

# All My Relations: Reclaiming the Stories of our Indigenous Grandmothers

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## Abstract

In this paper, I document conversations I engaged in with my Métis grandmother (Grambear) and the process of compiling her teachings into a handmade book. Drawing on theory in the flesh and felt theory, I explore the significance of my grandmother's teachings for me personally and for Métis women more generally. For me, this project was not only about honouring my grandmother and her stories, but it is also about the process of Indigenous revitalization, resurgence, and decolonization.

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## Résumé

Dans cet article, je décris en détail les conversations que j'ai eues avec ma grand-mère métisse (Grambear) et le processus de compilation de ses enseignements dans un livre fait à la main. En m'appuyant sur la théorie de la chair et du ressenti, j'explore l'importance des enseignements de ma grand-mère pour moi personnellement et pour les femmes métisses en général. Pour moi, ce projet ne constituait pas seulement un hommage à ma grand-mère et à ses récits, mais il concernait aussi le processus de revitalisation, de résurgence et de décolonisation autochtone.

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The fur traders wrote almost nothing about the Indian women who shared their lives. And thus the voices of our grandmothers remain silent, leaving us to wonder about the story they would have told if they had been able to write it down. (Welsh, 1995, 34).

As a Métis woman, I have found that Métis women's experiences are often excluded from historical and contemporary accounts of Métis peoples in Canada.<sup>1</sup> Using theory in the flesh and felt theory (Archuleta 2006; Million 2009), this project aims to challenge the exclusion of Métis women from discussions of Métis peoples and shed light on the importance of Métis revitalization, resurgence, and, ultimately, decolonization. One way in which I have embodied this process is by listening to Grambear's (my grandmother's) stories and honouring her teachings by fashioning them into a book that can be handed down to future generations (see Appendices A-D).<sup>2</sup> This project has also contributed to my own process of revitalization and decolonization as a Métis woman. It has challenged me to identify and seriously question the power relations in Western forms of knowledge production. The research question explored in this project asks how can the stories shared by Indigenous grandmothers influence acts of revitalization, resurgence, and decolonization for Métis women like me.

This paper is comprised of three main sections. The first discusses Métis identity and culture, my own position as a Métis woman, and the significance of theory in the flesh and felt theory (Archuleta 2006; Million 2009). A brief description of the book of Grambear's stories that I compiled is included in the second section. The final section examines three themes that emerged in Grambear's stories with a specific focus on their relevance for the ongoing awakening of Métis peoples: violence against Indigenous women, the importance of community and family, and the value of sharing knowledges.

## Like a Sleeping Giant

Adam Gaudry (2009) has examined the history of displacement of Métis peoples and the recent resurgence of Métis collective identity. He writes:

The Métis nation is like a sleeping giant, slowly waking from a hundred-year slumber. Most Métis went underground for nearly a century following violent military invasions of our territory by the Canadian State in the 1870s and 1880s. The nation kept quiet because the dispersion of the Métis people allowed the State to refuse recognition of the Métis as a collective entity—a claim that wasn't possible when the Métis were politically and militarily asserting this reality in the nineteenth century...Only now are the Métis realizing our collective potential to reclaim the spaces, identities, and political autonomy taken from us over the past 120 years. This empowerment is due in no small part to the growing awareness of being Métis among Métis people as well as the increasing activism of Métis individuals and political organizations. (1).

Gaudry's words provide important context for my own experiences as a Métis woman. My mother's family is of the Red River Métis and my father's family is from the Ukraine. My family lived at White Horse Plains (a community on the Assiniboine River on the Western extremity of the Red River Settlement) beginning in the early nineteenth century. They fled Red River in 1870 in the midst of violent military invasions of Métis homelands and settled in what was called the Laboucane Settlement on Plains Cree and Blackfoot territory. The Laboucane Settlement was named after my ancestors. My family was active in the fur trade, hunted, farmed, and moved freight. Grambear was born in 1937 in Makwa Lake and lived outside of the Makwa Sahgaiehcan Reserve. She married my grandfather in Drayton Valley, Alberta. For most of my childhood, my sister and I lived with or next door to my grandparents. While Grambear did not explicitly discuss her experiences growing up and our Métis ancestry until six years ago, I have come to realize that she taught my sister and me many aspects of Métis ways of being and knowing. These include beading, gardening, farming, hide tanning, and embroidery. Despite the fact that our people were driven into hiding, I still have received these gifts from Grambear.

