article 1

I Love You as Much as all the Beads in the Universe: A Garment-Based Inquiry Into Re-stitching Alternative Worlds of Love

by Justine Woods

Abstract

The research held at the heart of this article engages with a praxis of decolonial love through garment construction and beadwork as a practice-based method of inquiry. The body of work centres decolonial love as methodology with the expressed purpose to physically and conceptually re-stitch alternative worlds that are grounded in ethical practices based on respect, empathy, reciprocity, consent, and love. Engaging in decolonial love as praxis, the artistic production of this research re-frames pattern drafting, garment construction, and stitching methods within decolonial and relationship-based contexts. The research prioritizes, and foregrounds, all of the relationships that make up my identity as a Penetanguishene *Aabitaawikwe* and centres these relationships as praxis towards building alternative worlds of love that honour, celebrate, and mobilize Indigenous internationalism, intercultural solidarity, co-resistance, and liberation.

KEYWORDS:
Decolonial love
Alternative worlds
Liberation
Worlding
Indigenous diaspora
Re-stitching
Garment construction
Beadwork

INDIGENOUS FASHION ARTS
FASHIONING RESURGENCE
FASHION STUDIES

Aaniin

Justine Woods nindizhinikaaz

Tiny nindoonjibaa besho waaseyaagami-wiikwed

Aabitaawikwe nindaaw

Je suis déscendante de la famille St. Onge et de la famille Berger-Beaudoin.

Mes ancêtres viennent de l'Île de Drummond et ils ont été rélocalisés à Penetanguishene en 1828.

I introduce myself in *Anishinaabemowin* first, along with French, because these are the languages still breathing today that were spoken by my Ancestors.[1] Although I do not know how to speak *Anishinaabemowin* fluently, introducing myself in both languages connects me to my Ancestors and to the land(s) where I am from. In *Anishinaabemowin*, I share that I am from Tiny, Ontario, where the land meets Georgian Bay. I share that I am an *Aabitaawikwe*; a term coded within the identity I have inherited from my family and my *Aabitaawizininiwag* Ancestors.[2] In French, I share that I am a descendant of the St. Onge and Berger-Beaudoin families and that my Ancestors come from Drummond Island (in what is now known as Michigan) and were relocated in 1828 to Penetanguishene, Ontario where they built diasporic roots.

Through my mother, I carry the St. Onge family name, and through my father, I carry the Berger-Beaudoin family name. I am proud to carry these names forward into the universe through my existence and pass these names along to my children one day.

I was raised as an only child by two horticulturists on a flower farm in Tiny Township on the outskirts of Midland, Ontario. I went to elementary school in Midland and high school in Penetanguishene, Ontario. Both my parents and our families have maintained strong roots in the Georgian Bay area since our Ancestors were displaced from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene after its ceding to the United States in 1828. Although my parents both left Georgian Bay as young adults, they eventually returned and laid down roots on the land where they still live today, a place where I feel fortunate to have grown up.

There is something about Georgian Bay that keeps a hold of us. Although we all leave at some point for a small moment of time, it does not take long to feel the land pulling us back. When I was seventeen years old, I moved to Toronto to study fashion design at Toronto Metropolitan University and then OCAD University to pursue a Master of Design within the IAMD program.[3] Although I visit home often, I can still feel the pull and know that soon I will return and lay down roots on the same land that has held and continues to hold my family and my community for generations past and generations to come.

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[1] It is important to note that my respective Ancestors did not speak *Michif* but rather the language of *Brayet*. *Brayet* is a dormant language once spoken by *Aabitaawizininiwag* throughout the upper Great Lakes region and referenced by Margaret Stobie (1970; 1971) as a mixture of French and *Anishinaabemowin*.

[2] Oral Knowledge held and shared by Issac Murdoch (2018). The term *Aabitaawizininiwag* (pl.) translates to half people and was used by the Anishinaabek to call the French Breeds in Ontario. *Aabitaawikwe* translates to half woman.

