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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the College of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis/dissertation entitled:

**Embodying the Past in the Present for the Future: Practicing, Supporting, and Highlighting Indigenous Tattoo Revivals Through Indigenous and Creative Research Methodologies**

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Abstract

I began the exploration of my ancestral (Nlaka’pamux) tattooing practices as a way to learn about the things that I had been denied the ability to learn in my grandmother's home community due to the legislative violence enacted upon my family and I by the Indian Act. In this thesis I will share the story of my journey moving from exploring my ancestral tattooing traditions to reviving Nlaka’pamux tattooing practices, and supporting the revival of Indigenous tattooing in Canada. The two main questions that I have sought an answer to in the pages of this research assessment portfolio are: how is a sleeping tattooing tradition awakened? And, how do I honor my Nlaka'pamux oral culture in the course of obtaining a Master of Arts degree? In answering these questions, I outline the steps that I took, what and who inspired and encouraged me, and share some of the knowledge and resources that fuelled me in the revival of Nlaka’pamux tattooing.

This project looks not only at the steps and processes I took in the revival of my ancestral tattooing tradition, but I also invited four additional voices to share their journeys and their stories. They are the voices of Indigenous tattoo artists and cultural tattoo practitioners who are involved in reviving traditional tattooing practices. The combination of our stories outlines a clear narrative and logical path that can 1) support Indigenous tattoo artists as a community, 2) provide critical grounding and guidance on revival. Addressing these issues meaningfully can support education and further research for individuals and groups seeking knowledge about Indigenous tattoo revival, and 3) Move towards honoring oral culture and traditions through interdisciplinary methods, theory, and representation. This exploration of Indigenous tattoo revival has been undertaken using Nlaka’pamux, Indigenous and creative research methodologies. This thesis sought to indigenize my academic and tattooing practice.
Lay Summary

This document explores the story of five Indigenous tattoo artists that are working in the revival of their ancestral tattooing traditions including the researcher. By sharing the steps that each artist has taken, guidance is provided for Indigenous peoples who are working towards the revival of their tattooing traditions. The research is presented using a media rich PDF that is offered as an alternative to transcription, and a step towards honor the oral nature of Indigenous cultures in academic research.
Preface

This research received ethics approval by The University of British Columbia-Okanagan Behavioral Research Ethics Board (H14-03314).

Figure 3.8 (Teaser Trailer) was undertaken during Jessica Stites Mor’s class “Digital media and History: Filmmaking for Activist and Scholars,” under the ethics reference number (H13-03513). A small portion of the final film is presented in this thesis as part of the contextual (literature) review chapter.
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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Introduction: My connection to the subject

The following is a traditional Nlaka’pamux formal introduction, which locates me within this research project and identifies the communities I am connected to: this is a fundamental Indigenous research methodology. It also serves the second purpose of positioning this research project within the social and political climate of the nation state of Canada and its relationship to the Nlaka’pamux and other Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Hello my name is Dion Kaszas, my mother is Maxine Mary McIvor, my maternal grandmother is Susan Mary Blankenship, and my great-grandmother is Mary Thom whose partner was my great-grandfather, Jacob Henry Blankenship. My maternal grandfather is Ernest D McIvor, my great-grandfather is Alexander R. McIvor, and his wife, my great-grandmother, was Cecelia McLean. My father is Larry Kaszas, my paternal grandfather is Paul Kaszas, and my paternal great-grandfather is Gyula Kaszas whose wife, my great grandmother, was Juliana Harvath. My paternal grandmother is Alice Ouellette, and my paternal great-grandmother is Rosalie Ouellette whose husband, my great-grandfather, was Clifford Chabot. As outlined above, my genealogy makes me a Bill C-31 member of the Lower Nicola Indian Band on my mother's side. On my father’s side Hungarian and Metis.

I would like to express my thankfulness for the gifts, talents, and opportunities the Creator has given me in being able to do what I do. As a Bill C-31 member of the Lower Nicola Indian Band, I began the exploration of my ancestral (Nlaka'pamux) tattooing practices as a way to learn about the things that I had been denied the ability to learn in my grandmother's home community due to the legislative violence enacted upon my family and me by the Indian Act. It is through this exploration that I have begun to feel a sense of
belonging and a sense of being complete because I am finally beginning to find out who I am
and where I come from. I am not writing this document as an expert on Nlaka'pamux
tattooing but as a person sharing my journey with you in hopes that together we can ensure
that our nieces, nephews, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren do not have the
same struggles as we did and do.

1.1.2 Historical Exploration of Indigenous Tattooing

The practice of tattooing our skin can be scientifically traced back to the beginning of
human history. In the article The World’s Oldest Tattoos, the author comments that "the
practice may have originated at least as early as the Upper Paleolithic" (2). Evidence of the
earliest tattooing comes from the discovery in Europe of several instruments that were used
for tattooing between 10,000 BC and 38,000 BC (Gilbert 11). The archeological record
further supports the ancient history of tattooing with the mummified remains of Otzi the Ice
Man who was found in 1991 in the mountains on the border between Austria and Italy, and
who dates back to around 3250 BC (Deter-Wolf et al. 3). The archeological evidence of
tattooing in North America is extensive; one example is the 3,500-year-old Dorset ivory
maskette that shows tattooed marks on the face of a woman (Krutak, Tattooing Arts146). The
Ainu of Japan who are descendants of the Jomon people had a tradition dating from back at
least 12,000 years up until the last tattooed woman died in 1998 (Krutak Tattooing Arts, 127-
128). Aaron Deter-Wolf and his colleagues comment that "Indigenous cultures from every
continent except Antarctica included tattooing as an essential element of their cultural fabric
(Worlds Oldest 1).

This historical introduction will be exploring five Indigenous peoples traditional
tattooing practices that relate to the four Indigenous tattoo artists I interviewed in 2015 and
my own ancestral tattooing tradition. This includes the traditional tattooing of the Northern
part of Japan among the Ainu, Indigenous tattooing in the Philippines, specifically Kalinga tattooing, the Polynesian tattooing of Tahiti, Tlingit tattooing practices, and traditional Nlaka'pamux tattooing.

Ainu are Indigenous peoples that live in the northern part of Japan who have a tattooing tradition that was practiced only by women. Tattooing was delivered to the Ainu through the ancestral mother Okikurumi Turesh Machi as recounted in their creation stories. Throughout the history of the Ainu, their use of tattooing was outlawed or banned by the Japanese government as a way of stripping them of their cultural customs so that they could be assimilated into the larger Japanese society. Despite the efforts of the Japanese government, the Ainu continued to practice this custom because of its association with marriage and its necessity to enter the afterlife (Krutak, Tattooing Arts 127-130). This practice continued into the nineteenth century, which included the tattooing of the lips, forearms, and hands. The practice of tattooing the lips was to ward off evil spirits and make sure the woman had a place with her relatives in the afterlife. A knife made out of obsidian was used as the tattooing tool by the Ainu, which the tattoo practitioner would use to make small cuts in the skin and then rub pigment over top of the incision to permanently mark the skins surface (DeMello, Inked 1: 13-14).

The islands of the Philippines are home to numerous Indigenous peoples, many who have a traditional tattooing practice as part of their ancestral cultural history. When the Spanish colonists first arrived on the islands they called them the “islands of the painted ones” (DeMello Inked 2: 492). One of the more well-known Indigenous groups in the Philippines is the Kalinga, who consider themselves men and women who are "people of the earth (Krutak Kalinga 46). The men's tattoos were a representation of status and showed the
prowess of warriors. These marks proved that they had done their duty in protecting their families and loved ones. The women's tattoos were marks of beautification and to demonstrate fertility. Further aspects of tattooing in the Philippines include some tattoos being used as protection and/or for healing and, for women, the movement through the life cycle (Krutak Kalinga 48). The traditional tools of the Kalinga were made from a horn that held a single thorn or group of thorns which was pounded into the skin after ink or pigment was spread out over the area to be tattooed (DeMello 1: 338). Thankfully, the Kalinga tattooing tradition has lived on until today with Whang-Od, the last remaining Kalinga tattoo artist, who some say is in her 90’s.

In Tahiti, the practice of tattooing is traced back to its creation by the god Ta’aroa’s two sons Mata Mata Arahu and Tu Ra’I Po. After its creation, tattooing was passed on to human beings, and Mata Mata Arahu and Tu Ra’I Po became the patrons of the art form. (Barbieri 45-46). Tattooing in Tahiti conveyed many messages including, but not limited to, status, marriageability, kinship, and sexual maturity. Tahitians applied tattoo designs based on the status of the individual; priests received certain designs reserved only for them, with other designs reserved for chiefs, warriors, and everyday folk. Warrior's tattoo marks included motifs that were applied to gain protection. After the arrival of the French and missionaries, the practice of tattooing was outlawed and eventually disappeared. (DeMello Inked 2: 636-638). According to Alfred Gell in Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia, all Tahitians “were tattooed on the hips and buttocks” (135).

The complete blacking out of the buttocks was the first tattoo received at puberty and other designs and motifs were added as time went on (Blackburn 111). The tattooing method in Tahiti consisted of using two instruments: one resembling a comb which had sharpened
bone attached to it and the second a stick that was used as a hammer to help the comb-like piece puncture the skin (Barbieri 73-74).

The Tlingit are Indigenous peoples who live on the Pacific Northwest coast of Alaska and British Columbia. Their tattooing tradition contained “the totemic crest for each moiety, clan or lineage, all of which were animals, but which could also represent heavenly bodies or features of the earth (DeMello Inked 2: 663-664). Tattooing was performed during or at the same time as the potlatch, which was held to honor those who had passed, the building of a new clan house, or for the prestige of those holding the potlatch (Krutak Tattoo Traditions 78). The traditional practice of the Tlingit included the tattooing method of skin stitch tattooing, which used a bone needle and sinew thread. The arrival of Europeans to the shores of the Tlingit contributed to the decline of this tattoo tradition on the Pacific Northwest Coast. With them, Europeans brought smallpox, other diseases, and Christianity, which devastated the Tlingit and their cultural practices.

According to Teit an early anthropologist, the tattooing Nlaka’pamux (the Thompson Indians) practiced was connected to the “social practices [of]…War, religion, shamanism, and puberty” (403). Teit insisted that in times past normally no one past the age of puberty was without a tattoo somewhere on his or her body. In his ethnographic work, Teit outlined five reasons for tattooing among my ancestors: The first was connected to adornment or ornamentation among young people in order to make themselves more pleasing to potential partners. The second reason was in connection with marriage. Teit asserted that tattoos could show fidelity and love, and make marriage enduring. Thirdly, our tattooing was associated with puberty and the acquirement of guardians, which ensured success, health, or protection; as a record or offering; as an ordeal to show courage; as a preventative against weakness and
premature old age. Fourthly, we practiced tattooing in connection with dreaming and the guardian spirits, to ward off death and cure sickness. Finally, tattoos were used for identification (Teit 406).

The designs were placed on the face and body; facial tattooing consisting of only lines, whereas the body and arm design motifs included such things as rattlesnakes, mountains, and guardian spirits. We practiced two techniques. The first a hand poking method, which used a sharp object like a sharpened bone or thorn to poke the design into the skin, following which pigments were rubbed over the holes. The other method that we used to tattoo was a skin stitching method, via a needle and thread, stitching the design into the skin. The decline of our tattooing practices was strongly associated with the influence of the incoming Europeans and the influence, manipulation, and coercion of their religious, cultural, political, economic, and assimilation practices.

Although an overview of only five Indigenous peoples tattooing practices is provided here, it illustrates that the techniques, tools, stories, and myths associated with tattooing is very diverse and the colonization or the policies of assimilation imposed on Indigenous peoples the world over are sickeningly similar. When thinking about the ubiquitous nature of tattooing across the globe among Indigenous peoples historically, and considering its importance to each culture, there can be no questioning the that these cultural practices should be revived and brought back.
1.1.3 Tattooing as Academic Study

As seen from the brief overview of tattooing among five Indigenous peoples, inscribing culture on our bodies is a practice that has operated at many levels throughout human history. Some of the levels are: as a form of adornment or beautification (Teit 1930), a talisman for protection or healing (Krutak 2012), a show of allegiance to a group or family (Krutak 2014), as a rite of passage (Krutak 2007), and as a display of one's identity (Nikora et al. 2007), and skills or special powers (Teit 1930). Scholarship on the art of tattooing has proliferated alongside its increased popularity in Western pop-culture (DeMello 2000, 2014, Fisher 2002, Sanders and Veil 2008). There is much writing and theorizing on tattooing and its history in the Western European tradition (Caplan 2000, Mifflin 2013, Steward 1990) and on the many levels at which tattooing operates in people's lives in the modern world (Atkinson 2003, Newman 2012, Pitts 2003, Schwarz 2006). Other work has been concerned with the uncovering of the historical and traditional tattooing practices of Indigenous peoples the world over (Gell 1993, Jefkin-Elnekave 2006, Krutak 2007, Teit 1930). A few academics have been looking at the revival efforts of modern Indigenous peoples globally who are working to bring back their traditional tattooing practices (Higgins 2004, Krutak 2014, Kuwahara 2005, Pritchard 2001).

1.2 Statement of problem (Indigenous Lens as Opposed to Western)

The introduction to the topic of Indigenous tattooing demonstrates the large volume of literature and research that exists on this subject. The majority of this scholarship has been formulated using Western European academic lenses, including anthropology, archaeology, psychology, sociology, history, and feminism, among many others. In *Maintaining Aboriginal Identity, Language, and Culture in Modern Society*, Marie Battiste says that "the existing body of research, which normally provides reference points for new research, must
be examined and reassessed" (195). This reassessment is necessary because of the imagined colonial history that the Western European academic tradition assumes. As a scholar with a specialization in Indigenous studies, through this project, I have contextualized Indigenous tattooing using Indigenous and creative research methodologies. I am in a unique position to undertake this research, currently being one of the few Indigenous tattoo artists reaching back into time seeking to revive our ancestral tattooing practices and working as a Indigenous scholar.

1.3 Research Questions

In Conducting Sacred Research: An Indigenous Experience, Roxanne Struthers states that "an indigenous researcher has permission to ask new questions that originate from an aboriginal perspective” (126). With this in mind, in this project, I sought answers to the question: how is a sleeping tattooing tradition awakened? After being embedded in the revival of Interior and Coastal Salish tattooing traditions since the summer of 2012, I was confronted with the question of why I began this work of reviving my ancestral tattooing practices. What steps did I take? What and who inspired me and encouraged me? What knowledge and resources fueled this process? And what responsibilities do I have now that I have this knowledge? How do I honor my Nlaka'pamux oral culture in the course of obtaining an MA?

In response to the second to last question, my responsibility is to ensure all my academic production is useful and accessible to those in my community and to Indigenous scholars who might find my work useful in their academic journey. This project will answer the remaining questions by outlining and exploring how I got to this place in my research journey. In it, I have told the story of how I came to be researching and reviving my
ancestors tattooing practices, and have shared some of the insights I gained along the way via artwork contained in this graduate research assessment portfolio (Gray and Malins 164).

1.4 Organization of the Study

Methodologies, methods, and theoretical frameworks are the subjects explored in chapter two, including but not limited to a definition of Indigenous and creative research methodologies as they relate to this research project. The key theoretical framework demonstrated throughout this research project was indigenizing of my academic and cultural tattooing practices. This chapter will also look at and argue for the creation of art in connection with academic research as an enactment of Indigenous methodologies and as a form of Indigenous storywork. A research assessment portfolio will be argued for and explained as a valuable tool for inclusion in interdisciplinary research contexts and as a necessity in this project. I will also be introducing my Nlaka'pamux weaving methodology in this section and explain how it operates as a unifying agent in the cohesiveness of this masters thesis assessment portfolio. Among many other things, this section will also introduce some of the many issues and concerns associated with the transcription of Indigenous voices in the academic context and offer my contribution to a possible solution.

The third chapter of this research assessment portfolio will contain my literature review or Indigenized contextual review. In this section I will introduce to the reader some of my reasoning for the transformation of what is commonly known as the literature review into what I have called an Indigenized contextual review. I characterize this as a way to tell the larger story of how this research project has come about, and further share my relationships, reactions, and insights that have come from the materials contained in my readings for this project.
The fourth chapter “Weaving Artwork” is the section that contains the artworks I have created as part of this research project as a continuation of my contextual review. I will explain the many different bodies of work which I have begun exploring, including the large-scale portrait series, and my commencement of the collection of pigments from the land and how this transformed my work. I will also explore with the reader my stencil work including the small scale ethnographic series and the larger text-based works. I will also share my use of the technology of laser engraving and how I have been able to honor the voices of many of my mentors in quotation and representation.

The fifth chapter is entitled “Weaving a New World/Building Indigenous Roads: A Multitude of Voices,” is the main body of my research assessment portfolio, and it contains the many lessons I have learned as I have traveled this journey. In it, I share with you the four Indigenous tattoo artists and cultural tattoo practitioners I interviewed for this project. This chapter also outlines the format and knowledge that I shared during the Earth Line Tattoo Training Residency. This section will also explore some of my practices and my rational around who can receive which designs and what designs to share outside my culture and nation as well as the potential for sharing our knowledge and worldview through tattooing in larger contexts.

The final chapter is a summary and conclusion that looks at some of the key insights and suggestions for further research.
Chapter 2 Methodologies, Methods, and Theoretical Frameworks

2.1 Indigenous Research Framework

This paper takes research to mean an “original intellectual activity leading to the generation of new knowledge” (Traore 176). With this in mind, I draw upon Margaret Kovach’s Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts where she further clarifies, “knowledge is that which helps people move forward in their lives” (72). I have chosen to use creative and Indigenous research methodologies as they have helped me to: 1) produce work which honors community co-creators, 2) build relationships of trust and partnership, and 3) moves communities forward. The work I have created while using these two methodologies is another way for me to enact the Indigenous methodology of positioning. Absolon and Willett state, “as Aboriginal researchers, we write about ourselves and position ourselves at the outset of our work because the only thing we can write about with authority is ourselves” (97). I find that the process of positioning myself within my research as a Nlaka'pamux man, as a member of an Indigenous nation, and as a practicing artist necessitates me to engage the process of the creation of knowledge in a way that acknowledges all that I am.

I understand that "methodology is…asking, "How do I find out more about this reality?" (Wilson 34). The reality, in this case, is Indigenous tattoo revivals and the process that other Indigenous peoples and I have taken to bring the traditions back to life. Kathy Absolon states methodologies are defined as, “a series of methods that are used in searching for knowledge. ‘Methodologies’ address the how, who, where, what and when of Indigenous re-search” (Absolon 22). If methodologies are a series of methods, “methods are the particular tools or techniques” (Wilson 39) that are used to go about the process of research. So, in this section I will lay out the tools I will be using to bring forth new knowledge about
the reality of Indigenous tattoo revival that arises out of Indigenous and creative research methodologies.

My selection of Indigenous methodologies flows directly from the fact that I am a Metis and Nlaka'pamux man, and the study was undertaken using these tools which align with my moral, spiritual, and ethical convictions. Margaret Kovach defines Indigenous methodologies as, "the theory and method of conducting research that flows from an Indigenous epistemology" (20). Merriam-Webster defines epistemology as, "a theory of the nature and grounds of knowledge ("Epistemology"). Kovach further clarifies when she says, "The term epistemology most closely approximates the ‘self-in-relation” (21). Which brings us back to the first paragraph in this chapter which defines knowledge as, "that which helps people move forward in their lives” (Kovach 72). This research assessment portfolio is an effort to demonstrate and to describe how I am related to the ideas and people I describe and interacted with throughout this research project.

The way I am approaching theory is simply as an explanation for the reason I am doing things the way that I am (Simpson 39). Margaret Kovach says, “researchers have the task of applying conceptual frameworks that demonstrate the theoretical and practical underpinnings of their research, and, if successful, these frameworks illustrate ‘the thinking’ behind ‘the doing’” (39). Reasoning being connected to doings weaves all that I am doing to reasons for the way and the why I am approaching things.
2.2 Indigenous Methodologies

2.2.1 Leaving footprints

When I began my work as an undergraduate student, I found it difficult to navigate through the methodological maze and because of this I have taken to heart Kathy Absolon’s urging:

It is important for us to be as specific as we can about our methodologies so that others who are travelling academic corridors and searching in the methodological maze may see Indigenous landmarks and not get lost. We need to leave our footprints as clearly as we can. We need to articulate and share as much as we can about how we went about searching for the knowledge we gather” (Absolon 162).

At times, I have felt lost without Indigenous landmarks. In academe and society, I have struggled to find my way. The tracks Absolon has left, and the tracks left by others have helped me. I must leave my tracks to fulfill my responsibilities and practice reciprocity. At the same time, as an artist, the theorizing I engage in must be on terms that make sense to me at this stage of my intellectual journey.

