geographical places and circumstances but yet share characteristics and behaviours. The relationship between Nanabush and turtles are most crucial relationships in the two works. These connections facilitate everything else.

Seen as Mikinaak bagijiganan, *The Great Flood* and *The Creation of the World* are offerings to the people of Manitoba and, arguably, Canada and North America. They are beginning points to consider the beauty of ancestral histories, and how these heal and empower individuals and communities injured by colonialism. They suggest the power in inter-cultural syncretism and sharing, of the brilliance of combining Picasso and Anishinaabeg artistic aesthetics and how fluidity, story, and perspective can be forged (Devine 25). They are reminders of the legacies of the Kaswentha and the responsibilities that first forged ties between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and how this relationship could destabilize and fall apart. These murals are memorials to the many injustices and violent acts that resulted in the province of Manitoba and continue to stand in the full potential of this place. They are also reminders that human beings have rich and powerful notions of home, language, culture, language, and land, and that they can adapt and change to see the beauty in other people, beings, and the environment. And, perhaps most of all, these works illustrate that through an honest process of sharing, respect, dialogue, and listening there are paths towards renewal and resurgence for all people and the creation of new communities, new worlds, is possible regardless of any flood. All of these sites of discussions, debate, and knowledge sharing are available through gifts of Mikinaakag.

This all gestures to arguably the most important story of all in *The Creation of the World*: the dream of a respectful and dignified home. As one can see, this dream takes a tremendous amount

of constant, tireless, and imaginative work. It involves conceiving of a place full of possibility, built through sustainability and equitable relationships involving people, animals, spirits, and the landscape. It involves incorporating a broad based notion of history and talking about the complicated parts – even if that inspires discomfort and disagreement. It involves recognizing and understanding that many communities, human and non-human, have sacrificed much to provide others with opportunities. It involves constant motion, eternal change, and a commitment to balance, cooperation, and mutual responsibility. It involves acknowledging that life is complex, that it is all around us, and that we are a part of it. It requires a full commitment to a process of *mino-bimaadiziwin*. Many more stories exist in the mural of course, but this one—of the creation of a home full of opportunity, integrity, and including all diverse parts—is the most poignant. *The Great Flood* and *The Creation of the World* are about the struggle that is Manitoba, Canada, and North America and the role relationships play between non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities – and particularly Anishinaabeg.

The turtle offerings within these murals haven't quite solicited the response surrounding ethics and responsibility that one would hope. Manitoba remains one of the most contentious sites of struggle for Indigenous peoples in Canada. As the 1988 Aboriginal Justice Inquiry that investigated into Aboriginal people and the justice system in Manitoba uncovered, Aboriginal men and women are by far more likely to be incarcerated than others. Virtually every spring, First Nations territories throughout Manitoba are the first to flood, the slowest to get assistance, and the least compensated and supported for repairs and rebuilding. Record high rates of poverty, unemployment, and poor health run rampant throughout Manitoba Aboriginal communities, particularly in the north. And, in perhaps the worst example of all, the number of murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Manitoba, according to a 2010 report by the Native Women's

Association of Canada, is the third highest in the nation, with 86% of the victims being Aboriginal mothers (“Missing and Murdered” 2).

There is hope, however. These murals still convey a powerful message as the province passes its 130th birthday. The Urban Shaman art gallery, the largest artist-run Aboriginal artist space in Canada, and Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art recently honoured Odjig and the other members of the “Indian Group of 7” and their contributions in a summer 2011 exhibit entitled *Frontrunners*. With the assistance of the province of Manitoba with several First Nations organizations, a Treaty Education Kit will be piloted in Manitoba classrooms. Entitled *The Treaties and the Treaty Relationship*, the goal of the initiative is that “all Manitoba students should be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the topics, concepts and understandings of the Treaties and the Treaty relationship by the end of grade 12.”²⁸ And, after years of litigation, protests, and letter-writing campaigns, in 1998 the Government of Canada acknowledged that the St. Peter’s land “surrender” was a wrongful act and in 2008, members of Peguis and St. Peter’s were offered \$126 million in compensation (to purchase land, fund community initiatives, pay individual citizens, and spur economic development). While these acts are certainly not enough to make Manitoba into a place where *mino-bimaadiziwin* can be forged, it is a start. The critical space facilitated by turtles is like the earth made into land that all can stand on.

There are many more Mikinaak bagijiganan in Anishinaabeg narrative tradition. One could spend an entire book just on these offerings. Connecting with turtles and forging a critical space where knowledge invested in *mino-bimaadiziwin* can be created and shared is arguably one of the most important narrative acts Anishinaabeg pursue when they tell stories. In Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag, inheritors of Mikinaak ndoodem embody these characteristics as well and are usually considered the intellectuals and storytellers of Anishinaabeg (Benton-Benai 74-75). It is not

only a clan responsibility however, but a duty shared by Anishinaabeg authors, writers, speakers, and thinkers. Narratives of mikinaak find their way into Anishinaabeg tradition and intellectual thought in a variety of ways. This is embodied in the many Anishinaabeg narratives where Mikinaak is a storyteller and dreamer who imagines possible connections between beings and articulates these relationships. Stories of turtle, like those mentioned so far in this chapter, illustrate how Mikinaak assists Anishinaabe to fulfill their abilities to think, philosophize, and communicate with the world around us. Not all Mikinaak bagijiganan overtly make reference to turtles, some use similar principles and teachings to gesture to them.

K'Zaugin: Anishinaabe Language & Literature

In spring 1991, over two centuries after the meeting at Niagara and over fifteen years after the turbulent times that led to Odjig painting her murals, Anishinaabe scholar Basil Johnston published “Is That All There Is? Tribal Literature” in *Canadian Literature: A Quarterly of Criticism and Review*. It was months following a tremendous period of activism by Indigenous peoples in Canada. Namely, it was directly following the events between Kanien'kehaka of Kanehsatà:ke and the town of Oka, Québec (often called the “Oka Crisis” of 1990). In the piece, Johnston reflects upon an experience he had during the 1970s with a young student at a public display of his class and their projects studying Native peoples in Canada. As Johnston narrates, “In front of a canvas tent that looked like a teepee stood a grim chief, face painted in war-like colours and arms folded. On his head he wore a headdress made of construction paper. A label pinned to his vest bore the name, Blackfoot” (54). When Johnston asks what is wrong, the boy explains,

I am bored. I am tired of Indians. That is all we have studied for six weeks. I thought they'd be interesting when we started, because I always thought that Indians were neat. At the start of the course we had to choose to do a special project from food preparation, transportation, dwellings, social organization, clothing, and hunting

and fishing. I chose dwellings... and that is all me and my team studied for six weeks: teepees, wigwams, longhouses, igloos. We read books, encyclopedias, went to the library to do research, looked at pictures, drew pictures. Then we had to make one. Sir, I am bored. (54-55)

Asked if he learned anything else, the student replies, “No sir, there was nothing else... Sir?... Is that all there is to Indians?” (55).

Using this experience as a broader example of the historical treatment of Native cultures in Canada, Johnston summarizes that for schoolchildren,

Little has changed since that evening in 1973. Books still present native people in terms of their physical existence as if Indians were incapable of meditating upon or grasping the abstract. Courses of study in the public school system, without other sources of information, had to adhere to the format, pattern, and content set in books. Students studied Kaw-lijas, wooden Indians, who were incapable of love or laughter; or Tontos, if you will, whose sole skill was to make fires and to perform other servile duties for the Lone Ranger; an inarticulate Tonto, his speech limited to ‘Ugh! Kimo Sabe,’ and ‘How.’ (55)

Johnston goes on to turn his sights on government and academia – the bodies responsible for said curricula. Condemning “Indian Affairs of Canada, with its more than two centuries of experience with natives,” as an institution that continues to rely on myopic stereotypes and “know[s] next to nothing about their constituents,” Johnston claims that the much of the blame belongs to “eminent scholars” (55). It is irresponsible academics, he accuses, who sanitize, objectify, and misrepresent Native cultures and ultimately justify an ongoing colonial process.

To rectify this state of affairs, Johnston advocates that scholars become fluent in two Indigenous knowledge systems: language and literature. Of language, Johnston argues that linguistic fluency is *the* primary method through which one can understand Native cultures, because “[w]ithout the benefit of knowing the language of the Indian nation that they are investigating, scholars can never get into their mind, the heart and soul and the spirit and still understand the native’s perceptions and interpretations. The scholar must confine his research and

studies to the material, physical culture, subsistence patterns, and family relationships” (55-56).

Regarding literature, Johnston is somewhat less prescriptive and more descriptive, arguing that:

There is, fortunately, enough literature, both oral and written, available for scholarly study, but it has for the most part been neglected. Myths, legends, and songs have not been regenerated and set in modern terms to earn immortalization in poetry, dramatization in plays, or romanticization in novels.

What has prevented the acceptance of Indian literature as a serious and legitimate expression of native thought and experience has been indifferent and inferior translation, a lack of understanding and interest in the culture, and a notion that it has little of importance to offer to the larger white culture. (56)

The article then turns Anishinaabeg-specific, translating several words from Anishnaabemowin to English and telling three interdependent and interesting stories – narrated with little explanation. It is a powerful, and perhaps perplexing, journey for readers, ending with Johnston explaining the meaning of “K’zaugin” (I love you) in the context of a narrative called “The Weeping Pine.”

The stated goal in the article is to offer a “brief sketch, no more than a glimpse, as it were, of my tribe’s culture” (56). He argues that this is demonstrated in the “inseparable” nature of Anishinaabeg “language and literature,” two processes that embody Anishinaabeg expression and the life it represents. He cites three words as examples: “Anishinaubae,” “w’daeb-awae,” and “w’kikaendaun.” Like all words in Anishinaabemowin, he points out, they “have three levels of meaning” that consist of “the surface meaning that everyone instantly understands. Beneath this meaning is a more fundamental meaning derived from the prefixes and their combinations with other terms. Underlying both is the philosophical meaning” (57). In terms of the first two levels, the “surface” and “fundamental” meanings are:

- i. “Anishinaubae” means “I am a person of good intent, a person of worth,” and is made up of “Onishishih” (meaning “good, fine, beautiful, excellent”) and “naubae” (meaning “being, male, human species”);
- ii. “w’daeb-awae” means “truth... he or she is telling the truth, is correct, is right”;

iii. “w’kikaendaun” means “to know... that he or she knows.” (57)

These translations into English are not quite direct, requiring several words and often more than one descriptor. While notable, this feature is hardly specific to Anishinaabemowin.

The third level of “philosophical meaning” offered by Johnston is where things get really interesting. As Johnston explains, the “surface” and fundamental” meanings of words are not enough to convey their fullest expressions. It is in *how they are used, what they do, and how they convey experience* that they find their deepest meaning. In other words, it is in how words are expressed, how they participate in the universe, and what is gained as a result. For “Anishinaubae,” for example, one can understand the meaning of “I am a person of good intent, a person of worth” in the context of the “stories of Nanabush, the tribes’ central and principle mythical figure who represents all men and all women” (57). Since “Nanabush was always full of good intentions,” these narratives therefore show evidence of how “[t]he Anishinaubae perceive themselves as people who intended good and therefore of merit and worth” (57). The “philosophical meaning” of “Anishinaubae” therefore is deeply embedded in narrative acts of intention, perspective, and thought – stories.

Worth remembering is how Johnston describes “Anishinaubae” just like the thinkers discussed in the Introduction, as not only a group of people but a set of self-determined actions – a noun and a verb. The actions of Anishinaubae, of course, create more self-determining actions and reactions, as “from this perception they drew a strong sense of pride as well as a firm sense of place in the community. This influenced their notion of independence” (57). “Anishinaubae,” therefore, is not only a name but also a venue for thought and action. Through his rhetoric and language, Johnston opens the reader up to a space illustrating where Anishinaabeg cultural traditions and intellectual pathways come from. He is offering a bagijigan. Like the communications with

Mikinaakag in the jiisakan in 1764 and the murals by Odjig in the 1970s, Johnston has facilitated a critical and creative place that includes both storyteller and audience to consider what “Anishinaubae” means and how it is continually being produced.

This is also illustrated in the “philosophical meaning[s]” of “w’daeb-awae” and “w’kikaendaun,” two words that first appear to be verbs. “W’daeb-awae” is truth as *it is perceived to be by the speaker of that truth*. It is “a denial that there is such a thing as absolute truth; that the best and most the speaker can achieve and a listener expect is the highest degree of accuracy” (57). This definition is active and mobile; an explanation that limits the truth available in any statement, leaves room for others to exist, and opens the possibility that truth can change. “W’kikaendaun” is knowing as *it is experienced by the speaker of that knowledge*. It is distinctly tied to sense perception and prior influence, and “may not be exact, but similar to that which has been instilled and impressed in his or her mind and recalled from memory” (57). Each instance of “knowing” is also active, an experiential process limited by past knowledge and expandable by future knowing. At the same time, “w’daeb-awae” and “w’kikaendaun” are claims, things that live in the world. “W’daeb-awae” and “wkikaendaun” are occurrences based in action. They are verbs *and* nouns. Like “Anishinaubae,” they are concepts in an ongoing process of story.

They are also expressions of Mikinaakag. Notice that these definitions of “Anishinaubae,” “w’daeb-awae” and “wkikaendaun” are all intimately tied to their environment. They are all subjective terms undergirded by context, perspective, and experience and embody an imaginative sense of autonomy and self-determination (Johnston calls it “independence”) that there is something imaginable as an Anishinaabeg way of life – perhaps *ways* of life – and, at the very centre of this is the acknowledgement of other ways. This is a statement of collectivity and separateness principled in individualism and universal connectivity – just like turtles protecting

themselves, hunting, and nesting, making a home amongst a collection of homes. They are words based in a complex world of thought (some might call it Manidog) with many choices and possibilities, a truth with many truths tied to specific experiences and memories. Most of all, however, the definitions offered by Johnston are like Mikinaak – creative entities based in processes of agency, change, and mobility. Like Mikinaak bagijiganan of the past, these words illustrate the potential of mino-bimaadiziwin: to constitute, create, and participate meaningfully in life in a diverse universe.

But Johnston does not stop here. He then narrates three stories: the Anishinaube “story of creation,” “The Man, The Snake, and The Fox,” and “The Weeping Pine.” The first is “our creation story,” a narrative that explains how the world was created after “Kitchi-Manidou beheld a vision,” how a pregnant Geezhigo-quaee and the muskrat re-created the world “with a small knot of earth,” how she gave birth to “twins who begot the tribe called the Anishinaubaeg,” why the Anishinaubaeg “dreamed Nanabush into being,” and how Nanabush “recreated his world from a morsel of soil retrieved from the depths of the sea” (58). “The Man, The Snake, and The Fox” is a story about a hunter who is tricked and almost killed by an “immense serpent,” until he is saved by a fox. In return, the fox wants nothing, until the man insists and agrees to “feed him should he ever have need.” “Some years later” though, the hunter shoots “a little fox who had been helping himself to the family storage. As the man drew his knife to finish off the thief, the little fox gasped, ‘Do not you remember?’” (59-60). The last story, of “The Weeping Pine,” is a narrative about a young woman and her arranged marriage to an “old man.” At first the young woman is resistant, but “in the years that followed she came to love this old man. And they had many children.” After thirty years of marriage, the old man dies and the woman refuses to leave his body, even after his

funeral ceremony. No one can move her from his side, not her children nor the elders of the community, and she dies there. Then,

The next spring a small plant grew out of the grave of the woman. Many years later, as the sons, daughters and grandchildren gathered at the graveside of their parents, they felt a mist fall upon their faces and their arms. 'It is mother shedding tears of love for dad,' cried her daughter.

And it is so. On certain days, spruces and pines shed a mist of tears of love.
(61-62)

These stories are too complex and multilayered stories to summarize quickly. I encourage readers to read them for themselves. I would like to follow Johnston's directive though, by employing his critical strategy and suggest the potential "three levels of meaning" in them. What I will suggest is that Johnston provides a way of reading strands of enawendiwin that forge waawiyeyag and a sense of ndiwemaganidog.

Examining the "surface meaning" of the "[Anishinaubae] story of creation" is fairly straightforward – as Johnston tells it to us. Like a good teacher – do not forget his degree is in education – he demonstrates and explains before encouraging independent exploration (as in the next story). As he states, this story is a "factual account of the origin of the world and of being" and does not have any "more basis than the biblical story of creation and the flood" (58). The story also "represents a belief in God, the creator, a Kitchi-Manitou, the Great Mystery. It also represents a belief that Kitchi-Manitou sought within himself, his own being, a vision. Or perhaps it came from within his being and that Kitchi-Manitou created what was beheld and set it into motion" (58).

The "fundamental meaning" of the narrative ("derived from the prefixes and the combinations with other terms") is also described by Johnston. As he writes, the "story of creation . . . precedes all other stories in the natural order." It is a prefix unto itself. Every expression, idea, or experience for the "Anishinaubae" is constituted somehow by this story. But, Johnston I believe is pointing to more here. A prefix can be a noun – meaning a term placed at the beginning of a

word to adjust or modify its meaning – and a verb – such as to fix, appoint, or determine beforehand. If we are to look at what immediately precedes the story in the article, it is the term “definitions”? Johnston offers – which, as I have described, suggests that words are imaginative acts of Mikinaak bagijiganan. This “story of creation” therefore is a self-constituting story, an act of autonomy and self-determination and a statement of collectivity and separateness principled in individualism and universal connectivity. It is a complex narrative based in principles of multidimensionality and processes of agency, change, and mobility: an imagination of a home amongst a collection of homes. It is an act invested in creating mino-bimaadiziwin.

And one based in time. At the time of the publishing of “Is That All There Is?” in spring 1991, Indigenous peoples in Canada had just started reflecting on the “Oka Crisis,” a 270-year conflict over land between the Kanien’kehaka of Kanehsatà:ke and settler Canadians that culminated in a 78-day standoff involving the Canadian military.²⁹ It is not that the event was a surprise, as Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson writes, for it “confirmed everything” Indigenous peoples knew, “that given the opportunity, Canada would not hesitate to use its military power to crush Indigenous nations and our aspirations to be peaceful, responsible, self-determining neighbours” (“Niimkig” 16). What was most remarkable was that Indigenous resistance and agency was so effective, even after hundreds of years of colonial assault. As Simpson describes it, the standoff resembled the act of:

throwing a stone into a body of water. The stone and the act of throwing, represents both intent and action. The impact upon the water is the result of that action. When the stone hits the water, there is an immediate and dramatic impact. There is sound and displacement.

But long after the stone sinks to the bottom, the concentric waves of displaced water radiate outward, carrying the impact of the action through time and pace. The impact of the initial disruption is carried across different realms by these concentric rings, interacting with the other elements of Creation in synergy” (“Niimkig” 17).

These “concentric” circles inspired more and more action and movement in the interests of Indigenous resurgence and revitalization, many of which continues to reverberate today. “When the Onkwehonwe collectively threw their stone into the lake in the summer of 1990” Simpson concludes, “there was no telling the tremendous gift and opportunity they gave to Indigenous Peoples. . . . The summer the Kanien’kehaka took on the Canadian army and won continues to inspire. It continues to bring us hope” (17-18). What Simpson is describing is precisely a Mikinaak bagijiganan. Her “stone” in the water is a turtle.

Because, in fact, the “Oka Crisis” was not a splash – but one part of a series of waves emanating from imaginative acts of creation and resistance by Indigenous peoples across the Americas. As Beausoliel Anishinaabe writer Wanda Nanibush reminds us:

[t]he stand that the Kanien’kehaka took in the Pines was also a traumatic event for the community and for all of us who acted in solidarity. It connects to a list of colonial traumas like “Starlight tours of Saskatoon,” “Ipperwash,” “Burnt Church,” “500 missing and murdered Aboriginal women,” “Trail of Tears,” “Residential Schools,” and many, many more. These specific events become part of a larger collective history of colonialism and our resistance to it. Each new colonial event brings up a prior trauma, something almost forgotten, repressed or something that has been attempted to be erased. (171)

Acts of violence and trauma are critically and creatively opposed by acts of the imagination, by thought, by language and narrative. In fact, these acts not only resist but create, forge, and imagine life outside of resistance. They facilitate a space where earth can be made that all can stand on. By acts like the jiisikanan, murals by Odjig in Manitoba in the 1970s, and other expressive acts, Anishinaabeg are narrating concentric circles that both provoke change and invite thought and dialogue. Meeting the young “chief,” Johnston begins a twenty-year process that culminates in his writing “Is That All There Is?” and reverberates throughout his career. In his preface to *The Manidous*, Johnston even attributes this event as the inspiration for “*Ojibway Heritage* and *Ojibway Ceremonies*, along with other books and articles” (xii).

This brings us to the “philosophical meaning” of the “story of creation.” Again, Johnston explains what he considers it to be, about all beings – “Kitchi-Manidou, animals, “lesser Manitous,” and others – “seek[ing] a morsel of soil with which to create and recreate their world, their spheres. So men and women must seek within themselves the talent of the potential and afterward create their own worlds and their own spheres and a purpose to give meaning to their lives” (“Is That” 58). For Johnston, it is in narrative that these “worlds” are facilitated, where the “morsels” become earth on the back of the turtle. The very first, and perhaps most important, turtle shell of all is thus the “story of creation.” Among many things, this story provokes senses of history, land, motion by encapsulating a narrative about creation, resistance, and resurgence embedded in a story that is part scripture, law, artistic expression, call to action, *magnus opus*, life lesson, and truth. All of these tenets, I propose, are lifeways of *enawendiwin* that form *waawewiyag*. They are prefixes for *Anishinaabeg* and a collective sense of *nidiwemaganidog* forged through *mino-bimaadiziwin*. This is also perhaps evidence of the life story of Johnston, as I point out elsewhere (Sinclair 83).

The next two stories are also framed as *Mikinaak bagijiganan*, but Johnston leaves understanding the landscape of these spaces to the reader (although he does gesture to “justice and fairness” as connective strands). In this, I assert, he nudges others to make *Mikinaak bagijigan* of their own, but I would like to suggest a few. “The Man, The Snake, and the Fox” ends with a series of questions that suggest the story is about trust and relationships between the three entities in the story. In many ways this narrative is about following stories, being tricked by stories (and almost paying for it with your life), witnessing the power of stories (to even trick a trickster), and forgetting stories (which seems to result in the worst punishments of all – death, anger, regret). In this narrative, I see this story as teaching about *enawendiwin* and *waawiyeyaag* through

responsibilities embedded in relationships. The hunter, for example, neglects his responsibility to the fox and their connection is almost severed, just as his relationship with the serpent is broken when he tricks him. The man, at the end, isolates himself and his family and they will likely die next time he faces a similar situation (unless perhaps he learns to be immune from the tricks of the snake). While trying to support his family, he violates a sacred trust by forgetting about interdependence. The lines of connection and the circle are broken, and death results.

It is hard – especially considering the prefix of all that has come before this story – to not see “The Man, The Snake, and The Fox” as a grand Mikinaak Bagijigan about today and life on Turtle Island. The entire narrative of Indigenous-settler relations on Turtle Island has been a struggle over stories – competing stories, sharing stories, hating stories, and everything in between. As Johnston points out, claims – for the Anishinaabeg anyway – do not exist in a vacuum. They have imaginative acts based in an environment, a part of truth, and a critically important relative in a system of relations. Simply put, the relationship needs to be more about forging responsibility to one another than tricking and exploiting. Referencing Canada – but could easily be applied to the United States and Mexico – I believe my colleague Damien Lee puts it succinctly in his essay “Echoes of Impermanence: Kahnehsatà:ke, Bimaadiziwin and the Idea of Canada” when he states:

As Anishinabek, we are seeking to transform our current relationship with Canada. Like our Onkwehonwe sisters and brothers, we are not seeking to defeat Canada, but instead we seek to revitalize and live in the spirit of co-existence embodied in our treaties and worldview. Currently, Canada does not uphold its treaty responsibilities, opting instead to negate Onkwehonwe self-determination and to oppress Indigenous Nations with the Indian Act. Transformation for us means co-existing with dignity, not winning or losing. It also means re-establishing balance through healthy relationships with Canadians. (241)

Reversing this, it is my hope that Anishinaabeg remember our commitments to the foxes of the world because you never know when you are going to be tricked by a serpent. There might not always be a fox present to hear us, help us, or ask us “Is that all there is to Indians?” This is what I

believe Johnston means when he describes Anishinaabeg as people with “good intention” – that we must live with integrity, respect, and responsibilities to both ourselves and those around us.

Crucial to this storied relationship is language. Most interesting is that Johnston writes “Is That All There Is?” – and makes a demand that scholars learn Anishinaabemowin – in English. I speak more about this critical move later, but it is notable that Johnston – a fluent speaker - chooses to explain Anishnaabeg concepts almost completely in English while not lamenting about the its inadequacy to to carry cultural meaning. While Anishinaabemowin clearly has critical and embedded concepts and ideas that he’s interested in explaining, he stubbornly refuses to throw up his hands like some Anishinaabemowin language advocates and claim incommensurability or chant accusations of inauthenticity. His Mikinaak bagijigan is proof that one can make a profound argument for the importance and autonomous value of Anishinaabemowin – in fact demand that scholars become fluent in it – but still be interested in dialogue, exchange, a *relationship* with English. Because, in the end, the only way a “balanced” and “healthy” relationship is possible is if we can speak to one another honestly and realistically using the languages we carry. Or, as Johnston puts it, “[w]ithout the benefit of knowing the language of the Indian nation that they are investigating, scholars can never get into their mind, the heart and soul and the spirit and still understand the native’s perceptions and interpretations.” For most, this “language” includes English. Johnston reminds that Anishinaabemowin has useful intellectual and critically important concepts that can help us understand and have relationships within the universe.

The last story is by far the most perplexing, but perhaps now that I have arrived at it, is also the clearest. It is a story about the immense power, beauty, and possibility within love. Like “The Man, The Snake, and The Fox,” Johnston provides us with no easy answers here, just the story. As I understand it – and offer my own Mikinaak bagijigan – “The Weeping Pine” is about

how love is hard work. It is not found in the instantaneous endings of fairy tales, but something that demands time, space, and constant and consistent communication. The young woman does not at first love the old man but, after years of commitment, grows to. She loves him so much in fact she builds a family, community, and life with him. She even forsakes her children and dies to be with him. Her love is what ensures her permanent presence on earth, in the “small plant” that grows from it. Love is not solely the physical, unconditional, lusty romp we see in Hollywood movies (although perhaps a fun part of it!) but a relationship filled with respect for, patience with, and responsibilities to another person. It is about listening and learning, even if the person you are communicating with is not doing the same. The question, undoubtedly, is how you can love another being when they are so drastically different. Sometimes love involves protecting yourself and those you love, too. Love is something that involves a never-ending struggle with yourself, someone else, and entities throughout the universe.

Most of all, however, love is something that happens in a place and in a time – and how this changes over time. It is easy to see how love can bring Anishinaabeg together in ceremonies, classrooms, and countless instances of community. A true commitment to k’zaugin is in seeing how it can inspire Anishinaabeg to maintain connections with one another even as we disagree, grow apart, and travel in different directions. K’zaugin can inspire us to continue to tell each other our perspectives, share food with family members and relations, and join together in times of struggle and resistance. K’zaugin can assist us to learn how to speak to one another in our many languages and listen, always listen. K’zaugin is what can maintain and define our many responsibilities to one another and ensure that we speak to each other with honesty, commitment, and truth – even if this results in disagreement. K’zaugin can also assist our continuation into the multiple, diverse, and complex community we are, always have been, and will continue to be as

Anishinaabeg. K'zaugin is the platform in which we will create our stories and continue Anishinaabe life forever.

In my studies of Anishinaabemowin, what strikes me about zaagi' is how it also means "to treasure" and so many words that talk about growth and expansion, such as *zaagigi* ("sprout, grow out"), *zaagijiwan* ("flow out") and *zaagidenaniweni* ("stick out tongue") (Nichols and Nyholm 123). Zaagi' is also a transitive animate verb, which uses the second-person singular "gii-" instead of the first person "nii-," which is kind of like saying "(you) do X to me" (Nichols and Nyholm xvii). "K'zaugin" might also mean: *you grow in me*. What is fascinating – and a little risqué – is that this also represents *lovmaking*, an action and a thing in its own right. Sex, especially when love is involved, is definitely a noun and a verb and is a pathway to creation. Anishinaabeg love-making is also life-making – the idea of each of us being a part of one another in all of our complexities and creating a beautiful and dynamic Anishinaabeg world together. It is the path of mino-bimaadiziwin.

This is articulated beautifully "K'zaugi-in, I Love You, My Soul is Open for You," a poem Johnston wrote to accompany an art exhibit featuring the painting of Norval Morrisseau. After describing two people entering the "heart and soul" of one another, he concludes by stating:

Hand locked in hand, hearts entwined
 We set upon the Path of Life
 Our dreams now one
 Our steps true and measured
 You love mine; mine yours
 To help me know myself, the world.
 You and Kitchi-Manidou
 And to walk on into the world of dream
 and beyond. ("K'zaugi-in" 12)

Our Anishinaabe language and literature, filled with love, is what inspires us to walk and grow together. It is a fundamental tie of enawendiwin that forms waaweyiyaag, facilitating a complex Path of Life, from thought to speech, this existence to the next.

K'zaugin is the political, intellectual, and creative space where Anishinaabeg expression lives. Love is what inspires Johnston to keep Anishinaabemowin and Anishinaabeg stories alive and encourage (even demand) others to learn from them. Love is what lives in Johnston and his work that speaks to and advocates for himself, his family, his people. Love is what inspires him to take up calls for resistance to colonialism and “independence.” Love is what will ensure that his life continues well beyond his own, in the work of all of us. His love, a model for our love for one another, is what can feed, support, and ensure our responsibility to one another, ensuring we as Anishinaabeg will continue to speak our languages and tell our stories for many years. Love is also how we can assure a future for our children, alongside and with others – who depend on to work with us to keep this world going. It is how we can live mino-bimaadiziwin, create and recreate Anishinaabeg culture and community, and make more life. As Johnston concludes in “Is That All There Is?,” “K'zaugin said everything. I love you, today, tomorrow, forever.” Love is a Mikinaak bagijigan – it is where we can create earth to stand on.

This kind of love is what I assert Johnston is gesturing to when he speaks about Anishinaabeg language and literature, and arguably, all of Anishinaabe life. Love is what inspires Johnston to keep Anishinaabemowin alive and demand others speak and learn it. Love is what lives in the stories and inspires resistance to colonialism and “independence.” Love is what feeds and supports us, encourages us to continue, keeps all of us alive. Love is also how we will assure a future for ourselves and our children, in the mist, in their blood, in life. It is how we live anishinaabe bimaadizi, how we should embody the Anishinaabeg Nation, and create more life. As

Johnston concludes in “Is That All There Is?,” “K’zaugin said everything. I love you, today, tomorrow, forever” (62). Love is where we will find our morsel of soil to remember, live, and continue.

I propose that this essay, from one of our greatest Anishinaabe intellectuals and elders, is a Mikinaak bagijiganan, an imaginative act in which language and literature can be understood through an Anishinaabeg-specific methodology of *zaagi*’, love. It is an offering that opens up opportunities to imagine the opportunities in relationships undergirded by a critical and creative notion of love and a gateway to understand the trails that beings can take together when they commit in this fashion. While no turtles are clearly evident in the work of Johnston, there are still lines he draws the echo the behaviours, life patterns, and shells that form a series of independent and interconnected webs. Through his notion of *zaagi*’ Johnston creates a site for Anishinaabeg to understand how language and literature provide tremendous gifts of communication, thought, and knowledge, enabling human beings to see themselves and the world differently, think critically, and illustrate how Anishinaabeg are a people *making* life as much as *living* life. Conceiving our expressions through *zaagi*’, I argue, provides a pathway to consider the intricate narrative processes of Anishinaabeg culture- and community-making that constitute us as a people.

Residing in the expressions of turtles in Anishinaabeg territories in 1764, the 1971 murals Odjig gifted to Manitoba, and the 1991 article “Is That All There Is?” by Johnston, these gifts of thought encourage us to think of our stories as vessels of life. Like Mikinaak bagijiganan of the past and present, these are very complex gifts, resulting in many unexpected outcomes – and journeys that have perhaps never been fully understood. But the act of imagining the importance of dynamic acts of story- and relationship-making amongst ourselves and with others is therefore what maintains us, re-creates us, and, ultimately, what defines us as Anishinaabeg.

Niswi: Maang Doodemag Bagijiganan

Story remains the heartbeat of Indian community. ... The accounts may have morals, suggesting an appropriate action or relationship, or they may simply allude to the general or specific mystery of life, but they always reinforce our connections. By centering us in a network of relationships, stories assure the survival of our spirits. Stories keep us migrating home. (2)

- *Stories Migrating Home: A Collection of Anishinaabe Prose*
Kimberly Blaeser (White Earth Anishinaabe)

Home Calls

In his 2011 collection *One Story, One Song*, Wabaseemoong Anishinaabeg writer Richard Wagamese published “The Loon’s Necklace.” In the piece, Wagamese reflects upon “the great bird known as Mong in Ojibway” and its “piercing and strong” call, so powerful “that in the Ojibway clan system, the Loon Clan carries the responsibility for chieftainship.” According to traditional people he knows, “the loon is also a symbol of communication and of family. When you see a female loon on the water in the spring and early summer, with her babies on her back as she swims, you can easily see why” (112). Wagamese then tells two stories, both of which encapsulate expressions about Anishinaabeg culture and life as embodied by the loon.

The first story is an aadizookaan about an old, blind and helpless man who “could no longer hunt or fish or take care of his family” and a loon who befriends and helps him. Finding the man crying on a shoreline, the bird tells him to grasp her wings as she dives several times to the “deepest part of the lake, where the water is purest.” After several dives, the man regains his sight and, overjoyed, places his “most prized possession” around the neck of the bird – a “necklace of sacred white shells.” The loon’s “pure black” feathers suddenly became sprinkled with white on every spot the shells touched. As Wagamese writes: “Through her compassion for the old man, the loon got the white necklace and the white pattern on her back we see today” (113).

The second story is a dibaajimown from the personal life of Wagamese, “after I had reconnected with my Native family” (113). Standing “in the darkness one evening on a northern beach with my uncle Archie . . . a bushman all his life,” Wagamese writes:

It was midsummer, and the sky was clear, filled with a million stars. As we watched the meteors, Arch told me how the constellations were named for the animals the Ojibway saw on their journeys. Then we heard a loon call. The sound wobbled out of the darkness and died out in echoes across the water. After a long silence, the call came again.

My uncle cupped his hands and blew into them. I’d never heard anyone do a pitch perfect loon call before, and in a few seconds the loon responded from across the water. Arch cupped his hands again and blew another series of trills and dips. Again, the loon responded.

As they called back and forth, the loon drew closer to us. We could hear the bird approaching. I waited to see if my uncle would call the loon right to the beach, but he stopped suddenly and put hands in his pockets. There was silence then, as thick as the night. I imagined the loon swimming away in the darkness. I could see the outline of my uncle, his face tilted up towards the sky.

When I asked him why he’d stopped calling, he took his time answering. He sat down on the beach, and I sat down beside him. When he spoke again, his voice was hushed. “The loon calls to remind us that everything is alive,” he said. “A loon’s call reminds us to look outside ourselves, at the air, the land, the water, and brings us back to the natural order of things. There’s no need to see the teacher. We only need to feel the teaching.” (113-14)

Wagamese ends by remarking that the loon teaches us to “pay attention” and “be open” to the messages in the world (114).

This is not the first time Wagamese refers to Maang in his work. Loons are heard and described throughout his 1994 award-winning first novel *Keeper ‘N Me* (11, 85, 104, 106) and his 2009 memoir *One Native Life* (2, 41, 192, 216, 254). They also figure prominently in his 2011 book of poetry *Runaway Dreams*, particularly in “The Canada Poem.” In virtually each and every use, loons foreshadow, remind, or illustrate to Wagamese and his Anishinaabeg characters the importance and intricacies of community, family, and Anishinaabe identity. They are a symbol of what connects him to his home territory in Ontario (and what continues to remind him of it from his home in British Columbia). As he narrates in a December 2008 column describing the powers

individual birds received from the Creator: “The Loon became the teacher of love and good relationships” (“More than ever”). Loons are a career-long metaphor and trope he uses to express respect and appreciation for his Anishinaabeg life. For Wagamese, Maang is a bagijigan.

Considering the life experience of Wagamese, it is little surprise that he takes such interest in what Maang offers. Born in 1955 near Minaki, Ontario, Wagamese was removed from his birth family as a toddler by Children’s Aid and became a ward of the child welfare system, experiencing feelings of isolation and alienation from his culture, community, and traditions. As he bravely recounts in his 2002 autobiography *for Joshua: An Ojibway Father Teaches His Son*, these feelings led to a road that included alcoholism, life on the streets, and the breakdown of relationships (and particularly with his son, Joshua). Eventually adopted by a loving non-Aboriginal family in southern Ontario, in his twenties he began a path that led him back to his birth family, community, and cultural traditions – a journey encapsulated throughout his writing. In many ways the journey of Wagamese mirrors that of Garnet Raven in *Keeper ‘N Me*, the story’s protagonist who returns to his reserve after a lifetime away and learns from an elder named Keeper how to become “a good human being . . . a good Indyun . . . a good Anishanabe” (213). While they are obviously not the same, certain similarities are too much to ignore and illustrate a method of self-reflection the author uses. Evidenced in pieces like “The Loon’s Necklace,” Maang represent a significant part of a personal journey into becoming an Anishinaabe-inini – a narrative path into Wagamese himself.

In most incarnations of Nindoodemag, Maang is one of two totemic beings representing leadership – the other being Ajijaak (“Crane”). This is embodied in their behaviours, actions, and life cycles, the forces that create connective strands of enawendiwin and a circle of waawiyayaag. This chapter suggests that Anishinaabeg narratives are Maang bagijiganan, offerings that forge and define bonds of Anishinaabeg community, constituting an autonomous and self-determining

network of people. Using the work of Wagamese as starting point, I will first show how he gestures to towards lines of enawendiwin by encouraging us to “look outside of ourselves,” forging a waawiyaag embodying many of the responsibilities, connections, and interdependence within Anishinaabeg community. Suggesting that Anishinaabeg community operates through an intricate system of nindinawemaganidog, I suggest that Wagamese offers a Maang Bagijigan that enacts and embodies autonomous Anishinaabeg traditions, histories, and cultural practices. I will then examine closely two other examples that show how other Anishinaabeg narratives are markings that represent the variation, beauty, and power in Anishinaabeg community: the aadizookaanag of the coming of the Miigis shell to Anishinaabeg and work from nineteenth-century Anishinaabeg non-fiction writer and missionary Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonabay).

As readers will also notice, this chapter is also structured differently than the previous one and in reverse chronological order. While Maang bagijiganan, like Mikinaak bajiganan, are always historically and spatially entryways immersed in political moments, I argue that they function more like a multidirectional conversation across a spectrum of time and space. Like Maang, they migrate and return, provoking dialogue and debate about the formations of nindinawemaganidog. In other words, this chapter in particular suggests a sense of Anishinaabeg community that is not progressivist – a single trail – but compound and interconnected – an active site full of paths that are well-worn, lead to ones less-travelled, and return to one another. Anishinaabeg is, as I have said several times now, a verb, a noun, and a word that travels in multiple directions. I think of Maang bagijigan as articulating the processes of nindinawemaganidog as much like the waterways loons inhabit: fluid homes filled with sound and movement from the stewards who leave and return as the seasons change.

Migrating Communities

Few animals are better known to Anishinaabeg than maangwag, loons. Five species inhabit North America: the *Arctic Loon*, the *Pacific Loon*, the *Yellow-Billed Loon*, the *Red-Throated Loon*, and the *Common Loon*. They emerge, according to ornithologists Edward S. Brinkley and Alec Humann in *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behaviour*, “from one of the more ancient bird lineages, fossil evidence of loon-like birds dates back well over 70 million years to the late Cretaceous period. . . . This means that loons survived the great upheavals in Earth’s atmosphere that took place [during mass extinction of the dinosaurs]” (123). While all loons certainly share collective traits, the story Wagamese tells in its northwestern Ontario context refers to the Common Loon (*Gavia immer*, or the *Great Northern Loon* or *Great Northern Diver*), which he has also seen outside his current home in Kamloops, British Columbia. Like Mikinaak, Common Loons are known well by most Anishinaabeg, inhabiting waterways and lakes close to communities throughout the Great Lakes. In fact, the spring and summer regions inhabited by the Common Loon could be considered a map of most of the lands Anishinaabeg inhabit and have inhabited (Figure 10).



Figure 10: the seasonal habitations of the Common Loon, from the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute (“Common Loon”)

Known for her loud and beautiful calls, brilliant red eyes, beautiful white and black feathers, and ability to dive to great depths, loons are remarkable and unforgettable birds. While sometimes mistaken for “certain grebes, or even small geese” Brinkley and Humann remark, “the combination of a dagger-like bill, short neck, long wings, and legs set far back on the body give them a distinctive shape” (123). The Common Loon in particular is so well known she has been named the state bird of Minnesota, the provincial bird of Ontario, and is featured on the Canadian one-dollar coin (the commonly-known “loonie”). Referring to the way she waddles on land, the English name emerges out of the old term *lumme*, meaning “lummox” or “awkward person” while the Anishinaabemowin root verb *maan-*, meaning “moving strangely” (such as in *maana’amii* - “has bad footing while walking”) (Ningewance 260). Still, while “[m]uch has been learned about this loon through research,” scientists Judith McIntyre and Jack F. Barr write, much remains a mystery, including it is “molt sequence,” “breeding,” “wintering ecology,” and “movements of young before their initial return to the breeding grounds” (1-2).

Story remains one of the best ways to understand loons. Even McIntyre and Barr begin their study by stating that “the Common Loon is surrounded by an aura of myth and magic... [a]mong a wealth of Native American tales” (1). Anishinaabeg are no different, we have many stories about Maang. A popular aadizookaanag, often called “Naanaboozhoo and the Dancing Ducks,” involves Naanaboozhoo who, hungry as usual, tricks geese and other birds by inviting them to dance in his wigwam with their eyes closed – while he breaks their necks. Maang, sensing danger, opens her eyes and warns everyone to escape. For this treachery, Naanaboozhoo kicks Maang and breaks her back – and this explains why she has waddled ever since. There are other stories. In *Honour Earth Mother: Mino-Audjoudauh Mizzu-kummik-Quae*, Basil Johnston tells three: how the loon participated in the creation of the first Little Boy Waterdrum ceremony for Midéwiwin (becoming

the echo in its sound and a model for its drumming stick); how the loon became an “avenger”; and, how the loon today searches for the departed “Nana’b’oozoo” and – if found – will “invite him to return, if not to the people, then at least to the world of loons” (*Honour Earth Mother* 83-86).

Nishnawbe author Jan Bourdeau Waboose begins her story *Where Only the Elders Go* by having a boy hear a loon call – a sound that reminds him of his grandfather, his life, and his ancestors.

Visual artist Norval Morrisseau made countless beautiful paintings of loons, many depicted in pairs, carrying babies on their back, and/or using calls that emanate waves of turbulence. As a catalogue at the Maslak McLeod Gallery in Toronto remarks: “Morrisseau sees the loon as a symbol of control, family and dedication” (12). This echoes stories other Anishinaabeg tell about loons, often referring to its necklace, relationship with water, and the power of its call.

The Maang constellation, an ancient part of the Anishinaabeg star system, is critically important to draw attention to here. Johann Kohl, for instance, had it pointed out to him in the mid-nineteenth century (119). In most stories, this constellation refers to a loon who loses a mate (or sometimes Naanabozho) and spends a lifetime searching the world and the sky, finally ending up in the stars. Always looking and calling for her partner, the resting place of Maang is a fixture in the sky. As Wikwemoikong scholar Michael Wassegijig Price writes in his 2002 article “Anishinaabe Star Knowledge”:

Polaris, or the North Star, is known as “Giwedin'anung—Star of the North.” “Giwedin'anung” was used in determining the four cardinal directions as well as navigating through the Great Lakes region at night. “Giwedin'anung” is part of the constellation known as “Maang, The Loon.” The Loon constellation comprises the stars of the Little Dipper. “Giwedin'anung” is located at the tip of the tail feathers of the Loon constellation. (53)

Giwedin'anung, of course, is the most stable star in the northern hemisphere and the most important marker a traveler needs to pinpoint where she is going and how to return home. Without it, any journey can go awry.

I would suggest that “The Loon’s Necklace” refers to all of these stories in various ways but is distinctly about the abilities of loon calls to forge and establish community. This begins in the ability of loon calls to inspire visions of home, community, and kin. I argue that loons provide sites where visions find voice in the physical world. As shown with Mikinaak Bagijigan, Anishinaabeg require a creative and critical venue for language and narrative to find, create, and ascertain meaning. Markings of Maang do this but they take it a step further, enacting this bagijiganan to form relationships that create, build, and protect community. Unlike gifts of turtle, which suggest visions and dreams of possibility within relationships, loon offerings embody the processes necessary to bring these relationships into being in and amongst Anishinaabeg, creating a sense of family, community, and nationhood.

Echoing this, Wagamese places “The Loon’s Necklace” in the section entitled “Introspection” in *One Story, One Song*. He writes that this section is “a place of vision . . . a resting place where the story, the song each of us has created up to this moment can be inspected” and decisions can be made to “bring us to balance” (107). The story of the loon facilitates this decision. It suggests that family, kin, and community are where this “balance” can be ascertained. “The Loon’s Necklace” shows how calls inspire Wagamese to form intimate relationships of community – with family, people, and other beings (like spirits, water, and non-Anishinaabeg) – forging a network made up of shared experience and collective responsibility. By doing this Wagamese also, in turn, guides the reader down this path and – like a good tour guide – shows how Anishinaabeg community operates. The call of the loon, I argue, is the sign of a migratory journey from Anishinaabe self to Anishinaabeg community, where spaces of kinship are formed and re-formed as narrative paths are visited, traveled, and returned to.

The question, for anyone who has taken the time to listen to loons, is which call might Wagamese be referencing on that night with his Uncle Archie? There are many loon calls, varying in range and purpose and are sometimes even distinctive to individual birds. There are also calls chicks make when they are still in an egg, McIntyre and Barr point out, resembling a “peep-peep-peep” that becomes a “yelp” during hatching (6-7). Later, during adulthood maangwag have four basic calls: i) a *hoot* – a brief call that sounds like “hoo” and is used to keep in contact with mates, chicks, and social groups; ii) a *tremolo* – a 8-10 note quick succession call used to indicate alarm, disturbance, or can sometimes be just a greeting; iii) a *wail* – a slow, long call heard for many miles and indicates “a willingness to interact” with a mate or another loon; and, iv) a *yodel* – a long, varied call by males often used to indicate territory, warn those who have entered nesting areas and is sometimes called the “loon’s song” (McIntyre and Barr 7-8).

As is obvious, loons have codes in their calls, using them to communicate specific information to one another. This is most evident during mating seasons, when loons use wails to call one another for copulation, or nesting seasons, when tremelos are used to protect nests, chicks and territories. McIntyre and Barr point out that mothers use hoots to encourage chicks “while hatching or when about to enter water” and parents use a wail to “retrieve chicks from hiding sites and to signal food delivery” (8). A recent Cornell and Chapman University research study discovered an interesting communicative code amongst males too: “When an intruding male flies over a lake, he sends out a wavering, tremolo call, and the resident male replies with a yodel. The code of the yodel, within its pitch indicates the weight and size of the resident and enables an intruder to determine the odds of winning a fight before he lands” (“Behaviorists”). The study also found that females communicated similarly.

Considering he refers to the call in “The Loon’s Necklace” as “haunting and wild, an ancient trill that is part honour song and part warning” (112), it is likely that Wagamese is referring to a wail. This is in the communicative vein Uncle Archie is interested in, but the description by Wagamese is a bit confusing – it is more likely a yodel or tremelo would be used by a loon as a “warning.” Or, perhaps he means something else, a point I will return to in a moment.

What is most interesting is how Maang behaviors and physiology mirror the work of her calls. From birth to death, loons spend their entire lives creating, protecting, and establishing community. These actions are embodied in their hoot, tremolo, wail, and yodel – which they use to greet one another, find a mate, protect their families and territories, and keep in contact with one another. Maang most often mate for life although, if one loses a mate, will often find another.³⁰ McIntyre and Barr point out that loons “defend territory for all activities,” living in pairs and families on bodies of water that they spend a lifetime protecting and returning to every migratory season (or, if a large body of water, a few pairs with stringently-recognized boundaries) (11). They also share parenting. In nesting sites chosen by the male but made cooperatively by the mated couple, loons share equal time protecting and incubating the eggs. They also cooperate raising them, with the female often carrying baby chicks on her back and the father taking over the majority of the rearing to adulthood. If calls do not work in scaring off animals who enter and threaten their territories and chicks, they have been known to use their bill to kill (Brinkley and Humann 125). The red eyes of Maaang also further the work of her calls. Acting as both a visual warning to other birds and a means of attraction, they are at their brightest during mating, birthing, and chick rearing seasons. As well, they filter underwater light. This makes hunting possible at any time and at great depths for fish, frogs, crayfish, mussels, leeches and aquatic insects.