[3] IAMD is an acronym for Interdisciplinary Art, Media and Design.

RE-STITCHING ALTERNATIVE WORLDS OF LOVE

bodies that bleed with the cycle of Mother Earth

house alternative worlds of love within them.

this is the ultimate magic that heteropatriarchal systems are afraid of.

the magic to produce bodies that look like us and love profoundly.

the magic to nurture a generation that is not afraid to love differently

from the ways we have been conditioned and taught.

in ways that respond to oppression with tenderness.

a tenderness as soft as manidoo-waabooz and as strong as sinew.[4]

The heart of this research started beating when I began dreaming about decolonial love. Dreaming about the beauty of our diasporic home that sits on the shores of Georgian Bay. Dreaming about the amount of love we have for our homeland of Drummond Island 500 km away. Dreaming about fishing and trapping and searching for morels in the spring. Dreaming about sitting at the shoreline and sharing stories with kin. Dreaming about the smell of smoked deer hide. Dreaming about beads dripping with love. Dreaming about smiling and laughing with my *Aabitaaw-izininiwag* Ancestors (they have a good sense of humor). Dreaming about sharing hugs with my family. Dreaming about sharing hugs with the land and the water. Dreaming about worlds of decolonial love.

With this body of work, I look toward and am inspired by the important role garments play not only in how we present ourselves to the worlds around us, but the knowledge, strength, and stories they carry in helping us to re-shape the worlds around us.

Each garment holds and carries my dreams of what worlds of decolonial love look like, what they feel like, and as a garment artist, what I would wear as an *Aabitaaw-ikwe* in alternative worlds of love.

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[4] *Anishinaabemowin: manidoo-waabooz* means cotton tail rabbit.

This research centres *re-stitching* as theory and method with the expressed purpose to physically and conceptually re-stitch alternative worlds that are grounded in ethical practices and based on respect, empathy, reciprocity, consent, and love. *Re-stitching* is both a physical and conceptual gesture that radically re-imagines the social and political relationships within and between communities and mobilizes collective acts of love. As a theoretical framework, it expands on and is informed by a group of theories that together make up my theory circle; *re-searching* (Absolon, 2011), *re-storying* (Kovach, 2009), and *re-membering* (Smith, 2012). *Re-searching* articulates the gesture of looking again from within the depths of ourselves.[5] *Re- storying* reminds us of who we are and of our belonging.[6] *Re-membering* is an act of resistance against being dismembered.[7] These theoretical underpinnings guide my spirit, mind, and heart to be reflexive and relational in activating worlds of decolonial love.

The creative production of this research engages with the following questions within a praxis of decolonial love: How do we re-stitch alternative worlds of love that re-imagine identity outside of and beyond the colonial consciousness? In what ways can garment making contribute to the making of meaning held within alternative worlds of love? As an individual and as a member of my community, how do I make sure that when my great-great-great grandchildren look out into Georgian Bay, they see all of who they are looking right back at them?

TERMINOLOGY

In this article I use specific terminology to identify, acknowledge, and support the practice of my Indigeneity and my identity as an *Aabitaawikwe*; an identity that has been passed down to me through my Ancestors, my family, my community, and the land(s) where I come from. I have been raised in a community and within a generation that has found belonging in the term Métis. Over the last twenty-nine years this term has helped my community and my nation politically recognize ourselves and each other.[8] Métis is the term I have been raised with to identify myself and therefore I cannot just let go of the term completely. This term will always be stitched into my body through my lived experience. It is important to me to honour the way(s) this term has helped me to recognize and care for my Indigenous body for twenty-six years. It is also important to me to acknowledge and honour all of the hard work done by Elders and community members of the Métis Nation of Ontario over the last twenty-nine years.

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[5] The term *re-search,* gifted to us by Anishinaabekwe scholar Kathy Absolon (2011), articulates the gesture of looking again. Absolon writes: "To search again from our own location and to search again using our own ways as Anishinaabek is Indigenous re-search" (p. 21).