2.2.2 Nlaka’pamux weaving methodology

In outlining a new Nlaka'pamux methodology built on Shirley Sterling's work, I am beginning to develop an evolving Indigenous methodology formed from my ancestral cultural knowledge. The development of a unique culturally specific methodology adds to the academic resources other Nlaka'pamux or basket making people will have to choose from. By arguing for the opening up of Indigenous and interdisciplinary graduate studies to allow more room for Indigenous voices, I am leaving an academic legacy for those coming after me.
My people, the Nlaka’pamux, have been known as master weavers throughout history, and it is from this tradition of weaving that this Indigenous methodology comes from. Shirley Sterling says, “The concept of basket weaving was given to the Nlaka’pamux by a sacred event. A Nlaka’pamux boy went to the moon, and met an ancient couple there who taught him how to weave many things including baskets. When he returned home he taught Nlaka’pamux how to weave” (Grandmother 49). This methodology of weaving is very pertinent to this research project as I move through the many disciplines, approaches, methodologies, methods, and stories to produce the final academic artifact of my research portfolio.

In her dissertation, Shirley Sterling uses the metaphor of basket weaving, “as an analogy of a storytelling methodology in which theory is interwoven with practice to complete a purpose, that of carrying the culture” (62) Building on Sterling, I will be using weaving in a similar way in this project, as a metaphor for the process I have undertaken by weaving together all of the parts of my research process. Sterling says “the basket is called research, and the interweaving of the three (and more) materials is my methodology” (49). This process of using different methods to gain a clear understanding of a given topic is commonly referred to in academic research as triangulation (Gray and Malins, 31). The development of this Nlaka’pamux triangulation methodology began to develop in my mind over the past few years. I am embracing this as a praxis for shaping my relationship to the past and the present.

2011-2012 was the first time I had the opportunity to look at Nlaka’pamux basketry in the course Indigenous Art and Visual Culture. In this class, I wrote the paper My Journey into Nlaka’pamux Basketry. I explored the construction, varieties, and various decorative
forms that we have used throughout time. During this project, I was in awe of the beauty of the baskets and dedication it takes to construct one of these baskets that carry our culture. That is where the paper ended. However, the development of my thinking, through an alternative Indigenous methodology, did not begin to take shape until in the summer of 2011 when I was in the course Examining an Indigenous Methodology: En'owkinwixw with Dr. Jeannette Armstrong. In this course, I was introduced to En’owkinwixw, as the course title suggests, as a research methodology. This research methodology is modeled after a collective decision-making process. Armstrong states, "the requirement of enowkinwixw is to take the responsibility to be informed by differing views" (Constructing, 185). After being introduced to this idea, looking at things from as many angles as possible is my responsibility, or, as I understand it, to take into account my subjectivity. I am excited by the interdisciplinary approach that is taken in Indigenous studies and my graduate program, for this opened the opportunity to engage in the En’nowkinwixw, which in turn enabled me to participate in transformative thinking and ways of being.

My thinking was further influenced by the word picture created by Jeannette Armstrong as she translated the word for her people. Armstrong says, “Syilx describes a people who continuously are in the process of unwinding the long-term knowledge of a right relationship within the land and coiling its many strands into one strong thread to lead, unbroken, to the future” (Armstrong Constructing, 43). I explored this idea in the paper Looking at Tattoos through Four Indigenous Lenses, in the course Indigeneity as Theory, taught by Dr. Jeannette Armstrong. In the final paper I wrote:

It is through the coiling of the many threads that will emerge through this research that I hope to create a project which helps the coming generations in their lives as
Syilx, Secwepemc, and Nlaka’pamux. I hope to also provide more fuel for the tattoo revival movement underway in the interior of British Columbia.”

As I explored the literature in my many graduate level classes and read how other Indigenous peoples approached their methodologies, I was inspired to consider: “What is my own instinctive research methodology?” As I have always been someone who collects many ideas, as I wonder and wander, I am seeking to find how they relate to each other.

Two writers illuminate how my thinking has been shaped in considering the coiling or weaving together of many opinions on a subject. As a critical Indigenous methodology, I need to consider the above question. In Ayukpachu: Empowering Aboriginal Thought James Youngblood Henderson says, “The old instinct had always been to gather the feelings and opinions that were scattered through the village, to gather them like willow twigs and tie them into a single prayer bundle that would bring peace to all of them” (253). The process of looking at a subject from every point possible is brought out in the En’owkinwixw methodology. However, my search is further supported by similar methodologies found in Indigenous places beyond the Okanagan and Canada. Donald Fixico says, “The circular method is a circular philosophy focusing on a single point and using familiar examples to illustrate or explain the point of discussion” (15-16). As I continued to look at the many readings I had encountered in my undergraduate degree, coupled with graduate degree readings, I found the final two pieces which helped to solidify my development of this basket weaving methodology.

Henderson points out that, “stories are told in a circular or spiral theme, with each thematic repetition or spiral adding a little” (266). This is how I see the metaphor of basket weaving as the framework for my project. I am weaving theory and methodology throughout
my search. This weaving of knowledge is a bundling of the plurality of Indigenous methodologies and creative research methodologies influencing my journey. Together these will give me a clearer picture of Indigenous tattoo revivals. Shirley Sterling says, “Research is like basket weaving. Many components contribute to a whole, and none of the separate parts can accomplish by themselves the making of the basket or the process of research” (Grandmother Stories 48). In this project, the specific type of weaving I am using for my Nlaka’pamux research methodology is coiled cedar root basket weaving.

2.2.3 The Teachers

This ‘basket making’ starts at a central point, and as I weave my understandings, it coils up and around that central point. Each coil is supported and connected to the next one by strands of cedar. My discussion of the steps and ideas that brought me to this metaphor support the coiling, circling, and weaving of all the components of my assessment portfolio to create a basket of knowledge. The following photographs and figures will help me in describing in a visual way how I see this methodology working. Figure one is a photograph I took at the Lytton Museum and Archive as part of my research. It demonstrates how a cedar root basket starts at a single point and grows from that place. The central point that I am starting from in this project is my research question, how is a sleeping (tattoo) tradition awakened?

Figure two shows the process which Karen Petkau describes in *Baskets Carrying a Culture* of coiling a basket which is, “Wrapping either bundles of fine cedar splints…with the smooth split root of the cedar tree through a process of whip stitching, or overcast sewing which lashes the coils together. As the coils are laid around in the shape desired, they are wrapped...An awl is used to split apart the lower splint, which was wrapped on the previous turn” (5). The central bundles in figure two are referred to as the foundation of the basket,
which then is stitched together with the smooth split root. The bundles in this metaphor are the methodologies that are the foundation for this project. In the process of making a coiled basket, the basket maker uses a single tool, a bone awl. The awl in this metaphor is the particular methods I will be using during the process of fashioning this project/basket. The smooth split cedar used for stitching stand for the relationships I am building with ideas, knowledge-keepers, and visual and material objects. The final ‘basket’ will be my research assessment portfolio.

![Basket Image](image)

**Figure 2.1** Lytton Museum Collection (Coiling)

![Diagram Image](image)

**Figure 2.2** Otis Tufton Mason (Nlaka’pamux Basketry Research Framework)
2.2.4 Positioning

This portion of my methodologies section highlights and expounds on concepts already introduced and explores processes that have not been introduced. The first Indigenous methodology that I have tried to demonstrate is that of positioning. In her master’s thesis, Patricia McGuire says, “You must say who you are when you tell your truth. When discussing whatever phenomenon you are concerned about, you have to speak from your own experience. This is done so that your truth is apparent” (64).

This methodology weaves into and is informed by the methodology of relational accountability (Wilson, Research is, 10). By positioning who I am and how I am connected to the topic of Indigenous tattooing, I am demonstrating why this is important to me, and it helps others see how it is connected to me.

2.2.5 Story

My use of positioning is woven and connected to the Indigenous methodology of story. Through story, I relate my relationship to the ideas presented and also to the knowledge keepers I have interviewed. Story has allowed the knowledge keepers to tell the story of their relationship to the revival of their Indigenous tattooing practices. The use of story also works to honor the oral culture of myself and the other knowledge keepers involved in this project. In "Honouring the Oral Traditions of my Ancestors Through Storytelling" Robina Anne Thomas asserts that "the beauty of storytelling is that it allows storytellers to use their voices and tell their own stories on their own terms" (242). In honoring Indigenous oral traditions over Western academic practices like transcription and allowing knowledge keepers to have their voices heard and not my own, I weave a segue into my next Indigenous methodology of decolonization. Margaret Kovach asserts that "story as
methodology is decolonizing research. Stories of resistance inspire generations about the strength of the culture" (Indigenous Methodologies 103).

### 2.2.6 Decolonization and Indigenization

There are two thinkers that clarify what decolonizing methodologies are and what the ultimate goal of decolonization is, Indigenization. First is Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* in 2013:

> *Figure 2.3 Linda Smith Decolonizing Methodologies (DataCenter Research for Justice/CC)*

In her presentation *InQ13 Decolonizing Methodologies* given in April of 2013 at CUNY graduate center, Linda Smith further points us in the right direction when she says:

> *Figure 2.4 Linda Smith Decolonizing Methodologies (The Graduate Center, CUNY/CC)*

The second scholar Taiaiake Alfred describes his idea of decolonization:
From these two thinkers, I have engaged my project as a decolonizing form of research that seeks to transform the reality of Indigenous peoples so that the next generation can be more Indigenous than this one. This concept is one that connects to me as an uncle to two nephews Sebastien and Tyler and a niece Janessa: my wish for this generation is that they learn their stories and have experiences out on the land and understand their rights and responsibilities to the land. I am also thinking of this process as one that Margo Tamez has pointed out as “a personal-intimate-creative-intuitive ‘felt theory’ (Dian Million)” (Tamez Research Proposal Comment) Margaret Kovach also says, "the use of story, life history, oral history, unstructured interviews, and other processes that allow participants to share their experiences on their terms" (Indigenous Methodologies, 82). These are powerful methods to engage in a project that moves the position of power away from the researcher to the co-creators/knowledge keepers.

2.2.7 Relational Accountability, Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility

In Research is Ceremony, Shawn Wilson shares that he has, “situated himself, in the research process by giving a detailed explanation of [his] background. This is required by the Indigenous axiology and methodology of relational accountability” (10). My use of positioning and story is a direct result of my understanding of this principal of relational
accountability as outlined by Wilson. My formal Nlaka’pamux introduction at the beginning of this document is the simplest and most relevant example of this principle, as it explains who I am and how I am related to the reader and how I am connected to this topic.

Wilson further drives the point home when he says, "research must use relational accountability, that is, must be connected to or a part of a community (set of relationships), if it is to be counted as Indigenous" (42). As I see it, this research project is connected to multiple communities that I have relationships with, first my closest friends and family, next my ancestral Nlaka’pamux community, then the larger Indigenous community of tattoo artists and cultural tattoo practitioners, as well as the community of Indigenous academics and scholars, and finally to the community of all that is.

My use and insistence on the methodologies and methods I have used in conceiving, implementing, conducting, and analyzing my research takes into account that my project had to be, "based in a community context (be relational) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action)" (Wilson 99). Beginning with a project that is related to me, and having a clear connection to my reality—that is, to the questions I asked and the way that I have approached the voices of my co-creators—have all been a part of my accountability to the relationships I have built before, during, and after this project.

Wilson further states that "research is ceremony. The purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves (11). This research project is a ceremony in that it is seeking to build stronger relationships with cultural tattoo practitioners like myself, to further build a deeper, fuller
relationship with the subject of Indigenous tattoo revival and then to share this with those who wish to read what I have written.

In 2008 I walked into a class at the Okanagan campus of the University of British Columbia and was introduced to the thinking of the Syilx (Okanagan) through the teaching of one of my mentors, Dr. Jeannette Armstrong. It was in this class that I became acquainted with the Okanagan story *How Food was Given*. This story has shown me how I am part of many communities and at various levels interconnected to my family, the larger community, the environment, and finally to all that is. It has shown me that my contribution and my voice may be one of the most meaningful songs that will help to regenerate the life of another being.

At a time before humans lived on this earth, the animal people were told by the creator to figure out how the people to be would survive, considering they did not have fur, or claws, or a way of gathering nutrients from the earth. With this central question, they convened to discuss this matter. The four chiefs included black bear who represented all the animals which walk on land, saskatoon berry represented all the fruit bearing plants, bitterroot represented all the roots, and salmon represented all the creatures that live in the water. These chiefs sat in a circle facing each other trying to figure out how these humans would survive, after a long time with no solutions, saskatoon berry, bitterroot, and salmon all looked to bear, commenting ‘you are the oldest and wisest among us. You tell us what you are going to do’ (Kou 13). With that, bear announced that he would give himself and the animals he represented as food for the people to be. All the other chiefs followed bear’s example and gave the beings they represented as food for the people to be.
With that being settled, bear laid down his life to make these things happen. After bear's gift of his life, all the animal people gathered to sing songs, to bring bear back to life. All the animals sang their songs, and bear did not come back to life; at various times fly would buzz by and ask if he could sing his song, but he would be shooed away. After all the other animal people had sung their songs, finally, with nothing left to lose, fly was allowed to sing his song. He sang, “You laid your life down, you laid your body down” (Kou 25). Fly’s song was powerful and black bear came back to life.

A few years later, 2010 became pivotal in the development of my future work as a cultural tattoo practitioner because it gave me a sense of purpose and pushed me to find a way to help anchor Indigenous young people into their culture. It was in this year that I was reminded of my own struggle and the struggle that many Indigenous youths have with who they are. This remembering came through an interaction I had with a young man who was enrolled in a kickboxing class I was instructing. This pivotal event was during a trip in which I took a few of my students to compete at a competition. While on the way to this contest, I was talking with this young aboriginal man, and I asked him if he had any Indigenous heritage. To which he replied, "no." I did not push the conversation any further as it seemed he had some reason to hide who he was. That conversation sat in my mind and on my heart, and it was not until I was sitting in a seat at his funeral that I decided I needed to find a way to help Indigenous people become proud of who they are. Many of our peoples are lost and they need an anchor to survive and thrive in the modern colonial storm.

It is the question that the creator asked the animal people, ‘what will you do for the people to be?, connected to the death of my young friend that inspires me as I move forward in my work as a cultural tattoo practitioner. From this place is where I get my sense of
responsibility, and this is the reason I do what I do. The teachings of many of the folks you will meet in this research assessment portfolio have demonstrated to me how receiving the ancestral mark changes people. I think that if that one mark, that one tattooed line, is enough to keep one of our young people here for one more day, then it is of value. I do this work, and I am writing this document so that we can make our nations stronger, and in turn so that we do not lose any more of our young people. My responsibility comes from my heart, a heart that wishes my young friends could see the value they have, for my experience with my own ancestral tattoos has shown me that, and this is what I want to share.

2.3 Problems with Transcription and Honoring Orality

In telling my story and the stories of Indigenous peoples who come from oral cultures, I am confronted by a question that has been explored in this research project: How do I honor my Nlaka’pamux oral culture and the oral traditions of the non-Nlaka’pamux Indigenous knowledge keepers in this process of obtaining my masters of arts in interdisciplinary graduate studies? This thesis project is one that moves toward honoring oral culture and tradition. In this research assessment portfolio, I present a case study that demonstrates my vision of a media embedded thesis that honors and opens the way for Indigenous knowledge keepers to communicate in an oral fashion in Indigenous studies.

I have been struggling with the tensions that revolve around transcription and oral culture for a while; my struggle materialized in an encounter with a fellow student in one of my graduate classes. The student shared how they got tired of transcribing the testimony of an Indigenous elder and changed to paraphrasing. This experience made me acutely aware of the asymmetrical power relations involved in the process of transcription and pushed me to find a solution that leaves as much of the original testimony in the final document, in this case, a thesis project. I initially thought the solution was an entirely non-traditional thesis in
the form of a documentary film or something of that nature. However, while waiting in the Tim Hortons line during the 2014 *Indigenous Activist Art* summer intensive at the University of British Columbia Okanagan, in conversation with Dr. Sherry Farrell Racette, she shared with me how non-traditional theses are ‘good' except that they do not leave records of the theorization of the Indigenous scholars who undertake them. The way I understood this is that completely non-traditional theses do not leave an intellectual record for those who come after to build upon. What I am attempting to do with this paper is show how I can leave an academic record that can be built upon while still honoring the oral nature of my culture, and the culture of those who have shared their knowledge and life with me, as I explore the revival of Indigenous tattooing.

In the introduction to *Aboriginal Oral Traditions: Theory Practice Ethics*, Eigenbrod and Hulan state, “the process of writing down oral stories adds layers of meaning through recording, transcribing, translating and editing for the page, and the damage that can be done when stories are recast through this process is well known (7). In 1979, Elinor Ochs called into question the process of transcription, the subjectivity of the transcriber, and the theoretical purpose of the study. In "Transcription as Theory," she argued, the process is not always transparent and involves relationships of power (Roberts 167-168). In her comments, Ochs brings me back to the task Marie Battiste set out for me in reassessing the “existing body of research” (Maintianing195). In this case, Ochs points out the colonial assumption of the academic over the ethnic Other. When considering research by, for, and alongside Indigenous peoples, these concerns are of particular interest considering the oral nature of Indigenous cultures (Bird et al. 18).
In *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, Marie Battiste reminds us of the Supreme Court of Canada’s ruling in upholding “oral modes of transmission…as a legitimate form of understanding and transmitting Indigenous knowledge, history, and consciousness” (Reclaiming xx). This ruling is in the context of the 1997 *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* (Canada) court case where the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en argued using their oral histories to assert their rights to 58,000 square kilometers of Northern British Columbia. Battiste further states, “if the courts are required to consider oral traditions, then all other decision makers should likewise consider the validity of oral traditions, including oral dissemination within Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, as significant sources for the distribution and dissemination of Aboriginal knowledge and scholarship” (Reclaiming xx).

In understanding the concerns that surround transcription, the ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada and its acknowledgment of the importance and validity of oral dissemination of knowledge, I feel compelled to operate in such a way as to honor my Indigenous culture and the Indigenous culture of my ancestors.

### 2.4 The Enacting of Rights Through Research

The use of the oral tradition in my academic work is supported and inspired not only by the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision in *Delgamuukw vs. British Columbia* but also the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). In Article 13, section one it states, “Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures” (UNDRIP). The key word I would like to emphasis in Article 13 is ‘use,’ for I am asserting my right to the ‘use' of my oral tradition in this paper as the UNDRIP outlines. I began to enact my rights as described in the UNDRIP after encountering them in the undergraduate course *Indigenous Historical Perspectives* which prompted me to realize I
had these rights. I see the use of the Declaration as a way of giving voice back to Indigenous peoples as an academic and as a tool affirming my right to decide on the most relevant mode of delivery. It is also a way of interrupting the academic preference for written text as being the ultimate form of effective communication and knowledge transmission. I am aware that this is only a small step towards actually honoring oral cultures.

2.5  **Blended Methodologies**

A solution, which addresses the concerns above, and creatively has allowed for accuracy and experimentation in this project, has been a method that honors the agency of individuals. When appropriate and when a digital media copy of an interview with an Indigenous knowledge keeper or academic was available, instead of transcribing and placing their words in quotation marks, I will be embedding a video in this document as demonstrated above. This short video of Linda Tuhiwai Smith during the presentation *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* in 2013 is one example; in it, she encourages me to be mindful:

![Figure 2.6 Linda Smith Decolonizing Methodologies: Mindful (DataCenter Research for Justice/CC)](image-url)
2.6 Creative Research Methodologies

The second set of methodologies that I am using are commonly referred to as creative research methodologies or arts-based research methodologies. The practices I will be undertaking fall into these categories, and I see them as outgrowths of Indigenous methodologies. Kathy Absolon has argued a creative methodology is needed, “to reflect my way of thinking, being and doing” (Kaandosswin 15). One of the ways that I exist in this world is as an artist and as a creator of things. From this place, I step into practice-based research. Richard Hill says, “native societies tend to think of artists differently. The ability to make things by hand is considered a gift given by the Creator, to be used for the welfare of the community” (234). When I move into creating artistic works, I not only see it as another way for me to build a relationship with Indigenous tattooing, but I also see it as one of my responsibilities to my community, to use the gifts I have been given by the creator.

As I move into a more active form of knowledge creation, Leanne Simpson reminds me that, “Indigenous cultures engage in processes or acts to create meaning. Indigenous cultures understand and generate meaning through engagement, presence, and process—storytelling, ceremony, singing, dancing, doing…creating aligns us with our Ancestors” (Dancing 93). The process of creating or doing is one of my primary methodologies in my daily life. Since I was a young child, creating has been one of the things I was always encouraged to engage in. From this personal place, I begin to engage in meaning making through artistic practice.