Why are the stories of my ancestors important today? Indigenous feminist Shirley Green (2007) explains the importance of looking back when reclaiming our heritages (172). Green maintains that we must “remember the injustices done to the women of this country by the colonizers, by society and by our own families, for the parts they played in denying us our birthright and the opportunity to know our own identity” (172). She further suggests that “it is only by reclaiming our heritage that we can gain an understanding of who we are and enable us to achieve our full potential as [Indigenous] women” (172). Drawing on the wisdom of Shirley Green, I have sought to reclaim the stories and experiences of my elders and ancestors in a meaningful way.

Understanding gender relations among Métis peoples has been crucial in my own understanding of my role as a Métis woman within the Métis nation. Christine Welsh (1995) argued two decades ago (as quoted at the outset of this paper) that there has been little written on Métis women even in the period of awakening described by Gaudry (2009). I first showed Grambear Welsh's words six years ago and they initiated many conversations between Grambear and me about the importance of Métis women's stories for the future generations of women who will walk ahead of us. Thus began the formal process of listening to Grambear's stories with the aim to end the silencing of Métis women. The experiences shared during these conversations were not often discussed in my family. For me, the process of listening, compiling, and documenting her stories is part of the larger process of revitalization, resurgence, and decolonization as a Métis woman and feminist.

Jeff Corntassel (2012) discusses resurgence and decolonization by saying that, “being Indigenous today means struggling to reclaim and regenerate one's relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization” (89). In order to disrupt the physical realities of colonialism, he argues that we need to focus on everyday acts of resurgence (88). Indigenous resurgence, he says, means “having the courage and imagination to envision life beyond the state” (89). For Corntassel, decolonization and resurgence are interrelated actions and strategies “that inform our pathways to resistance and freedom” (89). Carrying the stories of our ancestors in our hearts, as Indigenous peoples, is one way to imagine our lives beyond the state

and could also be a form of decolonization. It is a way of looking back, reclaiming our Métis identities and spaces through honouring the Métis women who walked before us (Gaudry 2009; Green 2007).

When working towards decolonization, we must acknowledge that Indigenous women have experienced the brunt of colonialism. As Joyce Green (2007a) argues in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, “Aboriginal feminism brings together two critiques, feminism and anti-colonialism, to show how Aboriginal peoples, in particular Aboriginal women are affected by colonialism and by patriarchy” (23). She maintains that Indigenous feminism takes into account how “both racism and sexism fuse when brought to bear on Aboriginal women” (23). Colonialism, Green (2007b) asserts, is not only an historic event, but an ongoing process. Colonialism refers to the “appropriation of the sovereignty and resources of a nation or nations, to the economic and political benefit of the colonizer” (143). She further explains that the imposition of “European derived and Christianity conditioned” patriarchal ideologies and structures influences and constructs the way Indigenous women experience and are affected by colonialism (143-144). Green (2007a) describes Indigenous feminism as principled, self-reflective, critical, and anti-oppressive (26).

Colonialism functions in academic institutions through knowledge production practices. Métis author Maria Campbell (2012) writes:

No one has ever researched and documented us from our perspective. Everything has been done by historians and done from a historical perspective until very recently. It is crucial for us to research and document our own stories and to share and discuss them at a community level. To celebrate them is a part of our decolonizing. I believe this must come first. Coming together to tell these stories is a beginning or a start to finding our way home. Home meaning the place where the spirit dwells. (xxv)

As a Métis woman, my academic introduction to issues related to ongoing colonialism and assimilation was through feminist theories and, as such, Indigenous feminism is something that is close to my heart. Two Indigenous feminist theories that I am particularly interested in are theory in the flesh and felt theory. As I read J. M. Bumsted’s (1996) book *The Red River Rebellion*, I no-

ticed that Métis women are only present in relation to white men who sought to gain access to Métis communities. They are presented as a tool and nothing more. They are not real living women with bodies, teachings, pain, emotions, and lifelong journeys.