[6] The term *re-storying* is informed by Cree and Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach (2009) and her discussion on storywork as an Indigenous methodology. Kovach shares with us: "Stories remind us of who we are and of our belonging. Stories hold within them knowledges while simultaneously signifying relationships" (p. 24).

[7] The term *re-memebering* is gifted to us by Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith. Smith (2012) discusses the term *re-memebering* in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2nd ed.) as a "connecting of bodies with place and experience" (p. 147). Additionally, I have chosen to write the full name of each author mentioned throughout this thesis to support Smith's decolonizing project of naming (p. 158).

[8] The Métis Nation of Ontario was established in 1993, forming a Métis-specific governance structure to support the nation's inherent right to self-government in the province of Ontario.

FIGURE 1 our bodies are stitched with 193 years of diasporic love. Quilted duck vest sewn in double-faced wool and beaded with size 11 seed beads. Photo by Lori Woods in Tiny, Ontario.

Indigenous terminology used to identify my Ancestors in the Great Lakes and Georgian Bay include the terms *Half Breed*, *French Breed, Wiisaakodewininiwag* (half burnt wood), *Aabitaawizininiwag* (half people) and *Bois Brûles* (burnt wood people). I have spent a lot of time visiting with kin and relatives from my community, thinking through terminology by myself and with them, and how this terminology affects my research. Many of my community's stories have been forgotten, with gaps filled by the stories of our Red River Métis kin. But these are not our stories to claim as they are not our lived experiences. We have our own experiences in relationship to our kinship systems built and practiced in our territories and to the land(s) and waterways we call our home. These stories and experiences also need to be shared so that we can re-stitch knowledges that hold our diasporic Indigenous bodies and the love we carry within us for our home(s) of Drummond Island and Penetanguishene (Figure 1).

Engaging in decolonial love as praxis means nurturing new possibilities of identity that are lived, celebrated, and practiced beyond the parameters and limitations of the colonial; an alternative consciousness of identity that flows and pours like water, soaking into the land and into every pore of our bodies.

To honour the practice of decolonial love that this research prioritizes and engages with, I have chosen to centre the term *Aabitaawizininiwag* within my research in reference to the identity that is coded for the bodies of my community with respect to our histories, the land(s) we are from, and our kinship ties to our Anishinaabe kin and Red River Métis kin. Centring this term positions our contemporary identity in closer relationship to our *Aabitaawizininiwag* Ancestors whose identities were born in the Great Lakes over 250 years ago, shaped at Drummond Island close to 200 years ago, and later formed diasporic roots in Penetanguishene that continue to hold strong to this present day. I prioritize this term to help me think expansively about the possibilities of identity with respect to the way(s) my community and my nation identifies, and to make space for these future possibilities to unfold.

I am still at the beginning of my relationship with the term *Aabitaawikwe*. It is difficult to set aside a term (Métis) that has been tied to my body and my identity for years, but I have learned that this is the gift of reciprocity. Sometimes we must let go, to practice decolonial love with others who share this world with us. I have to be brave and open up my heart with the courage in knowing that my community recognizes me, my family recognizes me, my Ancestors recognize me, and my homeland(s) and waterways recognize me beyond colonial terminology. This is possible because of the identity that is intrinsically coded within my heart, and within the heart of my community. Returning to the term *Aabitaawizininiwag* within my research opens up a space of looking back in order to expansively move, dream, dance, and walk forwards, hand in hand.

Alongside all of this I think about the possible terminology my grandchildren and great-grandchildren will use to identify themselves when they are my age. Will they use the same term(s) we use today? Or will they be different? I think about how my community will evolve as a people over the future generations to come and how our people will continue to thrive and practice our collective identity in relationship to the land(s) that have shaped us over generations past. I consider this the beauty of identity as an evolving and expansive practice. It is within this expansive space where decolonial love can be nurtured and mobilized.