2.7 Art as Research and Art as Theory

The creation of artistic work in this thesis project on Indigenous tattooing not only comes out of Indigenous methodologies and the reality of my creative lived reality, but it is also a developing field of academic research. The form of work I will be doing can be
described as practice-based research in which creative outcomes from the research process [will] be included in the submission for examination, and the claim for an original contribution to the field are held to be demonstrated through the original creative work" (Candy 3). I was drawn to the idea of art as theory in conversation with my supervisor Margo Tamez during a progress report in 2014, and then began to look into how others have used it in their graduate work. The step towards presenting artistic work without clear explanation is supported by the work of Michael Fisher. In the book *The Authentic Dissertation: Alternative Ways of Knowing, Research, and Representation*, Michael comments that he does not, “articulate the fine details of a ‘clean’ new theory-a lot of it is implicit, and a lot of it is performed theory-artional-art as theory” (146). In this research, I have done something similar in that I have not explained the artistic creation per se, but have allowed the creative work to exist as part of the larger aesthetic theorizing embodied in my thesis and “present these objects as part of, or all of, an argument for interpretation by the viewer” (Biggs 4).

I do understand that for my artistic creations to be considered a contribution to new knowledge or as research, they must conform to a few conditions that do not apply to art simply as art. The first is that the work must be an original contribution and has to be intended as research from the outset and not merely a by-product of another process (Borgdorff 9). Further, “Artwork itself must be contextualized in terms of research-intentions to limit the proliferation of its meanings, ensuring it conveys the relevant message and knowledge outcomes…This emphasizes the need for the artist clearly to articulate…intentions, and/or find a way of positioning h[is] artefacts so that they communicate in the appropriate way, so that the viewer/assessor can understand what the agent-creator is doing" (Pakes 10-11). The pieces of art that I have created are contextualized
within my assessment portfolio (Gray and Malins 164), which situates and embeds them in the larger picture of all the work I have undertaken in this thesis project (Borgdorff 13).

2.8 Creative Research Methodologies and Honoring

My use of creative research methodologies is an effort to honor the relationships I have with the many voices, actors, and co-creators of this project. The painting of portraits is one way that I honor those who have influenced me in one way or another and to honor those relationships. The inclusion of video recordings of the co-creators I interviewed is another way I am seeking to honor their voices and their ancestors as they share their experiences.

2.9 Methods

The specific tools I use flow out of my methodologies and weave together to provide the right amount of information to accomplish the goals I have set out for myself regarding my ethical considerations in honoring Indigenous oral culture. Echoing Kathy Absolon, “my gathering process [is] eclectic, flexible and organic. A multi-method approach best suited the wholism of Indigenous culture” (Kaandosswin 32). The method I have demonstrated throughout my project is storytelling my journey and my relationship to the ideas presented in articles, television programs, and documentaries. I have asked knowledge keepers to share their stories through unstructured interviews (Firmin 907-908). The process of an unstructured interview allows the knowledge keepers the freedom to tell their story with minimal interference from me asking and directing the conversation, and still establishes the background questions.
2.9.1 Selection of Participants

The participants included in this project were chosen based on the knowledge that they have of Indigenous tattoo revival. In Conducting Sacred Research, Roxanne Struthers points out that the researcher has the right to select the, “participants according to the informants knowledge and expertise by virtue of involvement, or undergoing a specific event(s) or phenomenon of the research topic” (130). The co-creators selected are individuals who are involved in the revival of their ancestral tattooing traditions in the capacity of cultural tattoo practitioners (tattoo artists). These people have been chosen because they are Indigenous tattoo artists working at reviving their ancestral tattooing traditions.

2.9.2 Interview Procedures

The procedures that were followed to contact and arrange the interviews are as follows.

Step 1: I sent out an email invitation to participate, and I answered any questions or concerns.

Step 2: The interviews were scheduled at a time convenient to the artist. Upon meeting for the interview, I, Dion Kaszas, read through the consent, answered any questions and explained what would happen during the interview. Participants were reminded that they could withdraw at any time. The participant was given a copy of the consent form. The interview began. At completion of the interview, the participant was thanked for their time and reminded that the contact information listed on the consent form is there if they would like further information or have questions or concerns that have arisen after the interview has been completed.

These interviews were recorded via video and audio recording devices and sections are included in this research assessment portfolio.

Step 3. The video was reviewed by me and a rough edit of all portions that might be
potentially used during the rest of the research project was shared with the co-
researchers/participants for review to ensure their satisfaction with the way they are being
represented, if they indicated this was desirable. Participants had an opportunity to edit or
add additional comments at this time.

Step 4. Once approval was given for the rough edit material, it was considered available to be
used as part of the final outcomes for this project.

In step one, I used an email invitation as the first level of formal contact concerning
this research project, which outlined the foreseeable contribution of each tattoo artist that had
been asked to participate. Not only was the email invitation the initial contact with each
tattoo artist who was interviewed, but it was also used as the main consent document that
indicates the co-creators desire to be included in the project. This form of consent was
brought to my attention, and the email and supporting documentation that was used was
fashioned after documents employed by Stephen Foster in some of his research work, which
he graciously provided me with, and which I adapted to fit this project. A video and audio
release form were used to ensure each co-creator was acutely aware of the potential uses of
the recorded video and audio.

2.9.3 Digital Documentary Film and Photography

In the process of interviewing, I used digital documentary to capture the interviews
(Gibson 917-919), and portions of these conversations are contained in this final thesis
document. The visual representation and use of the knowledge-keeper’s names will be
utilized as it acknowledges where I received the knowledge. It also upholds my commitment
to relational accountability, for as Shawn Wilson recounts, "the entire notion of relational
accountability would have been lost had I not honored the co-researchers by using their
names" (130).
2.9.4 Painting

I am using the artistic medium of oil paint on canvas and wood panel as a way of honoring the mentors and ancestors who went before me and provided encouragement and inspiration. These paintings are large scale oil paintings, and the series contains three separate but related bodies of work. The first includes tattooed Indigenous peoples whom I consider my mentors as their words, actions, and being have taught and inspired me as I began and continue the work of reviving Indigenous tattooing in Canada. The second contains portraits of ancestors who have been captured in ethnographic photography documenting the tattooing traditions of Indigenous cultures from across the globe. The third set of paintings in this series are painted in purple and depict historical photographs I have come across, which share tattooing traditions or practices of Indigenous peoples from across the world.

2.9.5 Laser engraving

In asking how do I honor the orality of each person's culture, and how do I honor their voice? One of the solutions I explored is laser engraving a portrait of the individual alongside their words or quotes that have inspired me.

2.9.6 Spray Paint Stencil Works

Another artistic medium that I have used in the creation of this research assessment portfolio and the artwork associated with it are stencil works on wood panel. For these pieces, I use the cutting out of quotes, ethnographic representations of Indigenous tattooing, and spray paint over top of cut outs to produce a stencil piece. In some cases, I have spray painted these stencils over top plain monochromatic backgrounds, while in other cases I spray paint over a print out from a variety of sources including my early writings or ethnographic works, such as James Teit’s *Tattooing Face and Body Painting of the*
Thompson Indians. I also use this medium to share, on wood panel and canvas, some of the quotes that have inspired me.

2.10 Analysis/Storying Interview Impact

I can remember as a young child asking about the meaning of a story that was shared with me by my aunties and found out, as Jo-ann Archibald says, “At one time, asking direct questions about what one said was considered rude. One reason for this relates to making meaning from stories, a process that involves going away to think about their meanings in relation to one’s life” (90). It is from this early experience and from the teachings I have gained as I engaged the Indigenous methodology of story that I will be presenting my work.

I know the move away from conventional academic standards of analysis is a major step to take in a master’s thesis project. However, logically, the work I have done, as an undergraduate student who majored in Indigenous Studies, positioned me to arise as a critical thinker and to establish original approaches. This approach to analysis comes from the thinking of Indigenous scholars like Marie Battiste who in Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge states, “to insist on analyzing Indigenous thought from a Eurocentric point of view is cultural racism and cognitive imperialism” (74). It is also from the Indigenous academics I have encountered in my graduate readings like Leanne Simpson in her dissertation The Construction of Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Issues, Implications, and Insights who says:

Indigenous knowledge is constantly being measured by the western yardstick…if you want your knowledge to be legitimate in this society, you have to prove it is legitimate on western terms, using the western knowledge system. This is not only epistemologically unsound, it is also racist (62).
As I have read through Indigenous academics’ dissertations, theses, and books, I have come across encouragement to be an academic in a way that honors who I am. In operating out of a decolonizing methodology, I echo Margaret Kovach who states, "supporting Indigenous scholarship means guarding against the tendency to adjudicate such scholarship based on the degree to which it conforms to Western academic custom" (Indigenous Methodologies 170-171).

The telling of my relationship to the ideas shared with me is woven together by the methodologies of positioning, relational accountability, and Indigenous story, and I am aware of the power relations involved in quoting another person’s thoughts. Engaging France Trépanier & Chris Creighton-Kelly, in Understanding Aboriginal Arts in Canada Today: A Knowledge and Literature Review, it is my goal to move the power back to the speakers interacted with. They state:

Rather than quickly summarizing a person’s point into our text, we have chosen to include fuller, more descriptive quotes than is usual... This allows the writer or speaker more space to cut down the brush, to blaze the trail, to elaborate their case, thereby de-centering our voice to a certain extent” (7).

Being conscious of my relationship to power as a researcher in the university and acting from an ethic of relational accountability, I have chosen to give more space to the voices that have influenced me and who have shared with me.

This research assessment portfolio is a media rich PDF that is structured, so the reader gains a clear sense of the direction of my thinking and the interwoven strands. I have been working towards honoring my oral culture and those of the knowledge keepers I have worked with but also all of the voices I encounter during my thesis work. As necessitated by
my methodology of positioning, I will share how the stories shared with me have impacted me. I agree with and have been influenced by Joyce Schneider, for, as she relates, “I was not comfortable with the mainstream practice of analysing what the participants shared, I preferred to reflect upon the impacts their words had on me and the path I would take because of what they shared with me” (Authentic Dissertation 35).

In a similar vein, I will be presenting the stories of the knowledge keepers without interpretation but, rather, placed within the context of the research portfolio. Firstly, I understand as Margaret Kovach points out that, "the presentation of story in research is an increasingly common method of presenting finding" (Indigenous Methodologies 131). Secondly, this approach is supported by my methodology of Indigenous story, backed by Kovach who states, "the interpretation and the teachings taken become the listener's task" (Ibid, 60). She suggests that all the analysis is not the researcher's responsibility but also the learners (129). The power that is inherent in the process of analyzing another's story and another person's voice is one that is plagued by power relations. I do not wish to operate from this place or to perpetuate processes of intellectual domination. So, I offer my research assessment portfolio with the artwork and the media embedded PDF, which contains the stories of the knowledge keepers and leaves the task of finding meaning with the reader, listener, and viewer (132).

The way I have chosen to go about the process of analysis is based on my use of story and relational accountability, Shawn Wilson says, “We’re not professing that this is the way it is; we’re professing our relationship to that which we are seeing” (110). My analysis will be the sharing of the impact that the interviews had upon me. This has been undertaken throughout this whole document; my analysis includes the artwork. Analysis being in this
case my understanding and my relationship to the things I have explored and had the privilege of encountering in this research project. In *Research is Ceremony* Wilson quotes his father, Stan Wilson as saying, "Something that should go in the writing is how you have changed and what the whole process has done to you. What have you become because of that" (123). The storying of the impact this research has had on my life is essential and is part of my analysis.

In *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know*, Kathleen Absolon uses a metaphor to explain how she sees analysis, which rings true to my own process as undertaken in this research assessment portfolio. She says:

“Making meaning is what we do with knowledge, and when we gather berries we make meaning of those berries by making jam or pies and then we share all that we have gathered with the people. In lieu of ‘data analysis,’ I use the term ‘making meaning’ to refer to the process of sorting the information and interpreting from all that was gathered and harvested” (22).

By weaving my story and the story of the knowledge keepers and the impact this whole project has had on me and the ways this work has changed me, I am sharing how I have made meaning out of this experience and this is my analysis. This whole document is the basket of meaning that I have created using the many strands of information, theory, methodologies, methods, stories, and voices weaving them all together to create a basketry of knowledge and culture.

When considering the issue of analysis, I must return to my Indigenous methodologies and listen to Wilson as he shares that, "If you use relational accountability as a style of analysis, the researcher must ask how the analysis of these ideas will help to further
build relationships. (119). When considering Wilson's point, I have made sure that the end product, this research assessment portfolio, is one that will help move forward all of the communities I have built relationships with.

Finally, I see the insistence of leaving meaning making up to the reader as an acknowledgment of my connection with those who engage my work and an acknowledgment of their intelligence and autonomy. As Wilson says out of "a need for each person to develop his or her own relationships with ideas and to therefore form their own conclusions” (94), I insist on the final analysis remains with the reader. It would be presumptuous for me to assume that I know all of the possible meanings or conclusions that could come from this research project I have woven.

2.11 Research Assessment Portfolio

This document is not a conventional thesis paper but a graduate research assessment portfolio (Gray and Malins 164). This portfolio provides a ‘roadmap’ of my journey into reviving Nlaka’pamux and Interior Salish tattooing; such a roadmap will be useful to Indigenous peoples who are working on similar revival efforts. This project tells my story and is fundamentally about building relationships and connections with Indigenous peoples who are reviving their tattooing practices.

Because of the many ways that this research project has been working towards answering the question of how we honor oral cultures and how a sleeping tattoo tradition is revived contains such a diverse array of media and forms of representation, I have chosen to use a research assessment portfolio. In the book Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design, Gray and Malins points out that some of, “the items of evidence that you might cite could be text, visuals, video, models or just about anything that provides clear evidence that you have achieved the learning outcomes” (164). I have
provided reproductions of the art created, portions of the interviews I did while in New Zealand, clips from other media sources, and materials produced for the Earth Line Tattoo Training Residency embedded into this final document which is my final assessment portfolio.

2.12 An Indigenized and Visualized Contextual Review: The Genealogy of a Research Project

The way that my contextual review is written took into account the research framework I have chosen and presented in this chapter, which includes the use of story as an essential Indigenous research methodology. It also takes the words of Kathleen Absolon into account when she says, “to indigenize is to position your Indigenous worldview as the center” (Kaandossiwin 30). With this in mind, I have written my contextual review as a story, not only as a story but the story of the fuller context from which this project has arisen, the context of my life experience. When my supervisor Dr. Margo Tamez looked at the way I have chosen to do this she commented that this is the genealogy of my research project. I am telling the story of my relationship with the literature and other nonacademic materials I have engaged in and also telling the story of my transformation as a scholar by sharing with the reader portions of my early writing from my undergraduate degree.

There is a large body of artworks that I have produced as part of this project that has become what I am terming a “visualized literature review”. This body of work contains a series of spray paint stencil pieces on wood panel that share many of the references and historical documentations of Indigenous peoples tattoos across Turtle Island (North America). These small spray paint stencil pieces on wood panel seek to highlight the many references that can be found and used for the revival of Indigenous tattooing and to possibly give the spark of inspiration to someone who is not aware that their ancestors have a sleeping
tattoo tradition. This portion of my contextual review will be further explored in the chapter four entitled Weaving Artwork.
Chapter 3 Indigenized Contextual Review: Storying Relationship to Literature

3.1 Weaving in the Literature

The story I wish to tell in this contextual review is not only of the literature I have reviewed but also of my relationship to that literature as one of the first emerging Indigenous artists investigating tattoos, laying down foundations from an Indigenizing standpoint. In the book *Research is Ceremony*, Shawn Wilson reminds me that research "is a ceremony for improving [my] relationship with an idea" (110). I wish to tell the story of my relationship with the notion of Indigenous tattooing in a way that positions me in the context of the subject academically and personally. Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett explain why the Indigenous methodology of positioning is so critical: “Aboriginal researchers, we write about ourselves and position ourselves at the outset of our work because the only thing we can write about with authority is ourselves” (97). My use of the Indigenous methodology of positioning is mutually supporting and backed up by my use of story. Shawn Wilson further points me back to the fact that:

Interpretation of the context of knowledge is necessary for that knowledge to become lived, become a part of our collective experience or part of our web of relationships. So we contextualize everything that we do, and we do that contextualization in a conscious way (102, 103).

This contextual review is based on my understanding of what my responsibilities are and is supported by the Indigenous methodology of relational accountability.

My use and characterization of this pivotal chapter in my research assessment portfolio as a contextual review as opposed to a literature review is to Indigenize the term as used in art and design research in order to demonstrate, “through the Contextual Review, the
hunch that initiated [my] research project becomes a tangible ‘gap’ in knowledge” (Gray and Malins 35). In Managing Interdisciplinarity: A Discussion of the Contextual Review in Design Research, Barnes, and Melles claim “that applied design research…requires students and supervisors to undertake a form of transdisciplinary contextual review that is distinct from the text-based disciplinary review of established academic disciplines.” As an Indigenous researcher using arts-based, creative research methodologies, and as an interdisciplinary graduate student working across transdisciplines, I aspire to take hold of the contextual review, seeking “a balance between a ‘reasonable’ response and a personal, creative, alternative view” (Gray and Malins 55). A contextual review positions me to be actively “invoking disciplinary and non-disciplinary sources” (Barnes and Melles 7). The contextual review operates as a multimodal document that will share a fuller picture of Indigenous tattooing reflecting today’s diverse sources and creative approaches, which work towards opening the field of study to contemporary locations of theorizing by Indigenous artists-theorizing practitioners.

In writing my contextual review in this way, I am accomplishing the tasks that are laid out for me by my methodologies. First, I position myself academically within the literature that is “the relevant body of knowledge underpinning” (Ridley, 3) my research. Secondly, I am sharing my process in a transparent way. In her book Kaandossiwim: How We Come to Know, Kathy Absolon shares that many of the Indigenous scholars she worked with demonstrate “that the stories of the research journeys are integral to their methodology; in fact, the essence of their methodology is their process. By process I mean their experiences, journey and transformation” (85). In other words, by sharing our research journey we are clearly outlining how we, “build relationships with the idea in various and
multiple ways, until [we] reach a new understanding or higher state of awareness regarding whatever it is that [we] are studying” (Wilson, Research is 117).

As well as placing my project within an academic sphere, I am acknowledging the full context from which this research project has arisen, including my life experiences, conversations, and pop cultural influences, such as magazines, television programs like *Tattoo Hunter*, and documentaries. The contextual review shows the relationship I have with the ideas that emerge from Indigenous tattooing and how ideas function to express the tie between academic research, artistic practice, and passion for tattoos. My engagement with the literature allows me to share my understanding and relationship with the ideas in the various places I have encountered them. This includes, but is not limited to, theorizing ideas which arose in class projects in my undergraduate degree and how I have been able to carry these out in new work in my graduate degree research and grant proposals. My supervisor Margo Tamez has pointed out, "that there are many perspectives, and it is impossible to cover, in depth, the range of viewpoints, for the purpose of the thesis. It is more critical that you, during your graduate research, establish a foundation that you, as well as future Indigenous researchers can explore more in depth" (Research Proposal Draft 1 Comments). The storying of my process and the relationship I have with ideas, authors, scholars, and knowledge keepers will leave a path which others can continue to walk upon.

Having outlined the need for using an Indigenized contextual review as opposed to a literature review, I can practice the Indigenous methodologies of, "respect, reciprocity, and responsibility" (Wilson Research is 77). As stated in the introduction, storywork is one of the Indigenous methodologies that I will be using, which honors Indigenous oral tradition (Archibald, Indigenous Storywork). In *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World:*
American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge, Donald Fixico asserts, “Story is the basis of American Indian oral tradition. Story is the vehicle for sharing traditional knowledge and passing it from one generation to the next” (21-22). The use of story in this project is not only an ‘Indigenous methodology,' it is a dynamic which is alive in my culture. Shirley Sterling states in her dissertation concerning Nlaka’pamux story and the transmission of culture that, "oral tradition is very common among the Nlaka'pamux" (5). This methodology of storying is a valid and relevant approach to reviewing literature, media, and storied worlds that are essential foundations for this research project. It is a methodology that has arisen out of my exploration of my rights as outlined in the UNDRIP in section 13 and from the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision in Delgamuukw. I will be using story as a methodology to emplace my contextual review (literature review).