Interestingly, migration time is when the territorial nature of loons virtually disappears, their red eyes dim to dark brown, and large gatherings congregate on lakes, attracted by hoots and tremolos (Mcintyre and Barr 4-5). Forging communities of travelers ranging “from a few individuals to hundreds,” loons travel together to coastal winter spaces but “the routes are still poorly known (Brinkley and Humann 126). Flying collectively to cut down on wind drag and protect one another, they use calls of tremolo mid-air to maintain connectivity and travel up to speeds of 75 miles (or 120 kilometres) per hour (“Common Loon – Migration”). Young loons, on their first migration, will most often remain in the south on coastal waters for one or two seasons before waiting for the collective to arrive and migrate northwards (Mcintyre and Barr 4-5). Barring a foreign intrusion or the loss of a mate, these young loons will find a partner and then stake a claim in a waterway, returning to the same territories until their death – continuing a long life cycle of family- and community-making.

Reflecting back upon “The Loon’s Necklace,” the loon call Wagamese hears inspires him to remember the story of how the blind man is healed by the abilities of the loon to swim the deepest depths of the water. As I refer to it earlier in this project, water – particularly for Nindoodemag relatives – is not only an ecological, physical substance in Anishinaabeg narrative traditions but also a metaphorical one. The path Maang takes the blind man on is similar to the journey she takes a listener to her call, into the metaphysical depths “where the water is purest.” In other words, water is a place of change, healing, and sight – it is a place where thought is enacted. For the blind man this call of the loon is a mark – a bagijigan that opens a pathway to sight and action. It is also this for Wagamese. As Uncle Archie explains, hearing a loon call opens a path to choice, to introspection, and to learn to “pay attention” and “be open” to understand “the natural order of things.” Like the blind man, Wagamese has received an opportunity from the loon to receive the

gift of vision – the ability to look with new eyes at himself, his people, and his relations – and “take care of them.” Taking us on a path begun by the loon call, readers are now marked with a pathway to community.

What I have not mentioned yet are the parts of loons that Wagamese directly refers to: the “necklace of sacred white shells” the blind man gives the loon as a gift. Encircling her throat, these are what facilitate calls of Maang and their bagijiganan. These shells encompass her vocal acts of creating, protecting, and establishing community and are symbolically what Anishinaabeg refer to as Miigis – one of the most important expressions in all of Anishinaabeg history, culture, and tradition. There are many stories on how Miigis come to be around the necks of loons. It is a story of how the Miigis came to Anishinaabeg and is the best example of Maang Bagijiganan for it tells how Anishinaabeg have come to be, who they are, and where they are headed.

Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin

The story of the Miigis is an aadizokaanag, often called the “Great Anishinaabeg Migration.” Many call it *Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin*, “The Seven Fires Prophecy,” or simply *Niizhwaaswi Ishkoden*, “The Seven Fires.” This collection of stories combines into one grand narrative, explaining how Anishinaabeg came to settle in and around the Great Lakes. It is a multiply-derived, rich, and wide-ranging story covering a journey of over a thousand years and can be found on birch bark scrolls, in oral tradition, and on rock, paper, and earth – such as in markings of Nindoodemag. It is embodied elsewhere: in a petroglyph in Sanilac County in Michigan or in the Seven Fires Prophecy Wampum Belt held by Algonquin elder William Commanda (Ojigkwanong) of the Kitigan Zibi First Nation. Many Anishinaabeg writers and scholars have cited versions of this story too, from William Warren to Basil Johnston to Ignatia

Broker to Edward Benton-Benai to Gerald Vizenor to Gail Guthrie Valaskakis to Winona LaDuke to Cary Miller.³¹ The Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin resides in narratives like Naanaboozho and the Dancing Ducks, in *Honour Earth Mother: Mino-Audjaudauh Mizzu-kummik-Quae* by Johnston, *Where Only the Elders Go* by Waboose, and in the many loon paintings Morrisseau created. It also resides in the Maang constellation, an image in the sky Anishinaabeg use to find home. This is a narrative that comes up again and again, in similar embodiments.

The story of Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin begins sometime between 600-700 AD, when ancestors of Anishinaabeg resided on the shores of what is now the Atlantic Ocean, in a political and social alliance often called the Waabinaakii (“Day Break People”) Confederacy. While there, seven prophets appeared to the Anishinaabeg, each telling of a period of time – an *Ishkode* (“Fire”). These beings pronounced to the people that they must move, as a light-skinned people were coming from across the *Gizhegami* (“Great Salt Water”) along with many challenges that would threaten and change them – and perhaps even result in their destruction. They were informed that they would be guided by a vision of a great shell, the Miigis, a bagijigan that would lead them to a place where “food grows on water.” Some storytellers remark that prophets also told Anishinaabeg that they would establish the spiritual and intellectual institution of the Midéwiwin Lodge, a society based on medicines and teachings of mino-bimaadiziwin, “the good life.” William Warren even writes that he was told that the “megis . . . means the Me-da-we religion” (79). While easy to make this connection, storytellers vary on this point. Some do not make this direct correlation while others remark that Midéwiwin existed well before this time. Regardless, for many Anishinaabeg, the connection between Midéwiwin and Miigis are very close.

Most versions of Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin blur the line between narrative and history, combining what Anishinaabeg were told by each prophet and what eventually

happened. This obviously includes past events but also encompasses the present and future of Anishinaabeg. The two descriptions – of prophecy and action – are, for the most part, the same story. The first prophet pronounced that the Miigis would arise from the Gizhegami and the Bezhigh Ishkode would begin. The Anishinaabeg would travel west, meet many new enemies and dangers, and light a Sacred Fire on an island shaped like a turtle shell and form a mutual alliance together based on faith, protection, and diversity. As Gerald Vizenor states in *Summer in the Spring*: “The sacred Miigis shell of the anishinaabeg tribal spiritual world arose from the eastern sea and moved with the seasons through the inland waters, guiding the anishinaabeg” (8). This journey was not easy. Anishinaabeg warred with the Naadawe (Haudenosaunee) as they entered their territories. They also struggled with direction, until a woman dreamed of a turtle-shaped island and led them to one near what is now Montréal.³² Here, they would begin to understand the spiritual and political significance of their journey.

The second prophet declared that Niizh Ishkode would emerge when Anishinaabeg moved and lived by a great and powerful force of water. Here, they would lose their way, strength, and ability to see the Miigis and continue their path. When hope would start to wane, a little boy would be born who would remind the people of their traditional ways, help them build a Midéwiwin lodge, and direct them to their future.³³ The vision of the Miigis would emerge again. This came to be true when the Anishinaabeg moved to Animikii Waboo or Gizhe’gabekong (“Niagara Falls”) and warred with Naadawe until a peace was forged. As Benton-Benai describes, a great Wampum Belt was gifted to Anishinaabeg, “[t]he O-pwa’-gun (Pipe) was shared,” and a long-standing peace was ensured (98). This agreement continues to this day.

The third prophet said that the Anishinaabeg would follow the Miigis again until arriving at a place “where two great bodies are connected by a thin, narrow river . . . a deep and fast ribbon of

water that slices through land like a knife” (*Diba Jimooyung* 5). This would become known as Detroit River, and this place would be the first steps towards the end of their collective journey. Here, the Anishinaabeg remained for a long time and traded, joined, and united politically and socially with others in the region, including the Shawnee, Miami, and the Wiaandoke or Wyandots (Huron). A series of northern islands were discovered that led across what is now Lake Huron, one of them being “Bakejiwang Ziibi (River Flowing Off) . . . Walpole Island” (*Diba Jimooyung* 5). Anishinaabeg spread throughout these territories and began to split geographically into different yet related villages. At the same time, Benton-Benai identifies, “three groups began to emerge” who “took upon themselves certain tasks necessary for the survival of the people”:

The group called the Ish-ko-day’-wa-tomi (fire people) were charged with the safekeeping of the Sacred Fire. As the people moved on the migration, this group guarded the coals of the Sacred Fire as it was carried along. These people were later called the O-day’-wa-tomi, and, still later, the Potawatomi.

The group called the O-daw-wahg’ (trader people) were responsible for providing food, goods, and supplies to all the nation. They took charge of the major hunting and trading expeditions. These people were later called the Ottawa.

The people that retained the name Ojibway were the faith keepers of the nation. They were entrusted with the keeping of the sacred scrolls and Waterdrum of the Midéwiwin. These people were later mistakenly referred to as the Chippewa. (98)

In this “Confederacy of the Three Fires,” all were family: the Ojibwe were the “Older Brother,” the Odawa the “Middle Brother,” and the Potawatomi the “Younger Brother.” Potawatomi elder Shup-Shewana dates the formation of this event to approximately 796 AD at Michilimackinac (“Aaniipiish Aayaayang”).

The time of the Niiwin Ishkode was described by “two prophets [who] came as one” (Benton-Benai 89). They told of a meeting with a light-skinned race bearing two faces, one of *niikonisiwin* (“brotherhood”) and the other of *niboowin* (“death”) (*Diba Jimooyung* 6). If arriving with *niikonisiwin*, this would herald a time of growth and equality – with Anishinaabeg joining with them to become a powerful and united nation. If with *niboowin* though – which resembled

niikonisiwin – it would bring greed, destruction, and struggle. Beginning likely in the early 1600s with Samuel Champlain (or one of his employees) encountering Anishinaabeg on the eastern shores of *Manidowi-zaaga`igan* or *Waasaagamaa* (Georgian Bay), European newcomers arrived with both faces and a tumultuous relationship. Niiwin Ishokde was also a time when Anishinaabeg settled on Manitoulin Island, a home that would offer much prosperity, and protection in the future (Benton-Benai 89-90).

Naanan Ishkode, declared the fifth prophet, would be a time of change but also a time of continued struggle. Anishinaabeg would be presented with a choice to continue their traditional ways or give them up and adopt the ways of the newcomers. For some, this appeared as a worthwhile decision but for more it turned out to be an illusion. Many would suffer and perish.³⁴ This became true, as *makadeikonayag* (“missionaries”) visited and began to live amongst Anishinaabeg, promising great prosperity if they converted and rejected old pathways and “superstitions.” European forces with never-ending demands for land and resources and their militaries signed treaties but neglected the responsibilities they entailed. At the same time, Anishinaabeg settled in an area rich in resources called Baawaating (Sault Ste. Marie), one of the most critically important spaces where Anishinaabeg culture and community was fostered from then and into today. A large part of this included the erection and fortification of a Midéwiwin Lodge, which was rebuilt and re-established in this place.

The events of the Sixth Fire, remarked the next prophet, would be a time of ultimate struggle, sickness, and death, a time when it would be extremely difficult to see the Miigis and the future of the Anishinaabeg would come into question.³⁵ This is a time well-documented. Anishinaabeg ceremonies were banned and declared “illegal.” Many medicines proved incapable of handling new disease. Treaty agreements between Anishinaabeg and colonial forces were

exploited and ignored. Communities moved to land “reserves” set aside for them, experiencing tremendous stress on their governance structures and land claims. Indigenous children were removed from homes and places in an education system that sought assimilation. This was a dark time. At the same time, Anishinaabeg took action as many protected, preserved, and hid Anishinaabeg ceremonies and traditions, teaching them secretly. By now, as Scott Lyons writes, the Anishinaabeg split “into two parties taking different paths around Lake Superior – one to the north, the other traveling south, both groups leaving a record of impressive rock paintings” (3-4). Wars with the Bahwin (Dakota) were fought. At this time, manoomin (wild rice) – the prophecized “food that grows on water” was also discovered near Spirit Island (what is now Duluth, Minnesota) – resulting in the original prophecy of the migration being fulfilled.

The seventh prophet, who had glowing eyes, declared that Niizhwaaso Ishkode would be a time both of destruction and possibility. While many would perish during this time, the final stopping place would be found. By this time, the Earth would be poisoned. The vision of the Miigis would be almost gone, and all life would be in peril. Then, a people called the Oshki Anishinaabeg (the “New Anishinaabeg”) would emerge, Anishinaabeg who would desire to know who they are, where they have come from, and what they have inherited. Many would try to heal the earth and re-learn stories, histories, and traditional ways, re-creating themselves through the Midéwiwin and other venues. The Light-skinned people, at this time, would be given another choice: to revisit the possibilities of the Fourth Fire and fully extend the hand of niikonisiwin, or not. If so, the Eighth Fire and a “powerful and united nation” would begin. If not, the light-skinned people, and those who they had convinced to join them, would destroy themselves and perhaps everyone else too.

Elders and storytellers claim that this is the time of today. After finding Madeline Island, the final stopping place and a place of protection for Anishinaabeg, a long journey of struggle has

gripped most Anishinaabeg. Much pollution infects our environment, many beings have died and become extinct, and armed global conflicts are a regular occurrence. Struggles with the “light-skinned race” and faces of niboowin endure, but an increasing number wear faces of niikonisiwin. At the same time, Oshki Anishinaabeg have also emerged. These Anishinaabeg are, as Gerald Vizenor describes them in *The Everlasting Sky: New Voices from the People Named the Chippewa*, the “young and old, angry and affectionate, committed and selfish . . . real people” who are making choices to live life with complexity but who “share the secrets of the heart from the tribal past” (xiv-xv). They also face many choices. As Winona LaDuke remarks that now is the time of choice between “two paths,” the first an unsustainable, consuming, and self-destructive one and the second a physically-, culturally-, and life-sustaining one (*All our Relations* 198). Today, Oshki Anishinaabeg exist in communities over five states, five provinces, and in territories that cover approximately 1500 square miles. By some estimates there are over a quarter of a million Anishinaabeg citizens living today (Roseau River Chapter 12). These communities and individuals are constantly struggling for life and autonomy in areas divided by settler governments and under near-constant scrutiny. But, as LaDuke points out, there remain paths to choose.

Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin embodies the calls of the loons. It is a narrative of community creation, building, and protection – a story that articulates and fosters a collective sense of Anishinaabe. It is an autonomous narrative, describing the pre-contact and post-contact existence of Anishinaabeg on a self-determined trajectory. It describes who the Anishinaabeg are, where they have come from, where they are going. It also echoes the definition I described in the Introduction, of a collective of Anishinaabeg communities that maintain connections with one another despite great geographical distance and time.

Most versions of Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin blur the line between narrative and history, combining what Anishinaabeg were told by each prophet and what eventually happened. This repeats a pattern we witnessed in “The Loon’s Necklace”: of the journey of a Maang bagijigan being a site of vision. This narrative is not only intended to inspire thought but sight and action, change. It is a politically and socially unifying narrative, illustrating how Anishinaabeg have protected themselves from invasions, assaults, and wars they have experienced. The story demonstrates a unique, dynamic, and complex peoples who have endured difficulties and struggles yet carry tremendous powers of resilience and relationships with one another. Most of all, it is also a story unfinished – a narrative that makes room for Anishinaabeg, our children, and a future full of relations. Now taken up by Oshki Anishinaabeg, the migration continues.

Lyons argues that the Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin shows that the Anishinaabeg were “a people on the move,” envisioning life and existence as a “journey” not a finality. He suggests that it demonstrates three things:

it produces *difference*: new communities, new peoples, new ways of living, new sacred foods, new stories, and new ceremonies. The old never dies; it just gets supplemented by the new, and one result is diversity... Yet the Great Migration also speaks of home. There was always a destination in view, oh yes, but the wondrous thing is, it kept changing! One moment the Great Migration had come to an end; the next moment people were telling stories about the last two, three, four stopping points they encountered. Home is a stopping point, for there is no sense in the migration story that there will be only one home for only one people forever, , , , Finally, migration tends to privilege the small . . . a shell, a food that grows on water, the dreams . . . The Great Migration not only included these things but followed them as guiding visions (4-5 original emphasis)

Lyons names “diversity, home, stopping points, and the power of the small” as “the lessons of the Great Migration insofar as it reveals something we might call the ‘spirit of a people’” (5). Lyons is right that the Miigis embodies the small, but it also embodies the big; the Creation of a people, their migration, and emergence into a contemporary Anishinaabeg community with local,

nationalistic, and global ties. It is a spiritual and historical narrative for political and social purposes. The story constitutes a people and how individuals can see themselves as part of a whole. Different incarnations of the story therefore embody inter-related and subjective elements. For instance, Anishinaabeg in 1671 in Bawaating might have a much different version that emphasizes more the significance of Naanan Ishkode. Or, those in Québec might focus more on the Niizh Ishkode and the earlier parts of the story. Benton-Benai, writing in 1988 in a politicized Minneapolis, emphasizes the Niizhwaaso Ishkode while Lyons, from a much more distanced view in New York (teaching at Syracuse at the time), talks about the journey from a fairly detached perspective (even naming it “The Great Migration”). These versions would be distinctly different than myself writing the Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin in Manitoba in 2012 and making a case for Nindoodemag Bagijiganan in Anishinaabeg narrative. They are specific and discernable but also incomplete – gesturing to a journey while also a future path.

If we listen to stories like “The Loon’s Necklace,” this path is available to us today – via the necks of loons. Considering this, it is not surprising that the sound emerging from a necklace of Miigis shells is one made in the interests of protecting, forming, and re-creating parts and cycles of community. Emerging from this call, Anishinaabeg gain a sense of sight that a path to take action and form their community through imagination and narrative. It inspires a sense of community requiring constant re-visitation and a dynamic sense of Anishinaabeg nationhood: a community made up of multiple sounds, responses, and actions.

I said earlier that Wagamese is a bit ambiguous in specifying which call Maang makes in “The Loon’s Necklace.” He may be referencing a wail, a tremolo, or another. I believe this is intentional and he may just be describing all of them at once. I argue that Wagamese may be making a statement on how loon calls echo the multiple stories available in the Niizhwaaso-

ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin and the many layers of thought and action that constitute Anishinaabeg. Maang calls, I posit, show us how important it is to look inside stories – and oneself – to understand all of the strands that make up a collective history, experience, and the dynamic relationships that constitute a people. Like looking into the night sky at the constellation of Maang – which moves in synchronicity with the Earth, stars, and ourselves – we can see an image of an autonomous, connected, and fluid home. Homes, no matter how long in a place or time, are always mobile, requiring thought and action to remain sustainable. Anishinaabeg, migrating on a journey across space and time, know this, and these principles are found in the Maang Bagijigan of the Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin. Calls of Maang facilitate the relationships Anishinaabeg both carry and can carry and the specific strands that define us as a community.

Admittedly, it is somewhat easy to find Maang Bagijigan in all of these different narratives thus far. Calls of the loon however are found in the unlikeliest of places too. They are not only found on necks, constellations, and shells but in calls that forged Anishinaabeg community through controversy and complexity. This brings us Anishinaabe missionary Peter Jones, Kahkewaquonabay, a determined voice of resilience, reflection, and reality during one of the most difficult times in Anishinaabeg history.

The Tragic Wisdom of Peter Jones, Kahkewaquonabay

Born in 1802, Peter Jones – also known as Kahkewaquonabay (“Sacred Waving Feathers”) – is a writer whose literary output is impressive, including dozens of political letters and documents, hundreds of translated hymns and biblical passages, and multiple recorded sermons, political speeches, and letters. His two best known published works, *The History of the Ojebway Indians with especial reference to their Conversion to Christianity* (1861), and *Life and Journals of Kah-ke-wa-quo-na-by (Rev. Peter Jones,) Wesleyan Missionary* (1860), were edited by his wife, Eliza, and published posthumously.³⁶ The corpus left to us by Jones is vast and his non-fiction English writings are some of the earliest by Indigenous hands in North American history.

Still, Jones’s contributions to Anishinaabe culture are somewhat controversial. Many cite Jones’s religious beliefs, politics, and authenticity, questioning his ability to speak as an Anishinaabe. Jace Weaver posits that there is a collective sentiment amongst critics that Jones represents the view of a “fully assimilated Christian Indian” (*That the People* 59). Illustrating this, Bernd Peyer dismisses him as the most “thoroughly converted” Anishinaabe writer among his contemporaries (“Non-fiction prose” 119), while Nicholas Deleary labels him pejoratively as “colored” (40). Gerald Vizenor accuses Jones of seldom cracking “a verbal smile in his literate memories and moralizations” and implies that his “black robe of religious conversion” results in his separation “from traditional tribal cultures in his narrative posture” (*The People Named the Chippewa* 72).³⁷ Much of this sentiment echoes scholarship that questions the legitimacy of work written by Christian Indigenous writers as a whole. As James Treat writes: “Conventional wisdom suggests that ‘native’ and ‘Christian’ are mutually exclusive identities: a native who has become a wholeheartedly Christian has lost some measure of native authenticity; a Christian who is still fully native has fallen short of Christian orthodoxy” (6).

Although many question the validity of Christian Indian authored narratives, scholars have uncovered these texts as reflective of Indigenous political interests and cultural traits. Work on Pequot writer William Apess in *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* by Jace Weaver comes quickly to mind, along with the way Robert Warrior studies Society of American Indian writers in *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions*. Indigenous writers – like Indigenous peoples – have used Christian discourses for their own needs and purposes – Anishinaabeg are no different. Simply put, they have agency. Several, including George Copway, Peter Jacobs, John Sunday, and of course Peter Jones, wrote and published widely about their experiences during colonial invasion, documenting exploitation and advocating for their communities. Many recorded important historical accounts from “insider” points of view as well as parts of Anishinaabe language, ceremonies, and songs. The work of William Warren is used by traditional and Midéwiwin ceremonialists in their work. Rebecca Kugel, in her study of Minnesota Anishinaabe political history, argues that narratives written by Anishinaabe Christians prove two essential points: that they were “at the center of their own history” and “conscious historical actors” who “thought and acted. They evaluated their options and developed political strategies. They took action in pursuit of their political goals” (2).

It is essential, of course, to recognize that Jones is influenced by Christianity. At the age of 21, he converted to Wesleyan Methodism and was a missionary for over thirty years of his life. It was a perspective that framed all of his work and, like any other writer, his faith and beliefs informed his perspective. But, at the same time, the dedication Jones showed to Anishinaabeg was unwavering. He deeply loved his relatives and community and – as I will show in a moment – this sentiment is embedded within his work. He was hardly perfect of course, but his deep commitment to Anishinaabeg in the face of complex circumstances is unquestionable.

This is perhaps most evident in his own recording of Anishinaabeg history, which – alongside his own life experiences – he spent most of his entire lifetime researching, documenting, and writing about. While scholars like Peyer argue that Jones does not acknowledge a “debt” to his oral “narrated history” (“Non-fiction prose” 119), nothing could be farther from the truth. *History of the Ojebway Indians*, for instance, includes dozens of direct quotes and stories from elders.³⁸ He records the Anishinaabe language in print, taking great effort to translate names, words and phrases phonetically and accurately (136, 161-2, 178-90, 208). He also mentions histories regarding wars, peace agreements, and treaties forged with Mohawks and Hurons that he could have only been exposed to if he had spent a great deal of time visiting and earning trust.

Where the critique from Peyer might gain some traction is in the vagueness Jones displays about certain segments of Anishinaabeg cultural history – and in particular of the story of the Miigis and Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin. For instance, while relaying stories told to him by the “aged sachems” of his people, Jones writes that “many, many winters ago, the Great Spirit, whom we call in Ojebway *keehe-munedoo*, or *Kezha-munedoo*, the Benevolent Spirit, created the Indians, and placed them on the continent of America” (*Ojebway* 31). He records that “every nation speaking a different language is a separate creation; but that all were made by the same Supreme Being. How they were created is not known” (31).³⁹ He even seems to be describing a migration journey that went the other way: “The different Tribes of the Ojebway nation who now inhabit the shores of Lakes Ontario, Erie, Simcoe, &c, have a tradition current amongst them, that they originally came from the great western lakes, Huron and Superior” (32).

But, while Jones is lacking in specificity and fact, he does the same work as the story of the Miigis and Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin by enacting the connective threads that forge an entire community of Anishinaabeg with local, nationalistic, and global ties. He is on one hand

very protectionist, declaring that Anishinaabeg must resist European intrusions into their lives. He spends much time recording how Anishinaabe communities have been under attack since settlers invaded their territory, writing that Europeans have “been an agent of Satan in the extermination of the original proprietors of the American soil!” and that much of the “corruption” of Anishinaabe life is attributable to their interactions with them (*Ojebway* 29). Just in *Ojebway* alone he lists western expansion (29, 123-30), “diseases introduced by whites” (141-2), and “evils introduced by white people” (165-175) amongst the many problems introduced. Like the story of the Miigis, Jones seems extremely interested in defining Anishinaabeg as self-determining actors best left forging a future through relationships within their community.

On the other hand, Jones is also an adamant advocate for cultural and political adaptation, incorporation, and change. He suggests that for Anishinaabeg to survive and grow, his relatives must bravely engage the new to enact dynamic, balanced lives. This is most easily seen when his writing specifically addresses Indigenous peoples. While often slanted towards a European-settler readership, Jones wrote often to a growing, future Indigenous and Anishinaabeg audience connected by the written English word. Jones knew that alphabetic writing would be a significant part of the future for Anishinaabeg. In fact, he had witnessed it.⁴⁰ As he records:

It makes the heart of the poor Indian rejoice to see his child read in a book: to see him put the talk to paper, and to see the talk go to a distance, that makes him rejoice. I will give you one instance. At the River Credit, we have a station. A chief had a son who was instructed in our mission school; after, he was employed as a teacher in another school, and went away more than a hundred miles from his father; after a time, he wrote a letter to his father in the Indian tongue, which he did not know how to read: the father brought it to me, to read it for him; and, while I read, the tears ran down his eyes, and he rejoiced to hear the talk of his son on the paper at a distance. (*Missionary Records* 412-3)

While the rhetorical context of this writing is worth mentioning (to raise money in England for Indigenous schools), it is equally important to say that Jones saw many benefits in Indians learning

European practices such as reading and writing in English. Among other things, it helped them trade more effectively and adjust to a changing economic climate (*Information Respecting the Aborigines* 36). They also could create texts in their own languages, as he has done (*Missionary Records* 412). Or, they could use English and writing to articulate, advocate for, and benefit themselves.⁴¹ One of the most frequent arguments in *Ojebway* is that Anishinaabeg are equal to Europeans and carry the “same capacity to learn as the white man” (191); an “eagerness” for an education (199-202); traits such as “eloquence, wit and shrewdness” (204-6); a great love of the British government and a hatred for Americans (217-18); and a desire to become Christian (223-32). To Jones, anything European can be appropriated for Indigenous political and cultural needs.

What is discomfiting for most scholars of Jones is this last point. It is in his position that Christian conversion is a primary part of this trajectory towards survival and that Anishinaabeg must turn away from traditional beliefs and adopt this way of worship. This is manifested in two ways: first, in his copious amounts of pejorative statements regarding Anishinaabeg traditional spiritual practice and culture and, second, in his celebration of a Christian existence. For example, Jones writes that Anishinaabe spirituality is “under the power and control of the evil spirit, who worketh in the heart of all pagan nations of the earth” (*Ojebway* 92). He also claims that Christianity will solve problems Anishinaabeg face and opens a gateway so that European values, practices and certain medicines can cure disease (142-3) and assist transition to farming (172). Christian conversion forms the basis for most arguments Jones offers on how Anishinaabeg can survive.

There are valid concerns regarding whether Jones is the advocate I suggest he is. I return however to this primary point: that regardless the pejorative statements regarding Anishinaabeg traditional spirituality, his ardent advocacy for Christian conversion, and belief that Indigenous

people must change with a changing world, Jones referred to himself, was recognized by, and viewed himself as a political, spiritual, and subjective Anishinaabe-inini. This position guided, influenced, and shaped his goal: to facilitate a space where Anishinaabeg could continue on their own terms and by forging their own self-determining relationships. Through two examples, I will show how Jones is deeply invested in the internal relationships of Anishinaabeg community. These are microcosms of the types of community-building practices he embodied in virtually everything he wrote, in his decisions, observations, and meetings with other Anishinaabeg. Jones, I argue, is one of the most fiercest and bravest advocates for Anishinaabeg community who have ever lived. He deserves a place amongst our greatest narrative voices.

“The red man is gone, and a strange people occupy his place”

In the opening pages of *History of the Ojebway Indians*, Jones defiantly announces that – no matter what anyone else believes: “I cannot suppose for a moment that the Supreme Disposer has decreed that the doom of the red man is to fall and gradually disappear, like the mighty wilderness, before the axe of the European settler” (29). Throughout his expansive body of work, he remains consistent with this very thesis, focusing his work on the changing nature of Anishinaabe tradition and what the Anishinaabe have to do, in his eyes, to survive. Lamenting the loss of Anishinaabe lives, cultural livelihoods, and freedoms – problems that manifested themselves in his own life – Jones defiantly resists the notion of Anishinaabe extinction and seeks to ensure the survival of Anishinaabe people by the best means he believes available.

It is crucial to understand that his interests in Anishinaabe survival is in response to cataclysmic historical events that threatened the future of his people. Jones was literally born into the Niiwin Ishkode, after British settlers and Mohawks had flooded into territories surrounding

him and his community. By the time of his birth in 1802, Mississauga territory had shrunk to a small area on the north-western side of Lake Ontario called “The Mississauga Tract,” a fraction of the region they once claimed as their traditional lands (Hayes 131).⁴² The Mississaugua community Jones called home, settling in the Credit River area of Burlington Bay, soon found themselves surrounded and their borderlands constantly violated (Schmalz 97).⁴³ With few choices, land cessions were forcibly “negotiated” with the British crown from 1805 to 1812, and the Mississauga Tract grew smaller and smaller as land was purchased from them for white settlement.⁴⁴ After the “Head of the Lake Purchase” of 1806, the Mississauga controlled lands “at the mouths of the Credit River, Sixteen Mile Creek and Twelve Mile Creek” (Surtees 62). By this time, the population of the Credit River Indians had fallen to approximately 350 people, down from 500 in 1788, with many more sick and dying (Smith 30). The Mississauga, Jones recalls, was “rapidly thinning their numbers” from “measles, small-pox, hooping-cough” (*Ojebway* 141). While in 1791 there were approximately 30,000 settlers in former Mississauga homelands (Hayes 126), by 1812 this number had swelled to 75,000 (Surtees 9). While there were countless Anishinaabeg resistances to these moves and impositions, this was a harsh and unforgiving world Anishinaabeg like Jones faced.

Among the settlers flooding into Mississaugua territories was a British land surveyor, Augustus Jones, who learned to speak Anishinaabemowin. Augustus “became much interested in the Indian character,” regularly visiting the Mississauga community at the River Credit, where he met Tuhbenahneequay, the daughter of Chief Wahbanosay, and married her (*Life* 1-2). A proud Anishinaabe-kwe, Tuhbenahneequay refused to convert to Christianity so Augustus found a woman who would, marrying a Christian Mohawk woman named Sarah Tekarihogen. Continuing to visit Tuhbenahneequay however, he bore two sons with her. Soon though, the social status of

Augustus became compromised so he disavowed Tuhbenahneequay and their children, only visiting them sporadically over the next fourteen years (Smith, *Sacred* 5-6).

The first son for Tuhbenahneequay, born in 1802, was “named Kahkewaquonabay... ‘sacred waving feathers’” and named by his grandfather, Chief Wahbanosay (*Life* 2, *Ojebway* 160). He would become known later as Peter Jones. Growing up, Jones was deeply immersed in Anishinaabe traditional life: “In my early days, as long as I can remember, I was taught to think according to all the customs and manners of my people” (*Sermon* 12). He writes that he was known as “a great hunter. I was also thought expert at using the canoe, and the spear, and frequently brought home a large supply of fish” (*Life* 3). This expertise finds its way into his writing, in his knowledge of where specific animals are located, how they taste, and where they can be “caught in great abundance,” all persuasive evidence of someone with extensive experience and respect for the land (*Ojebway* 40-1).⁴⁵ Being an exceptional hunter and fisherman was undoubtedly revered at this time as the land that both animal and Anishinaabeg relied on was constantly in flux. As a successful hunter, Jones suggests that he played a powerful and meaningful role in his community.

At the same time, Jones knew that hunting and fishing formed a part of “the uncertain mode of Indian life” (*Life* 4). He was not far off. These practices during the development of Upper Canada led to an inconsistent and unviable way of life as land disputes, technological advances, and expanding white settlement made animal resources unsustainable. Urbanization, technology and western expansion threatened nature by destroying forests, killing animals, and filling the land with pollution at an alarming rate. Simply put: an ecosystem was under attack, with little relief in sight. Jones was exposed to a world with deteriorating hunting conditions, one where game was scarce, expeditions more difficult, and sickness due to malnourishment more likely. Regardless of his abilities as a hunter or fisher, Jones knew that Anishinaabeg life had to change.

Anishinaabeg traditions had lost the ability to cope with European influence to Jones. Take the lack of a father in his formative years, for example. From his mother he not only learned Anishinaabeg culture and traditions and how “to gain the approbation of the Munedoos” but also “how to become a successful hunter” (*Life* 2). This must have also been somewhat anomalous in Anishinaabeg society, for a father, uncle, or another male figure would typically teach a young man these things, mentoring him into adulthood. Another particularly important moment for a young man is his first vision quest. Simply put, an Anishinaabe vision quest is one of the most important steps a young Anishinaabe takes. Basil Johnston argues that for men it represents the single most important event in the transition from boyhood to manhood (Johnston, *Heritage* 119) while William Warren writes that it is believed to be a crucial step in maturation and the assurance of “old age” (65). A vision quest involves an intricate process of forming a spiritual and physical relationship with the universe around him/her, including practices like fasting and praying in the natural world. Another part is finding a guide and helper in the spiritual world – what Johnston calls “The Place of Visions” – who provides assistance on how to live a long and healthy life (*Heritage* 119; *Ceremonies* 44). Prepared most often by a father and grandfather, a young man is told about “the meaning of the quest and its obligations,” or the event can be frightening and seem “a solemn charade bereft of any essential element” (*Ceremonies* 44-45). Jones is aware of the importance of obtaining a vision and he tried to do it several times (*Life* 2).⁴⁶ Unfortunately, as he writes: “in all of my fastings I never had any vision or dream; and consequently, obtained no familiar god, nor a spirit in rank of a pow-wow” (*Ojebway* 91). This led, he admits, to a spiritual wedge between himself and his mother. An absent father may perhaps explain why a young Jones and his experience with Anishinaabe culture is fraught with feelings of disjunction, disconnection, and isolation. This would also set the stage for his feelings regarding Anishinaabeg tradition.

Differences like these would manifest themselves throughout his life. His view that Anishinaabeg spiritual traditions held little resonance in a changing world, but that his family and community did, led to a premise Jones spent his life thinking about: Anishinaabeg cultural practices needed to change direction. In the opinion of Jones, Anishinaabeg fail to communicate with God because they seek relationships with a disappearing and dying natural world. This is manifested in his own experience, in the very lands around his community that is being rapidly exploited, invaded, and industrialized. Jones claims that Anishinaabeg reliance on the natural world will lead to their downfall and this is manifested in their inability to resist alcohol. Note his rhetoric in this passage:

Of all the causes which have contributed to the rapid decrease of the Indian tribes, the abuse of ardent spirits, *while following their native mode of life*, is, in my opinion, the primary and most important. For when an Indian is intoxicated, all the savage passions of his nature assume the entire control, often leading him to commit the most barbarous acts of cruelty and murder. This is the way in which the natives have been continually falling one after another, like the tall trees before the rushing blast; (*Ojebway* 30, my emphasis)

To Jones, the “native mode of life” is to worship the forces of nature and engage in a sinful and intemperate existence. Any nature-based belief system is doomed in the face of western expansion and economy, “like the tall trees before the rushing blast.” Jones asserts that “whilst the Indian follows the *light of nature*, he will never be saved by that light” because traditional spirituality makes Indians “more prone to follow the evil than the good practices of the white man” (*Ojebway* 91, 93, original emphasis). As forests and nature are erased for cities and farms, Jones deduces, so are Anishinaabe belief systems. This makes these a path towards unfulfillment and death. Manifested in his own experience, he writes: “I can affirm that the Indian in his natural state is not happy. He has his trials, affections, and fears: the worst passions of the human mind bear uncontrolled sway,

entailing misery and woe. ‘There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.’ A civilized state, even without religion, is far preferable to paganism” (93).

Above all things, Jones comments that European contact has resulted in life for Indigenous peoples becoming virtually unrecognizable. In the span of a hundred years, ways of life that had existed for millennia had been forcibly disrupted and changed. As he knew firsthand, the effects on Anishinaabeg social, economic, and cultural structures was cataclysmic and at times created traumatic confusion. As he writes in his *History of the Ojebway Indians*: “The red man is gone, and a strange people occupy his place” (26). Addressing this disruption is a paramount interest. He asserts that an Anishinaabe way of life can, and must, persevere. Survival, especially in the face of colonial expansion, would involve difficult, intense discussions surrounding possibilities and choices Anishinaabeg had to make on their own. It would involve vision, innovation, and struggle as Anishinaabeg enacted a self-determining future – something Jones would discover years later.

No event is more influential to Jones than his conversion to Wesleyan Methodism at an 1823 camp meeting in Ancaster, Upper Canada. This story – which he spent his lifetime lecturing, writing, and speaking about, hundreds of times to thousands of people, exists in two parts. The first part, of his youth, is a story where he describes the years before his conversion, where little was beautiful and even less was joyous. It is the story found above, in an absent father, failed vision quests, and a rapidly deteriorating and “uncertain mode of Indian life.” The second, of his conversion, is a story full of discovery of beauty, peace, and possibility in a Christian life.

Presented with Christianity as a youth, Jones explains that he did not initially study it for spiritual benefits but “that I might be entitled to all of the privileges of the white inhabitants” (*Life* 8). Jones claims that he attended Christian schools, planning to “get employment in an Indian trading establishment,” and gain tools to raise his social mobility (8). Framed as a means to an end,

Christianity is described by Jones as an advantageous opportunity to climb the socio-economic ladder. This may have changed over time but suggests an interesting context in which Jones found himself at June 1823 at a Methodist camp meeting “held in the township of Ancaster” (9).

Jones recalls: “I heard of a methodist camp-meeting, and I had great curiosity to see how the methodists worshipped, so I, and a sister of mine made ready, and went in company with a kind of religious family to camp meeting” (*Sermon* 13). Up to this point, this conversion story follows the typical structural convention James Holte describes in *The Conversion Experience in America: A Sourcebook on Religious Conversion Autobiography*: “a three-part structure: life before the conversion, the conversion experience itself, and life after the conversion” (xii). Holte posits that conversion narratives represent a transformational shift away from sin and towards purity and towards a belief system initially foreign, a “turning from or a turning toward” (xiii). As Catherine Hobbs points out, these narratives often result in a structure with conversion as the pivotal moment, what she calls: “I once was X, but now I am Y” (4).

The difference with this conversion narrative is that this is not the pattern Jones follows at the Ancaster gathering. His journey is a long process of reconciliation and empowerment, more like “I once was X, and *now I am X-plus*.” A powerful theme manifests itself in this story and his later missionary work: that no matter how much Anishinaabeg resist, they must deal with the reality that European settlement is here and explore ways to engage with the cultural and political contexts of their new neighbours. In other words, Anishinaabeg must form relationships with Europeans and the new life they are introducing. He argues that they must change their medicines from traditional to western ones to combat disease, learn English, give up hunting as a primary source of sustenance, “devote their attention to the more primitive, healthy, and profitable

enjoyment of man, and become tillers of the ground” (*Ojebway* 142-43, 172, 197-98). Jones views Christianity as the central pillar for this change – all else rolls out from here.

Even in all of this, Jones does not turn his back on Anishinaabeg traditions. It is critical to note that during the first three days of his time at the Ancaster gathering – even as he watches many Anishinaabeg convert – he resists doing so. On the fourth day however, Jones recounts a crucial moment. He writes:

In the afternoon of this day my sorrow and anguish of soul greatly increased, and I felt as if I should sink down to hell for my sins, which I now saw to be very great, and exceedingly offensive to the Great Spirit. I was fully convinced that if I did not find mercy from the Lord Jesus, of whom I heard much, I certainly should be lost forever. I thought if I could only get the good people to pray for me at their prayer meetings, I should soon find relief in my mind, but had not sufficient courage to make my desires known. (*Life* 11)

Jones and his emotional psyche enters a state of turmoil (“my sorrow and anguish of soul greatly increased”) and he raises the stakes of his conversion. If he does not convert now, he feels he will live in perpetual damnation.

Ironically, Jones returns to find answers in the one place he experienced trepidation earlier in his life: the natural world. He does not return to the camp meeting but travels to the forest, explaining: “I retired into the solitary wilderness to try and pray to the Great Spirit. I knelt down by the side of the fallen tree. The rattling of the leaves over my head with the wind, made me uneasy” (*Life* 11). Although it is the place he experienced some of the greatest failures of his life, nature is where Jones turns for the salvation he craves. His doubts about this place, however, are still present. He continues: “Now when I knelt down to pray, the devil, it seems, had followed me; for when I heard the leaves falling around me, I thought that some person was coming in search of me” (*Sermon* 13). For Jones, nature is still part of the fallen, fallible world. As if resonating with the experiences of his youth, the forest is full of doubt, failure, and evil.

But it is *also* here where Jones finds an answer to this evil. He recalls: “I retired further back into the woods, and then wrestled with God in prayer, who helped me to resolve that I would go back to the camp and get the people of God to pray for me” (*Life* 11). It is in the natural world where Jones states that he receives a message to return to the gathering and it is this place that facilitates his entry into Christianity. In a Sept. 26th, 1831 speech, Jones states of the same events: “I went further into the woods, and prayed again: there I told the Lord that if I were to go back (into the world) all the wicked people would laugh at the poor Indian, so I thought I would go and get the true Christians to pray for me, and got up; and as I went, I made the resolution that I would be the Lord’s (*Sermon* 13-4). In this moment, Jones rhetorical struggle becomes clear: his fears lie in himself, in his own feelings of insecurity. He is fearful of being embarrassed and inadequate as a Christian, human being, and first and foremost, being mocked by “all the wicked people” who “would laugh at the poor Indian.” Jones is scared of becoming a victim of ridicule.

It would be easy to acquiesce to these attacks and internalize the doubt, fear, and anger Jones experiences. Most of his life he has witnessed those who want him, and other Indians, to fail, falter, and ultimately disappear from the landscape. These people will continue to exploit, steal land, and force Indigenous peoples into starvation and poverty until there are none left. Remember that for Jones, “the doom of the red man” is encapsulated in the fall of “the mighty wilderness, before the axe of the European settler.” One would think that this would be a reason to abandon the forest, but it is in the “mighty wilderness” where Jones realizes the most insidious part of colonialism: the invasion of his own thoughts. It is the removal of his own visions as a capable and agent Anishinaabe and the replacement of these with a passive, weak, and “poor Indian” that is his biggest downfall. Embodying a victimist position, Jones has become his own worst enemy. The “some person . . . coming in search of me” is himself.

Jones then makes a choice. He will ask for help from “the true Christians,” and stand as a proud Anishinaabe who can make choices and act for himself. To Jones, the central issue undermining Anishinaabeg spirituality is that it relies on a natural world rapidly being removed by Europeans. The solution is not to abandon the forest but turn back to it and ask what can be done now. The solution is to turn to what Anishinaabeg know and understand and make sense of this change in the place that facilitated Anishinaabeg understandings of Creation. The solution is to forge a relationship with the world you are leaving to prepare you for the one you are about to enter. Another word for this: migration.

But this struggle is not over. Jones returns to the camp and states that “my spirit almost failed me again, so I went and leaned against a tree” (*Sermon 14*). He appears to have difficulty turning away from the forest. He writes that although his decision to convert is made, “my fearful heart again began to hesitate. I stood by the side of a tree considering what I must do, whether I should give up seeking the Lord altogether or not. It was now about dusk” (*Life 11-12*). By this point it is important to reflect upon what has instilled Jones with doubt up to this point: his inability to be a part of community. Throughout his life, his closest relationships have been filled with trauma, absence, and compromise, with his father, his mother, himself, the natural world, spirits, and so on. It is important to remember that it is not relationships with settlers Jones is most interested in (beyond economic purposes anyway), but those with family, relatives, and other Anishinaabeg. It is in this inability to reconcile these relationships with Christian conversion where he struggles most. Manifested by the tree he stands beside, his ties to the ancestral life and community he knows and feels indebted to is what he thinks will be hardest to give up.

It is strikingly not a settler who convinces him. He writes: “Whilst I was hesitating on what to do, a good old man named Reynold, came to me and said, ‘Do you wish to obtain religion and

serve the Lord? I replied yes. He then said, ‘Do you desire the people of God to pray for you?’ I told him I did, and that was what I had desired. He then led me into the prayer meeting” (*Life* 12).⁴⁷ But this visit to the prayer meeting results in very little: “I fell upon my knees and began as well as I could to call upon the name of the Lord” while Reynold prays with him and “exhorted me to believe on our Lord Jesus Christ, who, he said, had died for Indians as well as white people” (12). Although the Methodists around him try to convince him that Christianity is an Indian religion, Jones does not believe it: “When I first began to pray my heart was soft and tender, and I shed many tears, but strange to say, sometime after my heart got as hard as stone. I tried to look up, but the heavens seemed like brass. I then tried to say to myself that there is no mercy for [the] poor Indian. I felt myself an outcast, a sinner bound for hell” (12). Christianity, at this point, does not offer what Jones needs. Exhausted and discouraged, Jones states he went to sleep.⁴⁸

Early the next morning, on June 5, 1823, Jones converts. He writes:

I had not laid long there before one of the preachers came to me and said, “Get up and get religion!” There is your sister has got religion, and you may get religion too.” When I heard this, I did not know that she had been seeking the same Saviour: when I heard this, that she had found Jesus in her heart, I sprang up and ran to the place where they were praying. My sister came and wept over me, and prayed for me. I fell down upon my knees, and in a short time, just as daylight appeared, I found peace with God. (*Sermon* 14)

Jones claims that the “words [from my sister] came with power to my poor sinking heart” (*Life* 13). It is not the words of the white preachers that finally get him to convert, but his Mohawk half-sister, Mary. Convinced now that Christianity can give him an Indigenous community and a future, Mary facilitates his entry into his new life. She has given him a gift, a bagijigan.

Jace Weaver comments in *That the People Might Live* that “[s]ignificantly, it was not Whites, but Indians, particularly family, that led to ultimate conversion” and “it is clear from both his writings and his praxis that his conversion did not conform entirely to traditional Western norms”

(62). Weaver argues that this conversion echoes Joseph Epes Brown's theory in *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian* that Indigenous conversion is often "not conversion as understood in the exclusivistic manner by the bearers of Christianity, but rather a continuation of the people's ancient and traditional faculty for what may be termed nonexclusive cumulative adhesion" (27). I would add to Weaver that the conversion recounted by Jones was a process-based engagement with the natural world, his family, and the changes taking place in his Mississauga community. Weaver argues that this conversion story is one where Jones "championed Native community" and demonstrates "the single thing that most defines Indian literatures" – a theory Weaver names "communitism" – a "proactive proactive commitment to Native community, including what I term the 'wider community' of creation itself" (*That the People* 64 xiii, 43, 64). This conversion story also shows aspects of Anishinaabeg spirituality, seeks to heal the relationship between Indigenous life and the natural world, and articulates Indigenous-centred political, spiritual, and social struggles. A forerunner to Warren, who would write fifty years later, the conversion by Jones is evidence of a "spontaneous" people on the move. It is deeply Anishinaabeg.

I would like to take a step further than Weaver and argue that Jones not only converts for the purposes of community but also establishes it at the same time. In other words, he takes a step towards self-determination, forging a new path where Indigenous people and Anishinaabeg can survive, thrive, and continue. To Jones, conversion does not mean an end to his cultural life but a continuation and expansion of it. Describing what he sees after he converts, he writes:

That very instant my burden was removed, joy unspeakable filled my heart, and I could say "Abba, Father." The love of God being now shed abroad in my heart, I loved Him intensely, and praised Him in the midst of the people. Every thing now appeared in a new light, and all the works of God seemed to unite with me in uttering the praises of the Lord. The people, the trees of the woods, the gentle winds, the warbling notes of the birds, and the approaching sun, all declared the power and goodness of the Great Spirit. And what was I that I should not raise my voice in giving glory to God, who had done such great things for me! (*Life* 12)

Powerfully, this new vision is of words Jones hears throughout the natural world achieves what the vision quests of his youth did not. I would even go so far as to suggest that his conversion facilitates a pantheistic relationship with the universe that is meaningful in Anishinaabeg terms. Like Anishinaabeg who discuss and witness the breath and language instilled throughout Creation by Gizhe Manido, Jones sees a virtual similar world.

Jones also, remarkably, finds a father. In Mark 14:32-36, Jesus fears the plan of God for his crucifixion and asks him for solace. In response, God gives Jesus the strength to suffer through the next few days, where he will act as a vessel for the sins of man. Jesus responds with “Abba, Father,” using the Aramaic name for “daddy.” Using the same name Jesus uses in this moment for God, Jones seems to find peace with his absent father and, as if in a migratory sequence, all of the relationships that form who he is as a man, Anishinaabe, and human being. In other words, receiving this bagijigan of joy he makes a call that forms relationships of community throughout many layers of Creation. Like the blind man in “The Loon’s Necklace” or even Wagamese himself after hearing the call of Maang, Jones states that the vision he receives forms relationships that make him a beautiful and dynamic Anishinaabe. Returning to the natural world, he describes this new Indigenous and Anishinaabeg spirituality in terms of how it facilitates a close and unified relationship with nature, echoing the practices of the past.