A DECOLONIAL PRAXIS OF LOVE

A term articulated through the work of American-Dominican writer Junot Diaz (2007), decolonial love as praxis radically re-imagines social and political relationships that contribute towards future possibilities of a liberated and

more loving world.[9] According to Yomaira C. Figueroa (2015) with reference to Walter Mignolo's discussion on colonial difference, "decolonial love is a practice that bears witness to the past while looking towards a transformative and reparative future by unraveling coloniality, the matrix of power that is manifested in our contemporary conceptions of power, gender, and bodies" (p. 44).[10] Decolonial love as praxis offers us the ability to engage with theories of decoloniality that "reimagine reparations as a radical transformation of communities and as an attempt to repair broken societies, histories, and identities destroyed by colonialism and the coloniality-of-power" (p. 47).

When I think about decolonial love as praxis, I think about the writings of Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) on Nishnaabeg Brillance; I think about the poems of Cree Poet Billy Ray Belcourt (2020) and the letter to his Nôhkum in *A History of My Brief Body*; I think about the ethic of love held within the work of brilliant Black writers, poets, and thinkers; James Baldwin, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and bell hook's (1994) essay "Love as the Practice of Freedom" where she shares with us:

> The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others. That action is the testimony of love as the practice of freedom. (p. 250)

Additionally, I think about the work of Urban Cree scholar Karyn Recollet (2019) and the practice of decolonial love within her research. Recollet's theorizing of the star glyph, flight, and landing technologies is an inspiration when thinking through *Aabitaawizininiwag* diaspora, and where my community and my identity *land into place*. Recollet's research looks towards our star relatives to help us *jump scale* "from certain orientations and worldly practices to others that are generative in our modes of flight" ("When Future Falls are Imminent: The Moves and Returns of Scoop Choreography of the Fall", 2019, November 13). Her theoretical framework, grounded in Afro-futurist and Indigenous futurist theories, nurtures a space *in-between* where expansive possibilities when thinking through the multilayers of kinship systems are mobilized. Recollet's work offers a gift when thinking through the fundamentals of practicing decolonial love at the forefront of our kinship systems with other Indigenous nations and within our own respective communities and knowledge systems.

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[9] Junot Diaz is an American-Dominican writer whose book ***The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*** explores the practice of decolonial love.

[10] As footnoted by Figueroa, "Mignolo [(2000)] argues that the colonial difference is the colonial classification of the world in the modern/colonial imaginary…to transform or traverse these differences/values requires a fundamental shift in human relations. One way to transform these human relations is through decolonial love, which requires the decolonial attitude" (2015, p. 45).

DECOLONIAL LOVE AS THEORY OF PRACTICE WITHIN *AABITAAWIZININIWAG* THOUGHT

when you are in the middle of Georgian Bay and all you can hear are fish whispers between the heartbeat of each wave

when you taste the very first drop of sugar water in the spring

when you hold your breath and watch zhashagi look at you from the shoal

just off of Gin Rock until they decide to fly away[11]

when you look out across the bay and your eyes catch the top of Kitchikewana's belly and you know that he is there because his love was a love so strong that in result formed the land that has provided us with a home[12]

when you see your first trout of the season swimming down the Wye River

when you dance with the cattails that grow on the edge of Papoose Bay

when you lay with your back on 12 inch thick ice in the middle of Penetang Bay at 11pm on a Tuesday night in February and count the stars, but there's too many to count so you just lay there in awe of how lucky you feel to breathe in the universe

when you dream about smelts for breakfast

when you sit at the kitchen table and listen to a story about a young boy getting into mischief at the coal docks that has been told a million times before, but you never get tired of hearing it

when a body holds you in their arms the way water does

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[11] *Anishinaabemowin:* zhashagi means great blue heron.

[12] *Kitchikewana* is a Huron-Wendat god, and son of the *Great Spirit Manitou*, who lays to rest just north of Penetanguishene Bay as the Island of Giant's Tomb.