Elizabeth Archuleta’s (2006) article “‘I Give You Back’: Indigenous Women Writing to Survive” challenges Western forms of knowledge production through Cherríe Moraga’s “theory in the flesh” (see Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981, 23). Archuleta (2006) cites Moraga, arguing that a theory in the flesh is “one where the physical realities of our lives – our skin colour, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings – all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity” (101). Indigenous women theorize their lives through collective and lived experiences. Theory in the flesh is thus grounded in “struggles for knowledge in women’s bodies” (89). For Indigenous women, these are racialized and sexualized bodies. Archuleta maintains that “Indigenous women reject paradigms that ask us to disassociate ourselves from our lived experiences before we can claim to have the skills and knowledge to theorize” (89). She adds that “[w]e believe theory comes not from abstract written ideas, but from the collective knowledge of Indigenous women” (89).

Indigenous women’s experiences have been discredited by Western forms of knowledge production, including by those ways of being and knowing often dominant in academic institutions. In “Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History,” Dian Million (2009) explains that “felt scholarship continues to be segregated as a ‘feminine’ experience, as polemic, or at worst as not knowledge at all” (54). She further argues that “the Native’s subjective, feminized, infantilized, and above all domestically positioned personal or oral narrative can never be proper history inside a disciplinary space protected by its gatekeeper’s desire to be a ‘science,’ convinced of its right to police the past” (71). In her view, Indigenous women *feel* their histories (54). Those histories are created through addressing the multilayered facets of Indigenous women’s experiences and the emotions that encompass them. Because their knowledge is rooted in felt emotions, it is not credited in academia, which is often dominated by a focus on rational or calculated thought. Felt theory focuses not on what it is like to be an Indigenous person and the logistics of those histories. Rather, it focuses on

what it *feels* like to be an Indigenous person (61). Felt theory makes space for the brutal realities of ongoing colonialism to be heard, felt, and theorized. It also makes space for Indigenous women's acts of resistance, resurgence, and survival to be heard and respected. We need not seek validation in Western power structures and need not rely on experts, researchers, policy analysts, and bureaucrats. We can challenge Western modes of knowledge production by bringing to the forefront the lived experiences and emotions of Indigenous women, told and explained by us on our own terms.

Theory in the flesh and felt theory, then, are Indigenous feminist approaches that seek to challenge the colonial dynamic in knowledge production. These two theories address how Indigenous women's lived experiences have been discredited by academic institutions and offer anti-colonial ways for Indigenous women to theorize and account for their experiences. They allow us to begin to share our truths and find our way home.

How do I reclaim my ancestry when the feelings of my ancestors, their journeys, and their stories have been rendered largely invisible by white historians? By excluding Indigenous women's theories, emotions, and feelings in academic writing, the violence inflicted on us is concealed. Thus, I aim to theorize differently so that the words spoken by Grambear will not only be heard, but also respected and cherished in and of themselves.

### **All My Relations: Grambear's Storybook**

The book I created that contains Grambear's stories could be considered an act of resurgence (Corn-tassel 2012). It is made up of goat leather, beading, embroidery, a family tree dating back to the sixteenth century, Grambear's stories, and two maps of where my ancestors lived (see Appendices A-D).

The leather that forms the outside of the book is goat leather that I fleshed, tanned, and stretched. Tanning and stretching hides have been central practices in my family for many generations. My great great grandfather was a trapper and used to work the leather so my great great grandmother could make different items for my family. As I was growing up, my grandfather shared his leather making knowledge with me. I was involved in the entire process of making the leather for this book—from taking the goat's life, harvesting the meat, rendering the fat, removing the brain for tanning the

hide, and stretching the hide. As such, it was important for me to use this specific pelt. To create the cover of the book, I had to hand-scrape the hair off the pelt, which took about eighteen hours. After the hair was removed, I had to re-tan and stretch the hide as well as smoke it. By using a home-tanned hide as the book cover, I also attempted to include and honour the knowledges of men such as my great great grandfather and my grandfather who have walked before me.

The second feature of the book is the beading. There have been many Métis teachings that have been shared with me about the process of beading. Métis peoples are known as the "flower beadwork people" (Belcourt 2008, 144). Christi Belcourt (2008) speaks of reclaiming collective Métis history through art in her article "Purpose in Art, Métis Identity, and Moving Beyond the Self." Belcourt is a Métis artist who creates art to raise awareness and educate people about Métis issues. She describes the use of beadwork in her own paintings by saying that it "infers a sense of history" (147). She also uses "beadwork to make the statement that Métis culture is not fossilized but alive" and as a tribute to her ancestors (147). While beading the outside of the book, I kept Belcourt's teachings in my heart. Beading is a way to honour my ancestors and to tell their stories. Beading is an act of everyday resurgence and part of my process of decolonization.