Jones, after converting, writes: “I cannot describe my feelings at this time. I was a wonder to myself” (*Life* 13). After witnessing a virtual genocide taking place around him while growing up, Jones finds a way to ensure that Anishinaabe life could be meaningful, continuous, and endure regardless of the devastation around it. He realizes that whatever the invasion and destruction to Indian culture, Anishinaabeg can continue to be an actively self-determining people. Christianity facilitates a path for Anishinaabe relationships to continue in a similar complex path as they

always had. It is notable that the first people Jones wants to tell, after converting, are his Indian friends, family, relatives: “My heart was now drawn out in love and compassion for all people, especially for my parents, brothers, sisters, and countrymen, for whose conversion I prayed, that they might also find this great salvation” (*Life* 13). While obviously a missionizing statement too, he has also made a new discovery: that European arrival does not signal the end of Indigenous lives. Mississauga, Anishinaabeg, and Indigenous communities can, and will, endure.

The story Jones tells does not come without a great deal of anguish for it required overcoming a great deal of personal strife and overwhelming doubt. It demanded that he see past passivity, victimhood, and even genocide. This struggle was not over for Jones either. Doubts about Christianity would continue into his adult life.⁴⁹ Importantly, however, Jones does not get mired in paralysis or fear but spent most of the rest of his life trying to reconcile Christianity for Indigenous peoples. Much of this was sought through writing. He, of course, was human and made many mistakes, but his ardent stubborn belief that Indigenous peoples could self-determine through practices of migration and change continued throughout his entire life. Like Maang who migrate, he forges community through calls of unity and relationship, making signs on how Anishinaabeg and others could live in a colonial reality.

This conversion story is not one where he emerges into another identity for Jones is, at all times, Anishinaabe. He is not an X that becomes a Y through narrative, but one that has grown and discovered new possibilities in his existing position: an *X-plus*. His story maintains that Anishinaabe continuance can, and will, endure using all the universe has to offer. His narrative also shows how Christianity can be appropriated and used as a spirituality that continues Anishinaabe community. And, importantly, his story also gestures to the possibility that Anishinaabeg do not have to abandon ancestral practices and homes, but can use them while

migrating and changing. They can bring them with them into new worlds, illustrating a new importance for places like forests and why they must be protected. This conversion narrative is a call that builds, protects, and forms community. It is a Maang bagijigan full of strands of enawendiwin in a reciprocal and cyclical waayiyaag. Jones' conversion narrative is full of teachings of mino-bimaadiziwin. Jones proves, against incredible odds, that Anishinaabeg community is a powerful vessel that cannot be easily overcome. This would be an ironic lesson he would learn again years later, when he shared his discovery with other Anishinaabeg.

“Brothers and Friends, I arise to shake hands with you”

Six years after his conversion, in the afternoon of Tuesday, August 4, 1829, at *Bkejwanong* (“Where the Waters Divide,” also known as Walpole Island or unceded Anishinaabeg territory between the United States and Upper Canada), Jones and a group of missionaries met with approximately thirty “principal men of the Indians in this vicinity” to discuss Christianity and their future (*Life* 246). It was a tense time for Anishinaabeg in the region. The slow genocide Jones witnessed in his youth had continued. After enduring countless devastating conflicts and tens of thousands of refugees flooding their territories, Anishinaabeg throughout the Great Lakes had experienced tremendous costs. Many communities had lost virtually an entire generation of warriors, thousands of acres of territory due to coerced land secession agreements, and now had strained relations with British Canada, the United States, and other tribal nations. While still a major political player, Anishinaabeg were continuously pressured and assaulted by relentless forces around them. As a symptom, the effects of alcoholism, poverty, and religious fundamentalism was deeply undermining long-standing Anishinaabeg institutions and practices. These were problems enhanced by overwhelming new stresses demanded upon traditional medicines and ceremonies. By

the time Jones and his group arrived at Walpole Island, game was sparse throughout the region, many forests were replaced with towns and farms, and the effects of disease and starvation were evident.

With increasing colonial pressures for land, a seemingly unstoppable ecological disaster developing around them, and dwindling community populations, Jones believed that dependence on nature for religion and existence, combined with settler erasure of forests in the name of “progress,” was eventually going to lead to Anishinaabeg extinction. As he writes, the disappearance of nature is “emblematic of the fate of the red man of the forest. The white man comes, and as he advances the trees vanish before him; thus the poor Indian disappears, as if crushed by the falling of the immense forests” (*Ojebway* 254-55). Encompassed in his conversion narrative, Jones believed the primary answer lay in Christian conversion, and a radical re-formulation and migration on the tenets that made up Anishinaabeg life. This not only made sense personally to Jones, but also as someone who witnessed his own community at Credit River undergo difficult times and then find a semblance of stability through Christianization.⁵⁰ For Jones, Christian conversion provides an opportunity for a material and spiritual future.

It is important to point out that, even in his great desire to Christianize Indians, Jones still recognized the right to self-determine for any community. Evidenced in his journals, Jones adheres to the Methodist belief in individual choice. His visit to Anishinaabe leader Tumeko and his community, for example, resulted in resistance to his exhortations. Jones was told that Anishinaabeg “had a religion of their own, handed down to them by their forefathers, in which they were now walking.” While patronizing in his attitude, Jones still leaves, promising “them that we should again visit them in about two months and a half” to see if their minds had changed (*Life* 28-9).⁵¹ Jones adamantly believes that Christianity provides a migratory path to salvation, but

forces no one to believe if they do not want to. This is very different to the missionaries George Tinker refers to in *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*, who accompanied armies into Native communities and/or openly used violence in their work (57-8).

For several Anishinaabeg communities and their leaders however, the costs of conversion would be more land secessions, losses of community autonomy, and the adoption of a strict and fundamentalist religion. While some Anishinaabeg adopted and/or adjusted to Christianity, many fiercely resisted it. Perhaps none were so defiant as the communities at Bkejwanong, led by their Head Chief *Pazhekezhikquashkum* (“He Who Makes Footsteps in the Sky”).⁵² A staunch Anishinaabe traditionalist born before the American Revolution, Pazhekezhikquashkum had migrated with his family from the west shore of Lake St. Clair to the island in the 1820s and had quickly ascended to Head Chief there. He had witnessed the devastation wrought by constant war between the British and the Americans (not to mention the unfulfilled hopes of Tecumseh and his separatist confederacy) and in his experience, foreigners could not be trusted with securing a future for Anishinaabeg.⁵³ With such a staunch belief (and arguably proof) in the inability of non-Natives and their ways to advocate for Indigenous interests and needs, Pazhekezhikquashkum had good reason to resist Christianity.

Still, Pazhekezhikquashkum and his followers met with Jones on that Tuesday afternoon in 1829 to hear what he had to present. After expressing “gratitude to God for permitting us to meet together, and to shake hands with each other,” Jones “gave them a short account of the conversion of the Indians in the east; the happiness they enjoyed in their hearts while worshipping in the new way, and the hope that they have of obtaining eternal life, and happiness after death, in the kingdom of heaven, and assured them that the promises of God were to them and to their children,

and to all of them that should believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Life* 247). In response, Jones recorded a lengthy quote, stating that Pazhekezhikquashkum said:

Brothers and friends, I arise to shake hands with you, not only with my hands, but with my heart also do I shake hands with you. Brothers and friends, the Great Spirit who made the earth, the waters, and everything that exists has brought us together to shake hands with each other. Brothers and friends, I have listened to your words that you have spoken to us this day. I will now tell you what is in my heart. Brothers and friends, the Great Spirit made us all; he made the white man, and he made the Indian. When the Great Spirit made the white man he gave him his worship, written in a book, and prepared a place for his soul in heaven above. He also gave him his mode of preparing and administering medicine to the sick different from that of the Indian. Brothers and friends, when the Great Spirit made the Indian he gave him his mode of worship, and the manner of administering and using medicine to the sick. The Great Spirit gave the Indian to know the virtue of roots and plants to preserve life; and by attending to these things our lives are preserved. Brothers and friends, I will tell you what happened to some of our forefathers that once became Christians. I have been informed that when white people first came to this country, our fathers said to one another, Come brothers, let us worship like our white brothers. They did so, and threw away all that their fathers had told them to do, and forsook the path that their fathers had pointed out to them to walk in. When they had thrown away the religion of their fathers, sickness came among them, and most every one of them died, and but a few escaped death. Again, since my own recollection, there was one man who came among the Indians at the River Miamme, who told them the Great Spirit was angry with them on account of their witchcraft and living in the way of their forefathers. They listened to this babbler, and threw away all their medicines, all their pouches, and all their medicine bags, and every thing they used in their arts into the river. They had no sooner done this than great sickness came among them also, and but few escaped death of them that had taken heed to the words of this babbler. Now, brothers and friends, if I should follow the example of those that once worshipped like the white man I should expect to incur the anger of the Great Spirit, and share the same fate of them that perished. I will therefore remain as I am, and sit down alone and worship in that way that the Munedoo spirit appointed our forefathers to do and to observe. Brothers and friends, how can I, who have grown old in sins and drunkenness, break off from these things, when the white people are as bad and wicked as the Indians. Yesterday two white men, christians, got drunk, quarrelled and fought with one another, and one of them is now on the Island with a black eye. Brothers and friends, what you have said concerning the evil effects of the fire-waters is very true. Strong drink has made us poor and destroyed our lives. Brothers and friends, I am poor and hardly able to buy enough cloth for a pair of leggings, and wherewith would I be able to buy cloth enough for a pair of pantaloons to dress me like the white man, if I should become a christian or live like the white man? Brothers and friends, I am glad to see you as native brethren, but will not become a Christian. This is all I have to say. (248-49)

After stating that he vaguely made “some remarks” in return, Jones and the missionaries then departed. As he did with virtually all who resisted Christian conversion, Jones disagreed with the Head Chief. As he would write later in his journal, “[t]hese people are complete pagans and strongly attached to their heathen rites and ceremonies, and, consequently, it will take time, labour, and exertion to get the gospel introduced among them” (249).

In the end, Jones never did convince the Anishinaabeg communities at Walpole Island to convert. It was not without great effort, for he would return over and over, asking them time and time again. Largely due to Pazhekezhikquashkum and his influence though, the communities on Walpole Island defiantly resisted. In *History of the Ojebway Indians*, written years later, Jones would reflect on the power of the Head Chief:

I am acquainted with a noted medicine man, a chief residing at the River St. Clair, who, by his subtle art and cunning, has impressed with fear all the Indians who know him, insomuch that the other chiefs never undertake anything of importance without consulting him. If he approve, it is well; if not, the object is abandoned. This chief is quite like a patriarch among his people, and may be considered a rich pagan Indian, as he possesses many horses, which run wild on the plains, and are only caught as he wishes to use or sell them. It is said that he has obtained most of his possessions by his pow-wowism on the stick, and by curing those who are bewitched. The pow-wows are generally paid well for their performances, either by gun, kettle, blanket, coat, or a gallon or two of whiskey. When the last article is demanded and paid, the performance of the pow-wow is sure to be crowned by a drunken frolic, in which the doctor joins with his companions for a whole night, singing, yelling, and beating a drum, much to the annoyance of the afflicted persons, whose sufferings are aggravated and his death hastened by this barbarous custom. I have visited this chief and his people three or four times for the purposes of introducing the Gospel among them; but, like Elymas the sorcerer, he has by subtlety and mischief resisted our endeavours and prevented his tribe from embracing the truth. (*Ojebway* 144)

Although it could be argued that defiant resistance to Christianity was a tradition at *Bkejwanong* (and Pazhekezhikquashkum was simply maintaining it),⁵⁴ the fact remains that Jones took a personal interest in the Head Chief and the power he wielded. As I show in a moment, his representation of Pazhekezhikquashkum and their 1829 exchange is fascinating.

Firstly, most interesting is the representation of Pazhekezhikquashkum in *Ojebway*. Jones is obvious in his irritation with the stubbornness of the man, no doubt enhanced by having been turned away “three or four times” in his attempted introductions of the Gospel. Just under the surface of his irritation however, is a clear rhetorical intent. While he utilizes terms like “noted” and describes his central role in decision making and leadership on Walpole Island as an undeniable “patriarch,” Jones couches his description in pejorative terms, painting Pazhekezhikquashkum as having “subtle art and cunning,” having “impressed with fear all the Indians who know him” and reflecting “mischief” – all of which denote a dark character to the man. This is not to forget that Jones questions the ethics of the head Chief as both leader and medicine person, painting him as a wealthy and drunk “sorcerer” interested specifically in exploiting his position for personal gain and “prevent[ing] his tribe from embracing the truth.” Then, in a most interesting rhetorical move, Jones describes Pazhekezhikquashkum as “Elymas” – the Jewish magician who opposed the Apostles from spreading the Word of God – locating the Head Chief in oppositional terms to him. This all constructs a sort of hero self-narrative, with Jones righteously delivering truth in the face of an evil nemesis, with nothing less than the future of Anishinaabeg (and perhaps even all Indians) at stake.

In the journals Jones would write however, the personification of Pazhekezhikquashkum is somewhat different. There, he describes him much more graciously (a fact possibly attributed to the fact they are first meeting) and his recording of the speech suggests a deep respect. For instance, he goes to great lengths to record his narrative in surprisingly intricate detail. Few “resistance to conversion” speeches exist in his writings (even though Jones heard many throughout his career) and, of those, virtually none in the depth that Pazhekezhikquashkum does. He even mentions parts of the speech (albeit translated slightly differently) in *History of the Ojebway Indians* – the only

anecdote of Native resistance in a section entitled “Objections to Becoming Christians” (229). His journal recording is also notable by the fact that the response by Jones is somewhat concealed. In his few other recordings of resistance by Indian chiefs and leaders, Jones seems extremely interested in explaining at length the ways he openly disagreed with them to their faces.⁵⁵ Interestingly, for Pazhekezhikquashkum Jones offers no similar public rebuttal – leaving his response of dissent and disagreement for his journal and book.⁵⁶

The focus on the rhetorical detail of Pazhekezhikquashkum’s 1829 speech and the lack of a direct response by Jones suggests to me that the narrative made quite an impression on the Ojibwe missionary. More evidence is found by doing a close reading. Instead of characterizing Pazhekezhikquashkum as a delusional evildoer (as he does in *Ojebway*), the Head Chief appears rather measured, polished, and intelligent – with a verbal artistry that combines a defiant rhetoric with an interesting and artful argumentative trajectory. Most notable too is the rhythmic cadence, respect for audience and sense of protocol, and use of reasonable and specific examples to support claims against Christian conversion. Jones even includes the sense of humour Pazhekezhikquashkum clearly had and his facetious complaint that he is too “poor and hardly able to buy enough cloth for a pair of leggings to dress me like the white man” (which, we find out in *Ojebway*, may not be true). Whether Jones (or his editors) embellished it or whether it contained translation errors – both impossible to know – this speech is unquestionably a work of art.

It is in the argumentative trajectory Pazhekezhikquashkum follows that the recording really gets interesting. Kinship terms, as Jones points out when he meets the Head Chief for the first time, are of deep interest to the man (the missionary is even startled when the chief pessimistically refers to the President of the United States as “stepfather”).⁵⁷ Considering this, it is little surprise that Jones mentions that Pazhekezhikquashkum uses the terms “brothers and friends” throughout his

speech to refer to Jones and his fellow missionaries. While this could too be a case of rhythmic cadence and respectful protocol, I would argue that these terms show the Head Chief framing their exchanges as opportunities to build community. As legal scholar Robert A. Williams Jr. writes in *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600-1800*, terms of kinship “had precisely understood meanings” for Native leaders who used them, and “‘Brothers’ was the term used between formal equals in a relationship of connection” (71). It is not as if Jones did not understand the implications of the term in Anishinaabeg culture too, having witnessed its use several times throughout his life.⁵⁸ Pazhekezhikquashkum, however, not only utilizes “brothers” but also “friends” – inferring that Jones (and his brethren) are both relations *and* visitors. They are connected, but different.

As if to demonstrate this, Pazhekezhikquashkum constantly brings up notions of difference and speaks about them in relation to one another. For instance, the central point of the Head Chief is that there are irreconcilable “differences” between “the white man” and the “Indian,” and these are embodied in their different experiences, the ways they treat medicines, and the way they treat their ancestors. Most specifically he points out their differences exist in their “mode of worship.” For “the white man” his way of worship is “written in a book,” while for the “Indian” it is “to know the virtue of roots and plants to preserve life.”

Yet, even though these groups of people are different, they have similarities: both share “the earth, the waters, and everything that exists,” both struggle to live healthy lives, and both are created by the “Great Spirit.” Interestingly, both also have to pursue a path of literacy and interpretation in “reading” the universe to find meaning in their lives. Then, in arguably the most provocative move of all, Pazhekezhikquashkum identifies that both peoples seem to be invested in following religions that are imperfect. As the Head Chief suggests, he is a traditionalist but hardly

without flaws – evidenced in his own “sins and drunkenness.” On the other hand, though, Christianity does not guarantee perfection for it certainly did not stop the “two white men, christians, [who] got drunk, quarrelled and fought with one another, and one of them is now on the Island with a black eye.” No religion devised by humans is perfect, the Head Chief seems to suggest, for “white people are as bad and wicked as the Indians.” This does not mean that Anishinaabeg tradition and Christianity should be cast aside, but that both religions may hold some measure of value, one piece of an unfolding mystery. Simply, neither tells the whole story but a source for knowledge regarding how each people shall continue.

Listening a little more closely to the words of Pazhekezhikquashkum, though, an overwhelming ethic comes through: responsibility. A community, the Head Chief recognizes, holds many responsibilities and they all are embedded in relationships: with ancestors, with the land, with Manitous (spirits), with animals, with citizens, with neighbours, with the universe. All of these responsibilities are understood by considering what makes up the complex ties that exist between individuals and entities who recognize each other as relations (brothers) and/or connected partners (friends). Other relationships, such as those of enemies or strangers, have many fewer responsibilities and drastically different ties (but considering the makeup of nindinawemaganidog, need the other to exist too). I suggest that the Head Chief is describing strands of enawendiwin.

Understanding that a community is made up of “brothers and friends,” however, identifies crucial and specific ways in which relationships live. For instance, you can choose your friends and perhaps not so much your family (adoption being the obvious exception), and so your relationship with either is characterized differently. The ways in which these two systems of relationships form eventually become institutions and frameworks guiding ways of life – laws in which individuals and communities learn and agree to co-exist. As Pazhekezhikquashkum suggests, any changes to

these long-standing traditional lifeways should not be made hastily but with consideration of the effect these will have on all of the ties affected in the community. As demonstrated in those who give up their medicines and die as a result, the Head Chief argues that the Anishinaabeg invite sickness and death upon themselves if they immediately and unilaterally break away from their tradition of acknowledging difference. The responsibility to maintain the teachings and lifeways they have inherited, it seems, is also law. Anishinaabeg spirituality, as “the way the Munedoo Spirit appointed our forefathers to do and observe,” has proven a worthy life way, and Pazhekezhikquashkum sees no reason to alter that path. He is making an argument of waayiyaag.

But it is not as if Pazhekezhikquashkum and his relatives refuse to hear Jones and his brethren share their message of Christianity. The rhetorical attention paid by the Head Chief and the collective refusal by the community cannot only be seen as an outright denial of relevance. It may in fact be, according to the narrative offered by Pazhekezhikquashkum, that life is only assured when difference and sameness are recognized as parts of the whole of the universe – when “brothers and friends” are recognized and acknowledged as having value they can contribute in the understanding of the universe. Humankind, to survive, appears to need both. No one individual or group of peoples has a monopoly on truth: not Pazhekezhikquashkum, not Jones, not Anishinaabeg, not “the white man,” not Anishinaabeg tradition, not Christianity. All have and hold meaning. And, perhaps, all must contribute, through dialogue and sharing, their truths – knowledge handed down from ancestral history and first-hand experience – for all of life to continue. This is the primary responsibility the Head Chief identifies “brothers and friends” have towards one another: to live in a community that allows for difference and sameness and find a way to ensure equal treatment and respect for all. They also, as demonstrated by the gathering

itself, have a responsibility to listen to others and their beliefs carefully and considerately, for they may hold relevance and value in understanding the secrets of Creation.

As relatives in a family of Creation, both are essential and relevant and need the other. Both may also be embodied as the same person, in the same people. While the Head Chief voices rejection towards Christianity for Bkejwanong, stating “I will not become a Christian,” he prefaces his rejection by making a powerful statement: “I am glad to see you as native brethren.” The “native brethren,” of course, refers to Jones (and perhaps others), suggesting that Pazhekezhikquashkum, even in his fierce statements for autonomy and self-determination, acknowledges Jones as both “brother” and “friend” to the people of Walpole Island. In this, the Head Chief recognizes there may be meaning to be ascertained from Christianity for some Anishinaabeg after all. Hearing Jones describe “the Indians in the east; the happiness they enjoyed in their hearts while worshipping in the new way,” perhaps Pazhekezhikquashkum even acknowledges here a usefulness in Christianity for Anishinaabeg, and perhaps all Indians as well.

By now it may be obvious what I am suggesting: that Pazhekezhikquashkum is giving Jones a Maang Bagijigan, perhaps many in fact. In the end, and unaware or not, Jones heeded this call. He spent his entire career trying to record the ways of his relatives and explain them to settlers in ways that would demystify them. He fought for Anishinaabeg land claims and entitlements on both sides of the ocean, even touring England to raise money for schools and books. He also believed that he was fighting a life-or-death battle against time and conquest, for he believed his relations would perish if they continued to believe in a spirituality based in a nature that was dying. And, while he continued to be rejected in his attempts to spread the gospel, he did not give up his visits to the communities of Walpole Island, though he disagreed with what he heard. Though forceful in his claims that these “pagans were “strongly attached to their heathen rites and ceremonies,” he

remained unquestionably dedicated to battling for their lives in his writings, even until his death in 1856. His “brothers and friends” were the most important people of all in his life, evidenced in his narratives of hope and continuance in the only way he thought possible. Throughout his writings no other narrative so embedded in notions of Anishinaabeg responsibility and community exists than his exchanges with those at Walpole Island, suggesting his encounters in this place were long-lasting, valuable, and worth recounting.

The question of how Anishinaabeg could reconcile different religious tenets and still maintain a sense of a unified community and identity is found in the exchanges between Pazhekezhikquashkum and Peter Jones. It is about listening and learning, sharing and communicating. It is also about compromise and patience. It is about giving and receiving the bagijiganan each community has to offer within a broader framework. Not all Christians were of course like Jones, however, or interested in this kind of exchange. As I will discuss in the next chapter, not all Anishinaabeg were interested in dialogue with anyone outside of their community either, whether it be for spiritual or material needs. It is worth noting, however, that in this historical, political, and subjective moment in the early 19th century, Anishinaabeg were meeting together to discuss the future. They disagreed, departed, and returned to talk again – a process that encompassed their entire lives. This is an instance of Anishinaabeg enacting the processes that make up who they are: that to be Anishinaabeg you have to do Anishinaabeg. Like definitions addressed early on in this project, the Maang Bagijiganan found throughout this work documents an active and vibrant process of negotiating mino-bimaadiziwin and an active sense of nindinawemaganidog. These are, of course, not perfect, but they are Anishinaabeg.

These two examples from Jones illustrate the many possibilities of Maang Bagijiganan. They indicate the infinite complex layers that make up Anishinaabeg community during a

tumultuous and unstable time. Like the journey of return to and re-connection Wagamese travels to the longstanding Anishinaabeg political and cultural ties evident in the story of Niizhwaasoshkoden Ningaanaajimowin, the discoveries Jones makes during his conversion and his relationships with those he disagreed with yet still felt responsibilities to illustrate an ongoing and dynamic sense of how to form Anishinaabeg community. These expressions, like calls of the loon, encourage a community to re-create themselves, move, and change. They are, I suggest, loon calls that encourage us all to look within ourselves and make choices towards a self-determining future in the footsteps of our long migration following the sacred shells on its necklace. They are Maang bagijigaanan, gifts that gesture to an autonomous sense of Anishinaabeg relationality, community, and nationhood and how it is forged and continues through narrative acts.

Niiwin: Ajijaakwag zhigo Waabajjaakwag Doodemag Bagijiganan

For the Anishinaabeg, the clearest demonstration of power was the lack of dependence. Hence the animal and plant beings had more power than humans, since they could exist independently of humans with little difficulty, while humans were exceedingly dependent upon them for food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. . . . This created an odd paradox within Anishinaabeg social organization in which individuals aspired to independence but considered it achievable only through the widest possible networks of mutual obligation with both human and Manidog partners. Leaders often had the grandest of these networks at their disposal and used these physical and spiritual resources both to meet the needs of the community and to influence the political process of consensus building that directed community action. (19)

- *Ogimaag: Anishinaabeg Leadership 1760-1845*
Cary Miller (Ojibwe)

Spontaneous Calls

The Covenant Chain and wampum between Anishinaabeg and Zhaaganashag at Niagara in 1764 was not shared with all relations. Many, for a variety of reasons, resisted the alliance and none more so than Anishinaabeg west of Bawaating – most of whom continued to resent the British well into the nineteenth century. The relationship eastern Anishinaabeg had with Zhaaganashag divided kin and communities and created a separation between them and those either affiliated with Gizhe Mookomaanag (Americans) or those in a growing resistance against them (such as those allied with Tecumseh). Meanwhile, a long-held conflict between Zhaaganashag and Gizhe Mookomaanag raged – and would soon become the War of 1812. A struggle over the Great Lakes – what historians David Curtis and Larry L. Nelson have called “The Sixty Years War” – was about to reach a climax.⁵⁹

Aware that they could not win a war with Gizhe-Mookomaanag without assistance from Indigenous Nations, Zhaaganashag reached out to the western Anishinaabeg. After the battle at Fort Howard and the opening days of the War of 1812, British agent John Askin called

Anishinaabeg to a meeting on Mackinaw Island, which the interpreter Michael Cadotte Jr. witnessed and William Warren recounted in *History of the Ojibway People*. Representing western Anishinaabeg was the respected leader Keesh-ke-mun (“Sharpened Stone”), who had moved his community in 1745 to Lac Du Flambeau and had made it clearly known that he detested any alliance with Zhaaganashag. Beginning the meeting, Askin was direct, asking: “Your British father wishes to know who you are, that you should do these things – that you should dare to measure yourself against him” (qtd. in Warren 267-68). After smoking, Keesh-ke-mun responded as follows:

“Englishman! you ask me who I am. If you wish to know, you must seek me in the clouds. I am a bird who rises from the earth, and flies far up, into the skies, out of human sight; but though not visible to the eye, my voice is heard from afar, and resounds over the earth!”

Englishman! you wish to know who I am. You have never sought me, or should have found and known me. Others have sought and found me. The old French sought and found me. He placed his heart within my breast. He told me that every morning I should look to the east and I would behold his fire, like the sun reflecting its rays towards me, to warm me and my children. He told me that if troubles assailed me, to arise in the skies and cry to him, and he would hear my voice. He told me that his fire would last forever, to warm me and my children.

Englishman! you, Englishman, have put out the fire of my French father. I became cold and needy, and you sought me not. Others have sought me. Yes, the Long Knife has found me. He has placed his heart on my breast. It has entered there, and there it will remain!” (qtd. in Warren 268)

Warren then describes that Keesh-ke-mun “pulled out from his decorated tobacco pouch, an American George Washington medal” and hung it around his neck (268). Threatened, Askin demanded that the ogimaa remove it or accept the consequences of his choice. Keesh-ke-mun refused, declaring that Askin should “remember the voice of the Crane echoes afar off, and when he summons his children together, they number like the pebbles of the Great Lakes shore” (269). At a stalemate, the meeting adjourned.

Of course, both Keesh-ke-mun and Askin are clearly posturing and this piece is politically charged. This fits with the historical and subjective frame in which I discussed Warren and his

work earlier. This is an extremely turbulent time, wartime in fact, and a difficult moment to form relationships. At the same time, western Anishinaabeg faced incredible pressure. They knew that forming relationships with Zhaaganashag would create a dividing line between themselves and Gizhe Mookomaanag and – since Americans appeared driven by conquest and fueled by military might – creating any sort of ties with their enemies would not be a smart political move. As Warren points out, Anishinaabeg “occupying Lake Superior, and the waters of the Mississippi firmly withstood every effort made by the British to induce them to enter the war” (264). Many had also witnessed the struggles the alliance led by Tecumseh experienced fighting Americans and were not keen to join the conflict. The alternative for communities throughout the southern Great Lakes was to either affiliate or adopt as neutral a stance as possible with Gizhe Mookomaanag.

This sentiment is evident in the rhetoric employed by Keesh-ke-mun – which clearly externalizes Askin and Zhaaganashag. Unlike exchanges of Maang Baijiganan I have referred to, there are no “Brothers and Friends” here. As Warren shows in his version, Keesh-ke-mun gives Askin a history lesson on the failure of Zhaaganashag to honour the responsibilities they inherited from Wemitigoozhiwag – but yet gave to their relations in the east. His placing of the Washington medal on his chest is unabashedly bold, sending a message to Zhaaganashag that they have failed to initiate and maintain a meaningful relationship with him and his Anishinaabeg community. Like any good leader, Keesh-ke-mun has therefore sought relationships in the best interests of his kin – discovering Gizhe-Mookomaanag to be a willing partner. Keesh-ke-mun is stating that he and his community are self-determining, independent, and have the ability, resources, and allies to wield this power. While recorders Cadotte and Warren might have political stakes in framing Keesh-ke-mun in this way, the rhetoric of the speech is fairly clear: there will be no alliance.

Most interesting is how Keesh-ke-mun foregrounds his totem, the crane, to articulate his reasoning. Scholars have been keen to pick up on this reference. Lac Du Flambeau scholar Gail Guthrie Valaskakis describes this as a sign that the leader is talking “not about the land but with the land and the [human and non-human] persons who inhabit it” (119). Gerald Vizenor declares that Keesh-ke-mun utilizes his totem as a creative statement of his ancestry and history, naming it evidence of his subjective “point of view” and abilities as an “artist and diplomatic orator” (*Fugitive Poses* 120-121). Undoubtedly, this crane reference is a political and social mark, a bagijigan that deserves a closer look.

Keesh-ke-mun draws attention to two parts of cranes and parallels these with his words and actions towards Zhaaganashag. First, he refers to the ability of the crane to travel at great heights, beyond even the sight of humans. Second, he draws a parallel to the rich call of the crane and its ability to travel and communicate across great distances. These two aspects indicate a rhetorical claim and a vision Keesh-ke-mun has for relationships he sees Anishinaabe carrying with Zhaaganashag. While in other chapters I examine a spectrum of a totemic animal’s behavior, I will focus here on these two cranes to gesture to some points I believe the ogimaa is making.

Cranes are some of the most well-known and well-studied birds in the world. Like Mikinaak and Maang, they are amongst the most ancient animals on the planet, with fossils dating millions of years. Divided into two subfamilies of species, scientists Curt Meine and George Archibald remark, the oldest date back “37-54 million years before present” (1). They are, as Paul Johnsgard describes, “large, long-legged and long-necked members of the Gruiformes” with “an elongated and tapering bill that is often longer than the head,” “gregarious outside the breeding season” and have a long and complex trachea which results in “loud and often resonant” calls (3). Like Maang, they are wetland birds and are diurnal (active in daylight), working in pairs during the day and

mating season before roosting at night in large groups. Also like Maang, they are fiercely territorial, with both parents sharing rearing duties and serving as protectors too. Maang and Ajijaak share many characteristics.

In North America, two species of crane exist, *Ajijaakwag* (*Grus canadensis*, or Sandhill Cranes) and *Waabajjaakwag* (*Grus americana*, or Whooping Cranes). Adult ajijaakwag stand approximately four to five feet tall and according to ornithologists T.C. Tacha, S. A. Nesbitt, and P.A. Vohs, are known by their red crowns and grey feathers (2). Adult waabajjaakwag are over five feet and according to James C. Lewis are usually known for their ebony-white plumage with patches of red on their heads (2). While all cranes have distinctive vocalizations, ajijaakwag and waabajjaakwag have three basic calls: a *contact call* (a low-pitched and soft call meant to keep relations in contact with one another in deep grass or marshlands); a *guard call* (a single loud vocalization used to warn or threaten); and the “*unison*” *calls* (repeatable sounds by mated birds in a synchronized duet, used for mating or warnings) (Tacha et al 8, Lewis 7-8). As William Seng points out, calls accompany what is often referred to as “dancing . . . synchronized dips, bows, head swings, wing spreads, leaps, and flaps. Birds also will occasionally pick items off the ground and toss them into the air” (253-54). These are often used to provoke mating but can also be “aggressive displays” used “to defend breeding territories or feeding areas” (254).

While not all subspecies of ajijaakwag and waabajjaakwag migrate, the majority travel in groups –at heights up to twelve thousand feet, using tail winds and thermal streams to travel as fast as 70 km per hour and 300 to 500 miles in a day (Seng 255). Evidenced in these two maps (Figure 11 and Figure 12), the main differences between ajijaakwag and waabajjaakwag are in their habitat, migration patterns, and populations. Both crane species have suffered tremendously from habitat loss, over-hunting, and agricultural and industrial sprawl and their population declines have

been well-documented. This is none more true than in the case of the Whooping Crane, who John Fitzpatrick argues has made it the “dramatic symbol” for 20th century bird conservation throughout North America (97).

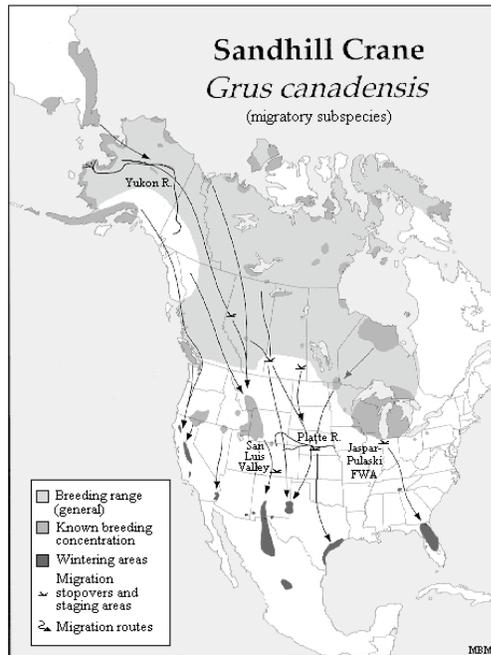


Figure 11: Sandhill Crane breeding and migration route, International Crane Foundation (“Sandhill Crane”)



Figure 12: Whooping Crane breeding and migration route, International Crane Foundation (“Whooping Crane”)

What is most interesting however, is how each bird has reacted to these changes.

Waabajjaakwag are on the endangered species list. Once numbering in the hundreds of thousands before European contact, they have suffered tremendously due to changes in their lives. Due predominantly to the draining of North American wetlands, loss of habitat, and the stringent needs waabajjaakwag require for nesting and migrating, their population has rapidly decreased virtually since Europeans began to settle the areas around the Great Lakes (Lewis 1, 14-15). By 1870, just over a thousand remained and by the 1940s less than two dozen were left (International Crane Foundation). Simply put, whooping cranes have specific needs and if these are not met, they die. Recent conservation efforts to restore nesting areas and migration paths have increased the number of waabajjaakwag to over 500 (“Whooping Crane”).

Ajijaakwag, on the other hand, are the most thriving cranes in the world, with a population of over half a million (Tacha et al. 1, 16, “Sandhill Crane”). While also suffering from loss of habitats, they have been able to use a broad range of nesting and hunting spaces to replace their original grounds, including bogs, cultivated lands, meadows, and grasslands. As Sacha et al. state: “A nesting territory usually has several potential nesting sites that may be used” (12). While they can be stringent in their migratory needs as well (over 80% use North Platte, Nebraska as an annual gathering place, for instance), they are flexible and adaptable, traveling sometimes many differing routes in several directions (Sacha et al 4-5). To put it most simply, the strict migratory and habitational needs of whooping cranes and the broad ones of sandhill cranes are primary explanations for their different populations.

While impossible to know which crane Keesh-ke-mun is describing (something I will return to in a moment), the point he makes to Askin and Zhaaganashag are that crane movements and calls embody who he and his community are. The community Keesh-ke-mun represents are a

mobile, powerful, and self-determining community with many relations and friends, near and far, who they can draw upon if they are threatened. Due to their sounds and calls, they are also a united people (amongst themselves and with other Anishinaabeg) that echo one another, protect themselves, and carry connective and communicative abilities to continue their lives. These come together to constitute the bold statements Keesh-ke-mun makes to Zhaaganashag.

Zhaaganashag response to the calls of Keesh-ke-mun is fascinating. Resuming their meeting the next morning, Mr Askin pronounced to Keesh-ke-mun:

Your English father has not sent for you to take your life. You have refused to accept the badge of his heart. You have refused to join him in putting out the fire of the Long Knives who are stealing away your country. Yet he will not detain you. He will not hurt a hair of your head. He tells you to return to your village in peace. He gives you wherewith to warm your children for the coming winter. But he says to you, remain quiet – remember if you join the Long Knives, we shall sweep your villages from the earth, as fire eats up the dry grass on the prairie. (qtd. in Warren 269-70)

Warren claims that Keesh-ke-mun, “without answering a word, accepted the presents and returned to his village. To his influence may be chiefly attributed the fact that the Ojibways of Lake Superior and Mississippi remained neutral during the progress of the last war” (270).

Warren argues that the decision by Keesh-ke-mun is a wise one, resulting in Anishinaabeg communities like Lac Du Flambeau maintaining – even “increasing” – its population while “other tribes, who have foolishly mingled in the wars of the whites, have become nearly extinct” (264). It is hard not to see this as an opinion emerging and perhaps some favoritism to tribes whom he knows and respects (and even perhaps a territorial disdain for Anishinaabe who allied with Zhaaganashag). At the same time, “extinct” is an interesting word choice (which some may notice is a hallmark of Warren). While he may mean the disappearance of a population, “extinct” also refers to the loss of the *existence* of a people in terms of their character, identity, and autonomy. According to Warren, Anishinaabeg in the west – while perhaps in possession of a political partner

with Zhaaganashag – might have given up something much more by separating from their relations. While Keesh-ke-mun states that he will use the “voice of the Crane” to “summon his children together,” this statement at the same time illustrates that perhaps not all Anishinaabeg will answer him. A rejection of Zhaaganashag includes a division with the eastern Anishinaabeg. The “voice of the Crane” – while powerful and strong, is not enough to stop Anishinaabeg from growing apart, echoing politically and ideologically what the “great Anishinaabeg migration” began physically.

The ties Keesh-ke-mun shares with his eastern relations – strong as they may be – were not enough to overcome his sentiment about Zhaaganashag and bring him into a relationship. He makes it fairly clear that his interests in negotiation and contact with Zhaaganashag – and by default their allies in the east – will be minimal. Or are they? For all of their posturing and threats to one another, the encounter between Keesh-ke-mun and Askin had some long lasting effects. Evidenced in their bagijiganan – for instance the presents offered by Askin and the gift of a neutral stance in the War of 1812 given by Keesh-ke-mun – it is clear that these men clearly felt some sense of kinship. Perhaps Keesh-ke-mun felt ties more with his relations who allied with Zhaaganashag and he had no interest in warring with his relations – there is no way to know for sure. Still, an encounter such as this lays bare a moment of encounter where decisions that impacted and influenced both communities, their culture, and their future were made. On the cusp of the War of 1812, Keesh-ke-mun and Askin formed a tentative strand of enawendiwin and a cycle of waayiweyaag. This was worth remembering at Lac Du Flambeau, as this crane marking would certainly have impacts over a century later. More on this in a moment.

Diplomatic Interventions

Signs of community unity and division when encountering and engaging with others are precisely what crane markings are all about. While sounds that call beings together in interests of protection and community, they are also opportunities of collaboration and affiliation, spaces where relationships external to Anishinaabeg community can be forged and solidified. Sharing duties with Maang in Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag, crane markings are signs of leadership and images of encounter, engagement, and direction. Crane markings are acts of diplomacy, discussion, and debate by Anishinaabeg with the beings they encounter. They facilitate opportunities for Anishinaabeg to engage and form relationships with those from other cultures and communities. These are gestures made most often – but not always – by leaders and community speakers. Crane bagijigan are amongst the most recorded and known expressions by Anishinaabeg, constituting many “first encounters” between Anishinaabeg and non-Anishinaabeg.

Ajijaakwag and waabajjaakwag provide a spectrum of different paths by their movement and calls. These are ways to forge relationships with beings through strands of enawendiwin and the creation of waayiyaag. One is a direction where Anishinaabeg needs are stringent and specific, the other is a path where these needs are variable and general – with each relationship profoundly impacted by its specific context. Crane markings are openings to inter-cultural and inter-community engagements, bagijiganan in the interests of movement and change. Considering power dynamics, they are almost always very difficult choices too – and sometimes not really choices as they accompany consequences and benefits in either direction. The real question however is this: how are the changes in Anishinaabeg senses of culture and community reflected in calls and actions of cranes? What do they indicate? And, perhaps most importantly, do they result in an ongoing and vibrant sense of Anishinaabeg or a compromised and disappearing one?

It is simply not a matter of deciding whether a crane marking is evidence of ajijaakwag or waabajjaakwag, for both are cranes. Cranes also have different calls for specific purposes. A contact call for example is different than a guard call or a “unison” call. It is also critical to remember that crane markings on treaties are also not of two birds but one (or, in some cases, several, solitary ones). Understanding a crane marking engages the process of negotiating what parts of tradition, protocol, and culture a community is willing to negotiate with. The actions by Keesh-ke-mun could be considered a sign of waabajjaak but also of ajijaak – a sign of specific needs but broad ones at the same time. It could also be considered a “guard” call, a protectionist move in the interests of separateness. I would argue that it might be more like a “contact” call to Zhaaganshag and their allied Anishinaabeg – a marking in the interests of connection and contact, but at a distance and far from sight from one another. Like cranes migrating in the sky, Keesh-ke-mun and his community may not be seen but are moving, migrating, and adjusting. Anishinaabeg leaders, particularly during negotiations with non-Anishinaabeg, are faced with decisions like this all the time. The question is always to adopt new ways and collaborate or to protect old ways and resist. The best leaders often find some compromise but the results are always complex.

Crane bagijiganan however do not have to be in the interests of collaboration. Nearly one hundred and fifty years after Bawaating Anishinaabeg leaders signed with the French using their totems at Sault Ste. Marie, on June 15, 1820 United States Territorial Governor Lewis Cass led an expedition to Bawaating to the south side of the St. Mary’s River, Anishinaabeg territory now claimed by the Gizhe Mookomaanag. It was now the aftermath of the War of 1812, a war that resulted in a British retreat back into Upper Canada and an abandonment of their Anishinaabeg allies south of the Great Lakes. While the United States and Britain had divided the region across the north and south shores in the 1783 Treaty of Paris – placing a borderline that spanned across

the Great Lakes (and specifically St. Mary's River) – the remoteness of Bawaating from major American urban areas and the fact that many Anishinaabeg were “hostile” (aka allies with Zhaaganashag) had ensured that most forces of American imperialism and conquest were kept at bay. Now, with American expansionism unencumbered and the area at the front door of the British, it was suddenly strategically and politically relevant.

Accompanying Cass on his travels was a young Henry R. Schoolcraft, who recorded the proceedings in a journal which later became *Narrative Journal of Travels from Detroit Northwest through the Great Chain of American Lakes to the Sources of the Mississippi River in the Year 1820*. There is a corroborating journal recorded by Charles C. Trowbridge assistant to Captain David B. Douglass⁶⁰ (a Cass ally) and a partial account by George Johnston, the mixed-blood son of North West Company fur trader John Johnston and Anishinaabe-kwe leader Ozhguscodaywayquay (“Woman of the Green Glade” or Susan Johnston).⁶¹ This is a compiled report from these three accounts, with Schoolcraft providing by far the most intricate detail. Arriving, Cass called immediately for a meeting with Anishinaabeg chiefs. The next morning, he offered tobacco to them and explained his desire to establish a fort and raise the American flag on the south shore, on land Anishinaabeg had permitted French Jesuit missionaries to inhabit in 1668. By virtue of a seigniorial grant made in 1750 and the 1795 Treaty of Greenville, Cass claimed that the United States had rights to the territory without any need for annuities or payments. The southern shore of Bawaating was now American, he pronounced, and he was going to take it.

Bawaating, as discussed earlier, was a sacred place for Anishinaabeg, where elders of the ajijaakwag and waabajjaakwag doodems had established a permanent ishkode (“fire”). With an outsider arriving to ask for a piece of it, much of the assembled Anishinaabeg balked. Many held deep ties to their Zhaaganashag allies and, to illustrate this, wore their colonial medals, clothing,

and adornments to the meeting. Most were also unimpressed at the prospect of negotiating with their former American enemy and were also aware that an egregious and presumptuous international border had been imposed on their territories. Many seasoned Anishinaabeg stakeholders in the area in fact, did not come to hear the pronouncement by Cass – a silence that spoke volumes. And, considering the past neglect of Bawaating by British and Americans, his claims were likely not taken too seriously as well.

Those who were present, however, vocally resisted the Gizhe Mookomaanag. Schoolcraft noted that the chiefs were “evidently opposed to the proposition, and first endeavored to evade it, by pretending to know nothing of the former [French] grant, but this point being pressed home, was afterwards given up,--still they continued to speak in an evasive and desultory manner, which amounted to a negative refusal” (*Narrative* 136). The leaders then asked to be assured that the Americans not establish a military garrison there, to which Cass flatly threatened that “so sure as the sun, which was then rising, would set, so sure would there be an American garrison sent to that place, whether they renewed the grant or not” (137).

This was enough for Sessaba, a young Anishinaabe chief attending the meeting and an adamant supporter of Tecumseh, who had had his close brother killed by Gizhe Mookomaanag at the 1813 Battle of Thames. After a lengthy and angry oration, he drew his staff and thrust it into the ground, kicked away the tobacco offered by Cass, and abruptly departed. A short time later, and in clear defiance to Cass and the Americans, news arrived that Sessaba had raised a British flag above his lodge. An enraged Cass “immediately ordered the expedition under arms,” travelling to the lodge of Sessaba where he tore the flag down and publicly chastised the young ogimaa (*Schoolcraft Narrative* 137). It is not known precisely what he said, but the interpreter relayed to

Schoolcraft that Cass “told him it was an indignity,” promising that while he and the US government were “natural guardians and friends... [there to] promote their peace and happiness.”

the flag was the distinguishing token of national power, connected with honour and independence,--that two national standards could not fly in peace upon the same territory,--and that they were forbid to raise any but our own [American flag], and if they should again presume to attempt it, the United States would set a strong foot upon their necks, and crush them to the earth (138).

This threat circulated widely and quickly. “Ten minutes” later, Schoolcraft witnessed a mass evacuation of the women and children in the community and both sides preparing for battle (139). For hours there was a “state of alarm” (139).

George Johnston, also witnessed – and later recorded – these events. At the urging of his mother Susan he states that he sent for the chiefs and elders, many of whom did not attend the gathering with Cass. Speaking to them in his office on the south side of the river, he expressed his concern over the situation and asked them to put a stop to Sessaba, who was rumoured to be arming himself and collecting warriors to help him fight the Americans (*Pioneer* 608-611). In response, the chiefs sent Chief Shingwaukonce (“Little Pine”) with a few warriors to deal with the situation. A Chief living on the northern shore of Bawaating, Shingwaukonce was a close ally of the British (having fought valiantly during the siege of Detroit) and also a great orator, clear thinker, and mediator.

Discovering Sessaba preparing for battle, Shingwaukonce told him that he must stop because not only would he suffer at the hands of the Americans but, in the words of Ozhguscodaywayquay, would “bring ruin to the tribe” (*Pioneer* 610). Sessaba, not be dismayed, lashed out at Shingwaukonce with his club, grazing his shoulder. Shingwaukonce, equally defiant, “kept up his oration and with his eloquence and the power vested him by the chiefs, he prevailed on the party to return quietly to their respective lodges” (610). Next, Johnston states that Sessaba

and his warriors “retired quietly to their respective wigwams” and another meeting was quickly ordered with Cass, this time in the office of Johnston. Robert Dale Parker attributes the work of the entire Johnston family – including the daughter and later poet and wife of Henry Schoolcraft) Jane Johnston – in engaging “the fraught emotions surrounding the decision to sign away Ojibwe land” (“Contemporary Anticolonialist Reading” 49). The provisions of an agreement were agreed upon by 7 o’clock on June 16, 1820 (*Pioneer* 611).

