

**Springtime in n'Daki Menan, the Homeland of  
the Teme-Augama Anishnabai:  
Babies, Cradleboards and Community Wrapping**

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Art History

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Ottawa (Odawa, Unceded Algonquin Territory), Ontario

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### **Abstract**

This is a study of how the tikinaagan (cradleboard) as an object related to pre-colonial Indigenous childcare can be metaphorically investigated as a model for traditional social frameworks that illustrate the central place and role of babies and young people within Anishinaabe families and communities. Through this, I approach the ornamentation and arrangement of a small cradleboard collected by Frank Speck in the early-twentieth century during his visit to the territory of n'Daki Menan in northeastern Ontario. By exploring the historical context in which this cradleboard was created, used, and collected I address the gaps in the early literature where the Indigenous voice and value placed on these objects were disregarded or overlooked. I argue that cradleboards, through their stylistic design and contextual power, have the ability to communicate traditional knowledge and values of parenting, family and community across generations to present day.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to offer my warmest gratitude to June Twain, Mary Katt, and Virginia McKenzie for taking the time to sit with me and share their stories. I am so grateful for what I learned from each of them and for the ways in which they helped this thesis shapeshift and re-form into what it now is. I also owe an enormous amount of thanks to Temagami First Nation and the Teme-Augama Anishnabai and their Chiefs and Councils for welcoming me onto their territory of n'Daki Menan – land that I have grown incredibly fond of throughout this journey, and a place that I feel I will always have an attachment to and continually visit. Many thanks to Holly Charyna and Alice Becker for taking the time to read my initial project proposal and for being so helpful in preparing me for my first visit to the Island. Thank you to Dean Potts for the boat rides to Bear Island, Linda's Wigwams and June Twain for the comforts of home, Mary Laronde for the sound advice, Lucille McKenzie for showing me some of her family's keepsakes, Verna Friday for sharing some of your family's photographs and memories with me, Cathy Metcalfe for the afternoon visits, and gchi miigwech to many other community members that I have met and learned a great deal from.

My advisor, Ruth B. Phillips, has provided me with unshakeable support throughout the three years that it has taken me to complete my Masters. I am incredibly grateful to her for her patience and thoughtful advice, and for introducing me to historical Indigenous art of the Great Lakes – thank you for lighting that fire. Allan J. Ryan has also continually been in my corner since the very beginning of this journey and has provided me with a mentorship and friendship that I cherish dearly. Gchi miigwech to Armand G. Ruffo for taking the time to read and consider my work; I admire your writing and insight, and your perspective is very important to me.

I am also very appreciative of those who have helped this lost researcher find her way through various archives and collections. I'd like to thank the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the place where I was first introduced to the collection from n'Daki Menan, and I am particularly grateful for the guidance of Judy Hall and Jamieson Brant, and the help of Jonathon Wise, Vincent Lafond, and Nathalie Guenette. Trudy Nicks provided me with the valuable experience of working in the museum space, and acquainted me with some very special tikinaaganan in the Royal Ontario Museum collection. I am also grateful to the staff at the library of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia who also offered very helpful assistance throughout the research process.

I would like to express my great appreciation to the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (Indspire) for their support of my research. And also to Joe Horse Capture and Shiri Pasternak whose words have helped me navigate between the worlds of academics and Indigenous/personal knowledge.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends for their ongoing love and support. There aren't words to explain everything you have been for me throughout this journey. From my heart – Gchi Miigwech / Nia:wen kowa.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of Illustrations.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Appendices.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Chapter Two.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Chapter Three.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Chapter Four.....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Illustrations.....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>146</b>

## List of Illustrations

- Fig. 1 “cradle-board”, (CMC III-G-196), c. 1913, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau QC, Speck Collection  
Teme-Augama Anishnabai artist, Bear Island ON  
source: Canadian Museum of Civilization.....133
- Fig. 2 Map  
“Temagami First Nation Traditional Territory, n’Dakimenan”  
source: Brian Back / [Ottertooth.com](http://Ottertooth.com) .....134
- Fig. 3 “cradleboard”, (NMAI 24/2019), c. 1790, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.  
Likely Anishinaabe artist, Great Lakes  
source: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution.....134
- Fig. 4 “cradle”, (ET Am2003,1942), pre-1825, British Museum, London UK  
Anishinaabe artist, Great Lakes region of Minnesota  
source: British Museum.....135
- Fig. 5 “cradle-board”, (CMC III-G-1166), c. 1940, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau QC, Foster Collection  
Anishinaabe (Ojibway) artist, Pic Mobert ON  
source: Canadian Museum of Civilization .....135
- Fig. 6 a, b “woven bag”, recto and verso, (NMI 1902.329), c. 1800-1809, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin IRL, Jasper Grant Collection  
Anishinaabe artist, Central Great Lakes  
source: Phillips, catalogue no. 20, pg. 68.....136
- Fig. 7 “cradleboard ornament” or “cuff”, (ET Am 1949,22.132),  
c. 1750-1850, British Museum London UK, Oldman  
Collection no. 1036  
Anishinaabe artist, Central Great Lakes  
source: British Museum.....137
- Fig. 8 “pouch”, (CMC III-X-374), mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau QC  
Anishinaabe artist, Eastern Great Lakes  
source: Canadian Museum of Civilization.....137

- Fig. 9 “doll”, (III-L-276), c. 1779, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau QC, Speyer Collection  
Anishinaabe (Algonquin) artist, Northeastern Woodlands  
source: Canadian Museum of Civilization.....138
- Fig. 10 “cradleboard decoration” (HBC 47-6), c. 1822, Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg MB, Hudson’s Bay Company Collection – Lower Fort Garry  
Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) artist, Red River  
source: Manitoba Museum.....139
- Fig. 11 “Cee-Cee Whitebear Becker with son Walter in tikinaagan”, (no. 23966), 1913, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau QC  
Photograph taken by Frank G. Speck, Bear Island ON  
source: Canadian Museum of Civilization.....140
- Fig. 12 “Roles and Responsibilities: The Role of Children”, Parenting Bundle Program, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Ottawa ON  
source: Wabano Parenting Society, pg 14.....141

### List of Appendices

Appendix 1	A little bit about June, Mary and Virginia.....	142
Appendix 2	The right kind of moss.....	144
Appendix 3	Glossary of Anishinaabemowin terms.....	145

## Introduction

### Beginnings...

I first visited Temagami First Nation on Bear Island (Makominising) through the Eastern Door, in Springtime at the very end of March. The lake was beginning to swell, and I could hear the ice groaning, the Underwater Beings were already at work preparing for open water. New life was stirring, and the Earth was waking up from her deep slumber, regenerating once again.

Not too long ago I heard the Michi Saagiig<sup>1</sup> Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson say that Springtime always reminds her of being pregnant, of that special time when she too was swelling with new life and with water that was preparing to break.<sup>2</sup> I begin here because this is where we are taught that our journeys in life begin, in the East, where the sun rises, and where new life stirs.

And as is the case with all journeys, beginnings are always welcomed with a great amount of excitement, but can also at times produce a small amount of fear or anxiety. I remember the first time I travelled down the Mine Road (Lake Temagami Access Road) off of Highway 11 North to catch the shuttle boat at the Mine Landing that would take me to Bear Island. Immense anticipation and nervousness are words that do not even begin to describe the array of emotions that I was feeling for my first visit as I navigated

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<sup>1</sup> Mississauga

<sup>2</sup> Leanne Simpson, "Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Revitalizing Anishinaabe Intellectual Traditions," (paper presented at Anishinaabewn Niswi Conference: Deep Roots, New Growth, Sudbury, ON, March 2-3, 2012).



the road's many twists and turns. Looking back now, this drive down the Mine Road which marks the beginning of my relationship with this extraordinary territory and its people, in a way very much resembles my personal journey through the writing of this thesis, which also seemed to take me on many exciting, sometimes a little bit scary, and occasionally unexpected turns. Just like the Springtime air that surrounded me then, this beginning induced that same feeling of anticipation that *something* was about to happen.

This thesis will explore pre-colonial Indigenous childcare practices and traditional community organization through the unpacking of Anishinaabe material culture related to childrearing. By focusing my attention on the creation, use, ornamentation and arrangement of baby carriers from the past, I hope to contribute towards a deeper understanding of Anishinaabe social frameworks, communal childcare, and the significant role that young people play at the centre of communities in a way that may resonate with contemporary Indigenous reality. On my journey to try and accomplish this end, I engage with Anishinaabe narratives surrounding seasons and cycles of life that illustrate the perpetual motion that quite intimately links the present to the past. Working within this understanding, Anishinaabe storyteller, Basil Johnston's description of The Four Hills parallels my analysis of historical childcare objects. He explains, "[T]hough all else may change, the stuff and substance of life remains the same ... There is continuity, there is no break."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1976), 117.

### Thesis Structure: Anishinaabemowin and Teachings of the Four Hills

In the second year of my graduate degree I was given the very valuable opportunity to return to lessons of my language,<sup>4</sup> Anishinaabemowin, through an introductory course provided at Georgian College in Barrie, Ontario. One of our earliest teachings that involved multiple words and sentence structure was a seemingly simple greeting: “Aniish ezhi bimaadiziyin?”<sup>5</sup> This old Anishinaabe greeting, which today is often understood as an interpretation of the quick and everyday, “Hey, how’s it going?” is actually translated to mean, “How are you *living*?” or, “How is your *life*?”. “It’s a question,” my Anishinaabemowin teacher Jeff Monague,<sup>6</sup> jokingly said, “that you better make sure you have the time for before you ask, because you could be listening for a while!”

Indeed, in many Indigenous worldviews, the concept of life and living, or more specifically for the Anishinaabek – mino-bimaadziwin: living the good and well-balanced life – is tremendously complex. Viewed as a composite understanding of “holistic health and wellness, including physical, emotional, mental and spiritual states of being,”<sup>7</sup> this fundamental awareness of what it means to live well is often conceived as being circular, oriented to the four cardinal directions and composed of four equal parts. It is understood

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<sup>4</sup> My dad spoke to me in Anishinaabemowin when I was very young, and so I had some of the basic building blocks of the language and could say a handful of words. Taking this course reinvigorated my learning of Anishinaabemowin that began with my dad and continues today, and for that I am very grateful.

<sup>5</sup> I understand that it is customary in Western academic writing to italicize text that is unfamiliar or absent from the English language. However, as I do not view Anishinaabemowin as being foreign in this way, I am following the lead of other Indigenous writers who have chosen not to italicize or demarcate words printed in their own language. Given this, it is also important to note that there are writers who feel that italicizing Indigenous words draws critical attention to the “writing down” of a language that is traditionally and historically oral. See: Gerald Vizenor, *Summer in the Spring: Anishinaabe Lyric Poems and Stories, New Edition*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Jeff is from Chimnissing (Beausoleil First Nation).

<sup>7</sup> Kim Anderson, *Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2011), 7.

that these four quadrants of the circle “are so intertwined that they make up life and one whole existence [...And] with less than the four orders, life and being are incomplete and unintelligible.”<sup>8</sup> In keeping with this understanding of four to represent wholeness, many Anishinaabek have described the natural rhythms of the path of life as a spatial passage over four hills.<sup>9</sup> According to Basil Johnston, these hills of life correspond to different physical and moral stages:

*Infancy and Childhood*: a time of preparation, or the age of listening;

*Youth*: a time of quest, or the age of doing;

*Adulthood*: a time of vision, or the age of giving it back;

and *Old Age*: a time of fulfillment of vision, or the age of sacred learning.<sup>10</sup>

Through this understanding of life therefore we can see “the distinct way in which the responsibilities of different life stages played into the organization of [traditional] Indigenous societies.”<sup>11</sup> However, along with being vital to the well-being of a community, interdependency and the intergenerational exchange of knowledge and teachings between these four stages was also fundamental to the perseverance and survival of a people.

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<sup>8</sup> Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 109; and Michael D. McNally, *Honoring Elders: Aging, Authority, and Ojibwe Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 57; See also: Thomas Peacock and Marlene Wisuri, *The Four Hills of Life: Ojibwe Wisdom*, (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 7; and Jeffrey D. Anderson, *The Four Hills of Life: Northern Arapaho Knowledge and Life Movement*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 106; McNally quotes these Arapaho teachings through Jeffrey Anderson’s work when speaking about the Anishinaabe Four Hills teachings he was given by Larry Cloud Morgan, indicating that the two descriptions of life’s passages are quite similar; see McNally, 85.

<sup>11</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 5-6.

This framework of life stages and the traditional organization of Anishinaabek society that has been laid out in Basil Johnston's Four Hills have shaped much of the way in which this thesis is written. However, while I do discuss the older stages of life to some degree in terms of the roles that extended family and community members played in raising the younger generations, due to my central focus on material culture related to traditional Anishinaabek childcare, my attention naturally turned towards the roles and responsibilities found on the First Hill of Infancy and Childhood, and the season of Spring remains a common theme throughout much of my writing.

#### **At the Heart: Tikinaagan – 'Cradleboard'**

On this First Hill, Anishinaabe babies were bundled and carried by their parents and loved ones in a cradleboard, or what in Anishinaabemowin is called a tikinaagan. Quite simply, a tikinaagan is a protective baby carrier that was used by many Indigenous groups throughout North America. Typically constructed with a flat wooden backboard and curved frame along the bottom, an attached ornamented cover or moss bag securely held the little one in place, and a bent wooden bow that extended outwards around the infant's face acted as somewhat of a crashbar if the tikinaagan ever fell forward. Wrapped inside the cradleboard coverings, a baby could be swaddled tightly in rabbitskin blankets, smoked hides, and fine trade fabrics, with wool from cattail reeds or dried sphagnum moss (see Appendix 2) acting as a lining or absorbent diaper – hence the

names for “moss bags” or the “moss-back cradle.”<sup>12</sup> A mossbag could also be taken off the wooden frame of the tikinaagan and be used on its own; however, for the purposes of this thesis, which will discuss the multi-layered protective qualities of both the mossbag and the wooden frame, they will be considered together as two unified elements that made up the tikinaagan as a whole.

What led me towards this interest in traditional childcare was the tikinaagan that rests at the heart of this thesis and which acts as a central case study throughout this work (Figure 1). Due to its relatively small size, the height being only 43 cm tall, it is likely that this tikinaagan was a replica model constructed for sale, or may have been used as a child’s toy or teaching tool for young girls. As many Indigenous communities typically thought that selling or giving away a cradle that had been made and used by a family could have very negative repercussions, smaller models and doll-sized cradles were often made and have found their way into museum collections and are at times exhibited as examples to illustrate the construction and use of full-sized cradles.<sup>13</sup> In keeping with this tradition, for the purposes of this thesis, I will be discussing the tikinaagan from Bear Island as if it were used for the purposes of carrying a baby.

Created by a member (or members) of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai, the “People of the Deep Water,” and collected by the anthropologist Dr. Frank G. Speck during his trip to Bear Island in the summer of 1913, this little tikinaagan caused me to see or feel

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<sup>12</sup> Johann Georg Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami: Wanderings Around Lake Superior*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1860), 7; Sister Mary Inez Hilger, *Chippewa Child Life and Its Cultural Background*, (1951; reprint, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992), 25.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Janulewicz, *Brave Hearts and Their Cradles: A Pictorial Presentation of Native American Cradleboards*, (Centennial: Lifevest Publishing, 2006), 6.

something that extended well beyond the material object itself, as well as beyond the walls of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, where this tikinaagan is currently held. Throughout my graduate work studying Indigenous art history, I have come to understand that there are some traditional objects that are animate, alive and which hold inherent power, such as masks, drums and other ceremonial items; and then there are other objects, likely made for everyday use, that have acquired a *different kind* of power through the context in which they were created, used, worn, or danced.<sup>14</sup> And the special ability of this latter group of objects to affect and activate cultural memory, metaphor, and meaning has largely informed the way in which I proceeded with my research on the tikinaagan and its metaphorical relation to traditional Anishinaabek social organization and communal childcare.

### **The Being of Objects and Theory of Relationships**

What struck me the most about the tikinaagan as a traditional object is the understanding that it has *always* been used by the Anishinaabek in the care of infants. Our stories describing the Creation of this world tell us that it originated when one of the first women on Earth used a tikinaagan to carry our trickster and culture hero, Nanabozho and his twin brother, Stone Boy.<sup>15</sup> And having been held in a tikinaagan myself, one that

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<sup>14</sup> Evan Maurer, “Whose Art – Whose Story?,” Presentation at The Otsego Institute for Native American Art History, Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, NY, May 21-24, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> In this story, a young woman becomes impregnated by the sun and gives birth to twin boys, Stone Boy and Nanabozho. Before her sons’ feet can touch the Earth, the young woman places them both in cradleboards and carries them on her back. Because the young woman did this, human babies cannot walk straight from birth in the same way that other newborn animals can. See: Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, *American Indian Myths and Legends*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); See also: Brenda J. Child, *Holding our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2012), 16.

was created by a friend of my father at the time of my birth in 1986,<sup>16</sup> I understood that there was a certain cultural continuity that existed within cradleboards and mossbags that has somehow extended over time and space and across many generations into a contemporary context. Likewise, Anishinaabe scholar Brenda Child has observed that despite the devastating changes that have altered traditional ways of life, the Anishinaabek, as well as other Indigenous groups throughout North America, have continued to design and make cradleboards well into the present day, which “suggests something about the boards’ cultural value, not just their utility.”<sup>17</sup>

In order to revisit the meaning of art objects from older traditions of Anishinaabek childcare and explore their ability to transfer knowledge and values of parenting, family and community into the contemporary reality of Indigenous peoples, I relied on theoretical views that were grounded in the agency or the ‘being’ of objects. However, the area of study that I am currently engaged in is relatively new, and the discipline of art history has not addressed Indigenous art until fairly recently. I have thus borrowed perspectives from certain areas of anthropological theory that interrogate objects, such as Alfred Gell’s theory of the agency of art.<sup>18</sup> Such theory supports investigations of the *social relationships* that occur between persons and ‘things,’ and persons and persons through ‘things.’<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> My family’s tikinaagan, which held my younger brother and I, was created by a close family friend and member of the Mitchikanibikok Inik (Algonquins of Barriere Lake), Jean-Maurice (Poncho) Matchewan.

<sup>17</sup> Child, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: A New Anthropological Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Ruth Phillips, “Panel: We Have Never Been Western: Science and Magic, Objects and Things,” Presentation at The Otsego Institute for Native American Art History, Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, NY May 21-24, 2012.

According to Gell, objects possess autonomous agency by virtue of the care, skill, and creative choice that the artist has put into the creation of an object's stylistic design and physical construction. In his chapter, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," Gell discusses art objects as the outcome of the mastery of technique: "Objects ... demonstrate a certain technically achieved level of excellence, 'excellence' being a function, not of their characteristics simply as objects, but their characteristics as *made* objects."<sup>20</sup> The notion that an object was carefully crafted and *made* by the hands of a well-skilled artisan "enchants" viewers and can affect people in a very physical and emotional way. Thus, upon their making, objects carry with them a compelling and autonomous *agency* that has the ability to continually *act* upon people in present moments, even well after the artist is gone, and viewers can react and respond to this agency as if the objects themselves are living beings or even people. Stories, thoughts, and memories thus become activated within and through the viewing of objects in a way that motivates social interaction and relationship -- between person and object, and person and person through object. In applying this analysis I will explore the creation and design of objects related to Anishinaabe childcare, and the families, communities and nations they have *affected* for centuries and which have become embodied within the objects themselves.

When dealing with Indigenous art objects, however, there are certain areas of Gell's argument that are inadequate. In addition to his theory of object agency and stylistic or technical design, there is another aspect of "enchantment" with regard to Indigenous art objects that Gell does not consider -- the "enchantment" that occurs

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<sup>20</sup> Gell, 43.



through an object's "relation to the artist and the community that it was made in."<sup>21</sup> To address this gap I sought methodologies to complement Gell's analysis and drew from the work of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, who has engaged in the concept of in-depth object biography,<sup>22</sup> and the theory of the social life of things as explored by Igor Kopytoff.<sup>23</sup> Both of these writers approach life-stories and the meaning of objects, albeit from slightly different angles.

Ulrich is a practitioner of micro-history that is object-centered. She uses detailed investigations of historical context to reveal an object's meaning in its own time. Often focusing on a single seemingly "ordinary" object of daily use to tell a larger and more well-defined story, Ulrich's work "[asks] large questions in small places."<sup>24</sup> Of her concentration on "the stories of individual people – makers ... and users of ordinary household goods," she says, "sometimes the most useful insights come from pondering the harnesses and treadles that move the interlocking threads of daily life."<sup>25</sup> Engaging with this research practice was very helpful for my approach to cradles and specifically to my case study of the tikinaagan from Bear Island. Like Ulrich, I was interested in closely examining the ways in which a single object of everyday family use could communicate wider traditional understandings of community and worldview.

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<sup>21</sup> Gloria Bell, "Threads of Visual Culture: Métis Art and Identity in Ontario," (MA Thesis, Carleton University, 2010), 90.

<sup>22</sup> See: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001); see also: Janet Hoskins, "Agency, Biography and Objects," in *The Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Kuchler et al, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2010), 74-84.

<sup>23</sup> Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64-95.

<sup>24</sup> Charles W. Joyner, *Shared Traditions: Southern History and Folk Culture*, (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1999), 1.

<sup>25</sup> Ulrich, 8.

However, I wished to go a bit further. Whereas Ulrich's approach to object biography focuses on the study of an item in its own time of creation and use, I was also interested in exploring the ways in which the meaning of Indigenous cradles could change *over time*, even beyond the life of the object's original use to present day. Igor Kopytoff's article, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," considers the shifting social use and value of an object as it ages and travels through time and space.<sup>26</sup> According to Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, this study of the social life of things argues that objects cannot be fully understood "at just one point in their existence and processes and cycles of production." Rather, in taking up Kopytoff's approach, they contend, "Not only do objects change through their existence, but they often have the capability of accumulating histories, so that the present significance of an object derives from the persons and events to which it is connected."<sup>27</sup> This work, together with the writings of Gell and Ulrich, explains how objects have the ability to carry, embody and activate meaning, stories, values and understandings of the world. Through an investigation of the tikinaagan, this thesis will address the ways in which the social interactions between individuals and the art created and used by their ancestors generate meaning and have the potential to invigorate conceptual continuity in a contemporary context.

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<sup>26</sup> Kopytoff, 66-67.

<sup>27</sup> Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, "The Cultural Biography of Objects," *World Archeology* 31.2 (1999): 170.

More recently, art historical scholars and students of Indigenous art, such as Steven Leuthold<sup>28</sup> and Heather Ahtone,<sup>29</sup> have proposed alternatives to anthropological theory that emphasize conceptual continuity and theorize aesthetics in a new way. Both scholars stress the importance of understanding Indigenous art as a largely collective process, one that encourages viewers to investigate the experiences of art beyond the formal properties of individual works, and instead focus on their extension into cultural systems. According to Ahtone's approach, the study of Indigenous objects is inherently reliant on the study of relationships.<sup>30</sup> In a similar vein to works of Gell and Kopytoff, Ahtone views historical objects as being layered with relationships that link present community members to those of the past. She goes on to explain that the relatively new research area of Indigenous aesthetics must also base itself on the viewing of art objects as didactic materials and mnemonic devices that carry expansive cultural memory of traditional values, and contribute to a regenerative identity that is distinctly Indigenous.

### **The "Artist" as Collective**

The name(s) of the Teme-Augama Anishinabai community member(s) that created the Bear Island tikinaagan were sadly never recorded, and the maker(s) of the object have remained anonymous since the time of the cradle's collection one hundred years ago. Although recovering the identity of the person(s) who may have crafted the Bear Island tikinaagan was not possible, I felt that it was important to try and refer to

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<sup>28</sup>Steven Leuthold, *Indigenous Aesthetics: Native Art, Media, and Identity*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998).

<sup>29</sup>Heather Ahtone, "Designed to Last: Striving Toward an Indigenous American Aesthetic," *The International Journal of the Arts in Society*, 4.2 (2009): 373-385.

<sup>30</sup>See also: Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, (Halifax; Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008).

them in a way that respected them, their community, and their skilled work. By doing this, I adopted the Western convention of using the term “artist” to refer to the tikinaagan’s maker(s), but have shifted its implications to serve a different tradition. In Western thought, the word “artist” carries a certain stigma and is often understood to be synonymous with “the individual.” However, in Indigenous traditions, “art-making,” and certainly “tikinaagan-making,” was a communal and shared effort – and as I will discuss in forthcoming chapters – collectivity and interdependence were also highly valued aspects of pre-colonial Indigenous childcare practice. To acknowledge these traditions I have used the term “artist” to refer to not only the individual Teme-Augama Anishnabai member(s) who created the Bear Island tikinaagan, but moreover to refer to the wider circles of traditions and relationships among community, family members, and ancestors that would have also contributed to its making, ornamentation, and metaphorical use in the caring/carrying of the younger generation.

### **Writer’s Perspective, My Teachers, and Indigenous Practice**

As an Indigenous scholar, I write from a position in two worlds, and I have tried as best I can to draw on theory and methodology that honours both Western academic practice, and Indigenous bodies of knowledge. According to Marlene Brant-Castellano, Indigenous knowledge systems are necessarily and profoundly grounded in the “personal, [as well as the] oral, experiential, holistic, and [are] conveyed in narrative or metaphorical language.”<sup>31</sup> In keeping with this understanding, as an individual who is a

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<sup>31</sup> Marlene Brant-Castellano, “Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge,” *Indigenous Knowledges In Global Contexts*, ed. George J. Dei, Budd L. Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 25; See also: Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and*

part of a wider community of Indigeneity, I also have a responsibility to engage with these different elements of Indigenous knowledge, in addition to the anthropological and art historical theories of Western scholarship.

The place that I write from is deeply personal. And although throughout this discussion on the roles of children and traditional childcare I cannot speak from the experience of a parent or caregiver, I *do* understand what it is to be a young person, to be raised and cared for by family and extended family members, and to be a part of supportive communities and two resilient nations, Anishinaabe and Onkwehonwe. However, in order to gain a better understanding of these themes of traditional childrearing, I viewed the tikinaagan from Bear Island as a catalyst to open up this wider conversation of communal childcare and social structures. According to Brant-Castellano's understanding of Indigenous methodologies, "The holistic quality of knowledge implies that isolating pieces of experience and trying to make sense of them apart from the environment that gave rise to them flies in the face of reality and is bound to lead to frustration."<sup>32</sup> Therefore, I felt that to view the Bear Island tikinaagan as separate from the territory and community that gave rise to it about one hundred years ago would be to completely deviate from the tradition of knowledge within which it originated. This in turn, brought me to N'Daki Menan ("our land"), the territory of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai (TAA). And so began my friendships with some very special people. They very graciously and very patiently sat with me over tea and coffee, and shared their personal histories, their experiences and what they know as women, mothers,

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*Indigenous Peoples*, (London; New York: Zed Books; Dunedin: University of Otago Press; New York: Distributed in the USA exclusively by St. Martin's Press, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> Brant-Castellano, 30.

aunties, and grandmothers as I fiddled with my digital voice recorder and tried to take in every bit of story I could.

The meetings I had with these three ladies, June Twain, Mary Katt and Virginia McKenzie (See Appendix 1) were very relaxed and more conversational in nature than a formal interview.<sup>33</sup> I had prepared a set of sample questions to act as a guide, but I made the decision very early on to remain very open and adaptable to whatever June, Mary and Virginia wanted to share with me. This decision to deviate from the standard structure of the interview process allowed for more spontaneous diversions that gradually guided this thesis into unexpected arenas in a very natural way. The original project proposal I presented to the TAA on my first visit to Bear Island in late March of 2012 centered on the role of Anishinaabekwewag<sup>34</sup> and their roles as lifeline guardians and caregivers to younger generations, and so my initial research inquiries were geared mostly towards the experiences of women. I had always intended to use the tikinaagan as a case study for a wider conversation. What emerged from my meetings with June, Mary and Virginia and the time I spent on Bear Island, however, was a growing emphasis on the importance of family, community and nationhood. The notion that Anishinaabekwewag played central roles as caregivers to babies and children was certainly always present, but I often found that the stories that were shared also had much to do with memories surrounding *many* close and extended family members, and what it means to be a part of a community at

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<sup>33</sup> For further reading on this qualitative research practice in Indigenous methodology see: Margaret Kovach, "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research," *First Nations Child and Family Review*, 5.1 (2010), 40-48.

<sup>34</sup> Anishinaabe women

every life stage. As I gathered these stories together, the focus of this thesis shifted, transformed, and began to take shape.