Beading is something that my family has engaged in for generations. My great great grandmother knew how to bead. Grambear knows how to bead. In my own beadwork, I do not necessarily create a flower or leaf to symbolize each person in my life. With every bead stitched, there is a thought that goes onto the material. Every bead placed onto the material represents everything that was being thought about and the intention behind the beading. A piece of beadwork can thus encompass several different stories within it – those stories are passed down to the person for whom the beadwork is made. Before I began beading the outside of the book, it was first important to transcribe Grambear's stories so that I could think about the strength within them. Those stories and that strength will be passed down to each person who carries the book in the future.

One of the teachings that has been shared with me is the importance of always placing a bead that is not the right colour in the design to remember that nothing

can be as perfect as the Creator. Another teaching that is specific to Métis beading pertains to a particular design where beads are placed along the flower stem. These are called mouse tracks. Traditionally, the Métis from Red River used white beads for their mouse tracks because different colours symbolized different locations. However, today there are many Indigenous peoples who use the “mouse tracks” of a variety of colours in their beading.

The beaded design on the cover of the book was done collectively with Grambear (see Appendix A). After our initial conversation, we talked about different flowers and looked at different styles of beading to create something together. The numerous colours in the piece show the variety and complexities of Métis peoples’ experiences today. The colours are inspired by the colours of our homelands. The four stages of plant life—leaf, stem, flower, and bud—show the intergenerational knowledge that was crucial to this process. Finally, the infinity symbols on the side of the book surrounded by blue are the emblem of the Métis nation—which has not always been a source of pride in my family (see Appendix B).

Embroidery also played a crucial role in the creation of the book. Grambear taught me to embroider while I was growing up. It first appears on the cover of the book. I embroidered the words *All My Relations* (see Appendix A). *All My Relations* is a Métis teaching that speaks to the interconnectedness of human and non-human beings and the responsibilities we have to those relations. The second place embroidery appears is on the family tree. I made a ten foot long family tree on cotton fabric dating back to the sixteenth century. In order to connect my ancestors to each other, I used the same embroidery whipped backstitch that Grambear taught me (see Appendix C). Using embroidery was a way to honour the knowledges shared with me by Grambear and how those teachings and her stories connect me to my Métis ancestors.

### **Honouring Grambear’s Experiences**

My grandparents’ house has always been a comforting place for me. It smells of firewood and leather oil and is filled with “knick-knacks” they have collected over the years—one being a piece of embroidery that says “I love you” that I made for them when I was in the fourth grade. Grambear and I sat in the kitchen of her

house—the same house that my grandfather built when my mother was only two years old and the house where I was raised for part of my childhood. Located on top of a hill with a view of the Rocky Mountains to the west across the plains, it is surrounded by their farmland. While I sat listening to Grambear, she often had to get up to stoke the wood stove that kept us warm.

As we talked, three themes emerged: violence against Indigenous women, the importance of family and community, and the value of sharing knowledges. When considering what is important for me to convey to future generations of Métis peoples, these three themes seemed crucial. As “everyday acts of resurgence” (Corntassel 2012), Grambear’s teachings on these topics inspired me when considering my responsibilities to my people, community, and family. Métis women give birth to the future of our people. If our women do not feel proud and safe to be Métis, our people will disappear. This means that we need to reconnect as a community to collectively support each other as we awaken, as Gaudry (2009) described, like a sleeping giant. In doing this, we also need to be committed to sharing our knowledges and teachings with each other as a means of healing from the impacts of colonialism.