3.2 Genealogy of a Research Project

It was in 1996 that I received my first tattoo, and I continued to get tattoos as the years have gone by. But it was in 2006, as I was sitting in the waiting room for my turn under the needle to continue the Maori-inspired right sleeve, that I was shuffling through magazines on a waiting room table and pulled out a small booklet entitled, "Tattooing and Face and Body Painting of the Thompson Indians" by the anthropologist James Teit. My head just about popped off, as I was not aware that my ancestors had a tattooing practice, which this publication clearly outlined. I was conscious of other Indigenous peoples that had tattooing practices but not my ancestors. The thought crossed my mind that, "this is something I could do Master's research on". However, I was not in a position to pursue such a thing as I did not have a bachelor's degree nor was I in school to obtain one. Nevertheless, the seed had been planted and stayed dormant.
In 2008 I entered the University of British Columbia Okanagan with a double major in Indigenous studies and philosophy. At the beginning of the 2009 academic year, I ruptured my spleen which poisoned my blood and resulted in the deterioration of my aortic valve to the point that I needed to have it replaced. So, I was forced to withdraw from my classes for the 2009 school year; it was during this year off that I applied and was accepted as a tattoo apprentice. As the next school year began to get closer and closer, I decided I needed to go back and finish my bachelor’s degree.

As I re-entered academic life as an undergraduate, I decided to drop the philosophy major and continue as an Indigenous studies major. In the second semester of the 2010-2011 school year, I entered the class, "Indigenous Historical Perspectives." It was in this class that the dormant seed that was planted in 2006 began to be nurtured and watered through the reflective reading assignments and keyword lens work. In this course, I produced the final paper, “Excavating Cultural Treasure: Indigenous Tattooing in the Northwest of North America”: this project situated my work in Indigenous tattooing right off the bat as a process steeped in the rights outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, specifically Article Eleven Section One, which speaks about the rights of Indigenous peoples to develop the future manifestations of their cultures.

In this paper, I engaged with the work of three groups of scholars the first group included: Jill Fisher and her article *Tattooing the Body, Marking Culture*, Sonja Modesti in *Home Sweet Home: Tattoo Parlors as Postmodern Spaces of Agency*, and Paul Sweetman and his article *Anchoring the (Postmodern) Self? Body Modification, Fashion, and Identity*. The position I took after reading this first group of scholars was that tattoos operate as a way of anchoring postmodern people in an environment where, “postmodernism rejects the notion
of ultimate truth, and so people in the postmodern condition are left to create their own truth from the temporal shifts of a highly relative existence” (Modesti 210). I argued that it is from this place that tattooing arises to anchor postmodern folk into a firm sense of themselves.

This second group of scholars looked at tattooing from a different position and characterized Indigenous tattooing as a form of resistance and as an "exploration of ways of knowing and being in the world" (Schwarz 229). The above quote comes from Maureen Trudelle Schwarz in her article Native American Tattoos: Identity and Spirituality in Contemporary America, she being the first of the two scholars in this group. The second is Linda Nikora et al. in the article Renewal and Resistance: Moko in Contemporary New Zealand. It is from these scholars that I started to see tattooing as a way of countering the Western colonial project of identity erasure of Indigenous peoples.

The final group of researchers includes Lars Krutak with seven publications, the most important being his book The Tattooing Arts of Tribal Women and the article Many Stitches for Life: The Antiquity of Thread and Needle Tattooing. The second scholar being the author of the ethnographic work I found in 2006, James Teit with Tattooing and Face and Body Painting of the Thompson Indians of British Columbia. These two scholars introduced me to the ethnographic tradition that as Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out as one of the disciplines, “that the indigenous world has been represented to the West and it is through these disciplines that indigenous peoples often research for the fragments of ourselves, which were taken, catalogued, studied and stored” (58, 59). Both of these scholars have helped me in the recovery of Nlaka’pamux tattooing by providing knowledge and information.

Alongside the "Indigenous Historical Perspectives" course, I was enrolled in another course, Studio Theory, and, in this class, I began to undertake a research project that surveyed
some of the scholarly work on contemporary Western tattooing and its connection to
postmodern identity construction. In the paper for this class, “Giving Roots to Modern
Seaweeds” I wrote, "With the influences of postmodern critique, existentialist philosophy,
modern technological advances, capitalist economies which commodify everything including
our body, and the increasingly deceptive nature of consumer advertising people are
struggling to answer the question for themselves, who am I? Tattooing has become a way in
which modern society has begun to write the story of their lives on themselves" (2). Robert
Edgerton and Harvey Dingman in their article Tattooing and Identity confirmed that tattooing
in the West is being used for the construction of identity.

My relationship to the idea that Indigenous tattooing was used in a similar way to
that of postmodern thinkers shifted when I began to explore the politics of identity in an
Indigenous Studies course Indigenous Governance where I came across the thinking of
Bonita Lawrence in her book Real Indians and Others: Mixed Blood Urban Native Peoples
and Indigenous Nationhood where she says:

With definitions of Indianness deeply embedded within systems of colonial power,
Native identity is inevitably highly political...For Native people, individual identity
is always being negotiated…in the face of an external, colonizing society. In both
Canada and the United States, bodies of law defining and controlling Indianness
have for years distorted and disrupted older Indigenous ways of identifying the self
in relation not only to collective identity but to the land (1).

I had to start to rethink my position on tattooing and postmodern identity construction and
Indigenous identity. For, in my experience as an Indigenous person in Canada whose
identity is legislated under the Indian Act, my identity is not only complicated by the
philosophical traditions of the West coming through existentialism and postmodernism, it is also complicated by the colonial history of genocide and symbolic violence under the Indian Act.

I see that my underlying assumption that the things Nietzsche, Sartre, and Derrida among other thinkers was a form of internalized, "cognitive imperialism" (Battiste and Youngblood 74). Manu Aluli Meyer in her article *Acultural Assumptions of Empiricism: A Native Hawaiian Critique* asks the question, "Why would we believe that the discussions of Plato and Kierkegaard and Aristotle are acultural? And even worse than that, we believe without even thinking that what they had to say actually applied to us!" (192). I had been trapped in this form of internalized cognitive imperialism where I thought all that Western Philosophy had to say about existence directly applied to me. In no way am I saying that none of Western philosophy is relevant, but what I was exploring was a critical question, which pivoted my journey. Shouldn’t we as Indigenous academics examine these ideas to see what type of relationship they hold to our experience?

As mentioned earlier, 2010-2011 gave me a sense of purpose and pushed me to find a way to help anchor Indigenous young people into their culture. For it was in this year that my young friend took his life. That conversation him and I had sat in my mind and on my heart, and it was not until I was sitting in a seat at his funeral that I decided I needed to find a way to help Indigenous people become proud of who they are.

The fire to bring back traditional tattooing to Indigenous people was started with a desire to do something that would help anchor the youth in their culture mixed with the theorization of modern Western tattooing as a form of identity construction. I wrote quoting Jill Fisher: “Tattooing for Indigenous peoples as well as non-Indigenous can be a means to reappropriate
the physical body from the socially diseased body, as a means to resist the cultural forces that have commodified the body, and continue to do so” (Fisher 104). Fuel for this fire came in the form of the example of the Maori and the revival of Moko as a kind of resistance against “dominant ethnic identity.” When I read Article 11 Section, 1 of the UNDRIP was when the fire in my soul began to roar, and I outlined the beginnings of a tattooing revival movement.

In the 2011-2012 academic years, I took two classes, which have contributed to shaping my thinking and continued to set the trajectory of my academic life. The first class was *Indigenous Governance*. In this class I looked closer at the symbolic violence perpetrated by the Canadian government on Indigenous peoples in Canada. I gave a final presentation entitled, “Indigenous Identity,” and in it, I explored my struggle with who I am in connection with the Indian Act and the Canadian Constitution. In this presentation, I quote Bonita Lawrence as saying: “Identity, for Native people, can never be a neutral issue” (1). This one quote and the thinking and research that I undertook in this course began to disrupt some of the ways I was thinking about tattoos and Indigenous identity.

I completed a directed studies course during this school year that was created to research in depth the revival of Indigenous tattooing globally. In this course, I looked extensively at documentaries, television programs, scholarly articles, magazine articles and online newspaper sources to see how and what other Indigenous peoples were doing with their tattooing practices. It is within this research project and within the paper I wrote for this class, “Identity as Power: Underpinnings of Indigenous Tattoo Revivals” that I explicitly outline the genocidal history that such tattoo revival projects emerge from. This genocidal history brings forth the importance of not only anchoring Indigenous peoples identity for the individual but also for the collective, for in this paper I write:
If my peoples and I disappear into the multicultural melting pot of the nation state of Canada, and if the only difference that remains is that we have a slightly darker skin tone, then this genocidal history also disappears. If this history is white washed away by policies and legislation then the nation state no longer has to contend with its history of child abuse, land theft, and our claims to the return of that land, and genuine recognition of our rights to self determination and the right to be human… It is within this framework that my struggle to identify who I am and therefore how I operate in the world enters the revival of Nlaka’pamux tattooing, as a way of contesting the nation state’s continued attempts to erase me and my peoples (1-2).

Not only does tattooing have to do with the strengthening of Individuals, but in strengthening people it is a tool that can lead us towards self-determination.

As I listened, watched, and read the experiences of the many Indigenous peoples I encountered in this research project, I was blown away by the new realities that came into being after they had gone through the experience of being tattooed in a culturally relevant way. Like Manu Neho from the PBS special Skin Stories:
Figure 3.1 Neho Manu (PBS Clip) has been removed due to copyright restrictions. In this video excerpt Neho Manu says, “My grandfather died in 1958. And at that point, I was four years old. Now, in my mind, everything stopped. The death of my grandfather had such a traumatic effect on me that I stopped speaking Maori, which was my first language...I think that subconsciously I've always wanted to have a moko...Having left the Mormon Church and having made that decision to be more Maori, to take up an active political struggle of the way that we were, it just was a natural progression to physically stumble upon ta moko...So the yearning was awakened and having awakened that yearning it became a need to actually move it from a yearning to a reality...I had made the decision on a Saturday morning and called my mother. When I talked about my moko, she said, "Oh, no, Manu. If God wanted you to have that, you would have been born with it." And I said to her, "Well, if God wanted you to have clothes, you would have been born with that as well." To which she replied, "Don't be stupid," to me...So we had it here, it was important that I had the people that mattered the most around me...There were about seventy people in our home throughout the whole weekend coming and going, so it was a big celebration, a weekend of celebration. Were we laughed and cried and had lots of fun and lots of anguish, about how it iss we just about lost this art form, and then there was the jubilation of rekindling it in our own particular family. It was absolutely wonderful. I think it was my rebirthing. Because as I sat up after I had been completed, there was this overwhelming sense of rebirth. Just I sat up and the tears just flowed. I sobbed, literally sobbed.” Neho, Manu, Interviewee. Skin Stories. PBS Special, 2003.

Or, the testimony of Keone Nunes a Hawaiian tattoo artist:

Figure 3.2 Nunes (© Voices of Truth, by permissions)

In this paper I assert that:

The revival of cultural tattooing works on many levels for indigenous peoples and signifies many different narratives, identity of self as Indigenous as Maori as Samoan as Yupik, Inuit, Nlaka’pamux etc. Also as a political statement, as an affirmation of the historical struggle our ancestors went through to insure we are still Nlaka’pamux, as an anchor of self in culture, a reclaiming of the body from the commoditization of the consumer culture, a reclaiming of the body from the colonial machinery which seeks to control indigenous peoples identity through legislation. With the legal clumping together
of indigenous peoples under the Indian act, cultural expressions of tattooing can help indigenous peoples feel separate and distinct once again. Tattooing in times past has meant many different things but for me today it symbolizes my process of decolonization (7-8).

The many Indigenous peoples I looked at in this project have continued to be inspirational to me, as I have continued my journey in reviving my ancestral tattooing practices. The final clip I will share with you comes from Rosanna Raymond as she describes her first experience with Samoan Tatau (tattoo) and then shares what the word tatau stands for in Samoan:

Figure 3.3 Raymond (Pitt Rivers Museum) has been removed due to copyright restrictions. In this video excerpt Rosanna Raymond shares when, “We were walking up to the shed and I could hear this incredible tapping sound and within that tapping sound I completely slipped through time and space and I heard the music I saw the drumming there was so much that converged on that one point I am listening to this particular sound…If you look at the word tatau it is you know ta is time and tau is to hold on it is literally holding on to time, so its not just about that we decorate our bodies it a way of allowing the past to be in the present because you know we are the genealogical matter of the past and present and the way that it converges into the now and that’s what talk about when we mean that these things are living to us.” Raymond, Rosanna, Interviewee. “Tatau and Ta Moko: Body Arts.” Vimeo, uploaded by Pitt Rivers Museum 11 Apr. 2013, https://vimeo.com/63826843.

This paper continued my exploration of the relevant academic and non-academic literature further embedding the context of this current project.

The final paper for this class adds a few new voices to our contextual review that again includes three groups of contributors. The first group is academics that have written about tattooing in the Western and Indigenous tradition starting with the Western tradition with Shannon Bell in her article Tattooed: A Participant Observer’s Exploration of Meaning, Patricia Gagne and Angela Orend with the article Corporate Logo Tattoos and the Commodification of the Body, and Lauren Langman in the article Punk, Porn and Resistance:
Carnivalization and the Body in Popular Culture. Academic articles that look at Indigenous tattooing include, Lingereia Gorre in *Expressions of Identity: Maori Ta Moko and the Utilization of the Internet* and Stephen Pritchard and his article *An Essential Marking: Maori Tattooing and the Properties of Identity*.

The second group of voices that are added to this contextual review from this paper are from non-academic sources including tattoo magazines and internet magazine articles. The first of which comes from the September 2011 issue of *Skin and Ink* magazine with the article, *Aisea Toetu’u: Waking a Sleeping Tradition*. The next non-academic source is an article by Allie Hostler entitled, *Taking it on the Chin*, and the final contribution in this group is *Marks Across Time* by Rachel Uranga. From the article by Rachel we get the testimony of L Frank Manriquez who says:

> These tattoos make waves; it says we are not extinct…After I got the tattoos, there was an emotional change…I felt responsible, a responsibility for my ancestors…People nowadays are like detached seaweeds—they don’t have a root…But when blood calls you, it is too strong to deny…I just thought the physical (marking) would happen…I would just get the tattoo and that would be it. But it marked me in an eternal way…It has to do with being correct in the eyes of my ancestor…For me, (the tattoos) are a way of holding hands with my sisters, my aunties, my grandmother, through time


This group of articles gives context to the revival of Indigenous Tattooing by providing voices that would not be included in the conversation if we tightened the justification for inclusion to that of only academic sources.
The final group that arises from this undergraduate project is those that come from documentaries or YouTube videos, starting with Making His Mark: A Visit with Keone Nunes posted by the Voices of Truth. The second is Body Arts: Tatau and Ta Moko by the Pitt Rivers Museum, and the final one is Suluape-Steve Looney-Art Talk, posted by Vice. Material from all three of these groups helped to lay the foundations for the next step in the evolution of my academic journey. This project and its sources further confirmed my hunches and previous conclusions and added the element of a spiritual connection to our ancestors and a testimony to the youth that the cultural tattoo is who we are.

Leading up to the summer of 2012, I was not only working on the above-mentioned classes, but I was also writing a proposal to the Irving K. Barber Undergraduate Research Awards, a program that affords undergraduate students to spend a summer researching under a supervisor. The title for my proposed project was Uncovering Nlaka’pamux Tattooing: Reclaiming Symbolic Cultural Identity Markers. In it I proposed uncovering the historical evidence of Nlaka’pamux tattooing by finding examples in archival sources. The second thing I wished to do was begin to discover and collect proof of the connection tattoos have with basketry designs and pictographs in museum collections and out on the land. These two research phases were framed under the question: What historical documents remain that tell the story of Nlaka'pamux tattooing? This project not only had a research question but also a goal: the revival of traditional tattooing among my people.

This project shifted gears after I was unable to find any historical photographs in the many archival holdings I searched. I did, however, find many examples of historical photos and references to other nations’ tattoo traditions, which I collected along the way. After collecting a large database of examples of other nations’ tattoos, I decided I had to share
them as references for other Indigenous peoples revival efforts. This resulted in the creation of the website www.indigneoustattooing.com which houses photos from the summer research project. After my summer of investigation, which took me out on the land and into museum collections, the revival of Nlaka'pamux tattooing went from an idea to reality as I tattooed a pictograph from the Stein Valley onto the back of a Nlaka'pamux woman. I recount this portion of that journey in the final presentation of my research at the URA final symposium:

![Image of Kaszas (Undergraduate) with others]

This presentation recounts the culmination of the project conceived by happenstance in a tattoo parlor six years prior when I came across James Teits book.

As a result of my research into my cultural tattooing, I had the honor of being interviewed by Lars Krutak, an anthropologist who has been featured on Discovery Channel’s “Tattoo Hunter,” for three books Spiritual Skin: Magical Tattoos and Scarification, Tattoo Traditions of Native North American: Ancient and Contemporary Expressions of Identity and The World Atlas of Tattoo. In Tattoo Traditions of Native North America, I am quoted as saying:

I have found healing in my research, for as I become more and more knowledgeable about my ancestors' tattooing practices, I become more and more connected to their way of life and what was important to them. I have begun to reconnect with the land,
I have begun dreaming, and my dreams have showed me that this revival of Nlaka'pamux tattooing will help heal our people. When I see my Nlaka’pamux tattoo I am reminded to ask myself: is what I’m doing at this moment in my life connected to my life’s purpose, and if it is not then I must take steps to change that. This re-framing and refocusing of all my efforts to fulfill the purpose which the Creator has given me, has helped me to ask how do the choices and decisions I make affect myself, my family, my community, the larger community, and the community of all that is. For me the magic of the revival of traditional tattooing in today’s world is empowering Indigenous peoples to embody their Indigeneity (102-104).

This long quote tells the story of the recovery and healing I underwent during my time as an undergraduate student enrolled in the Indigenous Studies program at UBC Okanagan. All of this research and my work as an Indigenous tattoo artist has created a depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject of Indigenous tattooing. My graduate supervisor has suggested that this body of knowledge could be considered as an informal pilot study for my graduate project showing the viability and necessity of the topic and my ability to pursue it.

As I entered my graduate program in the 2013-2014 academic year, my supervisor encouraged me to take this time to make sure of the direction I was going to take, as I was going to be spending a lot of time on the subject. So, during the class Indigenous Methods and Tattooing, I was ‘wondering and wandering’ through the topics of interest that I could spend time researching. The topics I explored in this class included: Indigenous masculinities, Indigenous aesthetics, contemporary Indigenous artists, family history, re-writing history, Indigenous tattoos, tattoo narratives, research methodologies, Indigenous research methodologies, and Indigenous identities. After looking at all of these topics, I felt
the need to continue working on the subject of Indigenous tattooing, as I explored the subject in courses that ran concurrently with this one. As a final project in this class, I produced a ten-minute media essay which explores the journey I have taken you on in this essay and also demonstrated where my thinking was at regarding new explorations in Indigenous Tattooing:

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 3.5 Kaszas (Media Essay).**

In this class I also explored a whole new group of academics that have thought and written about tattoos: they could be categorized into three groups. The first group deals with academics concerned with Western tattooing, the second group with Indigenous tattooing, and the final group looks at Indigenous tattooing in the modern age as a modern phenomenon. The first group, who are looking at Western tattooing, I have split into two different categories: In the first we have Michael Atkinson and his book *Tattooed: The Sociogenesis of a Body Art*, Nick Crossley and the article *Mapping Reflexive Body Techniques: On Body Modification and Maintenance*, Margo DeMello’s book *Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community*, Mindy Fenske and *Tattoos in American Visual Culture*, Natasha Hanson’s masters thesis *The Contemporary Canadian Tattoo as Symbolic Adoption and Adaptation*, Victoria Pitts *Reading the Body through a Cultural Lens* and *In the Flesh: The Cultural Politics of Body Modification*, and finally Ryan Sims *Fleshing Out the Self: A Heuristic Study of Modern Tattooing*. This group of scholars
looks at tattooing in the West in much the same ways we have already seen, including as a postmodern form of anchoring identity; Atkinson and DeMello do an excellent job of outlining the history of tattooing in the Western tradition. Then Natasha Hanson looks at tattooing in Canada as does Atkinson. Both of these studies draw many of the same conclusions that we have already explored.

The second category of scholars deals with tattoos and how they relate to race, gender, culture, and embodiment in ways that have helped to shape the way I am looking at tattoos today. This group includes Kay Inckle and Writing on the Body: Thinking through Gendered Embodiment and Marked Flesh, Keri Jacqueline Brandt and the article The Skin we Live in: Explorations of Body Modification, Sexuality, and Citizenship, John Burton and Culture and the Human Body: An Anthropological Perspective, Jennifer Putzi and the book Identifying Marks: Race, Gender, and the Marked Body in Nineteenth-Century America, and finally Kathy Davis and Embodied Practices: Feminist Perspectives on the Body. As I was continuing to look, think, and investigate the phenomenon of Indigenous tattooing further, these scholars helped to clarify and solidify some of my hunches about the embodied knowledge that can be read or found in tattoos on Indigenous bodies, similar to female bodies which exist under the Western patriarchal systems of domination. Finally, I see how this group of authors specifically influenced my thinking about the reality of culture being inscribed in the flesh.