### **The Literature, and ‘Quite A Lot of Digging’**

In addition to conducting interviews, I also consulted a variety of source materials and engaged in the research practice that Heidi Bohaker has referred to as “casting a wider net.”<sup>35</sup> Along with scholarly and archival material, throughout this thesis you will also find references to a range of conferences, symposia, conversations with friends and family members, songs, and passages from novels, childhood stories, and plays. I follow Bohaker’s lead both in the hope of composing a rich and meaningful story, and also out of necessity. To quote my friend and fellow scholar, Mariah Battiste, who works within a similar theme on traditional maternal health within Mi’kmaw communities, when it came down to gathering the scholarly literature on my topic, I too at times felt as if I was trying to “make ground on the back of a turtle.”<sup>36</sup>

There has not been a large body of work that has focused on childcare objects or traditional Anishinaabe childrearing. At the beginning of this research journey I was told by my advisor, Dr. Ruth B. Phillips, that I would be required to do “quite a lot of digging,” as information on early Anishinaabe cradleboards and the overall domestic sphere was somewhat scarce and difficult to find. More recently, scholars such as Cath

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<sup>35</sup> Heidi Bohaker, “‘Nindoodemag’: The Significance of Algonquian Kinship Networks in the Eastern Great Lakes Region, 1600-1701,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63.1 (2006): 23-52.

<sup>36</sup> Mariah Sundaylace Battiste, “Nurturing the Future: Exploring Health Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviours Among Mi’kmaw Women” (MA Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2010/2011), 127.

Oberholtzer,<sup>37</sup> Barbara Hail,<sup>38</sup> and Mary Jane Lenz<sup>39</sup> have taken up traditional childcare objects as a focus of study; however, despite this important work, in-depth writing within this research area is still relatively hard to track down. There is however, a growing body of work that engages similar arenas surrounding traditional family life, parenting, the roles of Indigenous women and the revival of these values which has informed my related research on the metaphorical meaning of the tikinaagan.<sup>40</sup>

I have gathered this diverse array of information, both historical and contemporary, from many different sources gleaned from different Algonquian,<sup>41</sup> Anishinaabek and Indigenous communities, not just Bear Island specifically. Although my focus for this is the TAA, and the creation of a tikinaagan which would be collected by Frank Speck in 1913, in order to attain a fuller understanding of the object itself and its ability to activate meaning and cultural continuity, I have had to engage with a number of accounts related to Indigenous childcare to locate similarities and parallels that could be found across communities within Algonquian nations. By doing this, I am in no way assuming that *all* Algonquian peoples, families and communities are part of a homogenous group with shared identical practices, protocols and characteristics. Rather,

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<sup>37</sup> Cath Oberholtzer, "Net Baby Charms: Metaphors of Protection and Provision," *Papers of the Twenty-Fourth Algonquian Conference*, ed. William Cowan, (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1993) 318-330.; and Cath Oberholtzer, "A Womb with a View: Cree Moss Bags and Cradleboards," *Papers of the Twenty-Eighth Algonquian Conference*, ed. David Pentland, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1997), 258-270.

<sup>38</sup> Barbara Hail, ed., *Gifts of Pride and Love: Kiowa and Comanche Cradles*, (Bristol: Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, 2000).

<sup>39</sup> Mary Jane Lenz, *The Stuff of Dreams: Native American Dolls*, (New York: Museum of the American Indian, 1986).; and Mary Jane Lenz, *Small Spirits*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

<sup>40</sup> Particularly the works of Kim Anderson and Leanne Simpson; see: Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2000); Anderson, *Life Stages*, (2011); and Leanne Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*, (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> This name is used to identify a large group of North American Indigenous languages. Nations that form a part of this language family include the Ojibwe, Odawa, Potawatomi, Cree, Algonquin, and Mi'kmaq.



through this inclusive approach to the research of “gathering” and “bundling,” I hope to highlight areas in which strong correlations in knowledge systems *can* or *do* occur, and which have the possibility of resonating among many Algonquian, Anishinaabek and Indigenous peoples to invigorate imagination, empowerment, and resurgence.

To summarize, the areas of work that I have indicated above address related fields of family life, childrearing, and life stages, while some touch on the use of childcare objects. There is also, as I noted, a burgeoning area of research using the notion of object biography and the “active” historical object in contemporary contexts,<sup>42</sup> and a growing emphasis on the revitalization of Indigenous knowledge through the exploration of museum objects and other historical or archival material.<sup>43</sup> Yet a specific and in-depth examination of the traditional values of Great Lakes Indigenous parenting, family and community through an examination of the layered meanings of the Anishinaabe tikinaagan still had not been undertaken. As the following chapters unfold, I address these gaps in the literature and explore the metaphorical implications of the Bear Island tikinaagan in further depth.

### **Thesis Overview**

In much the same way that a newborn baby is swaddled with blankets and bands of mossbag coverings, this thesis has many layers.

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<sup>42</sup> Chris Gosden, “Material Culture and Long-term Change,” in *The Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Kuchler et al. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2010), 425-442.

<sup>43</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Looking for Stories and Unbroken Threads: Museum Artifacts as Women's History and Cultural Legacy,” in *Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community, and Culture*, ed. Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, Madeline Dion Stout, and Eric Guimond, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2009), 283-312.

**Chapter One:**

My first chapter provides a literature review of existing sources that describe the use and structure of the tikinaagan in the past. I discuss the ways in which these historical writings were largely informed by an outsider's perspective that placed value on the object in a way that did not necessarily reflect the views or voices of the Indigenous reality, often only remarking on the tikinaagan's utility. Despite their richness and complexity, Anishinaabe concepts and perspectives related to the creation and use of these art objects was marginalized or entirely ignored in these texts. In contrast to the treatment of childcare objects in this early written record, the chapters that follow will seek to demonstrate the way in which these material things were not 'passive' and did not exist in isolation, but formed part of a complex body of cultural understandings through their renderings of Anishinaabe worldview.

**Chapter Two:**

This section is dedicated to the biography of the Bear Island tikinaagan, the context in which it was created, and the hands it passed through to arrive at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, where I came to visit it at the beginning of my graduate program. I address here the question of how this object ended up in a museum collection, so far removed from its place of origin. Through this investigation, I will introduce you to the Teme-Augama Anishinaabai, their territory of n'Daki Menan, the historical changes occurring in the Dominion leading up to the early-twentieth century, and what research

paradigms prompted the anthropologist Frank Speck to visit and collect this particular object from the community on Bear Island one hundred years ago.

In this chapter I begin outlining some of the history of the TAA and the way in which settler-colonialism has drastically impacted their relationship to n'Daki Menan. I felt that it was crucial to include this history because, as previously discussed, Indigenous knowledges are necessarily both personal and experiential and are related to identity -- and whether expressed through objects or texts -- are inherently connected to land. A small part of this very complex expression of Indigenous identity can be seen in the TAA's identification of themselves as "The People of the Deep Water," a distinct nation who are fundamentally and irrevocably *from* the waters and surrounding lands of Lake Temagami. Keeping this in mind, it becomes clear that in discussing the creations of a people, one cannot separate this dialogue from conversations about the history of traditional territory. In addition to this very important point, I also felt that outlining some of this history was significant because it also speaks to the strength, tenacity and fortitude of the TAA as a community and as a people. This discussion of Indigenous knowledge anchors the following chapter examining the innovative creativity of Anishinaabekwe beadworkers and the shifting iconography of cradleboards.

### **Chapter Three:**

This chapter builds on the discussion of the history of the TAA and n'Daki Menan laid out in the previous section but focuses on the changing economy of Northern Ontario in the early-twentieth century as it shifted rapidly from furs to lands, resources and tourism.

What I explore here are the ways in which this dramatic change, together with related government objectives, not only further displaced the TAA from their own territory but also severely impacted their ability to live off the land as they had always done. The community, like many others, had very few options other than to participate in the tourist industry that seemed to be encompassing all of Ontario's north once it became reachable by railway. Within this discussion of the economic shift to the tourist trade, I also outline a parallel change in the iconography of Anishinaabe wares, including cradleboard covers. Abstract motifs were gradually replaced by more "ornamental" figurative floral depictions, like the beaded spray on the Bear Island tikinaagan. This chapter explores how these seemingly altered designs communicate continuity and embody meaning that has remained very much the same across time and space. I view Anishinaabekwewag as innovators, who made use of their shapeshifting abilities through their artworks as a strategy for cultural survival.

#### **Chapter Four:**

My findings on the continuities in the iconography of old and new cradleboard covers allow me to argue in my final chapter that the designs that speak to the very purpose of the tikinaagan and its profound metaphorical relationship to traditional Anishinaabek community organization. By locating the tikinaagan within the broader context of its traditional social use as a place of warmth, safety and protection for infants, I investigate the connection between the cradleboard's iconographic qualities and its ability to communicate an understanding of family, community and nationhood within a

contemporary Indigenous contexts and affirms its place as an object of attained power activated with cultural memory.

**And so, we begin.**

## Chapter One

### Cradleboards and Cultural Difference

*In France, children are carried on the arm, or clasped to the breast; in Canadas, the mothers bear them behind their backs. In France, they are kept as well covered as possible; there [in Canadas] they are most often as bare as your hand. The cradle, in France, is left at home; there [in Canadas] the women carry it with their children; it is composed merely of a cedar board, on which the poor little one is bound like a bundle.*<sup>44</sup>

Paul Le Jeune, French Jesuit Missionary, 1657-58

This text appears in the *Jesuit Relations* of 1657-1658 in a chapter titled, “Of the *Differences* Between the Manners and Customs of the French, or the Europeans, and Those of the Savages.”<sup>45</sup> Although this entry is sourced from the mid-seventeenth century writings of the Jesuit missionaries located in Iroquois territory (or what was then referred to as “Lower Canada”), it serves to represent the ways in which Indigenous cradles and childrearing practices were viewed by many of the early European settlers – as inherently *different* from those found in France. As is evident from the opening passage, the early writing on this topic displays a Eurocentric, outsider's perspective that in many cases did not reflect the understandings of an Indigenous worldview. These early European writings on childcare were predicated on a sense of Otherness, which assumed that European customs, traditions and values were what was “normal” or “universal.”<sup>46</sup> They

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<sup>44</sup> Paul Le Jeune, “Chapter VII: Of the Difference Between the Manners and Customs of the French, or the Europeans, and those of the Savages,” in *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791*, ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Bros. Co., 1896-1901. 44: 275-309), 303-304. The author of this chapter is not provided in the original *Relation*. In the preface to this relatively smaller volume, the original Paris editor implies that some material and information was lost when it was sent from New France. However, despite this, editor Thwaites indicates in his preface to the volume that this chapter was “apparently written by Paul Le Jeune,” and so it has been attributed to him here.

<sup>45</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>46</sup> Tuhiwai Smith, 32.

invited damaging “us vs. them” comparisons and described those who did not subscribe to European ideals only by their *difference* in comparison to Europe.<sup>47</sup>

In this small portion of text from the early *Jesuit Relations* we see the cradleboard being viewed as a distinct site of cultural difference. From the perspective of the early settler, the cradleboard represented everything that France, as a European nation was *not*. Additionally, as Ruth B. Phillips has indicated in *Trading Identities*, within the European context, cradleboards, much like birch bark canoes, were viewed as inventions *unique* to the Woodlands peoples of the Great Lakes region. Their use seemed to represent and suit the Indigenous nomadic way of life, and reflected early explorers’ view of Indigenous peoples as and their land as picturesque, wild and free. Thus, tikinaaganan<sup>48</sup> quickly became objects of intrigue, as well as archetypal symbols of authentic “Indianness.”<sup>49</sup>

The “exoticism” that surrounded the cradleboard’s uniqueness and its marked cultural difference stimulated the curiosity of many early European travellers, explorers and anthropologists who often remarked on the physical attributes and novel use of the cradleboard in their descriptive accounts and ethnographies of the Indigenous peoples of the “New World.”

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<sup>47</sup> Marie Battiste and Sakej Youngblood Henderson. *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge*, (Saskatoon: Purich, 2000), 21-22.

<sup>48</sup> Plural Anishinaabemowin term for cradleboard.

<sup>49</sup> Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 81.

### **Tread Lightly: A Quick Note on the Early Written Word**

Kim Anderson has noted in her research on life cycles and native women that early ethnographies, such as the ones that I will be outlining in this chapter, often provide the most explicit sources of information on our people. However, while these historical accounts undoubtedly offer invaluable material they should be read critically.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, when using historical texts, one must also be wary of the Western tendency to think of time as being linear and divided into two large eras predating and following European contact.<sup>51</sup> Although the early written accounts that describe the use of tikinaaganan, life stages and childrearing practices begin at the time of European settlement and provide the starting point for the component of this research that relies on written sources, I recognize that the traditions of the Anishinaabek have existed since before they were put down on paper, and I do not privilege the written word over the oral or storied. It is important to acknowledge that according to our histories, our people, our songs and our traditions have existed since time immemorial, long before the time of European contact. In this study I hope to illustrate the gaps in the literature and historical record that have resulted from ignoring the Indigenous voice.

### **Cradleboard Cleverness: Ethnographies and Other Early Accounts**

Many early travellers and ethnographers commented on the physical construction of the cradleboard and marveled at the cleverness of its design and resulting portability.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 16.

<sup>51</sup> Ruth Phillips and Janet Berlo, *Native North American Art*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>52</sup> See Peter Grant. "The Saulteaux Indians about 1804," in *Les bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest* Ed. Louis Rodrigue Masson, Vol 2. (Quebec: Impr. Generale A Cote et cie, 1890) 322-323.; John Long, *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter*, (London: Robsen, 1791) 60-61.; William Wentworth-Fitzwilliam, *The North-West Passage By Land*, (London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1865), 85.; Frances



In his early-nineteenth century account, for example, traveller John Lambert noted the suitability of the cradleboard to the nomadic lifestyle of the Indigenous peoples he encountered in Lower Canada:

The women carry their children behind their back: they are wrapped up in swaddling-cloths, and fastened to a flat board, which has a piece of hickory stick bent over at the top; upon this a piece of cloth is fastened, which covers the child, and preserves it from being plagued by the musquitoes [sic] and flies, or scratched by the bushes when going through the woods. This mode of carrying children is well adapted to the wandering life of the Indians, and their fatiguing journeys through the forest.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, Joseph N. Nicolett, a scientist and geographer who spent time with the Anishinaabek along the Upper Mississippi River during the 1830s, remarks in his journals on the fitting use and portability of the cradleboard, referring to it as a “crib used by the Chippewa ... so tastefully made and so convenient for the mother who can attend to her domestic work without losing sight of her little one.”<sup>54</sup> This particular attribute, the ability for a mother to keep her infant “constantly with her,”<sup>55</sup> gained the attention of many others as well. “The mother can set the baby up in its cradleboard anywhere,” Sister Mary Inez Hilger writes, “against a tree or wigwam or any place, or she can hang it on a tree [by the bow] so dogs can’t bother the baby while she is busy making sugar or picking berries. The baby can’t get hurt if it falls over: the bow protects

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Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 86, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1929), 48-50.; Kohl, 6-8.; Hilger, 21-25.

<sup>53</sup> John Lambert, *Lambert’s Travels Through Canada*, (London: Printed C. Cradock and W. Joy, 1814) 364-5.

<sup>54</sup> Joseph N. Nicollet, *Journals of Joseph N. Nicollet*, ed. Martha Coleman Bray, (1970; reprint, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2004), 188, 255. The translation of Nicollet’s journal uses the term “crib,” however the description he provides of the infant’s bed, complete with a wooden arch to guard the baby’s head and its linings of wood rot, moss and cattail wool, very strongly suggests that he was referring to the Anishinaabek cradleboard. See 181, 188.

<sup>55</sup> Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, 48

its head and body.”<sup>56</sup> The ingenious addition of the cradleboard’s upright curved bow, which appears to be a common characteristic of cradleboards for many Indigenous groups, served a variety of purposes. The most noticeable being its use as a kind of “crash bar”<sup>57</sup> that, as I note in the Introduction to this thesis, was used to protect the infant laced within should the cradleboard happen to fall forward. As Kohl marveled, “You may roll an Indian tikinaagan over as much as you please, but the child cannot be injured.”<sup>58</sup> Another use for the curved bow is, as Lambert observed, to support a covering of skins, or light cloth or netting to shelter the child from the various elements of North American seasons, and to shield its face from the pesky flies and rough tree branches while traveling through the bush.<sup>59</sup> Ethnologist and curator Otis T. Mason also likened the cradleboard to a kind of “play-house” for the baby, as nearly all cradleboards could be seen with dangling objects and trinkets suspended from the bow for the child’s entertainment.<sup>60</sup>

Many early anthropologists would also evaluate Indigenous cradleboards according to their scientific understandings of infant physiology and development. There are many different descriptions of the ways in which the cradleboard’s blankets and

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<sup>56</sup> Hilger, 23. See also Rev. Joseph A. Gilfillan, “The Ojibways in Minnesota,” *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*. Vol. 9, (St. Paul: The Society, 1901), 86.

<sup>57</sup> Bruce White, *We Are at Home: Pictures of the Ojibwe People*, (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008), 21.

<sup>58</sup> Kohl, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, 49.

<sup>60</sup> Otis T. Mason, “Cradles of the American Aborigines,” in *Report of the National Museum 1886-87*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 162. See also: Kohl, 7-8; Densmore, 49; and Hilger, 23. One of the most important articles to be hung by the bow of an infant’s cradleboard was the navel pendant, or umbilical cord amulet. These objects, which also form a portion of Speck’s collection from Temagami, will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

natural padding were arranged,<sup>61</sup> but the early literature is in agreement that the Indigenous mother paid careful attention to the “straightness” of her baby’s back, arms and legs while preparing the infant for the tikinaagan wrappings.<sup>62</sup> According to Densmore, “It was the desire of the Chippewa that their children should be straight and vigorous, and to that end the mother began a child’s training in early infancy.”<sup>63</sup> This “training,” or what Henry R. Schoolcraft characterized as an Indian child’s “first lesson in the art of endurance,”<sup>64</sup> came from the restraint offered by the cradleboard’s tightly wrapped coverings. Although babies spent most of their first year on the tikinaagan, mothers would also alternate periods of time to let the baby “out for exercise.”<sup>65</sup> Additionally, Western scholars such as Mason also noted the rounded wooden “footrest” fastened along the bottom and side edges of Eastern Woodlands cradleboards and admired this element for its ability to help “the little one ... exercise its legs.”<sup>66</sup>

In their effort to understand the use of the cradleboard in Woodlands communities many anthropologists interpreted the childcare object through this functionalist, scientific and highly Westernized lens. They focused on the *convenience* of the physical attributes of the cradleboard and thereby marginalized Indigenous belief systems that surrounded the object and its relationship to traditional childcare practice. Historically, the typical anthropological approach to objects was to compare them to the rational institutions of

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<sup>61</sup> Depending on the availability of certain materials, padding most often included sphagnum moss, but also varied from cattail wool to rotted cedar wood, while blankets could be made with rabbit, weasel or squirrel skins, deer hide, trade cloth etc.

<sup>62</sup> See: Inez Hilger, 22-24; Densmore 49, Kohl 8, and “Indian Cradles,” *The Canadian Indian*, May, 1891. Vol. 1, No. 8. Ed. Rev. E. F. Wilson, H.B. Small., Published under the Auspices of the Canadian Indian Research and Aid Society. P 229.

<sup>63</sup> Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, 48.

<sup>64</sup> Henry R. Schoolcraft, *The Red Race of America*, (New York: Wm. H. Graham, 1847), 390.

<sup>65</sup> Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, 48

<sup>66</sup> Mason, 162.

Western civilization, and to invariably judge Indigenous understandings of their usefulness as inadequate and based on “magical” beliefs.<sup>67</sup> In an article titled, “Isometric Advantages of the Cradle Board: A Hypothesis,” for example, anthropologist Charles Hudson explains that despite the “false” and “magical” explanation for the value of the tikinaagan offered by North American Indigenous peoples, there is in fact *scientific* evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of its use in the physical development of children.<sup>68</sup> He writes: “[This] discussion provides an example of an exotic custom which is magical in its rationale, but which nevertheless succeeds in doing what it is intended to do. It is therefore comparable to ‘Voodoo’ death, divination, and other magical techniques that ‘actually work.’”<sup>69</sup>

The stress on convenience in the early literature about cradleboards, resulted in a denial and complete disregard for the presence of spiritual or *non-physical* attributes of the tikinaagan and their contribution to the well-being of babies. As will be discussed in later chapters, objects related to early life stages and traditional childcare held great significance for infants and families as well as for the wider community. While many early anthropologists understood that deeper spiritual concerns existed with regard to children and childcare objects such as the cradleboard, these considerations were often discounted as being “absurd” or “superstitious” notions and were rarely given much attention in early accounts.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Murray Wax and Rosalie Wax, “The Notion of Magic,” *Current Anthropology*, 4.5 (1963): 495.

<sup>68</sup> Charles Hudson. “Isometric Advantages of the Cradle Board: A Hypothesis,” *American Anthropologist*, 68.2 (1966): 470-474.

<sup>69</sup> Hudson, 474.

<sup>70</sup> Grant, 324.

Family life and childcare are not extensively treated in the archival record, in part because of the male bias that is present in many historical texts. There have, however, been several ethnographic accounts written by women<sup>71</sup> and a number of ethnographies that contain material shared by female informants which will be discussed in this thesis. Most of the early travellers and anthropologists were male and spoke almost exclusively to male informants, in many cases often overlooking the traditional female spheres of home life and childcare.<sup>72</sup> This lack of information in the historical record regarding the voice of Indigenous mothers and the deeper understandings of children and cradleboards is evident in the following passage by Otis T. Mason from his “Cradles of the American Aborigines” in 1887:

Much remains to be done exactly at this point ... There are a thousand old saws, superstitions, times and seasons, formularies, rites and customs hovering around the first year of every child’s life in savagery that one should know, in order to comprehend many things attached to the cradle and its uses. Indeed, no one but an Indian mother could narrate the whole story in detail. Awaiting information from these sources, we shall describe as faithfully as possible the material now stored.<sup>73</sup>

### **Life Stages, Babies and the First Hill of Life**

The tikinaagan, as an infant’s first environment after life inside the mother, was a place of profound importance for many Indigenous communities. Returning to Basil Johnston’s understanding of the Four Hills we can see the way in which each life stage

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<sup>71</sup> See: Hilger, Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*; see also: Ruth Landes, *The Ojibwa Woman* (New York: AMS Press, 1938). There are many areas of *The Ojibwa Woman* that are problematic and Landes has been criticized by many scholars for her largely ethnocentric depiction of the lives of Anishinaabekwe, and for the way in which the information she provided often conflicted with the findings of other ethnologists working with Anishinaabek. I find some of her descriptions of Anishinaabekwe harmful and unfair, and difficult to grapple with. For these reasons, many Indigenous scholars, including myself, have not included much of Landes’ account in contemporary works related to the empowerment and resurgence of traditional womanhood and roles of Anishinaabekwe (See: Note 8 in Kim Anderson, *Life Stages*, 184).

<sup>72</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 16

<sup>73</sup> Mason, 162.

was associated with certain responsibilities and significant roles that had to be played out within the traditionally organized Indigenous community. It may seem unusual to think about babies as having significant responsibilities at such an early age. “They are small, frail, helpless,” Johnston writes, “All they possess is potential, nothing more.”<sup>74</sup> However, it is through the *potential* they carry within them that babies play the most important role of all: “They bring happiness and hope.”<sup>75</sup>

While many of the early historical accounts discuss traditional women’s work, day-to-day family life and childcare only briefly, there are a number of anthropologists and early travellers who did document certain aspects of what they thought of as Anishinaabek “superstitions” regarding life stages, particularly the careful attention paid to infants on the First Hill of Life.<sup>76</sup>

During his work with the Wasauksing<sup>77</sup> Anishinaabek in the early-twentieth century, anthropologist Diamond Jenness noted some of the traditional understandings of early life stages and the significant role that protection played in the lives of infants. According to the traditional Anishinaabe worldview, the time of infancy is very precarious and the soul of a child can easily slip back into the Spirit World.<sup>78</sup> Developing trust and feelings of belonging is therefore paramount during the first stage of life. According to Jenness’ Anishinaabe informants the spirit of the infant is conscious of

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<sup>74</sup> Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 112.

<sup>75</sup> Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 112

<sup>76</sup> See: Peter Jones, *History of the Ojibway Indians*, (London: Bennett, 1861)161; Nicollet, 181-194; Densmore, 48-73.

<sup>77</sup> Parry Island First Nation

<sup>78</sup> Diamond Jenness, *The Ojibwa Indians of Parry Island, Their Social and Religious Life*, Department of Mines Bulletin 78, (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1935), 19-20.

many things at this time. Once a baby is born, its soul and shadow, which exist beyond the child's physical presence, are "peculiarly sensitive and need the most careful consideration."<sup>79</sup> Jenness explains, "As soon as a child is born its shadow wanders over the earth observing many things. That is why the child appears to lie dormant at this period and to learn nothing. Actually it learns a great deal."<sup>80</sup> He goes on to say that because the infant's soul and shadow are so active at this time, they are only attached to the baby's body by "very slender bonds," and so during this precarious life stage the child requires special protection and feelings of security.<sup>81</sup> How fitting, when we think about the protective *physical* qualities of the cradleboard that we have gleaned from the historical accounts outlined above; that the cradleboard's portability kept the baby under the watchful eye of the mother; it sheltered the infant from the natural elements, and its curved upright bow protected the child if the tikinaagan ever fell forward.

Given the understanding that children played such a crucial role in traditional societies, and that their souls and shadows - which were still strongly connected to the Spirit World – required the feelings of safety and belonging experienced within the physical and material place of the tikinaagan, is it possible that other attributes of the tikinaagan helped to communicate feelings of security and expressions of belonging to the baby in both physical and *non-physical* ways?

Many of our stories and traditional teachings tell us about the importance of balance and the complex duality and rhythms of both the physical and spiritual worlds.

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<sup>79</sup> Jenness, 19

<sup>80</sup> Jenness, 19-20.

<sup>81</sup> Jenness, 19.

Marie Battiste and Sakej Henderson maintain that within Indigenous knowledge systems all products of the human mind and heart are interrelated, that is to say that they all flow from the same source: relationships. Whether they are kinship ties between people, or people's kinship with other living creatures, natural beings, and the land, or people's kinship with the Spirit World – Indigenous knowledge is rooted in the multi-layered relationships that are found in both the physical and spiritual realms.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, in Basil Johnston's story of "The Vision" as well as in his understanding of the life cycle in the "Four Hills," we see that at every stage there are always two dimensions to a person's life, the physical, as well as the moral.<sup>83</sup> In keeping with this Indigenous understanding of knowledge, it follows that to view tikinaagan completely apart from their physical *and* their moral/spiritual attributes is to step away from the worldview of the people who created them and the families that once carried them.

### **Museum Objects: "Visiting the Beings," Material Stories and Planting Seeds**

The model tikinaagan (Figure 1) that forms the central case study for this thesis is part of the 'Speck Collection' at the Canadian Museum of Civilization and objects are referred to by the name of the collector, in this case the anthropologist Dr. Frank G Speck. Typically, throughout the numerous institutions holding Indigenous collections across the globe very few accounts identify the specific names of the makers of the objects. There is very little documentation that offers insight into the overall context and

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<sup>82</sup> Battiste and Henderson, 41.

<sup>83</sup> Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 120.



creation of collected objects because, also typically, collected artifacts were valued not as the work of an individual *artist*, but as of production of an entire culture of *Indians*.<sup>84</sup>

“That’s the way that should have been done,” Mary Katt said as we leafed through photographs of anonymous objects in the ‘Speck Collection’ that had been created by members from her community, “People’s names all should have been there. If you’re going to do something you put your name to it.”<sup>85</sup> As someone who has spent time in museum storage with historical objects and seen the great love and care that imbues them with contextual power, I certainly shared this sentiment with Mary – people’s names all should have been there.

Like Gerald Vizenor’s trickster character Harold, who compares the glass cases of an anthropology museum to the display of “lost and lonesome animals” in a zoo, I too shared those feelings of sadness, anger, and at times, extreme detachment from museum objects whose makers were left largely anonymous by early collectors.<sup>86</sup> However, what I came to learn from A’aaninin curator Joe Horse Capture, is that, yes, these objects are indeed lonely. In many cases they have been left in the dark tucked away in the drawers of museum storage, lost and separated from their creators and their territory. But because

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<sup>84</sup> James Clifford, “On Collecting Art and Culture.” In *The Visual Culture Reader*, edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff, (London: Routledge, 1998), 101.

<sup>85</sup> Mary Katt, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 3, 2012.

<sup>86</sup> Lee Schweninger, “‘Lost and Lonesome’: Literary Reflections on Museums and the Roles of Relics,” *The American Indian Quarterly* 33.2 (2009): 169-199. See: Gerald Vizenor, “Harold of Orange,” in *Shadow Distance: A Gerald Vizenor Reader*, (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 323; and, Gerald Vizenor, *Harold of Orange*, directed by Richard Weise (1983; Lincoln: Native American Public Telecommunications, 1984), DVD.

of this loneliness, Joe encourages people to visit them, because the objects miss it.<sup>87</sup> I still find it difficult to put into words how I felt when I had the experience of holding the Bear Island tikinaagan for the first time early in my first semester of graduate school. I viewed the objects in the collection from Bear Island, this tiny cradleboard, and the number of navel cord amulets that I would also later see, as part of history, and as being very special. And although they were left without the names of their individual makers, they tell the stories of the multi-layered relationships that surrounded their creation.