Several times throughout our conversations, Grambear talked about how Indigenous women were treated by non-Indigenous peoples and, specifically, by non-Indigenous men. When discussing why my family changed their last name, Grambear said that “they changed their names so many times because I think they were on the run and they didn’t want to be arrested, especially the men. And there was no respect for the Indian woman or the Métis woman from the white people. I think they raped and did whatever they wanted with them—killed them and left them.” She explained that there are men who prey on Indigenous women, that men “are waiting for them—to use them.” She identified cultural attitudes in colonial society where “nobody gives a shit about [Indigenous women], except for their parents or their sisters!” The reason for this violent apathy is “because they are Métis or they are Indian.” However, she concluded by affirming the strength and inherent worth of Indigenous women in saying that Indigenous women have to “be strong enough to believe what they got in them is every bit as good as the next” (Grambear, personal communication, December 23, 2012). Grambear’s words resonate with Andrea Smith’s

(2003) insight that colonialism is inextricably linked to sexualized violence against Indigenous women.

It was important for me to hear Grambear's insight on violence against Indigenous women. I have been involved in many different actions and campaigns that attempt to raise awareness about this travesty. When Grambear was talking about this, it was incredibly painful. Anytime she mentioned the violence experienced by many Indigenous women, she would pause for a length of time in between the sentences while shaking her head and sometimes tearing up. I often feel the same way.

At the time when I was transcribing Grambear's stories, I was in the process of organizing the Stolen Sisters Memorial March in Victoria, British Columbia, an annual march intended to raise awareness about and remember the missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada. That year, the participation of community members was significantly lower than it had been in the past. It was so frustrating to hear Grambear's words and then consider how few people came forward to support us in organizing the event. The frustration increased when I thought about the fact that the Missing Women's Commission of Inquiry report had just been released in British Columbia and how it fell so short of anything even remotely resembling justice (British Columbia. Missing Women Commission of Inquiry 2012; Ball 2012); when I thought about the large crowds at Idle No More events (Ip 2013); and when I thought about how there was increased violence against Indigenous women as a backlash against the Idle No More movement (Nason 2013).

In the giant's awakening that Gaudry (2009) described, it is imperative to look critically at how our women are treated as this process is crucial for our survival. When Grambear said that Indigenous women needed to be strong enough to believe that they are important, it is because the women in our communities are under constant attack, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Being proud of our Métis heritage is something that did not always exist in my family. When I was a child, Grambear told me not to tell anyone that I was Métis because there was a lot of sexualized violence in our community. This violence was inextricably connected to the violence against the land. Those working in extractive industries were often perpetrators of both kinds of violence. In my own process of awaken-

ing, I have begun to identify and challenge those colonial narratives that say Indigenous women are worthless. In my own journey, I have done what Grambear has suggested. I have started to feel strong enough to challenge the attackers. It was through the mentorship and guidance of Christine Welsh (1991 and 1995) and Adam Gaudry (2009 and 2011) that I began to think of my Métis self as important and valuable. This is about being strong enough to recognize that what we have to say, our experiences, our emotions, our frustrations, and our anger are vital to our survival, resurgence, and decolonization.

In Canada, there are currently many hundreds of missing and murdered Indigenous women (NWAC 2012, 4). Grambear's words remind me that colonialism continues and is still based on the subjugation of Indigenous women's bodies. As a Métis woman, I take Grambear's emotions and words very seriously. I will fight so that, in time, when I talk to my grandchildren or nieces and nephews, I can say that something has changed. I will fight so that when I talk to them, and share my own stories, I can say that our communities—Métis communities, but Métis women in particular—are actively resisting colonization.

In order to carry through everyday acts of resurgence while seeking revitalization and moving towards decolonization, it is crucial to consider how we are raising future generations. They are the future of our people. Our children need connection to their community. They need connection to their ancestors (both human and non-human). Their ancestors' knowledge can guide them forward.

The theft of children from our communities by the child welfare system is one major factor that has contributed to our "weakened and dispirited state" (de Leeuw, Greenwood, and Cameron 2010). Grambear and I agreed that the easiest way to destroy a culture is by removing the children. We spoke about how the child welfare system is essentially the same as residential schools, but with a new name. Grambear grew up near the Makwa Sahgaiehcan Nation Reserve. She said that when the children were taken away, it was "like a flood." The reserve became a sad and empty place. She also grew angry when talking about how many children were raped by both priests and nuns, saying that "those bastards should have been hung by their nuts" (Grambear, personal communication, December 23, 2012).