The third group of scholars I looked at in this class were concerned with Indigenous peoples tattoos. It contains, Anna Cole et al. and the book Tattoo: Bodies, Art, and Exchange in the Pacific and the West, John Barker and Anne Marie Tletjen and the article Women's Facial Tattooing among the Maisin of Oro Province, Papua New Guinea: The Changing
Significance of an Ancient Custom, Rhonda Dass and her dissertation Native American Symbols in Tattooing, Aaron Deter-Wolf and Carol Diaz-Granados and the book Drawing with Great Needles: Ancient Tattoo Traditions of North America, Therese Mangos and John Utanga and the article The Lost Connections: Tattoo Revival in the Cook Islands, Rachel Robinson’s thesis The Commodification of Polynesian Tattooing: Change, Persistence, and Reinvention of a Cultural Tradition and Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, et al. Mau Moko: The World of Māori Tattoo. This group of scholars has laid some fantastic groundwork by looking at Indigenous tattooing in the Pacific in a contemporary context and how embodied culture operates in the world today. I found John and Anne Marie's article and Rachel Robinson's thesis exciting because they outline the changes that have taken place in respect to facial tattoo among the Maisin in Papua New Guinea and Maori in New Zealand: they are excellent examples of showing how change and evolution in a culture does not lead to erasure, just change and adaption. The final works look at Indigenous Tattooing in North America in a historical sense and then how body arts play out in the lives of modern Indigenous peoples in a very general sense. The last two works look at modern tattoo revivals in New Zealand and the Cook Islands. I found their discussions to be very enlightening and inspiring as I move forward to look at revival here in North America.

The final group of works I looked at are connected to the analysis of Indigenous tattooing in the above section, but I feel they are looking at things in a slightly different way. This includes Susan Phillips and the article Gallo’s Body: Decoration and Damnation in the Life of a Chicano Gang Member and Xuan Santos’s article The Chicana Canvas: Doing Class, Gender, Race, and Sexuality through Tattooing in East Los Angeles. These two works deal with a modern reality that has connections to an ancestral past, but the tattoos are of a
very modern flavor. I was extremely interested in these two articles because at the time I was more concerned with modern Indigenous tattoos that aren't necessarily connected to a historic ancestral tradition. For example, the tattooing of words from an Indigenous language or tattooing of a status card number.

The next class that I was enrolled in where I explored Indigenous Tattooing was Creative Research Methods. A significant portion of this classes time was devoted to the writing of a SSHRC grant proposal, so because of this I will be exploring this class and my SSHRC proposal together. The title of my SSHRC proposal was “A Historical and Epistemological Journey Through the Embodied Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples Tattoos”. My thinking was centered around using Indigenous tattoos as a vehicle for unveiling the lived reality of Indigenous people’s lives and realities: including but not limited to the over-representation of Indigenous peoples in the criminal justice system, residential schools, and political resistance. The questions I was asking at this time included, what stories are Canadian tattooed Indigenous peoples telling with their tattoos? What embodied knowledge can we find when we analyze Indigenous tattooing? Do these tattoos tell of colonization and the struggle for freedom? How has the politicized and legislated identity of Indigenous Canadians been inscribed on our bodies?

At this time, I examined the large body of research that is devoted to theorizing tattooing in the West and the large body of knowledge found looking at Indigenous peoples and realizing that there was a small gap in the literature, which I was conscious of because of my work as a tattoo artist. The voices of modern Indigenous peoples who were getting tattooed independent from their cultural tattooing traditions with symbols that told stories about Indigenous realities. During this class, I looked at three new readings: The first being
the book by Clinton Sanders and D Angus Vail *Customizing the Body: The Art and Culture of Tattooing*, Debbie Jefkin-Elenevake, the article *Tribal Identity through Body Art: Extraordinary People Living in the Remnants of Time*, and Rawinia Higgins and He Tanga Ngutu, *He Tuhoetanga Te Mana Motuhake o Te Ta Moko Wahine: The Identity Politics of Moko Kauae*. The Sanders and Vail book looks at Western tattooing, and the other two helped point me to work being done on Indigenous tattooing outside of North America. This class made me focus on the literature I had surveyed in my journey up to this time and made me ask myself what can I add of value to this discussion of Indigenous tattooing. In my SSHRC proposal, I comment that:

Orality justifies the use of the creative methodologies of visual ethnography as I shape a documentary film around Indigenous peoples tattoo stories which not only tells their stories but also connects it to the broader historical, genocidal, colonial, imperialist program. Indigenous tattoo subject matter has the powerful capacity to teach and enlighten wide audiences about the experiences and perspectives of the oppressed. Tattoos serve history and oral history by reminding society about the slaughtered, destroyed and forever altered reality of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous lands (1). After writing this proposal, I began to feel a slight sense of unease about what I was proposing to do with the stories of others, how I was going to be manipulating them and shaping them as I crafted this documentary film. This unease was something I knew I needed to explore further as I continued in my coursework.

In this class, I not only prepared a SSHRC proposal but also took part in an exhibition that showcased a series of tattoo portraits, which I was exploring as one of my creative
research methods for dissemination alongside digital documentary film. These are two examples of the four photographs that I took for the class:

Figure 3.6 Kaszas (Wes)

Figure 3.7 Kaszas (Kristine)

In the class *Digital Film Making for Activists and Scholars*, as I was being trained how to use the video and audio equipment and editing software I would need to complete a documentary for my thesis project, I took the opportunity to do a mini documentary to
explore the viability of this idea. It was as I worked through this class that I once again felt
the uneasy feeling of narrating the stories of the people I interviewed, and it was in the
editing room that I decided that I had to just present their voices and not speak over them
with my idea of what they were saying. This is the teaser trailer, which I produced for the
longer film, both of which can be found on my YouTube channel:

![Teaser Trailer](image)

Figure 3.8 Kaszas (Teaser Trailer).

After completing this class project, I felt satisfied with the result but realized it still wasn’t
quite what I was looking for regarding representing the stories in my final thesis project. I
was encouraged to see that by asking Indigenous peoples about their tattoos, the stories about
their struggles against the legislated forces were beginning to emerge, and the stories about
residential schools were also coming forth: things that I had thought would appear did in this
small case study.

In a class, which spanned the whole 2013-2014 academic year, Community, Culture,
and Global Studies Pro-seminar, I went through a similar process to the previous one by
positioning myself in my research through an exploration of my undergraduate work, which
resulted in me contributing the story of my journey in the form of a peer-reviewed abstract,
utilized for the class e-publication, Analysis & Investigation of Graduate Research Projects:
Proseminar Series 2014. This quotation from that publication informs as to what my thinking
was while I worked through these other courses and how my thought process slightly shifted:

There are two overlapping groups of questions which my thesis and graduate work will be seeking answers too. Beginning with what is the relationship between Indigenous peoples, tattoos, and identity? This question will seek answers in two areas, the first being what historically has been the connection? Then what is the connection today in the lived experience of contemporary Indigenous peoples? The second group of questions will be seeking the connections between other visual symbolic systems and indigenous identities. The other things I will be looking at are basketry, face painting, pictographs and other material culture like clothing. My question is how do these visual forms speak to who we are? How are these connected to tattooing? How are our stories, traditional and contemporary connected to these visual symbolic systems? (Mitchell and Smith 13).

Through this series of questions, I sought to find a way to investigate Indigenous tattooing and identity without co-opting the voices of those whom I spoke with. Via this process, I was also working towards connecting some of the ideas I had encountered in my 2012 URA experience and in the material I was still processing from my Indigenous Study and Tattooing course.

The connection I was trying to make at this time was also related to the work I had started as a graduate research assistant to Dr. Jeannette Armstrong, who had just begun her Canada Research Chair in Okanagan Indigenous Philosophy. She had mentioned that she remembered reading about a study that connected Navajo weaving and Navajo identity, which intrigued me and was also connected to some of the work I had done previously with visual and material culture. It was in relationship to her work that I was looking at what I was
doing with tattoos and their relationship to identity. Initially this was concerned with Nlaka'pamux story but slightly shifted as I continued to think about tattooing and the visual language contained in it.

My uneasiness with my previous conception of what I was going to do with the Indigenous voices I would be collecting in my fieldwork interviewing Indigenous peoples with tattoos continued to grow as I began to think about tattoos in connection to four Indigenous lenses in the course *Indigeneity as Theory*. In the final paper for this class I say:

While engaged in exploration of tattoos…I will be using four Indigenous lenses to help formulate the research questions which will direct my project. First is the lens of resistance, secondly decolonization, then revitalization and finally reconciliation. It is these lenses that will help me to be firmly rooted and grounded in a project which honors the traditions and cultures of the peoples I will be working with.

The four lenses that I speak of in this paper and the ideas and issues that they brought forth for me—specifically doing a project which honors the traditions and cultures of my co-creators—continued to transform my project.

This course kept my heart and mind grounded in a project and a process that would be ethical and useful to those who come after me and to the communities I am involved in during this project. In this essay I also say:

It is from Dr. Jelena Porsanger that I realize my project must do more than create new knowledge it, ‘s expected to produce new knowledge, which our societies require and need for their developmental processes’ (52). My project must support the communities I am working with in a way that moves them forward (2).

The idea that my project has to do more than just qualify as research in the common
conception was firmly implanted in my thinking as I began to see my project shift and change. As I reread this paper, I can see how I was struggling to break out of the Western academic approach of just creating knowledge and of how my project filled a small gap in the academic literature, as I had surely found that hole. But filling that gap wasn't enough, neither was the way I had proposed to deal with other’s voices satisfactory.

The summer of 2014 found me in the course Indigenous Activist Art, in which I began to think about two distinct things. First, I began to ask the question: “How do I honor the oral nature of Indigenous cultures and peoples?” The question is copied from a note I wrote on a napkin when the insight came to me during my hour and a half drive home from class. This question came about in connection to an experience I had in one of my graduate classes in which a discussion about transcription arose. In that discussion I began to feel a sense of responsibility in my academic work to free the Indigenous voice from the colonial project of reducing speech to text. It also came about in connection to the quote mentioned above from my Indigeneity as theory essay. It was in the Indigenous Activist Art class that I began to consider the possibility of producing a document that contained hyperlinks to videos housed on an online forum such as YouTube.

In the final project for this course, I created a short media art project, which explored some of my early pop cultural influences related to tattooing. In the final essay which accompanied the media project, I said: "this piece is an autoethnographic media exploration of the movies, and music, videos which sparked some of my interest in tattoos I have had throughout my life.”

Here is the project in its entirety:
This media project did more than help me to explore media influences on my ideas about tattooing, for it also sparked a desire to explore tattooing not only in video and film but also in more artistic and expressive ways, which for me began to make sense considering its creative nature as an artistic form. It also sparked within me thoughts about how artistic and creative research methods could work to honor the knowledge keepers and co-creators I would be working with.

As I entered the 2014-2015 academic year, my project had gone through drafts, revisions, different visions, and various conceptions and, as a result, transformed into something entirely different. I was enrolled in one class, *Graduate Studio in Visual Arts*, to complete the coursework portion of my master's program. In this course, I continued to explore using the visual arts as a research methodology to honor those I would be interacting with in my continued research in Indigenous tattooing. As I thought back over the work I had done up to this point in tattooing, I was reminded of those voices that inspired me in my undergraduate program. I knew I had to use various methods to honor those voices as well as the voices of those whom I would be personally interviewing. With that in mind, I started to create what I would characterize as a visualization of my contextual review. The first two pieces in this series are of two of my Indigenous tattoo heroes. The first is Keone Nunes,
the piece contains a portrait of him alongside a quote taken from one of my papers that I had transcribed from an interview in the TV series *Tattoo Hunter*:

![Image](image-url)

Figure 3.10 Kaszas (Whispers)

The second piece honors Turumakina Dulay and features a portrait of him along with a poem that he penned talking about Moko for the Maori. It is a laser engraved wood panel:

![Image](image-url)

Figure 3.11 Kaszas (Treasures)
These two pieces bring more life, more honoring to the voices which challenged me, encouraged me, gave me courage, and made me realize this is a gift I can give back to my people and other Indigenous peoples who are working on the same types of projects in their communities. This is one way I can, as Shawn Wilson implores us to, “be true to yourself and put your own true voice in there, and those stories that speak to you. That is retaining your integrity; it’s honoring the lessons you’ve learned through saying that they have become a part of who you are” (123). I am honoring the voices that have guided me through the process of positioning myself in my thesis, for it is and was their stories that have become part of me.

During the *Graduate Studio in Visual Arts* class, I was encouraged to work on an application for the Aboriginal Graduate Fellowship from UBC Okanagan. On the application form, I was required to write a one-page description of my research project. This short paper was entitled *A Historical and Epistemological Journey into the Embodied Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples Tattoos*, the same title I had outlined for my SSHRC proposal, but this paper looked slightly different from that one. During the previous year, a new publication had been released: *Tattoo Traditions of Native North America: Ancient and Contemporary Expressions of Identity* by Lars Krutak; I am featured in this book as one of the Indigenous peoples working at reviving our tattooing traditions. This book was a catalyst for another slight shift my project has taken as I revisited all of the past work I have done related to tattooing and Indigenous tattooing more specifically. I began to see my position even more clearly, and I started to see what my contribution will be. I have outlined interesting questions and identified a gap in the academic literature between two bodies of literature that look at tattooing. I knew I must begin to speak truly from my position.
Lars’s book is an excellent resource, which collects together the stories of many Indigenous peoples, and it also collects many important historical documents and references into one volume. After reading this book, I realized many of the things I had been thinking about had been explored in this volume, and many haven’t, while the one thing this book and many of the other academic works I had looked at don’t do is speak from the Indigenous perspective. The other thing that I could see is that my experience with reviving my traditional ancestral tattooing practices has arisen from my passion for tattooing and through an academic context. What I have to contribute to this conversation is the story of my journey.

This contextual review has looked at the steps I have taken in my academic life, regarding my interaction with ideas, my work in collecting visual and material objects that reference Nlaka’pamux visual language. But it has not explored and outlined the steps I took that eventually lead to the revival of Nlaka’pamux tattooing. The telling of this story will give clues to others who are working at waking up their sleeping traditions.

The second influence that directed my decision to shift the direction of my research project was my exploration of Indigenous methodologies and the persistent and consistent insistence of Indigenous academics whom I looked at who pushed me to ensure my research was relevant, respectful, reciprocal, and mindful of my relationships. It was the voices of the Indigenous scholars who laid the groundwork for me in the academy that helped me to refocus on my position as the key to my project and begin to explore from this position. It is from my position as an Indigenous person embedded in a tattoo revival that my authentic voice emerges. In Margaret Kovach's book *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* the story of Jeannine Carriere is shared. In it Jeannine relates
how she kept asking herself, “Why are you searching for all these research topics? You should be doing this research on adoption. This is who you are, this is your story and this is what you should be contributing” (105). It is the knowledge that comes from skin stitching a Coast Salish basketry design on a young Coast Salish man, or from tattooing porcupine quill designs on an internationally exhibiting Mi’kmaq fine artist, or hand poke tattooing Interior Salish tattoo designs fashioned after the sketches of James Teit on a Secwepemc woman involved in environmental activism. It is when I realized what Kathy Absolon said that, “Other Indigenous scholars today also assert the legitimacy of beginning with our experiences and cultural orientations, which is seen as integral to the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge” (24). The knowledge that I have emerges from the actions I have taken that allow me the privilege of tattooing these people. This is where I must begin.

As I round out this exploration of my academic work and how it shaped the context for my master's research project, the final piece of work I went through that helped to form the way my project would look is my research proposal. In this proposal, I set forth the final questions I will be asking when I say, “With this in mind, I am asking the question: how is a sleeping tattoo tradition awakened? After being embedded in the revival of Interior and Coastal Salish tattooing traditions since the summer of 2012, I am confronted with the question of why I began this work of reviving my ancestral tattooing practices. What steps did I take? What and who inspired me and encouraged me? What knowledge and resources fueled this process? And what responsibilities do I have now that I have this knowledge? (3).” It is these questions that have arisen from my academic exploration of Indigenous tattooing; it is these questions that I have answered in this research assessment portfolio.
Chapter 4 Weaving Artwork

4.1 Chapter Overview

In this section, I will be exploring the artwork that has been created as part of this research project, first starting with the stencil work that I have undertaken that relates to text and ethnographic representations. The second body of work presented will be the large-scale oil paintings that I have created in honor of what I have termed in previous sections of this assessment portfolio: my mentors. These paintings also include the historical photographic works I have found in archives and other print formats. These artworks are a visualized contextual review as argued for in other parts of this research portfolio.

4.2 Ethnographic Stencil Artwork

After the completion of my proposal for my master's research in 2015, I set off with a desire to represent, in a visual form, my journey into the revival of the tattooing practices of my ancestors, the Nlaka'pamux. When I think back into the story of how I began this long journey, it was simply with the discovery that my ancestors had a long tattooing tradition. I have told this story many times, and it takes me back to 2006 sitting in a local tattoo parlor waiting to continue work on my right Maori-inspired sleeve. Sitting, waiting, listening to the buzzing of the machine, the anticipation of sitting down for another long session of needles piercing my skin at a rapid-fire pace as the machine hums along, I was shuffling through the reading material on the waiting room table. As I shuffled through all the assorted magazines, I picked up a small pamphlet entitled Tattooing Face and Body Painting of the Thompson Indians. This booklet is an extensive outlining of the tattoo tradition of my ancestors written by the ethnographer James Teit in the early 1900's; it was this small pamphlet that I happened upon in a contemporary tattoo shop that planted the seed for my revival journey.
As I began to research the history of Indigenous Tattooing in North America by reading through the many books, papers, and pamphlets, I began to notice a similar type of ethnographic depiction of our tattooing practices involving simple lifeless sketches that place designs on Indigenous bodies. Although I am grateful and understand the importance and value of this genre of ethnographic work for the revival of many sleeping Indigenous tattooing traditions the world over, I still felt a sense of sadness at the lifelessness of these drawings. I decided that I needed to bring these invaluable records of Indigenous tattooing practices out of the pages of old ethnographic booklets and out into the world in a fresh and new way, thus bringing new life to these important references.
I also began to think of my experience of jubilation at finding that small booklet and began to consider the question of dissemination of research results through conventional means. I also continued to reconsider my experience of reading what is typically called a "literature review" which is just as it sounds -- an exploration of the things that have been written on a given topic. With that in mind, I began to create small 8" x 10" spray paint stencil pieces using the references from my review of the literature related to Indigenous Tattooing in North America. The use of the bright colors in these pieces brings life to the otherwise flat graphic nature of this style of depiction. This style lends itself to the process of stencil making, where one cuts out shapes on a larger piece of paper or plastic using a sharp knife like an x-acto knife to make a stencil, which then can be sprayed with aerosolized paint.

Figure 4.3 Kaszas (Inuit Lilooet Sinkone)

These small spray paint stencil pieces on wood panel seek to highlight the many references that can be found and used for the revival of Indigenous tattooing and to possibly give the spark of inspiration to someone else who is not aware that their ancestors have a sleeping tattoo tradition. I also realize that by laying out all of these various tattoo references,
we can begin to see the wide variety of motifs and designs and also the reality of the ubiquitous nature of tattooing across Turtle Island.

Figure 4.4 Kaszas (Okanagan Lilooet Chowchilla Miwok)

I consider these small pieces to be a portion of my "literature review" or, as I characterized it in my research proposal, my "Indigenous Contextual Review." I would characterize these as a "Visualised Contextual Review," and what I mean by this is that these are evidence of my engagement with the literature that contains these images. They are not only proof of this engagement but also an important creative/artistic research method or tool that turns the traditional literature review into something that is useful and beneficial for the communities whose tattooing traditions I have been privileged to learn about through my readings and research. In this way, I am not the only one to gain benefit from my work but have a way to share what I have learned with those for whom it will be of use, too.