It should not be any surprise that the “agreement” heavily favoured the Gizhe Mookomaanag. Cass had made it clear that he was not interested in negotiation. The Anishinaabeg received presents and fishing rights at “the falls of St. Mary’s, and also a place of encampment upon the tract hereby ceded, convenient to the fishing ground, which place shall not interfere with the defenses of any military work which may be erected, nor with any private rights” (“Treaty with the Chippewa”). Signing the treaty were Anishinaabeg leaders such as Shingaubaywassin, Nabinois, and Shaiwabekaton. Unsurprisingly, Sassaba did not sign, leaving a mark of absence in defiance. In the following years, Edward Capp remarks in *The Story of Bawaating; Being the Annals of Sault Sainte Marie*, Sassaba roamed this territory, continuing to “officially” state that his home was occupied and openly renouncing Gizhe Mookomaanag (153). He also suffered from bouts of alcoholism – and eventually mysteriously drowned with his wife, and his children (154)

Shingwaukonce signed the treaty and then returned to live on the north shore of Bawaating – alongside Zhaaganashag. But, he did so in an interesting fashion, using his French name “Augustin Bart” to sign the treaty. Scholars have speculated why he used this name, speculating it was an homage to his father Lavoine Barthe, a French trader at Sault Ste. Marie (Knight and Chute 90). This could be true. It is notable, though, that when he went on to sign later agreements

(such as the 1850 Huron Robinson Treaty) he used his Anishinaabe name. Regardless, it is hard not to see the signature of Shingwaukonce as much like Keesh-ke-mun's lessons to Zhaaganashag eight years earlier, drawing upon the long Anishinaabeg relationship with Wemitgoozhiwag to gesture to notions of history, narrative, and relationship. "Augustin Bart" is a marking of resistance and a declaration of autonomy. It is also an appropriation: the use of a European linguistic signifier in the interests of Anishinaabeg politics, culture, and life.

I argue that Shingwaukonce, like Sassaba, knew the terms Gizhe Mookomaanag were making were unjust and that the Americans would proceed into their lands regardless of any "agreement" they would make. Anishinaabeg could either try to engage them in this process or resist. Both would come with consequences and would be a choice on which to face. One path would lead to the fate of Waabajjaakwag and the other to Ajijaakwag. Both Shingwaukonce and Sassaba offer up two of these strategies here. Making differing crane bagijiganan, "guard calls" as they were, they illustrated to Gizhe Mookomaanag that they may enforce their will and demands – even with the backing of military might – but they cannot silence Anishinaabeg. They cannot stop them from making their crane markings. They can ignore, deny, or misrecognize the sign, but it is there anyway. These crane markings are signs of leadership, proving that the power of Gizhe Mookomaanag is limited, contested, and separate from Anishinaabeg interests. The Americans would have to eventually listen to Anishinaabeg if they were going to have a relationship with them. Anishinaabeg just had to continue to make their marks, struggle, and hope that they would one day be heard.

Crane bagijiganan of today are dynamic and illustrate an ongoing sense of relationship-making between Anishinaabeg and non-Anishinaabeg. After centuries of colonial advancement and violence, it is fascinating that Anishinaabeg still choose to pursue a relationship with non-

Anishinaabeg, but they do. In these examples, these narrative acts continue a long tradition of articulating Anishinaabeg interests and potential pathways to relationships throughout space and time and here are two examples of storytellers giving Crane Bagijiganan and articulating what needs to happen for non-Anishinaabeg to carry the responsibility of relationship.

Wenabojo and the Cran(e)berries

In the 1977 book *Wisconsin Chippewa Myths & Tales And Their Relation to Chippewa Life* by anthropologist Victor Barnouw, there is a recorded story entitled “Wenabojo and the Cranberries.” Collected in 1944 at Lac du Flambeau from a 70-year old storyteller Barnouw calls “Tom Badger” (a pseudonym), it goes like this:

As Wenabojo was traveling one day, he went along the edge of a lake and saw some highbush cranberries lying in the bottom of the shallow water. He tried to fish them out time and time again, but every time he tried, they just stayed on the bottom. Well, he finally gave up. But he tried to grab them with his mouth by sticking his head into the water. Then he dove down into the water. The little rocks in the bottom hurt his face. While he was holding his face, Wenabojo happened to look up and saw the berries hanging up there. But he was so angry that he just tore the berries off the tree and wouldn't eat any, and he walked away. (46)

There are many entryways into this story (of which many versions exist) and I have pursued a few when teaching it. Here however I would like to employ the methodology of Basil Johnston for understanding Anishinaabeg language and literature (for more on this and why, see “Niizh”). Here I take up the task of uncovering the three parts of Anishinaabeg aadizookaanag: a “surface meaning” (derived from the basic words), a “fundamental meaning” (derived from contextual analysis), and a “philosophical meaning” (derived from identifying the beliefs inherent to the world-view, or epistemology, being expressed) (“Is That All There Is?” 100). It is here, I assert, where Anishinaabeg crane bagijiganan can be heard and seen.

I start with some of the “surface meaning.” As usual, Wenabojo wants to eat. Whether starving or his gluttonous or a mixture of the two, Winabojo eats to live, to continue, to assert his presence. Of course, as things usually go, the journey Wenabojo takes to fulfill his “need” does not result in success but a failure (a “hurt face,” in fact). Whether he knows it is going to end this way or not (Wenabojo does after all “give up” and yet tries again), he acts – discovering that his mistake is in his perception, reasoning, and trust of his own faculties. What he thinks are *real* berries are reflections, mirror images, and simulations of actual ones. By the time he realizes his error it is his damaged pride that has consumed him – he is “so angry that he just tore the berries off the tree and wouldn’t eat any.”

What is most upsetting for Wenabojo is his inability to recognize the trickery embedded in the images on the water. While appearing to give a promise of sustenance, what they really hold are absences – as unsatisfying, empty, and ultimately inedible “fakes.” By disconnecting the reflections from their “real” counterparts, Wenabojo has discovered that there are unsettling disjunctions that exist between illusion and the real, and he should be careful (perhaps suspicious) of his perception of reality. Simply, he should be cautious of his imagination. While this is an educational moment and one full of possibilities, it is also a reminder that there is such a thing as “the real” and it not only physically exists but also comes with metaphysical responsibilities and consequences (like carefully thinking, looking, and considering before acting – or else be the recipient of a “hurt face”). If he is going to avoid bruises, satisfy his needs, and assert presence, Wenabojo had better consider the intricate and important connections between acts of imagination and material realities.

An analysis of the “fundamental meaning,” as Johnston describes it, considers the many constituent parts that make up a story, its surrounding universe, and the web of relationships

actualized by its telling. Here I invoke the work of the late Lac du Flambeau Anishinaabe scholar Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, who has performed some of most community specific work about her community. In *Indian Country* Valaskakis discusses the specific contexts of her community, including their complicated entry into the Treaty of La Pointe in 1854 with the United States government. The Treaty of La Pointe was a historic negotiation: it created four Wisconsin reservations (at Red Cliff, Bad River, Lac Du Flambeau, and Lac Courtes Oreilles), two in Minnesota (Fond du Lac and Grand Portage), left out communities who thus lost federal recognition (St. Croix and Sokaogon) and laid the groundwork for other reserves throughout the Great Lakes. As Valaskakis writes, while Keesh-ke-mun had led his community in the 1740s to settle at Lac Du Flambeau, Anishinaabeg had been there for centuries (encountered by the Jesuits in the 1600s) (11). The Treaty of La Pointe, however, was a hinge-point, resulting in the formal creation of the Lac du Flambeau band of Lake Superior Chippewa and a deep impact on their cultural, economic, and social evolution.⁶² While the community faced several assaults and impositions that the treaty did not help them with, these intensified in the late nineteenth century with the 1887 Dawes Act. This was a devastating federal Indian policy that resulted in the sale of land allotments and resources at Lac du Flambeau, settlers flooding the area (specifically for logging), and wide-scale introduction of educational, social, and religious influences and institutions (14-16). By the 1930s, after years of exploitation, massive deforestation (resulting in the end of the sawmill industry), and the onset of the Great Depression, Lac du Flambeau members required new economic opportunities.

With beautiful lakes, plenty of opportunities to hunt and fish, and a culturally rich Indian population, most turned to tourism. For decades tourists flocked to the region – exponentially increasing demands for land and rapidly changing (often for worse) Lac du Flambeau life.⁶³ “By

then,” Valaskakis asserts, “almost half of our reserves lands were privately owned, mostly by non-Indians,” and community life had been radically undermined and altered (16). She cites a 1937 survey of the lands at Lac du Flambeau, where “the most desirable and valuable portions of lands along the lake shores have practically all been alienated [from Indians] by white owners and much of the remaining land, owned by Indians, is swamp lands, cut over or burned over timberlands and for the most part is of little value” (McKinsey qtd. in Valaskakis, 16). Of course, resistance and activism took place during and before these years, and Valaskakis states that many pursued political and social subversion and resisted these changes in their traditional practices and ceremonial activities as well. Since then, Valaskakis describes the past “seventy years” as moving from a “process of silence, through the rosary of resentments, to decisions on housing and working, to controlling and living our lives in Lac du Flambeau, all in the shadow of the government of Others, and always angry. We are still often angry, with imposed policy and decided practice, with non-Indians and other Indians and with one another” (18).

I would like to place this history in the context of “Tom Badger” and “Wenabojo and the Cranberries.” Badger undoubtedly witnessed some of the impact of this legacy on his community and is narrating “Wenabojo and the Cranberries” to an anthropologist – a colonial microcosm of cultural “tourism” (which, not coincidentally, Barnouw has been accused of).⁶⁴ The story speaks of empty and unsatisfying illusions on lakeshore water – which physically by then would signify settler-controlled land at Lac du Flambeau – and describes the disjunctions between perceptions and realities embodied in a loss of a sense of land, physical harm, and infuriation. It is hard not to see this as the original hopes and devastating results of the Treaty of La Pointe on the Lac Du Flambeau community. The “hurt face” of Wenabojo certainly rings of the pain felt by Flambeau citizens enduring the failed promises and constant impositions by Americans while his anger in

realizing the trickery of the cranberry illusions resounds of a historical discontentment regarding legacies of land ownership, impacts of industries, and colonial exploitation there. It also cannot be ignored that the tearing of the berries “off the tree,” refusal to eat them, and ultimate departure certainly reminds of the resistance, activism, and moves Valaskakis describes Lac du Flambeau members took in the interests of “controlling and living our lives in Lac du Flambeau.”

Considering all that was stolen, I would not eat the berries either. I posit that “Wenabojo and the Cranberries” is a narrative articulating all of these complex historical and spatial relations, describing an inter-connective relationship between Anishinaabeg and Gizhe Mookomaanag. I would also suggest that this story also describes how this relationship embeds itself in ties between history and narrative, politics and expression, mind and body, and imagination and reality.

Wenabojo is not only a creative and critical mythic vessel for Anishinaabeg spirituality, philosophy, and “traditional” teachings (as most often posited), but also a vessel for Anishinaabeg-centred historical, subjective, and political acts. And, while scholars have tended to laud “tricksters” like Wenabojo as representations of Native re-creation in narrative worlds (and figures used to enforce, tease, and test the boundaries and possibilities of existence), this being is also a methodology Indigenous storytellers and audiences use to assert, interrogate, and continue individual and collective existences as members of communities with diverse conceptual and corporeal relationships, rights, and responsibilities. While “trickster” stories are definitively about imagination, possibility, and transgression, they are also tied as much to complex histories, politics, and experiences as anything else. This point is put best by Vizenor in *The People Named the*

Chippewa: Narrative Histories:

Naanabozho, the compassionate woodland trickster, wanders in mythic time and transformational space between tribal experiences and dreams. The trickster is related to plants and animals and trees; he is a teacher and healer in various personalities who, as numerous stories reveal, explains the values of healing plants,

wild rice, maple sugar, basswood, and birch bark to woodland tribal people. More than a magnanimous teacher and transformer, the trickster is capable of violence, deceptions, and cruelties: the realities of human imperfections. (3-4)

Stories such as “Wenabojo and the Cranberries” explore these “mythic” and “transformational” spaces as well as illustrate Anishinaabeg expressions of treaty rights, land claims, and history – such as those found at Lac Du Flambeau – too.

I suggest that “Wenabojo and the Cranberries” is a bagijigan echoing the calls of cranes: given with hopes of understanding, recognition, and an offering to join in. It is a “unison” call, a sound by a mate when trying to inspire a synchronized duet and a narrative expressing the frustration that Anishinaabeg at Lac du Flambeau have endured all the way back to the defiant choice by Keesh-ke-mun to resist an alliance with Zhaaganashag at Fort Howard. “Wenabojo and the Cranberries” also embodies the reasons citizens of Lac Du Flambeau might have utilized to sign the 1854 treaty which led to its entry into tourism and capitalism. “Wenabojo and the Cranberries,” though, is also an encouragement to an anthropologist to look around, see the kind of illusions he is a part of, and see a reality being formed through treaties, relationships, and responsibilities. It is a gift and invitation to how a relationship can be re-made.

The crane markings by Keesh-ke-mun, Sassaba, Shingwaukonce, and Tom Badger endure. Their acts and sounds in interests of protection and community, collaboration and affiliation, and how these encounters and engagement can be directed in meaningful ways continue to teach. These invitations of diplomacy, discussion, and debate facilitate opportunities for Anishinaabeg and non-Anishinaabeg to engage and form relationships cross-culturally and provide a spectrum of different paths. Through strands of enawendiwin and the creation of waayiyaag, these are openings to inter-cultural and inter-community engagements – bagijiganan in the interests of movement and

change. Crane Bagijigan however can also take modern, nationalistic forms, such as in the work of Gerald Vizenor.

A Nation of Transmotion

I turn now to the critical and creative contributions of Vizenor, whose creative and critical work has much to say on these issues. While much has been written on Vizenor,⁶⁵ most critics are satisfied with over-emphasizing single aspects of his work and limit their criticisms along overarching political lines and tastes. While to varying degrees right, most unfortunately sell his writings short, using them to assert somewhat polemical assertions on the make-up of Native identities and the basis for cross-cultural collaboration and diplomacy. Mindful of this, I suggest here something few have: that imaginative ideas by Vizenor can be applied to current material struggles of Indigenous (and specifically Anishinaabeg) sovereignty and self-determination. In particular I will argue that Vizenor's writing is deeply applicable to one of the most important processes happening in Anishinaabeg communities: the re-defining, re-establishment, and re-assertion of practices and processes necessary for an active sense of Anishinaabeg nationhood to be recognized. Much of the work of Vizenor, I posit, are offerings Crane bagijiganan, gestures towards the application of Anishinaabeg structures through cross-cultural and cross-political change. This is perhaps best manifested in his vision of a sovereignty of "transmotion," a complex, powerful message based in Anishinaabeg intellectualism and a useful and hopeful idea of how Anishinaabeg survivance is actualized and assured.

For years critics of all stripes and interests have declared Vizenor to be a writer focused primarily on struggles of the imagination, and have described his legacy in these terms. In the most wide-ranging study of his work, *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*, Blaeser notes that the

“primary goal [of Vizenor’s work]... seems to center on preserving or creating a space of survival [for Natives]... more imaginative than physical” (39). How he does this, Blaeser writes in *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*, is by “upsetting the status quo, to deconstructing the term ‘Indian,’ to re-defining the mixed-blood, and to liberating the contemporary Native peoples he identifies as postindian” (“Postindian” 257). In other words, the articulation of Native identities is the primary method how the imagination is “freed.”

For the most part, analyses of Vizenor can be broken down into two veins of thought, with accompanying conclusions emerging continuously. The first posits that Vizenor is a virtual cultural relativist engaged in the process of undermining, subverting, and exploding almost all parts of Native identities. The second is that Vizenor is overly-distanced from most real-life Native contexts, struggles, and discourses, and this makes his articulations of Native identities vague and dubious at best, and fraught with assimilationist rhetoric and Eurocentrism at worst.

In terms of the former, most critics have focused on the way Vizenor subverts problematic, static discourses on “Indianness” (what he calls “terminal creeds”) and particularly as they are embedded in imperial, oppressive, and domineering colonial intellectual legacies (what he calls the “manifest manners” of dominance). Although Natives have ever-changing lives, cultures, and histories, David Murray writes:

this most ambiguous and paradoxical group has been subject to an essentializing rhetoric, in which Indianness is constantly associated with purity or simplicity, rather than the complexities and ambiguities of change and history. . . . Vizenor’s writing, with its emphasis on the crossing of races, genres, conventions and boundaries of all kinds offers one of the most powerful and extended demystifications of this rhetoric of Indianness, wherever it is found” (20).

These are activist moves, as the late critic Louis Owens stated in *Mixedblood Messages*:

Literature, Film, Family, Place states that

all of Vizenor's work represents such a liberation, a brilliant attempt to free us from romantic entrapments – especially victimage – and to liberate the imagination. The principal targets of his writing are the signs “Indian” and “mixedblood,” with their predetermined and well-worn paths between signifier and signified. Vizenor's aim is to free the play between these two elements, to liberate “Indianness” in all of its manifestations. (86)

For Elvira Pulitano, everyone is implicated in this as “at the heart of Vizenor's writing lies the intent to discard the institutional and academic stereotypes ‘invented’ for Native Americans by Euroamerican culture, to liberate his characters and readers and win for all the freedom of realistic growth and continual becoming” (242). Many similar claims exist.

These critics suggest that Vizenor advocates that Indigenous peoples cast off all imposed subjectivities and, with the help of post-structuralist theories, adopt a fluid, mediated, “crossblood,” cosmopolitan space existent in the contact zone between cultures – similar to what Owens has named the “frontier” (*Other Destinies* 52). After centuries of colonial discourses, policies, and practices on Native peoples (most embodied in the misnomer “Indian”), the need to always and continually forge “new” identities in the interests of resistance and survival is an idea commonly attributed to Vizenor. Most claim that his vision of the “postindian,” most clearly articulated in his 1994 book *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance*, recognizes what A. Robert Lee calls Native Americans as “mirror selves yet also actual selves,” and residents of modern, inter-subjective realities (6). Lee calls the writing of Vizenor that of a “textual shape-shifter... a ‘postindian’ authoriality ingeniously at one with ‘postindian’ Native life and experience” (16).⁶⁶

For the most part, these theories posit that Vizenor focuses on the liberating abilities of language to free Native individuals and encourage them to constantly make and remake themselves using “trickster discourse,” a theory that combines notions of “trickster” stories with postmodern moves toward fragmentation, the destabilization of signifiers, and wordplay. This is all to avoid

cultural ossification and stasis in the interests of continual reproduction of individualistic and infinitely refractable identities. According to Karl Kroeber:

Vizenor turns for recourse to the trickster... [to] manifest the creative force within individuals that allows them to escape from crippling burdens of the traditions they depend on for their sense of personal and communal identity. Vizenor dramatizes natives' skill in individual visionariness to resist becoming victims *even of their own culture*. (29, original emphasis)

Existing in a world where only Baudrillardian simulation is possible, Native identities must be multiply constructed and deconstructed in a continual linguistic performance of identity – remade in every dialogic negotiation, every utterance, every re-creation of the real. According to these critics, Vizenor offers chance, language games, and eternal transgression as some of the keys to the liberation of Native identities. Mirroring the description by Kroeber, Deborah Madsen argues that Vizenor reminds that “the self is always multiple and subject to liberating transformation” (69). Even the notion of any unified Indigenous subjective position (especially those based on notions of tradition and history) is destabilized in favour of multiplicities based in cultural relativism, humanism, and hybridity. Many additionally argue that these are “tribal” values. As I recount in a moment, even several theorists who have taken up Indigenous-centered and nationalist approaches to Indigenous literatures are occupied with the kinds of Indigenous identities Vizenor describes in his writing.

This has led to the second most popular conclusion on Native identities in the work of Vizenor: that it has little to no relation to Native political movements because of his difficult rhetoric and style, close relationship to poststructuralist theories, and privileging of postmodern individualism. Robert Warrior, for example, in an early essay entitled “Intellectual Sovereignty and the Struggle for an American Indian Future,” accuses Vizenor (at that time) of not putting most Indigenous interests at the center of his work as he “replicates the conclusions and praxes of

French theory.” On his applicability to indigenous struggles for “intellectual sovereignty,” Warrior claims, “while he opens tremendous avenues at the level of creativity and critical reflections, at the level of program, Vizenor offers us little” (17).⁶⁷ Although pointing out that Vizenor is “a writer I personally admire” for wide-ranging contributions and “heterodoxy,” Craig Womack writes that the discourses Vizenor employs distances him from most Native readers who could benefit from his work and are removed from tribal cultures and discourses (particularly in his use of “trickster consciousness”) (64). Womack also critiques the implications of his overly-open theories and “grab-bag relationship with theory” (70-72).⁶⁸ Anishinaabe critic Joanne DiNova takes these claims surrounding Vizenor a step further, asserting that his notions of Native identity are naïve, empty, and self-serving, using “some Native terminology and some mild (but not disturbing) allusions to Native issues within a distinctly Western and elite discourse” (75-84). The writing and theories of Vizenor, to these critics, is for the most part misguided, distanced from Indigenous contexts, and – in the opinion of DiNova – even evidence of assimilation.

All of this has resulted from some very limited interpretations. One such displacement occurs in an essay by critic Arnold Krupat entitled “‘Stories in the Blood’: Ratio- and Natio- in Gerald Vizenor’s *The Heirs of Columbus*.” In it, Krupat runs into a familiar Vizenor-ian phrase – that Native peoples (in the case of the novel – Christopher Columbus and his genealogical “heirs”) carry “their stories in the blood.” Krupat laments that this “troubling locution” “occurs some 53 times in a novel of 189 pages” because, “I do not... believe that there is any gene for narrative orientation or preference, nor that stories can be inherited ‘naturally,’ remembered, listened to, heard ‘in the blood’” (“Stories” 168). He then concludes (employing the work of Frederic Jameson and Kwame Anthony Appiah) that Vizenor must be playing with racist discourse and healing tribal cultures by “rattling the bars of nationalism” and insisting that national and tribal identities, as well

as the nation-state concept, be abandoned (172-73). Everyone, Krupat concludes on the novel, would be better off if they thought themselves as hybrid, crossblood “mongrels” (170).

As Jace Weaver points out, although he refers to his characters most times as “postindians,” and “crossbloods,” Vizenor “nonetheless champions them as *Natives* rather than ‘hybrids’” (*American Indian* 22, original emphasis). If Krupat considered this nomenclature, he might see that a concept such as “stories in the blood” is not so troubling. If we think of the characters in *The Heirs of Columbus* like their real-life counterparts – historical Indigenous subjects with spiritual, cultural, and political claims and members of still-existent Native communities – the notion that they have maintained their identities in the face of colonial invasion, genocide, and subjugation proves that they are living a narrative of Indigenous survival and endurance. Their continual genealogical line of strong, tribally-based, Native “heirs” from the bloodline of Christopher Columbus –the architect of the most genocidal chapter in Indigenous history – is a testament to the resiliency, political savvy, and innovative cultural abilities of Indigenous peoples. In his own words, Vizenor writes that, “the presence of natives on this continent is an obvious narrative on sovereignty” (*Fugitive Poses* 182). The ongoing presence, lives, and blood that runs through the veins of the tribal heirs facilitates, in fact, a possibility of Indigenous continuation in the Americas.

Also, the conclusion Krupat makes about *Heirs* – that we need to abandon national identities – stands in marked contrast to the end of the novel, where a “new tribal nation,” which the heirs name “Point Assinika,” is founded. Krupat, in this instance, seems to be conflating Indigenous “nationhood” with the historically European, progressivistic, and patriotic “nation-state,” while Vizenor seems to be doing something quite different.

Point Assinika is a tribal utopia that holds the power to heal the world.⁶⁹ It is a place where few controlling and discursive structures, what Louis Althusser identifies as “Ideological State

Apparatuses” (the police, courts, schools, government, media, and the church) exist – at least in the patriotic and historical nation-state sense. In addition, erased at Assinika are all of the institutions brought to North America by colonialists to affirm, entrench, and carry out their power over Indigenous peoples. It is a place where colonial policies and practices, such as blood quantum, can be overcome. It is also a beautiful place of resilience, resistance, and power based on values such as chance, “postindian” creativity, and survivance (which, in other work, Vizenor cites as Native-centred narrative practices) tie citizens to one another. And, perhaps most interestingly, it is also a place where sovereign and referential Indigenous identities (and arguably others) can be forged and continued through these linguistic and community practices.

What is most interesting to me is how much Point Assinika reminds me of the kinds of tribal nations articulated by certain Indigenous literary nationalist critics. Although Assinika is an imaginary construct, compare it to the visions of Indigenous nationhood in the collaboratively-written *American Indian Literary Nationalism* by Weaver, Warrior, and Womack. In the Afterword, written by Abenaki critic Lisa Brooks, her notions of Indigenous nationhood are, like Assinika, of “a nationalism that is not based on the theoretical and physical models of the nation-state; a nationalism that is not based on notions of nativism or binary oppositions between insider and outsider, self and other; a nationalism that does not root itself in an idealization of any pre-Contact past, but rather relies on the multifaceted, lived experience of families who gather in particular places” (“Afterword” 244). Described by Womack earlier in the book, Indigenous nations are definitively cosmopolitan but have “strong roots” at their bases, define relations, responsibilities and rights between family, relatives, and kin, and have citizens that tell stories grounded in specific histories, politics, and perspectives (168-9). And, while Indigenous stories take up resistance to colonialism, states Weaver, they are equally about sovereignty, “about the ability of Natives and

their communities to be self-determining rather than being selves determined” (41). Virtually echoing *Heirs*, Warrior points out that Indigenous intellectual practices emerging from complex Indigenous national experiences and perspectives not only ensure the continuance of tribal subjectivities, but also benefit others and the world as a whole (198-9). And – as if describing Assinika itself in his book *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History*, Justice argues that “Indigenous nationhood is more than simple political independence or the exercise of a distinctive cultural identity; it is also an understanding of a common social interdependence within the community, the tribal web of kinship rights and responsibilities that link the People, the land, and the cosmos together in an ongoing and dynamic system of mutually affecting relationships” (151).⁷⁰

Although Krupat calls Assinika a “post-tribal utopian community” (“Stories” 173), one cannot ignore the intriguing vision of Indigenous nationhood offered in the text, and the interesting similarities between the vision Vizenor offers and what Indigenous literary nationalist critics are seeking.⁷¹ Additionally, Vizenor gestures to similar endings in *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles* and *The Trickster of Liberty: Tribal Heirs to a Wild Baronage* (although admittedly none use the notion of “nation” as vividly as does *Heirs*). And, although Krupat identifies all of these texts as positing “post-tribal utopian communities,” critics have argued that these texts have grounding in contemporary struggles of specific Anishinaabeg nations.⁷²

At this point it is crucial to identify the skepticism Vizenor holds of nationalist movements. It was the monolithic and western drive to build nations, he points out in *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence*, that dominated and sought to erase Native perspectives from the landscape. Any forms of pride that unify a community, such as “colonialism, nationalism, and theocentrism,” can be “variations on narratives of dominance” (181). Vizenor also holds great suspicion of “concurrent native literary nationalists [who] construct an apparent

rarefied nostalgia for the sentiments and structures of tradition and the inventions of culture by a reductive reading of creative literature” (*Survivance* 17). I propose that this skepticism is healthy, important, and valid – but more on this in a moment.

While important, these Vizenor criticisms have obscured the fact that although Vizenor has written widely on Native identity, he has most often used Anishinaabeg-centered discourses to do so. From his description of what drives his writing in the introduction to *Escorts to White Earth, 1868-1968: 100 Year Reservation* (where “The fine spirit of the Ojibway song has been held in the heart”) (2), to his recent poetic re-telling of Anishinaabeg history in *Bear Island: The War at Sugar Point* (which calls the Leech Lake defeat of the Third Infantry “a continental shimmer/of native liberty”) (82), Vizenor consistently employs Anishinaabeg cultural expressions, historical events, and political practices. Most often, his main characters are Anishinaabeg, they come from Anishinaabeg communities, and they engage (or reference) some aspect of Anishinaabeg traditions. In particular, Vizenor most interests himself in how Anishinaabeg discourses resist, confirm, or coalesce with Western theories, colonial practices, and rhetorical imperialisms, but as I intend to show, he also explores them on their own terms.

Although Vizenor is definitely interested in individualis, he does not abandon Native-specific community processes as a crucial defining feature of Native identity. Take, for example, his virtual call-to-action in the final sentences of *Fugitive Poses*. Opening up the term “We, the people” in the United States constitution (“not a foremost pronoun of native presence on this continent” due to its historical enabling of domination and exclusion of Indigenous peoples), Vizenor claims that,

The promise of that plural pronoun is not passive, but an active obligation to be *the* people of this nation; the *we*, as natives of this continent, are the presence, transmotion, and stories of survivance.

We, the natives of this continent, are the storiers of presence, and we actuate the observance of natural reason and transmotion in this constitutional democracy. (*Fugitive Poses* 197, 199, original emphasis)

If Americans recognized that “the presence of natives on this continent is obvious, a natural right of motion, or transmotion, and continuous sovereignty; in other words, natives are neither exiles nor separatists from other nations or territories. The presence of natives on this continent is an obvious narrative on sovereignty – that is, natural reason and sovenance of motion, and survivance” (181-2). This turns “We, the people” into words of presence, words of inclusion, and an American nation where *all are native*. While tricky, the use of the pronoun “we” is both specific and multiple. For American identities (where individualism is a primary tenet) to have legitimacy, Native sovereignties (forged through their own “we” practices) must be recognized.

As he does in virtually all of his work, Vizenor employs what he posits as evidence of sovereign Indigenous principles today (“natural reason and sovenance of motion, and survivance”), bases them in historical evidence (namely that Indigenous presences are “obvious” and “natives are neither exiles nor separatists from other nations or territories”), and makes an argument that a “narrative on sovereignty” exists. Then, he identifies that all can learn and benefit from this. And in typical Vizenor fashion, he invents a neologism to assert how this “natural right of motion” and “continuous sovereignty” exists: *transmotion*.

I offer that transmotion is a cultural, political, and historical Anishinaabeg method of continuance and a crane bagijigan. It is evidence of a culturally-grounded way of studying his texts and a tribally-specific theory that evades most studies of Vizenor. Using a traditional and historical sense of motion, grounded in Anishinaabeg politics and intellectualism, Vizenor invents and didactically describes the struggles Anishinaabeg should take up to articulate concepts of nationhood and assert their sovereignty to others. It is a contact, guard, and “unison” call all at the

same time, a crane marking in the interests of a dynamic and vibrant Anishinaabeg nation and an encapsulation of the definition of Anishinaabeg that forms the basis of this project. Transmotion is a re-making of traditional nation-making practice and a statement of sovereignty for others to recognize. Although perhaps repulsed by certain attachments to “tradition” as a formative claim for identity, Vizenor himself writes, “Natives have been on the move since the creation of motion in stories; motion is the originary” (*Fugitive Poses* 55).

To understand transmotion one must engage survivance, for the two are interrelated. Most explored in *Manifest Manners*, “survivance” (a neologism that combines the words *survival* and *endurance*) is the state where Indigenous continuance is imaginatively and creatively conceived of, and then advocated for, by Indigenous thinkers in real-life contexts and circumstances. For Vizenor, this is particularly salient in the work of Native writers, such as Luther Standing Bear, who encounter, overturn, and rewrite the “manifest manners of domination” – those narratives and actions that subjugate, simulate, and ultimately seek to replace Indigenous presences in real and literary landscapes (*Manifest Manners* 3-5). In *Fugitive Poses*, Vizenor expands on the activist nature of the term, writing, “Survivance, in the sense of native survivance, is more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence. . . . The native stories of survivance are successive and natural estates; survivance is an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (*Fugitive Poses* 15). In his recent introduction to *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, Vizenor describes the idea of survivance as “a practice, not an ideology, dissimulation, or a theory” and mentions (without always critiquing) alternative spaces where it asserts difference in certain nationalist, global, and linguistic contexts (*Survivance* 11, 18-22). And, while not describing it as exclusively an Indigenous “practice,” Vizenor does argue that “the nature of survivance is unmistakable in native stories, natural reason, remembrance, traditions, and

customs and is clearly observable in narrative resistance and personal attributes, such as the native humanistic tease, vital irony, spirit, cast of mind, and moral courage” (*Survivance* 1).

For Vizenor, survivance begins in creative and sovereign imaginations. While many critics have turned primarily to post-structuralist theories to understand Vizenor’s advocacy of the imagination (often correctly), I’d like to suggest that to only do so is overly limiting.⁷³ In other words, I suggest that the determination of Vizenor to maintain cultural-specificity is worth considering. The strongest case for this is in the essay “Woodland Word Warrior: An Introduction to the Works of Gerald Vizenor” by A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff which studies Vizenor in the context of his “commitment to his own Ojibwe heritage” (23). Like many scholars, Ruoff explains that for Vizenor the imagination is the battleground Native peoples must take up if they seek to sustain themselves, their sovereignties and their cultures against colonialism as,

it is in the imagination of tribal people, not in the documents of historians and anthropologists, that their culture is recorded and transmitted. Vizenor stresses that “traditional tribal people imagine their social patterns and places on the earth, whereas anthropologists and historians invent tribal cultures and end mythic time.” For Vizenor, “to imagine the world is to be in the world; to invent the world with academic predications is to separate human experience from the world, a secular transcendence and denial of chance and mortalities.” (“Woodland” 24)

As Griever de Hocus (who Ruoff claims is a mouthpiece for Vizenor himself) pronounces, “Imagination is the real world, all the rest is bad television” (Vizenor, *Griever* 28). For “tribal people” to continue, they must imagine themselves into reality.

Creative and imaginative tribal knowledges, experiences, and sovereignties do not end when others are encountered.⁷⁴ It may be challenged, influenced, and even coerced, but our dreams, ideas, and expressions do not cease. We re-make, re-use, and re-create ourselves all the time, using materials, tools, and languages to do so. Even postmodernity, what critics point to as “transculturalism” in Vizenor, can be made tribal. As he writes in his Preface to *Narrative Chance*,

“The postmodern opened in tribal imagination; oral cultures have never been without a postmodern condition that enlivens stories and ceremonies, or without trickster signatures and discourse on narrative chance – a comic utterance to be heard and read” (x). Vizenor is right – certain postmodern theories such as polyvocality, “open-ended” texts, deconstruction, and subversion of monolithic didacticism have arguably always been a part of tribal knowledges. Notions such as hybridity, multiplicity and wordplay could be posited too. Parts may have been introduced as well. Where does the original begin and the new stuff begin? Can we find this in the Anishinaabeg Creation story? Does this matter?

It may be that there are multiple starting points, when sound meets thought for example. It might be that there is a spectrum of change taking place in multiple ways and directions everywhere throughout Indigenous nations of Turtle Island. It may just be that Indigenous cultures change and move and migrate and speak to others all the time, even though they must also be studied in community-specific ways and in times and places. As Vizenor notes of the misdirection of most literary criticism: “Native American Indian literatures have been overburdened with critical interpretations based on structuralism and other social science theories that value incoherent foundational representations of tribal experiences. . . . Foundational theories have overburdened tribal imagination, memories, and the coherence of natural reason with simulations and cruelties of paracolonial historicism” (*Manifest Manners* 75). Postmodernity, Vizenor reminds us, “is the discourse of histories over metanarratives,” an action that, when adopted by Native peoples, results in “the advance of survivance hermeneutics” (“Trickster Discourse” 167). This resembles writers like Peter Jones who refused to become a victim to European invasion, Indigenous peoples can use English, Christianity, and computers to survive and endure (where the neologism of “survivance” comes from). In other words, Indigenous peoples can use

postmodernity on their own terms. And, they can decide which parts are useable, and which parts are not.

In *Gerald Vizenor*, Blaeser also posits that his employment of the imagination is both tribal and political. Building on Ruoff, Blaeser reviews how Vizenor combines tribal, pan-tribal, and postmodern traditions, strategies and tropes, all in the interests of Indigenous survivance. In particular, she shows that Vizenor models his writing after stories he heard as a young man and grassroots activist in Anishinaabeg communities, uses Midéwiwin song structures, “word cinemas” available in Anishinaabemowin, and cites events in Anishinaabeg history, all of which substantiates her theory that Vizenor achieves “a sense of cultural continuity in his writing” (11).

In “Intersections with the Oral Tradition,” Blaeser explains that Vizenor “attempt[s] to invest the written form and his own creative works with the qualities and the power of the oral” (16). As she mentions, Vizenor draws on a long history of several tribal beliefs about the necessity of combining thought and language to create the world. One of his central methods is celebrating “the power of words to affect their reality, to bring about change, to create” (17). Words are vessels of thought, formulated by the creative impulse of the imagination, and the way tribal existence is conceived, understood, and lived. In the preface to *Wordarrows: Indians and Whites in the New Fur Trade*, “We are touched into tribal being with words, made whole in the world with words and oratorical gestures. Tribal families created the earth, birds and animals, shadows and smoke, time and dreams, with their words and sacred memories” (vii). As described in the Preface, Vizenor posits that words pre-date humanity, and that “storytellers (and, by extension, writers) are merely vehicles or voices for the words that have always existed” (Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor* 18). This concept, as I explore in the preface, is central to understanding how Anishinaabeg communicate, inter-relate, and create relationships in the universe. It is an inherent Anishinaabe philosophy.

In fact, this is part of a gift Anishinaabeg carry as a part of humanity. For all human beings to reside in relationships with each other, the earth, the universe, and ascertain the meanings of all of this – in other words, *to live* – they must creatively engage in the act of perceiving and expressing the world, giving back gifts that existence has given them. The processes of this experience are the words that become stories, narratives that explore a living, creative, and active universe. Vizenor, asserts Blaeser, takes part in a tribal principle that thought and expression are intrinsically tied together, an imaginative process where creativity invokes real-life change (*Gerald Vizenor* 18).

This carries with it great responsibility, though, for words can also bring forth death if the imagination is limited, as it does for the “terminal believers” who speak at the “last lecture on the edge” in *The Trickster of Liberty* or Belladonna Darwin-Winter Catcher in *Bearheart*. Language has the ability to create, to remake, and to change the world, but it also has the ability to constrain, to hurt, and to cause death if not understood appropriately (Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor* 19-20). And of course, linguistic acts are distinctly tied to human experiences, politics, and history.

This is why part of the powerful ability and responsibility of articulating the imagination is to maintain ties to referential realities, even if this is fraught with difficulties. Turning back to Tom Badger and “Wenabojo and the Cranberries” for a moment, the words of Wenabojo are embedded in his actions, his “incorrect” perceptions of the images on the water and his tossing away of the berries. His failure to understand the expansiveness of his creativity, conceptions, and contemplations makes his “words” empty, frustrating, and ultimately self-defeating. Simply, he has failed to connect his sign to a referent, and will not eat as a result. His only way to assure his presence, *his survivance*, is to learn, move on, and try again. If sovereignty is the ability to fail, grow, and learn on your own terms, the actions of Wenabojo suggest just that.

This is the power of Ajijaakwag and Waabajjaakwag: to move, communicate, and forge relationships and therefore come to understand the purpose, direction, and actions of your community. This is to grow within your community, to migrate and comprehend the complexity of its parameters within the world we live in. Then, once involved, crane calls help forge ways of life that ensure the continuation of community in relation to other peoples whether this be in specific and communal ways, or the wide and universal. Crane calls protect and speak and also understand when unity is required.

As I have spoken about earlier, many Anishinaabeg have spoken and written about how Creation began with a thought by Gizhe Manido. Humankind carries this ability to create too, in the gift of dreaming. This gift of dreaming, as stated by White Earth elder Odingun, gives humankind purpose (as they had “no minds of their own” before this), and “they learned how to heal the sick . . . how to teach the children and do everything” (qtd. in Vizenor, *Chippewa* 3). Dreaming is what many Anishinaabeg claim is how one maintains a meaningful relationship with the world and in the universe (Johnston, *Heritage* 13, 15-16, Rheault 88-90). The imagination is multifaceted, existing in Anishinaabeg consciousness (in intuition), unconsciousness (in dreams), and in spiritual existences (in visions) (Benton-Benai 78, Rheault 88-92, Johnston, *Heritage* 119-33). And, of course, thought is enacted through its like in the physical world, through forces like breath and movement. Language is the clearest and strongest vessel that travels from the incorporeal world into the corporeal one, bringing thought into motion.

As Vizenor writes in *The People Named the Chippewa*:

Traditional tribal people imagine their social patterns and places on the earth, whereas anthropologists and historians invent tribal cultures and end mythic time. The differences between tribal imagination and social scientific invention are determined in world views: imagination is a state of being, a measure of personal courage; the invention of cultures is a material achievement through objective methodologies. To imagine the world is to be in the world; to invent the world with

academic predications is to separate human experiences from the world, a secular transcendence and denial of chance and mortalities. (27)

For Vizenor, as I have stated often throughout this essay, there is such a thing as tribal cultures, tribal histories, and tribal imaginations, and they have been under attack for over five hundred years. The remedy is “to imagine the world” – maintain that courageous realm of creation where “anthropologists and historians” and their “objective methodologies” cannot overcome all discourse – and to “be in the world” – partake in the active process of bringing forth this vision.⁷⁵ It is crucial that this be done responsibly, ethically, and communally. As Wenabojo in “Wenabojo on the Cranberries” illustrates, the mistake is in perception. Trends towards nationalism and nationhood should be treated similarly, and not be immediately accepted but scrutinized, engaged, and enacted after careful consideration. Anishinaabeg peoplehood, sovereignty, and nationhood, if these things are to exist, must be carefully and responsibly conceived, defined, and imagined by Anishinaabeg. To not do so would be to believe the empty illusions on the water as truth, when they are intended to be provocations and possibilities, what Vizenor often calls “narrative chance.”

If one conceives of the sense of the imagination Vizenor employs as Anishinaabeg-centred, phrases such as “Native survivance is a sense of presence, but the true self is visionary” and “Nature, shamanic visions, oneiric presence, and the simulations of culture are true in the imagination, not discourse; one is survivance, the other is commodity” take on decidedly Anishinaabeg referents (*Fugitive Poses* 20, 26). This also starts to sound like Vizenor is advocating the kinds of action where spiritual knowledges effect Anishinaabeg politics. Personally, Vizenor has seen this movement in action, in the activist nature of his *Anishinaabe-gokomis*, who defined her “reservation in words” and “created a homeland in the memories of native humor” in her stories (*Chippewa* 54). So, if Vizenor is articulating a sovereign Anishinaabeg “homeland” in the imagination, can it be brought into reality and advocated for with non-Anishinaabeg?

In the final thirty pages of *Fugitive Poses*, entitled “Native Transmotion,” Vizenor weighs in on what he believes constitutes Indigenous sovereignty. Most remarkable is not that he engages sovereignty but how he does it, weaving in traditional Anishinaabeg ideas of motion with contemporary struggles for nationhood. It is here I suggest he makes his loudest and most resounding crane bagijiganan.

Vizenor opens with a discussion of the differences between Anishinaabeg and Euro-western senses of mapping. Citing a thirty-year-old court battle over wild rice paddies between members of the East Lake Reservation in Minnesota and the U.S. government, Vizenor shows that traditional concepts signifying Indigenous relationships to land and history, embedded in the oral tradition, are seen as nothing more than “hearsay” in court struggles. Treaties, he argues, are the only languages of value the courts recognize. Although valuable, Native senses of sovereignty are more than these paper contracts. As Charles Aubid, an eighty-six-year-old member of the East Lake Reserve who testified at the trial, says, Native senses of sovereignty live in “four distinct creases of native reason” – language (specifically Anishinaabemowin), courage and the seizure of an opportunity to speak honestly (what Vizenor calls “the mien of a chancer”), “stories of survivance,” and “presence.”

In a way similar to that by which Momaday imagines and invokes his grandmother and people into this world in “The Man Made of Words,” Aubid tells a story that brings people into being from a tribal imagination. Both planes of reality, the imaginative and the physical, are connected through his story. Vizenor, by narrating a story about Charles Aubid, who tells his own narrative about other elders who were present at the original treaty signing between US government officers and Anishinaabeg leaders, literally brings all of them, and their histories into being. Through language, Vizenor, like Aubid (and in turn as I have done so right now), has

brought the national homeland of the Anishinaabeg into being in this world. This embodiment of the oral tradition, in fact, is the practical combination of perception and expression, thought and action, imagination and motion. It is this movement between imaginative and “real” worlds that brings sovereignty into being.

Transmotion is not about giving up tribal identities, knowledges, and beliefs when you leave the imaginative world, but bringing them into being. By *evoking* them Anishinaabeg *invoke* them and assert experiences, ideas, and knowledges as families, relatives, kin. Collectively, these become complex expressions of collectivity, interconnectivity, and nationhood. These creative and critical processes also fulfill the responsibilities Anishinaabeg undertook when receiving the gift of dreaming, to engage with each other and the universe respectfully and holistically. As Vizenor claims, other Native writers perform this task in their writing, defining a “transmotion of native consciousness” and a “literary giveaway,” that defines other sovereignties too (*Fugitive Poses* 55).

Although critics like to point to the statement from Vizenor that “Native transmotion is survivance, a reciprocal use of nature, not a monotheistic, territorial sovereignty” (*Fugitive Poses* 15), this does not mean that he envisions land claims, borders, and tribal citizenship as irrelevant. These are necessary aspects of transmotion and survivance too. Just as cranes migrate, they must also have homes to return to, rest, and create homes and families.

As Vizenor claims, Aubid “mapped a visual representation” through his words. Mapping, one might remember, is a critical aspect of nationhood and a crucial way nations employ and recognize sovereignty. Mapping, Vizenor notes, is an Anishinaabeg tradition too. As he points out, “Maps are pictures, and some native pictures are stories, visual memories, the source of directions, and a virtual sense of presence” (*Fugitive Poses* 170). Maps are narratives devised by the imagination, placed onto land, enforced by belief, maintained through struggle. Just as colonial

agents in the West have created maps of lands using principles of individualism, capitalism, and colonialism, so too must Anishinaabeg create maps of lands using tribal values (note: “a reciprocal use of nature”).

I would suggest that mapping is also a crane bagijiganan. Scholars such as Miller have connected mapping with Nindoodemag markings and I add to this process in Bezbig. In other Anishinaabeg contexts, maps exist within the pictographs written on Midéwiwin scrolls. In one important scroll, the “path of life,” Anishinaabeg people are instructed on how to live. Citing Frances Densmore in her book *Chippewa Music*, Vizenor interprets the scroll like this:

The tangent lines at the turn of each angle are representations of the seven temptations, a virtual cartography. Densmore pointed out that the sense of temptation in this connection “implies primarily a trial of strength and motive.” The first and second tangent lines are resistance and the chance for life; the third, a spiritual initiation of the *midewiwin*; fourth, the temptation of middle age; fifth, the temptation and reflection of old age; and sixth, a return to a spiritual presence, the temptations of the visionary. The seventh and last temptation is the endurance of old age, at a time when *maji Manido*, or the evil spirit, comes to mind. (*Fugitive Poses* 172)

This is a map of life, a story that shows the life process of birth to death, explaining how an Anishinaabe person upholds his or her responsibility as member of Anishinaabeg society. It is a narrative about age, time, life, and most importantly, motion. It goes from right to left, which on a map would signify from east to west, the same path the sun takes, which ends up at the same ending point where the “path of souls,” the place where passed-on and future kin reside, exists (Johnston, *Heritage* 103-08). It also echoes the migratory path of the Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin with several divergent points, stops along the path, where Anishinaabeg stopped, split, and then continued. If one turned it north-south, the path of life is the same path cranes take, with stops along the way. Transmotion is about migratory paths and diverse needs.

The gestures of migration in crane bagijiganan that Vizenor employs illustrates how Anishinaabeg culture and tradition teach that motion is the way geographical, social, and spiritual relationships have been forged, maintained, grown, and fortified our people. And, while the Anishinaabeg nation and its borders, citizens, and cultures have shifted as others were met, traded and warred with, the community has continued. Some peoples of the Anishinaabeg nation have even moved in other directions, splintering off like the Pottawotomi or the Odawa, while some stayed behind to guard the Eastern Doorway, such the Abenaki. All have always maintained that they are members of a living and continuing Anishinaabeg collective.

As Vizenor states, “Motion is the originary.” The idea that Anishinaabeg peoples have always been on the move, on their own imaginative and narrative terms, is a sovereign concept. It is a principle inherent in Anishinaabeg notions of lands, maps, histories. It is the way material existence is perceived and the way bodies travel, live, and die in this life. It is also the way change is provoked and tribal selves and communities are maintained, as well as how both are brought bring forth into reality. As Vizenor reminds us, Native transmotion is not only lines on a map, it is a tribally autonomous worldview, a way of life.