While there was always a risk of being taken away by the state, Grambear was lucky to be raised by her grandparents when her father and mother could not care for her. She further explained that when she was growing up, there was never a babysitter or someone from outside the community that raised the children. Everyone in the community had to participate in taking care of the children and youth.<sup>3</sup> The children would go with their parents or family to social gatherings and even sleep under the desks. Hearing Grambear's stories reminded me of my own childhood. Like Grambear, my sister and I were raised by various family members. We never had a babysitter. This meant that, over time, I had access to many teachings, such as hide-tanning, embroidery, horseback riding, harvesting herbs, farming, and wilderness skills, that were passed down to me. This is something that I may not have had the opportunity to experience had I not spent a significant amount of time with my grandparents. Reconceptualizing parenting to focus on reciprocal relationships with children and youth in the community is something I learned directly from my grandparents. I felt valued and cared for.

The removal of children from their communities is something that must be addressed (de Leeuw, Greenwood, and Cameron 2010). It is difficult to provide a universal solution to the theft of children by the child welfare system. In reconnecting as a people, however, it is possible that it will become easier to directly and collectively resist such removals.

During our conversations, Grambear and I also connected when she shared her practical knowledge with me. She taught me about making moccasins as I was making a pair for my cousin's baby. When referencing the beading design, she said "Yeah and you make your own designs. They got their designs apparently from nature, whichever ones they wanted to look at. And they implemented them. Sometimes animals, sometimes flowers. But mostly flowers I think." Grambear also explained how to use and harvest sinew. Sinew was often used to sew and make moccasins with. She said that after she harvested the muscle memory from the back of the animal, her grandmother would "hang it on the logs in the house until it dried. Then you could separate it into little strings. And all it is is a muscle mass. And then you had to wet it and then twirl it." The final teaching Grambear shared with me was about

canning. Grambear explained that it took "four hours to cook meat" in the broiler pot and that "you had to keep the water boiling, which meant you had to keep the fire going." She also indicated that they did not have pressure cookers growing up, but that she was still able to can meat and that it is possible to do that today (Grambear, personal communication, December 23, 2012).

Why are these teachings relevant? Why do we need to consider empowering our women and thinking about what leaders are emerging from our communities? Simply put, much has been lost in many Métis communities through the forced removal of our people from our homelands and during the hundred-year sleep that Gaudry (2009) described. When I asked Grambear for specifics, such as whether we were involved in the Hudson's Bay Company or if we were part of the buffalo hunt, her common response was that her family members "probably talked about that stuff, but as you are growing up, you only absorb what you want to absorb. It's too bad because we lost a lot over the years." She also explained that many things were not talked about. For example, when I asked if our family was part of the Métis resistances of the late nineteenth century, her response was "Oh I think there was a lot of them but nobody talked about it. They learned how to keep their mouths shut. I think there was lots" (Grambear, personal communication, December 23, 2012). This is because, as mentioned above, after the resistances, many Métis families were on the run.

## Conclusion

In only a few conversations, Grambear taught me so much about making moccasins, beading, and making sinew. The potential for knowledge and strength to be shared will increase as we connect more deeply with each other.

The Métis have a teaching that speaks to recognizing that we carry the journeys our ancestors took with us in the paths we walk today. That is the meaning of "All My Relations." It reminds us that, through the Creator, we are all connected and that we need to look out for one and other. Grambear said that "I think the world has to learn how to sustain itself. Everybody has to put in for later on, for seven generations" (personal communication, December 23, 2012). Just as Shirley Green (2007) stated, "it is only by reclaiming our heritage that we can gain an understanding of who we are

and enable us to achieve our full potential, as Aboriginal women” (172).

To conclude, I wanted to honour the Métis woman who helped inspire this project and inspired Grambear to share her stories. Christine Welsh (1991) says:

Native women will be rendered historically voiceless no longer. We are engaged in creating a new history, our history, using our own voices and experiences. And as we raise our voices—as we write, sing, teach, make films—we do so with the certainty that we are speaking not only for ourselves but for those who came before us whom history has made mute. We have a responsibility to our children and our people to ensure that the voices of our grandmothers are no longer silent.