In a chapter of *Museum Pieces*, Ruth Phillips recalls a former student, Lindsay Borrows, who described spending time in museum collections in a similar way to Joe Horse Capture – as a *visit* or reunion with the “beings,” and referred to the historical objects as “family” and “old friends.”<sup>88</sup> However, this intimacy of reunion or visiting our old Anishinaabe friends can, like Harold’s experience described above, feel inhibited by the unfamiliarity of the Western museum environment. As many scholars and community members have stated in the past, for contemporary Indigenous peoples museums can often carry negative connotations of death, in that they can be painful reminders of a past that was forcibly taken away, their shelves filled with old things from long-ago traditions that are no longer ‘living.’<sup>89</sup> Yet as Sherry Farrell Racette reassures us, objects have stories to tell. “They are encoded with knowledge,” she says, “although they are sometimes impenetrable and difficult to understand. Most often sleeping on a shelf in a

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<sup>87</sup> Joe Horse Capture, “Receptacles of Power: Three Case Studies,” Presentation at The Otsego Institute for Native American Art History, Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, NY May 21-24, 2012.

<sup>88</sup> Ruth Phillips, *Museum Pieces*, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2011), 293.

<sup>89</sup> Ruth Phillips, “Why Not Tourist Art? Significant Silences in Native American Museum Representations,” in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, ed. Gyan Prakash (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 116.

museum storage room, completely decontextualized from their cultures of origin, they are the raw materials of our history.”<sup>90</sup>

We can say, then, that these objects in themselves can be considered stories, stories that have been preserved for us, the younger generations, to learn from. Although the era in which these written and material stories were collected was a time of great cultural disruption, during which ethnographic researchers and their native participants were entangled within damaging colonization efforts, many Indigenous scholars today, such as Wendy Makoons Geniusz, believe that on some level our Elders were helping ethnographers and collectors to record this knowledge so that it would be preserved for the generations to come.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Simpson describes the Elders’ efforts to shelter our stories as an act of resistance. She writes: “They resisted by taking the seeds of our culture ... and packing them away, so that one day another generation of ... Nishnaabeg might be able to plant them.”<sup>92</sup> Simpson also says that in this revitalization of Indigenous knowledge it is our responsibility to unpack our teachings and our stories in a way that makes them relevant to Indigenous peoples today. She remembers her Elders telling her, “That’s the responsibility of your generation Leanne, you’ve got to figure out how to take the meaning from the teachings and interpret them -- because there’s always more than one way to interpret things -- interpret them in a way that has meaning for this generation.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Farrell Raccette, “Looking for Stories,” 285.

<sup>91</sup> Wendy Makoons Geniusz, *Our Knowledge Is Not Primitive*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 105.

<sup>92</sup> Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back*, 15.

<sup>93</sup> Ryan McMahon and Leanne Simpson, “The Leanne Simpson Interview,” *Red Man Laughing* 1.19. Podcast audio. May 11, 2012, <http://www.redmanlaughing.com>.

So you see, although these old stories, these old objects, these tikinaaganan, may not be in use as often or at all anymore in many of our communities, we have to find a way to understand them, to listen to the stories they tell to foster meaning for our contemporary peoples. Through this approach I do not investigate tikinaaganan and pre-colonial childcare practices to suggest that all Indigenous families and communities need to return to their daily use. As Simpson reminds us,

There was a great diversity amongst Indigenous peoples in the kinds of childrearing practices they employed, and not all of the pre-colonial techniques are acceptable or desirable in contemporary times. Our children live in a very different world than their pre-colonial counterparts, and they have to be able to live and function in (at least) two worlds.<sup>94</sup>

Rather, what I am proposing is a deep *visit* with the values and teachings and these items carried. The cultural memory of historical objects and their instrumental ability to transmit knowledge across generations is palpable, but somewhere along the way we have forgotten or have been told to forget how to listen. Culture, and ancestral life-lines, as understood by Tom Hill and Richard Hill Sr., “are not preserved in books, films or [even in] museums. They are preserved when native children learn the traditions of their people and express them in *new ways*.”<sup>95</sup> It is our responsibility to take on the role that our ancestors laid out for us all those years ago, in revitalizing our knowledge, planting the seeds that have been preserved for us, and understanding our stories in new and meaningful ways so that we may pass them on for the generations to come.

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<sup>94</sup> Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 127.

<sup>95</sup> Tom Hill and Richard Hill Sr., “Across the Generations.” *Creation’s Journey: Native American Identity and Belief*, ed. Tom Hill and Richard W. Hill, Sr. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press in association with the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 1994), 177. (Emphasis added)

## Chapter Two

*It's called Teme-Augama, that means 'deep water', and that's who we are, we're Deep Water People.*<sup>96</sup>

June Twain, Bear Island, 2012

Located in Northeastern Ontario, is n'Daki Menan, the homeland and traditional territory of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai “The Deep Water People” (see Figure 2).

From time immemorial<sup>97</sup> and for many generations the Teme-Augama Anishnabai (TAA) have hunted, trapped, and lived on this land. For many Indigenous groups, this intimate relationship to land, to our ancestral territories, is not one that can be easily explained. Craig Macdonald's extensive work on the historical mapping of the region, which is based on many interviews with TAA Elders and Elders of nearby bands focusing on the region's Anishinaabe place-names and nastawgan,<sup>98</sup> provides some insight into the deep place-based knowledge of the territory that the TAA have maintained over centuries.

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<sup>96</sup> June Twain, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 4, 2012.

<sup>97</sup> This phrase refers to Indigenous occupation of land that is undeniably ancient and exists beyond memory or record. Diana Gordon's chapter “Prehistoric Occupations at Lake Temagami” in *Temagami: A Debate on Wilderness* provides an outline of the archeological and anthropological research that has been conducted throughout N'Daki Menan by archaeologists and historians such as Thor Conway, Jim Morrison and Craig MacDonald. The Teme-Augama Anishnabai have always asserted that they are the descendants of the Indigenous peoples who have occupied and cared for n'Daki Menan since time immemorial. See: Diana Gordon, “Prehistoric Occupations at Lake Temagami,” *Temagami: A Debate on Wilderness*, edited by Matt Bray and Ashley Thomson, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990), 153-184.

<sup>98</sup> “Nastawgan” are the ancient Indigenous travel routes of trails and waterways throughout the Temagami district. See: Craig Macdonald, “The Nastawgan: Traditional Routes of Travel in the Temagami District,” in *Nastawgan: The Canadian North by Canoe and Snowshoe*, edited by Bruce Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs (Weston: Betelgeuse Books, 1985), 183-189.

Indeed, n'Daki Menan has been referred to as a “storied” territory<sup>99</sup> filled with the memories of its caretakers, who, as Hodgins and Benidickson have written, have the land at “the centre of their identity and their existence as a community.”<sup>100</sup> However, as the late- nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries brought new visitors to the territory, the TAA quickly found that their ways of life and their close relationships with n'Daki Menan were becoming radically disrupted. Although n'Daki Menan, and the TAA remained relatively isolated from encounters with European settlers and their activities until the late-nineteenth century – an aspect which would attract one anthropologist in the summer of 1913 – a new set of government priorities that followed Confederation in the new country of “Canada” would put n'Daki Menan on the radar of many government officials, settlers and researchers.

### **The Dominion: Research, Responsibility and Salvaging the Authentic**

*Now or never is the time in which to collect from the natives what is still available for study ... With the increasing material prosperity and industrial development of Canada the demoralization or civilization of the Indians will be going on at an ever increasing rate ... What is now lost will never be recovered again.*<sup>101</sup>

Edward Sapir, 1911

When the Dominion of Canada was created with the Confederation of Provinces in 1867, extensive exploration and research on the newly amalgamated land was

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<sup>99</sup> Graeme Wynn, “Foreword: Nature and Nation in a ‘Little Known District amid the Wilds of Canada’” in, *Temagami’s Tangled Wild: Race Gender and the Making of Canadian Nature*, by Jocelyn Thorpe (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), xiii.

<sup>100</sup> Bruce Hodgins and Jamie Benidickson, *The Temagami Experience*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 4.

<sup>101</sup> Edward Sapir, “An Anthropological Survey of Canada,” *Science Journal* 34.884 (1911): 793.

essential, as W.H. Collins wrote in the annual report of the National Museum of Canada in 1926.<sup>102</sup> Together with the country's newfound responsibility for its Indigenous occupants declared under the British North America Act, 91(24), this need for exploration generated a desire to collect as much information as possible not only from the land, but also from its Indigenous inhabitants. Thus, began a surge of survey reporters and anthropologists into many of the "little known" regions scattered throughout the country.

The onslaught of research picked up considerable speed at the turn of the twentieth century and has been referred to as a "natural history movement."<sup>103</sup> Prior to the time of Confederation, the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC), which had been formed in 1841, held the responsibility of surveying the lands of Canada West and Canada East that comprised the Province of Canada.<sup>104</sup> In the time following Confederation and with the country's acquisition of the massive territories administered by the Hudson's Bay Company, there suddenly existed a huge tract of land in the north to be investigated by Euro-Canadian newcomers. The GSC, with its already well-established capacity for the investigation of natural resources, was assigned by the federal government to classify, collect and preserve any and all materials and specimens across the newly acquired land that fell within the broad scope of the "outdoor sciences."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> W. H Collins, "National Museum of Canada," in *Annual Report for 1926, National Museum of Canada: Bulletin 50* (Ottawa: Acland, 1928), 32-70.

<sup>103</sup> Siomonn Pulla, "From Advocacy to Ethnology: Frank Speck and the Development of Early Anthropological Projects in Canada, 1911-1920" (MA Thesis, Carleton University, 2000), 25.

<sup>104</sup> "Geological Survey of Canada," in *Scobie's Canadian almanac and repository of useful knowledge, for the year 1851*. (Toronto: H. Scobie, 1851), 67-68.

<sup>105</sup> Collins, 38.

According to Mary Louise Pratt, the European tendency to create scientific descriptive systems such as the discipline of natural history arose from the desire to control and systemize that which appeared to be in a state of disorder.<sup>106</sup> Canada, as a new country with so many of its northern regions still relatively unknown to settlers, was seen as wild, and the work of researchers was thus required to create order out of the chaotic frontier. The “outdoor sciences” of Canada included research on the flora and fauna of the territory as well as the collection of ethnological data and material culture from the diverse Indigenous groups whose traditions were believed to be quickly disappearing.<sup>107</sup>

The underlying paradigm of Canada’s “natural history movement,” as it would affect the Indigenous peoples who were now geographically within the new Dominion, was “salvage ethnography,” a research framework that was driven by the myth of the “Vanishing Indian,” produced by the widespread European belief that Canada’s Indigenous peoples were quickly on their way to extinction due to colonization and assimilationist efforts. The notion that Indians were “vanishing” was often romanticized and viewed as tragic by many of the early settlers. Yet, the death of Indigenous culture and way of life was understood to be unavoidable and necessary if modern society was to “progress.” The supposed “inevitability” of Indigenous disappearance sparked a sense of urgency to document “authentic” Indian culture before it was replaced by a more “civilized” Western society and lost forever. The word “authentic” is crucial here, for it governed the way in which Indigenous peoples were treated and studied by many early

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<sup>106</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 31.

<sup>107</sup> Pulla, “From Advocacy to Ethnology,” 25.



European anthropologists. This Western understanding of “authenticity” was based on the assumption that settler society and the ongoing Indigenous interaction with Europeans was quickly blemishing the purity of Indian culture. *Authentic* information that “still represent[ed] the unadulterated knowledge or crafts of the prehistoric races”<sup>108</sup> was becoming scarce -- *vanishing* -- and therefore valuable and needed to be “salvaged.” Canada, to fulfill its new federal responsibility over “Indians and lands reserved for Indians,”<sup>109</sup> began to implement its national duty to collect, document and preserve the supposed remaining fragments of authentic Indian culture and tradition before they became extinct.<sup>110</sup>

In this vein, anthropologist Franz Boas indicated in a journal article written in 1910 that an exhaustive study of the Indigenous peoples of the Dominion needed to be “seized upon ... before it [was] too late.”<sup>111</sup> In that same year, the Anthropological Division of the GSC, with Edward Sapir as its first director, was established, and transferred to the National Museum of Canada located in the Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa, Ontario (now the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Quebec).<sup>112</sup> The paradigm of “salvage ethnography” brought many anthropologists, researchers and collectors to Indian country in the north at the turn of the twentieth century. At the same

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<sup>108</sup> Marius Barbeau, “The Native Races of Canada.” *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series. 21, Section 2, (1927): 52-53. qtd in Andrew Nurse, “Marius Barbeau and the Methodology of Salvage Ethnography in Canada, 1911-51,” in *Historicizing Canadian Anthropology*, edited Julia Harrison and Regna Darnell (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 52.

<sup>109</sup> Section 91(24) of the British North America Act, 1867.

<sup>110</sup> Pulla, “From Advocacy to Ethnology,” 25.

<sup>111</sup> Franz Boas, “Ethnological Problems in Canada,” in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 40 (Jul.-Dec, 1910): 539.

<sup>112</sup> Pulla, “From Advocacy to Ethnology,” 26.

time, however, the European interest in settling and developing their traditional territories was significantly altering many Indigenous peoples' relationship to land and way of life.

### **n'Daki Menan and “New Ontario” in the Twentieth Century: Surveys, Settlement and Indigenous Displacement**

Although the TAA had come into contact with non-Native peoples on their lands prior to this point, the fluctuating European presence of early travellers, researchers, missionaries, traders and Hudson's Bay Company employees had remained relatively sparse and semi-permanent.<sup>113</sup> According to Thorpe, and Hodgins and Benidickson, it was not really until the turn of the twentieth century that n'Daki Menan, which had always remained under the care of the TAA, began to feel the sudden and heavy pressures of mass European settlement, tourism and resource development.<sup>114</sup> For much of the nineteenth century, n'Daki Menan had remained “just beyond the Canadian periphery” and was left either forgotten or unknown by government officials for a fair amount of time.<sup>115</sup> While a few surveyors explored the Lake Temagami region in the nineteenth century, much of the government interest in the development and regularized settlement of the north was limited to areas along the shores of the Great Lakes.<sup>116</sup> The more inland region surrounding Lake Temagami, although picturesque and attractive to the occasional traveller, was quite difficult to get to. Its rocky soils were believed to be

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<sup>113</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 30.

<sup>114</sup> Jocelyn Thorpe, *Tangled Wild, Temagami's Tangled Wild: Race Gender and the Making of Canadian Nature*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012); Hodgins and Benidickson, (1989).

<sup>115</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 36

<sup>116</sup> James Morrison, *The Robinson Treaties of 1850: A Case Study*. (Ottawa: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996), 7.

essentially unfit for agriculture and so showed little promise for permanent European settlement.<sup>117</sup>

Reports commissioned to take stock of the territory's other exploitable resources around the turn of the twentieth century would quickly change the way the potential of northern Ontario was perceived. As a 1900 report stated, "[It] was considered best to confine exploration to the territory north of the C.P.R. [Canadian Pacific Railway] track ... for there, after all, must lie our greatest hopes for future expansion."<sup>118</sup>

It was the desire of the provincial government to increase industrial development and the population of the province as a whole. Therefore, it became necessary for "New Ontario" to be opened-up with further railway lines<sup>119</sup> that connected the north to the activity happening in the burgeoning centre of Toronto. This was done with the hope that the northern district, which was then described as "practically a 'terra incognita,'"<sup>120</sup> would soon become what surveyor George R. Gray referred to in 1900 as: "a nucleus ... around which the lumbering, mining and agricultural industries [could] develop with rapidity, thereby inducing the settlement of these regions which now support only a few

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<sup>117</sup> "Temagami Lake, Nipissing District," in *Northern Districts of Ontario Canada: Nipissing, Algoma, Temiscaming, Wabicon, Rainy River*, Department of Crown Lands, (Toronto: Warwick Brothers and Rutter, 1897), 60; see also David Taylor, "Report of the Commissioners on the Survey of the Ottawa River, etc." *Appendix to Journal of the House of Assembly of Upper Canada*. 4<sup>th</sup> Session, 13<sup>th</sup> Parliament, (Toronto: R. Stanton, 1839), 92-93.

<sup>118</sup> "Introductory," in *Report of the Survey and Exploration of Northern Ontario, 1900*. Department of Crown Lands, (Toronto: L.K. Cameron, 1900), v.

<sup>119</sup> The Toronto and Hudson Bay Railway Commission inquired into potential routes connecting Toronto with areas in Ontario north of the Canadian Pacific Railway line. The commissioners advised that the new line, intended to reach James Bay, should travel by way of North Bay, thereby tapping into other regions in the area, such as Lake Temagami. See: "From Toronto to James Bay: Railway Commission Presents a Favourable Report," *Daily Mail and Empire*, December 31, 1898, 10; and "Ontario Projects," *The Globe*, January 3, 1899, 4.

<sup>120</sup> Department of Crown Lands, "Introductory," v.

scattered families of Indians.”<sup>121</sup> According to Toronto newspapers, which provided updates to their readers on reports from commissioners in the north, the fertility of the land far exceeded the opinions they had once had about its suitability for settlement.<sup>122</sup> With the pressure on arable lands in the south, coupled with the province’s ever increasing population wanting tracts of land to call their own, Canadian settlement pushed steadily northward.<sup>123</sup>

According to Hodgins and Benidickson, one of the most ambitious individual attempts at agriculture in the promotion of settlement in the Temagami region was through the missionary and colonization work of the Oblate priest Father Charles Paradis<sup>124</sup> in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.<sup>125</sup> Around this time, the colonization effort of the Catholic Church was aimed towards drawing settlers into the northern regions of Quebec and northeastern districts of Ontario, including Temagami. The underlying purpose of these campaigns was to recruit and “keep Canadian settlers in Canada and prevent them from leaving for the United States.”<sup>126</sup> A peculiar and controversial figure, Paradis sought to establish a farming retreat in 1891 that would also

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<sup>121</sup> George R. Gray, “Land and Timber Estimator’s Report of Exploration Survey Party No. 3,” *Report of the Survey and Exploration of Northern Ontario, 1900* (Toronto: L.K. Cameron, 1900), 97.

<sup>122</sup> “Means Millions: Eastern Outlet From Temiscamingue for Ottawa Lumberman,” *The Globe*, June 13, 1899, 4.

<sup>123</sup> Morrison, *Robinson Treaties*, 11.

<sup>124</sup> For further information on Father Paradis and his colonization missionary work in the Temagami region, see: Bruce Hodgins, *Paradis of Temagami: The Story of Charles Paradis, 1848-1926, Northern Priest, Colonizer and Rebel*, (Cobalt: Highway Book Shop, 1976).

<sup>125</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 58.

<sup>126</sup> Robert Choquette, *Canada’s Religions: An Historical Introduction*, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004), 346.

serve as a mission to the TAA at Sandy Inlet on the northern arm of Lake Temagami.<sup>127</sup> The priest's odd "retreat" was intended to act as a headquarters for the colonization scheme "to repatriate French Canadians from Michigan to New England and have them settle in northeastern Ontario."<sup>128</sup> This colonization work was already being undertaken nearby by the Oblate order to the east of Temagami in the Temiskaming area, where a permanent mission had already been established in 1863.<sup>129</sup> Although Paradis' colonization effort to encourage specifically French Canadian agricultural settlement in the Temagami region inevitably failed, according to Hodgins and Benidickson, the presence of the Oblates and their influence could be felt throughout the area in the 1890s.<sup>130</sup>

In the years following the aforementioned land surveys and commissions, the TAA's relationship to n'Daki Menan became alarmingly strained. Indeed, as early as 1902, *The Globe* reported that the entire Temagami district had been "progressing" significantly in terms of development, far beyond the expectations of many government officials.<sup>131</sup> The Ontario government's establishment of the Temagami Forest Reserve in

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<sup>127</sup> Bruce Hodgins, "Reflections on a Career of Northern Travelling, Teaching, Writing and Reading," in *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History*, ed. Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates, (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), 182.

<sup>128</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 58.

<sup>129</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 56. The colonization work through this mission is likely what brought a number of French Canadian settlers to the Temiskaming area. Speck noted the strong French Canadian influence in that region, and on several occasions compared the Temiskaming Anishinabe to the Temagami Anishinabai whom he felt had not been so affected by this presence. I explore Speck's particular interest in the Temagami region further in this chapter.

<sup>130</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 218. I do not discuss the specific missionary work of the Oblates in n'Daki Menan much further beyond this paragraph. Although I have briefly investigated it here, and the general presence of missionaries and residential schools in North America in Chapter Four, this is certainly an area where more research would be helpful, however it was beyond the scope of my study at this time.

<sup>131</sup> "The Temagami Forest" *The Globe*. October 3, 1902, 2.

1901 ignored the presence of the TAA and their traditional claim to the territory. The opening of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway to the public in 1904 brought settlers and tourists to n'Daki Menan by the thousands, further dispossessing the TAA from their traditional lands. This constant and persistent push from outsiders and the complete disregard for the rights of the TAA to the entire territory of n'Daki Menan, which will be discussed at a greater length in Chapter Three, continued throughout much of the twentieth century until the federal and provincial governments finally officially recognized them as having a rightful claim to Bear Island, which became a reserve in 1971.<sup>132</sup>

Today, the main community of Temagami First Nation is located on Bear Island in the heart of Lake Temagami, Ontario, an area of roughly only one square mile out of the 4,000 that comprise Teme-Augama Anishnabai traditional territory.<sup>133</sup> Despite ongoing imperial pressures, damaging assimilationist efforts and the TAA's struggle to reestablish control over their traditional lands, the TAA have maintained a strong sense of self-determination and identity as caretakers of n'Daki Menan. For many years, through direct legal action, they have sought to have their claim to n'Daki Menan recognized and their responsibilities honoured as the original owners of the territory. The further history of the TAA and their actions to assert control over n'Daki Menan is unfortunately beyond

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<sup>132</sup> Thorpe, *Tangled Wild*, 2. Thorpe further discusses the creation of the Bear Island reserve in her chapter entitled, "A Rocky Reserve" in *Temagami's Tangled Wild*. Here she thoroughly investigates the events leading up to the reserve's creation and the way in which the TAA's request for a reserve was by no means meant to replace their overall claim to n'Daki Menan. According to Thorpe, this becomes clear when looking at the TAA's registering of land cautions against the Crown in 1973, thereby challenging the provincial government's assumed control over their traditional territory.

<sup>133</sup> Thorpe, *Tangled Wild*, 2.

the scope of this thesis. There are, however, a number of works written by TAA members, as well as other authors, who, in solidarity with the TAA, have examined this history thoroughly.<sup>134</sup>

### **Bear Island**

Historically, Bear Island was used by the TAA as a central gathering place during the warmer months of the year. Early-twentieth century travellers, anthropologists and government officials often referred to the territory as their “summer rendezvous.”<sup>135</sup> These summer gatherings had undoubtedly been invigorated by the trading activity surrounding the Hudson’s Bay Company Post, which relocated from Temagami Island to Bear Island in the 1870s. Yet Bear Island, being centrally located in Lake Temagami, would very likely have been the ideal summer gathering place for the TAA long before contact.<sup>136</sup> As historian Heidi Bohaker has discussed in her work on kinship patterns and political networks throughout the Great Lakes region, Anishinaabe seasonal patterns of

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<sup>134</sup> I also owe a great deal of thanks to the following authors for their written experiences and their historical research on the territory that helped me significantly in formulating this chapter: Gary Potts, “Bushman and dragonfly,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 33, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 186-195; Gary Potts, “Last Ditch Defence of a Priceless Homeland,” in *Drumbeat: Anger and Renewal in Indian Country*, ed. Boyce Richardson (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1989) 201-228; Mary Laronde, “The Teme-Augama Anishnabay at Bear Island: Claiming our Homeland,” in *Justice for Natives: Searching for Common Ground*, ed. Andrea Morrison, (Montreal: McGill Aboriginal Law Association, 1997) 83-88; Mary Laronde, “Co-management of Lands and Resources in n’Daki Menan” in *Rebirth: Political Economic and Social Development in First Nations*, ed. Anne-Marie Mawhiney (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992) 93-106; Bruce Hodgins, Ute Lischke and David McNab, eds., *Blockades and Resistance*, (Waterloo, Wilfred Laurier Press, 2003); David McNab, *Circles of Time: Aboriginal Land Rights and Resistance in Ontario*, (Waterloo: Wilfred University Press, 1999); David McNab, *No Place for Fairness: Indigenous Land Rights and Policy in the Bear Island Case and Beyond* (Montreal: McGill Queens University Press, 2009); Thorpe, (2012); and Hodgins and Benidickson, (1989).

<sup>135</sup> Frank Speck, *Memoir 70: Family Hunting Territories and Social Life of Various Algonkian Bands of the Ottawa Valley*, (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1915): 11; and American Library Association, “Post Conference Trip: North Channel of Lake Huron – Temagami Lake – Ontario Forest Reserve – Toronto,” *The Library Journal* 35 (January-December, 1910): 271.

<sup>136</sup> Diana Gordon, “Prehistoric Occupations at Lake Temagami,” *Temagami: A Debate on Wilderness*. Eds Matt Bray and Ashley Thomson, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990), 166.

movement and cycles of community aggregation and dispersal are very old. They served many social and political functions, and would have also respected the natural rhythms of the “spiritually charged landscape” of n’Daki Menan, allowing the land to “rest” and replenish itself between seasons.<sup>137</sup>

As I sat with June Twain at her home on Bear Island, she recalled memories of growing up on n’Daki Menan, and described her own family’s cycle of movement, which depended largely on the shifting seasons, and respect for the natural changes in environment that the seasons carried with them:

I spent summers on Bear Island. [And in the winters] we lived at my dad’s trap ground ... about two lakes over from Bear Island ... When we would go into the bush in the fall, we would go in October, before it got cold, and we were there [on my dad’s trap ground] for the winter, we wouldn’t come out until after breakup, like after the lake opened.<sup>138</sup>

This time of year is called Kawasikototc kizis – “breaking up of the ice moon,” the month of April.<sup>139</sup> It means the coming of Spring, movement, and the opening of the lake and the Eastern door. The warmer months that followed this time of year also brought the annual gathering of community, which is precisely what brought the anthropologist Dr. Frank Gouldsmith Speck to Bear Island in the summer of 1913.

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<sup>137</sup> Bohaker, 23-52.

<sup>138</sup> June Twain, Interview; see also Madeline Katt Theriault, *Moose to Moccasins: The Story of Ka Kita Wa Pa No Kwe*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Toronto: Dundurn, 2006), 26.

<sup>139</sup> Frank Speck. Algonquin field notes (inside notebook cover), June 1913, APS, Frank G. Speck Papers II(2C2), Coll. 126; Box 1; and J.A. Cuoq. *Grammaire de la langue algonquine*. (S.I.: s.n., 1891?), 140.; see also: James Morrison, “Algonquin History in the Ottawa River Watershed,” in *A Background Study for Nomination of the Ottawa River under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System*, ed. Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee, (Petawawa: Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee, 2005), 29-30, accessed June 23, 2013, <http://www.ottawariver.org/pdf/05-ch2-3.pdf>.



### **Frank Speck, the Geological Survey of Canada and a Visit to Bear Island**

Frank Speck was an American anthropologist and ethnographer who was one of the most active researchers and collectors in Northeastern North America in the early twentieth century. Unlike many other ethnographers at the time who chose to focus their research initiatives on the Indigenous groups in the West, Speck began to pursue his interest in the study of the Algonquian peoples of the Eastern Woodlands shortly after completing his graduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania in 1908.<sup>140</sup> While many aspects of Speck's early life undoubtedly influenced his approaches to anthropological research and his involvement with Indigenous peoples,<sup>141</sup> it was Speck's early friendship with Edward Sapir, the head of the Anthropological Division at the GSC, that played a key role in the development of the Victoria Memorial Museum's collection of Canadian Indigenous material from the Northeast.

Sapir and Speck had maintained a close friendship and professional relationship since their graduate years at Columbia University. When Sapir was appointed to organize the government-sponsored systematic survey of Canada's Indigenous peoples under the Anthropological Division of the GSC, no one, he must have thought, was better suited for the task of surveying the Northeast than his colleague, Frank Speck, who had already shown a rather unique research interest in "salvaging" material from groups from that region. Speck began working as a collector for the GSC in 1912, and through his role as a

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<sup>140</sup> Irving Hallowell. "Frank Gouldsmith Speck, 1881-1950," *American Anthropologist* 53.1 (1951): 72.

<sup>141</sup> See Pulla, "From Advocacy to Ethnology," who goes into detail about Speck's early relationship with Mohegan culture keeper, Dji'ts Bud dnaca (Fidelia Fielding), as well as Speck's graduate work under the supervision of the anthropologist, Franz Boas.