This way of life, of course, has been disrupted by colonial advancement and domination, signified in land struggles and court battles. In fact, many Anishinaabeg have continued their westward expansion as a result of colonial displacement – some by choice, some not. So, how does thinking through a lens of transmotion help sovereignty debates today? Again, critics who like to claim that Vizenor is not interested in these discussions, quote lines like “The native sense of motion and use of land in the northern woodlands does not embrace inheritance or tenure of territory” (*Fugitive Poses* 178). Critics should not think, though, that Vizenor is saying claims to land

are not important (why would he cite the points Aubid makes about wild rice paddies, for example), but that they are not the only struggles sovereignty should take up. As he writes,

Colonialism, nationalism, and theocentrism are variations on narratives of dominance; these political, economic, and causal powers are not obvious historical instances of natural reason, rights of motion, or entitlements of native sovereignty. At the same time, the establishment of constitutional democracies in the past two centuries has secured new and diverse narratives of governance: the diplomatic narratives of treaties, executive documents, and court decisions that acknowledge the rights and distinctive sovereignty of native communities. (*Fugitive Poses* 181)

Crucially, Vizenor is not saying that Anishinaabeg should give up claims, but that we must think of land in *Anishinaabeg ways, through Anishinaabeg traditions, according to Anishinaabeg beliefs and community-derived decision-making methods*. Anishinaabeg must think of land beyond reservations and speak to others about this vision, perhaps in the way Vizenor imagines it at Point Assinika—without colonial vestiges. Anishinaabeg should think of sovereignty as: “mythic, material, and visionary, not mere territoriality, in the sense of colonialism and nationalism. Native transmotion is an original natural union in the stories of emergence and migration that relate humans to an environment and to the spiritual and political significance of animals and other creations” (183).

Individual and community diversity, creativity, and uniqueness are what Anishinaabeg bring to the table of creation. As crane calls suggest, Anishinaabeg have a responsibility to think and speak, no different than engaging with the earth creatively and respectfully. Anishinaabeg should not, and must not, destroy either imagination or earth by introducing methods of destruction, erasure, and domination, but keep them thriving through values that celebrate ethical communities, growth, and continuance. At the same time, needs must also be flexible and not too stringent, finding the balance whooping cranes and sandhill cranes gesture to. This is how Anishinaabeg can foster meaningful relationships and an active community – the way Anishinaabeg keep it Anishinaabeg.

Thinking of the Anishinaabeg nation in this way also imaginatively expands notions of peoplehood. One starts to include Anishinaabeg people in cities, for example. One starts to imagine economic methods where money, capitalism, and environmental degradation do not have to be the central tenets of economic self-sustainability. One can even imagine a space where legacies of colonialism, violence, alcoholism, racism, romanticism, and war can be overcome. Tribal “heirs” can tell stories of these imaginings, and even, perhaps change the world. They might create a new nation, name it Point Assinika, invite children, and inject them with healing “stories in the blood” too.

Crane bagijiganan, I argue, are statements of diplomacy but also markings of resistance. They are vessels of opportunity for relationships between Anishinaabeg and non-Anishinaabeg to forge relationships in meaningful ways. Markings by Keesh-ke-mun, Sessaba, and Shingwaukonce, “Wenabojo and the Cranberries” by “Tom Badger” and theories of transmotion by Vizenor are embodiments of crane bagijiganan. They are narratives with knowledge that Anishinaabeg can take to their next encounter at the negotiation table, conference boardroom, or the next time they see images of berries on the water. By drawing on collective knowledges embedded in history, language, and land, Anishinaabeg can learn from mistakes, devise notions of nationhood, and assert presence. Many Anishinaabeg, like myself and my daughter, can draw from these calls, their life-giving capabilities, and participate in Anishinaabeg community in a rich and meaningful fashion.

Naanan: Makwag Doodemag Bagijiganan

We need to see images of ourselves as healthy, whole people. People who love each other and who love ourselves. People who fall in love and out of love, who have lovers, who make love, who have sex. We need to create a healthy legacy for our peoples. (148)

- “Without Reservation: Erotica, Indigenous Style”
Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm

Whole Scratches

In the Anishinaabemowin/English short story by Alex DeCoteau called “Giche Makwa (The Great Bear),” a group of students ask their teacher if they can play in the forest near their school. Unsure, the teacher tells them: “Gogo ginwenzh ondendikegon! (Do not be gone long)” (4). Promising to listen, the students spend the afternoon chasing butterflies, enjoying birds, looking for flowers and watching squirrels until “[b]aanimaa go bezhig gwiiwizens ogii kikendaan. (all of a sudden one boy realized it was getting dark)” (5). Looking around, they realize they are lost and, as day turns into night, the children grow scared and worried. Suddenly, they hear a great being coming towards them, shaking the earth with every step. “Nawaj besho ezhi ayaanid, ogikenimaawaa awegweniban. Mii a’aw giche makwa! Ogii naanoondawaawaan iniw giche makwan iko bezindawaawaad chi aya’aan. Gakina awiia ogikenimaawaan iniw gizhe makwan. (As it came closer, they realized who it was. It was Giche Makwa, the great bear! They used to hear about him when they listened to elders. Everyone knew of the great bear)” (6).

Shaking in fear at seeing Giche Makwa and his huge red eyes, the children call out: “Aanish gidizhi doodamang? (What are we going to do?)” (6). In response,

Mii dash iniw gizhe makwan gaa izhi giigidonid: “Boozhoo,” gii ikidowan. Aapiji goshkwendamoo abinoojiiyag. Miinawaa gii kiigidowan: “Aaniish ezhiwebiziyeg?” Bezhigh abinoojii gii ikido: A’aw chi makwa Anishinaabemo!” “Ni wanishinomin,” bezhigh gaa izhi nakwetewaad iniw chi makwan. “Giga wiidookooninim,” gaa izhi nakwetaagod chi makwan. “Ambe, noopinanishinaam.”

(Then the great bear spoke: “Greetings,” he said. The children were shocked. Again he spoke: “What is wrong with you?” One child said: “The great bear talks Ojibwe!” “We are lost,” one answered the great bear. “I will help you,” the great bear answered. Come, follow me.”) (6-7)

Escorting the children to the end of the forest and the edge of town, Giche Makwa refuses to continue. “Giishpin waabamiwaagwen anishinaabeg giga nisigodogenag” gii ikidowan iniw chi makwan. “Maajaag aazha . . . giniigi’igowaanig wenda gashkendamodogenag” (“If the people see me they might kill me,” said the great bear. “Go on now . . . your parents must be very lonesome.”) (7). Leaving Giche Mikwa, the children call back and say: “Miigwech miishoomis” (“Thanks grampa”) and return to their home.

“Giche Makwa” is a narrative that demonstrates not only the importance of using all senses to comprehend a situation but how experience must be contextualized. It illustrates how the body is an interconnected vessel, filled with perspectives, and located in space and time. The children, who promise to heed the warning about playing too long, become distracted by the distinct and pleasurable experiences the forest provides them with: the smells, things to see and touch, and others that demand their attention. The experiences their bodies facilitate for them are rich and colourful but by themselves serve to *displace* the memories of the promise they have made. Like “Winabojo and the Cranberries” mentioned earlier, the children are tricked by the dynamism of their own senses, resulting in the neglect of responsibilities, loss, and confusion. It is when Giche Makwa arrives with a resounding “Boozhoo” (the Anishinaabeg traditional greeting) that the story turns: it is when the children realize their mistakes, re-centralize their perceptions, and acknowledge that Giche Makwa is, in fact, a relative.

In “Giche Makwa” it is not a sinful, corrupting, and distracting natural world like the puritans imagined it (“Young Goodman Brown” by Nathaniel Hawthorne comes to mind), but one that offers gifts. It is similar to the discoveries Peter Jones uncovers in his conversion narrative in

the early nineteenth century, a place that offers possibilities of relationship. The connection between corporeal things like smells, tastes, sight, touch, and sounds with incorporeal things like memories and commitments seems to be the most stark message. The natural world of this story suggests a place filled with subjectivities and entities struggling to communicate and work together. In fact, the story stresses communication, suggesting the possibility that the children will return to their community to tell the people that Giche Makwa is a friend and relation. Relationships are something to be constantly worked on, established and re-established, and while perhaps begin in the imagination, must be enacted through the body.

“Giche Makwa” however also gestures to relationship-making processes in this world too. Contextually, the story fits well in the 2006 publication, *Otter Tail Review, Volume Two: More Stories, Essays, and Poems from Minnesota’s Heartland*. As editor Tim Rundquist writes, the storytellers of Minnesota illustrate and re-create Minnesota itself, they take what is ancient, familiar, and new and engage with it in meaningful, beautiful, and important ways. “Our history is everywhere around us,” Rundquist states, “it fills us” (xiii-xiv). The narratives in *Otter Tail Review*, Rundquist suggests, illustrate the experiences storytellers have on the land, water, and with the beings who reside there – re-constituting the dynamism and movement in a shared place. Stories are the venues where experience, voice, and place share an intricate relationship and forge a Minnesota that others can share in, draw from, and use to form identities and communities. Framed in this way, the story in *Otter Tail Review* is intended to give an articulation of an Anishinaabeg perspective of Minnesota, a critical and under-represented voice. “Giche Makwa” the story is thus doing the same work as Giche Makwa the being. Both challenge notions of perception and encourage a larger understanding of place and members within it. In other words: both re-create the body of Minnesota.

Both Giche Makwa the being and “Giche Makwa” the story act as sorts of intermediaries, advisors, and doorway managers. They stand at entryways, places with strict ideas and stringent borders but with many available access points to one another. Giche Makwa, for example, stands where the forest meets the town, an entry point where language, experience, and sensory perceptions coalesce to form a relationship. “Giche Makwa” is a sign herself, an offering facilitating the possibility that a knowledgeable and sensitive audience – and particularly Minnesotans – can read the story, understand themselves and the world around them better, and form healthy relationships. In both cases bears provide possibilities and facilitate relationships within complex bodies, their interconnected parts, and the world around them. In my final section “Oshki Nasanaamo,” I examine “Boozhoo” further.

Makwag echo this in the world and have provided Anishinaabeg with bagijiganan about the dynamic nature of bodies, experiences, and relationships for millenia. In North America there are three types of bears: polar bears, brown bears (grizzly bears, sometimes known as Kodiak bears), and black bears. All derive from ancient ancestral lines and are omnivores. Anishinaabeg are most familiar with makade makwag, black bears – a slight misnomer, as there are sixteen subspecies and a wide variance of black and brown shades of them.

The smallest and most common species of bear in North America, the Black Bear (*Ursus americanus americanus*) is a fierce, strong, and smart animals. They are ancient creatures, with relatives dating back to over 35 million years ago according *Ecology and Behaviour of North American Black Bears* by to Roger Powell, John Wayne Zimmerman, and David Erran Seaman (8). Adults average between 40 and 140 kg in the springtime (females weighing usually less than males) and can go as high as 300 kg in the fall (Powell et al 5). Their geographical range is vast, stretching from the Great Lakes northwards and in pockets throughout North America (Figure 13). Makade

Makwag are incredibly resistant and adaptive – even adjusting to humans – and many inhabit traditional ranges even as urbanization has gone on around them. As zoologist Adrian Forsyth writes: “In both deciduous and coniferous forests, from the tundra tree line all the way into Mexico, wherever there is enough natural forest to sustain it, the black bear continues to inhabit almost all of its former range. Only in the densely settled eastern part of North America has it disappeared” (185). They are beings that both shape and are shaped by their environment. Research suggests that while they share many common features, “black bears live under a range of conditions that... lead to diverse spacing behaviors” (Powell et al 4).

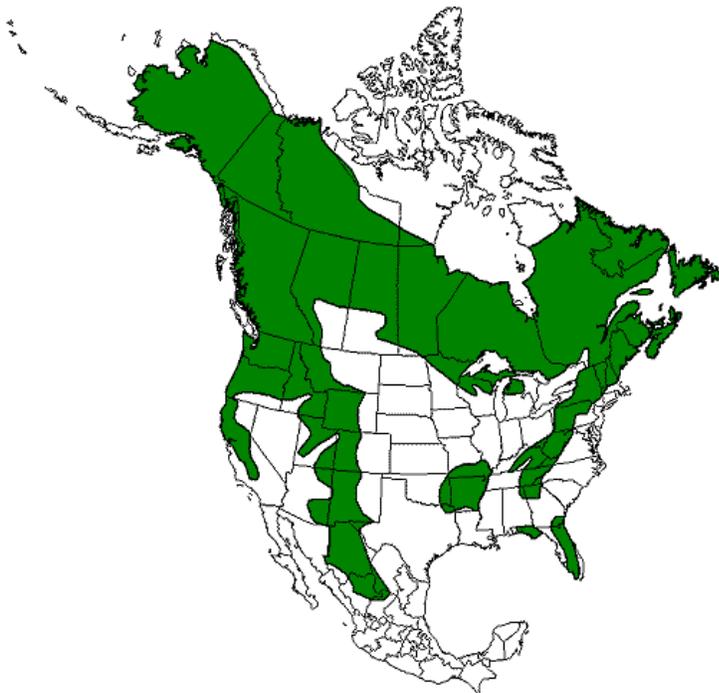


Figure 13: Geographic range of black bears in North America, the Wildlife Branch, Province of Manitoba (“Black Bear”)

Makade Makwag are generally shy and travel for the most part alone so encountering one is rare. At the same time, they are territorial, protective, and can become aggressive quickly – particularly when an intruder arrives unexpectedly (i.e. during feeding), competes for a mate, and/or threatens another (like a mother or cubs). They roam large territories, ranging from a fifteen

to eighty mile radius, and often mark territorial lines with urine, feces, or “leave deep claw marks high on scattered trees to show their size and strength,” mark territory, and send messages to potential mates (Forsyth 186, Powell et al 120-25). They can also vigorously tear strips of bark off with their teeth. These marks leave fur, carvings, sweat, and saliva, making bears one of the most provocative “authors” in nature.

Bears, on the whole, have extremely complex biologies and makade makwag are no exception. They “are considered omnivorous and eat a wide variety of foods” but “are quite selective in what they eat” (Powell et al 8). Excellent tree climbers and daytime hunters, their diet consists of mostly vegetation (roots, bulbs, corms, and tubers), insects (like ants), and meat when available (deer, fish, and other prey). They love honey, eating it even when enduring hundreds of bee stings. They also have been known to feast on human garbage and can become attracted to campsites, cabins, and rural homes where present. Much of their summer eating habits centre around preparing for fall hibernations, as “month or two before a bear actually enters its den in late fall, its physiology begins to change” so they change their diet with the season, eating sweeter and heartier foods like fruits and nuts in the fall to collect enough fat for the winter – putting on sometimes 15 kg a week (Powell et al 11-12). Living until approximately 20-25 yrs old in nature, they are able to inter-breed with other bear species, creating a sort of “hybrid” offspring. They are also one of few animals who will seek out medicines (such as *hedysarium alpinum*, bear root) to soothe upset stomachs, increase antibodies when sick, and promote healing and fur growth.

The complexity of a black bear’s body is especially evident during hibernation periods. Sleeping from November to March in burrows, caves, and hollowed-trees, black bears can go as long as 100 days without eating, drinking, urinating, defecating, or exercising. While sleeping, they slow their heart rate down to eight beats a minute (compared to 40-50 times at rest when not

hibernating), waking up only for brief amounts of time. During hibernation makwag keep rolled in a ball to maintain heat, cut metabolic rate, and are sustained by bodies that are basic self-maintenance machines. Supplying nearly 4000 calories a day to maintain their mass, their bodies have the unique ability to live off of muscle and organ tissue and avoid muscle cramping and degenerative bone loss. This process would normally result in a slow and painful death, but black bears replace tissue by processing urea (a component of urine) in a never-ending cyclical process. A bear therefore can maintain hydration without drinking water and carry extremely high cholesterol levels without hardening arteries or the formation of gallstones (Powell et al 11-15). On this scientists and Anishinaabeg agree: makwag are powerful and mysterious vessels.

It is these three parts of makade makwag, black bears – their territorial and protective nature, their rich and dynamic relationship with their surroundings, and the complex ways in which their bodies sustain themselves – that offer Anishinaabeg ways to understand themselves and the gifts they carry. There are, of course, other offerings by bears – many of which carry direct ties with Anishinaabeg communities – but these from black bears give a good starting point in understanding the place of makwag in Anishinaabeg tradition and expression. In fact, makwag are arguably some of the most viewable, utilized, and employed image in all of Anishinaabeg culture, existing on mediums from birch bark scrolls to rock paintings to nodoodemag markings on treaties to beadwork at pow-wows. There are many stories about bears. Johnston in *Ojibway Heritage* tells of how bears introduce wampum to Mudjeekawis and Anishinaabeg (152-53) while Vizenor tells in *Summer in the Spring* about how Great Bear serves as a guide, a builder and destroyer of barriers, and a teacher of the Midéwiwin (91-92). It is easy to view makwag in Anishinaabeg narrative, they are referred to directly and there are so many examples. It is, after all, difficult to hide a bear.

As an example, Louise Erdrich's use of makwag in her well-known series of books on the Pillager and Nanapush families are good places to begin. As Nora Baker Barry writes, it is the Pillager family in this series that encapsulate most directly the power and dynamism of bears.

Readers, Barry writes,

know what to expect when a Pillager appears. Pillagers are people of power with the smile of a wolf and the clan markers on their graves of "four crosshatched bears and a marten," who "knew the secret ways to cure or kill," who are feared and respected by all, and who fight the encroachments of Euroamerican culture. ("Fleur Pillager's" 24-25)

This is encapsulated most directly in the fierce and protective matriarch Fleur Pillager. In every incarnation in the series Fleur's interests, actions, and motivations are tied somehow to the body. As an elder in *The Bingo Palace*, for instance, she is a midwife, in *The Beet Queen* she is a medicine healer. In Erdrich's most enduring novel, *Tracks*, Fleur own body carries mysterious powers. She is able to avoid drowning (twice), conjure a wind storm to freeze men who raped her, call to bears during Lulu's birth, and even appears to Pauline to become a bear, leaving tracks in the snow (12).

In *Tracks*, where Fleur is the main character, her protective and territorial nature is not only in the interests of the physical but takes on an ideological agenda. She is the main protector of Anishinaabeg land claims against logging interests and is the most knowledgeable character about the land, carrying intimate relationships with spirits such as Misshipeshu, medicines, and is arguably the best Anishinaabeg hunter in the community. She is also a master gambler who uses her senses to outwit and read opponents. She is a territorial protector, a master geographer and a warrior and healer. She stands at the gateway between Anishinaabeg and interests that threaten them. And, although she is unable to fully protect Anishinaabeg from settler encroachment and dispossession, she disappears onto the land only to come back, as Baker describes in *The Beet Queen* and *Love Medicine*, "like a bear returning to its home territory" ("Fleur Pillager's" 32).

Other Anishinaabeg authors echo the offerings of makwag, giving bagijiganan that gesture to the dynamism and interconnected ways Anishinaabeg bodies connect with themselves, their territories and others. This sentiment resides in our very creation stories, in the very breath they are spoken in. Makwag bagijiganan are expressions that encapsulate the powerful abilities of the physical to forge relationships and support life. Here are two further examples.

The Bagijiganan of Wind and Writing

In “Uses of Plants by the Chippewa Indians” in the *44th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1926-1927*, ethnologist Frances Densmore included a story entitled “Legend of Winabojo and the Birch Tree” in amongst her descriptions of Anishinaabeg traditional medicines and ceremonies. Due to its rarity, I will provide a full transcription here:

Legend of Winabojo and the birch tree

There was once an old woman living all alone on the shore of Lake Superior. She had a little girl living with her whom she called her daughter, though she did not know exactly where the child came from. They were very poor and the little girl went into the woods and dug wild potatoes or gathered rose berries for them to eat. The little girl grew up to be a woman, but she kept on doing the same work, getting potatoes and berries and picking up fish that were washed ashore. One day when doing this she had a strange feeling as though the wind were blowing underneath her clothing. She looked around her but saw no signs of anyone. After a while she went home.

As soon as she entered the house her mother saw that she looked troubled and bewildered. Her mother asked, “Did you see anyone? Did anyone speak to you?” The girl replied, “I saw no one and heard no one speak to me.” After a time the mother noticed that the girl was pregnant and questioned her again but the girl replied as before, that she had seen no one. The only thing strange to her was the sensation of the wind blowing about her which she had described to her mother. When the time came for her to be delivered there was a sound as of an explosion and the girl disappeared, leaving absolutely no trace. The old woman threw herself on the ground and wailed because her daughter had disappeared. She searched every-where but could find no trace of her. Finally, in looking among the leaves, she saw a drop of blood on a leaf. She picked it up carefully and put it beside her pillow. After a while, as she lay there, she thought she heard some one shivering and breathing near her head. She lay still, not knowing what to do. She heard the breathing near her head constantly. As she lay there wondering what it could be she heard a sound like that of a human being.

She said, "I guess I am going to be blessed." As she lay there a voice spoke and said, "Grandmother, get up and build a fire. I am freezing." The old woman arose and looked around, and there beside her lay a little boy. She took him up and caressed him. She got up and made a fire to warm him, and behold the child was Winabojo. All the spirits that roam the earth were frightened at the birth of Winabojo, for they knew his power. Throughout his human life he was a mysterious being with miraculous powers. He grew rapidly in strength and soon began to help his grandmother. He dug potatoes and brought fish and berries for her.

One day, when he had grown to be almost a man, he asked his grandmother what was the largest fish in the lake. She replied, "Why do you ask? It is not good for you to know. There is a large fish that lives over by that ledge of rock, but it is very powerful and would do great harm to you." Winabojo asked, "Could the great fish be killed?" His grandmother replied, "No; for he lives below the rocks and no one could get down there to kill him."

Winabojo began to think about this and he made up his mind that he would learn to fight so that he could kill the great fish. He got some wood and began to make bows and arrows. Then he asked his grandmother if she knew of any bird whose feathers he could put on the arrows to make them effective. The old woman replied "No. The only bird whose feathers would make the arrows effective is a bird that lives in the sky, at the opening of the clouds. One would have to go up there to get the feathers." Winabojo began to think how he could go up there and get the feathers that he was determined to have. At last he said to himself, "There is a high cliff on the edge of the lake. I will go up there and stay a while."

When he reached the high cliff he wished that he might change into a little rabbit. So he became a little rabbit and lived there. One day he went on a very high part of the cliff and called to a big bird, saying, "Eagle, come here. I am a cunning little animal. I would be a nice plaything for your children." The bird flew down and saw the little rabbit playing there. The rabbit was the cunningest thing he had ever seen. The big bird was the thunderbird and he alighted on the top of the high cliff, near the little rabbit. Finally he took the little rabbit and flew up, up toward the opening in the sky.

When the thunderbird came to his nest he called to his children, "I have brought you something very cunning to play with." His wife spoke to him very crossly and said, "Why did you bring that rabbit up here? Have you not heard that Winabojo is on the earth? There is no knowing what you have picked up." But the little rabbit was very meek and quiet, letting the children play with him as they liked. The big birds were seldom at home as they went away to get food for their children.

All at once, one day, Winabojo began to talk to himself and he said, "These children throw me around as though I was nothing. Do not they know I came here to get some of their feathers?" The next time the old birds went away he changed into his human form, took a club, killed the little thunderbirds and pulled off their feathers. He hurried around and tied the feathers up in bundles for he was sure the old birds would soon be home. When all was ready he jumped off. He was not killed because he was a *Manido* (spirit) and nothing could hurt him. He was unconscious for a time after he fell on the earth but he was not hurt. Soon there was a great roaring in the sky with flashes of lightning. The thunderbirds were coming after him. Winabojo jumped up when he saw the flashes of lightning and heard the thunder. The lightning was the flash of the thunderbirds' eyes and the roaring was their terrible voices. He snatched up the bundles of feathers and ran for his life. Wherever he went the flashes and the roaring followed him, but he held on to the feathers. He had gotten what he wanted and he

did not intend to lose them. The thunderbirds kept after him and at last he felt that they were tiring him out. He began to fear that he would be killed after all. The thunderbirds came so close that they almost grasped him with their claws. He was getting bewildered. They were almost upon him when he saw an old, fallen birch tree that was hollow. He crept into the hollow just in time to save his life. As he got in the thunderbirds almost had their claws on him.

The thunderbirds said, "Winabojo, you have chosen the right protection. You have fled to a king-child." There they stopped. They could not touch him for the birch tree was their own child and he had fled to it for protection. There he lay while the thunder rolled away and the flashes of the thunderbirds' eyes grew less bright. He was safe.

When the thunderbirds had gone away Winabojo came out of the hollow birch tree and said, "As long as the world stands this tree will be a protection and benefit to the human race. If they want to preserve anything they must wrap it in birch bark and it will not decay. The bark of this tree will be useful in many ways, and when people want to take the bark from the tree they must offer tobacco to express their gratitude." So Winabojo blessed the birch tree to the good of the human race. Then he went home, fixed his arrows with the feathers of the little thunderbirds and killed the great fish.

Because of all this a birch tree is never struck by lightning and people can safely stand under its branches during a storm. The bark is the last part of the tree to decay, keeping its form after the wood has disintegrated, as it did in the tree that sheltered Winabojo.

The little short marks on birch bark were made by Winabojo but the "pictures" on the bark are pictures of little thunderbirds. It was said that the bark in some localities contains more distinct pictures of the little thunderbirds than in others. (381-84)

Densmore collected this aadizookaan from elder and storyteller Papa'gine, ("Grasshopper" or Mrs. Mary Razer) from the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota. A long-time collaborator with Densmore, Papa'gine shared this story on a trip where she taught her the proper way to cut down a birch tree "in all sincerity" (386-87). From the tree, Densmore provides a piece to show the reader (Figure 14).

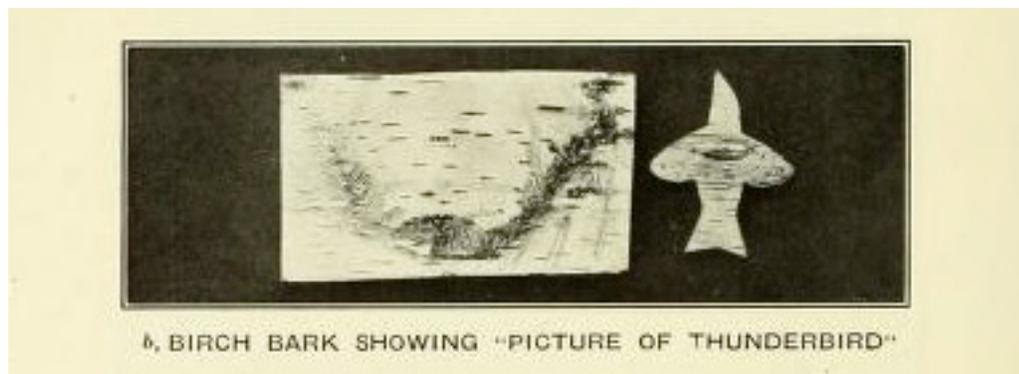


Figure 14: Densmore's photograph (plate 52b)

So, what might this story have to do with makwag? None are mentioned. But yet, I argue that makwag bagijiganan exist here.

“Winabojo and the Birch Tree,” like most aadizookaanag, is a narrative that shares and demonstrates knowledge about the universe and humanity’s relationship to it. This is encapsulated in the title. Take, for instance, the first word: “Winabojo.” This being, as has been addressed throughout this study, is the spirit/human physical manifestation of connection between the spiritual and physical realms. In “Winabojo and the Birch Tree,” this bridge is illustrated through his mysterious parentage and origins. As “a mysterious being with miraculous powers” growing “rapidly in strength,” his abilities are demonstrated through transformation and motion (shape-shifting and traveling to nests in the sky, for example) while his character is full of curiosity, obstinacy, and determination. He also inherits gifts and responsibilities from his relations (from his mother he receives life for example and from his grandmother, to provide). This sets up the ending of the narrative and Winabojo’s gift of the birch tree to his future relations: the “human race.”

“The birch tree” makes up the last part of the title. As the story shows, the tree is a “king-child” to the thunderbirds, holding powerful and mysterious properties unto herself. Like Winabojo, the tree is also a bridge between physical and spiritual realities. And, like Winabojo, the tree’s powers are strong, protecting from the “flashes” in the thunderbirds’ eyes, maintaining its strength even as it is “old, fallen” and “hollow,” and preserves and prevents decay. As Winabojo demonstrates, the birch tree is also to be respected and honoured for the “good” she gives – signified in offerings of tobacco. Perhaps the most important message of all though is in what Papa’gine shows Densmore: that the birch tree shows actual, empirical evidence of the claims of this story through two markings. The first is in the “little short marks on birch bark... made by

Winabojo,” and the second in the “‘pictures’ on the bark . . . of little thunderbirds.” In the title, therefore, we find two powerful and unique entities singled out and acknowledged.

This still does not however explain the most significant relationship embedded in the story. This is found in the title’s middle word: “and.” “Winabojo and the Birch Tree” is about connections, relations between worlds and realities, and what happens when Winabojo and the birch tree join their lives together. One only has to list the number of bridges constructed between entities by this narrative, such as: Winabojo-birch tree, Winabojo-humanity, birch tree-humanity, spirit-Winabojo, spirit-birch tree, Winabojo-White Earth, Papa’gine-White Earth, White Earth-Densmore, Densmore-Papa’gine, Densmore-reader, Papa’gine-reader, White Earth-reader, and so on. Everything in this story seems to be about relationship building, how parts come to make a unified whole.

In the story’s universe, it is “and” that carries the most meaning. Take, for instance, the blurry line between natural and supernatural. In this world, the wind can impregnate a human and a being named Winabojo can appear out of a drop of blood to shiver and breathe. Or, a half-human/half-Manido can magically transform into a rabbit, travel up to a nest in the sky, turn back into a human, and jump back down to earth. Or, Thunderbird spirits can have tree-children. Or, spiritual beings like Winabojo and Thunderbirds can leave permanent markings like those found on the birch tree. These marks, in fact, are *the evidence* of this bridging between spiritual and material existence. They are created and endure as a result.

Whereas the body of Giche Makwa connected the corporeal and incorporeal worlds in “Giche Makwa,” birch bark markings do similar work here. “Winabojo and the Birch Tree,” Papa’gine shows, is written right into the bark by two great teachers of Anishinaabeg – a relation (Winabojo) and a non-relation (Thunderbirds). In “Winabojo and the birch tree,” these writings

demonstrate how relations and spirits communicate with humans and how knowledge about the universe and responsibilities within it are shared. In these markings are lessons of how history is remembered and activated. This makes birch bark a mnemonic device that not only Papa'gine considers and thinks about, but one that she "reads." Influenced by forces around her (tradition, history, politics, Densmore, etc.), Papa'gine uses these birch marks to tell a story of its meaning. The birch tree therefore is the equivalent of a book, document, or piece of art created through an ongoing collaboration between Manido, humans, and nature. Birch bark markings are thus the memes that remind of relationships connecting the peoples, forces, and worlds in this story.

But it is how the narrative encourages its own re-telling that the most important bagijiganan are revealed. It is worth noting that the most significant bagijiganan in "Winabojo and the Birch Tree" are delivered through "wind." This is most obviously shown through the conception of Winabojo – by the wind "blowing underneath" his mother's clothing – but two other instances occur. In the first Winabojo is literally created from breath that the grandmother hears – it literally pronounces his arrival. In the second, Winabojo declares how the birch tree carries markings that will "bless" humankind. Breath and speech are what gives birch bark markings power. They create life, signify presence, and forge a language that carries the story from the incorporeal to the corporeal.

Considering for a moment the author, it is not just words and birchbark that are shared with Densmore but instructions. It is simply not enough that Papa'gine tell the story of "Winabojo and the Birch Tree," but demonstrate the knowledge within the story. It is a bit of a rough analogy, but she must practice what she preaches. As Densmore records, Papa'gine "offers tobacco to the cardinal points and the zenith, murmuring petitions, and buries it at the foot" of a 38-foot birch tree before cutting it (387). Papa'gine is honouring the bagijigan she has received from Winabojo. Like

Winabojo (who owes his life to the birch tree and blesses it in return), actions, breath, and words must accompany the “reading” of the story if the gift of the birch is to be enjoyed. In other words, the markings carry responsibilities of respect, honour, and duty first set forth by Winabojo. And, if others wish to experience the positive relationship humans and birch trees share, they too must maintain the responsibilities within birch marks.

Sharing this story to Densmore is a part of this process too. As much as Papa’gine can say that the birch tree must be honoured because it protects and preserves teachings for humanity, she must be active in her relationship to it and show Densmore how she can partake in this relationship too. Sharing “Winabojo and the Birch Tree” with Densmore ties her to Papa’gine in a relationship of mutual exchange. The narrative is, to return to the description of gifts by Cary Miller in the “First Breath”: “a permanent reminder of mutual obligations accepted at the moment of exchange.” Simply, Papa’gine shows Densmore how traditions of respect are followed with the birch tree because both are now responsible for carrying this knowledge. Since both can now “read” the birch bark markings, both have duties in the physical world to the knowledge contained within them. For Papa’gine then, sharing the story is a practice of gift-giving, kinship formation, and sharing: a lifeway.

The “little short marks” and “pictures” also demonstrate that Anishinaabeg (from White Earth at least) have known about writing for a long time – since first viewing the markings and pictures made by Winabojo and the thunderbirds. They have ideas of “texts” and “signs” and perhaps even “authorship.” There is also an argument for Papa’gine as a literary critic somewhere in there. Writing and reading here makes up essential parts of the cultural universe of Pape’gine. They are not corrupting forces “tainting” traditional Anishinaabeg cultural expression but working hand-in-hand with it. The truth of this is right there – one just has to “read” it.

The body though is the critical site of this scene of writing. It is the marking on the tree to relations, to kin, to the universe that marks presence, territory, and life – just like makwag. “Winabojo and the Birch Tree” is a Makwag bagijiganan, a site forged through experiences of body and expressions of it. Like bears marking their territories or signifying for a mate, markers on birch bark are makwag bagijiganan that create, protect, and document Anishinaabeg experience, provoking others to partake in a narrative tradition. It marks the place where Anishinaabeg expression lives, can be found, and can be fostered. This is not an ancient narrative practice – it is happening today too.

“blackened red reddened black”

Born and raised in Winnipeg to an Anishnaabe mother and Irish father, Marie Baker – also known as “Annharte,” which I will use here⁷⁶ – has written three poetry books: *Being on the Moon* (1990), *Coyote Columbus Café* (1994), and *Exercises in Lip Pointing* (2003). A performer, mixed media artist, and activist in poverty and disability issues, her work includes plays and radio dramas, several essays, and mixed media art pieces, but poetry is what she is best known for. Most of her best known work emerges out of the turbulent 1970s and 80s, when Indigenous activists were speaking out against a wave of assimilationist policies and practices and writers were often motivated not only by a rediscovery of traditional cultural practices but by these politics. These were words not always welcomed by the Canadian literary establishment, and Annharte struggled alongside writers like Lee Maracle, Maria Campbell, and Basil Johnston to be heard. *Being on the Moon*, for example, was published by a small, independent British Columbia press at an extremely contentious time, in 1990 – the same year Elijah Harper declared a defiant “no” to the Meech Lake Accord and the Oka standoff occurred. Echoing these movements, the collection mixes Anishinaabe metaphors and

intricate wordplay while unapologetically advocating for Indigenous cultural autonomy, community-building, and recognition. It is a text that endures, with poems re-appearing in collections like *Native Poetry in Canada: A Contemporary Anthology* (2001), edited by Jeanette Armstrong.

Echoing writers like Leslie Marmon Silko and theorists like Gerald Vizenor, Annharte is deeply invested in the liberation of Indigenous peoples from the discourses that coerce, objectify, and seek to dominate them. More specifically, her words investigate how Indigenous bodies enable discursive freedom through inspiring dynamic expressions based in complex experiences, forming relationships in unique and interesting circumstances. Through her poetry, Annharte suggests that Indigenous presence and survival is found in the specific moments and sensations we carry, learn from, and express. Inspired by a creative and critical force she calls Coyotisma, these instances are found in the words forged by Indigenous bodies, actions, and ideas and embody the praxis of Indigenous Poetics. She is in many ways a forerunner to this project.

One manifestation is found in her iconic poem “Raced out to write this up”:

when I cross the finish line will it be white will I be red
 from running hot and cold touch me not less I am to be
 divided against my self who is both red and white but not a
 shade of pink maybe a beige pink blushed flushed off
 white right I color my winning everytime I am still in the
 red not the black blackened red reddened black but
 what about black ‘n blue green at the gills yellow belly
 but what about the white frightish part I put it behind
 behind me when I need to say my piece about togetherness
 that we must not breed not by ourselves but with everyone
 out in the world who will listen hey I am a half a half
 breed a mixed bag breed... (*Being on the Moon* 61)

“Raced out” is about experience as both a member of a race and a racialized *other*. Critics have long sought to undermine claims of race – calling it essentialist and a constructed illusion and so forth – but one cannot ignore that there are very real experiences of race, good and bad, and a world full of

racism. Annharte draws upon these in “Raced out” and suggests that the body is an experiential site where several discourses of community, race, racism, poverty, skin, alcohol, and blood converge. She suggest that Indigenous bodies both *mark* and *are marked by* experience. Reflecting on the gaze of a white, mainstream audience on her work, she first considers how her words are coerced and controlled when she employs her race. She mulls the colours she will be shaded with until realizing that her body resists this imposition and facilitates her autonomy. As she writes: “I color my winning everytime.” Her body though is “still in the/red not the black” and carries agency to create a “blackened red reddened black” (even allowing her to colour the colour that absorbs all colour). Through experiences found in bruises (“black ‘n blue”), sight (“green at the gills yellow belly”), and sex (“breed”) Annharte now can create a new racial category for herself: a “half a half/breed a mixed bag breed.”

Annharte here is provocative. In a poem about resisting assimilation and finding liberation through the body, she utilizes discourses that have been historically used to undermine Indigenous communities: blood quantum, genealogy, and the loaded name *halfbreed*. Of course, she is of mixed parentage and the term arguably carried different connotations in the 1970s and 80s, but I believe she is making a profound statement about how Indigenous bodies inform cultures and identities and how they mark the world as much as are marked by it. In other words, she is demonstrating how Indigenous peoples carry the ability to create themselves and their cultures and communities through words emerging from their experiences. They only have to recognize this power, that they have it, and have the courage to forge a “blackened red reddened black.”

More on this in a moment, but critics have noted the focus Annharte plays on the body and asked her about it. Take, for instance, her interview with literary critic Pauline Butling:

Pauline: Has hybridity been an important issue for you?

Annharte: Well yes, it is a painful thing. You're always made to feel like you're somehow inadequate. You're considered inauthentic. Somehow the racial thing is supposed to give validity to who you are. From day one, if you're not one hundred percent identified with one particular group, you're inadequate. But I have often felt there was a kind of freedom connected to that. At other times, I have felt connected to people of the world of mixed heritage or dual heritage. But I was born with a blue spot on my bum, which is considered a marker for Native babies. For some people that is very important.

Pauline: That makes you authentic! ("I Make" 110)

Annharte of course is referring to the "Mongolian spot," a congenital birthmark carried by a majority of Indigenous babies. Marked by it, Annharte carries a tool to combat questions of authenticity and accusations of inadequacy. She might even convince detractors by employing it (evidenced in the tongue-in-cheek response by Butling). At the same time, she recognizes that "the racial thing" is an empty part of addressing the question surrounding her "hybridity."

At this point it is crucial to engage for a moment the critical theory of "hybridity" and examine whether this work fits this mold. Hybridity is a concept that has dominated the field of Indigenous literature for almost two decades. Critics have done an ample job tracing and interrogating it, but I will review a few major tenets here. Hybridity is a vein of criticism emerging out of post-colonial and post-structural theory that suggests that cultural literatures are focused on – and emerge from – a thoroughgoing "hybridization" with social and political forces around them. Like all cultures of the world, John Thieme suggests, hybridity is a multicultural, multidirectional, transient process human beings experience where identity is created from the temporal balance found in mediating competing forces in life (121-2). The current theoretical incarnation has "re-emerged," Arnold Krupat suggests, since "the discovery of the new world" – when Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples met in the Americas (*Red Matters* 15). Hybridity has been profoundly shaped by critics like Frederic Jameson – who argues that all subject positions are multiple – and post-colonial theorists who have used theories like displacement by Sigmund Freud and *différance* by

Jacques Derrida to assert that the continuance of minority identities resides in the mediation of all multiple subject positions – which are “[d]isplaced but not *replaced*,” (original italics, Bammer xiii). In other words, advocates of hybridity suggest that human beings mediate different positions at different times while privileging some strategically. The implication of a hybrid identity is that it constantly shifts as positions inform each other through their presence and influence. An excellent example of this is found in Chinese Canadian writer Fred Wah and his work, which privileges the in-between space mediated between his Chinese or Canadian identities, what he calls “the hyphen – that marked (or unmarked) space that both binds and defines” (72).⁷⁷

The notion of “hybridity” has been specifically used to understand work in Indigenous cultures and communities, suggesting that they recover their identities in a post-colonial context by combining pre-contact cultural lives with present “modern” ones. Much early work in this area involved privileging an Indigenous “traditional” position against others, such as by Algerian writer Frantz Fanon⁷⁸ and Kenyan-Gikuyu writer Ngugi Wa Thiong’o.⁷⁹ Some have accused these theorists as advocating for essentialist, isolationist positions that privilege a naïve “Nativism” and deny European cultural influences (Gandhi 6-8). Advocates of hybridity have also suggested that colonized peoples might be better off avoiding cultural “nostalgia” by accepting and embracing fluid, cosmopolitan subject positions. Homi Bhabha, for example, argues that human identities have “moved away from singularities of ‘class’ or ‘gender’ as primary conceptual and organizational categories” and there is now,

an awareness of the subject positions – of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation – that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world. What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of

collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (*The Location* 1-2)

For Bhabha it is in the “in-between spaces” where identity is constantly being mediated, not in single and unitary subject positions. Culture is enriched and identity is liberatory when acknowledged as hybrid as then there are no fixed positions that can be controlled, coerced, or dominated by a power source. As Bhabha claims, this can be a “strategy of political subversion” through constant cultural “mimicry” and “new signs of identity” (*The Location* 62).

In recent years the theories of language and literature by Bakhtin have been utilized to expand theories of hybridity into contemporary Indigenous literatures. Bakhtin’s theories of heteroglossia were particularly influential for Louis Owens, who suggests that Indian identity is “always unstable, multidirectional, hybridized, characterized by heteroglossia, and indeterminate” and Native writing is “what postcolonial critics have called “migrant” or “diasporic” writing” (“As If An Indian” 171).⁸⁰ Relying heavily on Bakhtin, he argues that “the Native American writer, like almost all colonized people, must function in within an essentially appropriated language” and they are always in the position of encountering hegemonies that seek to undermine them (*Other Destinies* 12). Owens posits that Indigenous writing is always resisting, always appropriating, “and thus entering into dialogue with the language itself. The result of this exquisite balancing act is a matrix of incredible heteroglossia and linguistic torsions and an intensely political situation” (15).

The book that polarized this issue of hybridity is the 2003 text *Towards a Native American Critical Theory* by Elvira Pulitano. In it, Pulitano seeks to do a “dialogic or a crosscultural” reading of Indigenous texts since “any attempt to recover a ‘pure’ or ‘authentic’ Native form of discourse is not possible since Native American narratives are by nature heavily heteroglot and hybridized” (7, 13). For Pulitano, an autonomous Indigenous perspective is impossible as “Native American writers and critics are inevitably implicated in the discourse of the dominant center, and, from such an unstable,

strategic location, they articulate their critical voice” (189).⁸¹ She creates an evaluative hierarchy of six Indigenous writers (Paula Gunn Allen, Craig Womack, Robert Warrior, Louis Owens, Greg Sarris, and Gerald Vizenor), judging harshly those who are “nationalist” or “separatist” (Allen, Womack, Warrior) because they do not acknowledge western discourse and lauds those Native writers (Owens, Sarris, Vizenor) who merge “Native epistemology with Western literary forms” because they “argue for a hybridized, multidirectional, and multigeneric discursive mode, one that reflects the crosscultural nature of Native texts” (14, 186-191). Vizenor in particular suggests the most subversive tactic as his “trickster hermeneutics negotiates between two different epistemologies, and within this context it functions as the perfect embodiment of Bhabha’s third space” (178). For Pulitano, Indigenous writing is only valued insofar as it mediates (and makes its central tenet) multiple subject positions that engage with asserting “hybrid” – multicultural, multidirectional, transient – identities.

Many Indigenous writers, on the other hand, have spent much time articulating their cultural- and community-specific perspectives, traditions, and histories. Most are mixed-blood Native peoples, with many cultures and communities making up backgrounds and identities. In recent years these have been called tribally-specific writers, Indigenous literary nationalists, or another trendy name, but I would suggest that some level of interest with one’s family, community, and kin is almost always the concern of Indigenous writing. These poets, storytellers, and essayists may find it startling to discover that as soon as a critical mass of published Indigenous authors emerge and articulate culturally-specific claims and perspectives in their work, a theory comes along claiming that this is naïve, impossible, and based in Eurocentric concepts like race. Now, we are told, there are only hybrid individuals mediating constantly contesting and multi-directional positions in things like “third spaces.”

Before returning to the question Butling asks of Annharte, there are two main issues here worth addressing with respect to hybridity: a problematic principle of purity that undergirds virtually all theories and some well-worn, stereotypical assumptions of Indigenous cultures. These are encapsulated in a belief I often call the *deficit model* that much of Indigenous Studies falls into, the idea that European contact with Indigenous peoples always represents a long, slow, and inevitable march towards disappearance. A consistent, gripping, and underlying belief that infects so many theories surrounding Indigenous cultures and communities, this is the same force that produces the 1971 “Keep America Beautiful” commercial, where a crying Indian named Iron Eyes Cody passively watches Mother Earth get polluted and turns to the viewer and cries.

Meanwhile, just as it turns out Iron Eyes Cody is Italian and the commercial is really just settlers constructing and gazing at a fantasy, hybridity relies on a similar notion. Namely, it is undergirded by a undying belief there is such a thing as a “pure,” “unitary” or “single” Indigenous position and that in the face of anything European it is a passive, impotent victim. I have written about this elsewhere and will not repeat this here,⁸² but the point is that theories of hybridity have for the most part left Indigenous people and our actual, complex, and real-life expressions out of the equation. This does not mean that hybridity theorists have not provoked interesting suggestions,⁸³ just that the disjuncture between their theories and the lived experience of Indigenous peoples – and in particular writers – is profound.

“While many Native writers and critics have emphasized marginality,” Muskogee Creek critic Craig Womack states, “this has not always matched Indian people’s vision of themselves, a gap between literary and social worlds that deserves some attention. In all my years in Oklahoma I have yet to meet an Indian who introduced him or herself to me as a ‘hybrid.’ Maybe someone should wonder why a word that used to reference seed corn and cattle is now the term of choice for

critics describing people of color” (*American Indian* 136). The larger question might be why anyone would be so threatened by something called a “Native perspective” and what this might mean for political and social movements in North America. Could it be about pride in one’s community and culture and a tool that has always operated in the formation of bodies we might call nations? As Justice argues in *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History*: “[t]o ground one’s work within Indigenous epistemologies is not a necessarily exclusivist act that seeks an idealized cultural purity. Rather, it is, at its core, a deeply ritualistic and life-affirming act” (10).

Justice also points out:

To whatever degree “hybridity” is a human reality, one thing is certain from the work of most Indian writers: being Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw-Cherokee, or Anishnaabe, or any of the other self-designations of the Indigenous peoples of this hemisphere, includes a fundamental affirmation of the Indian nationhood of a specific community that expresses a tribal-specific identity that is rooted somewhere in a tribal-specific language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and geography. Why else would we cite tribal affiliation? Why would we acknowledge kin, ancestors, and spirits if not to acknowledge their specificity? Why would so many use their Indigenous language to name particular spirit beings, or give geographical details of a particularly meaningful place, if not to locate them in a specific linguistic, geographic, and sometimes historical relationship? (214)

In many constructions of hybridity, Indigenous-specific spaces must be cast away in favour of contact zones, revealing an assimilationist intent, an attempt Cherokee critic Jace Weaver describes as constructing “everyone into a hybrid or mixed-blood mold” (*American Indian* 28). We have to remember, Weaver reminds us, that, “Native cultures have been highly adaptive, and they continue to evolve constantly. . . . Since 1492, hybridity has been an attribute of both “races,” Native and Amer-European. Its positive aspects, however, are often presented as unidirectional. For Europeans or Americans to hybridize with Natives is to become more American, more indigenized. For Natives, it seems, it is to become less Native (Weaver, *American Indian* 28). “[D]espite postmodern claims of fragmented, fractionated, and multiple identities,” Weaver claims, “Native identity is not

freewheeling and infinitely refracted. One cannot, for instance, dream oneself Indian while possessing no Native ancestry. Not even the most louche critic would do so” (20). While this last point is perhaps debatable, Weaver makes an important part that the recognition of membership in community matters and – as this project shows with people like Frances Densmore or Alexander Henry – this might shift over time, place, and politics.

What remains a sticky discussion point for many is in biology, blood, and the body, which brings us back to the question Butling asks Annharte. As she has written in “Cheeky Moon”:

I am left to defend
 one lonely drop of blood.
 I might terminate
 if I get a nosebleed.
 The degree never counts
 unless you practice law.
 I need the law of the land
 to respect my blood.
 Between you and me
 it is the bucket of crabs
 pulling us down together.
 I count myself lucky
 to salvage my ancestry
 in this particular drop
 at my time. (*Being on the Moon* 69)

What happens in the deficit model is that Indigenous peoples get reduced to drops of blood and Mongolian spots in order to convince others of authenticity. Well, that is until we get a nosebleed or grow up – and then we disappear. What we need, Annharte suggests, is to not get caught up in this notion of disappearance and pull one another down like a “bucket of crabs” but advocate that “the law of the land... respect my blood” and find a way to “salvage” our ancestry for ourselves.