And so the voices of my grandmothers are alive today, for they speak through me. (24)

The voice of Grambear will speak through me. I will carry her strength, courage, patience, love, and wit in my heart. Her voice and teachings will be passed on to young Métis women to guide them on their journeys of resistance and resurgence. It is only through the voices of our grandmothers that the giant’s awakening can occur.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I will be using the terms Indigenous and Métis throughout this paper. Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel and Alfred (2005) write that “indigenouness is an identity constructed, shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism” (597). Unlike colonial societies that have spread from Europe, Indigenous peoples “are indigenous to that lands they inhabit” (597). Being Indigenous is an “oppositional, place-based existence, along with the consciousness of being in struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization by foreign peoples, that fundamentally distinguishes Indigenous peoples from other peoples of the world” (597). Brenda Macdougall (2006) uses the term *Wahkootowin* when writing about Métis peoples. She says that “*Wahkootowin* is the Cree cultural concept that best represents how family, place, and economic realities were historically interconnected, the expression of a world view that laid out a system of social obligation and mutual responsibility between related individuals—between members of a family—as the foundational relationship within communities” (432-433). Being Métis today is about living a *Wahkootawin* life that was established by our ancestors in the prairies in the nineteenth century. Being Métis means

being Indigenous.

<sup>2</sup> My sister and I call our grandmother “Grambear.” To personalize this paper, I will use Grambear when referencing my grandmother.

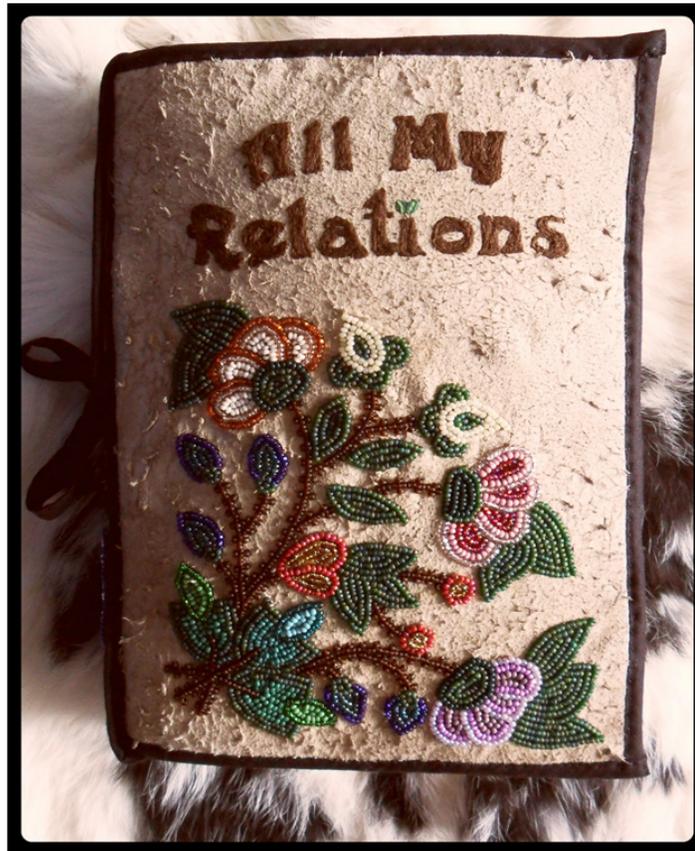
<sup>3</sup> There many parents whose economic lives and distance from relatives necessitate non-communal practices such as babysitting. So this is not to say that children must always be cared for by their ancestors. Rather, this is a long-term goal as we reawaken and reconnect as a people.