“liaison” or “freelancer,”<sup>142</sup> his professional partnership with Sapir became established; Speck was able to provide Sapir with the Northeastern Indigenous material necessary to fill the gaps in the survey's collections,<sup>143</sup> while Sapir, by purchasing the objects Speck collected for the museum, provided him with the financial assistance he needed to continue his own personal research and fieldwork.<sup>144</sup>

During the summer of 1913, Speck travelled throughout the Northeast and spent some time with a number of Ojibway and Algonquin bands primarily on behalf of the GSC. While conducting his survey of the region Speck hoped to “form a general idea of the characteristics of the line of contact between the Montagnais, Cree and Ojibway (and Algonquin).”<sup>145</sup> He also took a keen interest in the organization of family bands and hunting territories. With an aim to focus this research on bands that had maintained totemic clan systems, Speck visited the Anishinaabek of Nipissing, Timiskaming, Mattawa, Dumoine River, Mattagami, Matachewan, Lake Abitibi, and Temagami. According to a memoir Speck published in 1915, the best opportunity for investigating hunting territories and clan system organization was presented during the two weeks he spent with the TAA on Bear Island: “The small size of this band (ninety-five souls in

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<sup>142</sup> Pulla, “From Advocacy to Ethnology,” 30. According to Pulla, Speck’s position with the museum is a bit of a mystery. There is no documentation that has been found to suggest that Speck was ever hired as an official employee of the GSC and it appears that he was never directly funded by the division for completing research in the field. He was, however, paid outright for the objects he collected in the interests of the Geological Survey, hence Pulla’s reference to Speck as a “freelance collector.”

<sup>143</sup> Sapir, 793. Sapir indicates that the museum’s ethnological material at the time was primarily limited to objects from the West Coast, and most of the material collected from Ontario was strictly archeological.

<sup>144</sup> Claudia Medoff, “The Frank Speck Collections and the Documentation of the Material He Collected,” in *The Life and Times of Frank G. Speck, 1881-1950*, ed. Roy Blankenship, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1991), 104; and Pulla, “From Advocacy to Ethnology,” 33.

<sup>145</sup> Letter, F. Speck to E. Sapir, 25 June, 1913, CMC, Edward Sapir’s fonds (I-A-236M), Folder Speck, F. G., Box 634 f.2.

1913) enabled me to make inquiries, so far as I could plan them, on a number of points concerning the life of the individual and the social group.”<sup>146</sup> In addition to this, another unique aspect of the TAA sparked Speck’s interest – their relative isolation from Europeans and their activities throughout much of the nineteenth century.

According to Anthony F. C. Wallace, by the time Speck entered the field in the early-twentieth century, it was believed by many European scholars that much of the Eastern Woodlands had already been so affected and “tarnished” by white settler society that ethnological work in that region showed little promise of recovering “authentic” Indian culture. Many anthropologists therefore directed their focus to what Wallace refers to as “the relatively intact peoples” in the West.<sup>147</sup> According to legal scholar, David McNab, the TAA had remained largely off the settler radar until the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries because they were off the main “highways” along the Great Lakes and connecting waterways where most of the early European settlement and economic activity was directed until roughly the late-nineteenth century.<sup>148</sup> This aspect of the TAA would have undoubtedly caught the attention of Speck, who, according to Wallace, took upon himself the “task of recovering, in the lost corners of remnant communities and overlooked eastern reservations, the ethnography of the Eastern Woodland tribes.”<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Speck, *Family Hunting Territories*, 11.

<sup>147</sup> Anthony F. C. Wallace, “The Frank Speck Collection,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 95, no. 3 (June 12, 1951), 288.

<sup>148</sup> McNab. *Circles of Time*. 46.

<sup>149</sup> Wallace, 288.

Here again, it is important to keep in mind the “salvage ethnography” paradigm that informed Speck’s work. As can be grasped from Wallace’s language, the ultimate goal was to collect and preserve “authentic” objects and information from Indigenous groups that were unaffected by interaction with white society. In contrast to other nearby bands, the TAA, in Speck’s eyes, still exhibited traditional cultural traits that could potentially be traced back to pre-contact times, such as their use of family hunting territories.<sup>150</sup> Like his graduate school supervisor, Franz Boas, Speck believed that certain ancient traditions, like Indigenous understandings of territoriality, could still be found in tiny pockets throughout the Northeast.<sup>151</sup> In papers that outline his investigations into hunting territories, Speck compares the quality of research information he was able to uncover at Temagami with that of the neighbouring Anishinaabek groups whom he believed had been more affected by European influence:<sup>152</sup>

The Timiskaming band has partially taken up farming through contact with French Canadians. Consequently the information obtained here is not

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<sup>150</sup> Speck’s argument that the Algonquian family hunting territory system was a distinctly Indigenous institution that pre-dated European settlement has been debated since the research was published in 1915. While some scholars supported his study, others indicated that family-based hunting territories were only created out of a “reaction” to the European fur trade. Due to the scope of this thesis, I am unable to discuss this debate, or Speck’s theory much further. However, I do support Pulla’s stance that while Speck’s argument sought to break away from racist and Eurocentric ideologies, it can be very difficult to translate complex Indigenous understandings of worldview and relationships to land through Western frameworks and colonial projects that only interpret territory through settler understandings of “ownership” and “property.” For Pulla’s outline and response to this debate, calling on scholars to “shift this discussion away from purely ethnohistorical and anthropological sources to a conversation that also incorporates and represents unique Indigenous perspectives on territoriality,” see: Siomonn Pulla, “A Redirection in Neo-Evolutionism?: A Retrospective Examination of the Algonquian Family Hunting Territories Debates,” *Histories of Anthropology Annual* 7 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011): 170-190.

<sup>151</sup> Edmund S. Carpenter, “Frank Speck: Quiet Listener” in *The Life and Times of Frank G. Speck, 1881-1950*, ed. Roy Blankenship, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1991), 82.

<sup>152</sup> As I mentioned in note 129 of this thesis, it is likely the colonization work of the Oblate Mission in Temiskaming that brought a large number of French Canadians to the Temiskaming region and contributed to the shifting Indigenous way of life that Speck alludes to here.

of as high a grade as that secured from the Timagami band, which is of the same general type.<sup>153</sup>

Further, in a separate paper, Speck indicates that “the Timagami people offered a rather attractive opportunity because *they had maintained the hunting territory system up to the present.*”<sup>154</sup>

### **Speck and the “Authentic” Appeal of Tikinaaganan to Collectors**

While on Bear Island, Speck not only mapped family hunting territories described to him by community members, but also recorded and collected many aspects of TAA culture and way of life, including stories, customs and social organization.<sup>155</sup> Indeed, former Chief of Temagami First Nation, Gary Potts, said of Speck: “Our people called him the writing man, and they told him the whole story of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai.”<sup>156</sup> In addition to collecting information for research that he would later publish, during his two weeks on Bear Island Speck also collected a variety of 114 objects created by the TAA that he shipped and sold to his friend, Edward Sapir, at the GSC. And among these very special objects in the collection is the tikinaagan seen in Figure 1.

In Chapter One I discussed the appeal that cradleboards, tikinaaganan, had for many anthropologists, travellers and collectors. Admired for their cleverness in design,

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<sup>153</sup> Speck, *Family Hunting Territories*, 1.

<sup>154</sup> Frank Speck, “The Family Hunting Band as the Basis of Algonkian Social Organization (1915),” in *A Northern Algonquian Sourcebook: Papers by Frank G. Speck*, ed. Edward S. Rogers, (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1985), 297. (Emphasis added)

<sup>155</sup> See: Frank Speck, *Myths and Folklore of the Timiskaming Algonquin and Timagami Ojibwa* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1915); Speck, “The Family Hunting Band” (1915); and Speck, *Family Hunting Territories* (1915).

<sup>156</sup> Potts, “Bushman and dragonfly,” 191.

and suitability for the nomadic life in the bush, tikinaaganan were also seen as a distinct site of cultural difference that made Indigenous Woodlands peoples unique. Indeed, as Marius Barbeau's comparative analysis of museum objects indicates, "authentic" Indigenous culture could be found in items for which anthropologists could find no European equivalent.<sup>157</sup> The tikinaagan was thus a desirable addition to museum collections because it communicated just the kind of Indian "authenticity" that anthropologists were seeking to "salvage" before the use and creation of these objects became extinct.

According to Speck's colleague, Sapir, the act of collecting objects was a tricky business. Andrew Nurse has discussed Sapir's methodology in acquiring objects for the Anthropological Division of the GSC:

What is interesting about Sapir's methodology is how his conception of effective ethnographic field research carried with it an implicit model of cultural authenticity. For Sapir, the objective of field research was not to collect whatever cultural material was available. Instead, effective ethnographic research required discrimination... Determining what to collect, Sapir conceded, was not easy. He recommended avoiding seemingly *modern* objects.<sup>158</sup>

Certainly, in a letter to fellow anthropologist F. W. Waugh in 1911, Sapir explains his preference for the "authentic" with regard to future additions to the Victoria Memorial Museum collection:

It seems important to me to keep very clearly distinct that part of [Native] ... culture which may with some degree of certainty be called aboriginal, and that part which has grown up only secondarily through contact with

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<sup>157</sup> Nurse, 60.

<sup>158</sup> Nurse, 54. (Emphasis added)

whites ... such objects are hardly what our museum would be particularly interested in ... the aboriginal element should always be carefully peeled out.<sup>159</sup>

Since Speck had travelled to Bear Island in the summer of 1913 to collect for the Anthropological Division, it is very likely he would have kept Sapir's methodology in mind. Speck would have selected the tikinaagan pictured in Figure 1 for the Victoria Memorial Museum for at least two reasons: 1) because the cradleboard itself, as an object of distinct cultural difference from that of Europe, was viewed as being "authentic" to Indian cultures; and 2) because the creators -- the TAA themselves -- were also viewed by Speck as being "authentic" for their relative isolation from the influence of Europeans compared to many of their Anishinaabek neighbours in the region.

Now that I have outlined the way in which this tikinaagan became a part of the Victoria Memorial Museum collection, and its value for the Western collector and anthropologist through whose hands it travelled to the museum, I will ask what this object might have meant to the family and community of the TAA artist who created it? While Speck was often praised by his students and contemporaries for his meticulous documentation of the objects he collected,<sup>160</sup> I found that much of the Indigenous voice, as well as the family names of the makers of the objects, were largely left out of the collection from Bear Island.

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<sup>159</sup> Letter, Edward Sapir to F. W. Waugh, 3 October 1911, CMC, Edward Sapir Fonds, box 430, file 62, qtd in Nurse, 55.

<sup>160</sup> Ernest S. Dodge, "Speck on the North Shore," in *The Life and Times of Frank G. Speck, 1881-1950*, ed. Roy Blankenship, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1991), 47.

## Chapter Three

### Tikinaagan Transformations: Shapeshifting to the Floral and Fine Trade Fabrics

*You pick up from out there what you see ... Because they're nice! That's what the Creator gave us, to make use of.*<sup>161</sup>

Mary Katt, Bear Island, 2012

The use of plant patterns and floral imagery in Anishinaabe beadwork has been the topic of scholarly discussion for quite some time. Part of the reason for the interest in this particular aspect of iconography is the dramatic change that occurred in the style of Anishinaabe ornamentation in the nineteenth century.<sup>162</sup> Whereas earlier Anishinaabe styles of decoration incorporated linear and geometric motifs and figurative depictions of manitous, the nineteenth century saw a massive transformation in Indigenous art production that featured new images that could be found within the natural world of Anishinaabe traditional territory – patterns of plants and flowers.<sup>163</sup> Many aspects of Anishinaabe styles of clothing underwent a massive transformation around this time. However, my focus is on the ornamentation of moss bags and cradleboard covers, and while I will be discussing some aspects of clothing textiles that were used in the creation of these childcare objects in this chapter, the specific topic of dress is beyond the scope of this study.

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<sup>161</sup> Mary Katt, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 3, 2012.

<sup>162</sup> For a thorough discussion of historical changes in Great Lakes clothing see: Cory Silverstein (Willmott), “Clothed Encounters: The Power of Dress in Relations Between Anishinaabe and British Peoples in the Great Lakes Region, 1760-2000,” (PhD diss., McMaster University, 2000)

<sup>163</sup> Ruth Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900*, (Seattle : University of Washington Press ; Montreal, Quebec : McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 155.



While a number of texts have discussed this shift in style, much of the writing from the early-twentieth century focuses solely on problems of *influence* and *origin*. Frank Speck held that floral designs in Indigenous cultures originated in “authentic” double-curve designs and eventually progressed towards more naturalistic imagery.<sup>164</sup> On the other side of the spectrum Marius Barbeau argued that floral patterns were not Indigenous at all, but had arrived in Indigenous communities through contact with Ursuline nuns who taught floral embroidery to Wendat (Huron) girls in the seventeenth century.<sup>165</sup> These contrasting theories sparked a debate over the origin of floral imagery in Anishinaabe artwork and continued to engross scholarly interest for a number of years thereafter.<sup>166</sup>

However, as a growing body of work by art historians in the late-twentieth century emerged, scholars such as Ruth Phillips and David Penney began to advocate a more thorough analysis of material culture that stepped away from this debate. On the one hand, the earlier debates represented Anishinaabe makers as examples of deteriorating authenticity, and on the other as simply passive recipients of European influence. It is important to step outside of these reductive arguments of origin and influence because they are inherently Eurocentric, and they deny the acknowledgement of Anishinaabe

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<sup>164</sup> See: Frank Speck, “Huron Moose Hair Embroidery,” *American Anthropologist* 13.1 (1911): 1-14; and Frank Speck, “Symbolism in Penobscot Art,” *Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 30.2 (1927): 25-80.

<sup>165</sup> Marius Barbeau, “The Origins of Floral and Other Designs among the Canadian and Neighboring Indians,” *Proceedings of the Twenty-Third International Congress of Americanists* 23 (1930): 512.

<sup>166</sup> For further discussion of this early debate see: David Penney, “Floral Decoration and Culture Change: An Historical Interpretation of Motivation,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 15.1 (1991): 53-77; and Ruth B. Phillips, “The Iconography of Indianness: The Floral, the Feminine and the Folk,” *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900*, (Seattle : University of Washington Press ; Montreal, Quebec : McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 155-197.

makers as innovators, artists, thinkers and cultural survivors who exercised profound creative choice during a time of great upheaval while still maintaining strong ties to their roots. As we will see, although certain aspects of Anishinaabe art-making had appeared to shift dramatically in the nineteenth century, there were many elements that remained fundamentally the same. In Algonquian tikinaagan-making, for example, the design of the cradleboard's wooden frame and backboard did not undergo the same drastic *visual* transformation as the ornamented coverings.

### **More “Digging”: A Note on Early Tikinaagan Descriptions and Examples**

Generally, there is very little documentation on early contact-period art from eastern North America, which makes understanding pre-nineteenth century objects extremely difficult. Locating surviving early items is another added struggle, as many of them are either unidentified in obscure places, or are scattered and dispersed in museum collections around the globe.<sup>167</sup> It appears that very few early cradleboard covers or ornaments survive. Of the handful that I have been able to locate, imprecise or lost documentation prevents us from being entirely sure that some likely candidates are indeed cradleboard covers, ornaments, or if they are even Anishinaabe- or Algonquian-made.<sup>168</sup> It should be noted that although the examples that I will be describing here have

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<sup>167</sup> Ruth B. Phillips, “Zigzag and Spiral: Geometric Motifs in Great Lakes Indian Costume,” in *Papers of the Fifteenth Algonquian Conference*, Ed. William Cowan, (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1984), 409.

<sup>168</sup> Jeannie Koroluk has written on this issue of identification with regards to an object (III-G-848) located at the Museum of Civilization that has been documented as a cradleboard decoration. Although Koroluk provides reasoning to support the object's identification as a cradleboard decoration, she also provides strong counter-arguments that suggest that the object may have actually been used instead as a back ornament and was never intended to adorn a cradleboard. This manuscript can be found in the curatorial files of the Department of Ethnology at the CMC. See: Jeannie Koroluk, *What's in a Name? A Case of Multiple Identity*, (unpublished manuscript for ARTH5210, Carleton University, 2010).

been identified as cradleboard covers or ornaments, there are a number of other possibilities that offer opportunities for further research and interpretation.

Because information on early Anishinaabe cradleboards and the overall domestic sphere is difficult to locate, deciphering these very old objects can be very challenging. Throughout this process I have had to do a fair amount of gathering and assembling of small pieces of information that are available in a way that makes understanding or reading these objects possible and meaningful in the present. In this discussion of early Anishinaabe cradleboards and their covers I have also included some descriptions and examples that I have gathered from other Algonquian nations that have demonstrated cultural continuity, such as the Cree. In many ways, the work of scholars, such as Cath Oberholtzer, whose research focuses much attention on art objects from Cree communities, is very applicable to my investigation of Anishinaabe material culture. Although the Cree and Anishinaabe are distinct nations, they share many cultural traits and values. Most relevant to this study is the fact that both peoples created and made use of very similarly constructed and designed cradleboards in their childcare practices.

Scholar Kim Anderson describes the method of recovering teachings from our past as “digging up medicines,”<sup>169</sup> while actor and activist Tantoo Cardinal refers to it as “digging through the rubble and searching for the gems.”<sup>170</sup> For both women, it is through the process of digging, searching, and gathering that we can find meaningful links that connect us to our roots. In attempting to interpret or read objects from the past,

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<sup>169</sup> Kim Anderson, *Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine*, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2011), 4.

<sup>170</sup> Tantoo Cardinal, (Presentation at the New Sun Conference on Aboriginal Arts: “Trailblazers,” Carleton University, Ottawa, March 2, 2013)

Ruth Phillips has offered another process of “digging” for art historians that involves reassembling what we can from these bodies of artworks and trying to locate the aesthetic and iconographic consistencies among them to uncover their links to language, stories and traditions.<sup>171</sup> Therefore, by placing some of the “old” examples of tikinaagan wrappings and other objects exhibiting early forms of ornamentation together with the “new” we can gain a greater understanding of how much they have changed, and how much, really, has stayed very much the same.

### **‘Tik’**

The two main elements that construct the tikinaagan are true to its Anishinaabemowin name: ‘tik’ meaning tree or wood, referring to the carved wooden backboard, frame and curved bow; and ‘naagan’ meaning bowl or vessel, alluding to the cover, bands or moss bag that hold the baby. In Chapter One I outlined a number of early accounts written by travellers, missionaries, ethnographers and the like who described the use and design of the cradleboard in Eastern Woodland communities. Of the two elements that make up the tikinaagan, many of the early writers focus quite a bit of their attention on the overall structure of the cradleboard, namely the wooden backboard, curved bow and footrest. This literature shows that this structural arrangement generally remained the same over a long period of time throughout Algonquian country, from before the mid-nineteenth century (see Figures 3 and 4) and continuing well into the twentieth century (see Figure 5).

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<sup>171</sup> Phillips, “Zigzag and Spiral,” 409.

In 1743, Hudson's Bay Company employee John Isham provided a fairly detailed description and diagram of the wooden frame of an Algonquian tikinaagan that he had seen at York Factory, Manitoba:

[T]hey make a board of about 3 foot in Length and abt. 19 inches wide, - one 3.4 inch Substance, which they cutt out of a Large tree with only a Hatchet and crooked Knife, sowing a hoop round from the Cross peice of abt. 3 inches wide, and withing an inch of the Edge of the board, wherein they tie the Child with their back to the board, using Cloth and Rabbit skins for clothing.<sup>172</sup>

Also active in the eighteenth century, interpreter and trader, John Long, who had spent some time with the Anishinaabek in the northern regions of Lake Superior, said of tikinaagan he had seen around Lake Nipigon<sup>173</sup> in the winter of 1778:

As soon as a child is born ... it is wrapped up in a small blanket, and tied to a flat board, covered with dry moss, in the form of the bottom of a coffin, with a hoop over top, where the head lies, to preserve it from injury.<sup>174</sup>

Then about 150 years later, through her work with the Anishinaabe in Minnesota, Frances Densmore provided a similar description of an Anishinaabe tikinaagan in *Chippewa Customs* in 1929:

The cradle board ... consisted of a board about 24 inches long with a curved piece of wood at one end to confine the child's feet and a hoop at

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<sup>172</sup> James Isham, *James Isham's Observations on Hudsons Bay, 1743 and Notes and Observations on a Book entitled A Voyage to Hudsons Bay in the Dobbs Gallery, 1849*, ed. E. E. Rich, (Toronto: Champlain Society 1949), 105.

<sup>173</sup> Long had been spending quite a bit of time with the Pays Plat Anishinaabek near Nipigon River, but in his recording of this tikinaagan description he had been staying at an inland winter settlement on "Lac la Mort." Although there is some discrepancy as to the exact location of "Lac la Mort" in Long's account, he was undoubtedly in Anishinaabek territory, present-day Thunder Bay district. See: Victor Lytwyn, *The Fur Trade of the Little North: Indians, Pedlars, and Englishmen East of Lake Winnipeg, 1760-1821*, (Winnipeg: University of Winnipeg/Rupert's Land Research Centre, 1986), 13.

<sup>174</sup> John Long, *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader*, (London: 1791), 60.

right angles above the other end... A light rod was fastened loosely to one side of the cradle board and to this were attached the two binding bands, about 6 inches wide, which were pinned or tied over the child.<sup>175</sup>

These accounts, together with a number of other ethnographic descriptions of the Algonquian tikinaagan that were made in the years between Long and Densmore's accounts, strongly suggest that throughout the turbulent era of transition that took place over a period of about 100 years from the early-nineteenth century to the early-twentieth century,<sup>176</sup> the overall form and structure of the tikinaagan did not change dramatically.<sup>177</sup> What is also striking about these descriptions is the way in which they illustrate the rather large region of historical tikinaagan use, and the similarity of design that stretched across such a wide area – from Hudson's Bay where Isham was located, to northern Lake Superior where Long travelled, and all the way down to Minnesota, where Densmore wrote from many years later. However, while the specific design and style features of the wooden tikinaagan backboard, bow and frame may have undergone some specific changes, this discussion is about the overall form and structure of the cradleboard and how its wooden elements have remained essentially the same. What this chapter seeks to explore further are the drastic changes seen in the ornamental aspects of the second element of tikinaagan construction – the wrappings, which do appear to have undergone significant transformations.

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<sup>175</sup> Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 86, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1929), 48.

<sup>176</sup> Silverstein (Willmott), 253.

<sup>177</sup> Attention to design features of the wooden backboard, frame and curved bow, although beyond the scope of this chapter, will be an area of further research to be pursued in the future.

## **‘Naagan’**

While the above descriptions and images of early tikinaagan provide us with a fairly concrete idea of what the overall form and wooden structure would have looked like in earlier times, what remains a little unclear are descriptions of the wrappings or ornamental coverings. Written descriptions of Indigenous cradles are very few and far between in the historical record, and of those descriptions that do exist, most touch only briefly on the structural aspects of the tikinaagan or its use. There is very little information about pre-nineteenth century ornamentation of cradleboard wrappings. In many cases, early texts remark only vaguely on the Anishinaabe mother’s use of hides, furs or blankets to wrap up her baby on the wooden frame, often not commenting much further on the design or ornamentation that may have decorated the covering, or a separate tikinaagan wrapper. However, what I have gleaned from surviving examples and early written accounts is that the ornamentation appears to have been chosen quite specifically by Anishinaabekwe and was very carefully applied.

### **Tikinaagan Covers, Wrappers and Ornaments:**

#### **The Importance of Maintaining Balance and Centrality**

*In place of a cradle, they make the children rest upon a little board, which they cover with skins of a beaver, or with some other furs. The women adorn this little cradle carefully with certain bits of bead-work, with wampum, porcupine quills, and certain figures which they form with their paints. This is in order to beautify it, and to render it just so much the finer in proportion as they love their children. For these they make little*

*garments of skins, which are all painted and adorned with the prettiest and most curious things they possess.*<sup>178</sup>

Father Le Clercq, Missionary of the Recollet or Reformed Franciscian Order of France  
Gaspé Bay, 1675

Although this passage provides Father Le Clercq's description of the Mi'kmaq cradles he had seen in Gaspé Bay during the seventeenth-century, it is one of the most detailed descriptions from before the nineteenth century of Algonquian cradleboard coverings and ornamentation that I have been able to locate. I have included it here to preface some of the early Anishinaabe/Algonquian examples because I believe his description on the use of porcupine quills and the incorporation of "figures" introduce the objects I will discuss in this chapter well. In the nineteenth-century Henry Schoolcraft also made similar mention of this style of ornamentation that incorporated the use of trade materials, indicating that this custom of "figural" adornment continued for centuries: "The tickenagun, or Indian cradle, is an object of great pride with an Indian mother. She gets the finest kind of broad cloth she possibly can to make an outer swathing band for it, and spares no pains in ornamenting it with beads and ribbons, worked in various *figures*."<sup>179</sup>

While detailed documentation and object examples of Anishinaabe and Algonquian cradles from the pre-nineteenth or early-nineteenth century era are quite rare, there are wider areas of research that can be explored to help better understand the motivations behind early modes of ornamentation, such as the more recent scholarship on

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<sup>178</sup> Chrestien Le Clercq, *New Relation of Gaspesia, with the customs and religion of the Gaspesian Indians*. 1691, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1910), 89.

<sup>179</sup> Schoolcraft, 390. (Emphasis added).



early Anishinaabe textiles and clothing design. According to Cory Willmott, early examples of Anishinaabe dress, particularly during the fur trade era, show a strong stylistic preference for balance through geometric design.<sup>180</sup> As I noted briefly in the Introduction, the importance of balance is reiterated through many of our medicine wheel teachings and remains centrally important to understanding all aspects of being Anishinaabe.

Balance, in terms of Anishinaabe ornamentation and design does not, however, necessarily need to be communicated through visual symmetry. Indeed, throughout the Great Lakes region, as Ruth Phillips has indicated, there appears to be a widespread tendency to adorn objects in an *asymmetrical* manner: “Characteristically, the front and back or upper and under surfaces of containers and utensils and the left and right sides of garments display different motifs or colours.”<sup>181</sup> This lack of symmetry in Anishinaabe art seems to have confused many of the early anthropologists travelling from Europe, where the Western notion of “beauty” in appearance went hand in hand with a visual preference for symmetrical balance.<sup>182</sup> On the practice of body ornamentation around Lake Superior, for example, nineteenth century German anthropologist Johann Georg Kohl referred to painted patterns that he saw Anishinaabek applying to their faces as “curious,” as they did not appear to be consistent or, to borrow his term - “regular”:

[R]egular patterns do not suit the taste of the Indians. They like contrasts, and frequently divide the face into two halves, which undergo different

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<sup>180</sup> Silverstein (Willmott), 85.

<sup>181</sup> Ruth B. Phillips, “Like a Star I Shine: Northern Woodlands Artistic Traditions,” *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1987), 89.

<sup>182</sup> I. C. McManus, “Symmetry and Asymmetry in Aesthetics and the Arts,” *European Review*, 3.12 (2005): 157-180.

treatment. One will be dark – say black or blue – but the other quite light, yellow, bright red, or white. One will be crossed by thick lines made by the five fingers, while the other is arabesque with extremely fine lines produced by the aid of a brush.<sup>183</sup>

Unlike the all-over patterning or repetitious motifs that Kohl was used to seeing in Western modes of ornamentation,<sup>184</sup> Anishinaabe art makers viewed and communicated balance in a very different way that he did not understand. According to Ruth Phillips, the creation of asymmetrical patterning and the use of contrasting design on object surfaces may be related to the spatial structuring of Anishinaabe cosmology.<sup>185</sup>

Within the Anishinaabe worldview the universe is understood to be comprised of layers that are both natural as well as spiritual. The cosmos is divided into contrasting upper and lower worlds that are joined by a central axis, and the quartering of the Earth's surface by the four cardinal directions is a principle by which all life can be understood.<sup>186</sup> The sky world above is home to the Thunderers, and the lower realm of water below is where the lake and river beings reside. And located in-between these two zones is the realm of the Anishinaabek, the land, and all the other beings both natural and spiritual that live here. In order to navigate and live well in the physical realm that exists between the dualities of sky and water, the Anishinaabek hold the responsibility to honour and maintain balance between forces and seek blessings from the beings that reside in those other worlds. According to Wendy Makoonz Geniusz, "This

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<sup>183</sup> Kohl, 15.

<sup>184</sup> Phillips, "Like a Star," 89.

<sup>185</sup> Phillips, "Like a Star," 90.

<sup>186</sup> Phillips, "Like a Star," 90

dibaajimowin<sup>187</sup> exemplifies one of the major differences between inaadiziwin<sup>188</sup> and non-native philosophies: the idea that *balance* is the source of *blessings*. From balance comes good. From balance comes health.”<sup>189</sup>

Although the two realms of sky and water appear to directly oppose each other, as many of our accounts tell stories of the conflicts between Thunderbirds and Underwater Beings, they are two complementary sides of one whole. They are dependent on each other, interconnected, and one cannot exist without the other, in much the same way that the day cannot exist without the night. This interpretation of the importance of balance appears to be particularly significant when viewing early Great Lakes Anishinaabe artworks, where many objects, such as the bag in Figure 6a and b, display seemingly contrasting motifs that represent the beings of both the upper and lower worlds, with the Thunderbirds on one side (a), and the Underwater Beings on the other (b).