Figure 4.5 Kaszas (Inuit-South Baffin Inuit-Chowchilla Miwok)
When I consider the conventional literature review contained in the vast majority of theses and dissertations, I instantly begin to yawn. This traditional academic practice is a dry arduous task for the researcher and the reader of academic papers, often limiting the review’s usefulness for nonacademic communities. I do not deny the importance of the exercise of a literature review in researching what has already been written about and researched on a given topic and, therefore, finding the space which the researcher’s work fills. But I always have to ask myself as an Indigenous researcher and scholar: how does my work move forward the lives of those who engage in my research and writing, how does what I am doing benefit those who do not read academic papers, how does my work indeed reach out into the world and do the work of dissemination? For as I see it, if our work does nothing more than get us degrees and good jobs, and the research we undertook sits in a digital archive contained in a document that is inaccessible, then we are doing nothing more as Indigenous academics than the colonial and settler academics who came before us and who appropriated the knowledge of our ancestors. In using creative and artistic research methods or tools, I am seeking a way forward for Indigenous research. My intention is that it spread my research and work far out into the world so that as many people as possible can be impacted by it.

Figure 4.6 Kaszas (Yuki-Nkaka'pamux-Nlaka'pamux)
The use of gold, silver or copper paint when depicting the tattoos portrayed on the various figures in this series of works, for me reflects back on a lesson I learned back in 2011 in the paper *Excavating Cultural Treasure: Indigenous Tattooing in the Northwest of North America* written for the class *INDG203: Indigenous Historical Perspectives*. In this article, I wrote that:

At the end of the article by Nikora I find a call to my heart for my journey into the reclaiming of the tattooing of my homeland, it is said, “Moko is about reclaiming a lost toango (treasure)-a part of us that was taken away through the process of colonization, almost to extinction. It’s my external way in showing that I’m proud to be Maori (Aneta) (488). This project is just the beginning of digging up the treasure that has been buried by colonization in North America (5).

These pieces represent the treasure that our tattoos and tattooing traditions truly are. My friend and colleague Nahaan says our "tattoos are permanent regalia."

![Figure 4.7 Kaszas (Lillooet-Okanagan-Kitlinermuit Inuit-Tattoos)](image)

As part of my research into Indigenous tattoo revival, I had the honor of interviewing, among others, Elle Festin of the Four Waves Tribe. In his interview, he recounts the story of
his friends and co-founders of the Four Waves after being tattooed with marks from their ancestors, and he says "Just seeing…them looking in the mirror and going “dang” like they could see themselves, their reflection already, their real selves, you know the mana, the ancestors, they could see themselves being the ancestors."

4.3 Quotes, Laser Engraving Ethnographic/Stencil/Quotes

My research into Indigenous tattoo revival is not only concerned with bringing new life to old historical, ethnographic representations of our ancestral tattoos and peoples. It also seeks to move Indigenous research results from within the confines of academic intuitions and mechanisms like academic journals etc. and out into the world. I am trying to work in such a way as to lift up and move others forward in their lives and efforts. This includes such activities as leaving Indigenous footprints in the academy and broadening the types of materials that are included in the literature review to represent the diverse sources available to me and others in the technologically saturated society that I live and operate in. In the following series we will be exploring, I continue working towards a visual representation of my research journey; this series adds a little bit of a different twist in comparison with the series that have come before it. In this series, I share some of the quotes and comments that have inspired me and taught me lessons on the road to revival.
This series of various artworks seeks to honor the voices of those who have inspired and taught me through their words and actions as previously recorded in my contextual review. I refer to many of these people as my mentors, not because I have spent a significant amount of time with them or because we have a measurable relationship, but because their words, actions, and being have influenced me and my work to revive my ancestral traditions.
Many of these voices are the ones that have stuck with me and which I share with others as a way of explaining why Indigenous tattooing is so important. Since I first encountered many of the people I am quoting in these works, I have formed a relationship with them.

I am trying to honor these teachers and mentors from my journey by presenting their voices and their teachings in a way that gives them the opportunity to inspire others on their revival journeys. The reason I share these stories, these sayings, these gems and nuggets of knowledge is so those who need to hear their message will be able to more quickly receive it.
4.4 **Stencil Artwork on Text**

The next series of work that I will explore with you in this chapter is related to the first set we explored but has a slight additional twist. These pieces are related in that they use the ethnographic tradition of representing Indigenous tattoos sketched onto graphic line drawings as the basis for spray paint stencils. The main reason I am using these basic line drawings of Indigenous tattooed persons is to bring new life to these historic representations in the hopes of enlightening and inspiring those Indigenous peoples who have a tattooing tradition but are unaware of the fact that they even have such a tradition. The gold, silver, and copper are used as a way of illustrating the way I see our tattoos as treasures, valuable treasures from our ancestors and our cultures. The use of these elements is a continuation of the stencil work described in section 4.2.
This series continues to tell the story of my discovery of my ancestral tattooing tradition by sharing with the viewer a few pages from that original booklet by James Teit, "Tattooing Face and Body Painting of the Thompson Indians," thus sharing some of the knowledge contained on these pages and seeking to pique your interest in the hopes that you will explore further. In a similar way, this series demonstrates a new way forward in the dissemination of Indigenous research and scholarship, and seeks to answer that same question: How do we make our work accessible and move forward those we are learning from, for, and about? In the book *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, Margaret Kovach further clarifies for me that, “knowledge is that which helps people move forward in their lives” (72).
This series is a continuation of my "Visualized Contextual Review." Here I continue to share the literature with the viewer but in a far more literal fashion, sharing pages from the actual books, pamphlets, and articles I have explored. However, a slight development in this series begins to make evident the way in which I have chosen to include my past thinking, writing and theorizing on Indigenous tattooing starting with my first paper from 2011, which was mentioned in the previous section, written for the class *Indigenous Historical Perspectives* and moving through my research proposal, BREB process and to some portions of my final thesis document. This reflects my insistence in my research proposal (which is a document that outlines the proposed steps of a graduate research project) that I must take:
To heart Kathy Absolon's urging: "It is important for us to be as specific as we can about our methodologies so that others who are traveling academic corridors and searching in the methodological maze may see Indigenous landmarks and not get lost. We need to leave our footprints as clearly as we can. We need to articulate and share as much as we can about how we went about searching for the knowledge we gather."… The tracks she has left, and the tracks left by others have helped me. I must leave my own tracks to fulfill my responsibilities and practice reciprocity (11).

With this in mind, I decided to share portions of my research journey: things I have written in the past and the development of my ideas and some of the challenges I pondered as I wandered the halls of the academe in this series of artworks.

Figure 4.15 Kaszas (Teit Body Tattoo Stencil)
I continue to seek a way to bring my academic work from within the confines of university walls out into the community. The creation of artworks that include the development of my thinking, theorizing, and writing since I first engaged with this topic academically in 2011 helps to create a fuller understanding of the context from which this project has developed.

4.5 Large Paintings

The final body of work we will be exploring together is a body of work that contains three separate but related sets of large-scale oil paintings. These paintings follow the ground, which we have already covered in the previous bodies of work about my creative and artistic research methodologies. Like the previous bodies of work we have explored, this series of paintings seeks to honor those who have inspired me, while it also aims to honor the ancestors who have carried our tattoo marks in the centuries before us.

Figure 4.16 Kaszas (Cradled in Culture: Yaari)

The first two sets of paintings in this body of work seek to honor two interrelated groups of tattooed individuals, which have influenced or inspired me as I journey along the path of
reviving my ancestral tattooing tradition. It also seeks to represent Indigenous tattoos as a symbolic visual language. In the case of the Maori and Iroquois, examples exist where leaders used a drawing of their tattoos in place of a signature on legal documents, which speaks to the reality that historically tattoos said something specific about that individual's identity. I have chosen to model the figures in a realistic fashion giving them volume and substance and then painting their tattoos in a graphic way, which flattens and contrasts the realistic modeling. In doing so, I am seeking to allow both the wearer of the tattoos a presence while also allowing the tattoos themselves to have their presence. The tattoos seem connected to the wearer, but at the same time disconnected; this interplay allows for both the tattoo wearer and the tattoos to exist individually.

Figure 4.17 Kaszas (Tattoos from the Land: Tihoti)
These two interrelated groups are historical figures captured in photographs and contemporary people who have somehow influenced me. The historical figures are painted in blue. Blue for my ancestors was used to represent the sky or the upper world. As I paint the historical tattooed figures captured in long forgotten photographs—in many cases locked away in old cardboard boxes on shelves in institutional archives—I hope to reveal them to a new generation. With each layer of pigment smeared on canvas or wood, I seek to bring new life to long passed ancestors who carried the marks of our peoples. I seek to open the eyes of others who do not know of their ancestral tattooing tradition by re-representing their ancestors and their ancestral tattooing tradition in a fresh and new way.

Figure 4.18 Kaszas (David Yelthmow Haida Thuderbird)
It is red that I use to acknowledge the many people who have influenced, inspired, and mentored me through their words, actions, and being. Traditionally for Nlaka'pamux, red can be utilized as a way of expressing a sense of life, existence, heat, and a new day. Some might say red represents goodness in a general sense and a color that communicates friendship. As I began this red series, I was subconsciously thinking about the identity politics around skin tone and its connection to authenticity. This set was originally only going to include the tattooed Indigenous peoples who inspired me. As I painted, the sense of red as a marker of racialized Indigenous identity came to my consciousness, and I began to think even deeper. I soon realized it was not only Indigenous peoples who I needed to honor but also non-Indigenous peoples. It was at this point I had to question whether I had to add another color to account for the non-Indigenous people who have helped in my journey. I finally concluded that I wanted to paint everyone red to make the argument that it doesn't matter what your skin color is, it matters what contribution you are making to this world, and if that contribution leaves this world a better place for the future generations, then you are worthy of being honored.

Figure 4.19  Kaszas (Holding onto Sacred Knowledge: Colin Dale)
Figure 4.20  Kaszas (Seeing the Ancestors: Elle Festin)

Figure 4.21  Kaszas (Permanent Regalia: Nahaan)
The third set of paintings in this series are painted in purple, which depicts the historical photographs I have come across that share the tattooing traditions of Indigenous peoples from across the world. I use purple as it is the color which is created if we mix blue and red together, this color is appropriate because it is the tattooing tradition itself which connects and binds the historic figure with the contemporary figures. The tattooing traditions are important to acknowledge as something independent but attached to each of these groups of individuals.
Every canvas in this series is thirty-six inches by forty-eight inches or larger; this size speaks to the great influence or importance of each to my journey.

Figure 4.24  Kaszas (Whispers of the Ancestors: Keone Nunes)

Figure 4.25  Kaszas (Female Maori)
The slow drying nature of oil paint allows me time to sculpt the character of each person. The limited monochromatic palette was inspired by a desire to include earth pigments collected from the land. I have begun adding such pigments to this series as they have been received, processed, ground, and mixed by my hand.

Figure 4.26  Kaszás (Holding Hands Across Time: L. Frank)

Figure 4.27  Kaszás (Looking Towards the Future: Alethea)
Figure 4.28  Kaszas (Historic Yupik Tattoos)

Figure 4.29  Kaszas (Atayal Face Tattoo Taiwan)
Figure 4.30 Kaszas (Historic Basadung Li Tattoos)

Figure 4.31 Kaszas (Learning the Basics: Carla)
Figure 4.32  Kaszas (Historic Papua New Guinea Tattoo)
Chapter 5 Weaving a New World/Building Indigenous Roads: A Multitude of Voices

5.1 Introduction

As I have moved through this research project, the one question that persistently has re-surfaced as the most important one is, “What responsibilities do I have now that I have this knowledge?” The way I have constructed this entire document and project has been my answer to this question, but this chapter is most directly focused on this question. This section will contain many of the lessons I learned and the steps I took as I traveled along the journey of tattoo revival. It will share with you the stories and teachings of the four Indigenous tattoo artists I interviewed as part of this project. And it will also briefly explore a project that I headed as instructor and facilitator. This project, the Earth Line Tattoo Training Residency, taught four Indigenous artists how to skin stitch and hand poke tattoo. As a continued answer to the question, “What responsibilities do I have now that I have this knowledge?,” I will be sharing some of the key lessons and expertise I shared with the participants in the tattoo school.

5.2 Earth Line Tattoo Training Residency

In the summer of 2016, I taught an Indigenous tattooing school from June 20th to July 15th, in conjunction with and with support from the 2016 Indigenous Summer Intensive through the Department of Creative Studies in the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. This project was also supported by Aboriginal Arts at the Canada Council of the Arts and the University of British Columbia's Equity and Enhancement Fund. This project hosted four Indigenous fine artists in a residency style training program that has resulted in them being, “qualified professional cultural practitioners that are trained in design application, cultural and spiritual safety, and the health aspects of
tattooing” (Kaszas, Earth Line). At the end of this training, all four of the participants Jordan Bennet, Amy Malbeuf, Jeneen Frei Njootli and Dean Hunt, began the revival of their ancestral tattooing traditions.

In this chapter, I will be sharing my personal journey, the journey of my friends and colleagues and also share some of the valuable knowledge I passed on to the artists at the Earth Line Tattoo Training Residency. As I move through these various capacities, I will be switching between speaking as a teacher instructing to those wishing to begin the revival of their ancestral tattooing traditions and a storyteller/researcher, as I continue to share the story of Indigenous tattoo revival.

5.3  Weaving My Story of Revival

5.3.1  Discovery

For me, the beginning of my work in the revival of my ancestral tattooing tradition came with my discovery of the ethnographic work of James Teit on Nlaka'apmux tattooing. This I would say is the first step on the road to revival. In my case, the discovery of my ancestral tradition came by happenstance with the finding of a written document at a tattoo parlor while waiting to be tattooed.

5.3.2  Inspiration

The second step along my path to revival was exposure to those who have gone before me and by being inspired by the words and actions of those who have done this work in other parts of the world. This step happened in many ways over the course of many years beginning when I absorbed the teachings of people like Keone Nunes who appeared on such TV programs as Miami Ink or in documentary films, which I later revisited in other steps along this journey and can be found in my contextual review. Further inspiration came from and was fed by the next important step on the road to revival.
5.3.3 Research

My research process has been described in my contextual review with the many classes that I took as an undergraduate student, but in this chapter, I will add a more detailed description of the places that I looked for information. Of upmost importance hunting down and finding out who wrote the pamphlet on my ancestors Indigenous tattooing practices that I had encountered many years previously because, unfortunately, at the time, I had not thought to write down its title or the name of the author. The title of that work is *Tattooing Face and Body Painting of the Thompson Indians* by James Teit. I tracked this book down by going through a keyword search which included the many different names used for my nation and the word tattoo. Searching out what was written about one’s people’s tattooing practices is a significant step for anyone looking to revive their ancestral tattooing tradition, and it begins with looking for the names of the people who have written, researched, collected, and interacted with our nations.

The first group of people who I looked to in my research included the first "explorers" who traveled through our territory. Many times, these explorers kept notes in journals, and in some cases, information about our tattooing traditions can be found in their letters to friends, family, or colleagues. The next group of people whose writings needed to be searched for possible information on my people’s tattooing practices were 19th century fur traders, as many of these folk kept notes and wrote in journals. This type of material is, in many cases, relatively unexplored with regard to tattooing and may contain vast amounts of knowledge about a large number of topics above and beyond tattooing. The next group of people who may have written about our tattooing traditions is the first missionaries who came to convert us to Christianity. Many times, descriptions of tattooing would have been recorded and reported back to the headquarters of whatever denomination the missionaries
came from. The final group of people who may have written about the ancestral tattooing
traditions of our peoples would be those who came to study us and acquire artifacts for
museums and private collections. This group includes archaeologists, anthropologists, and
surveyors. When looking at these people remember to not only look at what they have
published but also unpublished material such as letters, field notes, collection and acquisition
notes, journals and diaries. A key thing to remember is to look to all the places these folks
sent things, for example, in the late 19th century and early 20th century, James Teit delivered
our material culture to numerous museums, and his field notes are held in many places.

This brings me to the next place that I looked for any documentation on my nation’s
tattooing practices: museums and, more specifically, archives. I spent a whole summer
examining archival collections and continue exploring them whenever I get a chance. My
goal was to see if there was a document, a photograph, or any little bit of information that
hadn't been discovered by other researchers. One of the amazing things today is that many
museums, archives, and institutions have collections digitized and available online and more
material is continually being uploaded. Although on-line archives are a great place to start,
some gems may be waiting to be discovered in local museum and archive collections, as well
as among the material not available on-line, which is in larger, established, and prestigious
museum archives. I initially examined big on-line collections such as those of the Canadian
Museum of History and then moved to smaller collections like the Nicola Museum and
Archive.

When looking for information about my nation, one thing I deliberately did was
extend my search to include the nations that surrounded mine, so for me, it included the
Syilx, Secwepemc and St'at'imc. I got this idea from reading the Teit booklet on Thompson
tattooing where he remarks that the tattoos closely resembled the tattoos of the Shuswap and other surrounding nations (405). If there is very little documentation concerning your nation’s particular tattooing tradition, you may be able to get closer to it by looking to those nations you are intimately related to and have shared traditions with. I was lucky to have the James Teit book and know that it has been invaluable to those in surrounding nations, as they have been using its contents in their revival efforts.

One important lesson I learned very quickly as I began to look through the full cannon of literature related to my ancestors was that each writer had a different way of naming us. For example, I stopped counting the ways we were referred to around twenty distinct and separate words used to describe us as well as various spellings. The reason this is important when doing your research is that when you do your keyword research looking for your traditions in databases, it is essential to use each name and spelling that you are aware of so as to be sure you are not missing any references to your peoples.

One crucial place to look for knowledge related to your people’s tattooing tradition is from your elders and knowledge keepers: in fact, I would say that this is the most important place to look, but it might be wise to have a firm foundation of knowledge on what has been written so that you have something to contribute and know what is new, contradictory, or confirms what is already known. Because my work into the revival of my ancestral tradition began in the academic institution, I have taken all of the steps above, and talking to elders and knowledge keepers is one of the final steps I will be taking in the future as I move from this research project and further out into my community.

From the beginning, my research extended beyond the knowledge of my ancestral tattooing tradition out into gaining awareness of the entire visual and material culture of my
people. This decision to look outside the narrow confines of tattooing came from Teit’s book where he mentions tattoo’s close affinity to our baskets, pictographs, etc. (416). I feel that examining any possibly related material is necessary when researching your ancestral tattooing traditions, considering that each of our nations had a common symbolic language that communicated across mediums, so, in my opinion, just looking at tattooing and not extending research to a variety of mediums limits our work. One of the drawbacks or limitations of the academic study of our nations is the separation of our visual and material culture into compartments that focus only on a particular area, like, basketry, pictographs, clothing, tattoos, etc. For those of us involved in the revival of our artistic traditions, we need to reconnect our symbolic visual language and use the whole cannon of our visual culture as the inspiration and storehouse for our tattoo traditions.

I have found inspiration for my designs and motifs while looking at basketry, clothing, pictographs, petroglyphs, carvings, other material cultural objects, historic photographs, and tattoo references. One of the key sources of inspiration for me has been and continues to be spending time on the land looking for and recording our pictographs. For me, it is important to reconnect to these places, for many reasons, foremost to see the places that are important to our people and to reconnect to the earth. To walk on the land that contains the remains and legacies of our ancestors grounds me and us in our work.

5.3.4 Knowledge Related to Tattooing

I am extremely fortunate to have had professional training in the practice of tattooing. My training in this regard was through a tattoo apprenticeship at a professional tattoo studio, Vertigo Tattoos and Body Piercing in Salmon Arm, British Columbia, Canada. The proper and adequate training of cultural tattoo practitioners is one of the most critical steps in the revival of our tattooing traditions. This step is, first and foremost, related to the health aspects
of tattooing. The work of tattoo revival in general is about building up communities and nations. If one does not have the knowledge to protect one’s nation and community from bloodborne pathogens like hepatitis, HIV, and infections like MRSA, then one could potentially be doing more harm than good. We need to build our people up, not tear them down by spreading harmful pathogens.

I believe the function of the thesis needs to be lived and enacted. My knowledge related to tattooing is to be shared with not only the academic and scholarly community, but also with the reader aspiring to take up tattooing as a cultural practice. Here, I am speaking directly to you. Your work as a cultural tattoo practitioner goes further than your ability to apply a tattoo in a competent manner: It begins with your knowledge of the health aspects of tattooing. It continues with a willingness to become a competent knowledge keeper and seeker associated with the visual and material culture of your ancestors.

There are many differences related to the work of a cultural tattoo practitioner from that of a professional tattoo artist working in a professional studio. The first difference is the reality of your work will most commonly be done outside of the professionally controlled environment of a tattoo studio. Some of the situations I have been invited to participate in include, but are not limited to, the opening of an art exhibition, part of a cultural festival, tattooing in community members’ homes, and as part of tattoo conventions. Each of these situations has its challenges, but the solution to each problem is the same: your diligence in your responsibility to make sure everyone is safe and will remain healthy even after you have left the tattooing situation. As cultural tattoo practitioners, we need to take extra precautions and have a command of the physical environment so as to eliminate the chance of cross-contamination and the transmission of any diseases.
One fundamental principle to keep in mind is to assume everyone including you has some communicable disease. This, hopefully, will assist you in remembering to take every possible precaution for the successful completion of every tattoo. Furthermore, two principles that any person involved in any tattooing must be keenly aware of are bloodborne pathogens and cross-contamination.