For this we turn to our bodies, which demonstrate powerful messages to us all the time. As Annharte illustrates in her best-known poem “One Way to Keep Track of Who is Talking,” there is no more significant act performed by the body than the act of language:

If I change one word, I change history. What did I say today? Do I even remember one word? Writing is oral tradition. You have to practice the words on someone before writing it down.

I do not intend to become the world's greatest Indian orator. Maybe I will by accident. I might speak my mind even when running off my mouth like I am doing. Language finds a tongue. Maybe it will be an Indian accent. (*Being on the Moon* 78)

In these two stanzas Annharte suggests that the act of language making is a force the body carries. Language comes from somewhere of course, and must be always carefully considered, practiced, and undergirded by forces like honesty, but it must be embodied to make an actual change in the universe. It can also be learned. Once spoken, "Language finds a tongue" – the body shapes and creates words, "maybe" giving them "an Indian accent." The creation and re-creation of a language not only remakes a self but it results in the marking of Indigenous presence through a fundamental expression of experience, action, and change. This combination of mind and action echoes the first thought of Giche Manido that originally formed life.

At the same time, the body not only marks presence but it can signify the silencing of Indigenous existence. In the second half of "One Way to Keep Track of Talking" she writes:

Counting hostile Indians is made easier because they do not talk much or very little. They look the part - the part in the middle with braids. You never do know if you are talking to an Indian.

Frozen Indians and frozen conversations predominate. We mourn the ones at Wounded Knee. Our traditions buried in one grave. Our frozen circles of silence do no honour to them. We talk to keep our conversations from getting too dead. (*Being on the Moon* 78)

"Hostile" people do damage to themselves when they refuse to speak and participate in their creation. Their language literally becomes nothing, the "part in the middle with the braids." When

Indigenous peoples allow discursive forces to dictate and speak their words for them they become like those “at Wounded Knee.” Complicit acceptance of imposed and pre-determined “frozen conversations” therefore results in cold, lifeless and silent corpses, doing “no honor” to those who fought, resisted, and protected our traditions for us. Without speaking “Our traditions” are “buried in one grave.” This is why we must “talk to keep our conversations from going dead” and determine a future on Indigenous terms through our experiences, bodies, and words.

Annharte changes history in many more ways here (suggesting, for example, that “writing is oral tradition”) but I would like to further examine how she conceives of a future through body and language. Uncovering how language liberates Indigenous peoples and identities is a predominant theme of her keynote address “Borrowing Enemy Language: A First Nation Woman Use of English” to The Western Front’s 1992 “English: Writing with an Accent” Conference. In this speech, Annharte addresses those who claim that the use of English suggests an assimilation with Eurocentric discourse. She states:

My anger rises at the shaming mention of the loss of fluency in a mother tongue or the scolding talk that seems directed as a speaker who has not retained an Indigenous language or dialect – as if being a dispossessed (Indian) person with fragments of culture, history, and land base was not enough tragedy. . . Even while some of us use English, attendant with its limited foreign meanings, the innate understandings might go beyond language. Maybe we actually do speak from the heart. (59)

What Annharte is referring to is the historical claim that English is an incommensurable language to Indigenous discourses and its use signifies a total cultural loss.

This is a very popular claim in Indigenous Studies and one does not have to travel far to hear it. Take, for example, professor Anton Treuer’s in a 2010 interview in Anishinaabemowin with William A. Percy states:

[21]Aangodinong aanind anishinaabeg odaabajitoonaawaa zhaaganaashiimowin izhi-ozhibii’igewaad, miinawaa owiindaanaawaa anishinaabedibaajimowin, anishinaabe-ozhibii’igewin. [22]Gaawiin dash indinendanziin. [23]Mii

ow keyaa gaa-ozhibii'ang zhaaganaash, mii ow keyaa, mii i'iw inwewin gaa-aabajitood zhaaganaash, miinawaa zhaananaashii-ozhibii'igewin indinendaan. [24]Weweni sa gidaa-mikwendaamin weweni sa da-apiitendamaang gidinwewininaan. [25]Weweni sa go ge giishpin aabadak bakaan inwewin, gegoo izhi-aanji-aayaamagak, bakaan inendam anishinaabe anishinaabemong. [26]Miinawaa go ge giishpin aabadak i'iw zhaaganaashiimowin, bakaan da-inendaagwad. [27]Miinawaa sa nawaj da-wenipanad wii-paaping anooj gegoo omaa anishinaabemong, miinawaa anooj dino gikinoo'amaadiwinaan atewan imaa inweng anishinaabe. [28]Mii ow wenji-aabajitooyeg, miinawaa go ge izhi-inendaagwak i'iw anishinaabe-ozhibii'igewin.

[29]Weweni go ge aanind anishinaabeg noongom gaawiin gakina ogikendanziinaawaa anishinaabe-inwewin, mii iw wenji-inendamowaad niibowa "indanishinaabew'," miinawaa "indoozhibii'ige," mii o'ow anishinaabe-ozhibii'igewin. [30]Gaawiin dash gwayak, indinendam. [31]Geget sa zhaaganaashiimowin, zhaaganaashii-inendamowin, giishpin ozhibii'ang gegoo zhaaganaashiimong.

Percy's translation of Treuer's words are:

[21]Some Indian people are writing in the English language and calling it Indian literature. [22]I do not think so. [23]But I feel that this is actually a variety of English literature. [24]The language defines the literature. [25]And if a different type of language is used, something changes. [26]And if the English language is used, there's a different way of thinking in that language. [27]There are different understandings, and different teachings, that are embedded in the language. [28]And that is how it is thought of.

[29]There are many Native people who do not know their Native language, and so it is normal for them to think, "Indianishinaabew', I am Indian, indo-zhibii'ige, I am writing, so this is Indian writing." [30]Not exactly right, in my thinking. [31]In writing in English language, they are thinking in English language.

Treuer, of course, is a fierce advocate for Anishinaabemowin and a protector of the language, so it might not be advantageous for him to suggest value in English. The implication of his statement however is far-reaching, drawing a line in the sand where Indigenous writers, thinkers, or people operating in ancestral languages are doing cultural work while any and all working in English are not. Some, like Owens, have taken this a step farther, arguing that writing in English represents a similar loss of authenticity (*Other Destinies* 6). If true then most Anishinaabeg, the one writing in this book, and the majority of Indigenous peoples doing community work are deeply deluded.

Or, it may just be that language represents something more than deficit theories and concepts of hybridity provide, and this is found in the body. Treuer is right on one hand: English does carry deficiencies and inabilities to accurately translate other languages, but Annharte suggests that we might think instead about whether it is a force that controls us or we control it. Language, does, after all, come from the breath that was gifted to us by Gizhe Manido. Even as she is not a speaker of Anishinaabemowin, Annharte identifies that English has significant “limited, foreign meanings” that “fails to carry the spirit of what was said” (“Borrowing” 59). She specifically identifies the dependence on the pronoun “I,” which “gives the subject so much importance, and distances him or her from the humble listener.” She also notes that the “death and mutilation of our peoples’ spirits and bodies accompanied the teaching of English,” and it was used as a tool to victimize, undermine, and appropriate Indigenous history and experience (60). This process continues in those who demand to “hear ‘civilized’ speech or the correct grammar and pronunciation” – like the Métis man who accuses Annharte of “not being a poet” unless she writes like John Donne (61). Still, even as she names English an “enemy’s language” that lives “*within* the individual person,” she states that each has the responsibility to examine “one’s own language use and how one is programmed to look at things” (61). To quote her: “Maybe we actually do speak from the heart.”

Annharte explains how she does this herself:

The occasion to share experiences about subverting the English language is for me not just a discussion on First Nations’ vernacular use in writing. I glibly mention that I “massacre” English when I write. Of course, I need to explain that I am deliberate about poetic language in my writing. Academic snobbery or cultural arrogance has adversely affected our ability to use catchy phrases. Anyone who gives an interesting talk is given accolades. The vulgarity of normal expression is sacrificed for the deadness of scholarly language. Yet the ways to wring multiple meanings out of words still occur. The underclass English vocabulary is a source for my borrowing of language... Used by Indigenous peoples around the world to communicate, English may borrow from their struggle to maintain both land and cultural bases. I am not

suggesting further appropriation of ideas by ripping words and expressions out of cultural context. I think borrowing does happen especially when reciprocity actually does happen. (“Borrowing” 60).

“Massacring” English by focusing on it is “underclass,” Annharte escapes the “snobbery” and “arrogance” of the language and can “wring multiple meanings out of words.” This does not mean that standards of language cannot exist, more that they should be opened up. Importantly, she states that this process must follow a principle of “reciprocity,” an engagement where Indigenous and English lexicons are shared. Borrowing the title of the anthology *Reinventing the Enemy’s Language*, edited by Joy Harjo, she calls this process a “reinvention” of English.

This project echoes the methods Canadian theorist W.H. New describes Commonwealth post-colonial writers performing in his 1978 essay “New Language, New World.” While acknowledging that English “affirms a set of social patterns and reflects a particular cultural taste,” there are lexical spaces inside of it where it can be manipulated, reformed, and rearticulated so that “alternative literary possibilities can occur” (303). As New notes, these formations are not easily negotiated, because “a new lexicon is not simple to use. English is an absorptive language... But new words – invented, borrowed, or however devised in any given culture – have their own resonances, their own connotations. In use, they demand an appropriate formal context – sometimes even a new syntax – if they are to make sense. Failing to control form would result in pastiche and be equally as barren as imitation (303-04). For Annharte, reinvention is necessary through invention of this “new syntax” – a complicated re-working that redesigns and rehabilitates English into an Indigenous form of expression.

She does this, unsurprisingly, by treating English as a sick body requiring patience, surgery, and healing. Firstly, Indigenous peoples must question the deep “imposed language” embedded in discourses of English. These include, for example, the “shame that our people were not ‘civilized,’

and that our people used language differently than Europeans or other newcomers to this country.” In fact, not only English lexicon must be challenged, but the ways it has been used to narrate a victimist history (and systems like deficit models) and forced communities to internalize silence (becoming “frozen”). Then, she advocates that we must insert traditional Indigenous linguistic concepts into our everyday speech (embedded in words, symbols, and ideas found in Indigenous stories, pictographs, and ceremonies) and focus on using this “new” language freely and honestly in our cultures and communities, not worrying about “educat(ing) the oppressor” (“Borrowing” 61-2). We also must continue to learn and revitalize our traditional languages alongside these new ones and, of course, engage political and social efforts to support and maintain them too.

Annharte describes a process that reinvents English in her “Coyotisma” poems, a practice that mixes Indigenous narrative traditions, syntactical strategies, and notions like irony, humour, and orality with contemporary critical theory. Found predominantly in her 1994 collection *Coyote Columbus Cafe*, she employs a slippery and smart Coyote in her work, often dialoguing with her, observing, and enacting his directives. Coyote is a trickster, a provoker, and a provider that draws comparison to many similar beings throughout all Indigenous traditions (and might explain why she did not pick the Anishinaabe-specific Nanaboozhoo). In the title poem “Coyote Columbus Cafe,” readers are taken on a dialogic journey, where Annharte (on the left side of the page) and Coyote (on the right) interject into other languages their words, ideas, and experiences:

take a class Native Studies
begin with Precolumbian Era
receive an embossed buckskin
certificate or a stone with
your name in petroglyph

if the class is full
because too many Indians
are just learning about
their culture and identity

then simply select a popular
bestseller HOW TO OUTINDIAN ANYONE

do not read any works
by First Nations writers
that is an advanced course
& you must crawl before you
creep up to rich Indians
playing casino bingo warriors
subscribe to Aboriginal news
& pretend Indian sympathy

lo, the po'Indian

Indian Act

Tell Old Indian joke

Like Indian Affairs

Act Indian

Had an Indian affair lately? (15)

Contemporary language surrounding Indigenous peoples relies on notion of pre-contact purity residing in words on “buckskins” and “petroglyphs” and sometimes have difficulty comprehending Indigenous peoples who go to universities, live in cities, and are active contributors to a contemporary world. Indigenous peoples distanced from their communities and cultural institutions however, now rely on these languages to find out who they are and end up in false notions of authenticity that are distanced from the real life experiences Indigenous peoples carry and speak from. Most necessary instead is for this language to be disrupted through experiences of humour, wordplays, and reminders that we are being co-opted, which is what Coyote does here. Elsewhere in the poem, Coyote injects into the lines of poetry by Annharte examples from Anishinaabemowin, repeats her words using an accent, and uses “check” and “cheque” multiple times to illustrate how discourses, structures, and words within English can be disrupted.

This injection of multivocality results in a new, more open-ended language than before, one that contains fluid based on reciprocal exchange than formal, externally-imposed standards. In

other words: a new body of work. As Annharte states, Indigenous writers have a crucial role to play in the reinvention of the English language. In particular,

Our Ojibwe writers form probably the largest group of Native American or Native Canadian writers published in English. They write in Ojibwe, or may also display the current influence or infatuation with post-modernists and post-colonists. The Ojibwe language will survive because of our flexibility. England has been called the nation of shopkeepers, and English was used to develop an empire based on slavery and the impoverishment of other Indigenous nations. Our Anishnaabe nations also had a history of trading and were argonauts of the inland watersystems of the continent. Have canoe, will travel. (“Borrowing” 63)

In her theory of Coyotisma, Annharte develops a critical theory of hybridity more reflective of how Indigenous peoples actually live in the present. In the process, she also illustrates how Indigenous Poetics assures our cultural futures by reinventing Indigenous identities through adaption and adoption of languages emerging from our bodies. By re-working language from *within* our experiences, by challenging colonial discourse, injecting it with traditional lexicons, and embodying Coyotisma, Annharte asserts her most critical point: that Indigenous writers, like Anishinaabe ones, are reinventing our worlds by becoming “Argonauts of the inland watersystems of the continent.”

This theory runs parallels to that of Acoma Pueblo poet Simon Ortiz writing on Native cultural autonomy in his 1981 essay entitled “Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism.” In this piece, Ortiz argues that cultural adaptation and adoption constitutes the way Native people have always grown and continued. Remarking on the adoption of Spanish rituals, Ortiz remarks how Acoma people have appropriated them in ceremony so that they “are no longer Spanish” (8). He argues that they have now become part of the struggle against colonization, struggles which now constitute parts of “authentic” Acoma experiences (9). For Ortiz it is the experience of mediation that is a profoundly Acoman experience, for once an outside influence enters the Acoman community and is adapted and then adopted, making the influence now distinctly Acoman. This is how Native communities have developed their relationship with

the world around them in the past and how they must do so in the future, what he calls “continuance” (*Woven Stone* 32). The theories of Annharte and Ortiz coalesce in critical ways.

In her *Coyotisma*, Annharte develops a critical theory of how Anishnaabe writing assures our cultural futures. It is a model of adaption and adoption, an act of reinventing Indian identity by re-working discourse and injecting it with traditional ideas, lexicons, and principles. Using this model and applying it to the use of English by Anishnaabeg writers, Annharte proves that Anishnaabeg writers, by doing the same thing, are reinventing English into an Anishnaabeg language. Echoing Ortiz, Annharte shares his point that:

Indians have carried on their lives and their expression through the use of the newer languages, particularly Spanish, French, and English, and they have used these languages on their own terms. This is the crucial item that has to be understood, that it is entirely possible for a people to retain and maintain their lives through the use of any language. There is not a question of authenticity here; rather it is the way that Indian people have creatively responded to forced colonization. (“Towards” 10)

While perhaps different than the personification of English as an “enemy’s language” by Annharte earlier, the outcome of both theorists is clear: the reinvention of the terms and makeup of a language. By continuing to be the “argonauts of the inland watersystems” in actively resisting, investing with their language with their tribal traditions, and re-inventing *their* English, Anishnaabeg writers perform the important task of assuring a self-determining future.

These writers also perform the final task of Annharte’s model for re-invention by actively sharing and dispersing this knowledge amongst communities and therefore continuing the cycle of *Coyotisma*, English re-invention, and Indian cultural regeneration. By embodying *Coyotisma*, they encourage readers and listeners to be Coyotes themselves. Through the perpetuation and circulation of their work, Anishinaabeg writers, poets, storytellers and artists are actively engaging with the process of reinventing tribal identities and are one of the most important forces our nations

have. They assert a profound, different kind of hybridity than arguing for a new, liminal, space. Through their work they continue the same cultural path, the same versatile canoe, First Nations peoples have always been travelling in.

This theory of hybridity is a Makwag Bagijinan. It insists on the continuance of an Anishinaabeg cultural and political subjectivities alongside change and multiple sites of agency through processes found in remaking Indigenous bodies and their senses of their themselves. It is a notion that can be utilized to articulate an Anishinaabeg-specific future with identities that are mobile, innovative, fluid, while still retaining a sense of integrity. Her work embraces the reality of change through the centrality of Anishinaabeg-centred existence. It is an Anishinaabeg hybridity that is a verb and a noun, a word shaded “blackened red reddened black” and a theory that has much to teach us about the ability of Native existences to change on our terms.

The character Fleur Pillager in the novels of Louise Erdrich, “Winabojo and the birch tree” by Papa’gine and Densmore, and the “Coyotisma” poetics of Annharte, all enact senses of body that enacts gifts to the universe. These are all marks of protection that remake senses of blood and membership among network of people and form narrative expressions of identity. It is in these and other Makwag Bagijiganan that these markings form relationships and keep the Anishinaabeg world going. Like claw marks on a tree indicating territory or inviting processes of perpetuation, these Anishinaabeg narratives define and instruct how to travel a path of mino-bimaadiziwin.

Oshki Nasanaamo, New Breath

I believe in anything Anishnaabe. I am a nationalist. Like, here's a Nish microphone, Anishnaabe podium and there's an Anishnaabe modern mouse. This is an Anishnaabe plastic bottle, because I touched it. I appropriate anything I touch. I think that is what I have been doing for a living for quite a long time. I just appropriate anything it does not matter to me. It is mine! I have a guitar, it is an Anishnaabe guitar too. Everything about Anishnaabe to me is important. I do not know very much else. In the sense that I do not familiarize myself with other things too readily because everything is about Anishnaabe civilization. Anishnaabe this and that, is my main thing. (131)

- "An Anishinaabe Tale"
Leland Bell, Bebaminojmat
(Wikwemikong Anishinaabe)

"Our Story"

From August 20th to 26th, 2007, a gathering of Anishinaabeg leaders, traditionalists, councilors, headmen, headwomen, citizens, young people, and other allies⁸⁴ took place at Bawaating, in Ojibway Park in Ketegaunseebee Anishinaabe Territory (Garden River First Nation). Here, in virtually the same space where Anishinaabeg leaders met Wemitigoozhiwag in 1671 and signed using their Nindoodemag, over two thousand citizens met from "the Three Fires Confederacy and allied Nations that emanate from the historical Algonkian Confederacy" (including the original three signatories, "the Odawa Nation, Pottawotomi Nation, and the Ojibway Nation," and "including peoples from Menominee, Ho-chunk, Miami, Kickapoo, Algonquian, Sauk/Fox, Naskapi, Wabunakeg, Lene Lenapi and Cree" communities). Several roundtables, presentations, and teaching sessions honouring Anishnaabeg intellectual, cultural, linguistic, educational, and legal traditions were held. Most were conducted in Anishinaabemowin and English. Alongside these were ceremonies: Sweat Lodges, a Jingle Dress healing dance, an Eagle Staff Gathering, an OGichedaa ceremony, a Buffalo Dance, Pipe offerings, Sunrise ceremonies, and feasts.⁸⁵

On August 23, at the culmination of the gathering, an agreement entitled *Nswi Ishkoday Kawn Anishinaebeg O'dish Kidway Kawn* (“The Three Fires Anishnaebeg Confederacy Do Hereby Declare”) was collectively adopted (Figure 15). It is a statement affirming that “The Three Fires Anishinaebeg Confederacy” exists and continues on this continent. It is a sacred and binding document, a contemporary sign of Anishinaabeg collectivity. Among the agreed-upon points are that the “Spirit” is “the centre and foundation of the ways of our ancestors”; that existing historical and cultural relationship between all communities in the Confederacy are affirmed; that a renewed sense of responsibility and shared knowledge amongst all participants would be forged; that stewardship interests invested in the health and well-being of the environment and Anishnaabeg will be collectively shared; and, that all will work together to “overcome the immoral shackles of colonialism that plague our nation.” In other words: the Confederacy is a spiritual, historical, ideological, geographical, legal, and political entity. There was also a promise that future meetings be held and that “a Clan System model be developed based upon the priorities identified by this Confederacy, namely: Anishinaabemowin Language, Governance, Lands and Resources, Judiciary, Cultural Based Education, Citizenship and the Economy.”

NSWI ISHKODAY KAWN ANISHINAEBEG O'DISH KIDWAY KAWN

WE, THE CHIEFS, CHAIRPERSONS, COUNCILLORS, HEADMEN, HEADWOMEN AND CITIZENS PRESENT – OF THE THREE FIRES CONFEDERACY AND ALLIED NATIONS THAT EMANATE FROM THE HISTORICAL ALGONKIAN CONFEDERACY, UNITED BY BLOOD, CLAN, LAND AND SPIRITUALITY INCLUDING: THE ODAWA NATION, POTTAWOTOMI NATION, AND THE OJIBWAY NATION AND THOSE ALLIED NATIONS, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO: THE MENOMINEE, HO-CHUNK, MIAMI, KICKAPOO, ALGONQUIAN, SAUK/FOX, NASKAPI, WABUNAKEG, LENE LENAPI AND CREE. IN FREE AND OPEN ASSEMBLY, BEFORE G'ZHEMANIDOO, CREATION AND HUMANITY, THIS AUGUST 23, 2007, IN THE KETEGAUNSEEBEE ANISHINAABE TERRITORY AT BAAWAATING – WE, THE PEOPLE OF THE THREE FIRES CONFEDERACY AND ALLIED NATIONS DO HEREBY DECLARE:

- WE RECOGNIZE AND ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE SPIRIT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE CENTRE AND FOUNDATION OF THE WAYS OF OUR ANCESTORS. FURTHERMORE, THROUGH OUR PARTICIPATION AT THIS THREE FIRES CONFEDERACY GATHERING, WE HAVE FELT AND BEEN NURTURED BY THE SPIRIT TO MOVE FORWARD IN OUR LIVES WITH HOPE AND IT IS THE SAME CONNECTION TO THE SPIRIT THAT IS OUR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.
- WE RECOGNIZE THAT WE HAVE REVIVED A SENSE OF OUR ANISHINAABE HISTORICAL AND SPIRITUAL UNITY.
- OUR CHILDREN ARE LIVING VESSELS AND IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT, NURTURE AND CULTIVATE THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR ANCESTORS FOR OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE.
- THAT IN EDUCATION, OUR CHILDREN MUST HAVE A WAY OF LEARNING THAT IS BASED ON OUR STORY, AND OUR ORIGINAL WAYS OF KNOWING AND TEACHINGS.
- THAT EACH AND EVERY ANISHINAABE PERSON SHALL CONTINUE TO ADVANCE THE SPIRITUAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF OUR NATION.
- THAT EACH AND EVERY ANISHINAABE PERSON SHALL WORK TO OVERCOME THE IMMORAL SHACKLES OF COLONIALISM THAT PLAGUE OUR NATION, INCLUDING OVERCOMING THE COLONIAL BOUNDARIES THAT SEGREGATE US.
- THAT OUR WAYS IN WHICH WE GOVERN OURSELVES, OUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR CONFEDERACY AND HOW WE RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER IS ROOTED IN THE CLAN SYSTEM.
- WE DIRECT THAT A CLAN SYSTEM MODEL BE DEVELOPED BASED UPON THE PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED BY THIS CONFEDERACY, NAMELY: ANISHINAABEMOWIN LANGUAGE, GOVERNANCE, LANDS AND RESOURCES, JUDICIARY, CULTURAL BASED EDUCATION, CITIZENSHIP AND THE ECONOMY. THAT ANY SOVEREIGN ANISHINAABEG COMMUNITY MAY SHARE RESPONSIBILITIES IDENTIFIED IN THE CLAN SYSTEM MODEL.
- ALLIANCES AND TREATIES WILL CONTINUE AMONGST OURSELVES AND WITH OTHER NATIONS AND MUST BE IN KEEPING WITH THE ORIGINAL SPIRIT AND INTENT OF OUR WAYS OF RELATING WITH ONE ANOTHER AS NATIONS.
- THAT THE MEANS FOR OUR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING MUST BE BASED ON OUR ORIGINAL WAYS OF HEALING.
- THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MOTHER EARTH AND HER LAND AND ENVIRONMENT AND MOST IMPORTANTLY THE WATER – WHICH IS THE SOURCE OF ALL LIFE, NOURISHING AND SUSTAINING ALL HER CHILDREN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD – IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ANISHINAABEG, BY VIRTUE OF OUR SACRED COVENANT TO LOOK AFTER THE WELL-BEING OF OUR BEAUTIFUL AND SACRED MOTHER.
- WE LOOK AHEAD TO THE RE-KINDLING OF THE SACRED CONFEDERACY FLAME, WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF PONTIAC, TECUMSEH, JICHI MATCH-E-BE-NASHSHE-WISH AND SHINGWAUK AND ALL OUR ANISHINAABEG ANCESTORS.
- IT IS OUR DIRECTION AND COMMITMENT TO GATHER AS THE THREE FIRES CONFEDERACY AND ALLIED NATIONS EACH AND EVERY YEAR IN PERPETUITY.
- IN UNITY, WE DIRECT OUR LEADERSHIP OF ALL LEVELS TO WORK WITH US IN ENSURING THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DECLARATION.

WE HEAR THE ECHO OF OUR GRANDFATHER, DAN PINE AND AFFIRM HIS WORDS “NOW THAT WE HAVE FOUND THE CONFEDERACY; WE CAN NEVER LOSE IT AGAIN.”

Figure 15: The *Nswi Ishkoday Kawn Anishinaebeg O'dish Kidway Kawn*

The issue that immediately arises when looking at the *Nswi Ishkoday Kawn Anishinaabeg O'dish Kidway Kawn* is that the collective seems to suffer from an identity problem. While “The Three Fires Confederacy” is used in the title, another word clouds the water. For example, take this statement: “That each and every Anishinaabe person shall continue to advance the Spiritual, Political and Social well-being of *our Nation*” (my emphasis). In fact, “nation” appears far more times throughout the document (ten times). Reading it one gets a sense that this declaration of nationhood rather than a confederacy. So, which is it?

“Nation” is a word that provokes deep debate in Indigenous Studies and it is worth spending a few moments defining it. It is laden with historical and political significance, carrying with it not only respect and recognition from communities throughout the world but also anxiety and discomfort for the legacies of violence it has produced. Emerging from the Latin root *natio-* (referring to birth), nation is defined as an aggregate of communities and individuals united by factors such as common descent, language, culture, history, or occupation of the same territory, so as to form a distinct people. In other words, a community made up of communities whose identity is understood as related and autonomous. This is, of course, an ideal nation and the question whether such an entity has ever been fully realized is valid. At the same time, most nations define themselves along most of these lines and many might add some type of autonomous and over-arching governing structure with institutional supports invested in the educational, social, spiritual and/or economic growth of citizens. Generally understood therefore, a nation is a self-governing and self-defining cultural, political, and social community connected via a sense of shared customs, origins, histories, geographical regions, and languages.

The issue when discussing something called the Anishinaabeg “nation” is that this entity only partly fulfills what is classically the definition. For example, there currently is no over-arching

governmental structure that encompasses Anishinaabeg but rather localized bodies like the Anishinabek Nation of Ontario, a collective of communities who advocate, administrate, and deliver some programs together. The traditional and contemporary territory of the Anishinaabeg nation and what “occupation” looks like is also somewhat hard to discern. Does one cite the original Anishinaabeg homelands in the east, the western migration path, or reserves around the Great Lakes occupied in the past few hundred years? How does one encompass Anishinaabeg who endured removal to Oklahoma and formed geographical and spiritual homes in the south? Or Anishinaabeg who migrated as far west as Alberta and Saskatchewan, live alongside Cree and Dakota, and are now so intermixed it is impossible to tell the difference between communities? How does one form “a distinct people” in the case of the Anishinaabeg?

This brings us to how a nation identifies things like common descent, language, culture, and history – and perpetuates these amongst its members. This is an ideological endeavour. In an 1882 lecture, for instance, the French philosopher Ernest Renan claimed that “[a] nation is a soul, a spiritual principle” not only held in a common race, language, religion, and “interests,” but in a shared “consciousness” that includes “a rich legacy of memories ... the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form” (19). The construction of this “consciousness” is a self-perpetuating process – once people are exposed to, adopt, and enact connections of kinship they become citizens invested in the nation. In other words: in order for people to form a nation, there must be narratives that justify its purpose.

As this project illustrates, Anishinaabeg narratives are always contextual, subjective, and political so any “consciousness” derived from them is therefore equally so. This makes the creation, celebration, and dissemination of stories a crucial part of Anishinaabeg nation-building and an intensely politicized act no different than those that formed other nations of the world. As

Benedict Anderson argues in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, nationhood is constituted by multiple narratives accepted by citizens as truthful, communal, and reflective of a shared history, identity, and experience. This makes the nation, Anderson famously declared, an “imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). Critics have often felt queasy about the tendency of stories to limit and define, but these stories serve to both define a community and construct it in relation to others. Nations have “finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” and no “external” body can claim domination over them (6-7, 224). For a nation to exist, self-determine, and defend things like “boundaries,” self-perpetuating narratives must be present to simultaneously internalize members while externalizing others.

The issue again though is that Anishinaabeg narratives and the notion of a “distinct people,” “boundaries,” and the ability to “self-determine” do not fall neatly into this definition given by Anderson. On one hand certain Anishinaabeg narratives assert this. The notion of the breath of Gizhe Manido gifting “a different essence and nature” into all beings, as Johnston writes in *Ojibway Heritage* (12), is certainly an argument for distinction. Indeed, any narrative that could be read as a Maang Bagijiganan would have to posit some kind of internalized community while Ajijaak and Waabajijaak Bagijiganan are inherently about speaking to those external to community and demanding things like recognition, understanding, and collaboration. At the same time, Basil Johnston also states in *Ojibway Heritage* that “it is through story, fable, legend, and myth that fundamental understandings, insights, and attitudes toward life and human conduct and quality and their diverse life forms are embodied and passed on” (*Heritage* 7). Or, as Gordon Henry Jr. writes in the introduction to *Stories Through Theories, Theories Through Stories* with co-editors Nieves Pascual Soler and Silvia Martinez-Falquina: “[s]tories seem to transcend jurisdictions of nation,

culture, time, and text irrespective of whether they are spoken, written, heard, smelled, filmed, or performed. Stories are intertextual, transcendent, evocative, and arguable, arguably efficacious. We could never write enough to say what stories are, how they function, or what methodologies might be best for considering them as primary critical tools in a sort of meta-story critical process”

(“Allegories” 18). In other words, Anishinaabe thinkers have spent much time articulating how Anishinaabeg narratives articulate principles of the Anishinaabeg collectivity, certain borders, and self-determination while at the same time challenging the very notion of all of these things.

Before returning to the power of story, it should be said that the equation of nationhood with boundary making and self-determination has resulted in some destructive legacies and it should be no surprise that Anishinaabeg resist such ideas. Nation has been a word historically employed to institute political and cultural hegemony, violently eradicate political and social opposition, and erase difference and complexity. As Weaver, Warrior, and Womack have written, “nation” and “nationalism” are terms that describe “a phenomenon that has given rise, on the one hand, to modern democracy and the thirst for liberation of oppressed people around the world, and, on the other hand, some of the worst forms of political repression and xenophobia in human history” (*American Indian* xv).⁸⁶ What is “important to understand,” George W. White writes in *Nation, State, and Territory: Origins, Evolutions, and Relationships*, is that “[n]ationhood is a human construct. Derived from cultural characteristics, it is fluid and highly malleable, overlapping other layers of human identities” (3). Anishinaabeg who have had their communities divided by an arbitrary and imposed national border dividing the United States and Canada know exactly what political repression and xenophobia are all about. Try claiming your identity as Anishinaabeg next time you cross that border if you want to test this idea by experience. Undoubtedly, nations are

enveloped in complex power structures and dynamics, giving strength to particular formations within it while removing it at the same time from others.

Exacerbating the issue is the close relationship between the nation and the nation-state – the most popular expression of nationhood throughout the world. As scholars have noted, the nation-state is a political and/or geopolitical entity that rose primarily in the west and historically accompanied an increase in industrialization and technology, global expansionism, and protectionism in European and American communities who sought to grow and fortify their organizational, economic, and social structures – especially in relation to other lands and peoples.⁸⁷ Nation-states are often characterized by their revolutionary emergences and extremist separatisms as well as instances where certain localized linguistic, cultural, and political interests have been homogenized into a centralized and singular ideology – through what theorist Louis Althusser calls “Repressive State Apparatuses.”⁸⁸ While the nation-state in its recognizable form did not appear until the past three centuries, its formation accompanied European struggles for “sovereignty” dating as far back as the 14th century, when monarchs or leaders (sovereigns) exerted supreme power in relation to one another and fought wars over land, resources, and religion.⁸⁹ Micheline Ishay in *The Nationalism Reader* argues that sovereignty was shaped through a reaction to the stringency of “feudal and religious institutions such as the Catholic church” and a desire to break from a life solely dictated by religious doctrine (3).

Not coincidentally, notions of sovereignty accompanied European conquest, as continual, exponential economic expansion required finding new resources and peoples to support and strengthen these systems – sometimes through friendship and trade, other times through force and exploitation (and in many examples, both). Today, sovereignty is defined primarily by scholars as the ability of a community to practice self-determination and independence and, if this ability is

absent, they challenge community claims to nationhood. While this process has arguably resulted in several powerful and “developed” nation-states throughout the world, the formation of these bodies have virtually always come after scenes of intense brutality, coercion, and the domination of other communities. European nation-states have had their most profound impact on Indigenous communities and for the most part have done so by denying their rights to self-determination and imposing their values, beliefs, and ideas upon them. In the model of the nation-state, it is not just that nations are constructed by the production of controlled, and reproducible boundaries – it is that these are most often enforced with guns, violence, and separatist fervor. This has created an atmosphere of unquestioned allegiance to the nation state. As Max Weber writes in his essay “Politics as a Vocation”: “a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory” (78, original emphasis). “Like the air we breathe,” Jeremy Brecher claims, “the nation-state is today so nearly universal and so little questioned that it is difficult to scrutinize” (345).

Still, while these community formations have certainly overlapped one another in global history, *the nation-state is not the nation*. Each incarnation of nationhood comes from differing historical moments and influences and reside in purposes and trajectories. Returning to the Declaration, while impossible to homogenize the multiple expressions of nationhood in it into a single vision, it is accurate to say that its signatory nations have not duplicated the path followed by European nation-states. It may be that these sorts of expressions of Anishinaabeg nationhood, or rather *nationhoods*, come from differing paths than their western counterparts. As Daniel Heath Justice points out:

Assertions of Indigenous nationhood should not . . . be necessarily conflated with the nationalism that has given birth to industrialized nation-states, for the distinctions are significant. Nation-state nationalism is often dependent upon the erasure of kinship bonds in favor of a code of patriotism that places loyalty to the

state above kinship obligations, and emphasizes the assimilative militant history of the nation (generally along a progressivist mythological arc) above the specific geographic, genealogical, and spiritual histories of peoples. Its primary function is to justify the existing economic, military, and political structure – largely through the assimilation of all subject constituencies into the culture of a monolithic and coercive state. (*Our Fire Survives the Storm* 23)

Mimicking the nation-state and repeating the institutional justices perpetrated against Indigenous nations is often not the driving forces behind the formation of Indigenous communities and this is a problematic assumption many scholars make.⁹⁰ “Indigenous nationhood,” Justice argues, “is a concept rooted in community values, histories, and traditions that . . . asserts a sense of active sociopolitical agency, not simply static separatism from the world and its peoples” (24). While European histories, uses, and notions of nationhood are useful and influential – and unquestionably shape the life of Indigenous nations – it is equally important to consider the possibility that Indigenous communities have conceptions of community formation and nationhood of their own.

Anishinaabeg throughout history have often used confederacy to articulate their visions of nationhood. The *Nswi Ishkoday Kawn Anishinaebeg O'dish Kidway Kawn* is not the only place it is found. Benton-Benai, for example, uses it throughout the *The Mishomis Book* and it is used to describe the confederacy forged between Ojibway, Potawatomi and Odawa (with the Ojibwe the “Older Brother,” Odawa the “Middle Brother,” and the Potawatomi the “Younger Brother”). These terms alone are reminders of the close ties between family-making and nationhood and gesture to a definition with kinship at the centre. Confederacy is undergirded by the verb “to confederate” – a union between persons, bodies or states for mutual support or joint action. A confederacy is a partnership with a purpose – a sort of alliance that requires constant re-visitation, re-consideration, and renewal. It is a body constituted by affiliation and re-affiliation. A confederacy – like a nation – is hardly eternal but this does not mean it does not have power,

strength, and history. Autonomous and identifiable, this community is fluid and mobile, demanding constant re-visitation to determine in its value. Participants may enter and leave, it all depends on their needs, desires, and their relationships with others in the agreement. It is a body constantly being derived and constructed, consisting of several parts.

But at the same time, “nation” is importantly not abandoned in favour of confederacy – it is juxtaposed. This suggests that the *Nswi Ishkoday Kawn Anishinaebeg O'dish Kidway Kawn* is envisioning a complex and multi-dimensional collective forged through a shared relationship between the two descriptors. It might just be that a new term is required to describe the sense of Anishinaabeg nationhood produced by the document, perhaps a new name, a word, and a story. The *Nswi Ishkoday Kawn Anishinaebeg O'dish Kidway Kawn* gestures to a series of relationships specific in context and deeply invested in politics, subjectivities, geographies, and history but which together constitute Anishinaabeg as a whole. Like many other nations of the world, it is an entity made up of many political and social entities working in conversation. Considering this, it is perhaps not so odd that nation and confederacy are brought together in the Declaration because this juxtaposition results in a site of relationship, an offering, a bagijigan.

A Nationhood of Our Own

The question then, is what kind of Anishinaabeg nation is the Declaration envisioning? What are the roles and importance of narratives and history in the formation of the nation envisioned here? What are the ways the Declaration draws upon and expresses power? While sharing tenets of nationhood, how does the Declaration hope to promote a community of unity, separatism, and difference without repeating a bloody history of nation-statism? And, what does narrative have to do with all of this?

Answers are gestured to in the *Nswi Ishkoday Kawn Anishinaebeg O'dish Kidway Kawn*. As mentioned before, stories are deeply tied to nationhood, for citizens must imagine that their metanarrative connects to a broader, grand narrative. There are several places where this is alluded to, but perhaps no more so than in education: “our children must have a way of learning that is based on Our Story, and our original ways of knowing and teachings.” Pinpointing whatever “Our Story” is would begin a path to some answers. Unfortunately, this is not clearly outlined in the Declaration. No specific narrative is alluded to and we are left to do some work to figure out what this might be. This is markedly different than the way stories appear in other declarations of nationhood, like the United States Declaration of Independence, which narrates clearly the reasons why the colonies are seceding from Britain and ends with a “pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.”

Instead of simply stating what “Our Story” is, the *Nswi Ishkoday Kawn Anishinaebeg O'dish Kidway Kawn* spends much time describing complexity: the many different leaders, unique tribal “Nations,” and different ways people are “united” – through such things as “blood, clan, land and Spirituality.” There appears to be a multiplicity of stories that make up “Our Story” too: words like “knowledge,” “original spirit and intent,” and “original ways of healing” all suggest aspects of remembering, re-creating, or re-producing narratives. Dan Pine, an elder and leader, is quoted at the conclusion alongside other ancestral leaders like “Pontiac, Tecumseh, Jichi Match-e-be-nashshe-wish and Shingwauk” – who are all also known for their oratorical and storytelling abilities. In this vein, Anishinaabe is also interestingly spelled two different ways in the document: phonetically and using the double-vowel Fiero system. The only discernable narrative describing “Our Story” is that there are many within it.

It may just be that what identifies most Anishinaabeg nationhood, identity, and society is the relationship forged between narratives. I suggest that it is through shared narratives, in instances of past, present, and future relationship-making, that “Our Story” is forged. Anishinaabeg nationhood therefore is both a formed and forming community, demonstrated by Anishinaabeg engaging with entities throughout the world and re-creating themselves through stories that merge and become “our” story. Thus, Anishinaabeg nationhood is not only a socio-political entity that exists but it is one constantly moving, being re-made in every breath, every instance of language, every narrative. Through new words Anishinaabeg continue to be both a spontaneous people and a people being lowered to the earth: a community re-creating themselves in specific circumstances all the time.

This narrative path is one of *mino-bimaadiziwin*, “the good life.” As I have stated throughout this project, *mino-bimaadiziwin* is a process of forging new words, new ideas, and new formations in interests of healthy and strong relationships. The process of *mino-bimaadiziwin* therefore is therefore never eternal or achievable, it is always being made. The ongoing formation of Anishinaabeg nationhood – and the adoption and adaptation of concepts like nation and confederacy as we move and change throughout time - is the ethical, responsible, and dynamic process of relationship-making in order to enjoy a healthy life. Anishinaabeg stories, songs, and other narrative forms are critical and creative beings who illustrate processes of *mino-bimaadiziwin*.

I would argue that the kind of Anishinaabeg nation that the Declaration is envisioning is one that demands a different lens than the ways national communities throughout the world demand recognition. An Anishinaabeg sense of nationhood is one forged through moments, a community of voices, and multiple visions. It is a sense of community that is discernable but one

forged as circumstances demand it. This does not mean that it does not have guiding principles, laws, or even foundational documents like a constitution, but that these things are temporary and negotiable; never fixed or static. Anishinaabeg nationhood therefore is formed from a series of declarations in times and places, in creations and affirmations of relationships, and in responsibilities that require revisitation and renewal. Anishinaabeg nationhood therefore is something locatable on a map but one full of dotted borderlines, a mixture of communities with differing needs and stories that incorporate different and unique cultures, dreams, and humanity.

This is a radical vision of nationhood. The world by this point is used to nations with everlasting constitutions with forces like courts and lawyers bickering over interpretations of words. Human beings sometimes need firm and fixed boundaries. It is worthwhile pointing out however that the biggest injustices that have been perpetuated against Anishinaabeg come from this very approach, from hegemonic and nationalistic discourses like Manifest Destiny, the British North America Act, and the United States Constitution. If there is one thing cultural studies, post-modernity, and Indigenous Studies reminds us about, it is worth re-considering the impact grand narratives have on those whose vision are forged through local and community-based stories. If we are ever to stop wars, imperialism, and violence against difference, nations need their citizens to question the notion of a homogenous nationhood. This relies on a sense of the nation as pure when, in fact, this has never been the case for any nation anywhere. This project therefore adopts and puts forward the possibility that Anishinaabeg nationhood is something forged through the struggles embodied by Anishinaabeg and those we meet and create relationships. I therefore adopt the kind of nationalist vision my colleague Robert Warrior prescribes in his chapter in *American Indian Literary Nationalism* when he writes that “[t]he Native world needs criticism that is self-

consciously and aggressively radically inclusive” (206). This, I assert, is the closest critical descriptor of Anishinaabeg nationhood to date and this project adopts this as a foundation.

It is worth thinking about what power looks like if it is found in instances and moments, in people and places, and in relationships and relationship making. When a relationship is dictated, set out, and established before participants meet, there is no responsibility to one another. When we focus on the intricate practices of relationship-making and let the interactions guide us, we have the ability to forge a movement of peoples empowered with sincere ties to one another. In essence we create a sense of family, not friends. We get words with meaning, promises with commitments, treaties with assurances. The history of North America has all too often been a disconnect between the forces forming relationships and the relationships themselves. This results in wars, removal policies, and residential schools. These are things nations do to communities they have no responsibility towards, these are things you do to people you see as a problem. Meanwhile, it might just be that human beings – and non-humans for that matter - share more in common than the history of nationhood and nation-states would have us believe and that sovereignty and self-determination is a lot more dependent on relationships than separatism. The *Nswi Ishkoday Kawn Anishinaabeg O'dish Kidway Kawn* is a promise of community-building, not a description of a finished community. It is a promise that more should be done, that unity is something to think about but something perhaps that can never be truly forged. This is the vision offered by the Declaration and it is the history of Anishinaabeg nationhood.

Conceiving of Anishinaabeg nationhood in this way halts the stereotype that Indigenous life is in some mode of constant disappearance (“vanishing Indians”), particularly when communities consider, adopt, and engage new introductions and forms of expression. At various times, advocates have named the use of English, the conversion to Christianity, even the writing of

novels, as indications of a diminishment, as if Anishinaabeg identities emerge from fragile and passive cultures. What is most striking to me about these premises is how much this is not the case in Anishinaabeg narrative. As can be seen throughout this project, Anishinaabeg have been on a long migratory path towards the Eighth Fire. Change, adoption, and motion has always been a part of this journey, since the gift of the first breath. All anyone has to do is look at the specific ways Anishinaabeg forge narrative relationships through bagijiganan that have been cited throughout this project. Anishinaabeg are sovereign, active, and innovative. Evidenced by this project and documents like *Nswi Ishkoday Kawn Anishinaabeg O'dish Kidway Kawn, we are now*, I would argue, Oshki Anishinaabeg traveling in many directions towards mino-bimaadiziwin. This project is an homage to this past and a gesture to the future path emerging.

Nindoodemag Bagijiganan

The Declaration ends with a series of commitments centered on responsibilities, duties, and relationships, suggesting that “Our Story” is not finished. This is embodied in the promise that leaders implement the Declaration, future meetings occur, and “a Clan System model be developed based upon the priorities identified by this Confederacy, namely: Anishinaabemowin Language, Governance, Lands and Resources, Judiciary, Cultural Based Education, Citizenship and the Economy.” A commitment to the formation of this “Clan System” is the next step in the Declaration, it is what will carry its vision into the future. This is of course a continuation of a long history of Nindoodemag and a system of Anishinaabeg relationships and relationship-making that have formed the basis for Anishinaabeg culture and community for a long time.

Revisiting and reinstating the Clan System and making it relevant for the world of today is important for Anishinaabeg culture to revitalize and re-affirm past traditions. This is particularly

true as many advocates state that Nindoodemag has waned in recent years and is in less and less use. Benton-Benai writes that that the loss of clan system resulted in physical and cultural atrophy (*The Mishomis Book* 78), while Treuer states in his book *Ojibwe in Minnesota* that Anishinaabeg “began to challenge and change traditional clan and leadership structure long before Europeans arrived” (8). Or, as Anishinaabe activist Bob Goulais recently wrote in a December 2010 blog: “The Anishinaabe clan system is a distant memory and has not been used by Anishinaabe communities for nearly 140 years. Today, there is virtually no knowledge or awareness of the clan system” (“The Midewiwin Society Today”). While Goulais is rather sweeping in his claim, his sentiment is shared by many.

The question I might pose is whether Nindoodemag can – or perhaps should – be the same as in the past. In other words, does a contemporary Anishinaabeg sense of nationhood require a traditional sense of Nindoodemag? Or, perhaps, has the system continued and found its breath in other forms? Nindoodemag Bagijiganan suggests that it has and can be found in Anishinaabeg narratives. While none of the Anishinaabeg authors I refer to cite Nindoodemag in their work, this project suggests that the system is still viable and continues to hold relevance in the formation of community. As in the past, Anishinaabeg narratives are offerings that define, refine, and offer ways of thinking about relationships and relationship-making practices and they do so through connections understood through the Nindoodemag. Anishinaabeg narratives are bagijiganan that gesture to ways of thinking about the intricate relationships Anishinaabeg share with different entities throughout Creation and how these are political, sociological, and form a sense of Anishinaabeg nationhood. They offer methods in which to think of other relationships now emerging and yet to come and gifts of responsibility and affiliation in the interests of critical and creative expression and action.

I have formed this reading lens through the Nindoodemag to suggest that this system has never left us. The “deficit model” of Indigenous culture is pervasive and – when utilized in scholarship and law – suggests that our traditional forms of governance and kinship are disappearing or, at worst, dead. By actively drawing connections between Nindoodemag and what I see Anishinaabeg narratives performing, I argue that our relationship making practices and institutions are as vibrant as they have ever been and have adjusted well into the contemporary world. The Nindoodemag may look different now but I posit continues in the work of Anishinaabeg narrative artists who are imagining our nation in radical, subversive, and dynamic ways. We do not have to simply inherit the forms of nationhood imposed by other communities (like the nation-state) but can look to our storytellers, as we have in the past, for our ways of being and methods for our cultural and political continuance. Through multiple senses of our Anishinaabeg lives – our minds, bodies, and internal/external communities – Anishinaabeg narratives provide gateways in which we can imagine and enact paths of sustainability, sharing, and equality towards mino-bimaadiziwin.

I imagine the work Anishinaabeg narrative artists doing in this project as continuing the work treaty signers did when they first imagined relationships on Turtle Island – as places where multiple networks could come together and form nindinawemaganidog through waayiyaag and enawendiwin along a path of mino-bimaadiziwin. As I have argued, this I believe is an intricate process requiring constant vision and imagination through our traditional practices, a commitment to these values, and a constant need for stories. We have many relationships requiring constant revisitation and my work hopefully opens a dialogue into the way Anishinaabeg storytellers honour this history, think of our community today, and look towards an Anishinaabeg future.