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Appendix A



Appendix B

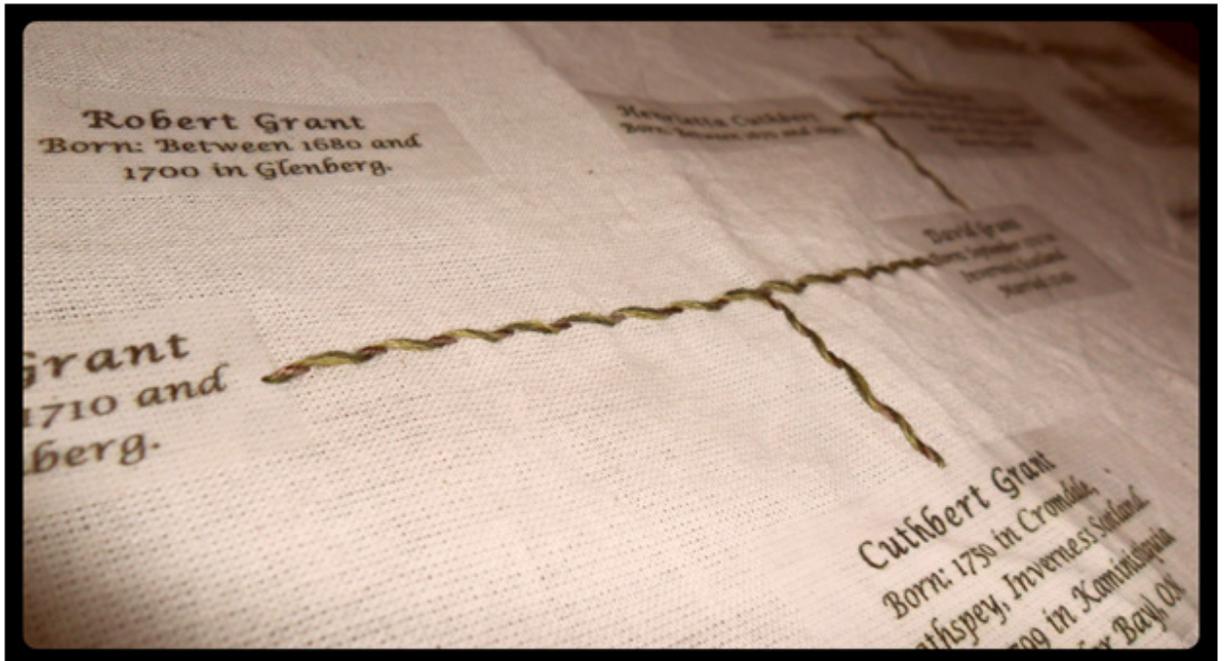


The front and side of the book. The binding is removable so I can add more stories as time passes. The leather is a goat hide that I tanned and stretched. The beadwork was designed by my grandmother and me. *All My Relations* is a Métis teaching.

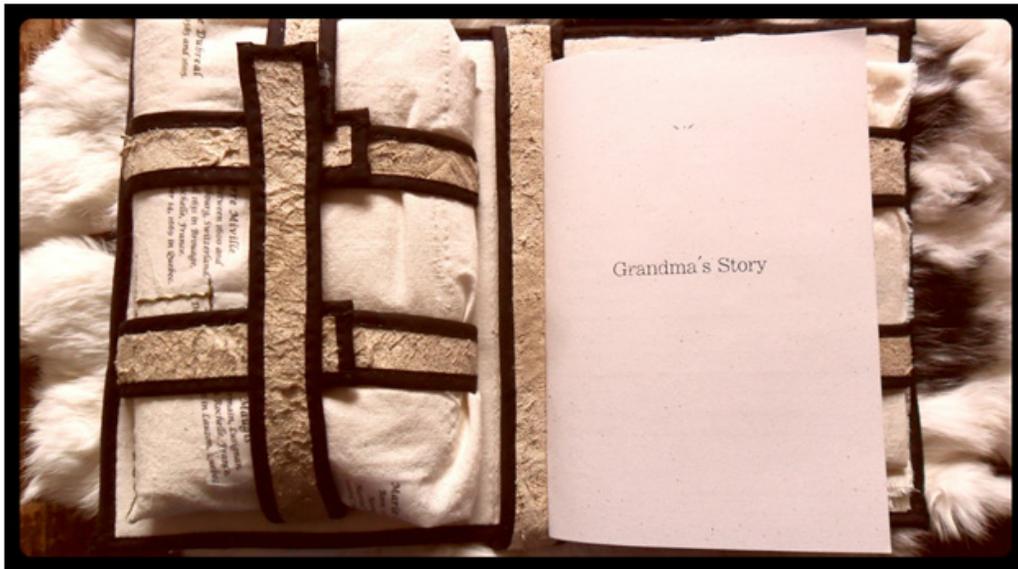


The Metis flag is beaded on the outside binding to pay tribute to my nation.

## Appendix C



The family tree is ten feet by two and a half feet and dates back to the early 1500s. I did embroidery to connect each ancestor's name.



The inside of the book: family tree on the left and my grandmother's story in the middle. Behind my grandmother's story are two maps: one of the Red River Settlement and the other of what is now Alberta and Saskatchewan that shows Battle River.

## Appendix D