5.3.4.1 Bloodborne Pathogens Definition

Bloodborne pathogens include any and all disease-producing microbes that are present in bodily fluids including blood, semen, saliva, tears, etc. The main ones associated with tattooing that will be touched on in this chapter are Hepatitis B Virus (HBV), Hepatitis C Virus (HCV), Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and Acquired Immunodeficiency Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). One further concern for cultural tattoo practitioners that will be covered is Community-Acquired Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus (CA-MRSA). This section has been adapted from the book Infection Control: Canada by Kris LaChance and David Vidra first as a teaching tool for the Earth Line Tattoo Training Residency and now included in my research assessment portfolio.

5.3.4.2 Modes of Transmission

Some of the ways that a human being can contract a bloodborne pathogen are through the contact of infected blood or other potential infectious material (OPIM) with the nose, eyes, and mouth or with non-intact skin. Acne, cuts, burns, new tattoos or piercings, and hangnails are some examples of non-intact skin that may be a gateway for the transmission of a bloodborne pathogen. These life-altering diseases may also be transmitted by receiving an accidental needle stick or puncture injury from contaminated sharps, such as needles. One could also transmit a bloodborne pathogen through the handling of a contaminated object or surface; this is commonly known as cross-contamination. One final mode of transmission
that is not often thought of is splash back, aerosolization or spray back of a contaminated liquid.

5.3.4.3 Most Common Bloodborne Pathogens

Hepatitis simply means inflammation of the liver, and can be either acute or chronic. Acute means immediate and short term usually lasting between four to eight weeks, and chronic means prolonged and long term.

**Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)** causes a contagious liver disease that can be transmitted through blood transfusions, sexual contact, and contaminated needles. HBV is present in blood, saliva, and semen.

One important thing to be aware of when thinking about Hepatitis B Virus is that it can live for up to a week in dried blood that is on a surface or contaminated sharps (needle, razor, or any object that has broken skin). This is one reason needles that are used for tattooing are one use only, and another reason cultural tattoo practitioners need to be vigilant when entering someone’s private home to help in the revival of this ancient cultural practice. It is unacceptable to be practicing as a cultural tattoo practitioner and putting our communities at risk.

One way to protect yourself as a person who is perpetually in a position to be exposed to this virus is to get vaccinated for hepatitis B. Please see your doctor and get vaccinated as soon as possible.

**Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)** is transmitted primarily through percutaneous exposure to infected blood, including IV drug use, accidental needle sticks, and occasionally through sexual contact and the sharing of personal items contaminated with infected blood.

**Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** attacks, impairs, and kills the cells of the immune system, which in turn destroys the human body's ability to fight off infections and some
cancers. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is believed to be caused by the contraction of HIV and is seen to be the most advanced stages of HIV infection. The most common way to transmit HIV is through sexual contact, and it has been found in blood, semen, vaginal fluid, saliva, tears, nervous tissue, and breast milk. Of all of these, the only ones proven to transmit the virus are blood, semen, vaginal secretions, and breast milk.

**Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)** is a bacterium that is commonly found on the skin and in the nostrils of healthy people and is very resistant to treatment because of the overuse of antibiotics. While on the skin or in the nose MRSA is harmless. It is not until it enters the body through non-intact skin that it causes problems. It can be as mild as a pimple or as severe as a blood infection. MRSA is another example of why we have to be concerned with cross-contamination because MRSA can live on contaminated surfaces and your skin.

With this knowledge, I hope you have begun to see why it is so essential for cultural tattoo practitioners to take the proper precautions to reduce spreading these dangerous diseases throughout our family and community circles.

I would further argue that it is your obligation to not only protect everyone you can from contracting a bloodborne pathogen but also your responsibility to educate people in the community about these diseases and their connection to tattooing.

### 5.3.4.4 Prevention and Exposure Reduction

The preventative measures that we are responsible for taking include the proper disposal of contaminated sharps, hand washing, and the wearing of gloves and other personal protective equipment.

Hand washing is one of the keys to the prevention of the spread of infection; it should be performed before the putting on gloves and after your gloves are removed or in the event
of a tear or hole in the gloves during the tattooing set up, tear down, or tattooing procedure.

An acceptable but not suggested alternative to hand washing is the use of antiseptic
towelettes or antiseptic hand cleaners that are used with clean paper towel. Antimicrobial
soaps are essential to the proper washing of hands as a cultural tattoo practitioner.

All needles that have punctured the skin are considered contaminated and must be
properly disposed of in a sharps container and when that container is full, it must be taken to
either a pharmacy or a health care facility such as a hospital to be disposed of.

**Needles are one use only!**

Accidental needle sticks or pokes can transmit the above-mentioned blood-borne pathogens
and other diseases such as syphilis, herpes, and malaria, among many others.

After hand washing, the use of gloves provides the next level of safety for the tattoo
practitioner and client, and gloves must be worn in every case that contact with a client is
anticipated. One thing to be conscious of when it comes to gloves is the reality of latex
sensitivity and allergic contact dermatitis associated with the use of gloves. The
recommended glove is a nitrile glove, and it is suggested to stay clear of latex gloves.

Work surfaces and any surface, which may have possibly come into contact with
blood or other bodily fluids, must be disinfected as soon as possible after the completion of
the tattoo procedure. This must be done with an EPA-registered hospital level Tuberculocidal
disinfectant.

The use of barriers and protective coverings (bags and drapes) are expected protocols
for every tattoo procedure performed by a cultural tattoo practitioner. This includes the
bagging of all bottles including green soap and sterile water bottles, the use of a workstation
surface barrier and a barrier to protect the bed or arm rest on which the body surface is resting.

This short lesson related to the procedures related to tattooing is not a do it yourself guide, however it outlines the minimum standards that each and every cultural tattoo practitioner needs to understand and follow. It is your responsibility to ensure you are properly trained, and the basic information provided here is not a substitute for that training.

5.3.4.5 **Work Area Set-up and Tear-down**

As a cultural tattoo practitioner, you will likely be tattooing in a variety of locations and the set up of your work area is essential to your mandate to uplift and enhance all you are working with, including those being tattooed, those observing, and those who will enter the former tattooing space once your work is complete. To help in the maintenance of your work area set up, the use of a zone system is essential. The zone system consists of three zones: the cold, warm, and hot zone. For this discussion, the tattoo procedure is defined as once the client's skin has been broken. The cold zone is the area that contains all of your sterile equipment and is not to be touched once the tattoo procedure has been started unless you remove contaminated gloves, wash your hands and then put on new gloves. The warm zone is the area that can be touched once the tattoo process has begun but only with clean gloves, meaning gloves that have not touched anything in the hot zone. The hot zone is the area that contains equipment that has touched or had the potential to have come into contact with blood or bodily fluids.

The following is a rundown of the set-up and tear down procedure that I have taught my students at the Earth Line Tattooing Training Residency. I am providing it here as a refresher for those who need to be reminded and as an essential starting point for those learning. This section includes a step-by-step breakdown of the setting up of your tattooing
area and a similar checklist of your tear down procedure. These lists have been adapted from checklists developed as teaching aids at Vertigo Tattoos and Body Piercing.

**Set-up Procedure:**

1. Wash hands
2. Glove hands
3. Clean and disinfect area that will be used for tattooing by spraying down with Cavi-Cide and wiping
4. Change gloves
5. Set a drape on surface
6. Cut paper towel
7. Get out a second drape to be placed under the tattooed body part
8. Grab wash bottles and bag them
9. Get out all the needles that you anticipate will be needed
10. Double check the sterilization pouches to make sure that they have been processed correctly and not punctured
11. Put a popsicle stick full of Vaseline on table
12. Set up ink caps needed for the tattoo, use a little of the Vaseline to make the ink caps stick to the drape
13. Fill all ink caps that you think will be required during the tattoo procedure, at no time should an ink bottle be in the hot or warm zone except when ink is being poured
14. Fill a rinse cup if needed
15. Grab a razor if needed
16. Check needles with eyelet to make sure they are not damaged in any way
17. Take 3-4 pieces of cut paper towel and wrap them around the needle bar and tape 
   them in place or if skin-stitching move to step 18
18. Get out needle and thread which will be used for skin stitch tattoo
19. Place prepared needles on work area drape
20. Once your set up is complete, everything except ink caps, tattoo needles, wash 
   bottles, paper towels, popsicle stick and vaseline are placed outside of the hot zone  
   into either the warm or cold zone  
Note: If at any time you touch anything that is not part of your set up, change your 
gloves.

**Tear-down Procedure:**

1. Wash hands
2. Glove hands
3. Dispose of all sharps including needles and razor into sharps container
4. Remove bags from wash bottles and throw away. When cleaning up your  
   workstation, I always teach that your dominant hand is the hand that you touch  
   everything that is contaminated with, which never touches anything that is clean and  
   your non-dominant hand is the hand you can touch anything in your set-up that is  
   clean.
5. Clean the wash bottle with Cavi-Cide and put away  
6. Throw the rest of the set up into the garbage
7. Change Gloves  
8. Spray down and wipe work surface and table or chair with Cavi-Cide  
9. Take off gloves
10. Wash Hands

Notes: Never touch anything else with contaminated gloves other than what is in the hot zone/contaminated area. Always wash your hands when stopping and starting this procedure.

This brief rundown of proper setup and tear down procedures is not a substitute for training related to tattooing.

5.4 **Methods of Tattooing**

One of the things you should already be familiar with from your research you have been doing is the methods your ancestors used for tattooing. This for me is an essential part of the revival equation, although I do not deny the benefit of the revival of our designs and motifs when applied using modern tattoo machines. There are critical lessons that come from the utilization of the methods our ancestors used. My people practiced both skin stitch and hand poke techniques, the needles were made from sharpened bone, thistles, thorns or small bones of fish or birds. And our ink was made of either pot black or devils club roots that were processed carefully. The thread for stitching was from sinew and taken from the spine of a deer. The revival of traditional tattooing practices can support and strengthen the restoration or use of traditional ecological knowledge related to plants and medicine applications and can also promote knowledge related to Indigenous diet and food harvesting.

When I think about the use of traditional tools, the first person I think of is Keone Nunes and his comments about why he uses the traditional tapping tools from Hawaii.
The second clip that speaks specifically to those who wish to be involved in the revival of their ancestral tattooing or are already involved is also by Keone.

The teachings of Keone and others have been essential to my journey, and I am sharing their lessons with you so you can be enhanced and strengthened in your journey. Once you are familiar with the methods that your ancestors used, it is important to learn how to use these
tools from someone who knows how to use them properly. When considering the inks that our ancestors used it is essential that we consider the potential harms that come with processing inks in a non-sterile environment, like MRSA and other infections. I personally use professional inks, and will one day do some experimentation with inks, but in a strictly controlled environment.

5.5 Ethical Considerations

As I have mentioned throughout this chapter, the first responsibility of a cultural tattoo practitioner is the building up of our communities. This includes leaving any tattooing space safe for everyone involved even after the tattooing session is completed. This whole project and my involvement and initiation of the Earth Line Tattoo Training Residency came from the question of the creator that is asked of all of us, “What will you do for the people to be?” The second responsibility that I have is sharing the gifts the Creator has given me. These responsibilities are integral to this project.

5.6 My Ethical Practices and Rational

One question I have tried to answer for myself in the past and an important one for every cultural tattoo practitioner to answer for themselves is, “Who can get what designs?” First, this question is related to the sharing of designs from my nation and ancestors with those who are not from my nation. My answer to this question for myself was that I would not tattoo any designs or motifs that were related to our creation stories: one clear example for me is the Sunman pictograph. I have tattooed this motif on my sister, but I would not tattoo it on someone who is not connected to that story. However, I have decided that I will share some of our designs related to teachings that I have developed an understanding of, for example, the earth line tattoo, which I share with as many people as possible. This design comes from our visual language. It can be found on clothes, in tattoos, basketry and is a
design from my nation that I have chosen to gift to those wishing to receive it and who are willing to embody the teaching of care for the earth and all that is.

Because there are not many cultural tattoo practitioners in Canada, and I get requests from individuals from nations all across Turtle Island, and I am not aware of their nation’s tattoo practices or designs and the applicability of a design to them, I usually start with a conversation about their background. Then I ask how the design is connected to them and what it means for them. In the end, however, I feel it is the responsibility of that individual to ensure they are wearing that mark in a way that honors their nation and culture.

When I started the revival of Nlaka'pamux tattooing back in 2012, my thinking around the issue of sharing was a lot stricter. After visiting New Zealand and seeing Maori style tattoos on brown bodies around every corner, I was inspired to see that happen here in North America. I also had a conversation with Mark Kopua, one of the original actors in the revival of Maori tattooing, when, he asked this same question of me and my friend Nahaan. My answer came back similar to what I have written above, and he replied that for him this same question came up over 20 years ago. He went on to share the following teaching with us, which he has shared many times before and which can be found in the Maori Television program Native Affairs, in the October 15, 2015, edition by Maiki Sherman Entitled Face to Face:

That made us look at what we eventually call a critical mass, was to go and flood the street literally with as much moko as we could possibly put out there and I recall Derek (Lardelli) one time sending me, this was before the invention of email, so he sent me a written note and at the end of it he signed his name "tattoo the world." And
it was later that I realized that this was about critical mass, tattoo the world, or moko the world.

After this encounter with Mark and hearing his words of wisdom, I am beginning to see the importance of the building up of a critical mass of those wearing the traditional mark so that it becomes normalized, which is key to revival. His comment and statement have had me thinking, and I am not sure how my practice will change as I continue to explore his thinking and experience.

When I consider my cultural tattooing practice and the sharing of designs with folks from outside the culture of the design, I use the principle of gifting as my main principle. What I mean by this is that I am willing to share designs when I feel it is appropriate as a gift from me and my culture to them. The use of gifting is the way that I usually work as cultural tattoo practitioner, which is far different from my professional tattooing practice. In my professional practice, there is an exchange of money based on an hourly rate. In my cultural practice, I ask for a small fee to cover the cost of expenses of supplies and if I am traveling to also cover my travel expenses and ask for a gift in exchange for my gift of the tattoo.

This way of operating is one way I am seeking to decolonize my Indigenous tattooing work and a way of re-indigenizing my life. I consider a few things when it comes to this way of working: the person has to be Indigenous, and the design has to come from their nation, unless it has been gifted by myself or someone qualified to gift it to them, like the artist who created the design, or an elder, or a knowledge keeper. One question my friend and colleague Nahaan asks those he works with is what is the tattoo worth to the individual, and I am beginning to consider this question as key to my gift exchange process. The gift should reflect the value the individual places on the tattoo for themselves. In some case I have
received some very extravagant gifts, and I am thankful for all I have received, extravagant or not.

Something that I find imperative when I share a tattoo from my nation is to share the meaning of the designs or motifs if they are known, alongside my interpretation and understanding of any stories or teachings associated with it. One example is the story linked to the boy being pulled along by the bear that I tattooed on my brother while on a backpacking trip into the Stein Valley. A second example comes from the Earth Line Tattooing action that I initiated as part of the opening of the exhibition "Owning with the Gaze," at Gallery 101 in Ottawa on October 31st, 2015. Each person who was tattooed received the teaching that we each have a responsibility to caretake the land and all that is. I have continued to share the earth line tattoo with people from many countries and nations including, but not limited to, New Zealand and Taiwan.

Another thing that I do to help the design or tattoo to fit with the person's life and personal story is the creating of a tattoo design based on their life history, personality, family history and experiences. This way of operating builds on the way designs are created for individuals in Polynesia, and I received this teaching clearly from Samoan tattooing via Suluape Petelo in this clip.

Figure 5.3 Su’a Suluape Petelo (Becoming Samoan) has been removed due to copyright restrictions. In this video excerpt Su’a Suleape Petelo shares, “What you give is what you get, if you don’t work hard, you will not reap the benefits. The more you contribute, the more you will be rewarded with. Each small pattern or marking has its very own meaning. However, when you put them together. You bring this pattern and that pattern. Then you merge them together, you create a new meaning to tell your story in its own element. That is how we form new patterns and use them to tell their stories as we mark them in a tatau. The person wearing the tatau must know that these are the stories made from their patterns that they wear and carry with them. Whenever they look down and see their tatau, they are reminded, this is my story and this is how I should live.” Su’a Suluape Petelo, Interviewee. “Becoming Samoan.” YouTube. Uploaded by Crystal Vaega. 24 Nov. 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWIq8I_LgMA.
I did this type of tattoo for one of my long-time clients that has become a friend. Because we have been friends for a long period I developed a design based on my knowledge of him, his values, and our friendship, which I tattooed on him at the Edmonton tattoo convention in 2016.

As I consider the question of who gets tattooed, I am aware of a sad reality when it comes to Indigenous peoples living on Turtle Island: many people are living in diaspora and in a fractured state of being. After seeing how powerful Indigenous tattooing is for Indigenous peoples, I am convinced that at this point we should risk error by allowing all who desire to be marked to be marked. Many people do not know their full history, and all they know is that they have an ancestral history that calls them. In my experience sometimes receiving their mark starts them on a journey.

5.7 Aesthetics

In times past, our tattoos communicated in many ways: they told others of our powers, skills, or achievements, and some, especially medicine people, could be identified by their tattoos. We also tattooed designs or representations of our spiritual helpers on our bodies and our clothing. Sometimes our tattoos would have been given to us in a dream, when our dreams would tell us what needed to be tattooed. Because the tattoos of our ancestors worked to communicate something to the outside world, their placement was in places that could be easily visible like the lower arms, hands and face. These are not the only places we tattooed but the most prominent.

I would argue that today’s Indigenous tattooing connected to our ancestors, works to communicate to the world but in a slightly different way. Currently, many of the people who are getting tattooed in a way that connects to their ancestors are activists and in the forefront of the revival and preservation of our land and culture. Because of this, it seems that, like our
ancestors, these people are getting their tattoos in places that are visible like their wrists, forearms, hands and face. This is a way of speaking without speaking, for when people see our traditional tattoos, they know that these are something different than conventional western tattooing.

While developing the design language associated with Nlaka’pamux and Interior Salish Tattooing, I have looked to James Teit and his ethnographic work alongside the plethora of other visual and material culture, which is housed in museum collections and on the land. When I consider placement of tattoos, many times the placement is dictated by the person being tattooed, but in some cases, when given free rein to design, I have looked for ideas starting with Teit and moving out to the placement of designs on clothing as well as to traditional body paint designs. I also look at the design itself and decide where on the body the design fits best based on its shape and the flow of the design. Many of our designs are geometrical and representational.

5.8 Healing Power as a Nlaka’pamux Artist Bringing this Back

As a diasporic Nlaka’pamux person, the process of reviving our tattooing practices has been one of remembering. When I first stitched my own leg, I began to remember who I was at the deepest core of my being. I started to remember how I was connected to my ancestors and not only my Nlaka’pamux ones but also to all of who I am back as far as I can trace and further. My blood was calling out for me to remember what my responsibilities are. I began to recognize the power of the mark. To remember the power of an Indigenous identity. This project of revival has also had me beginning to remember to my ancestral community or reconnect.
Back in 2012, I presented at the URA conference, and I used the picture of a rock shelter from the Stein River Valley, which contains pictographs, as a metaphor for my journey into understanding who I am.

Figure 5.4 Kaszas (Looking In)

In this presentation, I said "I used to feel a huge sense of disconnection from my ancestral community due in large part to the symbolic violence enacted on my family through the Indian Act. This disconnection for me is symbolized by standing on the outside of this rock shelter looking into my culture and longing for connection.”
I shared the Stein River Valley with the artists attending the Earth Line Tattoo Training Residency. We hiked over 30 kilometers and explored the land that my ancestors traveled. As we sat inside the rock shelter pictured above, I shared that the research I have done related to tattooing, and how the work I have done in my ancestral community of Merritt was essential in transforming my feelings of disconnection to feelings of reconnection and remembering.

One of the greatest honors for me on this tattoo revival journey was when I was invited to travel back home and tattoo in my territory to share my gift with people from my nation. There are no words to explain the feelings I had as I applied my first Nlaka’pamux skin stitch facial tattoo on Molly Toodlican at the first of many tattooing sessions planned in
Merritt, British Columbia. This event was organized by Elder and language teacher Mandy Jimmie.

Figure 5.6  Kaszas (Nlaka’pamux Skin)

I will never forget the intense and exciting experience as I tattooed in the Nicola Valley among the mountains, the rivers, the sage brush, and trees which have sustained my ancestors for generations. I was tattooing Sue Sterling-Bur, Molly, and Andrea Sterling-Shintah in the staff room at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, which has huge windows, I would
occasionally look out and soak in the landscape, when I found another piece of myself as a Nlaka'pamux person through this experience.