The Anishinaabek frequently adorned their bags and other items of clothing with these designs and related motifs, seeking blessings for the wearer by acknowledging the powers of spiritual beings and maintaining balance. Cradleboard covers and ornaments, which can be thought of as a human being’s first “clothing,” were no exception to this style of ornamentation. According to David Penney,

Images of Thunderbirds and Underwater Panthers embroidered on deerhide pouches or represented in netted quillwork on bags, garters, and other elements of costume should be ... understood as generalized power symbols testifying to the spiritual strength and social importance of the

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<sup>187</sup> “storytelling”

<sup>188</sup> “our way of being”

<sup>189</sup> Wendy Makoons Geniusz, *Our Knowledge Is Not Primitive*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 200. (Emphasis added)

individual who wore them. In some cases, the images may serve as protective symbols, for example, when applied as the decorations of baby carriers.<sup>190</sup>

The notion that certain images have the ability to provide spiritual protection when applied to baby carriers seems fitting when we also think of the *physically* protective qualities of the tikinaagan laid out in Chapter One. Typically, images of Thunderbirds could range from the more naturalistic bird designs as seen in the bag in Figure 6a to more abstract symbols that resembled stylized segments of their bodies, such as the hourglass shapes seen on the Anishinaabe cradleboard cover<sup>191</sup> in Figure 7. Likely made between 1750 and 1850, this quilled panel would have been tied around the tikinaagan and wrapped across the baby bundle in the front, thereby swathing the infant with the protective qualities retained within the Thunderbird design.

However, what is also notable in this quilled panel is the use of alternating stripes of light and dark in the hourglass figures in contrast to the solid diamond shapes that are created between them. Ruth Phillips suggests that the application of contrasting colours, patterns, and motifs on many Great Lakes objects may reflect the Anishinaabe understanding of the importance of the interaction between contrasting forces.<sup>192</sup> Variants of Thunderbird images and diamond shapes are found together on many early Woodlands objects. In some cases the diamond shape might be found inside a Thunderbeing figure

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<sup>190</sup> David Penney, "Great Lakes Indian Art: An Introduction," in *Great Lakes Indian Art*, ed. David Penney, 9-20. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 11.

<sup>191</sup> GRASAC research team members have indicated this object to be likely a cradleboard ornament or a cuff, and have attributed it as Western Anishinaabe from 1750-1850 based on observations in style. See: Ornament, Am1949,22.132. Sheena Ellison, Stacey Loyer, Ruth Phillips, Robert Storrie, Cory Willmott. Great Lakes Research Alliance for the Study of Aboriginal Culture (GRASAC) Knowledge Sharing (GKS) Database: <https://grasac.org/gks/gks>. Accessed 03/11/13.

<sup>192</sup> Phillips, "Like a Star," 91.

perhaps acting as an X-ray vision of the heart, or at other times, as on the cradleboard covering in Figure 7, diamonds might be found interlocking with Thunderbird images, in which case some scholars believe the diamond may be a stylized representation of the powerful water Manitou, Mishipizhu, the Underwater Panther.<sup>193</sup> According to David Penney's reading of the pattern, in this context the diamond and hourglass motif could indicate an abstracted representation of the layered cosmos.<sup>194</sup>

This possible positive/negative depiction of Thunderbirds and Water Beings, which is further emphasized through the use of contrasting colour choice and the patterning in the quillwork, may express "a mimetic balancing of the powers that were believed to reside in the different directions" of sky above, and water below.<sup>195</sup> The quilled designs, although contrasting in colour, pattern and motif, complement each other, and fit together like puzzle pieces to create a tikinaagan cover that is both visually and spiritually "balanced," functioning to lovingly ornament the tikinaagan itself, but also to protect and bless the baby that the wrappings would have held all those years ago.

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<sup>193</sup> Cath Oberholtzer has also explored the possible meaning behind diamond motifs. In her study on diamond designs on Cree objects, she considers the shape to be a possible female symbol representing birth, fertility and regenerative power – an interesting notion to think about when the motif is applied to baby carriers. See: Cath Oberholtzer, "Are Diamonds a Cree Girl's Best Friend?," *Papers of the Thirty-Second Algonquian Conference*, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 2011, 343-359.

<sup>194</sup> David Penney provided this comment on the GRASAC database with regards to a pair of mid-nineteenth century Anishinaabe garters from the Detroit Institute of Arts that were beaded with a similar interlocked diamond and hourglass motif. See: Garters, 81.76.1 and 81.76.2 Kelley Konieczki, Alan Corbiere, David Penney, Cory Willmott. Great Lakes Research Alliance for the Study of Aboriginal Art and Culture (GRASAC) Knowledge Sharing (GKS) Database: <https://grasac.org/gks/gks>. Accessed 03/11/13.

<sup>195</sup> Phillips, "Like a Star," 91.

Scholars have previously mentioned how frequently designs related to manitous often seem to appear on “containers.”<sup>196</sup> According to Ruth Phillips, when these kinds of motifs are applied to a container such as the bag in Figure 6, it is possible that the contents themselves would have rendered the power that was retained within the designs that surrounded them.<sup>197</sup> This understanding leads us to believe today that many containers that are ornamented with opposing motifs of the Upper World and the Lower World may have been originally used to hold medicines or other sacred items. If we think about the interpretation of cradleboard coverings, naagan, as vessels or containers that held babies, it seems fitting that they would also be ornamented with these same kinds of powerful designs that were used to protect and bless our medicines. This thought reminds me of something I remember my good friend Geraldine King saying about the first time she held her newborn son; she very poignantly referred to this moment as holding her own little “medicine bundle.”<sup>198</sup>

In addition to the application of motifs representing beings from the Upper and Lower Worlds, another common design that appears to have adorned many early Anishinaabe articles of dress, including cradleboard covers, was the equal armed cross (see Figures 8, 9 and 10). This motif, which many of the early settlers erroneously viewed as indicating Indigenous peoples’ embrace of Christianity and the “success” of missionary efforts, is actually a very old and very meaningful cosmic symbol for the

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<sup>196</sup> See: Christian Feest, “Tab Pouches of Northeastern North America. *American Indian Art Magazine* 22(4):34-27; Phillips, “Zigzag and Spiral”; and Oberholtzer, “Diamonds.”

<sup>197</sup> Phillips, “Zigzag and Spiral,” 413.

<sup>198</sup> Geraldine is a member of Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek (Gull Bay First Nation), and I thank her wholeheartedly for allowing me to share this very special moment here, Gchi Miigwech.

Anishinaabek.<sup>199</sup> As mentioned previously, the notion of life is often conceived as being circular and oriented to the four cardinal directions. This symbol of the equal-armed cross, as well as signifying the four stages of life, the four winds, the four medicines and the cycle of the four seasons, also indicates the importance of interconnectedness. It implies the culmination of everything that extends outwards from those four directions and meets back at the centre at the point of intersection.<sup>200</sup> In much the same way that the upper world of the Thunderbeings cannot exist without the lower world of Mishipizhu, the understanding of living, and “living well” requires components from each of the four directions. They are intertwined and make up four sides of the same meaningful and balanced whole.<sup>201</sup>

According to Cory Willmott, early Anishinaabe styles of dress frequently incorporated the use of vertical and horizontal lines to divide the human form into geometric visual fields, with special attention paid to the points of intersection.<sup>202</sup> The points at which these vertical and horizontal lines would meet then, would in effect, create a motif parallel to that of the four directions, with the centre being the area requiring the most careful consideration. So here we can see the design of the four quadrants or the equal armed cross functioning to indicate both the importance of balance and also of centrality<sup>203</sup> -- the importance of maintaining a centre.

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<sup>199</sup> Walter James Hoffman, “The Mide’wiwin or ‘Grand Medicine Society’ of The Ojibwa,” from the *Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891, 143-300), 155.

<sup>200</sup> McNally, 56.

<sup>201</sup> Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 21.

<sup>202</sup> Silverstein (Willmott), 85.

<sup>203</sup> Ruth Phillips, “Zigzag and Spiral,” 417.

During the years when the lives of Indigenous peoples saw many drastic changes, beginning in the east in the early-nineteenth century, the many objects they created and their mode of ornamentation also began to change. Anishinaabe clothing styles and design began to show the effects of settler contact and were becoming increasingly “European” in appearance. Many of the early scholars saw these changes as a loss of culture and viewed them as testaments to the beginning of the unavoidable breakdown of Indigenous knowledge systems. They did not appear to recognize the strength and ability of the Anishinaabek to survive during this time of great change. Although the distinctive styles and motifs in object ornamentation that communicated our ancient values and the importance of balance and centrality underwent “rapid and substantial transformation,”<sup>204</sup> they did not and never have disappeared.

Before exploring in detail the transformations that occurred in the ornamentation of tikinaaganan that would result in the use of motifs like the floral sprays of beadwork that adorn the trade cloth baby wrapping on the Bear Island cradleboard, it is important to revisit some of the causes of these transformations. In the next section of this chapter I will discuss a number of factors that may have contributed to the changes in motivation of Anishinaabe artists. But it should be noted that although European contact can be viewed as causing the dramatic changes that led to transformations in artistic expression, these transformations were more than mere reactions to settler contact, for this view offers no insight into the full range of meanings that the new images held for their Indigenous creators. According to David Penney, it is not the identification of the likely

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<sup>204</sup> Silverstein (Willmott), 254.



source for the designs that is important to the discussion of floral patterns. Rather, he says, “[I]t is necessary to understand *why* women artists chose to use them.”<sup>205</sup>

## Change

Historically, the notion of “change” in Indigenous art forms has been interpreted as disorder and a tragic loss of authenticity.<sup>206</sup> As I discussed in Chapter Two, it was the desire of the colonizer to keep Indigenous peoples confined to the past. The past was associated with the pure and the simple whereas the modern was understood to be a complex era of “civilization,” in which the “authenticity” of Indigenous peoples could not survive. Thus, when Anishinaabe artists began transforming their images from the abstract and geometric to the floral, and from the use of the “traditional”<sup>207</sup> media of hides and porcupine quills to trade cloth and glass beads, many early scholars, collectors and anthropologists viewed this change as an inevitable fall from grace. Indeed, in the mind of the colonizer, Indigenous groups could never be thought of as “changing,” but only as “dying.”<sup>208</sup> And throughout the many damaging assimilationist efforts and attempts to tear Indigenous peoples from their traditional lands and identities, this belief that Anishinaabe culture was “dying” as a result of the ever-increasing European presence on their territory remained powerfully evocative.

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<sup>205</sup> David Penney, “Floral Decoration and Culture Change: An Historical Interpretation of Motivation,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 15,1 (1991), 56.

<sup>206</sup> James Clifford, “Introduction: The Pure Products Go Crazy,” *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 1-19.

<sup>207</sup> J.H.C. King has discussed the term “traditional” and the potential problems with its conventional usage. Because it usually refers to customary application of technique, media, form or symbolism in Indigenous art works in some ways the term “traditional” can also be used negatively to contain Indigenous peoples to the past. I put it in quotations here to highlight the expectations of what “traditional” may have meant to early collectors, scholars and anthropologists – as static and immutable. See: J.H.C. King, “Tradition in Native American Art,” *The Arts of the North American Indian: Native Tradition in Evolution*, edited by Edwin L. Wade, (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1986), 65-93.

<sup>208</sup> James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 342.

### **The Temagami Forest Reserve: Changes in Relationship to Land**

Indigenous groups like the Teme-Augama Anishinaabe experienced great cultural upheaval during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, which in many cases left them with very few choices but to change. However, as I will demonstrate, “change” does not necessarily mean disappearance, but can instead signify transformation, rebirth and regeneration. As I described in the previous chapter, until the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries the northern area of “New Ontario,” had remained “just beyond the Canadian periphery.”<sup>209</sup> Populations from the southern urban areas began to push northward, driven by the desire for natural resources and the entrepreneurial prospects of the region. As Temagami quickly gained a reputation for being “the best pinery in central Canada,”<sup>210</sup> the territory quickly became known not only for its potential in resource development, but also for its “wilderness”<sup>211</sup> that attracted many tourists and recreational sportsmen.

Prior to this onslaught of settler activity, the TAA, like other Indigenous groups surrounding the Great Lakes, had retained a great deal of control over their lands and the fur trade economy. The Hudson’s Bay Company and other rival independent traders were

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<sup>209</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 36.

<sup>210</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 68.

<sup>211</sup> Jocelyn Thorpe has written extensively on this topic of the socially constructed “wilderness” of the Temagami area that naturalized the territory as Canadian, sublime and open for white settlement and recreation. See: *Temagami’s Tangled Wild: Race Gender and the Making of Canadian Nature*, (2012); “To Visit and Cut Down: Tourist Forestry, and the Social Construction of Nature in Twentieth-Century Northeastern Ontario,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 19.1 (2008): 331-357; and “Temagami’s Tangled Wild: The Making of Race, Nature, and Nation in Early-Twentieth-Century Ontario,” *Rethinking the Great White North: Race, Nature, and the Historical Geographies of Whiteness in Canada*, ed. Andrew Baldwin, Laura Cameron and Audrey Kobayashi, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 193-211;

very reliant on the TAA not only for their furs, but also for their intimate knowledge of n'Daki Menan.<sup>212</sup> When the overall economy surrounding the Great Lakes area began to shift from the fur trade to lands, resources and tourism, Indigenous groups such as the TAA found that they were quickly losing control over their traditional territory.<sup>213</sup> The land that was suddenly reachable by railway and assumed to be open for resource extraction, attracted an onslaught of newcomers looking either to settle or search for the ideal summer vacation getaway. To satisfy these desires for resource wealth, population increase and tourism in the region, the government of Ontario set aside lands as the Temagami Forest Reserve (TFR), which placed an ever-increasing strain on the TAA and their relationship to n'Daki Menan.

Although the activities of resource extraction and wilderness tourism are today understood to be antithetical, in the early-twentieth century Temagami region, according to Jocelyn Thorpe, the two appeared to go hand in hand.<sup>214</sup> Established in 1901, the TFR, comprised of 2,200 square miles of territory centred on Lake Temagami,<sup>215</sup> was set aside under the Ontario Forest Reserves Act of 1898. Its creation was meant to signify the Crown's commitment to development management that would both implement conservationist principles and also allow for efficient economic growth in the area.<sup>216</sup> Although the primary purpose of the TFR was to conserve Ontario's pine timber, other government objectives that existed alongside forestry conservation, such as the protection

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<sup>212</sup> Jocelyn Thorpe, "Temagami's Tangled Wild: The Making of Race, Nature, and Nation in Early-Twentieth-Century Ontario." (PhD Dissertation, York University, 2008), 90.

<sup>213</sup> Cory Silverstein (Willmott), 244, 252-253.

<sup>214</sup> Jocelyn Thorpe, "To Visit and Cut Down," 346

<sup>215</sup> Bruce W. Hodgins, R. Peter Gillis and Jamie Benidickson, "Ontario Experiments in Forest Reserves," in *Changing Parks: The History, Future and Cultural Context of Parks and Heritage Landscapes*, Eds. John S. Marsh and Bruce Hodgins, (Toronto: Dundurn, 1998), 83.

<sup>216</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 68-69; and Thorpe, "To Visit and Cut Down," 335-336.

of waterways, game, and wildlife, also served to shape the region into a prime recreational destination for urban tourists.<sup>217</sup> This naturalization of the region as Canadian “wilderness” and paper timber reserve open for settler consumption further displaced and refused to acknowledge the presence of the TAA and their title to the territory that had always been known to them as their homeland.

### **The Temagami Forest Reserve: Restriction of Indigenous Rights**

The Forest Reserves Act stated:

*[W]ithin the boundaries of such reserves ... no person shall locate, settle upon, use or occupy any such land.*

Under this clause of the Forest Reserves Act, the TAA were suddenly considered almost “squatters” in their own traditional territory, which now fell within the boundaries of the TFR.<sup>218</sup> In the years that followed the Forest Reserve’s creation, the TAA found that their activities and traditional pursuits were being policed and criminalized by government officials at an alarming rate<sup>219</sup> and their lives “restricted and controlled ... by a provincial regime that hardly recognized them and barely tolerated their presence.”<sup>220</sup> Indeed, when the Temagami Game and Fish Reserve was later established in 1911, the province banned all hunting and fishing within the boundaries of the TFR.<sup>221</sup> Although a new statute regarding the enforcement of wildlife control, the Ontario Game and Fisheries Act of 1907, was not intended to “affect any right specially reserved to or conferred upon

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<sup>217</sup> Thorpe, “To Visit and Cut Down,” 346.

<sup>218</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 86.

<sup>219</sup> Thorpe, “Temagami’s Tangled Wild: The Making of Race, Nature, and Nation,” 201.

<sup>220</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 86.

<sup>221</sup> Teme-Augama Anishnabai, “The Native Dimension: Key Dates,” *Temagami: A Debate on Wilderness*. Eds Matt Bray and Ashley Thomson, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990), 105.

Indians,” the only Indigenous groups that were to be left unaffected by fish and game laws were members of First Nations who had entered into “any treaty or regulations in that behalf made by the Government of the Dominion of Canada with reference to hunting on their reserves or hunting grounds, or in any territory especially set apart for the purpose.”<sup>222</sup> According to Hodgins and Benidickson, the TAA faced a very difficult situation that set them apart from the surrounding First Nations who were parties to the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850. Unlike neighbouring bands, and despite their numerous attempts to negotiate with the Department of Indian Affairs and the province, the TAA remained without a reserve and so on paper appeared to have “no control” over any portion of n’Daki Menan. Additionally, because the TAA were left out of the signing of the Treaty, the land they occupied was assumed by the Crown to have already been relinquished, and within this context, the TAA had no right to hunt or fish on their traditional territory.<sup>223</sup>

Hodgins and Benidickson have explained that although provincial game laws certainly would have affected Indigenous traditional pursuits to a degree, *vigorous* interference and enforcement of “absolute prohibition of hunting and fishing in Temagami” began in 1911, after the provincial legislature re-enacted the Forest Reserves Act in 1910.<sup>224</sup> According to TAA member, Mary Laronde, in the years that followed the re-enactment, restriction on traditional activities and harassment of the TAA escalated considerably:

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<sup>222</sup> *Ontario Game and Fisheries Act*, 7 Edw. VII (1907) cap. 49, sec. 8. qtd in Hodgins and Benidickson, 141.

<sup>223</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 141-2.

<sup>224</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 141.

There were a number of families who had to remove themselves from their traditional territories because they were being prosecuted and jailed for fishing and hunting on their own traditional lands. When people travelled from one section of their territory to another on main waterways, agents of the Ontario government confiscated their nets, guns, furs, and any kind of food supplies that they had. The wild game that they had in their canoes would all be confiscated.<sup>225</sup>

Suddenly requiring permission to cut their own firewood,<sup>226</sup> members of the TAA were quickly finding that even the land they depended on as the cultural and spiritual foundation of their identity was being forcibly taken farther and farther out of their control.<sup>227</sup> In 1913, Chief Aleck Paul voiced his concerns about the province's continuing land management initiatives to Frank Speck, who, as I have noted, had been documenting the TAA's own, long-established, regulatory system for land management organized according to family hunting territories:

In the early times the Indians owned this land where they lived, bounded by the lakes, rivers, and hills, or determined by a certain number of day's journey in this direction or that. Those tracts formed the hunting grounds owned and used by the different families, wherever they went the Indians took care of the game animals ... So these families of hunters would never think of damaging the abundance or the source of supply of the game, because that had come to them from their fathers and grandfathers and those behind them ... We Indians do not need to be watched about protecting the game, we must protect the game or starve. We can take care of the game just as well as the game warden and better, because we are going to live here all the time.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Mary Laronde. "The Teme-Augama Anishnabay," 85.

<sup>226</sup> LAC, IA, RG 10, vol. 7757, Chief Francois Whitebear to Department of Indian Affairs, 21 May 1910, qtd. in Thorpe, "To Visit and Cut Down," 343.

<sup>227</sup> Thorpe, "Temagami's Tangled Wild: The Making of Race, Nature, and Nation," 196.

<sup>228</sup> Speech of Chief Aleck Paul qtd. in Frank G. Speck, "The Indians and Game Preservation," *The Red Man* 6 (1913): 23-24.

Under such circumstances, it is clear that the lives of the TAA were undergoing radical change. New provincial wildlife regulations prevented them from depending on the land for food and from maintaining economic subsistence as trappers in the fur trade.<sup>229</sup>

In an Indigenous context, when I address the issue of stolen land and stolen rights to live off the land, I am also discussing issues of stolen histories/stories and ultimately, stolen identities.<sup>230</sup> Not long ago I heard the Plains Cree and Blackfoot curator, artist and author Gerald McMaster speak on the topic of stolen Indigenous identity and the ways in which our people have always exhibited the profound ability to rebuild, search for our mentors, and continually create.<sup>231</sup> The hunting and fishing restrictions imposed upon the TAA would have also undoubtedly affected art making, and the appearance of the objects that were created. Many traditional materials could no longer be used, yet this did not mean that the “new” or “modern” objects were any less meaningful or significant as expressions of distinct Indigenous identity. According to Leanne Simpson, “Creating [has always been] the base of our culture. Creating [is] regenerative and ensure[s] more diversity, more innovation and more life.”<sup>232</sup>

In summary, in the late nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries, the social climate of n’Daki Menan was becoming increasingly more diverse, and the ways of life of the TAA were shifting dramatically. Not only was the new railway bringing a growing

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<sup>229</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 144.

<sup>230</sup> Eva Gruber, *Humour in Contemporary Native North American Literature: Reimagining Nativeness*, (Rochester: Camden House, 2008), 167.

<sup>231</sup> Gerald McMaster, (Presentation at the New Sun Conference on Aboriginal Arts: “Trailblazers,” Carleton University, Ottawa, March 2, 2013).

<sup>232</sup> Leanne Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back*, 92.

number of settlers and visitors to the area, encouraging the speedy economic development of n'Daki Menan, but Ontario's refusal to participate in granting the TAA a reserve and the restrictions placed on their traditional pursuits under the Forest Reserves Act pushed the TAA to become increasingly reliant on Lake Temagami's burgeoning tourist industry for survival.<sup>233</sup>

### **Temagami Tourism: Changes in Economy**

In the years between 1897 and 1915 n'Daki Menan quickly made the transition from "practically a terra incognita" to a place of enormous Western activity.<sup>234</sup> Through the various attempts at erasing Indigenous presence and rights to the territory, Temagami appeared to be a place prime for settlement and soon became socially constructed as a "site of national nature" and travel destination for wilderness tourists.<sup>235</sup> As I discussed previously, the establishment of the TFR was intended primarily to sustain the province's yield of timber, but its secondary focus capitalized on "the great beauty of [the] lakes, and the desirability of maintaining the surrounding land as a mammoth pleasure resort"<sup>236</sup> for wilderness recreation.<sup>237</sup>

According to Patricia Jasen, the development of the tourist industry in Canada's north in the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries was all part of a larger colonization

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<sup>233</sup> Thorpe, "To Visit and Cut Down," 354.

<sup>234</sup> The Department of Crown Lands, "Introductory," v; Thorpe, "Temagami's Tangled Wild: The Making of Race, Nature, and Nation," 197; and Hodgins and Benidickson, 86.

<sup>235</sup> Thorpe, *Temagami Tourism, Tangled Wild*, 196.

<sup>236</sup> "Reserve of 1,400,000 Acres: Immense Forest Area Set Apart Yesterday," *The Globe*, January 9, 1901, 10.

<sup>237</sup> Hodgins, 189; and Gerald Killan, *Protected Places: A History of Ontario's Provincial Park System*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993), 20.



process that asserted control over the territory.<sup>238</sup> While tourists were initially attracted to waterways and railway lines located closer to the urban centres of southern Ontario, as the second half of the nineteenth century arrived, so too did a growing interest in the “wilder” more distant lands in the north surrounding the upper Great Lakes.<sup>239</sup> Certainly by the early-twentieth century, after the newly established Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway (TNOR) line opened in 1904,<sup>240</sup> newspapers like *The Globe*, and periodicals such as *Rod and Gun*, and *Forest and Stream*<sup>241</sup> were frequently publishing advertisements and articles describing the territory and promoting travel to the Lake Temagami region.<sup>242</sup> According to Jasen, the publicity that was created surrounding settlement and tourism in northern Ontario was intended to “bolster public enthusiasm for bringing the region fully under white control.”<sup>243</sup> As the North American “summering movement”<sup>244</sup> brought an influx of outsiders to n’Daki Menan, the Indigenous presence, although a central feature of Temagami tourism, frequently came under attack.<sup>245</sup> While some tourists travelled to the north in response to a growing interest in the environment and wilderness recreation, there were others coming from the city centres of southern Canada and the United States seeking “wilderness spaces as refuges from occupational

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<sup>238</sup> Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

<sup>239</sup> Jasen, 80.

<sup>240</sup> Roman Brozowski, “The Importance of Tourism in the Temagami Area,” *Temagami: A Debate on Wilderness*, ed. Matt Bray and Ashley Thomson, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1989), 72.

<sup>241</sup> According to Hodgins, the Temagami region was already well known to canoeists even before the arrival of the TNOR. As early as 1894, *Forest and Stream* began running articles on northern canoeing in the Temagami area, which other periodicals would later do as well. See: Bruce W. Hodgins, “The Lure of the Temagami-Based Canoe Trip” in *Nastawgan: The Canadian North by Canoe and Snowshoe*, ed. by Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs. (Weston: Betelgeuse Books, 1985), 191.

<sup>242</sup> Jocelyn Thorpe studies travel writing written around the turn of the twentieth century that was posted in such periodicals as these. See: *Temagami’s Tangled Wild: Race Gender and the Making of Canadian Nature* (2012); “To Visit and Cut Down” (2008) 331-357; and “Temagami’s Tangled Wild: The Making of Race, Nature, and Nation in Early-Twentieth-Century Ontario” (2011), 193-211;

<sup>243</sup> Jasen, 81.

<sup>244</sup> Hodgins, 109.

<sup>245</sup> Jasen, 80.

pressures.”<sup>246</sup> Places that incited romantic notions of the past and the sublimity of nature piqued the interest of many early travellers who sought relief from the noisy activity of industrial progress that was occurring in the southern urban centres. According to Jasen, part of the novelty of visiting the “untouched” landscape of northern Ontario was the curiosity outsiders had about the territory’s Indigenous peoples, whose land-based lifestyle they viewed as being part of a “wild” past that would not survive white “civilization” of the future.<sup>247</sup> This tendency to confine Indigenous peoples to the past is a topic that I have discussed many times in this thesis. It will again become important in this discussion of n’Daki Menan and the TAA in relation to changes in their relationship to land, and the dramatic shift towards a mixed economy based primarily on tourism, both of which caused changes in the objects they created. Although many scholars viewed these visual transformations from the “old” ways of ornamentation to the “modern” as an indication of the death of “authenticity,” contemporary Anishinaabekwe artists knew better.

### **The Temagami Tourist Trade:**

#### **Teme-Augama Anishnabai Makers, Shapeshifting and Survivance**

Undoubtedly, the changes that the TAA saw occurring in their territory around the turn of the twentieth century were profound. In addition to government restrictions increasingly impeding their rights to live off the land, and with their title to n’Daki Menan being continually ignored, “the imposition of a succession of Indian Acts, which

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<sup>246</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 109.

<sup>247</sup> Jasen, 13, 16, 17

dictated numerous enterprises in which Indians could not engage, further limit[ed] economic viability.”<sup>248</sup>

With increasingly limited options to provide for their families, although TAA members continued to trap throughout the fall and winter, in the warmer months of the year many participated in the Temagami tourism industry, working as guides, and holding various positions at leisure camps throughout the summer.<sup>249</sup> Mary Katt recalled, “Each family had their own cottage, their own ‘trapping shack’ they called it. And the whole family would go for the winter, like I said there was only work here for summer months ... They’d come and work for the summer and then they’d all go back in September again.”<sup>250</sup> Mary remembered leaving home at around the age of eleven to start earning her own living at the summer camps that surrounded the lake:

There was a lot of work around here them days for that age you know. They’d hire you as a cabin girl or dishwasher. It would be cleaning cabins or like say dishwashers, kitchen help or whatever when you were really young. Until later years then as I kept working I got to be a waitress and all sorts of other stuff, pretty well everything then, a cook too.<sup>251</sup>

In addition to the numerous jobs that women held at summer camps, many Anishinaabekwe also earned money by producing and selling their handcrafts to interested travellers. As Jasen remarks, creating objects for the tourist trade, “while doubtless giving poor return for the skill and effort involved, provided a significant

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<sup>248</sup> Jasen, 81.

<sup>249</sup> Although this chapter focuses on tourism in n’Daki Menan around the turn of the twentieth century, Mary’s experience working at summer camps in the 1940s reveals the way in which the Temagami “summering movement” persisted well after the first decade of the 1900s.

<sup>250</sup> <sup>250</sup> Mary Katt, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 3, 2012.