At the same time, my reading lens suggests that Anishinaabeg narrative expressions point to a set of enduring concerns and interests of Anishinaabeg. These, I believe, are in how a people can move and change through relationships and relationship-making practices without losing their identity, sense of community and nation, and endure. Let me make this clear: I am definitely transplanting my reading onto Anishinaabeg narrative artists but I believe that there is enough evidence to show that they are carrying our community through offering the important and intricate paths our nation requires. Anishinaabeg community is not a new invention, but it is an invention that is constantly undergoing processes through our connections with spirits, the water, the earth, and the people and spirits we interact with all the time. These gestures I believe are available in our stories, songs, poetry, and art and it is in these expressions we can find the ways Anishinaabeg are re-making and contributing to all of Creation by walking a path towards *mino-bimaadiziwin*, the good life. As this project suggests, this is accomplished in a myriad of ways – some more interventionist than others – and these processes continue into today.

In this vein, while this project has suggested only four *odoodeman* that can be found in the work of Anishinaabeg authors, I have left room and gestured to others which could be examined and uncovered. It is my hope to continue this work in a book project and explore more recently developed *odoodeman*, such as *wiigwas* (birch tree) and *Nibiinaabe/Nibiinaabekwe* (Mermen or Mermaids). I recognize that this study is incomplete. I have had to make choices that include some works and theories and exclude others. I realize as well that the construction of this work is political. In his 1992 text *Is Literary History Possible?*, David Perkins states:

[t]he writing of literary history involves selection, generalization, organization, and a point of view. It selects for representation only some of the texts and relevant events in the tract of past time it supposedly describes; it collects these into general entities (e.g., romanticism); it adopts a point of view toward them; and it makes them constituents of a discursive form with a beginning, a middle, and an end, if it is

Aristotelian narration, or with a statement, development, and conclusion, if it is an argument. (19)

To address some concerns, I consciously chose to study narratives in different genres, emerging from particular geographies, from those widely-known to those less so (while considering the nuances of each). I have also tried to give a sampling of a large and dynamic group, working in many different directions and mediums, and spread out physically and historically. In the end, this work is admittedly just like Anishinaabeg: forever incomplete and in process.

I hope my work will suggest that the kind of “radical inclusivity” that Warrior and others are pursuing. It has been guided by the multiply-derived vision suggested by Anishinaabeg authors examined in this study and in ones yet to come. This project has suggested two main tenets surrounding Anishinaabeg narratives. The first is that this body of work honours and participates in a long stream of Anishinaabeg history on Turtle Island and formulates and perpetuates senses of Anishinaabeg existence. It is autonomous and meritorious on its own, reflective of an active community of thinkers. Secondly, this work also shows evidence of a primary responsibility Anishinaabeg hold as members of the human race: to ensure that they are healthy as a community and engaged in meaningful and productive relationships amongst themselves and with the broader universe. It ensures that Anishinaabeg continue so that future ancestors have an opportunity to inherit and enjoy a positive and beautiful life on this earth with other peoples and communities. I have shown that Anishinaabeg thinkers are engaged in a pattern of articulating relationships found in the many webs that make up Anishinaabeg community and are engaged in a process of cultural production as a result.

This project also suggests another important tenet: that Anishinaabeg narrative artists contribute to the global intellectual, artistic, and historical community not only as storytellers and culture-producers but also as intellectuals and historians. All too often scholarship divides

Indigenous art and artists from those engaged in other disciplines, such as ethnography and history and rarely are they are considered alongside one another. For instance, *History of the Ojibway Nation* by Warren is taken much more seriously in scholarly circles as “real” information and research than poetry by Annharte. *Ojibway Heritage* by Johnston is treated more seriously in the academy than art by Daphne Odjig. Or, see how Gerald Vizenor and Peter Jones are personified in their use of western expressions and languages versus Anton Treuer and Eddie Benton-Benai. Yet all of these thinkers combine politics and polemics to recreate Anishinaabeg culture and community, challenging fundamentalism and cultural stasis in the interests of innovation and renewal. All of these narrative artists, of course, bring very different knowledges and experiences to their expressions. Some have upbringings in Midewiwin lodges and “on the land,” others grew up in cities and towns. Some would be classified as “writers” and others something different. Some create “non-fiction,” others “fiction.” Some talk about things that are specific and local, others discuss topics that are overtly broad and general. Some intend their narratives for those inside the traditional borders of Anishinaabeg territory, others for those outside of it. Some do all of these things and more. Still, I will argue in this project, all have historically contributed to a fluid trajectory of Anishinaabeg intellectualism. Bringing these thinkers alongside one another is not simply to compare a set of tropes, symbols, or structures, but show how a way of life remains and endures from the past into today, and certainly into the future.

In these ways and others, this project is both community-specific while also intended for all to be able to take teachings from it. Anishinaabeg and their narratives do not stand separate from the universe, so nor do the findings and conclusions of this investigation. This work therefore is comparative in nature and activist in intent. It suggests that words used by Anishinaabeg have power and how they have been used, understood, and are now being utilized deserves careful

attention as they have the ability to shape all of our lives. Examining and understanding these incarnations gives a sense of a culture on the move and a people determining their lives on their own terms – as they always have, from the time of first thought, breath, and Creation. This act of self-determination is what constitutes Anishinaabeg and is embodied within our very language and narrative forms – in the very breath, words, and way we greet another. It is in this example that I end this project and gesture to an ongoing unfolding of Anishinaabeg through *oshki nasanaamo*, new breath.

Boozhoo

Travel to most Anishinaabeg communities and it is likely that the first word you will hear is *boozhoo*, a traditional greeting in Anishinaabemowin. You might also hear *bozhoo*, *bosho*, *bojo*, or something close to this. It is not the only word you will hear – some use *aniin*, *ahnee*, or *kweykwey* for similar purposes – but *boozhoo* is more widespread, known, or “formal.”⁹¹ Some communities use it far more than others.

Translated directly into English, the meaning of *boozhoo* is fairly straightforward. Most language speakers and teachers translate it as “hello” or “greetings” (Benton-Benai 1; Nichols and Nyholm 39; Treuer 253; Ningewance, *Talking* 9). Early dictionary writers like the nineteenth-century bishop Frederic Baraga claimed the expression meant “good day” (94). Departing a northern Wisconsin Anishinaabe community he was visiting in 1855, German writer Johann Georg Kohl heard “the old dreamer Kagagengs” use it, “wishing us farewell” (298). Like much of Anishinaabemowin, it is an extremely old, flexible, and resilient word.

Boozhoo, however, is not just a greeting. It is a word that lives in many contexts, from living rooms to boardrooms, on TV, in newspapers, at conferences, at the negotiation table, on the

internet. Simply put, boozhoo is *more* than “hello.” It is a powerful word that opens a doorway, an opportunity to share time and space, visit, reflect, listen, learn, discuss, or perhaps just acknowledge ties to one another. None of this is really surprising – most greetings do similar things. What is most interesting about boozhoo though is what it means when expressed by Anishinaabeg to a span of entities, human and non-human, throughout time and space. In every instance, the word embodies the ever-changing political and social relationships Anishinaabeg have throughout the universe with entities such as the *Nokomis Giizis* (Grandmother Moon), *aki* (earth), humans, and spirits. Each time it is used, a web of connections – a specific community – is determined, defined, and demonstrated. This community can be long-term or short-term but the word represents a possibility – a chance – to partake in some part of Anishinaabeg life.

For instance, Odawa writer Andrew Blackbird, in his 1887 book *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan and Grammar of Their Language*, wrote how relationships are signified through the word in his community:

At the New Year’s eve, everyone of the Indians used to go around visiting the principal men of the tribe, shooting their guns close to their doors after screaming three times, “Happy New Year,” then bang, bang, altogether, blowing their tin horns and beating their drums, etc. Early on the New Year’s morning, they would go around among their neighbors expressly to shake hands one with another, with the words of salutation “Bozhoo”, children and all. (50)

Boozhoo is used to communicate with non-Anishinaabeg too, but is still embedded in constructing and defining relationships. Some academics argue that it is residual evidence of long-standing military and economic ties with the French (an appropriated “bonjour”) while others say traders adopted it as a functional term when Anishinaabemowin was the *lingua franca* of the Great Lakes (the validity of these claims are unproven). Nineteenth-century non-Anishinaabeg narratives of encounters with Anishinaabeg are sprinkled with instances of boozhoo, all of which demonstrate the parameters of specific and shared relationships in certain times and places.⁹² More recently, at

The Ipperwash Inquiry in 2004, Anishinaabe elder Lillian Pitawanakwat employed boozhoo as a part of teaching representatives of government, court members, media, Anishinaabeg, and Canadians about the “wheel of life” and the importance for all life to co-exist peacefully (4-7).⁹³ Some of the best examples of the possibilities of wide-ranging community through boozhoo can be seen in the work of Anishinaabeg writers like Gordon Henry and Annharte,⁹⁴ or scholars like D’Arcy Ishpeming’enzaabid Rheault.⁹⁵ This is not to mention the numerous instances boozhoo is used in venues like ceremony, prayer, and everyday life. Few words in Anishinaabemowin are more critical to interconnectivity.

Perhaps the clearest evidence of community being realized is in the response. Boozhoo usually solicits an echoing “boozhoo!” or an acknowledgement sounding like “hoo!” Note how Edward Francis Wilson describes his naming ceremony in his 1886 narrative *Missionary Work Among the Ojebway Indians*:

The Chief expressed his pleasure in receiving us among them, and his desire that we should become as one of them by receiving Ojebway names; and then, taking me by the hand, he continued: “The name that I have selected for you is one which we greatly respect and hold in fond remembrance; for it was the name of an old and respected Chief of our tribe who lived many years ago and whose name we wish to have retained; and seeing you are a missionary to the Ojebway Indians, it is the wish of my tribe as well as myself that you should be called after our late respected Chief; so your name hereafter is ‘Puhgukahbun’ (Clear Day-light).”

The moment my name was given, "Heugh! Heugh!" sounded from all sides, that being the Indian mode of expressing approval when anything is said or done.

Mrs. Wilson then rose and received her name in the same manner. The Chief, addressing her, said: “It is with great pleasure that I bestow also on you, the wife of the missionary, an Ojebway name. The name I am about to give you was the name of one of our sisters who has long since passed away from our midst, and it is our wish that her name should be retained among us. Your name therefore is ‘Nahwegeezhegooqua’ (Lady of the Sky).

“Heugh! Heugh! Heugh!” again sounded through the room, and then the Indians one and all pressed forward to have a shake of the hand with their new brother and sister. We almost had our hands shaken off, and from all sides came the cry, “Boozhoo, Boozhoo, Puhgukahbun; Boozhoo, Nahwegeezhegooqua, Boozhoo, Boozhoo!” (33-34)

Like “heugh!” or “hoo!” boozhoo is not only an acknowledgement of arrival in Anishinaabeg community but also an affirmation of acceptance within it.

Boozhoo is therefore political, representing an expression of presence in a wide-ranging landscape of the universe. It locates Anishinaabeg, both individually and collectively, as members of *nindinawemaginidog*. It is a word therefore that not only represents the many relationships Anishinaabeg hold and can hold, but is an entrypoint to where Anishinaabeg discourse – knowledge gained from Anishinaabeg experience, thought, and expression – emerges and resides. This is space that is both independent *and* unseparable from Creation, an autonomous and interactive place that provides the opportunity for community but does not eliminate or ignore others. It is thus by nature an active word that both divides and joins, performing a delicate dance of establishing difference and breaking it down simultaneously. In other words, boozhoo is a linguistic entrypoint, a border, to an Anishinaabeg world.

Boozhoo therefore should not be used lightly. This is why it is most often used in ceremonial and traditional contexts, accompanying the announcement of a traditional name and clan as a way of fully identifying oneself to newcomers, relations, and *Manidog*. Ceremonies, however, are not the only place where boozhoo has an impact. The political power of the word was recently demonstrated in Bemidji, Minnesota, when a group of citizens concerned about the history of racism in their community rallied over sixty businesses to adopt boozhoo on signage. Although still contested space, this is a solid first step and Anishinaabeg who enter lands long part of their history now state they feel “more welcome” (“Bemidji Businesses”).

With a word so critical in the formation of different relationships important to Anishinaabeg, a broader definition is needed. Curve Lake elder Alice Olsen Williams provides one in her 1995 Margaret Laurence Endowed Lecture at Trent University, explaining:

In our language when we greet people (or even to take leave of somebody's company) we say "Boozhoo." Contrary to the popular belief that it is from the French word "Bonjour," it is not. The first human being to be created was named "Nanabozhoo." When "Boozhoo" is used as a greeting or departure, it connotes that we recognize each other as coming from the Creator, that we are all related and all have equal value. So "Boozhoo" is one of our words. It is a sign of respect for the creation, for ourselves, for each other and for our place in the creation, as Life is a circle and we are all a part of that Circle of Life. (144-5)

In "The Etymology of the Anishinaabe," published the same year, Nigigoonsiminikaaning professor and language teacher Dennis Jones states:

Many people believe that the Ojibwe word for hello—boozhoo – comes from Wenabozho himself as an abbreviated form of his name. It is said that when they repeat his name, they are really reminding themselves of their origin, as all *Anishinaabe* originated from this original man. Others have said that the people await the return of Wenabozho, and when using his name as a greeting, they are also asking, "Are you Wenabozho?" Still others stipulate that Wenabozho is always among the people doing his work, and that explains the reason for using his name as a greeting. From examining the oral traditions of the Ojibwe people we can see that a great deal of meaning can be packed into even a very small word. (45)

And, joining Williams and Jones, Ojibways of Onigaming elder Fred Kelly in his essay

"Confession of a Born Again Pagan" states that "booshoo" is a "contraction of Nanaboshoo – an affectionate acknowledgement of the person being greeted as a brother or sister through a common progenitor" (34). These three elders, all from very different Anishinaabeg communities, gesture towards a similar definition.

In a November 2008 newspaper produced by the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, a detailed explanation about the connection between boozhoo and Naanaboozhoo is offered. The story goes,

After all creation was complete, [GicheManido] created man. After he created the first Anishinaabe, he came to him in a dream and instructed him that he was to name all things in the language that he gave him, Anishinaabemowin. So the first man went about on his journey and named all things he saw – all the animals, insects, birds and fish – however long this took. Afterward, he spoke to the Creator GicheManido in his dream and said, "I have finished what you have told me to do." Then the Creator GicheManido spoke back to him and said, "Yes, you have indeed

done so, and now it is time for me to give you your name. Your name shall be Nanabozho, and whenever your people meet and greet one another, they will say a part of your name. That is why whenever the Anishinaabe people greet one another, they say the word Bozhoo. (6)

Naanaboozho, as the namer of all of Creation, invested in it this power. Naming is the very first relationship Anishinaabe share with all entities in Creation – it is how we create ties between ourselves and others. Names therefore are not only affirmations of others but recognitions of ourselves.

Names for Anishinaabeg are not only appellations but embodied connections. They are words, bagjiganan that reflect the make-up of the universe and the many relationships within it. Names are, simply, the fabric that keeps the universe together – strands in a grand web of interconnection. Anishinaabeg naming ceremonies honour this belief. A naming ceremony, as explained by Basil Johnston, is the “first important event in a person’s life,” a moment when “[a]n elder... conferred the name at the request and invitation of the parents” (*Ojibway Heritage* 121). A crucial aspect of this ceremony, Edward Benton-Benai points out, is when a “medicine person... seek[s]” a name “through fasting, meditation, prayer, or dreaming” (*The Mishomis Book* 9). These elders or medicine people, often called name-givers, often describe that there is a spiritual or metaphysical place, accessible through dreams, where all have names. Carrying that name back into the physical world, a name-giver delivers it usually in ceremony, announcing it to the four directions and the spirits and, when named, an Anishinaabe then becomes an embodiment of the connection between these realms.⁹⁶ A good example of this process is found in the collection *Stories by an Ojibway Healer: Te bwe win, Truth* by Ron Geyschick. In it, Geyschick explains that he is a conduit for names given by spiritual entities in the universe, words he receives through a process of dreaming, travelling, and fulfilling responsibilities to Creation.⁹⁷

Using Anishinaabeg names not only *evokes* connections but *invokes* them by identifying, honouring, and recreating them at the same time. Reflecting back on the story of Naanabozhoo naming creation, using boozhoo therefore not only ties Anishinaabeg to their historical “progenitor” but to “GicheManido,” the “Circle of Life,” dreams, land, and “all the animals, insects, birds and fish,” Anishinaabemowin, and to each other. It is the recognition of a shared community in amongst many and one that shares specific relationships through many experiences, histories, genealogies, names, and languages. In fact, boozhoo embodies a delicate balance between denoting separateness and demonstrating interconnectivity between all things at the same time. It could be said that the very presence of Naanabozhoo is defined by these inter-related actions to all beings in the universe.

Like marks of territory, formations of communities, and rivers that flow blood, breath, and word in the universe, boozhoo is a dynamic term illustrating how intricate Anishinaabeg relationships continue to operate throughout narrative. Boozhoo is evidence of a narrative of life that continues in Anishinaabeg lives and ensures that we continue as an active, dynamic, and full people. In the epigraph to this study, Lenore Keeshig-Tobias states “Stories, you see, are not just entertainment. Stories are power. They reflect the deepest, the most intimate perceptions, relationships and attitudes of a people. Stories show how a people, a culture, thinks” (n.p.) As I have shown, Anishinaabeg narratives inspire and influence change in the world. They carry life and spirit that enact a future of mino-bimaadiziwin. Boozhoo unveils towards how Anishinaabeg carry rich and complex knowledge through Anishinaabemowin, their cultural expressions, and how a people re-Creat themselves and their relationships through narrative. Simply using boozhoo is only one part of this: one must also know the responsibilities, histories, and politics within the word – the relationships – to understand its full possibilities. It is through narrative that

the fullness in boozhoo is identified, envisioned, and employed. Boozhoo is therefore an invitation to narrative but it is also many narratives unto itself. It is an Anishinaabeg Bagijigan. So, the next time you are in Anishinaabeg country or amongst Anishinaabeg and hear boozhoo, know that you are witnessing a long-standing cultural practice embodying life. You are also being invited to participate in the formation of an Anishinaabeg community. If you respond, you will be participating in a long-standing intellectual tradition – you will be telling a story. Go ahead. Try it.

Boozhoo.

Endnotes

¹ Wherever possible throughout my project I will indicate tribal affiliation, home community and localized spelling to recognize political and historical specificities.

² Throughout this project I will privilege “double vowel orthography,” a system of writing in Anishinaabemowin developed by linguist C.E. Fiero in the 1950s. There are several reasons for this that require explanation. According to John D. Nichols and Earl Nyholm in *A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe*, the “double vowel orthography system” has as “the main principles underlying it . . . that the letters or combinations of letters, although drawn from the same alphabet used to write English, stand for Ojibwe sounds, not English sounds, and that only the basic sounds (phonemes) of the language are written, not the predictable variants of them” (xxiii). Some traditional Anishinaabemowin advocates abhor the use of double-vowel orthography, preferring less standardized phonetic systems that maintain specific locality and control. Still, the Fiero system has become, Anton Treuer claims, “the most frequently used system for writing Ojibwe in the United States,” differing from “‘folk phonetics’ . . . romanized spellings of Ojibwe words based on ‘how they sound’ with very little consistency” or the much older “syllabic system” which uses altogether different representations for sounds (11-12). Treuer adds that it is “well designed, easy to use, consistent, and accessible to all students of the language” (12) while Patricia Ningewance writes that is “now becoming widely recognized as THE spelling system to use. The old phonetic way of spelling is discouraged. It is an unhealthy crutch that prevents consistent spelling. The Fiero system will never let you down, once you learn it” (*Pocket Ojibwe* 13). Considering the scope and focus of this dissertation, I utilize double vowel orthography to maintain consistency with other recordings of Anishinaabemowin and appeal to as wide an audience as possible. For a specific breakdown of double vowel orthography see Nichols and Nyholm’s *A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe* (xxiii-xxviii).

³ “Poachers” is a term described by Cherokee critic Daniel Heath Justice in his article “We’re Not There Yet, Kemo Sabe: Positing a Future for American Indian Literary Studies” as “a term coined by James Cox to describe those non-Indians who come into Native studies to nab a few of our resources, pick up a publication or two, tell the Indian folks who we are and how we think, and then head back to tenure land, leaving us with the bloody gut pile and, yet again, nothing to help our communities, either intellectually or physically” (*Our Fire Survives the Storm* 268). In a conversation with Justice, fellow Cherokee critic Jace Weaver added to this, “noting that in addition to poachers, we also have a category of *squatters* in the field who, as with the Georgia lottery of Cherokee land, lay claim to the field and remain to exploit it and the People. The one positive attribute of poachers is that they leave; the squatters lay claim to place and actively work to displace Indians from the field and its discourses” (qtd. in *Our Fire Survives the Storm* 248, n3).

⁴ There are other names used alongside Anishinaabe but this it is by far the most common.

⁵ See: Mary E. Southcott’s *The Sound of the Drum: The Sacred Art of the Anishinabec* (Erin, ON: Boston Mills Press, 1984); James A. Clifton et al’s *People of the Three Fires: The Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Ojibway of Michigan* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Michigan Indian Press Grand Rapids Inter-Tribal Council, 1986); or the collection *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2012).

⁶ An example of this occurred in 1836, when two bands of Chippewa (known as the Swan Creek Band and Black River Band) negotiated for a tract of territory on Osage River, Kansas and were later removed to Oklahoma. See: Charles J. Kappler, “Treaty with the Chippewa, 1836,” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, Vol. III, (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1904), 461-62.

⁷ Scholar and historian Theresa Schenck suggests that classifying Warren as Anishinaabe or Ojibwe is complicated and may even contravene his own understanding of himself (*William W. Warren* vii). With due respect, I recognize him as Anishinaabe and assert that Schenck does as well. For instance, Schenck describes “his extraordinary ability to speak and understand the Ojibwe language,” that he was “[e]qually at home in a native lodge or in the Minnesota territorial legislature,” and refers to him as Ojibwe throughout her work (*Life, Letters, and Times* xi). Reviewing *The Life, Letters and Times of an Ojibwe Leader*, White Earth scholar Jill Doerfler states: “Schenck illuminates the important role that Warren played as an interpreter during treaty negotiations and demonstrates his consistent loyalty to the Ojibwe” (332). While Schenck’s points suggest that Warren’s identity was complicated, his commitment to Anishinaabeg communities and embodying Anishinaabeg discourses is undeniable.

⁸ See: Schenck, *History of the Ojibway People*, vii, xvi-xx; Shenck, *Life, Letters and Times*, vii; and Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography 1827-1863*, (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2004), 199.

⁹ A good example is J. Edward Chamberlin, who acknowledges that “there are those who will quarrel with my use of the term *literature*” in describing Indigenous expressions but he claims there is “no other word” that “acknowledges their aesthetic and intellectual character, their beauties and – inseparably – their truths” (“The Corn People” 72). But others do use praise terms such as “verbal art.”

¹⁰ See Kristina Fagan and Sam McKegney, “Circling the Question of Nationalism in Native Canadian Literature and its Study,” *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 41.1 (2008): 31-42 and Kristina Fagan, Daniel Heath Justice, Keavy Martin, McKegney, Deanna Reder, and Niigonweddom James Sinclair, “Canadian Indian Literary Nationalism?: Critical Approaches in Canadian Indigenous Contexts – A Collaborative Interlogue,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 29.1/2 (2009): 19-44.

¹¹ Anishinaabek Nation, “Anishinaabe Chi Naaknigewin.” 6 June 2012.

¹² Ziibwing Center, *Gdodemonaanik Do Kinoomaagewinawaan (Clan System Teachings)*. 3 March 2012.

¹³ Lyons is somewhat arbitrary when determining what is “traditional” and “modern.” Anishinaabemowin and the Anishinaabeg Creation Story, for instance, are frequently used to mark Native entries into “modernity” while others – such as the symbol of the tree or genealogical descent – are deemed archaic. This creates a fixed sense of the “traditional” that frames the study as the whole.

¹⁴ In *Red on Red*, Womack lists a “‘pure vs. tainted’ framework, centred around European contact that “locks” Native Studies and expression “into a system that does not allow the discipline to evolve; it is the way in which we have inherited the vanishing mentality” (65). He lists it as:

<i>Pure</i>	<i>Tainted</i>
oral tradition	writing
performance	print
original language	translation
precontact	postcontact
Indian religion	Indian Christians
Indian culture	Indian politics (65)

¹⁵ Dumont pinpoints the “Seven Principles of Anishinaabe First Nationhood” as belief, faith, truth, gift of life, respect, knowledge, and strength” and provides explanations on each of these (“Anishinaabe Izhichigaywin” 15).

¹⁶ The “Anishinaabe Seven Fires of Creation,” according to Dumont, takes place “in seven stages. These stages outline the phases of the creation event from the state of ‘darkness of the unknown,’ through the sequential process of unfolding, to the final created ‘Image’ as it is reflected back to the creative source” (“Anishinaabe Izhichigaywin” 17).

¹⁷ Wendy Djinn Geniusz, *Our Knowledge is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabe Teachings* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2009). Geniusz identifies that enawendiwin is embodied in *Anishinaabe inaadiziwin* (“Anishinaabe psychology and ways of being”) and human-spirit connections called *gaa-izhi-zhawendaagosiyang* (“that which is given to us in a loving way by the spirits”) (10, 57).

¹⁸ John Borrows, “Wampum at Niagara: The Royal Proclamation, Canadian Legal History, and Self-Government,” *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada*, ed. Michael Asch (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997). 155-72. Borrows argues that Niagara was where Native nations participated actively “in the formulation and ratification of the Royal Proclamation” and received recognition of rights, sovereignties, and “guarantee of First Nations self-government” (“Wampum” 169).

¹⁹ Miigwech to my colleague Catherine Hunter from the University of Winnipeg who pointed this out to me.

²⁰ Odjig remarks in Raoul McKay’s 2003 documentary *The Life and Work of the Woodland Artists*: “My grandfather [Jonas] played a great role in my life – he nurtured my creative spirit – he was the first one I ever drew with...he was my first mentor.” Odjig even produced an *Homage to Grandfather* series of paintings in 1980, including most notably the works *Listening* and *Learning*. Odjig’s other primary source for traditional stories was her sister-in-law

Rosemary Peltier, who told her traditional Nanabush stories and escorted her around Wikwemikong, “from house to house to meet the elder ladies of the community and listen to their stories” (Devine 20).

²¹ See Southcott, *The Sound of the Drum: The Sacred Art of the Anishnabec* and Tom Hill and Elizabeth McLuhan, *Norval Morrisseau and the Emergence of the Image Makers*, (Toronto: Methuen, 1984). Indicative of her influence, a 2007 gathering by the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective in Canada entitled *Witness: A Symposium on the Woodland School of Painters* focused exclusively on Odjig’s work as well.

²² Devine adds that the remaking of traditional images by the Woodland School “has been called the ‘Pictographic Style’ because of its association with Selwyn Dewdney’s research on the pictographs of Northwestern Ontario” (18).

²³ Underlining this, R.M. Vanderbergh and M.E. Southcott in *A Paintbrush in My Hand* categorize this period of her career: “Story-teller and Teacher.” It is also important to recall that Odjig published her illustrated collection of ten children’s storybooks, entitled *Nanabush Tales* (Toronto: Ginn, 1971), at virtually the same time.

²⁴ Robin Jarvis Brownlie, *A Fatherly Eye: Indian Agents, Government Power, and Aboriginal Resistance in Ontario, 1918-1939* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2003).

²⁵ As Devine describes it, Odjig saw that “the Easterville Cree were in rough condition” and so she “responded with a series of naturalistic ink drawings depicting life in the community. They are sympathetic descriptors mainly – detailed but devoid of passion or poetry. The contemporary world of motorboats and steel tools is illustrated with clarity. The visionary atmosphere of the legend paintings was still to come” (21-22).

²⁶ In September 1907, officials arrived at St. Peter’s Indian Settlement, a Cree, Saulteaux, and Metis community on the Red River, to hold a land “surrender” vote. Through bribery and trickery, the vote was carried and an act of parliament was passed to entrench the decision. Residents of St. Peters were instructed to move to what is now known as Peguis Indian Reserve, a swampy land over one hundred kilometers north and both inadequate for farming and hunting and prone to flooding. Historian P. Paul Burrows writes that “[t]he St. Peter’s “removal” was an instance of ethnic cleansing, designed to maximize land for white settlers, and minimize the number of Indians upon it. It was both a crime against humanity and a significant breach of Treaty 1, the very agreement that gives colonizers a semblance of a right to dwell in southern Manitoba.” You have already quoted some of this in the text.

²⁷ Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair and Warren Cariou, eds. *Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press) 2012. Odjig’s *The Creation of the World* adorns the cover.

²⁸ Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, “The Treaties and the Treaty Relationship: Treaty Education Initiative Background,” February 2012 <<http://www.trcm.ca/PDF/TRCM-TEI-Backgrounder-February-2012.pdf>>.

²⁹ The “Oka Crisis” was the culmination of an over two-century land dispute between the Kanien’kehaka (Mohawk, or Haudenosaunee) people of Kanehsatà:ke and Canadians from Oka, Quebec, resulting in an armed standoff from July 11, 1990 until September 26, 1990. It was a peaceful protest that quickly escalated, as Lac Du Flambeau scholar Gail Guthrie Valaskakis documents in *Indian Country: Essays on Contemporary Native Culture*:

The seeds of conflict were sewn when land claims were ignored in a move to extend a golf course into the grounds of an ancient Indian cemetery in Kahehsatake, a patchwork of Mohawk reserve land intertwined with the town of Oka, forty eight kilometers from Montreal. Women who were cousins or clan mothers sat in “the Pines” where the cemetery is located, through the media silence of a restless winter. Their vigil was vocal but peaceful, a statement of heritage and heresy voiced without the guns that attract media attention. Winter dissolved into spring and then summer. In June, when the weary voices of the women in the Pines became shrill, the mayor of Oka obtained an injunction against the protestors and summoned police to remove them. The women called upon Mohawk warriors to defend their vigil, to resist their removal from consecrated land; and the festering wounds of Kanehsatake transformed from a campfire into a barricade. (37)

Many are uncomfortable with the term “Oka Crisis” and prefer the descriptor “resistance at Kanehsatà:ke.”

³⁰ McIntyre and Barr remark that “recent data from marked [loons] show that about 20%” of mates do not remain together and in a few rare cases, a female might take two mates during one season (11-12).

³¹ See: Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*, 76-94; Benton-Benai, *The Mishomis Book*, 90-103; Valaskakis, *Indian Country*, 110-11; Johnston, *Ojibway Ceremonies* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982) 107-108; Ignatia Broker *Night Flying Woman* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1983) 8-9; Winona Laduke, *The Winona LaDuke Reader* (Penticton: Theytus, 2002) 172-80; and Cary Miller, *Ogimaag* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2010) 92-94. There are others I cite here from settings such as ceremonies and visits with elders.

³² The exact location of the first “turtle shaped island” is somewhat unclear. Warren states that it “was on the shores of the great river where Mo-ne-aung (Montreal) now stands” (80). Benton-Benai notes a few potential possibilities in *The Mishomis Book* (95-96).

³³ The little boy showed Anishinaabeg “the direction to the stepping stones to the future of the Anishinaabe people” (Benton-Benai 89).

³⁴ Benton-Benai claims in *The Mishomis Book* that the fifth prophet declared the Fifth Fire as a time of great struggle that will grip the lives of all Native people. At the waning of this Fire there will come along the people one who holds a promise of great joy and salvation. If people accept this promise of a new way and abandon old teachings, then the struggle of the Fifth Fire will be with the people for many generations. The promise that comes will prove to be a false promise. All those who accept this promise will cause the near destruction of the people. (90)

³⁵ Benton-Benai remarks in *The Mishomis Book* that the Sixth fire would be a time when the “balance of many people will be disturbed. The cup of life will almost be spilled. The cup of life will almost become the cup of grief” (90).

³⁶ Eliza edited Jones’s work, but it is unknown to what degree. Biographer Donald B. Smith states in *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonabay) & the Mississauga Indians* that his English wife “presented it well” (246). Some scholars do not agree, like Scott Michaelson, who asks “why is it that Eliza Jones does not contaminate Jones’s text through her editing and additions to his notes? How is it possible to claim that this mediator-editor merely ‘presented’ Peter Jones in such a way so as to perfectly ‘preserve his voice’?” (113).

³⁷ In fairness to Vizenor, he does include a small segment of Jones’s work in *Touchwood: A Collection of Ojibway Prose* – which appeared three years after this quote.

³⁸ Within Jones’ *History* are many narratives obtained from Anishinaabeg elders and storytellers. A few are the history of European contact (26-8), thunder stories (86-7), dream stories (89-91), a spirit world story (103), a Mamagwasewug story (159), Pashegezhegwashkum’s defiant speech regarding Christianity (229-30), and the collective petition written by the chiefs of Credit River to the Queen of England (265-7). Jones also relates other histories heard from people in his community: his familial spirit stories (87), a Naanaboosho story (33-5), fasting stories (65-6), Mamagwasewug (Little People) stories (156-59), the Anishinaabeg welcome address to their territory for Joseph Brant and the Six Nation Mohawks (211-12), the history of French-Anishinaabe and British-Anishinaabe alliances (216-17), and War Cloud’s death story (251-12).

³⁹ Jones supports the theory that Indians are one of the “lost ten tribes of Israel,” and migrated to North America through the Bering Strait corridor (*History* 36). He does also interestingly express doubt about this theory however. As he writes immediately following: “But on the other hand, [the Indians] have no sabbath, no circumcision, no alters erected, and no distinction between clean and unclean animals. It would seem almost impossible for the descendents of the Israelites ever to lost the recollection of their Sabbath days, and the rite of circumcision, both of which were so solemnly enjoined upon them” (37).

⁴⁰ As Jones reports, English is rapidly being learned by Indians in his time, as “there are fifteen schools in different parts of Upper Canada, and there are no less than four hundred and fifty Indian children attending them, learning the English language” (*Missionary Records* 411).

⁴¹ Appropriating English writing for Anishinaabeg needs and purposes is exactly what Jones does in *History of the Ojibway Indians*. Without concern over authenticity or translation, Jones records what he understands as the internal discourse of the Anishinaabeg: the words and creations stories of the “aged [Ojibwe] sachems” (31-36), the traditional lands “originally occupied by the Ojibway nation” (40-56), the Ojibweg “general character” (57-70) and “natural state” (71-77), time-honoured customs and religion (78-104), governmental structures (105-10), historical information such as the “Ojibway wars with other tribes, long before the white man appeared in their country” (111-14, 130-3) and the “treaty made between the Six Nations and the Ojibways” (118-22), cultural “amusements” (134-40),

“opposition to the missionaries” (143-45), “medicines” (152-55), Ojibway names and language (156-64, 178-90), and the “opinion of the Indians respecting the sovereign and people of Great Britain” (207-10, 216).

⁴² See: John Moses’ *A Sketch Account of Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian Military* (8-26), Peter S. Schmalz’s *The Ojibwa of Southern Ontario* (100-05), Derek Hayes’s *The Historical Atlas of Canada* (126-28), E. Palmer Patterson’s *The Canadian Indian: A History Since 1500* (64), and R. Surtees’ report to the Government of Canada Indian Affairs Department entitled *Indian Land Surrenders in Ontario 1763-1867* (1-5, 8-10).

⁴³ Historian Donald B. Smith argues that the Burlington Heights area, “luckily” for the Mississauga, “lay in an area the white man initially regarded as undesirable. The swarms of mosquitoes in the summer deterred the Loyalists, as did the hundreds of rattlesnakes and the bears and the wolves. Most of the early white settlers, in fact, had bypassed Burlington Bay and continued farther inland to higher, drier, and more easily worked land” (2). Smith’s research is impressive but neglects to mention the Mississauga’s strong military reputation, other reasons the British respected their sovereignty. This is also likely why settlers saw the Mississauga as a threat and supported efforts to undermine them and their territories (Schmalz 87-94).

⁴⁴ See Surtees, 60-61. The most famous of these agreements was the 1805 controversial “Toronto Purchase,” where the British Crown reneged on their original 1787 agreement to allocate lands around York and solicited 85,000 more acres of the Mississauga Tract.

⁴⁵ In this time, hunting was one of the primary ways young Anishnaabe men were socialized into their community and traditional lives. As Johnston says “no occupation was more respected than that of hunting and fishing; that is, providing food; no men more honoured than the skilled hunter who kept family and community amply supplied with food and materials for clothing and shelter” (*Heritage* 66). It was the way a young man learned from and interacted with nature, and fostered the “proof of individual worth” because “not only had young men and boys to learn about the character and nature of animals, but they had to learn how to make and repair their own equipment so they could survive in a variety of circumstances when alone” (66-67).

⁴⁶ Jones writes:

The Indian youth from the age of ten to manhood are encouraged by their parents and the old people to fast, with the promise that if they do they will entertain them in the evening by the relation of one of their traditions or tales. Inspired with the hope of gaining favour with some god, and looking forward to the promised reward at the end of the day, they rise before the sun, take a piece of charcoal, which they pound to powder, and with it blacken their faces, the girls only blackening the upper part. During their fast they abstain from all food and drinks; towards sunset they wash their faces and then eat a little broth or soup which has been prepared for them; in this way they go on for several successive days, the longer the better, and the more *munedoo*s they will be likely to propitiate. All this time they notice every remarkable event, dream, or supernatural sound; and whichever of these makes the most impression on their minds during their fast, suggests the particular spirit which becomes their personal *munedoo* as long as their live, and in all emergencies and dangers they will call upon him for assistance. (*Ojebway* 87-88, original emphasis)

Jones adds: “I used to blacken my face with charcoal, and fast, in order to obtain the aid of personal gods or familiar spirits, and likewise attended their pagan feasts and dances” (*Life* 2).

⁴⁷ In a 26 Sept. 1831 speech Jones refers to Reynolds as “a white man, I suppose a good Christian” (*Sermon* 14).

⁴⁸ There is evidence to support that Jones, in the act of going to sleep, may have been attempting a vision quest of his own. Jones knows that dreaming is a way to engage a “personal *munedoo*” (*Ojebway* 88). Although he states that he “had not laid there long” and may not have dreamed of anything, it is intriguing to consider why Jones mentions he is going to sleep instead of simply beginning his narrative with the next day.

⁴⁹ Jones comments repeatedly in *Life and Journals* about doubt in his own missionary work. He continues to interrogate whether Christianity serves all of the spiritual needs of his Anishinaabe brethren. Notable days include: April 5, 9, 14, 17, May 14, 17, 23, 24, June 1, 9, 15, 29, Aug. 23 in 1825, Jan. 31, Feb. 4, 10, 12, 14, 17, April 16, 19, May 7 in 1826, and May 5 in 1827.

⁵⁰ In Jones’s experience at the River Credit, conversion provided Indians with a “new” basis for religious thought, church schooling for children, economic support (specifically for housing and agricultural development),

“friendly” relations with government and military (resulting in protection of rights), and opportunities for political and economic advancement. In a missionary report in 1838, he writes:

The River Credit Mission being the oldest station among the Chippeways, I will give you an account of their present temporal condition. About ten years ago this people had no houses, no fields, no horses, no cattle, no pigs, no poultry. Each person could carry all he possessed on his back, without being much burthened. They are now occupying about 40 comfortable houses, most of which are built of hewn logs, and a few of frame. They are generally one-and-a-half story high, and about 24 feet long and 18 feet wide, with stone or brick chimneys; two or three rooms in each house; their furniture consists of tables, chairs, bedsteads, straw mattresses, a few feather beds, window-curtains, boxes and trunks for their wearing apparel, small shelves fastened against the wall for their books, closets for their cooking utensils, cup-boards for their plates, cups, saucers, knives, and forks. Some have clocks and watches. They have no carpets; but a few have mats laid on their floors. This tribe own a saw mill, a workshop, a blacksmith’s shop, and a warehouse, the property of the whole community. (*Information Respecting the Aborigines* 36)

⁵¹ Three years earlier, for example, Jones writes that he met with Anishinaabeg leaders at Tumeko’s Camp, and barely records at all what they said, reducing their dissent into “objections of a feeble nature” (*Life and Journals* 41). While including a letter from a group of Mohawk chiefs refusing him entry to their communities, Jones gives it little merit and quickly points out that “this opposition originated from a white man, who influenced the Indians to sign the foregoing letter, which he himself had written” (56-7). In April 1828, while visiting chiefs at Lower Munciey Jones paraphrases their statements of resistance into single sentences (130).

⁵² Elsewhere scholars have spelled *Pazhekezhikquashkum*’s name as *Bauzhi-geezhig-waeshikum*, *Pechegechequistqum*, *Begigishigueshkam*, or *Beyigishigueshkam* as well as translate his name to mean “One Who Steps Over the Sky.” Even Jones spells it several times differently, as *Pazhekezhikquashkum* (*Life* 246), *Pashegeeghegwaskum* (*History* 159), *Pashegeezhegwaskum* (*History* 208), and *Pashegeezhegwaskum* (*History* 229).

⁵³ According to historian Donald B. Smith, “*Pazhekezhikquashkum* was distinctly antiwhite” and was someone who “believed that both his ‘father,’ the King of England, and his ‘stepfather,’ the president of the United States, had hurt his people” (109).

⁵⁴ There is arguable reason to believe that ardent resistance to Christianity was a tradition at Bkejwanong before *Pazhekezhikquashkum* and he was continuing this legacy. Two years after the death of the Head Chief, for example, Jesuit missionaries visited Walpole Island to begin discussions on Christianization and were received by Oshawana, an eighty-three year old elder and leader. In response to their requests for conversion, he referenced a “determination” that was “not recent,” stating:

It is true that among our brothers of the same blood there are some who have abandoned them. But that is no reason for us to do so. On the contrary, we must preserve more carefully the legacy of our ancestors.

Therefore, my brother, do not flatter yourself that we will change. No, never will I, a savage man, forget the Great Spirit by whom all things exist. I know what he has given to me, and I will preserve it carefully. I feed my fire, it will not go out.

This determination is not recent; it has existed for a long time. People who pray surround us, and even Black Robes have come. But our resolution is unshakable.

So you can clearly see, my brother, that we do not want to accept prayer and that by staying among us, you will never get what you desire. You will undoubtedly give up your plan. (qtd. in Delâge and Tanner 305)

⁵⁵ At Tumeko’s Camp Jones describes that he argued at length with the chiefs until realizing that to do so is “ineffectual” (*Life and Journals* 41). At Lower Munciey, Jones states he pointed out the fallacies in their claims, stating that he “asked them whether they were opposed to having their children taught to read and write. . . . They replied they were not; but on the contrary should like them taught as the white people” (130). In one of the few examples where Jones records a speech of resistance similar in detail to *Pazhekezhikquashkum*’s, by Kanootong an *Anishinaabeg* chief at Bear River, he states he offered him an extended “answer to these arguments” (123-25).

⁵⁶ Jones not only discusses how he disagrees with the ideas present in *Pazhekezhikquashkum*’s speech, but uses him as a figurehead for Native traditional spirituality. For instance, in a discussion about “supposed witches and

fairies” in Indian religion, Jones identifies Pazhekezhikquashkum as someone who “fully believed in the existence of these imaginary beings, and in their power to harm those who dared to disturb their habitations” (*Ojebway* 159).

⁵⁷ As Jones records in his journal on August 4th, the Head Chief takes kinship designations very seriously. Fully aware of the disillusionment many Indians in the area felt with Americans, he records,

In the morning the old Chief, whose name was Pazhekezhikquashkum, came and entered into a friendly conversation with us about temporal things. He remarked that the articles of merchandize in the dominions of our father the King were very dear, but said that the goods of our stepfather of the United States were not so high. This is the first time I have heard our Canadian Indians call the President of the United States step-father. (*Life* 247).

Jones cites the same discussion in *History of the Ojebway Indians* (208).

⁵⁸ Throughout his journals Jones refers to individuals he considers kin as “brother.” He cites the importance of the term, such as when he recounts the general council meeting held in January 1840 and renewed the friendship treaty between the Six Nations and the Anishinaabeg, where “agreement was made for ever after to all each other BROTHERS” (*Ojebway* 119).

⁵⁹ As defined by Skaggs and Nelson, the Sixty Years War was a military and political struggle over territorial control of the Great Lakes. It consists of six phases: the French and Indian War (1754-1763), Pontias’s Rebellion (1763-1765), Lord Dunsmore’s War (1774), the Frontier Warfare during the American Revolution (1775-1783), the Northwest Indian War (1785-1795), and the War of 1812 (1812-1814). See: Skaggs, David Curtis and Larry L. Nelson, eds. *The Sixty Years’ War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814* (East Lansing: Michigan State UP) 2001.

⁶⁰ This was later published by Ralph Brown as “With Cass in the Northwest in 1820: The Journal of Charles C. Trowbridge, May 24--September 13, 1820” *Minnesota History*, 23 (1942): 126-148, 233-252, 328-348.

⁶¹ See: Michigan Historical Collection. *Historical collections made by the Pioneer Society of the State of Michigan*. Vol. 12. 2nd Ed. Lansing: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford, 1908. 606-611.

⁶² See specifically Valaskakis’ chapter entitled “Living the Heritage of Lac du Flambeau: Traditionalism and Treaty Rights” in *Indian Country*, 9-34.

⁶³ According to Valaskakis, “by the late 1940s, there were one hundred resorts installed next to one thousand summer homes on the reservation, and summer came to mean tourists. Chippewa spearers were transformed into fishing guides, specialists of the storm warning, the brush pile, and the shore lunch. And women, the hearth of our culture pursued for their bodies or their souls, now sold beadwork and domestic service” (16-7).

⁶⁴ A close reading of Barnouw’s work certainly indicates a lot of disturbingly exploitative, objectifying, and consumptive interests. Gerald Vizenor comments on this in his essay “Trickster Discourse: Comic Holotropes and Language Games,” examining the anthropologist’s recording and commentary of Chippewa “trickster stories” and concluding that “Barnouw delivered his interpretations in isolation, as an anthropologist; he rendered a tribal language game into power theories, linear social structures, and carried on an autistic monologue with science” (198).

⁶⁵ Entire book-length studies and interviews are published on Vizenor’s wide-ranging contributions, while hundreds of articles appear in anthologies, at conferences, and for university classes. This is little surprise; Vizenor’s writerly resumé is what Weaver calls “one of Native America’s most prolific and protean” (2001, 54). Kimberly Blaeser, in her recent entry on his work in *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*, rightfully calls Vizenor “one of the most prolific and one of the most versatile of contemporary Native writers” (“Postindian” 257).

⁶⁶ Lee describes that through his interweaving of postmodern theory, “simulations” of Native America, and experiences of Native histories and issues, Vizenor’s writing reflects “chameleonism,” “a crossblood signature in textuality to match that in life” and a “call to remedy and, at the same time, the very embodiment of remedy” (265, 266, 274).

⁶⁷ In defense of Warrior, he did not include this passage in the final, edited chapter of *Tribal Secrets* – perhaps signifying a change of heart.

⁶⁸ Womack’s criticisms are in the context of Kimberly Blaeser’s analysis of Vizenor’s writings as much as to specifically his work. Womack also states that: “Vizenor’s oeuvre is so varied that a generalized critique is almost always reductive” (“A Single Decade” 72).

⁶⁹ Declared sovereign on October 12, 1992 and situated “in the Strait of Georgia between Semiahmoo, Washington, and Vancouver Island, Canada,” Assinika becomes the place where “the wild estate of tribal memories and the genes of survivance in the New World” are celebrated and fostered (*Heirs* 119). Using profits from three “tribal” business ventures destroyed in a thunderstorm: the Santa Maria Casino, the Niña (a restaurant), and the Pinta (a tax free market) at their old, destroyed “moored reservation,” the heirs announce that Assinika will be a “a free state with no prisons, no passports, no public schools, no missionaries, no television, and no public taxation” while “genetic therapies, natural medicine, bingo cards, and entertainment [will be] free to those who came to be healed and those who lived on the point” (11, 124). Its trickster spokesman, Stone Columbus, pronounces that because Indians are “forever divided by the racist arithmetic measures of tribal blood” he “would accept anyone who wanted to be tribal, ‘no blood attached or scratched,’” as citizens, preferring instead to “make the world tribal” (162). As “the first nation in the histories of the modern world dedicated to protean humor and the genes that would heal,” Assinika invites all wounded, lonesome, and abused children are invited to come and be liberated through shared stories and injections of “genetic signatures of survivance” (119). These signatures are taken from the genes of the heirs who “carried an unbroken radiance, a genetic chain from the first hand talkers of creation” (132-33).

⁷⁰ Justice envisions Indigenous nationhood as “the political extension” of “peoplehood,” a concept put forth by Cherokee anthropologist Robert K. Thomas (Holm et al. 25).