BUILDING MY BUNDLE OF LOVE

The writing of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) has helped me think through the importance of ethical practices and relationships within our Indigenous political systems and within our everyday lives. Reading and re-reading Simpson's work has gifted me with the realization that we need to organize and mobilize spaces of decolonial love and refuse to embed colonial systems within our Indigenous political contexts. In *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*, Simpson talks about radical resurgence organizing as a mechanism of refusal (p. 176). With reference to Dene scholar Glen Coulthard's (2014) discussion on the politics of recognition in his book *Red Skins*, *White Masks*, Simpson (2017) identifies that we need to create alternative spaces that "refuse the state's framing of the issues we organize around, and respond to and re-embed these issues within Indigenous political contexts and realities and within the place of productive refusal as a mechanism for building unity within the struggle" (p. 176) (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2 walking through our world(s) with a fierce and tender love. Workwear trousers sewn in double-faced wool and edged with size 11 seed beads. Photo by Lori Woods in Tiny, Ontario.

Simpson additionally expands on Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson's (2014) reframing of membership in *Mohawk Interruptus* as an example of radical resurgence organizing where *fear of disappearance* is centred as a mechanism of refusal, rather than embedding fear into our own community policies of belonging. Recognizing this difference around fear is important so that we don't harm or replicate colonial structures that create divisions within our own communities. As Simpson (2017) shares with us, "this shift in framing from identity politics to fear of disappearance enables us to organize around the root, instead of the symptom, and it allows for multidimensional nation-based approaches" (p. 177). The cutting out of community demobilizes this refusal that Simpson is talking about. In order to reach liberation, we need to build spaces that reject the politics of recognition and instead mobilize "generative refusal" where Indigenous bodies can stand in solidarity with one another and have each other's backs (p. 178).

Building these alternative spaces activates and mobilizes Indigenous internationalism and intercultural solidarity.

Centring Indigenous internationalism within a praxis of decolonial love is powerful because it allows for nation-based and community-based relationships that hold similar values to flourish. Creating spaces where we can respectfully and ethically engage with different nations and different theoretical positions mobilizes solidarity.

Engaging ethically means that we need to place reciprocity, respect, and consent at the forefront of our core values and systems. We also need to enact practices of empathy and consider one another as co-resistors. As Simpson shares with us, "building alternatives with community of coresistors is powerful because our struggle for liberation is profoundly related to theirs." (p. 66-67).

When I think about Indigenous internationalism it reminds me of a story my dad used to tell me as a young girl. A Huron-Wendat story about the god *Kitchikewana*, the son of the *Great Spirit Manitou*, who through anger, rage, and a deep profound love formed the 30,000 islands and the five bays of Georgian Bay.

Kitchikewana protected and guarded Georgian Bay. He was known for his tremendous size and his great temper. When it was time for *Kitchikewana* to marry, the Elders held a gathering with the hopes of finding *Kitchikewana* a wife. At the gathering, *Kitchikewana* instantly fell deeply in love with *Wanakita*, daughter of *Musquakie*, a northern chief. *Wanakita* denied *Kitchikewana*'s proposal because her heart was already taken by another. Enraged by *Wanakita*'s response, *Kitchikewana* ran the length of Beausoliel Island, picking up pieces of the earth and throwing them out into Georgian Bay, creating the 30,000 islands. He then pressed the palm of his hand into the earth leaving an imprint of his five fingers. These imprints filled with water, creating the five bays of Georgian Bay; Midland Bay, Penetanguishene Bay, Hogs Bay, Sturgeon Bay, and Matchedash Bay. *Kitchikewana* lays in eternal rest just north of Penetanguishene Bay as the Island of Giant's Tomb, a place I have grown up visiting many times with my family.

Although the story unfolds with heartbrokenness, anger, and rage, I consider this story to be an example of profound love. The love *Kitchikewana* held inside his heart for *Wanakita* was a powerful love. A love capable of re-imagining. A love capable of creating land and shaping water (Figure 3). A love we all dream about and search for. *Wanakita*'s response broke open *Kitchikewana*'s heart releasing all of his love into Georgian Bay, resulting in the creation of the land which we call home today.