<sup>251</sup> <sup>251</sup> Mary Katt, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 3, 2012.

source of income in locations where older means of survival had been eroded.”<sup>252</sup> This shift in livelihood from trapping to the tourist industry could be seen in many areas surrounding the Great Lakes. In discussing the significance that his father’s Indian Craft Shop played for many artmakers in his community throughout turbulent times at the turn of the twentieth century, Frank Ettawageshik, Anishinaabe and member of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa in Michigan, states that “although this income was not much, its importance should not be minimized, for often these earnings provided food for the families of the artists.”<sup>253</sup>

Despite the Eurocentric belief that the Anishinaabek were a people of the past who could not survive modernity, visitors to the Temagami region, like many Western tourists who encountered Indigenous peoples, found much to their surprise that the Temagami Anishnabai negotiated the “modern” era,<sup>254</sup> the economy and the tourist trade quite well. For example, journalist Frank Carrell wrote a short series of articles for *Rod and Gun* magazine detailing a hunting and fishing trip he took throughout Northern Ontario in 1907. During his visit to the Temagami region he marveled at the way in which the TAA navigated the “modern” world with such ease. Being surprised by the “interesting sight” of the use of gramophones in their homes, their changing customs of dress, “new” dances, fiddle playing, and their proficiency in English as well as in their own languages, he was startled to find that the Indigenous peoples he encountered at Bear

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<sup>252</sup> Jasen, 97.

<sup>253</sup> Frank Ettawageshik, “My Father’s Business,” *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Worlds*, eds. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 22.

<sup>254</sup> See: Frank Carrell, “Our Hunting and Fishing Trip in Northern Ontario, Part 1,” *Rod and Gun* 8.11 (1907): 931-944.

Island did not particularly fit the “authentic Indian” image that Europeans had so readily relegated to the past.<sup>255</sup> He wrote: “We left the island for our hotel across the lake, about ten o’clock with a very pleasant impression of the *advanced* state of civilization of the members of the tribe about the Post.”<sup>256</sup>

With similar surprise, during his visit to Bear Island, Speck made several comments in his letters to Sapir on the high prices that TAA artmakers received for their handcrafts compared to other communities he had visited:

[They] are rather more aesthetic than their friends at Temiskaming. They do more beadwork as you will see from stuff. Prices are quite high as they sell a good deal to Amer[ican] Sportsmen, as high as \$3.00 to \$3.50 for a pair of beaded moccasins.<sup>257</sup> .... To show how prices vary in bands, it nearly floored me to find they want 18 to \$20.00 for [a] rabbitskin blanket here.<sup>258</sup>

TAA artists were confident in their skill and saw the influx of tourists as an economic opportunity for survival during a time of great cultural upheaval. Recognizing the demand for “authentic” Indian wares within the tourist trade, Bear Island Anishinaabekwe were able to retain a certain amount of control through the setting of these higher prices. Women also had the option of selling their works to the Bear Island Hudson’s Bay Company Post, but it provided a far lesser profit margin than they received by selling directly to tourists.<sup>259</sup> Around the 1920s, Madeline Katt Theriault remembered tourists and sportsmen telling her husband, who worked as a guide at the time, ““We

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<sup>255</sup> Thorpe, “Temagami’s Tangled Wild: The Making of Race, Nature, and Nation,” 203; and Jasen, 142.

<sup>256</sup> Carrell, 938. (Emphasis added)

<sup>257</sup> Letter, F. Speck to E. Sapir, 30 June 1913, CMC, Edward Sapir fonds (I-A-236M), Box 634 f.2.

<sup>258</sup> Letter, F. Speck to E. Sapir, 16 July 6 1913, CMC, Edward Sapir fonds (I-A-236M), Box 634 f.2.

<sup>259</sup> Pamela Sinclair, *Temagami Lakes Association: The Life and Times of a Cottage Community*, Ed. Patricia Healy (Bloomington: Trafford Publishing, 2011), 34.

don't like buying moccasins from the Hudson's Bay Company. We would like to buy them direct from the Indians. Why doesn't your wife hold the Indian work or articles until tourist season.' From then on I kept my Indian articles to sell only at tourist season and they gave a good price, and cash too."<sup>260</sup>

Across the Eastern Woodlands, objects created for sale began to exhibit more Euro-American influences in appearance, making the transition from "traditional" media and design to "modern" figurative florals and trade fabrics. One might imagine that the cause for this change would have been solely to appeal to the aesthetic tastes of Western buyers who were very drawn to floral imagery, particularly beginning in the Victorian era.<sup>261</sup> However, the use of floral imagery and patterned trade fabrics, as well as being applied to objects intended for the external market, also began appearing on objects such as cradleboard wrappings that were being used by the Anishinaabek themselves. This suggests then that these new motifs, in their replacement or rather substitution of the "old" geometric and spiritually-charged designs, were in themselves meaningful, and signaled a major shift and transition in the expression of Indigenous identity, "one that formed part of a strategy for survival."<sup>262</sup> Virginia McKenzie spoke about this very dark and challenging era for the TAA and many Indigenous groups:

A lot of things had to basically go underground, the gifts people had went underground, and people sat really quiet with them ... For the grandmothers a long time ago, it was a real challenge, the challenge of survival was phenomenal. Through the history, their work, like even in the old photographs, you see the work, the beadwork and different things like

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<sup>260</sup> Katt Theriault, 48.

<sup>261</sup> See: Ruth B. Phillips, "The Iconography of Indianness: The Floral, the Feminine and the Folk," *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900*, (Seattle : University of Washington Press ; Montreal, Quebec : McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 155-197.

<sup>262</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 158, 195.

that, its all beauty ... In the darkest moments they could still see all that beauty.<sup>263</sup>

According to David Penney, there is a general consensus that floral imagery was introduced to Indigenous peoples through exchanges with Euro-American sources.<sup>264</sup> As already noted, due to the salvage ethnography paradigm that became so popular around the turn of the twentieth century, this transition in design that became increasingly Western in appearance was viewed as a sign of the decline of Indigenous “authenticity,” a belief which again confined Indigenous peoples to a past that did not allow for cultural change, innovation or transformation.<sup>265</sup> Many Euro-Canadians who eventually settled in n’Daki Menan felt that the tourist goods that were being created and sold by the TAA in the early- to mid-twentieth century showed signs of cultural “deterioration.” In 1948, Henry Woodman, a former employee of the Smithsonian Institution who later ran a summer camp on Lake Temagami, wrote a letter to Speck, who had maintained an interest in TAA wares since his visit in 1913. In dismissing these contemporary goods as “junk,” Woodman wrote to Speck:

Since you were here and during the twenty three years I have been coming to Temagami, the Bear Island Indians have definitely gone to seed ... There has been a definite deterioration here since the first war when so many came back from the “outside” with a taste of other things. As one who knows what a museum needs, I’d have none of it.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Virginia McKenzie, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 2, 2012.

<sup>264</sup> Penney, “Floral Decoration and Culture Change,” 54.

<sup>265</sup> Many early settlers confused the interaction between Indigenous and Euro-American design in material culture simply as the Anishinaabek trying to mimic or imitate Western modes of ornamentation. This racist view again circumscribes the Anishinaabek as a people incapable of change or innovation. In his travel account to Lake Temagami, Frank Carrell calls the TAA’s changing styles of dress, customs and habits “ludicrous.” See Carrell, 936; and Thorpe, “To Visit and Cut Down,” 355.

<sup>266</sup> Letter, H. Woodman to F. Speck, 16 July 1948, APS, Frank Speck Papers, Miscellaneous notes, 1927-1948, II(2F2), Collection 126: Box 2.

Letters, F. Speck to E. Sapir, 30 June 1913 and 16 July 6 1913, CMC, Edward Sapir fonds (I-A-236M), Box 634 f.2.

What Woodman and a number of early scholars and settlers failed to recognize regarding the TAA's engagement with the modernity of the "outside," was the continued trade, sharing and participation in exchange networks that had always flourished among Indigenous groups throughout the Great Lakes region. According to Hodgins and Benidickson, "By the fifteenth century, the Teme-Augama Anishnabai had established significant trading relations with people far from the homeland."<sup>267</sup> Archeological excavations close to and within n'Daki Menan reveal very old Wendat and other Iroquoian pottery shards and pipe bowls, showing that the TAA, like many Indigenous groups, were involved in trade and exchange with people who lived quite far away, long before they even came into contact with Europeans.<sup>268</sup> In this way then, we can say that our cultures have always been diverse, have always manifested interaction, and are always continually *changing*. According to Leanne Simpson, diversity was embraced and celebrated by the Anishinabek because it was used to "propel and promote life and rebirth. [It] afforded us some protection against the forces of colonialism because different pockets of our nation were able to continue aspects of their culture and lifeways that others were not."<sup>269</sup>

It is precisely this use of diversity as protection that drew Anishinaabekwe artists to shift the shapes and styles of their designs. Although the transition from the geometric and spiritually charged motifs to the floral pleased many missionary workers who were anxious to rid the territory of "pagan" imagery and viewed the change as a "positive"

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<sup>267</sup> Hodgins and Benidickson, 13

<sup>268</sup> According to Hodgins and Benidickson, the Nipissings acted as 'middlemen' for these old indirect trade routes between Algonkian-speaking groups north of Lake Nipissing to the James Bay lowlands, and Indigenous peoples living in the Huronian region around Georgian Bay. See: Hodgins and Benidickson, 13.

<sup>269</sup> Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 92.



sign of Anishinaabek acceptance of “civilization,” Indigenous beadworkers had other ideas of what these new styles meant.<sup>270</sup> Whereas in the view of outsiders, older designs were filled with meaning and spiritual significance, flowers and patterned fabrics were simply pretty and ornamental and posed no threat to the assimilationist effort. I argue that this common understanding served as the perfect, protected hiding place for the Anishinaabek to plant and pack away those resilient story- and teaching-seeds that I mentioned in Chapter One of this thesis.

### **Strategic Transformations: Anishinaabekwe Artists Shifting Shapes**

*The roots of tradition are cut and retied, collective symbols appropriated from external influences ... culture and identity are inventive and mobile. They need not take root in ancestral plots; they live by pollination by (historical) transplanting.*<sup>271</sup>

Flowers and plant life have always been important aspects of Anishinaabek cosmology. They were used as medicines for healing, but also formed part of “an integral link in the chain of life, transforming the energy of the greatest manito, the sun, into food for animals and humans.”<sup>272</sup> And as Mary Katt indicated at the beginning of this chapter, flowers and plants are beautiful and were given to us to use by the Creator, so they *are* indeed very special. Given this understanding of plant life it becomes easy to see why it was quite common for mothers, aunties and grandmothers to lovingly ornament the fabric covering of a little one’s tikinaagan with sprays of floral beadwork. What is interesting to

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<sup>270</sup> Berlo and Phillips, 30, 103.

<sup>271</sup> Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 15.

<sup>272</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 195.

note however is the overall form of the floral motifs. The tikinaagan from Bear Island in Figure 1 offers a representative example.

As I discussed in Chapter One, children, particularly during the first year of life require special protection because the time of infancy can be very precarious. For this reason, Anishinaabekwe would ornament tikinaaganan with powerful quilled designs that blessed the baby wrapped within them by communicating the importance of balance. As we have seen, this idea of balance and the reconciliation of opposing forces could be represented through the use of contrasting colour, alternating design motifs (perhaps of the Thunderbird and Underwater Panther), and variants of the four-quadrants or equal-armed cross. What we see in the beaded motifs that ornament both sides of the cradleboard cover from Bear Island are not, however, representations of manitous but of flowers, which at first appear to be a far departure from the earlier “traditional” designs that we have seen.

It is possible that these designs could portray a rendering of the wild rose, a pattern that became quite common in Anishinaabek beadwork in the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries. According to Densmore, the wild rose was sometimes considered to be a representative flower of the Anishinaabek, as it grew widely throughout the territory.<sup>273</sup> If the triangular shapes that emanate from the shared stem on the beaded design represent thorns, they would appear to support this interpretation. However, what makes these flowers particularly intriguing is the fact that they only have *four* petals,

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<sup>273</sup> Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, 186.

whereas the actual wild rose has five.<sup>274</sup> This seemingly minute detail is likely not without meaning or specific intention. This cradleboard cover I would argue provides an eloquent example of the TAA beadworker as a creative agent of transformation, shifting the appearance of the old quilled images of the four quadrants into new designs of four-petaled flowers. These four petals are oriented at right angles to each other, and much like the equal-armed cross motifs that ornamented earlier tikinaagan covers, this orientation emphasizes the point of intersection – the centre. Therefore, although the shape of our very ancient motif appears to have been slightly altered into a “new medium of floral representation,” the overall meaning behind the motif “of the four-part spatial division radiating from a central point” remains the same.<sup>275</sup>

In addition to maintaining the deep structures of traditional old motifs in their beadwork, archival photographs from Bear Island indicate that TAA mothers, such as CeeCee Whitebear-Becker, also made use of plaid trade fabrics to wrap up their babies<sup>276</sup> (Figure 11). In terms of visual design, plaid as a pattern is composed of a series of vertical and horizontal lines all meeting at points of intersection that create an all-over display of netted crosses and four-quadrant images. It is possible that Indigenous women came to value plaid patterned fabrics for these grid-like properties that would have still communicated elements of balance and centrality, albeit in new forms and through new

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<sup>274</sup> See: Tom Reaume, *Wild Plants of North America: Fully Illustrated*, (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2009), 71.

<sup>275</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 172.

<sup>276</sup> According to Cath Oberholtzer, examination of many Great Lakes region archival photographs from the nineteenth century onwards reveals that women from many Indigenous communities were making use of tartan fabrics for cradleboard coverings. See: Cath Oberholtzer, “A Womb with a View,” 268-270.

media.<sup>277</sup> Throughout the historical record, description of dress indicates that Indigenous women from many communities were very drawn to working with bright prints and plaid patterned fabrics and could often be seen wearing tartan shawls.<sup>278</sup> According to Sherry Farrell Racette, “[These] shawls were functional, warm, and enveloping, so that women often carried their babies in their folds.”<sup>279</sup> Cath Oberholtzer has also likened the grid-like qualities of plaids to the “protective powers inherent in netted fabrics,” indicating that through the use of tartan, perhaps “it is the interwoven colours of the tartan which ... perform the metaphoric protection of the infant.”<sup>280</sup> This notion that plaid fabrics acted as both physical and metaphorical protection for babies also speaks to the possible renditions of the four-quadrant images that could also be found within the netted pattern.

Additionally, it is also possible that Anishinaabekwe utilized brightly coloured or patterned fabrics for their babies’ mossbags to appease beings of the Spirit World for

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<sup>277</sup> Silverstein (Willmott), 104. Other scholars have also dealt with the “Indigenization” of trade goods and the possible meanings that certain trade items may have had for Indigenous peoples as they began integrating them with older materials and into their traditional designs. See: George Hammell, “Trading in Metaphors: The Magic of Beads,” *Proceedings of the 1982 Glass Trade Bead Conference*, ed. C. Hayes III, (New York: Rochester Museum and Science Center, 1982) 5-28; and Sherry Farrell Racette, “My Grandmothers Loved to Trade: The Indigenization of European Trade Goods in Historic and Contemporary Canada,” *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 20 (2008) 69-81.

<sup>278</sup> For example, Reverend Burden, who worked on Manitoulin Island indicated that Anishinaabekwe from that territory could often be seen wearing brightly coloured dresses and shawls. See: Rev. Harold Nelson Burden, *Manitoulin: Or, Five Years of Church Work among Ojibway Indians and Lumberman, resident upon that Island or in its Vicinity*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1895), 77-78.

<sup>279</sup> Farrell Racette, “My Grandmothers Loved to Trade,” 76-77. Additionally, Harold Burnham and Dorothy Burnham, who have also explored the use of trade fabrics in Canada, indicate that, “A shawl was expected to last a lifetime. The yarns were spun with special care and carefully woven so that it might be worn with pride. It is in shawls that some of the best handweaving is found.” Given the durability of shawls and tartan fabrics it seems very fitting that Indigenous women would have also used them to wrap their babies [See: Harold Burnham and Dorothy Burnham, *Keep Me Warm One Night: Early Handweaving in Eastern Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, in cooperation with the Royal Ontario Museum, 1972), 63.]

<sup>280</sup> Oberholtzer, “A Womb with a View,” 269. Cath Oberholtzer has written on the importance of strings, nets, and lines within Cree culture in other places as well. Her writing on baby charms also discusses this connection between woven and netted lines and metaphorical protection. See: Cath Oberholtzer, “Net Baby Charms: Metaphors of Protection and Provision.”

further protection over their young ones. In his writing from the early-nineteenth century, Peter Jones noted the Anishinaabe belief in mamagwasewug-- little people, or what he referred to as “the hidden or covered beings.”<sup>281</sup> Stories of these small spirits, who are often portrayed as mischievous but helpful tricksters who live in the rocky cliffs along water banks, are present all throughout Anishinaabe territory, including n’Daki Menan as Speck found during his work there in 1913.<sup>282</sup> Jones indicates that little people were understood to be “invisible, but possessed ... the power of showing themselves,”<sup>283</sup> with many believing that they were typically only visible to medicine people and young children. Jones goes on to explain that these beings were also “extravagantly fond of pieces of scarlet cloth and smart prints,” and for this reason, these types of materials were often presented to them in return for “long life or success.”<sup>284</sup> Similarly, Sherry Farrell Racette remembered a friend of hers, who now has her own ceremonial lodge, describing to her the preference that the grandmother spirits of her lodge had for offerings of vividly patterned fabrics.<sup>285</sup> Understanding that spirits throughout Anishinaabe country were fond of these types of textiles, together with the possibility that certain patterned designs, such as plaid, promoted health and good living through their illustrations of balance and centrality, further suggests the likelihood that Anishinaabekwe were specifically drawn to certain fabrics in the creation of mossbags for their ability to please the Spirit World, and thus foster protection for their infants. When viewed in this way, it is then possible to say

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<sup>281</sup> Rev. Peter Jones, *History of the Ojebway Indians; with especial reference to their conversion to Christianity* (London: A.W. Bennett, 1861), 156.

<sup>282</sup> See: Speck, *Myths and folk-lore of the Timiskaming Algonquin and Timagami Ojibwa*, 82. I also learned through my visits to Bear Island that stories about sightings of little people living in the rocks are still told. But these small beings are rarely seen anymore because they are afraid of loud noises from modern boat motors etc. and so today remain mostly hidden.

<sup>283</sup> Jones, 156.

<sup>284</sup> Jones, 157.

<sup>285</sup> Farrell Racette, “My Grandmothers Loved to Trade,” 77.

that while tartans arrived through European sources, when they were used by Anishinaabekwe they were valued for their own purposes and so became “Indigenized.”<sup>286</sup>

Given what we have come to know about early Anishinaabe material, it appears that objects that were worn on the body, and containers that were used to hold our medicines and our little ones, were very often ornamented with designs that retained power and protection through the communication of balance and centrality. Keeping in mind this understanding of the way our ancestors ornamented their objects all those years ago, as well as the overall strength of the Anishinaabek as a people, it is difficult to believe that we would/could have ever stopped honouring our visual and spiritual traditions. But with the very damaging assimilationist efforts and changes to our lands and rights attacking our very identities, there was a need to transform – to transform in order to survive.

Irving Hallowell, an anthropologist who spent quite a bit of the time with the Anishinaabek, marveled at the role that transformation and metamorphosis frequently played in many of our traditional stories. “Outward appearance is only an incidental attribute of being,” he wrote, “Metamorphosis to the Ojibwa mind is an earmark of ‘power.’”<sup>287</sup> Certainly, in many of our legends, transformation was a necessary strategy for survival as it allowed for safety and protection. According to Michael Witgen, the

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<sup>286</sup> See: Farrell Racette, “My Grandmothers Loved to Trade.”

<sup>287</sup> A. Irving Hallowell, “Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior and World View,” in *A. Irving Hallowell: Contributions to Anthropology*, ed. R.D. Fogelson, (1960; reprint, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 373, 377.

Anishinaabek as a people have always existed as dynamic individuals. Through seasonal movement, social exchange, trade, and political alliances our ways of life have always required us to celebrate change, diversity and transformation:

For the Anishinaabe peoples the reality of lived experience revealed the necessity of metamorphosis. Any animate being might shape-shift, or assume another life form, in order to make its way in the world. The same logic applied to human beings gathered together to form a collective social body ... The people of this world, the Anishinaabeg, recognized a shared sense of identity that linked people and territory. This was Anishinaabewaki – their homeland, Indian country – a physical and social landscape created by their connection to one another. But the Anishinaabeg recognized that there were many different ways of making these connections, and many different ways to imagine themselves within this space.<sup>288</sup>

Witgen goes on to say that this capacity for change and adaptation is much like the concept of shapeshifting, which “was pivotal to the worldview of the Anishinaabe peoples, and reflected the behavior of their trickster figure Nanabozho” who in legends might shape-shift to hunt game or fool an enemy.<sup>289</sup> Indeed, in Speck’s documentation of Teme-Augauma Anishnabai Nanabush stories, the trickster is referred to as “the transformer,”<sup>290</sup> having to disguise himself as a toad in order to slay “The Giant Lynx” in one story in particular.<sup>291</sup>

Sherry Farrell Racette has identified Indigenous artists’ abilities to transform media during a time of great disruption as powerful acts of cultural resistance and

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<sup>288</sup> Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native World Shaped Early North America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 90.

<sup>289</sup> Witgen, 19.

<sup>290</sup> Speck, *Myths and Folklore of the Timiskaming Algonquin and Timagami Ojibwa*, 28.

<sup>291</sup> See: Speck, “Nenebuc Wounds the Giant Lynx, Disguises Himself in a Toad’s Skin, and Finally Slays Her,” in *Myths and Folklore of the Timiskaming Algonquin and Timagami Ojibwa*, 34-36.

“survivance” – a term coined by Anishinabek author Gerald Vizenor that denotes “survival, endurance, and the repudiation of dominance.”<sup>292</sup> According to Farrell Racette, the changes initiated by women artists speak to the fluidity and flexible nature of living Indigenous “traditions” that exist both in the past and in contemporary contexts.<sup>293</sup> Indeed, when searching for “tradition” in Indigenous works, as curator Deborah Doxtator has cautioned, we cannot rely solely on the outward appearances produced by material, media and motifs:

If ‘tradition’ is merely the surface appearance of form, then those who lament the passing of Native traditions are justified in doing so. But if ‘tradition’ is really collective community and individualized processes which are evoked by continuing, culturally powerful metaphors ... then ‘tradition’ is very much alive.<sup>294</sup>

With the tremendous change experienced by the TAA, the destructive nature of the colonial and assimilationist efforts brought about the need to transform. Although many aspects of “tradition” seemed to shift in appearance, or, to the delight of many of the early settlers, appeared to “vanish,” the overall significance of the visualizations of balance and centrality that could be found on very early tikinaagan covers, has also stayed very much the same.

If we think about the significance behind the images of the four quadrants, and the “new” iconography of the four-petaled flower, it seems very appropriate that these

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<sup>292</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Traditional Arts and Media: Resilience and Survivance,” *Clearing a Path: New Ways of Seeing Traditional Indigenous Art*, Eds. Carmen Robertson and Sherry Farrell Racette, (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Chair, University of Regina, 2009) 21-33; and Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1994).

<sup>293</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Traditional Arts and Media,” 23.

<sup>294</sup> Deborah Doxtator, *Basket, Bead, and Quill, and the Making of ‘Traditional’ Art*, (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1996), 19-20.



images would have been applied to baby carriers. For as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, children and infants played a very important role in Anishinaabek societies, as they formed and continue to form the central heart of community.

## Chapter Four

EMILY

*(Reciting, over women humming their lullaby.)*

*When children sleep, their bodies lie at rest,  
But they are not at rest, they travel,  
They travel the length and the width of rooms, the children,  
They travel the length and width of houses, the children,  
The length and the width of the Earth and more;  
And on these travels, who knows what they see, the children;  
Do they see the stuff of which the walls of houses are made?  
Do they see the substance of the moon, the way this Earth is made of soil and rock  
and magic molecules,  
The way the human soul is made of spider's webs and veins and blood that  
glistens in the sun?  
They see all this, I do believe, and more,  
When children sleep.*

Excerpt from Tomson Highway's *Rose*<sup>295</sup>

In the early-twentieth century, anthropologist Diamond Jenness wrote about the Anishinaabek belief in the soul and shadow of young ones. According to his informants, although babies appear to learn and understand very little for the first months of life, their souls and shadows are actually quite active. And, as Tomson Highway's character Emily has articulated above, while infants do appear to require much sleep and rest, the Wasauksing Anishinaabek also understood that during this time of seeming passivity, children are indeed very "conscious of many things that [are] hidden from adult eyes."<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Tomson Highway, *Rose*, (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2003), 108.

<sup>296</sup> Jenness, 90.

“A child required the tenderest of care,” wrote Jenness, “Both before and after it was born the mother talked to it, teaching the soul and shadow such information as the habits of the animals it would encounter as it grew up.”<sup>297</sup> According to Basil Johnston, these early teachings were often delivered through story, song, or “simply imaginative descriptions” of the natural world. At this earliest stage of storytelling, he says, “The immediate end was to induce sleep; the more remote and ultimate object was to foster *dreams*, the simplest and first form of vision ... Stories were told slowly and graphically to allow a child to enkindle ... imagination.”<sup>298</sup>

The activity of their souls and shadows and their profound ability to imagine and easily see things that cannot be seen by adults places young ones in a transitory position that is both a part of this world and that of the Creator. Babies were seen as gifts, and through their travel from the Spirit World at birth they maintained very close ties to that realm and therefore were considered to hold greater spiritual power than their adult counterparts.<sup>299</sup> The round soft spot on the top of a baby’s head acts as a reminder of this power and the openness that little ones have to the Spirit World.<sup>300</sup>

Dreaming, imagination, and vision were very highly respected powers for the Anishinaabek, and children were encouraged to foster these abilities through sleep and rest. Anishinaabekwe would soothe their babies into slumber by gently swaying them

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<sup>297</sup> Jenness, 90.

<sup>298</sup> Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 122. [Emphasis added]

<sup>299</sup> Simpson, *Dancing on our Turtle’s Back*, 123.

<sup>300</sup> Kim Anderson, “New Life Stirring: Mothering, Transformation and Aboriginal Womanhood,” in *Until Our Hearts Are On the Ground: Aboriginal Mothering, Oppression, Resistance and Rebirth*, ed. D. Memee Lavell-Harvard and Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, (Toronto: Demeter Press, 2006), 21.

back and forth and singing accompanying lullabies of melodic “way-way”s and “e-we-yeah”s-- soft repetitions that complemented the slow swinging motion.<sup>301</sup> A baby could be swayed to sleep wrapped up in its mother’s arms, or wrapped up in its tikinaagan that could be laid down in a hammock made of a blanket or skins. As well, mother could also often be seen putting her baby to sleep by resting the cradleboard on her toes as she sat and rocked it by moving her feet from side to side.<sup>302</sup>

The sensations provided by the tikinaagan of being wrapped up tightly and softly rocked were very comforting for infants. Many ethnologists noted that babies would often cry to be placed back in the tikinaagan after they had been taken out for a short while,<sup>303</sup> and that they could not rest any other way.<sup>304</sup> In Chapter One I described the physical attributes of the tikinaagan, and explored the ways in which its structure allowed for portability, easy travel throughout the bush and convenience for the busy mother or mother-figure who was able to keep her infant constantly with her. From the position of being wrapped up in a cradleboard, whether it be feeling the terrain of the land while travelling on a mother’s back, or being rocked to sleep on a grandmother’s feet, or propped up against a wigwam while an auntie picked berries, the child observed, listened and felt daily life and all the interactions with the surrounding natural world.

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<sup>301</sup> Densmore, *American Indians and Their Music*, (New York: Woman's Press, 1926) 74-75; Schoolcraft, *The Red Race of America*, 391-392; and Hilger, 25-26.

<sup>302</sup> Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, 49.

<sup>303</sup> Edward S. Rogers, *The Round Lake Ojibwa: Occasional Paper 5 for the Royal Ontario Museum*, (Toronto: The Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, 1962), B.37

<sup>304</sup> Hilger, 24.

According to Cath Oberholtzer, it was when the infant was snugly laced within a cradleboard that it developed both an awareness of self and a sense of belonging to a people.<sup>305</sup> In Mosom Danny Musqua's understanding, this sense of self, purpose, and belonging as a member of a community are all learned from the womb.<sup>306</sup> Anishinaabe Elder Art Solomon speaks of our learning these kinds of teachings in his poem, *The Woman's Part*, when he writes, "The woman is the first teacher / Her teachings begin when the child is in / the womb."<sup>307</sup> It therefore seems fitting that Oberholtzer, who has so eloquently described tikinaaganan as a "womb with a view," sees the cradleboard as a further extension of the feeling of warmth and security that one has while still in utero.<sup>308</sup>

Indeed, as one of Sister Mary Inez Hilger's very elderly informants from Miskwaagamiwi-zaaga'igan (Red Lake Reservation) said regarding the use of moss bags and cradleboards, "You know, I used to hear my old grandmother say that babies like best to be wrapped tightly in deer hide for then they feel like they did in their mother's womb."<sup>309</sup> This connection between the tikinaagan and the womb is also further alluded to in Maggie Wilson's<sup>310</sup> telling of the legend of Tomorrow-Woman, where a Manito-child who has knowledge of the earliest hours of his life remembers his close contact with his mother in the womb:

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<sup>305</sup> Oberholtzer, "Womb with a View," 267

<sup>306</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 38.