5.9 Including Additional Voices (Artist Interviews)

In this section, I will be adding the voices of the four tattoo artists and/or cultural tattoo practitioners whom I interviewed while in New Zealand attending the 2015 Indigenous Ink tattoo convention. I will briefly introduce each person with a short biographical sketch and then share the video I captured of each interview. I have edited out my voice and have edited each artist’s answers to the following questions into one narrative to allow each artist to speak and share their story in a natural way. I asked each of the artists that I interviewed these same questions, and each answered in a way that best suited their experience. I will not be repeating these questions at any point during their interviews.

The following questions acted as the basis of our conversations. Please read them and keep them in mind as you listen to each narrative. The first, “Please introduce yourself in whatever way you see fit.” Secondly, I asked, “When did you start tattooing and what got you into it?” Thirdly, “When you started tattooing was it using traditional methods or with an electric tattoo machine?” If this question wasn't clearly answered, I posed it again as, “How did you begin the journey of reviving your ancestral tattooing practices?” Then I asked, “Who and what inspired you as you began to tattoo in the way your ancestors did?” I inquired if that hadn't already been covered, “What steps did you take to gain the knowledge you needed to start bringing your traditional practices back?” If the artist has two separate practices, I asked, “How does your ancestral tradition differ from Western-European tattooing?” Then the question was asked, “Why is it important for you and your people to tattoo themselves in the same way as your ancestors?” Lastly, I asked, “What advice would you give to those who are working towards reviving their ancestral tattooing practices?”
Keep these questions in mind as you listen to each of these artists outline their journey into the revival of their ancestral tattooing tradition.

5.9.1  **Nahaan**

Nahaan is Tlingit and Inupiaq of Alaska and Paiute of California and has been working on the revival of Tlingit tattooing since 2009 and works both with the tattoo machine, hand poke, and skin stitch methods. He travels with his dance group the Náakw Dancers and shares his teachings in spoken word and oral presentations.

![Figure 5.7 Kaszas (Nahaan Interview)](image)

5.9.2  **Tihoti**

Tihoti Matauteute Barff Faara is a tattoo artist from Tahiti and lives on the island of Taha; he is one of the first artists to begin the revival of Tahitian tattooing, and his story will defiantly inspire you. He has been slowly building up his body suit tattoo which consists of half being tattooed in Marquesasian designs and the other half in Tahitian designs that have come to him in his dreams.
5.9.3 Elle

Elle Festin is one of the co-founders of the Mark of the Four Waves Tribe, a group dedicated to the revival of the Indigenous tattooing of the Philippines. He works out of his tattoo shop, Spiritual Journey, in Stanton California.

5.9.4 Taku

Taku Oshima is known for his bold neo-tribal tattoos and is one of the key players in bringing forward the traditional designs of the Indigenous peoples of Japan. Although he does not characterize his work as revival at this point, he is optimistic that this is what will happen in Japan. I felt it is important to share his journey and the steps he has taken as he creates new and vibrant visions of historical Japanese designs and motifs. The work of Taku
is an outstanding example of the revival of designs and motifs, which have not been explored in tattoo designs before. Taku has been tattooing for close to 20 years and has taken on the project of bringing back into use the designs of the Ainu, Ryukyu, and Jomon of Japan. The creative way that he fits these designs to the human body is an example of the possibilities for those involved in the revival of their ancestral tattooing traditions. Taku is a Japanese artist based in Tokyo tattooing out of his studio Tribal Tattoo Apocaript. He continues to seek out the meanings and reasons for the ancient Jomon tattoos and is trying to reinvigorate Indigenous tattooing in Japan.

Figure 5.10 Kaszas (Taku Interview)
Chapter 6 Summary

6.1 Where I Began and Suggestions for Further Study

As I shared in my introduction, this research project manifested after working as a cultural tattoo practitioner for a few years. It was then; I was confronted with the question of why I began reviving my ancestral tattooing practices in the first place. Now, after going through the process of thinking, researching, and writing this assessment portfolio, I will reflect back on my answer to the research questions. I return to the underlying goal, which inspired me from the start, that is, to share my journey with you, in hopes that together we can ensure our nieces, nephews, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren do not have the same struggles as we did and do.

As detailed in my contextual review, when I first started this project I was looking at the large body of research which is devoted to theorizing tattooing in the West. Alongside a large body of knowledge I found that looks at Indigenous tattooing. I realized that there was a small gap in the literature that I became conscious of through my work as a tattoo artist. Absent are the voices of Indigenous peoples that are living today and getting tattooed independent from their cultural tattooing traditions. I see this gap in our knowledge still exists, and feel this needs to be explored further, and hope that others will pick up this work. I focused my time and energy on the material found in this research assessment portfolio because of my convictions based on readings in Indigenous methodologies. It provided me an opportunity to develop an original path to explore the embodiment of the past in the present for the future as an Indigenous and creative research methodology.

Some of the limitations of this study include only having enough time for the surface exploration of a knowledge system, including Nlaka’pamux and Interior Salish tattooing traditions, which require a more in-depth and well-funded approach. Future manifestations
could include interviews with elders and community members as well as further archival research specifically in the Teit archives. A deeper analysis of Interior Salish and Nlaka’pamux visual and material culture is needed. Further development of the thesis that our tattoos are part of a common symbolic language, could provide the possibility and potential for sustaining Nlaka’pamux studies. Another expansion of this project could involve taking the revival one step further by including the revival of Nlaka’pamux language associated with our tattooing traditions, traditional ecological knowledge, ceremonies and spiritual practices. These and other issues can be explored further. There is also the possibility to further the exploration of an Nlaka’pamux or Interior Salish aesthetic.

Reflectively speaking, the limitations of this thesis are related to the reality of the pace at which technology changes and updates; at some point this stand-alone thesis document will not function as it was intended. This limitation comes from some readers not having the same pdf reader, or eventually the technology will change to such an extent that this document will not be supported at all. We have taken this into account and a second version of this document is available through the library website. The second limitation of this assessment portfolio associated with technology is its size. I understand that some who wish to access this document may have a hard time downloading it, if they do not have high speed Internet. This is only the first step in the direction of honouring the oral nature of our Indigenous cultures.

6.2 Lessons Learned from Interviews

One of the ways that I have changed throughout this whole process of engaging in research related to the revival of Indigenous Tattooing is my thinking around the spiritual preparation of myself and my tools and the time and space that the tattooing is done in. I have begun to practice smudging as one of my primary practices, which allow me to prepare
myself and the space for the tattooing procedure. This is a lesson I have learned from my good friend Nahaan, from his interview but more importantly just while spending time with him as we traveled New Zealand and when he participated in the Earth Line Tattoo Training Residency as a guest mentor. Another lesson I learned and one of my goals for the next part of my journey into the revival of my ancestral tattooing tradition is the learning of songs to also prepare me for my work.

As I listen to the story of Tihoti and the ways that he has been able to move forward in his revival efforts because of his knowledge of his Indigenous language, I have also begun to desire to learn more of my tongue as yet another next step in the revival of my ancestral tattooing tradition. I know the learning of my language and a deeper understanding of the creation stories and the stories that recount our history will be keys to the next phase of our tattooing revival. The energy and enthusiasm that Tihoti has for his culture gives me more courage more determination to move forward and become more knowledgeable and move further into the revival of my culture. A lesson, which I have learned from both Nahaan and Tihoti, is the importance of the knowledge of the Elders and traditional knowledge keepers of our nations. I also know that is another one of the next things I must undertake in moving forward. I must go out into the community and learn what is still known about our tattooing traditions.

The main thing I have learned from listening to and spending time with Elle is the power of organizing one’s efforts so that you are not a single person doing a big thing. As I listened to Elle speak, I was inspired and knew that I had to start linking up with other individuals with common ground interests. With this in mind, after returning from New Zealand, I co-founded the Earthline Tattoo Collective with Jordan Bennett and Amy
Malbeuf; we are a group of Indigenous cultural tattoo practitioners who are seeking to support the revival of Indigenous tattooing in Canada. Our first official act as a collective was the organizing of the Earth Line Tattoo Training Residency, which I discussed with you earlier in this research assessment portfolio. The second thing we did was to apply for and to receive an Aboriginal Peoples Collaborative Exchange Grant from Aboriginal Arts at the Canada Council of the Arts. With this support, we secured the possibility to travel to New Zealand to share the Indigenous tattooing of Canada with like-minded Indigenous colleagues, activists, and practitioners.

When I think about the work of Taku, one of the main lessons I learned from him is his insistence that tattooing should not be focused at the micro level of a few inches, but, rather, taking in the full human figure from the distance of 10 meters is the most critical distance that our tattoos should be read from. I find much inspiration from his insistence for because of the amount of joy and monetary gain he has received from tattooing, he has a duty to give back. His sense of duty rings true to my thoughts and feelings and I am encouraged to continue to walk in my responsibilities.

6.3 Highlighting My Nlaka’pamux Footprints

6.3.1 Choosing Methodologies that Align with My Responsibilities

I posed the question in section 1.3, “what responsibilities do I have now that I have this knowledge?” This question not only relates to knowledge that I have associated to the revival of Indigenous tattooing and its importance to Indigenous peoples, but also to the knowledge that I have acquired through my life and in my time in academe. The specific knowledge I am referring to in this section of my summary chapter is knowledge related to the selection of research methodologies and the framework of my research project. In this project I have selected Indigenous and creative research methodologies which are found in
chapter 2. This selection flows directly from the fact that I am a Metis and Nlaka’pamux man, and that I am an artist and a creator of things. It is from this reality that I have chosen the tools, which align with my moral, spiritual, and ethical convictions.

It is through the foundational Nlaka’pamux basket weaving methodology, which I have presented in this thesis that I use to weave together the other methodologies that have been essential in staying accountable to my philosophical principles. These include, positioning, story, decolonization, indigenization, relational accountability, and creative research methodologies. Through the combining of these methodologies I have argued for the need of a research assessment portfolio instead of a conventional thesis paper. I have also presented an alternative for Indigenous studies and creative students and scholars to the literature review, with the submission of the Indigenized and visualized contextual review found in chapter 3.

The specific research methods or tools that I engaged in during this project include unstructured interviewing techniques combined with digital documentary film. In honouring the words, actions and people who inspired me I used large scale oil painting, laser engraving and aerosolized stencil works on wood and canvas.

6.3.2 Honoring My Nlaka’pamux Culture

The issues that I have sought solutions for begin with the common use of transcription in academic research and writing. I have argued that to allow Indigenous voices to speak today we need to move towards methodologies and methods that honour the oral nature of our ancestors. Some of the ways I have tried to acknowledge the tensions I have highlighted, include when I do transcribe or quote someone I give larger quotations than is usually acceptable in academic papers. This allows the speakers voice to be heard. Secondly I
have tried to decenter text as the primary means to communicate to those who encounter my assessment portfolio through the use of art.

Finally I have suggested the use of technology to allow the nuances of oral communication to be present in this thesis document. To this end, I use digital documentary film for my interviews. I also included wherever possible video clips of lectures from Indigenous academics or knowledge keepers in place of transcribed text. Examples can be found in section 2.2.6, section 2.5, section 3.2. section 5.4 and section 5.6. I have also argued for the embedding of the media films that contain the interviews of the four Indigenous tattoo artists and cultural tattoo practitioners I interviewed, so that you can hear them talk about their stories and journeys in section 5.9.

6.3.3 My Journey into Indigenous Tattoo Revival

My journey into the revival of my ancestral tattooing tradition began with the series of events that lead to my discovery of the fact that we as Nlaka’pamux peoples have our own, once ubiquitous tattooing tradition. This discovery was transformed from an interesting piece of trivia about my ancestors, into a call to action through the inspiring stories of Indigenous peoples from all across the globe who are reviving their cultural tattooing traditions. It was through the act or research that I began to build the storehouse of knowledge that I would need to begin moving forward in the revival of my own sleeping tattoo tradition.

The most crucial step in my tattoo revival journey is the training that I undertook as a professional tattoo apprentice at Vertigo Tattoos and Body Piercing. This training included but was not limited to certification in blood borne pathogens and cross contamination and the health related aspects of the tattooing process. It also included the proper set-up and tear-down of a tattooing station and the process of returning a contaminated area back into a safe cold zone.

After learning how to operate up to and beyond the standards of a professional tattoo artist, I had to learn the essential skills associated with the traditional methods that my
ancestors used. For the Nlaka’pamux it was hand poke and skin stitch, in the case some of my friends and colleagues it includes hand tap and scarification methods. One of the results of the research phase of my journey was that I had a storehouse of visual references that allowed me to begin to create and innovate the designs and motifs that have been used in my tattooing practice.

One of the elements that has slowly developed, and evolved is my ethical and moral philosophies related to my tattooing practice. The step that has assisted me the most throughout my journey is traveling to learn, share and collaborate with Indigenous peoples from nations that are not my own. The time that I have been granted sitting, watching, listening and talking to all my friends and colleagues from all over the world have been some the most important learning environments I have been blessed with.

6.3.4 Acknowledging those who have Animated and Illuminated My Journey

There are many people who have inspired me with their words, actions and being as I have traveled on this journey of tattoo revival. Many of these people are highlighted and honoured in the artwork created as part of this research assessment portfolio. From some, it is the words that they speak which illuminate my footsteps. Others still, have provided a clear path for me as I learned the foundational lessons I needed for this journey, Carla Gosgnach my professional tattoo mentor is one of these people. Then, there are the ones who inspire and encourage me through the way they exist in the world as human beings, my dear friend Nahaan is one of these special people.

The above paragraph has been a condensed version of my answer to the question, “what and who inspired me and encouraged me?” Another way to answer this question is to look to the world around me and acknowledge the special people that the creator has placed in this world and I with. What has influenced me the most is the family I have been gifted
with by the creator, the lessons, the love, the discipline, and the patience I have received have directed me and guided me.

I would also argue that the cultural and ancestral teachings that I have received as a member of my larger extended Nlaka’pamux Interior Salish family have been instrumental in the methodologies and approaches I have used in this project. For it is here that I was taught what it means to be a member of something bigger than myself, and that being a member of a community implies responsibilities. I was also taught that when we venture out into the world with those who are not as old or as knowledgeable or strong as we are we have a responsibility to nurture and protect these people.

The story of *How Food was Given* that I shared with you in section 2.2.7 helps to make visible the values I already hold as true. For it is this story that has shown me that maybe my contribution and my voice may be one of the most meaningful songs that will help to regenerate the life of another being. This story centers the question creator asked the animal people, ‘what will you do for the people to be?’, as the foundational incentive for the reading, writing and researching that consume my days. It is my goal to leave a good gift for the people to be, one that seeks to transform the reality of Indigenous peoples so that the next generation can be more Indigenous than this one.

**6.4 Concluding Thoughts**

In section 3.2 I quote myself from a early undergraduate student paper entitled, “Identity as Power: Underpinnings of Indigenous Tattoo Revivals,” I feel it is important to repeat it here in this closing chapter, for when I wrote this paper the observations came from reviewing research, testimony, and footage collected from many places, and today I realize that my lived experience as a key actor in the revival of Indigenous Tattooing in Canada confirms many of these early conclusions.
“The revival of cultural tattooing works on many levels for indigenous peoples and signifies many different narratives, identity of self as Indigenous as Maori as Samoan as Yupik, Inuit, Nlaka’pamux etc. Also as a political statement, as an affirmation of the historical struggle our ancestors went through to insure we are still Nlaka’pamux, as an anchor of self in culture, a reclaiming of the body from the commoditization of the consumer culture, a reclaiming of the body from the colonial machinery which seeks to control indigenous peoples identity through legislation. With the legal clumping together of indigenous peoples under the Indian act, cultural expressions of tattooing can help indigenous peoples feel separate and distinct once again. Tattooing in times past has meant many different things but for me today it symbolizes my process of decolonization”

In this final section I will outline some of the observations I have made during my time as a cultural tattoo practitioner and Indigenous scholar.

When I think about revival, I understand that our tattoos today do not have to look like our ancestors’ tattoos, nor do they have to mean what they used to mean; we are different people than our ancestors. If our tattooing traditions would have continued they would have naturally changed. I feel it is ok to create and innovate. I also think about some of the conversations I have had with people I have interacted with about their desires to become tattooed in a similar way to their ancestors and the protocols associated with being able to receive a particular tattoo based on prestige. One example is a man who wished to get a tattoo that could only be worn by someone who had killed two people inside the camp as they were attacking, and he felt that because he was unable to do such an act he would never be able to be tattooed in the way the ancestors were calling him to be tattooed. After further
conversation, this individual shared how they were working in their community to revive the language. To me, this is just as brave an act as what was required to receive the tattoo. I urge every Indigenous person who is working on reviving their ancestral tattooing tradition to revisit the protocols from the past and reinterpret them for today.

In my introductory chapter, I explored the historical tattooing tradition of my ancestors as outlined by James Teit:

The first was connected to adornment or ornament among young people in order to make themselves more pleasing to the potential partners. The second reason was in connection with marriage. Teit asserted that it could show fidelity and love, and to make marriage enduring. Thirdly, our tattooing was associated with puberty and the acquirement of guardians, which ensured success, health, or protection; as a record or offering; as an ordeal to show courage; as a preventative against weakness and premature old age. Fourthly, we practiced it in connection with dreaming and the guardian spirits, to ward off death and cure sickness. Finally, it was used for identification (Teit 406).

This historical account needs to be updated to account for how tattooing can be seen to operate today among Indigenous people in Canada and all across Turtle Island and beyond.

From my experience as a front-runner in the revival of tattooing here in Canada, I have had many opportunities to learn how tattooing is used today among my peers, friends, acquaintances, and clients. I feel it is important to share briefly some of the reasons for tattoos that I have had the honor to witnessing throughout my journey and to update Teit’s list. It is no surprise that the first reason is the same as Teit outlined, people today use tattooing for beautification and adornment, which in my opinion is just a good a reason as
any. If it was good enough for the ancestors it is good enough for us today. The second reason is also on Teit’s list, and it is people tattoo themselves in association with marriage and commitment to each other as life partners. I have had a few opportunities to tattoo youth in association with their coming of age ceremonies and am excited at the possibility of a community and nationwide revival of our coming of age ceremonies and the tattooing associated with these traditions.

Tattooing associated with dreaming is alive today, and I have been allowed to help individuals bring to life the tattoos that have been revealed to them in their dreams. I have also been part of ceremonial tattooing associated with the curing of sickness and the warding off of ill health. It can already be seen that tattooing today has some of the same reasons associated with our ancestral practices, but it is the next few examples that are new to our generation and associated with the revival of these traditions today.

When I consider some of the reasons that I have observed of why Indigenous people get tattooed today, some of them come from my own story, my own journey, my own experience, the first is one that many people will not completely understand. A few of my tattoos have come about because I felt a calling, a pull, an urge to get a certain style or motif to be tattooed on my body; at the time I did not know why but knew I needed to get that mark. Today, I understand that some of those designs were being gifted to me, and I was being called by my ancestors to receive those marks. As L. Frank says, “when blood calls you, it is too strong to deny” (http://topcat4.tripod.com/news/27aug01.txt). In section 5.6 of this assessment portfolio, I mentioned that I am mindful of people who are diasporic, or have somehow been disconnected from their ancestral communities. I have observed that it is important for these folks to receive their ancestral mark, and that many times this starts them
along the path of finding themselves. In many cases, as they continue along this path they will begin to, as Elle says in his interview in Figure 5.9, “see themselves being the ancestors.”

Many of the folks I have tattooed have become tattooed with their ancestral marks as a way of asserting their indigenous identity and using it as a way of forcing colonial powers to engage with them as descendants of their ancestors. This is a way of asserting the resilience and autonomy of their nations, communities and peoples. In the fight for the earth, land and water tattooing is being used as a tool for asserting Aboriginal rights.

These types of tattoos are used as communicative tools that speak to diverse audiences; this is a continuation of one of the traditional functions of our tattoos. Our tattoos today speak to those in our communities in many of the same ways they did in our ancestral communities, but today our tattoos are used to speak to a different audience. The audiences I am referring to are the colonial structures that have perpetrated genocidal violence against our land and peoples in the past, in the present, and on into the future. When our warriors stand against the destructive extractive practices of oil, mining, and political systems wearing our tattoos, they are asserting our continued un-surrendered rights to be stewards of our lands. Our tattoos also speak in ways that our ancestors’ never did because of the particular situation that we find ourselves in today, as peoples and nations under colonial regimes. Our tattoos speak to and honor those who ensured we are still here today, my Nlaka’pamux tattoos are prayers for my nephews, niece, and for the people to be.
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