⁷¹ I do not perform this reading to focus specifically on Krupat, a careful and considerate reader, but to show evidence of how politically motivated conclusions about Vizenor’s work are (as is the case of several critics – including my own). Krupat’s ideas in fact may have altered somewhat. In his book *Red Matters: Native American Studies*, he argues that “the identity Vizenor has elaborately been defining and redefining has at base the deep and unmistakable roots of ‘tribal’ values – which can and indeed must be taken along wherever one may go – to the cities, to Europe, to China, anywhere. . . . In these regards, Vizenor may well have provided *Indian* versions of cosmopolitan patriotism” (112). This statement however is slightly destabilized by a footnote where he writes, “Vizenor on occasion constructs an argument for sovereignty that I have found to be ‘cultural nationalist’ [but this] should not be taken to contradict his basically cosmopolitan or cosmopolitan patriot position” (141 n28).

⁷² For further critical studies on Anishinaabeg-specific conclusions of *Heirs*, *Bearheart*, and *The Trickster of Liberty*, see: Ruoff’s “Gerald Vizenor: Compassionate Trickster” in *American Indian Quarterly* 9.1 (1985): 67-73; Barry’s “Chance and Ritual: The Gambler in the Texts of Gerald Vizenor” in *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5.3 (1993): 13-22; and Burgess’ “Elaboration Therapy in the Midewiwin and Gerald Vizenor’s *The Heirs of Columbus*” in *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 18.1 (2006): 22-36.

⁷³ In an excellent essay entitled “Trickster Discourse and Postmodern Strategies,” the late Elaine Jahner explores how Vizenor employs postmodern theories on political engagement, deconstruction, the destabilization of the object/subject binary, and representation, all of which enriches understandings of Vizenor’s work as well as his use of tribal traditions such as dreams, storytelling, and trickster stories. In addition to showing these powerful possibilities, Jahner also importantly identifies the shortcomings of such an approach, showing that “the postmodern condition... is still being choreographed with intent to exclude tribal dances. Postmodern theorists need some time to mediate on an intertribal pow-wow” (56).

⁷⁴ This also problematizes a popular notion: that Vizenor’s use of trickster fragments all sense of unified tribal subjectivities. For example, I draw upon Vizenor’s trickster characters, who travel the world but constantly emerge from Naanaboozhoo myths or come from, return to, or stay close to Anishinaabeg peoples or communities. They also seem to be very interested in maintaining their Anishinaabeg specificity, so much so that scholars frequently draw on Anishinaabeg writers and thinkers such as Basil Johnston, Eddie Benton-Benai, and Patronella Johnston to illuminate Vizenor’s works. For more on this I recommend an essay entitled “(Re)Nationalizing Naanabush: Anishinaabe Sacred Stories, Nationalist Criticism and Scholarly Responsibilities,” where Daniel Morley Johnson explores how gameplaying is a sacred practice where balance and contradiction is sought, meaning that as much as transgression is celebrated, so are boundaries and morality.

⁷⁵ This is reminiscent of N. Scott Momaday’s famous “Man Made of Words” 1970 keynote address to the First Convocation of American Indian Scholars - which Vizenor cites regularly.

⁷⁶ Baker uses her middle name “Annharte” when she writes, a name of Welsh origin and from a character in the 1941 film *How Green Was My Valley*. According to Pauline Butling, Annharte chose this name “because the character in the movie offers hope for poor people” (“I Make” 89).

⁷⁷ For Wah it is the in-between spaces where hybrid individuals live, epitomized by the “hyphen,” the “operable tool that both compounds difference and underlines sameness” (72-3). This space is symbolized by the swinging door that separates Chinese and Canadian in his family’s restaurant in his work *Diamond Grill*.

⁷⁸ Fanon advocates that Indigenous intellectuals decolonize identities by first utilizing tools of the colonizer and then reconstructing them through a three-stage “evolution,” beginning by centring it around traditional tribal values (223-5). Fanon warns, however, that there can be no liberation for the Native intellectual who “fails to realize that he is utilizing techniques and language which are borrowed,” and it is only through an engagement with the real-life existence of the colonized people can a future be ascertained (224-25).

⁷⁹ Thiong’o argues in *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* that it is primarily through Indigenous ancestral languages that a process of decolonization and identity creation begins (15-16).

⁸⁰ Relying heavily on Bakhtin’s work, Owens argues that “the Native American writer, like almost all colonized people, must function in within an essentially appropriated language” (*Other Destinies* 12). He posits that Native American writers are always in the position of encountering hegemonic discursive languages which seek to undermine them, therefore their writing is always resisting, always appropriating, “and thus entering into dialogue with the language itself. The result of this exquisite balancing act is a matrix of incredible heteroglossia and linguistic torsions and an intensely political situation” (15).

⁸¹ Furthermore, as Pulitano writes, since Native writers “are inevitably implicated in the discourse of the dominant centre,” any who claim that Native writing should engage in any project outside of resistance to western colonialism are naïve, delusional, and end up “perpetuating the discursive paradigms of Eurocentric thinking, thus further marginalizing Native American literature and theory” (100).

⁸² See: Niigonwedom James Sinclair, “Tending To Ourselves: Hybridity and Native Literary Criticism,” *Contexts in Aboriginal/Native American Writing in Canada and the US*. Ed. Renate Eigenbrod, Paul DePasquale, and Emma LaRocque (Peterborough: Broadview, 2009) 239-58.

⁸³ As I wrote in “Tending to Ourselves,” the theory of hybridity “emphasize(s) the inter-connectedness between Native writers and the non-Native world,” showing that Aboriginal peoples are “diverse and complex,” countering any notion that Native identities exist in a static, pristine, “pure” past. Hybridity can also be employed to celebrate Native “knowledge systems, and try to account for how Indian writers utilize this knowledge in different ways in their multiple subject positions.” Advocates of hybridity also demand for “Native inclusion in the North American literary canon by emphasizing the ways Native artists have combined Western forms with tribal traditions,” another valuable contribution (248).

⁸⁴ Participating representatives were from First Nations communities and bands situated in Ontario, Manitoba, Quebec and Alberta in Canada, tribal communities and governments situated in US states such as Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Montana, and several national and transnational Indigenous political organizations including: the Anishinabek Nation, Grand Council Treaty #3, Algonquin Nation Secretariat, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Assembly of First Nations, and the American Indian Movement.

⁸⁵ A detailed “personal report” of the events at the gathering, along with the text of the Declaration, is written by Hank Bailey for the *GTB News*, the newspaper of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. It is available at: http://www.gtbindians.org/images/pdf_files/Oct07Part1.pdf.

⁸⁶ See: Ernest Gellner’s *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), E. J. Hobsbawm’s *The Invention of Tradition* (co-edited with Terence Ranger, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), and John Breuilly’s *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1982).

⁸⁷ See: Edward Hallett Carr’s *Nationalism and After* (London: Macmillan, 1945), Alfred Cobban’s *The Nation-State and National Self-Determination* (London: Collins, 1969), Charles Tilly’s (Ed.) *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1975), and Sir Michael Howard’s *The Lessons of History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991).

⁸⁸ Althusser explores how dominant social systems impose, legitimate, and enforce their control while reproducing their necessity in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),” arguing that structures of power require expansive apparatuses to enforce and ensure citizens’ “subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its practice.” While this process can include “Repressive State Apparatuses” that operate strictly

through violence (such as prisons, police, and the military), institutional systems that appear empowering and legitimate to the majority, operating mainly “through ideology” and called “Ideological State Apparatuses” – namely church, schools, the police, media, art, literature, and even the family – are the most influential, persuasive, and subversive (121-76).

⁸⁹ Jeremy Brecher argues that certain forms of statehood existed in early medieval Europe but these monarchies and feudal systems, he declares, were not recognizable “states” because of they inadequately could unify and defend their communities from invasion, they treated their members as “subjects, not citizens,” and were weak structurally and ideologically, particularly in relation to the church (345).

⁹⁰ This assumption is evident in Shari Huhndorf’s *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture*, particularly in her claim that Indigenous “nationalism ironically imports problematic political structures and ideologies derived from Europe” (11-12) – ignoring the nuanced and different visions of Indigenous nationhood Justice describes.

⁹¹ The Anishinaabemowin language program for The Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, for example, teaches that *boozhoo* is a formal greeting (suitable predominantly in venues like ceremony) while other words like *aanii* are for “casual” occasions. For more, see: www.Anishinaabemdaa.com.

⁹² For instance, when researching Potawatomi Chief Shaubena for his 1887 book *The Sauks and the Black Hawk War, With Biographical Sketches, Etc*, historian Perry A. Armstrong visits Matwas, the dead chief’s son, who stonewalls his questions until he recognizes him and declares, “Boozhu nicon” (602-03).

⁹³ Pitawanakwat then proceeded to give an *Anishinaabeg* teaching of the “wheel of life” about the necessity of balance, equality, and respect for all human life to exist (4-7).

⁹⁴ For example, Gordon Henry Jr.’s 1994 novel *The Light People* includes a character named Arthur Boozhoo who, after being asked by the young boy *Oskinaway* to tell the story about his lost parents, ironically tells his own. Poet Annharte plays on the phonetics of the term and demonstrates humour by using both “Bozhoo” and “Bozo” to greet Christopher Columbus in her long 1994 poem “Coyote Columbus Café.”

⁹⁵ Rheault begins his 2001 essay “The Ivory Wiigiwaam: Aboriginals and the Academy” with the following introduction: “Boozhoo, Ishpemingenzaabid n’dizhnikaaaz, Bizhiw n’dodem. Ojibwe-*Anishinaabe* n’dow, Timmins n’donjiba,” translating this as: “Greetings, my name is Ishpemingenzaabid (my name translates as He-Who-Sees-From-A-High-Place). I am a Lynx Clan Ojibwe from Timmins, Ontario.”

⁹⁶ Benton-Benai claims in *The Mishomis Book* that with the pronouncement of a traditional name, spirits can then recognize the named person’s face (9).

⁹⁷ In *Stories by an Ojibway Healer*, Geyschick recounts returning “home from Guelph, October 3rd [with writing collaborator Judith Doyle]. We’d given out three names, one to a little girl, two months old, one to a woman, and one to her daughter” (28). Then, Geyschick explains:

That Sunday night, around twelve or one our time, I started dreaming. Some spirits came and took me with them. We headed east, picked up two more spirits, then reached the shore of the main ocean. We stopped about midway up the north shore, at a place they call *ne ta wa gang*, meaning a long pointed sandbar. Four more great spirits came: two *asini anishinabe* – which means the ‘stone Indian people,’ and two *misabe*, I’d translate that as Bigfoots. Together we travelled west, to the high mountain where my spirits come from, spirits like thunderbirds and butterflies. The deer and moose were waiting for us, and so were the butterflies and many people, all my namesakes.

We had a feast, with all of the foods I was given as offerings for my ceremony that Sunday morning. There was a lot of discussion. I asked them about my naming ceremonies, whether I should go on with them. They said yes. “You can see there’s a lot of us and we all have names. When someone brings an offering to you, one of us will take it and give that person a name. So yes, go on, we love you.”

After this, Geyschick is visited by more spirits, including “the Creator who is in my heart” and ones from “all four directions” who “told me that I should not leave my pipe anywhere I go. I should always take it with me” (28-9).

Bibliography

- Ace, Barry. "The Modernists: The Art of Daphne Odjig and Oscar Howe." *Witness: A Symposium on the Woodland School of Painters*. Ed. Bonnie Devine. Sudbury, ON: The Aboriginal Curatorial Collective, 2009. 96-129.
- Akiwenzie-Damm, Kateri. *My Heart is a Stray Bullet*. Cape Croker, ON: Kegedonce, 1993.
- . "Without Reservation: Erotica Indigenous Style." *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'Etudes Canadiennes* 35.3 (2000): 97-104.
- , ed. *Without Reservation: Indigenous Erotica*. Cape Croker, ON: Kegedonce, 2003.
- . "First Peoples Literature in Canada." In *Hidden in Plain Sight: Contributions of Aboriginal Peoples to Canadian Identity and Culture*. Ed. David R. Newhouse, Cora J. Voyageur, and Daniel J. K. Beavon. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2005. 169-76.
- Alfred, Taiaiake. *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1999.
- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. London: New Left, 1971. 121-76.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1991.
- Anishinaabek Nation, "Anishinaabe Chi Naaknigewin," 6 June 2012
<www.anishinabek.ca/roj/download/AnishinaabeChiNaaknigewinDocument.pdf>.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. London: Methuen, 1992.
- Asikinack, William. "Anishnabe (Ojibway) Legends through Anishnabe Eyes." *The First*

- Ones: Readings in Indian/Native Studies*. Ed. David R. Miller et al. Piapot: Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, 1992. 156-9.
- Baker, Marie Annharte. *Being on the Moon*. Winlaw: Polestar, 1990.
- . "Borrowing Enemy Language: A First Nation Woman Use of English." *West Coast Line* 27.1 (1993): 59-66.
- . *Coyote Columbus Café*. Winnipeg: Moonprint, 1995.
- . *Exercises in Lip Pointing*. Vancouver: New Star, 2003.
- . "I make sense of my world through writing': An Interview with Marie Annharte Baker." *Poets Talk*. By Pauline Butling. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2005.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.
- Bammer, Angelika. "Introduction." *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*. Ed. Bammer. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994.
- Baraga, Frederic. *A theoretical and practical grammar of the Otchipwe language, the language spoken by the Chippewa Indians: which is also spoken by the Algonquin, Ottawa and Potawatami Indians, with little difference: for the use of missionaries and other persons living among the Indians of the above named tribes*. Detroit: J. Fox, 1850. Rpt. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1992.
- Barry, Nora Baker. "Chance and Ritual: The Gambler in the Texts of Gerald Vizenor." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5.3 (1993): 13-22.
- . "Fleur Pillager's Bear Identity in the Novels of Louise Erdrich." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 12.2 (2000): 24-37.
- . "Postmodern Bears in the Texts of Gerald Vizenor." *MELUS* 27.3 (2002): 93-112.

- Barnouw, Victor. *Wisconsin Chippewa Myths and Tales and Their Relation to Chippewa Life*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1977.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Bell, Leland. "An Anishnaabe Tale." *Witness: A Symposium on the Woodland School of Painters*. Ed. Bonnie Devine. Sudbury, ON: The Aboriginal Curatorial Collective, 2009. 130-39.
- Benton-Benai, Edward (Badwaywadun). *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway*. Hayward: Indian Country, 1988.
- Blackbird, Andrew J. *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan*. Ypsilanti, MI: Ypsilantian, 1887.
- Blaeser, Kimberly. "Gerald Vizenor: Postindian Liberation." *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*. Ed. Joy Porter and Kenneth M. Roemer. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. 257-70.
- . *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1996.
- . "Native Literature: Seeking a Critical Center." *Looking at the Words of our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*. Ed. Jeanette Armstrong. Penticton, BC: Theytus, 1993. 51-62.
- , ed. *Stories Migrating Home: A Collection of Anishinaabe Prose*. Bemidji, MN: Loonfeather, 1999.
- Bohaker, Heidi. "Nindoodemag: The Significance of Algonquin Kinship Networks in the Eastern Great Lakes Region, 1600-1701." *William and Mary Quarterly* 63.1 (2006): 23-52.
- . "Reading Anishinaabe Identities: Meaning and Metaphor in Nindoodem Pictographs." *Ethnohistory* 71.1 (2010): 11-33.
- Borrows, John. "Wampum at Niagara: The Royal Proclamation, Canadian Legal History, and

- Self-Government.” *Aboriginal Treaty Rights in Canada*. Ed. Michael Asch. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1998. 155-72.
- Borrows, P. Paul. "As She Shall Deem Just": Treaty 1 and the Ethnic Cleansing of the St. Peter's Reserve, 1871—1934.” MA Thesis. U of Manitoba, 2009.
- Brecher, Jeremy. “‘The National Question’ Reconsidered from an Ecological Perspective.” *The Nationalism Reader*. Ed. Omar Dahbour and Micheline R. Ishay. New Jersey: Humanities, 1995. 344-61.
- Brehm, Victoria, ed. *Star Songs and Water Spirits: A Great Lakes Reader*. Tustin, MI: Ladyslipper, 2011.
- Brinkley, Edward S. and Alec Humann. “Loons.” *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior*. Ed. David Sibley. New York: Knopf, 2009. 123-26.
- Broker, Ignatia. *Night Flying Woman: An Ojibway Narrative*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1993.
- Brooks, Lisa. *The Common Pot: Indigenous Writing and the Reconstruction of Native Space in the Northeast*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008.
- . “Afterword: At the Gathering Place.” Ed. Jace Weaver, Robert Warrior, and Craig S. Womack, *American Indian Literary Nationalism*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2006. 225–52.
- Brown, Joseph E. *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian*. New York: Crossroad, 1989.
- Burgess, Benjamin. “Elaboration Therapy in the Midewiwin and Gerald Vizenor’s *The Heirs of Columbus*.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 18.1 (2006): 22-36.
- Capp, Edward. *The story of Baw-a-ting; being the annals of Sault Sainte Marie*. Sault Sainte Marie: St. Luke’s Pro-Cathedral, 1904.

- Chamberlain, A. F. "Nanibozhu amongst the Otchipwe, Mississagas, and Other Algonkian Tribes," *The Journal of American Folklore* 4.14 (1891): 193-213.
- Chamberlin, J. Edward. "'The corn people have a song too. It is very good': On Beauty, Truth, and Goodness." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 21.3 (2009): 66-89.
- Copway, George (Kah-ge-gah-bowh). *The Life, History, and Travels, of Kah-ge-gah-bowh (George Copway)*. Albany: Weed and Parsons, 1847.
- . *The Traditional History and Characteristics of The Ojibway Nation*. London: Gilpin, 1850.
- DeCoteau, Alex. "Giche Makwa (The Great Bear)." *Otter Tail Review, Volume Two: More Stories, Essays, and Poems from Minnesota's Heartland*. Ed. Tim Runquist. Lincoln: iUniverse, 2006. 4-8.
- Delâge, Denys and Helen Tanner. "The Ojibwa-Jesuit Debate at Walpole Island, 1844." *Ethnohistory* 41.2 (1994): 295-321.
- Deleary, Nicholas. "The Midéwiwin, An Aboriginal Spiritual Institution, Symbols of Continuity: A Native Studies Culture Based Perspective." MA thesis. Carleton U, 1991.
- Densmore, Frances. "Uses of Plants by the Chippewa Indians." *44th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1926-1927*. Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1928. 275-397.
- Devine, Bonnie, ed. *The Drawings and Paintings of Daphne Odjig: A Retrospective Exhibition*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2007. 37-44.
- Dewdney, Selwyn. *Indian Paintings of the Great Lakes*. 2nd Ed. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1967.
- . *The Sacred Scrolls of the Southern Ojibway*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1975.
- DiNova, Joanne R. *Spiraling Webs of Relation: Movements toward an Indigenist Criticism*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

- Doerfler, Jill. "Mino-Bimaadiziwin: Living our traditions and envisioning the future." *Anishinaabeg Today* 12.18 (26 December 2007): 2, 18.
- Dumont, Jim. "An Interview with Jim Dumont." *People of the Seventh Fire: Returning Lifeways of Native America*. By Dagmar Thorpe. Ithaca: Akwe:kon, 1996. 77-81.
- . "Anishinaabe Izhichigaywin." *Sacred Water: Water for Life*. Ed. Lea Foushee and Renee Gurneau. Lake Elmo, MN: North American Water Office, 2010. 13-94.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008.
- Erdrich, Louise. *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country*. Washington: National Geographic Society, 2003.
- . *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.
- . *Tracks*. New York: HarperCollins, 1988.
- Ernst, Carl H. "Systematics, Taxonomy, and Geographic Distribution of the Snapping Turtles, Family Chelydridae." *Biology of the Snapping Turtle (Chelydra serpentina)*. Eds. Anthony C. Steyermark et al. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008. 5-13.
- Ernst, Carl H. and Jeffrey E. Lovitch. *Turtles of the United States and Canada*. 2nd Ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2009.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove, 1963.
- Fitzpatrick, John W. "Bird Conservation." *Handbook of Bird Biology*. Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2004. 10.1-116.
- Forsyth, Adrian. *Mammals of North America: Temperate and Arctic Regions*. Buffalo: Firefly, 1999.
- Foss, Sonja K. "A Rhetorical Schema for the Evaluation of Visual Imagery." *Communication Studies* 45 (Fall-Winter 1994): 213-24.

- Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Columbia UP, 1998.
- Garte, Edna. *Circle of Life: Cultural Community in Ojibwe Crafts*. Duluth: St. Louis County Historical Society, Chilsholm Museum, and Duluth Art Institute, 1984.
- Geniusz, Wendy Djinn. *Our Knowledge is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabe Teachings*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2009.
- Geyschick, Ron. *Te Bwe Win: Truth*. Toronto: Summerhill, 1989.
- Gibbons, Whit and Judy Greene. *Turtles: The Animal Answer Guide*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2009.
- Gingell, Susan. "Teaching the Talk that Walks on Paper: Oral Traditions and Textualized Orature in the Canadian Literature Classroom." *Home-work: Postcolonialism, Pedagogy and Canadian Literature*. Ed. Cynthia Sugars. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 2004. 285-300.
- Goulais, Bob. "The Midewiwin Society Today." 18 December 2010.
<<http://www.anishinaabe.ca/bgc/index.php/2010/12/18/the-midewiwin-society-today/>>.
- Gross, Lawrence W. "Bimaadiziwin, or the "Good Life," as a Unifying Concept of Anishinaabe Religion." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 26.1 (2002): 15-32.
- . "The Comic Vision of Anishinaabe Culture and Religion." *American Indian Quarterly* 26.3 (2002): 436-59.
- Hallowell, A. Irving. *Contributions to Ojibwe Studies: Essays 1934-1972*. Eds. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Susan Elaine Gray. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2010.
- Hayes, Derek. *Historical Atlas of Canada*. Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2002.
- Henry, Alexander. *Travels and adventures in Canada and the Indian territories, between the years 1760 and 1776*. Boston: Little, Brown 1901.

- Henry, Gordon D. Jr. "Allegories of Engagement: Stories/Theories – A Few Remarks." *Stories Through Theories/Theories Through Stories: North American Indian Writing, Storytelling, and Critique*. Ed. Gordon D. Henry Jr., Nieves Pascual Soler, and Silvia Martinez Falquina. East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 2009. 1-24.
- Higgins, Jim. "American Indian writers' conference in Milwaukee this week," *Milwaukee Wisconsin Journal Sentinel*, 3 September 2012
 <<http://www.jsonline.com/entertainment/arts/american-indian-writers-conference-in-milwaukee-this-week-g36mvih-168410346.html>>.
- Higham, C. L. *Noble, Wretched & Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States: 1882-1900*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2000.
- Hill, Greg. *Norval Morrisseau: Shaman Artist*. Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2006.
- Hobbs, Catherine L. *The Elements of Autobiography and Life Narratives*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005.
- Holm, Tom et al. "Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies." *Wicazo-Sa Review* 18.1 (2003): 7-24.
- Holte, James Craig. *The Conversion Experience in America: A Sourcebook on Religious Conversion Autobiography*. New York: Greenwood, 1992.
- The Holy Bible, New International Version*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 1989.
- Houle, Robert. "Odjig: A Pictorial Style in Transition," *The Drawings and Paintings of Daphne Odjig: A Retrospective Exhibition*. Ed. Bonnie Devine. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2007. 37-44.
- Huhndorf, Shari. *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2009.

- Hulan, Renee, ed. *Native North America: Critical and Cultural Perspectives*. Toronto: ECW, 1999.
- Information Respecting The Aborigines in the British Colonies Circulated by Direction of The Meeting for Sufferings. Being Principally Extracts from the Report Presented to the House of Commons, by the Select Committee Appointed on That Subject*. London: Darton and Harvey, 1838.
- International Crane Foundation. "Sandhill Crane." 10 June 2012.
<<http://www.savingcranes.org/sandhill-crane.html>>.
- . "Whooping Crane." 10 June 2012. <<http://www.savingcranes.org/whooping-crane.html>>.
- Ishay, Micheline R. "Introduction." *The Nationalism Reader*. Ed. Omar Dahbour and Ishay. New Jersey: Humanities, 1995. 1-19.
- Jahner, Elaine A. "Trickster Discourse and Postmodern Strategies." *Loosening the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*. Ed. A. Robert Lee. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State UP, 2000. 38-58
- Jameson, Frederic. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York: Norton, 2001. 1960-74.
- Jaskoski, Helen, ed. *Early Native American Writing: New Critical Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Johnsgard, Paul A. *Cranes of the World*. London: Croom Helm, 1983.
- . *Sandhill and Whooping Cranes: Ancient Voices over America's Wetlands*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2011.
- Johnson, Daniel Morley. "(Re)Nationalizing Naanabush: Anishinaabe Sacred Stories, Nationalist Criticism and Scholarly Responsibilities." *Troubling Tricksters: Revisiting Critical Conversations*. Eds. Deanna Reder and Linda Morra. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier UP, 2010. 199-220.
- Johnston, Basil. *The Art of Norval Morrisseau*. Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1999.

- . *The Gift of the Stars: Anangoog Meegiwaewinan*. Cape Croker, ON: Kegedonce, 2010.
- . *Honour Earth Mother: Mino-audjaudauh Mizzu-kummik-Quae*. Cape Croker, ON: Kegedonce, 2003.
- . "Is That All There Is? Tribal Literature." *Canadian Literature: A Quarterly of Criticism and Review* 128 (1991): 54-62.
- . "K'Zaugi-in, I Love You, My Soul is Open for You." *The Art of Norval Morrisseau, The Writings of Basil Johnston*. Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1999. 12.
- . *The Manitous: The Supernatural World of the Ojibway*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995.
- . *Ojibway Ceremonies*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1982.
- . *Ojibway Heritage*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976.
- . "One Generation from Extinction." *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*. 2nd Ed. Eds. Daniel David Moses and Terry Goldie. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1998. 99-104.
- Johnston, Darlene. "Connecting People to Place: Great Lakes Aboriginal History in Cultural Context." Presentation to the Ipperwash Commission Inquiry. July 2004.
- <http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/inquiries/ipperwash/transcripts/pdf/P1_Tab_1.pdf>. 28 February 2012.
- Jones, Peter (Kahkewaquonabay). *History of the Ojebway Indians; With Especial Reference to their Conversion to Christianity*. London: Bennett, 1861.
- . *Life and Journals of Kah-ke-wa-quo-na-by: (Rev. Peter Jones,) Wesleyan Missionary*. Toronto: Anson Green, 1860.
- . *The Sermon and Speeches of the Rev. Peter Jones, alias Kah-ke-wa-quon-a-bay, the Converted Indian*

Chief, delivered on the occasion of the eighteenth anniversary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, for the Leeds District; held in Brunswick and Albion Street Chapels, Leeds, September the 25th, 26th, and 27th, 1831. Leeds: Spink, 1831.

Justice, Daniel H. *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006.

---. "Renewing the Fire: Notes Toward the Liberation of English Studies." *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 29.1-2 (2003): 45-54.

---. "Seeing (and Reading) Red: Indian Outlaws in the Ivory Tower." *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities.* Eds. Devon A. Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2004. 100-23.

---. "We're Not There Yet, Kemo Sabe: Positing a Future for American Indian Literary Studies." *American Indian Quarterly* 25.2 (2001): 256-269.

Keeshig-Tobias, Lenore. "Stop Stealing Native Stories." *The Globe and Mail.* (Toronto). 26 Jan. 1990. A7.

Keewatin, Andrew. "Ahpi ka-moskahank ahki sikwa anin Nenapohs ka-isi-kihtwami-osihtot/When the Earth was Flooded and How Nenapohs Recreated It." *Nenapohs ahtahsokewinan: Nenapohs Legends.* Regina: U of Regina and First Nations U of Canada, 2011. 23-32.

Kimewon, and Margaret Noori. "Aaniipiish Aayaayang? Where are We?" 2 November 2012. <<http://www.umich.edu/~ojibwe/lessons/semester-one/introduction/>>.

Kinew, Wabanakwat. Interview by Ryan McMahon. *Red Man Laughing.* 03 Mar. 2012. <<http://www.ryanmcmahoncomedy.com/2012/03/25/ep14-the-wab-kinew-/>>.

---. *Live by the Drum.* Winnipeg: Strongfont/Indie Ends, 2009.

- King, Thomas. *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. Toronto: Anansi, 2003.
- Knight, Alan and Janet Chute. "In the Shadow of the Thumping Drum: The Sault Métis: The People In-Between." *Lines Drawn upon the Water: First Nations and the Great Lakes Borders and Borderlands*. Ed. Karl S. Hele. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 85-113.
- Kohl, Johann Georg. *Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1985.
- Konkle, Maureen. "Indian Literacy, U.S. Colonialism, and Literary Criticism." *American Literature* 69.3 (1997): 457-86.
- . *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Histiography, 1827-1863*. Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 2004.
- Kroeber, Karl. "Why It is a Good Thing Gerald Vizenor Is Not an Indian." *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*. Ed. Gerald Vizenor. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2008. 25–38
- Krupat, Arnold. *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1989.
- . *Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History, Literature*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1992.
- . *Red Matters: Native American Studies*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2002.
- . "Stories in the Blood': Ratio- and Natio- in Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus*." In *Loosening the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*. Ed. A. Robert Lee. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State UP, 2000. 166-77.
- Kugel, Rebecca. *To Be The Main Leaders of Our People: A History of Minnesota Ojibwe Politics, 1825-1898*. East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1998.
- LaDuke, Winona. *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*. Cambridge: South End, 1999.
- Lee, Damien. "Echoes of Impermanence: Kahnehsatà:ke, Bimaadiziwin and the Idea of Canada."

- This is an Honour Song: Twenty Years since the Blockades*. Ed. Leanne Simpson and Kiera Ladner. Winnipeg: Arbiter Ring, 2010. 235-44.
- Lee, Robert A. "The Only Good Indian Is a Postindian? Controversialist Vizenor and Manifest Manners." *Loosening the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*. Ed. A. Robert Lee. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State UP, 2000. 263-78.
- Lewis, James C. "Whooping Crane." *The Birds of North America, No. 153*. Ed. A. Poole and F. Gill. Philadelphia: The Academy of Natural Sciences; Washington, D.C.: The American Ornithologists' Union, 1995.
- Lyons, Scott R. *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010.
- Madsen, Deborah. "On Subjectivity and Survivance: Rereading Trauma through *The Heirs of Columbus* and *The Crown of Columbus*." *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*. Ed. Gerald Vizenor. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2008. 61-88.
- Maslak McLeod Gallery. *Norval Morrisseau*. Toronto: Maslak McLeod Gallery, 2006.
- McLuhan, Elizabeth and R.M. Vanderburgh. *Daphne Odjig, A Retrospective, 1946-1985*. Thunder Bay, ON: Thunder Bay National Exhibition Centre, 1985.
- McGuire, Patricia. D. "Restorative Dispute Resolution in Anishinaabe Communities – Restoring Conceptions of Relationships Based on Dodem." West Vancouver: National Centre for First Nations Governance, 2008.
- McIntyre, J.W. and J.F. Barr. Common Loon (*Gavia immer*). *The Birds of North America, No. 313*. Eds. A. Poole and F. Gill. Philadelphia: The Academy of Natural Sciences; Washington: The American Ornithologists' Union. 1997.
- McKegney, Sam. *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking History after Residential School*. Winnipeg: U of Manitoba P, 2007.

- Meeting for Sufferings. *Information Respecting The Aborigines in the British Colonies Circulated by Direction of The Meeting for Sufferings. Being Principally Extracts from the Report Presented to the House of Commons, by the Select Committee Appointed on That Subject.* London: Darton and Harvey, 1838.
- Meine, Curt D. and George W. Archibald, eds. *The Cranes: Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan.* Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK: International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, 1996.
- Mercredi, Ovide and Mary Ellen Turpel. *In the Rapids: Navigating the Future of First Nations.* Toronto: Viking, 1993.
- Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society. *Historical collections made by the Pioneer Society of the State of Michigan.* Vol. 12. 2nd Ed. Lansing: Wynkoop Hallenbeck, 1908.
- Miller, Cary. *Ogimaag: Anishinaabeg Leadership, 1760-1845.* Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2010.
- Miller, J. Hillis. "Narrative." *Critical Terms for Literary Study.* 2nd ed. Eds. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995. 66-79.
- Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte. "Culture." 1 March 2012. <<http://www.m bq-tmt.org/community/culture>>.
- Momaday, N. Scott. *The Way to Rainy Mountain.* Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1969.
- . "The Man Made of Words." In *Literature of the American Indians: Views and Interpretations*, Ed. Abraham Chapman, New York: Meridian, 1975. 96-110.
- Montana Natural Heritage Program and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. "Snapping Turtle – Chelydra Serpentina." Montana Field Guide. 2 November 2012. <http://FieldGuide.mt.gov/detail_ARAAB01010.aspx>.
- Morriseau, Norval. *Legends of My People, The Great Ojibway.* Ed. Selwyn Dewdney. Toronto:

- McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1965.
- Murray, David. "Crossblood Strategies in the Writings of Gerald Vizenor." *Loosening the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*. Ed. A. Robert Lee. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State UP, 2000. 20-37.
- Nanibush, Wanda. "Love and Other Resistances: Responding to Kahnesta:ke Through Artistic Practice." *This is an Honour Song: Twenty Years since the Blockades*. Ed. Leanne Simpson and Kiera Ladner. Winnipeg: Arbiter Ring, 2010. 165-74.
- Native Women's Association of Canada. "Fact Sheet: Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls in Manitoba." 3 March 2010.
<http://www.nwac.ca/sites/default/files/imce/FACT%20SHEET_MB.pdf>.
- New W. H. *Grandchild of Empire: About Irony, Mainly in the Commonwealth – The 2002 Garnett Sedgewick Memorial Lecture*. Vancouver: Ronsdale, 2003.
- . "New Language, New World." *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1995. 303-8.
- Nichols, John D. and Earl Nyholm. *A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995.
- Ningewance, Patricia M. *Talking Gookom's Language: Learning Ojibwe*. Lac Seul, ON: Mazinaate, 2004.
- Odjig, Daphne. *The Great Flood*. Peguis Central School, Peguis, MB. 1971. Mural.
- . *The Creation of the World*. The Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg, MB. 1971. Mural.
- Odjig, Daphne, R. M. Vanderburgh and M.E. Southcott. *A Paintbrush in My Hand*. Toronto: Natural Heritage, 1992.
- Ortiz, Simon J. "Song, Poetry and Language: Expression and Perception, A Statement on Poetics

- and Language.” *A Poetic Legacy of Indigenous Continuance*. Ed. Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez and Evelina Zuni Lucero. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2009. 75-85.
- . “Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism.” *MELUS* 8.2 (1981): 7-12.
- . *Woven Stone*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1992.
- Owens, Louis. “As If an Indian Were Really an Indian: Uramericans, Euramericans, and Postcolonial Theory.” *Paradoxa* 15.1 (2001): 170-83.
- . *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*. Norman: Red River, 1998.
- . *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1994.
- Parker, Robert Dale. “Contemporary Anti-colonialist Reading and the Collaborative Writing of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft.” *Before Yesterday: The Long History of Native American Writing*. Ed. Simone Pellerin. Pessac : PU de Bordeaux, 2009. 47-52.
- Patterson, E. Palmer II. *The Canadian Indian: A History Since 1500*. Don Mills, ON: Collier-Macmillan, 1972.
- Peacock, Thomas and Marlene Wisuri. *Ojibwe: Waasa Inaabidaa = We Look in All Directions*. Afton, MN: Afton Historical Society, 2002.
- Perkins, David. *Is Literary History Possible?* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992.
- Peyer, Bernd C. *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary Writers in Antebellum America*. Amherst: U Massachusetts P, 1997.
- . “Non-fiction prose.” *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*. Eds. Joy Porter and Kenneth Roemer. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. 105-24.
- Pitawanakwat, Brock. *Anishinaabemodaa Pane Oodenang – A Qualitative Study of Anishinaabe Language Revitalization as Self-Determination in Manitoba and Ontario*. Ph.D. thesis. U of Victoria, 2009.

- Pitawanakwat, Lillian. "Opening Words and Prayer." Ipperwash Public Inquiry. Forest, ON. 24 August 2006.
- <http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/inquiries/ipperwash/transcripts/aug_24_06/index.htm>.
- Pope, Rob. *The English Studies Book: An Introduction to Language, Literature, and Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Potherie, Bacquerville de la, M. de (Claude-Charles le Roy) et al. *The Indian tribes of the upper Mississippi Valley and region of the Great Lakes as described by Nicolas Perrot, French commandant in the Northwest ; Bacqueville de la Potherie, French royal commissioner to Canada ; Morrell Marston, American Army officer ; and Thomas Forsyth, United States agent at Fort Armstrong*. 2 Vols. Trans. Emma Helen Blair. Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1911-1912.
- Powell, R. A., J. W. Zimmerman, and D. E. Seaman. *Ecology and Behaviour of North American Black Bears: Home Ranges, Habitat and Social Organization*. London: Chapman & Hall. 1997.
- Price, Michael Wassegijig. "Anishinaabe Star Knowledge." *Winds of Change* 17.3 (2002): 51–56.
- Province of Manitoba. "Black Bear Fact Sheet." Winnipeg: Province of Manitoba Wildlife Branch. Web. 2 November 2012.
- Pulitano, Elvira. *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2003.
- Racette, Sherry Farrell. "Algonkian Pictographic Imagery." *Witness: A Symposium on the Woodland School of Painters*. Ed. Bonnie Devine. Sudbury, ON: The Aboriginal Curatorial Collective, 2009. 36-53.
- Ramanujan, Krishna. "Behaviorists discover within male loons' yodel, a code that settles issues of life and death." *Cornell Chronicle*. 6 March 2008. Web. 1 Feb. 2013.
- Redsky, James (Esquekesik). *Great Leader of the Ojibway: Mis-quona-queb*. Ed. James R. Stevens.

- Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972.
- Religious Tract Society. *Missionary Records: North America*. London: Religious Tract Society
1833.
- Renan, Ernest. "What is a Nation?" Trans. Martin Thom. *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi
K. Bhabha. New York: Routledge, 1990. 8-22.
- Rheault, D'Arcy Ishpeming'Enzaabid. *Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin: The Way of a Good Life*.
Peterborough: Debwewin, 1999.
- . "The Ivory Wiigiwaam: Aboriginals and the Academy." *Creating Learning Communitie*
Online Resource Centre. 2000. Web. 10 Feb. 2010.
- Roseau River Chapter, Three Fires Society. "Part 1." *Tie Creek study: An Anishinabe understanding of*
the Petroforms in Whiteshell Provincial Park. Winnipeg: Manitoba Dept. of Natural Resources.
1990.
- Ross, Ian. *fareWel*. Winnipeg: Shillingford, 1996.
- Rundquist, Tim, ed. "Introduction." *Otter Tail Review, Volume Two: More Stories, Essays, and Poems*
from Minnesota's Heartland. Lincoln: iUniverse, 2006.
- Ruoff, A. LaVonne Brown. "Gerald Vizenor: Compassionate Trickster." *American Indian Quarterly*
9.1 (1985): 67-73.
- . "Woodland Word Warrior: An Introduction to the Works of Gerald Vizenor." *MELUS* 13.2
(1986): 13-43.
- Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan. *Diba Jimooyung: Telling Our Story, a History of the*
Saginaw Ojibwe Anishnabek. Mt. Pleasant, MI: Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan,
2005.
- Sarris, Greg. *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts*. Berkeley: U of

- California P, 1993.
- Schenck, Theresa, ed. *History of the Ojibway People*. By William Warren. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2007.
- , ed. *William W. Warren: The Life, Letters and Times of an Ojibwe Leader*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2007.
- Schmalz, Peter S. *The Ojibwa of Southern Ontario*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991.
- Schoolcraft, Henry R. *Alcic Researches comprising Inquiries Respecting the Mental Characteristics of the North American Indians. First Series. Indian Tales and Legends*. Vol. 1. New York: Harper. 1839.
- . *The Myth of Hiawatha, and Other Oral Legends, Mythologic and Allegoric, of the North American Indians*. AuTrain, MI: Avery Color Studios, 1984.
- . *Narrative Journal of Travels from Detroit Northwest through the Great Chain of American Lakes to the Sources of the Mississippi River in the Year 1820*. Albany: Hosford, 1821.
- . *Onéota; or, Characteristics of the Red Race of America, from Original Notes and Manuscripts*. New York and London: Wiley & Putnam, 1845.
- Semple, Neil. *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1992.
- Seng, William J. "Cranes." *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior*. Ed. David Sibley. New York: Knopf, 2009. 252-55.
- Seven Generations Education Institute. *Mino Bimaadiziwin: Principles for Anishinaabe Education*. Fort Francis, ON. Web. 1 March 2012.
- Shohat, Ella. "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial.'" *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 99-113.
- Simpson, Leanne. *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 2011.

- . "Niimkig." *This is an Honour Song: Twenty Years since the Blockades*. Eds. Leanne Simpson and Kiera Ladner. Winnipeg: Arbiter Ring, 2010. 15-20.
- Sinclair, N. James. "K'zaugin: Storying Ourselves into Life," *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories* Eds. Jill Doerfler et al. Ann Arbor: Michigan State UP, 2013. 81-109.
- Skaggs, David Curtis and Larry L. Nelson, eds. *The Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814*. East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 2001.
- Smith, Donald B. *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) & The Missassauga Indians*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1987.
- Snake, Sam, Elijah Yellowhead, Alder York, David Simcoe, and Annie King. *The Adventures of Nanabush: Ojibway Indian Stories*. Ed. Emerson Coatsworth and David Coatsworth. Toronto: Doubleday, 1979.
- Southcott, Mary E. (Beth). *The Sound of the Drum: The Sacred Art of the Anishnabec*. Erin, ON: Boston Mills, 1984.
- Spielmann, Roger. "You're So Fat!": *Exploring Ojibwe Discourse*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998.
- Stark, Heidi Kwiitenpinesiik. "Marked by Fire: Anishinaabe Articulations of Nationhood in Treaty Making with the United States and Canada." *American Indian Quarterly* 36.2 (2012): 119-49.
- Stevens, Laura. *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004.
- Sugarhead, Cecilia. *Ninoontaan/I Can Hear It: Ojibwe Stories from Lansdowne House Written by Cecilia Sugarhead*. Ed. and Trans. John O'Meara. Winnipeg: Algonquin and Iroquian Linguistics, 1996.
- Surtees, R. J. *Indian Land Surrenders in Ontario 1763-1867*. Ottawa: Department of Indian and

- Northern Affairs, 1984.
- Tacha, T.C., S.A. Nesbitt, and P.A. Vohs. "Sandhill Crane." *The Birds of North America, No. 31*. Ed. F. Gill. Philadelphia: The Academy of Natural Sciences; Washington, D.C.: The American Ornithologists' Union. 1992.
- "Treaty with the Chippewa, 1820." Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles J. Kappler. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904. 187-88.
- Thieme, John. *Post-Colonial Theory: The Essential Glossary*. New York: Oxford UP, 2003.
- Thiong'o, Ngugi wa. *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986.
- The Three Fires Confederacy. *Nswi Ishkoday Kawn Anishinaebeg O'dish Kidway Kawn*. 23 August 2007.
- Tinker, George E. *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.
- Treat, James, ed. *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, "The Treaties and the Treaty Relationship: Treaty Education Initiative Backgrounder." *Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba*. February 2012. Web. 10 March 2012.
- Treuer, Anton. "An Interview with Anton Treuer." By William Percy. November 2010. Web. 5 March 2011.
- . ed. *Living our Language: Ojibwe Tales & Oral Histories: A Bilingual Anthology*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2001.
- . *The Assassination of Hole in the Day*. St. Paul: Borealis, 2011.

- Treuer, David. "Jibwaa-ozhibii'igewin." *American Indian Quarterly* 30.1&2 (2006): 3-10.
- . *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual*. St. Paul: Graywolf, 2006.
- U of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute. "Common Loon – Migration." Web. 2 November 2012.
- Uran, Chad. "From Internalized Oppression to Internalized Sovereignty: Ojibwemowin Performance and Political Consciousness." *Studies In American Indian Literatures* 17.1 (2005): 42-61.
- Valaskakis, Gail Guthrie. *Indian Country: Essays on Contemporary Native Culture*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2005.
- Valentine, J. Randolph. *Nishnaabemwin Reference Grammar*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2001.
- Vallaire, Leon, Jr. "A Brief History of the Waaswaaganing Ojibweg Lac du Flambeau Chippewa Indians Gaa-izhiwebak ishkweyaang." *Memories of Lac du Flambeau Elders*. Ed. Elizabeth M. Tornes. Madison: Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures, 2004. 9-76.
- Vescey, Christopher. *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Association, 1983.
- Vizenor, Gerald. *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990.
- , ed. *Escorts to White Earth, 1868–1968: 100 Year Reservation*. Minneapolis: Four Winds, 1968.
- . *The Everlasting Sky: New Voices from the People Named the Chippewa*. New York: Crowell-Collier, 1972.
- . *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1998.
- . *Griever: An American Monkey King in China*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987.
- . *The Heirs of Columbus*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan UP, 1991.
- . *Landfill Meditation: Crossblood Stories*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan UP, 1991.

- . *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance*. Lincoln, NB: Bison, 1999.
- , ed. *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1989.
- . *The People Named the Chippewa: Narrative Histories*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984.
- . "The Ruins of Representation: Shadow Survivance and the Literature of Dominance." *American Indian Quarterly* 17.1 (1993): 7-30.
- . *Summer in the Spring: Anishinaabe Lyric Poems and Stories*. Minneapolis: Nodin, 1965.
- , ed. *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2008.
- , ed. *Touchwood: A Collection of Ojibway Prose*. St. Paul: New Rivers, 1987.
- . "Trickster Discourse: Comic Holotropes and Language Games." *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. Ed. Gerald Vizenor. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1993. 187-212.
- . "Trickster Discourse: Comic and Tragic Themes in Native American Literature." *Buried Roots and Indestructible Seeds*. Eds. Mark A. Linquist and Martin Zanger. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1993. 67-84.
- . *The Trickster of Liberty: Tribal Heirs to a Wild Baronage*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1988.
- . *Wordarrows: Indians and Whites in the New Fur Trade*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1978.
- Voorhis, Paul. *A Saulteaux (Ojibwe) phrase book based on the dialects of Manitoba*. Brandon: Department of Native Studies, Brandon University. 1976.
- Wagamese, Richard. *Keeper 'N Me*. Toronto: Doubleday, 1994.
- . "Loons," *World of Wonders*. 10 August 2011.
- . "More than ever, slow down and listen," *Yukon News*. 10 December 2008.
- . *One Native Life*. Vancouver: Douglas & Macintyre, 2008.

- . *One Story, One Song*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011.
- Wah, Fred. "Half-Bred Poetics." *Faking It: Poetics and Hybridity*. Edmonton: NeWest, 2000. 71-104.
- Wahpeconiah, Tammy J. *This Once Savage Heart of Mine: Rhetorical Strategies of Survival in Early North American Writing*. Diss. Michigan State UP, 2004.
- Wall, Steve, and Harvey Arden, "Eddie Benton-Benai, Ojibway." *Wisdomkeepers: Meetings with Native American Spiritual Elders*. Hillsboro: Beyond Words, 1990. 48-55.
- Warren, William Whipple. *History of the Ojibway People*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1885.
- Warrior, Robert. "Intellectual Sovereignty and the Struggle for an American Indian Future." *Wicazo Sa Review* 8.1 (1992): 1–20.
- . *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995.
- . *The People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2005.
- Weaver, Jace. *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997.
- . *Other Words: American Indian Literature, Law, and Culture*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2001.
- . *Turtle Goes to War: Of Military Commissions, the Constitution and American Indian Memory*. New Haven, CT: Trylon and Perisphere, 2002.
- Weaver, Jace, Craig S. Womack and Robert Warrior. *American Indian Literary Nationalism*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2006.
- Weber, Max. "Politics as a Vocation." *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Trans. Hans Heinrich Gerth and Charles Wright Mills. London: Routledge, 1998. 77-128.
- West, Nigel H. "Respiratory and Cardiovascular Physiology of Snapping Turtles." *Biology of the*

- Snapping Turtle (Chelydra serpentina)*. Ed. Anthony C. Steyermark et al. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008. 53-58.
- White, George W. *Nation, State, and Territory: Origins, Evolutions, and Relationships*. Vol. 1. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.
- Williams, Robert A. *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600-1800*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997.
- Wilson, Rev. Edward F. *Missionary Work Among the Ojebway Indians*. London: Society for Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1886.
- Womack, Craig S. *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999.
- . "A Single Decade: Book-Length Native Literary Criticism between 1986 and 1997." *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*. Eds. Janice Accose, Lisa Brooks, Amanda Cobb, Tol Foster, Le Anne Howe, Daniel Heath Justice, Phil Cassell, Kimberly Roppolo, Cheryl Suzack, Chris Teuton, Sean Teuton, Robert Warrior, and Craig S. Womack. *Reasoning Together: Native Critics in Dialogue*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2008. 3-104.
- Ziibwing Center, *Gdodemonaanik Do Kinoomaagewinawaan (Clan System Teachings)*. 3 March 2012
<<http://www.sagchip.org/ziibwing/aboutus/pdf/%20Clans.pdf>>.