<sup>307</sup> Arthur Solomon, *Songs for the People: Teachings on the Natural Way*. Ed. Michael Posluns (Toronto: NC Press, 1990), 35.

<sup>308</sup> Oberholtzer, "Womb with a View," 267.

<sup>309</sup> Hilger, 24

<sup>310</sup> Maggie Wilson was from Manitou Rapids Reserve on the Rainy River and was the principal informant of the anthropologist Ruth Landes in her work, *The Ojibwa Woman*. Despite some of the issues surrounding Landes' work (see note 71 of this thesis), I believe the stories of Wilson that are sprinkled throughout the work are very valuable and provide an Indigenous voice that allows for somewhat of a balance within the text.

He thought he was in a tight wigwam (the womb), and he never moved. Sometimes he was rocked hard ... one time someone was singing, and he was rocked. He was tied to a cradle and he was crying. He stopped crying and looked... it was his mother rocking him, and she was singing.<sup>311</sup>

This feeling of tightness, warmth and rocking within the womb is similar to the feeling the Manitou child experiences while strapped to the cradleboard. Likewise, Mary Katt from Bear Island described this connection, remembering how she would soothe her grandchildren by wrapping them up tightly in blankets when they were feeling a little restless:

Well they're in your womb for nine months, and so when they leave that they're not protected. So when my grandkids used to come here, I'd babysit for them, and then they'd be cranky and crying and I'd get a blanket, I'd spread it out, I'd put them there, roll them up, and then they gone to sleep. Mmhmm they'd go right to sleep! They feel so snuggled up and cuddled. Because they've been in the womb for nine months ... They're keeping themselves awake when they move a bit like that. So this way then when they're bundled up, they're peaceful, they're sleeping.<sup>312</sup>

Virginia McKenzie also mentioned, "The tightness and the warmth of that womb was essential to their comfort... Babies really love to be, they need that, they really need that tight warm feeling for a while, they always have to be kept warm."<sup>313</sup>

In this first stage of life, developing trust, comfort and feelings of belonging are vital. Because an infant's soul and shadow are so active during this time they are only attached to the natural world by "very slender bonds."<sup>314</sup> Infancy could at times be very

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<sup>311</sup> Landes, 208-9.

<sup>312</sup> Mary Katt, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 3, 2012.

<sup>313</sup> Virginia McKenzie, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 2, 2012.

<sup>314</sup> Jenness, 91.

precarious and the soul of a child could easily slip back into the Spirit World. Therefore, it was understood by the Anishinaabek that babies required special protection and feelings of security – a similar sense of safety and belonging that was first nurtured in the womb.

### **“Waking time” and the Role of Community: Layers of Protection for New Life**

When I asked Virginia about seasonal cycles, and particularly about Springtime, she mentioned the way in which living by the water, and moreover living on Bear Island surrounded by water, allowed the opportunity to really *feel* the Springtime shifts and all the excitement that seemed to emanate from the land and the cracking of the ice. “A lot is happening,” she said,

You have all that winter, you have that time of darkness ... You’re in a very long period of darkness ... It gets dark very early. It becomes a very dark time ... That time is really restful, it’s a time to stay warm and to really take care of yourself ... When you go in from the Winter and then into the Spring, when Springtime comes, as beautiful as it is, it can be a real crazy time. Because you’re coming out of that period of so little daytime hours into a period of more light hours, but you’re coming out of a period where Creation has been sleeping, everything is totally relaxed and resting ... So when you come out of that, in Spring, you know people are becoming more alive, they have had the Thunderers come to kind of shake us out of our sleep, because we’re kind of like bear-like in a way. It’s that waking time, that waking time before you come into Summer, with planting and getting ready for the harvest of the first berries to come.<sup>315</sup>

Certainly, Spring, the beginning of the new seasonal cycle, and the welcoming of new life is a very beautiful and very powerful time. However, as Virginia indicates above, because it is a season of so much activity, it is also a part of the cycle that can at times be

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<sup>315</sup> Virginia McKenzie, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 2, 2012.

very hectic and requires quite a bit of energy. This description suggests why we liken the season of Spring to the birth of a newborn baby. For new parents, and in fact, for an entire community, the birth of a little one did in a sense involve a similar feeling of awakening, of shaking off the sleep from the Winter before, in preparation for the new life that would soon come to rely on the shared and reciprocal work from all the members of the surrounding community.

There were many customs and beliefs related to the welcoming of new babies, as well as many traditional practices that helped to ensure their safety and protection. Kim Anderson explains that for the Algonquian peoples, “life, all life, was understood as being imbued with ‘spirit’, and individuals had the responsibility of demonstrating care for the life forms around them. In keeping with these principles, new life was celebrated because it meant the continuation of a people.”<sup>316</sup> Frameworks such as Basil Johnston’s description of the Four Hills organize Anishinaabek societies into different life stages with their corresponding responsibilities. They emphasize the importance that interdependency and intergenerational knowledge exchange has for the well-being and survival of communities. In this vein, the old adage that “it takes a community to raise a child” speaks to the understanding within many Indigenous societies that childrearing is collective work in which the surrounding community plays a crucial role in the care and upbringing of younger generations alongside immediate and extended family members.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 39.

<sup>317</sup> Health Canada, *It Takes a Community: Framework for First Nations and Inuit Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effects Initiative*, (Ottawa: Minister of Health, 1997), 4-5.



In their publication for the *Parenting Bundle* program, Elders, teachers, and organizers at the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, in Ottawa, Ontario diagrammed a layered social structure of traditional Indigenous communities, an example of which can be found in Figure 12.<sup>318</sup> In much the same way that the Anishinaabek worldview, or *mino-bmaadziwin* (the way of a good and well-balanced life) is often illustrated through its depiction of the four quadrants, this model of community organization -- circular and composed of four parts-- is also “profoundly non-hierarchical.”<sup>319</sup> Within these concentric circles of community we see that children are given a very special place at the centre. As discussed earlier, in Kim Anderson’s reading of Basil Johnston’s story of the Four Hills, she describes the traditional role of children as bringing happiness and hope “because they represent potential and the future.”<sup>320</sup> This view of little ones as the future of nations determines their central position as the most important people in societies, “they make our families stronger and our communities whole.”<sup>321</sup>

In their fulfillment of these responsibilities of providing hope and possibility for the future, children contribute greatly to community. However, it is important to remember that while the gifts they bring are very *big*, children themselves are very *small*, and they are also very vulnerable, and therefore require special protection and care from

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<sup>318</sup> See: Wabano Parenting Society, *Parenting Bundle: An Aboriginal Cultural Parenting Program Manual for All Caregivers of Children*, (Ottawa: Wabano Centre of Aboriginal Health, n.d.), 14. This diagram can also be found in Kim Anderson’s *Life Stages and Native Women*. Anderson indicates that it was Maria Campbell, in drawing from teachings she received from Anishinaabe Elder Peter O’Chiese, who described this traditional social organization of Indigenous communities by using concentric circles. (See: Anderson, *Life Stages*, 99).

<sup>319</sup> Simpson, 128. Here, Simpson describes teacher Sylvia Maracle’s understanding of life stages. Although Maracle’s description is based on the Seven Stages of Life, this same understanding of Indigenous social structure as being non-hierarchical can also be applied here. Anishinaabek teachings that surrounded life stages often divided the life cycle into either four or seven stages (See: Anderson, *Life Stages*, 7).

<sup>320</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 9.

<sup>321</sup> Wabano Parenting Society, 14.

all the outer layers of community that surround them. “Our Elders tell us that we are all responsible to this inner circle and that the needs of our children must be considered in every decision that is made by the individual, family, and community.”<sup>322</sup>

Not long ago I listened to the Métis writer Maria Campbell deliver a keynote address on traditional family structures and their role in providing the foundation of health and wellness for Indigenous societies. She used the same model of community organization applied in the *Parenting Bundle*. For her, this circular framework appropriately illustrated the importance of relationship and mutual support within Indigenous communities that ensured that every person had a role to play in maintaining the health of every other person around them. Everybody had their work, she explained, and referred to the different roles, teachings and responsibilities of Elders, men and women as “bundles.” Whether these bundles were gatherings of stories, songs or teachings, they all were medicine. And with all the circulating energy and activity from these outer layers of community that revolved around the centre, this medicine was consistently directed inwards towards the younger generations who formed the very heart,<sup>323</sup> those who represented “potential and the future.”<sup>324</sup>

Keeping this perspective of social organization and the communal practice of childcare in mind, it becomes clear why so many traditions surrounding birth – the beginning of one new life – also involved the celebration of the continuity and vitality of

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<sup>322</sup> Wabano Parenting Society, 14.

<sup>323</sup> Maria Campbell, keynote address, “Traditional Family Structures: The Foundation for Health and Wellness,” Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health Symposium: Health From an Aboriginal Perspective, October 31, 2011.

<sup>324</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 9.

the ancestral life – as represented by the surrounding layers of community. Anderson explains through the teachings that she has received from Mosom Danny Musqua that the types of practices and traditions surrounding infancy that encouraged community engagement were a way of fostering a sense of identity and belonging within children, “so that from the youngest age, community members knew their place and developed a sense of trust.”<sup>325</sup>

### **Celebrating New Life: A Community Event**

According to the informants interviewed by Densmore and Hilger, long ago the birth of a child would be announced with vigor, and it was customary within certain groups for the father to notify the community of its newest member by the firing of a gun. Speaking with Inez Hilger, Anishinaabek from Miskwaagamiwi-zaaga'igan (Red Lake) remembered,

Neighbours, both men and women, as soon as they heard the gunshot, went to the home of the newborn baby, gathered at the outside of the wigwam, right near the place at which the baby was lying inside, [...] they all ran into the wigwam and formed a circle around the child, each one tapping it with his hand and telling it to be strong.<sup>326</sup>

One of Densmore’s informants indicated that this celebration, with all its commotion, was “done to make the child brave from hearing so much noise as soon as it was born.”<sup>327</sup> From this tradition we see firstly that the arrival of an infant was an event that involved a welcome from the entire surrounding community; and secondly, that each community member had a hand in ensuring the strength and well-being of the child.

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<sup>325</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 38.

<sup>326</sup> Hilger, 19.

<sup>327</sup> Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, 48.

During his visit to Bear Island, Frank Speck noted the naming ceremony of the Tem-Augama Anishnabai and the way in which all community members took part in the celebration:

[W]hen the child is about a year old, the mother generally appoints some old man or woman, selected on account of certain good qualities, to give the child a name. At this time another feast is held, during which the name-giver lifts up the infant and announces the name he has chosen for it; in a few words he or she bestows a name upon it. Then, as food is passed around among the assembly from right to left, the child is also handed from one to the other, and each guest kisses it.<sup>328</sup>

According to former Chief of Temagami First Nation, Gary Potts, this ceremony ensured “in the most fundamental way, [that] the birth and welfare of that child became a matter of collective and communal interest.”<sup>329</sup> Basil Johnston maintains that Wauweendaussowin, the naming ceremony, was “the most important event in a person’s life,” and likens the occasion to “the receiving of an identity.”<sup>330</sup> This notion that identity is grounded within community becomes very important when we think about the central role of children within community and their vulnerability. Because infancy could be very precarious, the Anishinaabek understood that individuals in this fragile life stage required feelings of community-belonging, and it was the responsibility of caregivers and older generations to communicate these valuable lessons of inclusion to little ones. Therefore, through the act of naming, and the affirmation of identity through a community gathering that celebrated the continuity of lifelines, children and infants were taught at a very early

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<sup>328</sup> Speck, “Family Hunting Territories,” 20.

<sup>329</sup> Gary Potts, “Last Ditch Defence of a Priceless Homeland,” 205.

<sup>330</sup> Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Ceremonies*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 15.

age that they were valued people within the circles of their family, their community and their nation.

The family's creation of a baby's cradleboard and mossbag-- the central focus of this thesis-- was another aspect of the celebration of new life. According to Laura Peers and Jennifer S. H. Brown, the key role that community and extended familial relationships had in helping to raise a child can be symbolized by the tikinaagan itself, in that its preparation was a combined effort between the men and women who would soon become part of the little one's life.<sup>331</sup>

### **Cradle Creation and Ornamentation**

Typically, in reflecting the complementary skills of men and women, "the construction of the cradleboard and its cover follow a traditional course in which the father or grandfather produces the wooden frame with its steam-bent footrest and hoop, while the mother or grandmother prepares the covering."<sup>332</sup> According to Cath Oberholtzer, "these combined and complementary labours provide[d] both physical and spiritual security and support for the growing infant."<sup>333</sup> Through its very creation as a synthesis of the work of family and community members, the tikinaagan itself embodies the communal practice of childrearing, but its making also illustrates the importance of nurturing feelings of belonging, and helps to further define the traditional placement of roles and responsibilities related to children at the centre of communities.

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<sup>331</sup> Laura Peers and Jennifer S. H. Brown, "There is no End to Relationship among the Indians': Ojibwa Families and Kinship in Historical Perspective," *The History of the Family*, 4, 4 (1999): 529-555.

<sup>332</sup> Oberholtzer, "A Womb with a View," 259.

<sup>333</sup> Oberholtzer, "A Womb with a View," 259.

As I discussed in Chapter Three, many Anishinaabekwe artists helped to stimulate feelings of protection and security for their little ones by carefully adorning the coverings of their tikinaagan with beaded, quilled or painted designs that would serve to shelter the baby wrapped within. Similarly, Anishinaabe mothers were also known to hang various objects from the curved bow of the tikinaagan to ward off any negative activity that might cause the infant's soul or shadow to slip away. Noticing the many variations of little embroidered toys, noisemakers and other small ornaments that could be seen hanging suspended from the curved bow of nearly every cradleboard he had seen, ethnologist Otis T. Mason referred to the cradleboard as a kind of "play house" for the baby, reflecting his understanding that many of the dangling objects were there for the child's entertainment.<sup>334</sup> However, for the Algonquian family, the chief function of the net charm and navel amulet that hung from the bows of their children's cradles was spiritual protection.

Densmore reflected on the use of protective ornaments, or what she refers to as "charms" made for infants in Anishinaabek societies,<sup>335</sup> learning from her informants that "matter has two sorts of properties – one tangible and the other intangible."<sup>336</sup> And this tangible matter, which retained the powers of the intangible, took the form of "charms," and could be "included in the general term of 'medicine.'"<sup>337</sup> Net baby charms were made of a small wooden hoop filled with string or twine that was woven to look like a

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<sup>334</sup> Mason, 162.

<sup>335</sup> See Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, 51-52.

<sup>336</sup> Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, 107.

<sup>337</sup> Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, 107.

spider-web.<sup>338</sup> And in much the same way that a spider's web is meant to physically entangle and ensnare, net baby charms were hung from an infant's tikinaagan to spiritually protect the baby by catching any bad dreams, and any other "evil or malevolent force[s] includ[ing] colds, illness and bad spirits" that could cause harm to this sensitive new life.<sup>339</sup>

Navel amulets, one of which can be found hanging from the bow of the Bear Island tikinaagan (Figure 1), also provided another mode of spiritual protection for young ones. Carefully preserved within the suspended navel pendant was the baby's umbilical cord, "which is always secured at the time of its birth, and, being rolled up into a little wad the size of a pea and dried, it is inclosed [sic] in the center of this little bag and placed before the child's face, as its protector and its security for 'good luck' and long life."<sup>340</sup> According to Anderson, shortly after birth, customs and practices involving the treatment of placenta and umbilical cords "were considered vital in terms of protecting babies and ensuring they had long, healthy and productive lives."<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Densmore, *Chippewa Customs* 52; Oberholtzer, "Net Baby Charms: Metaphors of Protection and Provision," *Papers of the Twenty-Fourth Algonquian Conference*, Ed. William Cowan, (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1993) 318.

<sup>339</sup> Oberholtzer, "Net Baby Charms," 318.

<sup>340</sup> Mason, 203. Although Mason's text, as well as some other accounts (Densmore, Inez Hilger, Nicollet, Jenness) that I have read that refer to this practice within Anishinaabe groups, they do not directly specify whether or not it is the entire cord that is kept and dried etc. or if it is only the smaller portion at the end of the cord that later falls off that is cared for in this way. It is my belief, that it is only the smaller portion of the umbilical cord, once cut, that is placed inside the beaded bag. Regina Flannery's account on Algonquian childhood from James Bay supports this. See: Regina Flannery, "Infancy and Childhood among the Indians of the East Coast of James Bay," *Anthropos*, 57 (1962), 477-478.

<sup>341</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 50.

Many Anishinaabek also believed that the careful consideration of a newborn's umbilical cord, or "indisi"<sup>342</sup> as it is called on Bear Island, ensured that their children did not become restless, or what the TAA described to Speck as always "snooping."<sup>343</sup> Similarly, Anishinaabek who spoke with Frances Densmore indicated that the navel cord held wisdom for the child, and if it were not preserved "the child would become foolish," and other informants said that if the cord were not kept the child, 'would always be searching for something.'" <sup>344</sup> According to Anderson, "umbilical cords signified connections that were made between the child and his or her relations."<sup>345</sup> Therefore, this 'searching' that Densmore's informant describes may imply that without the spiritually protective qualities retained within the umbilical cord – the physical connection to the mother, and in a sense, the tangible ancestral lifeline – an individual may feel incomplete; when a child began to act restless and 'get into things' Anishinaabe mothers would say, "He is searching for his navel cord."<sup>346</sup> In *The Bingo Palace*, Indigenous author Louise Erdrich very eloquently describes the umbilical cord as a lifeline and the role of children as their relatives' future, when she writes: "The red rope is the hope of our nation. It pulls, it sings, it snags, it feeds, it holds. How it holds."<sup>347</sup>

In themselves, net baby charms and navel amulets<sup>348</sup> are very special objects that deserve their own in-depth consideration, exhibiting distinct iconography and possessing

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<sup>342</sup> CMC, III-G-267 "Collectors Remarks" - Speck refers to the collection of twenty beaded navel amulets he later sold to the National Museum as "otissiwac," a phonetic spelling of the plural term used above.

<sup>343</sup> APS, Frank Speck Papers, Algonquian Fieldnotes (II2C2), 143.

<sup>344</sup> Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, 51.

<sup>345</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 51.

<sup>346</sup> Hilger, 17

<sup>347</sup> Louise Erdrich, *The Bingo Palace*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 6.

<sup>348</sup> It is interesting to note that during his visit to Bear Island in 1913, Frank Speck collected twenty navel amulets made by TAA members, which are now housed at the Canadian Museum of Civilization (III-G-



deeper significations for their makers and families than I am able to discuss at this point in my research. In this thesis I have sought to emphasize the spiritually protective qualities that these child care objects possessed. Much like the net baby charm, the navel amulet served to ward off any negativity that could harm the infant sleeping beneath it. These navel amulets are also intriguing in that they suggest further connections to the womb as the environment of utmost protection for infants. When attached to a tikinaagan or moss bag, they convey a similar feeling of being tightly wrapped and also seem to reinforce the importance of celebrating lifelines, and to offer a symbolic protective tie connecting the infant to their family, community and all their relations.

### **Tikinaagan Wrappings and Maintaining a Centre**

As previously discussed, Anishinaabekwe, in addition to their attachment of protective charms to the bow of the tikinaagan, would also ornament the tikinaagan cover with designs and images that served to guard the swaddled baby. As well as incorporating depictions of the powers from the spirit beings of the Upper and Underwater Worlds, mothers, aunties, and grandmothers would also craft images that communicated the importance of maintaining balance and centrality through their application of the four quadrants. Although in the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries the iconography of cradleboard covers shifted from the early geometric equal-armed cross depictions to the more “modern” floral designs or the use of tartan fabrics, I argue that the overall purpose

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267). For further research on the creation and use of navel amulets in North American Indigenous cultures, see: Morgan Baillargeon, “The Use, Typology and Significance of Umbilical Cord Amulets as Employed by a Selection of North American Aboriginal Cultures,” (MA Thesis, Ottawa: Carleton University, 1991).

of these balanced designs and patterns and their relation to children and communal childcare has remained very much the same.

If we think back to the diagram (Figure 12) that outlines the concentric circles of Indigenous social organization that has been applied by Maria Campbell and the Wabano *Parenting Bundle* Program, and we imagine the tikinaagan itself as being a representation for this framework of community, many evocative and very beautiful parallels begin to emerge. As a principal item of childcare, the tikinaagan was valued for its ability to stimulate sleep (dreaming, imagination and vision), and for the way in which it encouraged feelings of physical and spiritual safety for babies. Because infants are positioned in such a delicate life stage, it is crucial that they know from the very beginning, after they leave the security and sensations of belonging that are offered by the womb, that they are still protected and have an important place within the wider spectrum of community. So if we think about those concentric circles of traditional society, Elders, women and men, as *layers* of protection that are warmly wrapped around children at the centre, then those *layers* of quilled, beaded, or painted hide, or trade fabrics and blankets that also protected babies begin to mean much more than just simple textiles. The designs evoking the significance and protection of centering that Anishinaabekwe applied to the surfaces of tikinaagan wrappers, such as the four-petaled flowers on the Bear Island tikinaagan, seem to permeate inwardly through the layers of material they covered and speak to the very *centre* of what they themselves embraced – the infant snugly wrapped inside. These motifs thus express the significations of centrality and balance that Maria Campbell's diagram of social organization, and the

layered tikinaagan itself communicate – that children have a role at the heart of their communities, and so require the protective layers of every “fabric” of the older generations that encircle them.

Thinking about the tikinaagan in this way, it becomes clear why infants would feel a tremendous amount of comfort and safety when they are wrapped up tightly, enveloped within layers that represent the great love and care that family and community members had put into the crafting of the tikinaagan-- the same amount of love, care and protection from family and community that would be turned inward towards the centre of Anishinaabek societies when raising the younger generations. My auntie once told me that wrapping a baby up tightly in a mossbag is a way of letting the child know that they are safe, that they belong here. So in nurturing an infant’s feeling of security within these fabric wrappings, a mossbag or tikinaagan can help to communicate the significance of the baby’s central place not only within the spectrum of family and community but also within the wider understandings of the nation. As the centre of Anishinaabek societies, children play very important roles, and just as it is the responsibility of their adult counterparts to protect, comfort and teach them, in keeping with the interdependent model of Indigenous community the older generations also have an obligation to listen and learn from these little ones. As traditional teacher Sylvia Maracle once expressed to Leanne Simpson, “[C]hildren have it right already; it is the adults that need to learn.”<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 128.

## Central Responsibilities and Springtime Teachings of Zaagidewin: Bringing *Life to Your Life*

In returning once again to where I began in the Introduction of this thesis, to Basil Johnston's story of the Four Hills, it becomes clear that each stage of life carries certain responsibilities that contribute to family as well as the wider community. On a visit to Bear Island when I asked June what the role of babies and children was, she said that it was their job to just be loved: "Love them. That's the most important thing, and to show *a lot* of love to them."<sup>350</sup> Love – Zaagidewin – is one of the Seven Grandfather / Grandmother Teachings that were given to the Anishinaabek very early in our history.<sup>351</sup> As part of a greater web of these seven gifts, including Aakde-ewin (Courage), Dbadendiziwin (Humility), Debwewin (Truth), Mnaadendiwin (Respect), Nbwaakain (Wisdom), and Gwekwaadiziwin (Honesty), the role and responsibility of Loving is something that children and infants, in their complete vulnerability and openness, know very well.<sup>352</sup> Child advocate, Cindy Blackstock, has even referred to young people as being the "experts" in the teachings of love and fairness.<sup>353</sup>

When Leanne Simpson asked her Michi Saagiig<sup>354</sup>Nishnaabeg Elder, Gdigaa Migizi (Doug Williams), about the teaching of Love, he spoke "of an unconditional love ... of one bearing their soul and their heart nakedly, expressing a complete vulnerability" that reminded her of a newborn baby:

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<sup>350</sup> June Twain, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 4, 2012.

<sup>351</sup> Edward Benton-Benai, "The Seven Grandfathers and the Little Boy," *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway*, (Saint Paul: Indian Country Press, Inc., 1979) 60-66.

<sup>352</sup> Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 124-125.

<sup>353</sup> Cindy Blackstock, Opening Statement of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, Ottawa, ON, February 25, 2013.

<sup>354</sup> Mississauga

When one comes to another bearing his or her soul, completely trusting that the other person will be non-judgmental, caring and gentle, he or she comes expecting acceptance, gentleness, kindness and nurturing. In the context of Kokum Dibaajimowinan [The Seven Grandmother Teachings], this is what is meant by ‘love’.<sup>355</sup>

Babies are on this First Hill of life, where responsibilities involve developing trust, and being nurtured and dependent on others from the layers of community that surround you.<sup>356</sup> They certainly know something of tremendous kindness, openness, gentleness and the understandings of love that they have carried with them from the Spirit World.<sup>357</sup> And in keeping with the interdependent and reciprocal nature of Anishinaabek societies as previously discussed, it is the responsibility of family and community members from the older Third and Fourth Hills of Life to respond to infants with that same unconditional love and care.<sup>358</sup>

Leanne Simpson refers to young ones as “small teachers,” indicating that in the pre-colonial Anishinaabek nation, “children were highly respected *people*, valued for their insights” and for what they could teach the family and community members who cared for them.<sup>359</sup> As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, children possess special gifts of imagination and dreaming, and have the ability to find excitement in things that we can often lose sight of as we grow older. “You do learn from them,” June said, on the teachings that she has received from her children and grandchildren, “What you see and what they see is completely different, and they bring a whole different

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<sup>355</sup> Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 124-125.

<sup>356</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 9.

<sup>357</sup> Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 129-130.

<sup>358</sup> Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 130.

<sup>359</sup> Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 122.

perspective to life to you.”<sup>360</sup> This teaching of seeing things newly, and the important lesson of finding the extraordinary in the ordinary was best given to June by her granddaughter, Amy, who, as she remembered, would attentively watch her as she made bread and buns in the kitchen:

When Amy was small ... we were baking here and so we put the rolls in the oven and I went on to do something else anyway, and then all of a sudden, ‘Grandma! Grandma! Come here!’ so I went in I was wondering what was going on, I thought the oven was on fire or something! She says, ‘Look at the buns! Look how big they’re getting!’ And they were just getting so puffy, and she was so excited about it. Like that’s just a natural thing for me to see you know, but for her it was amazing, brand new! ‘Look at how big they’re getting!’ Getting so excited by it all. So I think that’s what, the amazement of life I think is what grandchildren bring for you. Like sometimes you don’t pay attention, like what happened with Amy, when she saw the rolls that was just a natural thing I wouldn’t get excited about, but here she got so excited. All these amazing things that happen, they bring so much *life* to your life, you know, and I love being with them ... Those are the types of things grandchildren bring to you, they bring so much love and so much energy ... I love being a grandmother, I just love it.

The honesty that children carry with them instills a great deal of hope, as well as laughter and joy, in their families and communities. The ability to see the wonder in things that appear very natural allows younger generations, as June describes above, to take on the role Cindy Blackstock has described as “the keepers of the possible.”<sup>361</sup> Because of this role as visionaries for the future, Elders and Grandmothers in particular share a very special relationship with young people. This close connection can be seen in the traditional framework of Anishinaabek society (Figure 12) in the guardianship of the Elder’s circle that surrounds the central place of children.

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<sup>360</sup> June Twain, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 4, 2012.

<sup>361</sup> Blackstock, Opening Statements, 2013.

Even at this final stage of being, Basil Johnston asserts that “the [Elder’s] work is not finished ... By living through all the stages and living out the visions, [our Elders] know something of human nature and living and life. What they have come to know and abide by is wisdom. This is what they must pass on to those still to traverse the path of life and scale the mighty hills. Only when they finally vanish into the mists is the work over.”<sup>362</sup> Through Basil Johnston’s interpretation of life stages as Four Hills, the chapter of Old Age can then be distinguished by the distance and time that one has travelled and the wisdom gained along the way.<sup>363</sup> From the perspective of the Fourth Hill, the well-travelled Elders have gained insight from what McNally has called their “mastery of relatedness.” According to Kim Anderson, “this mastery of relatedness” refers to our Elders’ fulfillment of living a well-balanced life, having honoured all of the responsibilities associated with the earlier stages.<sup>364</sup> Although in Basil Johnston’s model, Old Age is signaled as the final slope of life, it is important to remember that the holistic notion of the Anishinaabe worldview tells us that life is circular and cyclical – and in this understanding, the work of the Elder who has reached the fourth stage is to ensure that this circle remains continuous and connected. Indeed, as the teachings of Mosom Danny Musqua indicate, “Old age is a very productive stage of life. Old people have much to contribute in that they are the teachers of history, traditions, language and philosophy.”<sup>365</sup> And more specifically, it is the Grandmothers and the old ladies of a community who hold the “responsibilities as the ultimate guardians of kinship.”<sup>366</sup> In fulfilling their role as the teachers and nurturers of the younger generations through their

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<sup>362</sup> Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 118.

<sup>363</sup> McNally, 59.

<sup>364</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 126.

<sup>365</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 126.

<sup>366</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 140.

close relationships with children within their families and communities they ensure the protection and continuation of the life-line.

Anishinaabek Elders served as the driving force behind “life movement” – a concept studied by Jeffrey Anderson<sup>367</sup> that has been described as, “a principle that the cosmos persists in ongoing motion by virtue of an ongoing generational exchange: elder generations pass on power and knowledge toward life to younger generations in return for respect.”<sup>368</sup> And as the keepers of this movement of knowledge transfer, Elders also provided crucial support to parents throughout the planting stage of life. However, as newcomers brought their own perspectives on parenting and childrearing techniques, Indigenous groups throughout North America quickly found the ties among children, Elders and other community members becoming increasingly strained and thrown into a radical state of disorder.

### **The Assimilationist Effort and Disruptions of Indigenous Parenting**

*The reason why they prefer the one-roomed house is on account of the sociability and for greater warmth. They are gregarious. They love to see and hear each other, love laughter and jests ... they find their amusement in each other's society. It is therefore by preference and not from poverty that they have the one-roomed house... The idea of shutting one person alone in a box of a bedroom seems an unnatural way, and far inferior to their own. They can sleep far better with the children crawling over them, and a warm fire at their feet.*<sup>369</sup>

Reverend Joseph Gilfillan, 1873

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<sup>367</sup> See: Jeffrey Anderson, *The Four Hills of Life: Northern Arapaho Knowledge and Life Movement*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011).

<sup>368</sup> McNally, 50; McNally’s take on Jeffrey Anderson is also quoted in Kim Anderson, *Life Stages*, 126-127.

<sup>369</sup> Rev. Joseph A. Gilfillan, “The Ojibways in Minnesota,” *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, Vol. IX (St. Paul: The Society, 1901), 98-99.



The passage above, written by the Protestant Episcopal missionary Joseph Gilfillan, notes the custom within the Anishinaabe community Gaa-waabaabiganikaag (White Earth Reservation) of the “one-roomed house,” wherein all family members occupied and slept in the same space in the home. Though Gilfillan’s description was written some time ago in the nineteenth century, there are people in my life who have childhood memories of this custom as well. My dad, who grew up on Whitefish River First Nation on Birch Island, Ontario, remembers the home he grew up in had two storeys which were made up of two large rooms on each floor that everyone shared. And June also recalled her family home as a child was made in a similar way, “There was no privacy,” she laughed, “[But] we’d keep warm ... That’s just the way it was ... When I was with my family I felt loved, because I was home.”<sup>370</sup> Although seen by the early settlers as “heathen”<sup>371</sup> or harmful, for Anishinaabe families this way of living was very healthy. It encouraged constant interaction and fostered a sense of family closeness, togetherness and surely – warmth.

As I discussed earlier in this thesis, the colonization and assimilationist efforts that occurred throughout North America affected Indigenous groups in profound ways, and caused, and continues to cause, a great deal of damage to the family unit. Many of the early explorers, settlers, anthropologists and missionaries viewed domestic life through an extremely ethnocentric perspective and criticized Indigenous community members for what they saw as a “lack of parenting” or a “lack of control over their children.” Jean de Lamberville, a Jesuit missionary at Notre-Dame-de-Foye in the late-seventeenth century wrote that, “The savages, as a rule, are too indulgent toward their

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<sup>370</sup> June Twain, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 4, 2012.

<sup>371</sup> Gilfillan, 99.

children, and know not what it is to punish them.”<sup>372</sup> Similarly, Diamond Jenness, in the early-twentieth century, remarked on the way in which Anishinaabek children seemed to “possess far more freedom than children of European descent.”<sup>373</sup> This colonialist belief that Anishinaabek parents “[had] no government whatever over their children”<sup>374</sup> was inherently racist and arose from settler observations that Indigenous parenting styles did not typically include harsh “punishment, coercion, manipulation, criticism, authoritarian power [or] hierarchy.”<sup>375</sup> Through this perspective, Indigenous approaches to childcare seemed far too “relaxed” compared to the specific understandings of childhood that existed in Europe during this period, which, at the time, were quite severe. Additionally, due to the annual round of seasonal cycles of activity in which children travelled with their families to the trap grounds in the Winter or the sugar bush in the Spring, Indigenous parenting was seen as having very little structure.<sup>376</sup> These cycles, however, taught children at a very early age the importance of living and behaving in a responsible way that respected the land, and the way in which reciprocal work and responsibilities between family members was necessary for survival.

As can be seen from the teachings of the Four Hills and the ways in which traditional Anishinaabek societies were organized, infants and children were dependent

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<sup>372</sup> Jean de Lamberville, “Of the Mission of nostre Dame de foye, near Quebec,” *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents – Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Bros. Co., 1896-1901, 57: 35-77), 45.

<sup>373</sup> Jenness, 95

<sup>374</sup> Gilfillan, 87

<sup>375</sup> Simpson, 123.

<sup>376</sup> John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and Residential School System, 1879 to 1986*, (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 25; See also: [“The Davin Report”] Nicholas Flood Davin, *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds*, (Ottawa, 1879), 13 – Davin argued for the need for residential schooling wherein children would live at boarding schools for extended periods of time. He criticized Indigenous families for being “so largely migratory,” indicating that these seasonal movements were detrimental to the Western education, and “civilization” of Indigenous children.

on surrounding family and community members for love and support and trusted them to be nurturing caregivers. In keeping with this philosophy, the needs of children were attended to carefully and consistently,<sup>377</sup> and family and community members played a crucial role in “supporting parents in what is described as a ‘prolonged’ attachment phase.”<sup>378</sup> In contrast to the colonial perspective that viewed Indigenous childcare as being too careless and permissive, Anishinaabek parents and their surrounding helpers, were in fact, very present, albeit in a way that also encouraged children to develop and think as highly independent and autonomous beings who at the same time remained very tied to community.<sup>379</sup>

According to Marie Battiste, “Indigenous pedagogy values a person’s ability to learn independently by observing, listening and participating with a minimum of intervention or instruction.”<sup>380</sup> In speaking about the values of the tikinaagan in relation to Indigenous knowledge systems, Mary Katt told me, “If you were doing anything outside you could just bunt [babies] up and stand them wherever ... And, well, babies you know, the way kids are, they watch everything you do.”<sup>381</sup> June also remarked on this perspective of little ones when they are wrapped up and propped upright in the tikinaagan, saying, “Children watch you, whatever you’re doing, they’re watching,

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<sup>377</sup> Anderson, *Life Stages*, 56

<sup>378</sup> Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 123; See also: Cindy Hardy and Sherry Bellany, *Caregiver-Infant Attachment for Aboriginal Families*, (Prince George: National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2013) [http://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/75/Infant%20Attachment%20Fact%20Sheet\\_English.pdf](http://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/75/Infant%20Attachment%20Fact%20Sheet_English.pdf)

<sup>379</sup> Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, “Chapter 5: Education,” Vol. 3: Gathering Strength, (Ottawa: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996) 416-417; and Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 123

<sup>380</sup> Marie Battiste, “Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education: A Literature Review with Recommendations,” Prepared for the National Working Group on Education and the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, (Ottawa, 2002), 15.

<sup>381</sup> Mary Katt, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 3, 2012.

they're learning. You don't realize that they're learning, but they're watching you."<sup>382</sup> She remembered her auntie, Madeline Theriault, telling her about the way she made use of the tikinaagan as she worked, "She would bring her children in the cradleboard around with her, sometimes they put a thing in the back so that they could hang up the cradle, and she was cleaning moose, skinning moose and stuff like that, the kids were watching all of this stuff."<sup>383</sup>

I noted earlier the view of Cath Oberholtzer, who indicated that from their position on a tikinaagan infants were able to "develop an awareness of self, and, from this awareness, learn[ed] about the world around them." Whether they were listening to their Elders tell stories, feeling the drum of songs from their family members, or watching their mother skillfully handle a moose hide, "the infant continually learn[ed]."<sup>384</sup> The way in which the use of the tikinaagan fostered Indigenous pedagogy through its support of learning through sensory experience thus also defines the object as a representation of traditional Anishinaabek parenting and childrearing values: "interdependence, non-interference, teaching by modeling, [and] learning by doing."<sup>385</sup> Through the guidance and knowledge transfer from the generations around them that followed these principles, Indigenous children became highly diverse and resilient thinkers; people who understood the values and ethics of society, responsibility to community and the principles required to live a well-balanced life.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> June Twain, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 4, 2012.

<sup>383</sup> June Twain, Personal interview, Bear Island, ON, May 4, 2012.

<sup>384</sup> Oberholtzer, "Womb with a View," 267.

<sup>385</sup> Simpson, *Dancing on our Turtle's Back*, 130.

<sup>386</sup> Battiste, "Indigenous Knowledge," 15.

Throughout this chapter I have highlighted the responsibilities of (and to) children that placed them at the very centre of traditional Anishinaabek societies. Because they played such a significant role not only within the spectrum of family and community, but also of the nation, their removal from their communities during the residential school era was devastating, as has been widely acknowledged. These removals had a profound and intergenerational effect in disrupting childcare knowledge and severing parent-child relationships.<sup>387</sup> The colonial vision behind residential schooling was specifically aimed towards upsetting the parenting practices of Indigenous families that were believed to be “unsafe,” “permissive,” and “unbeneficial to a modern world.”<sup>388</sup> The cradleboard in particular, as an object that was distinctive of pre-colonial Indigenous childcare, was also viewed as a “threat” to the mission of “civilizing” families and the “re-socialization”<sup>389</sup> of children. An 1883 report of The Women’s National Indian Association, a settler organization aimed towards the Christianization and assimilation of American Indigenous peoples, strongly advised missionaries working with young Indigenous mothers to do whatever they could to “get the babies off the board; this is what kills them ... we would do a good work if we accomplished only *its* abolition.”<sup>390</sup> Although this text refers to the missionary work among the Ponca, its focus on “reforming” Indigenous women as mothers and caregivers to future generations of Indigenous people was a common strategy in assimilationist efforts throughout North America. Similarly, John Milloy details the way in which the residential schooling of young girls was seen as necessary to

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<sup>387</sup> Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, “Chapter 10: Residential Schools,” Vol. 1: *Looking Forward Looking Back*, (Ottawa: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996); and Julian Walker, *The Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, (Ottawa: Parliamentary Information and Research Service, 2009)

<sup>388</sup> Milloy, 23, 26, 27, 43.

<sup>389</sup> Milloy, 2.

<sup>390</sup> “Report of the Missionary Committee,” *Annual Meeting and Report of the Women’s National Indian Association*, (Philadelphia: Women’s National Indian Association, 1883), 34.

produce mothers – and therefore “civilized” families – who conformed to the Victorian views of domestic life.<sup>391</sup>

### **Moving Forward: Revisiting The Use of Traditional Childcare Objects and Community Organization**

The effects of cycles of child removal including the residential school era, the 60s Scoop, and the colonial child welfare system, continue to have enormous impacts on Indigenous family units throughout the country. Given the recent statistics<sup>392</sup> of the overwhelming numbers of Canadian Indigenous children in care outside of their homes and away from their families, there is a genuine need for in-depth research initiatives that can inform future policy and programming promoting traditional childcare and family closeness.<sup>393</sup> As Dr. Cindy Blackstock, child advocate and director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society has written, “despite the erosion of parenting teachings and practices as a result of colonization, these values continue to be the basis for providing optimal care for First Nations children, families and communities.”<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Milloy, 40. See also: Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (2002; reprint; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 72-75. Although not specifically writing about Indian Residential Schools in North America, Stoler investigates the domestic sphere and the way in which colonists strategically targeted the family unit to advance imperial power. She writes that the domestic roles of women, and motherhood specifically, were understood to “form the centre of empire building.”

<sup>392</sup> Statistics Canada, “Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit,” *National Household Survey* (Ottawa): Statistics Canada, 2013; See also: Michael Woods and Sharon Kirkey, “Tragic number of aboriginal children in foster care stuns even the experts,” *Montreal Gazette*, May 8, 2013.; and Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada “Chapter 4: First Nations and Family Services Program-Indian and Northern Affairs,” *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons*. (Ottawa): Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2008.

<sup>393</sup> Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, "Narrative as Lived Experience," *First Nations Child and Family Review*. 5.2 (2010), 62.

<sup>394</sup> Cindy Blackstock, "First Nations Child and Family Services: Restoring Peace and Harmony in First Nations Communities." *Child Welfare: Connecting Research, Policy and Practice*, ed. Kathleen Kufedlt and Brad McKenzie, (Waterloo: Wilfred University Press, 2003), 334.

In this light, traditional parenting advocates, like Leanne Simpson are calling for a resurgence of teachings and values that are consistent with the contemporary realities of Indigenous peoples. As a Nishnaabeg mother herself, Simpson stresses the importance of childcare that “meet[s] the needs of our nations” and is grounded within “Indigenous cultural and political traditions that are able to confront and lead people through the many facets of colonialism.”<sup>395</sup> Kim Anderson refers to this ongoing process of empowerment, “rebuilding the circle” and “[re]connecting with all our relations” as “*bundling the layers: building on the strengths of the past to take us into the future.*”<sup>396</sup> How appropriate a description this is when we think about the use of layered fabrics of the tikinaagan as a representation of traditional community organization and the strengths of communal childcare.

Material culture theory that interrogates the roles played by objects in social life, such as Alfred Gell’s work on the agency of art,<sup>397</sup> and Igor Kopytoff’s study on the changing value and meaning of objects as they travel and age, has informed much of my thesis research. This area of scholarship encourages us to re-visit, re-imagine and allow ourselves to become “enchanted” by the social relationships between objects and the people they have affected across generations throughout time and space. According to this body of thought, objects have the ability to carry, embody and activate meaning, stories, values and understandings of the world. This investigation of the tikinaagan and its relation to traditional social structures demonstrates the social interactions between

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<sup>395</sup> Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 127.

<sup>396</sup> See: Anderson, “Conclusion: Bundling the Layers: Building on the Strengths of the Past to Take Us into the Future,” *Life Stages*, 161-179. (Emphasis added)

<sup>397</sup> Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: A New Anthropological Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Anishininaabek and the objects they have crafted to care for their families. It illuminates the profound ways in which they created meaning and their great potential to affirm conceptual continuity and to generate an expansive cultural memory of traditional values that can contribute to a regenerative identity through childcare that is distinctly Indigenous.



## Conclusion

### Endings...

The nice thing about endings is that it allows you some quiet time to rest and reflect on the journey you've taken just before it comes to a close.

Quite serendipitously, this thesis ended up becoming organized into four separate chapters, and although these four chapters were not intended to relate to Basil Johnston's Four Hills, or one full seasonal cycle, in some ways I believe viewing them in this way reflects both the different tone of each and my experience of writing them.

Rather than beginning in the Eastern Door of Springtime, this story began in the Summer, which is the time of youth or the age of *doing*. Ultimately, summer is a season of great activity, things have woken up, flowers have bloomed and friends and family members gather energetically. And, like picking summertime berries, I spent a great deal of time preparing my first chapter, busily and excitedly gathering and compiling small historical references of tikinaagan creation and use. With my basket full, I returned home and prepared for the colder months of Fall and Winter that would soon arrive in the writing to come.

In the 1830s the Anishinaabek along the Upper Mississippi River told the scientist and geographer, Joseph N. Nicollet that whereas during the Summertime "all the spirits are about," in the Fall, "they seek a hiding place, and in Winter they are completely

concealed.”<sup>398</sup> Chapters Two and Three paralleled this shift towards the two seasons of the greatest darkness and I had a very difficult time writing them. On one level I think this was because I was confronted with some of the ugliest aspects of settler-colonialism that sought to completely extinguish and destroy Indigenous peoples, such as the Temagami Anishnabai and their ties to n’Daki Menan. Although I am not a member of this specific community and I do not call the Lake Temagami region my homeland, learning this history affected me profoundly.

I look back now on my third chapter as the Winter, which is usually thought of as a time of darkness and rest when all is quiet. When I think about that very dark part of Canadian history when Indigenous traditions, songs, dances and stories were silenced, when many people were forced to go underground and into hiding, I am reminded of the packing away of seeds that Anishinaabekwe artists like the beadworker who created the Bear Island tikinaagan cover quietly planted, nurtured and creatively transformed into new, innovative, and powerful forms. Although concealed, those ancient protective motifs never died and were only asleep throughout the cold darkness of Winter.

By the time I reached the writing of Chapter Four, I began to feel somewhat re-energized and the feeling of anticipation, hope and excitement once again returned. Leanne Simpson, on whose work I have drawn throughout this thesis, writes about the importance of telling our creation stories, but also about the importance of telling stories that are regenerative – *re*-creation stories – that help us swim out of the darkness of the great flood with a small piece of earth in our palms with which to imagine and “dance a

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<sup>398</sup> Nicollet, 183-184.

new world into existence.”<sup>399</sup> It is my hope that this final fourth chapter, through its metaphorical investigation of the tikinaagan as a model for communal childcare, can in some small way contribute to this larger vision for a new beginning. It is a vision that fosters Indigenous values surrounding the empowerment of young people, traditional community frameworks and the importance of creativity, *re-visiting*, and imagination.

I understand that this area of knowledge and research requires further work on many levels and that imagining and dancing into existence a new and meaningful contemporary world that fully supports and values the kinds of ideas that I have promoted in this thesis is not something that will happen overnight. However, through the gathering of different sources of knowledge that came with the writing of these chapters I have come to learn about the important work of many community members, scholars and a growing number of extraordinary and insightful children and young people who are exhibiting tremendous hope and confidence in living out our teachings in a new and very innovative way. Just as Springtime signals the start of something new and regenerative, there is that anticipatory feeling in the air that something big is about to happen. Of that hopeful seasonal shift, Basil Johnston’s words shall serve as an appropriate closing:

*Though former modes can no longer be exercised, they live on in memory. By their very sweetness and worth they call out for living on; they deserve to be repeated in life again and again. What is good needs to be regenerated many times over. [But] to resurrect the past in forms already done, is to negate survival. The same flower does not live, die, to live again. It lives, dies, and is no more. [But] after death and passing it leaves a memory of loveliness and a promise of renewal of that beauty in another Spring.*<sup>400</sup>

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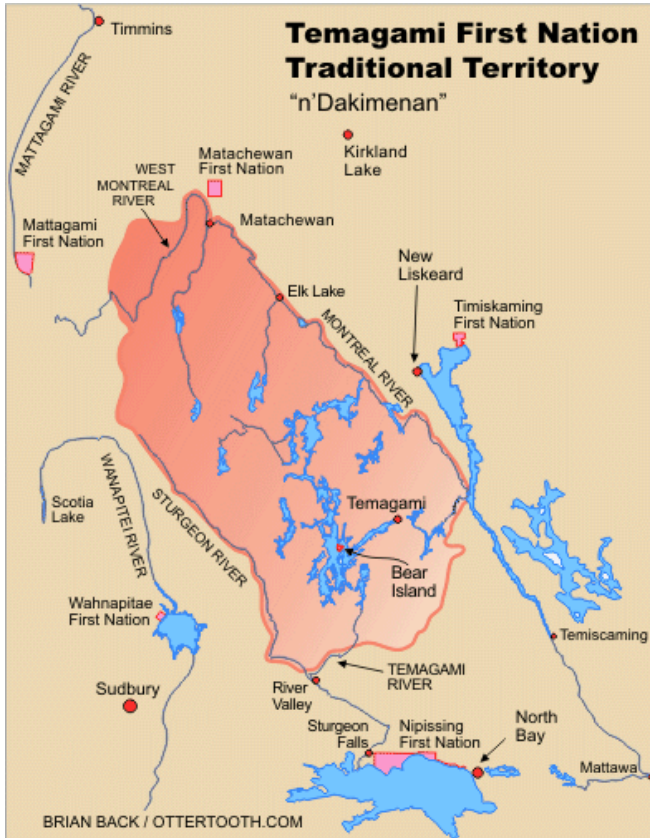
<sup>399</sup> Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 68-70. Simpson has discussed this metaphor of rebuilding a new world that was described to her by Elder Edna Manitowabi, see: McMahon and Simpson, “The Leanne Simpson Interview,” Podcast audio, May 11, 2012, <http://www.redmanlaughing.com>.

<sup>400</sup> Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 117.

## Illustrations



**Figure 1**  
“cradleboard”, Teme-Augama Anishinabai artist, Bear Island, n’Daki Menan, c. 1913  
(Canadian Museum of Civilization, artifact III-G-196, D2003-10374)



**Figure 2**  
(Map courtesy of Brian Back / Ottertooth.com)



**Figure 3**  
"cradleboard", likely Anishinabe artist, Great Lakes c. 1790  
(National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution [NMAI 24/2019]. Photo by NMAI Photo Services.)



**Figure 4**  
“cradle” (AM 2003,19.42), Anishinaabe artist, Great Lakes, pre-1825  
(©The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved)



**Figure 5**  
“cradle-board” Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) artist, Pic Mobert, c. 1940,  
(Canadian Museum of Civilization, artifact III-G-1166, D2003-10076)



**Figure 6a**

“woven bag” (recto), Anishinaabe artist, Central Great Lakes, c. 1800-1809  
National Museum of Ireland, Dublin IRL, 1902.329.

(In Ruth B. Phillips, *Patterns of Power: The Jasper Grant Collection and Great Lakes Indian Art of the Early-Nineteenth Century*, [Kleinburg: McMichael Canadian Collection, 1984], pg 68.)



**Figure 6b**

“finger woven bag” Anishinaabe artist, Central Great Lakes, c. 1800-1809  
National Museum of Ireland, Dublin IRL, 1902.329.

(In Ruth B. Phillips, *Patterns of Power: The Jasper Grant Collection and Great Lakes Indian Art of the Early-Nineteenth Century*, [Kleinburg: McMichael Canadian Collection, 1984], pg 68.)



**Figure 7**

“cradleboard ornament” or “cuff” (AM1949,22.132), Anishinaabe artist, Central Great Lakes, c. 1750-1850

(©The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved)



**Figure 8**

“pouch”, Anishinaabe artist, Eastern Great Lakes, mid-18<sup>th</sup> century  
Anishinaabe, Eastern Great Lakes

(Canadian Museum of Civilization, artifact III-X-374, D2005-05008)





**Figure 9**  
“doll”, Anishinaabe (Algonquin) artist, Northeastern Woodlands, c. 1779  
(Canadian Museum of Civilization, artifact III-L-276, S75-501)



**Figure 10**  
“cradleboard decoration”, Anishinaabe (Ojibwe), Red River, c.1822  
(Image © The Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg, MB, HBC 47-6)



**Figure 11:**  
Cee-cee White Bear-Becker with son Walter in tikinaagan, Bear Island, 1913  
(Canadian Museum of Civilization, photo by Frank G. Speck 1913, 23966)



**Figure 12:**

“Roles and Responsibilities: The Role of Children”

(Wabano Parenting Society. *Parenting Bundle: An Aboriginal Cultural Parenting Program Manual for All Caregivers of Children*. [Ottawa: Wabano Centre of Aboriginal Health, n.d], pg. 14.)

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: A little bit about June, Mary and Virginia

**June Twain** was born in 1937 and grew up in n'Daki Menan. She spent the summers on Bear Island, and during the colder months of the year lived with her family at her dad's trap ground, which was about two lakes over from Bear Island:

“Yeah, it was an old lumber camp. And we used two cabins, like one cabin was used to live in, and it had a wood floor. It was a log cabin, it just had a frame for the top of the building. It wasn't very warm, but if you kept the fire going all the time it was warm. But the fire went out at nighttime, you'd get up in the morning and our water pails would be all frozen! ... That's the way it was, but it was a good life. It really was a *good* life. It's hard to imagine living in the bush and not having a lot of conveniences that it would be a good life, but it was a good life.”

She's a mom and grandma and loves nothing more than fulfilling these roles. When I stayed with June on my visits to the Island I learned a great deal from her about generosity, the importance of family, laughter, and how much I love tea and freshly baked bread! She's a top-notch cook and baker, and often prepares meals for different community events that take place on Bear Island. In the past, June also established a landmark community art and theatre project for Indigenous youth called, *Roots 'N Wings*: “I realized how important it was to have native spirituality and native culture in our lives and the strength we get from them ... I felt if we could offer them roots, their culture, and their spirituality, that's their roots, and then wings, they could fly at any height. If they were already grounded in that, they could do anything they wanted.”

**Mary Katt** was born in 1933 and grew up in Elk Lake, Matachewan, where her mother was from, and later moved with her family towards Montreal River:

“There was a lot of settlers on Montreal River. So that's when every summer my grandparents and my mother and her brothers and sisters would paddle down from Matachewan, come all the way up here [Bear Island] to work for the summer, then they'd go back every September. I guess I must have travelled that route too many Septembers after I was born. ... Then that's where we stayed, in Montreal River ... in '39.”

Mary left home at around the age of 11 to start working at the different tourist camps surrounding Bear Island on Lake Temagami. Throughout her life she has spent quite a bit of time in the bush and was very skilled at trapping beavers, muskrats, minks and rabbits. Looking through photographs in her kitchen of the museum objects from her community, she patiently taught me a lot about how a birchbark basket would be made, and the way a certain wooden needle would be used to make a fishing net. Mary is the oldest person currently living on Bear Island and she speaks her language fluently. She's a mom and a grandma and has a livingroom full of family photos that she's very proud to share stories about. Mary has an incredibly warm smile, a big laugh, and always welcomes me with a hug and a fresh cup of coffee at her kitchen table.

**Virginia McKenzie** was born in the 1950s. She has tremendous love for the land and concern for the environment, care that she seems to have inherited from her grandmothers who had profound relationships with their territory of n'Daki Menan. Her maternal grandmother was a Whitebear and was raised on Bear Island. Her paternal grandmother was a Wawatay who grew up in the northern part of the community and lived in the bush all her life. "She could plant anything and grow anything, and she worked with a lot of medicines. ... She just had that kind of relationship." As a mother and grandmother herself now, Virginia feels that caring and nurturing our responsibilities to land are some of the most important teachings that can be given to young people today.

"That life force is really, I think that's, you know when the Elders spoke about that, it's that connection to the land. How can you define that? ... It's really, it's about the whole being. You take children into a garden, and into planting and things like that, you know and they *love* to be able to see things grow ... To see the nourishing and caring for it is phenomenal."

Virginia's thoughts on the connection between planting, gardening and young people really resonated within me as important work, and helped to inspire the theme of Springtime that is found throughout my writing. As well as being the proprietor of a local camp that provides visitors with the experience of learning about Anishnabai culture, Virginia also works at the Temagami First Nation public library on Bear Island, where she is currently working with community archives and historical material. At the library Virginia also encourages young people to read, and teaches them about the importance of learning and looking after the environment.

## Appendix 2: The right kind of moss

Mary Katt:

“The type of moss you to get is, you go into a swampy area ... not the ones you see just any old place on a rock ... because it’s really dirty, it’s muddyish looking and it falls apart. But like I was telling you, they were showing you there, when you break that other one off, when you take it, bring it off from the earth that it’s long and stringy-like you know, and it’s got more body to it ... What you do when you take it, you pull it all apart and spread out, let it dry and then you put it in your woodbox or whatever you got to put it in, then you just take whatever you need there what you use, and what you don’t then you just put it back to the earth again. ... You can find that moss where there’s cranberry bush. Then you look and see where that cranberry bush is and you pull that moss up.”

“[You put the moss in the cradle] loosely. You’d have little pillows [of moss] like this ... You see you have a bag like this I told you, even with that bunting bag I was telling you, so you fill that little bag up with your moss and then you put it in your bag there that you’re gonna put your baby to sleep in. So you put them in there and then that absorbs all the waste.”

### Appendix 3: Glossary of Anishinaabemowin Terms

<b>Anishinaabe(k/g pl.)</b> Anishinabe, Anishnabai, Nishnaabe, etc.	“First” or “original” peoples. Other definitions translate the word to mean “the good people,” or “the spontaneous beings.” Although there are variants in the spelling depending on the specific group, this is the identification used by the Ojibwe/Chippewa, Odawa, Potawatomi, Nipissing, Mississauga, and Algonquin nations.
<b>Anishinaabekwe(wak/wag pl.)</b>	Indigenous woman
<b>Anishinaabemowin</b>	The Ojibwe language
<b>Mino-bimaadziwin</b>	To lead a good life, to live well.
<b>n’Daki Menan</b>	“Our land,” the traditional territory of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai surrounding Lake Temagami, Ontario.
<b>Naagan</b>	Dish, bowl, vessel
<b>Teme-Augama Anishnabai</b>	“The Deep Water People” – The Indigenous peoples who are inherently <i>from</i> the waters and surrounding lands of Lake Temagami, Ontario.
<b>Tik</b> (Mitig)	Wood
<b>Tikinaagan(an pl.)</b>	Cradleboard



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