Growing up in Georgian Bay and carrying this story inside of me is an example of the importance of honouring stories and theories found within different nations that contribute to the ethical frameworks within our own contexts and systems of thought. The Huron-Wendat no longer call this land their home, but it is important to recognize, by engaging in ethical practices, that this land was their traditional homeland and that we *Aabitaawizininiwag* of Penetanguishene are diasporic visitors who continue to build community and foster love on this land. It also helps me to acknowledge and practice decolonial love with neighbouring Indigenous nations that my community shares this territory with; our G'Chimnissing kin.

Acknowledging this story grounded in Huron-Wendat theory within my own values as an *Aabitaawikwe* living in Georgian Bay helps me to ethically position myself in relationship to the land, to the water, to the air I breathe, to the plant and animal nations, to the spiritual beings and to the other Indigenous nations that also call(ed) this territory their home. Every time I am out in the middle of Georgian Bay and see *Kitchikewana* laying in tandem with the horizon, I think about the practices I employ within my own life to honour the importance of kinship systems, reciprocal recognition, and Indigenous solidarity.

The writing of Catherine E. Walsh alongside Walter Mignolo (2018) in *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* on interculturality has helped me think through the importance of intercultural solidarity within a praxis of decolonial love. Approaching interculturality through a decolonial context "calls for radical change in the dominant order and in its foundational base of capitalism, Western modernity and on-going colonial power" (Walsh, 2018, pg. 58). Walsh shares with us:

> Sociocultural, ancestral, political, epistemic, linguistic and existence-based different is affirmed in collective and community-based terms, and understood as contributive to the creation of new comprehensions, coexistences, solidarities, and collaborations. (p. 59)

Critically acknowledging interculturality within a decolonial context teaches us that Western modernity is not the only framework of possibility, and that we can embrace alternative philosophies, principles, and values at the forefront of our social and political systems. We need to employ interculturality as praxis for actual visible mobilization of alternative possible futures to happen. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) remind us, *decolonization is not a metaphor*. We need to partake in decoloniality, interculturality, and decolonial love as praxis, *together*, as a continual ongoing life practice. This means engaging in a radically "'other' thinking, feeling, sensing, being, knowing, doing and living" (Walsh, 2018, p. 102). Engaging in a decolonial praxis of interculturality opens up possibilities for actions of intercultural solidarity between diverse communities and nations.

FIGURE 3 a love that creates land and shapes water. Ice fishing bib pants sewn in double-faced wool and vegetable tanned deer hide, edged with size 11 seed beads. Photo by Lori Woods on the ice of Georgian Bay, Ontario.

When I think about the importance of intercultural solidarity it reminds me of a story my dad used to tell me as a young girl. A story about a wolf, *Le Loup de Lafontaine*. Originally published by Thomas Marchildon in 1955, this story takes place in Lafontaine, Ontario, a small Franco-Ontarian town located in Tiny Township, the township where I grew up. At the turn of the twentieth century, the town of Lafontaine was home to both diasporic *Aabitaawizininiwag* from Drummond Island and French-Settler immigrants from Quebec. Although both groups were French-speaking Catholics, they held a deep hatred and mistrust for one another.

The story involves a French-Settler sheep-herder named Colbert Tessier whose sheep herd was slaughtered by what he thought was a large dog, similar to those owned by a François Labatte, an *Aabitaawizinini* of Penetanguishene.[13] In the story Tessier confronts Labatte about the slaughter, resulting in Tessier shooting both of Labatte's dogs. Later in the story, we find out through the continual slaughtering of sheep across the town and neighbouring concessions that the terrorizer is a wolf, *le loup*. *Le loup* continues to terrorize all inhabitants of the town, regardless of their identity, regardless of where they come from. The *Aabitaawizininiwag* and French-Settlers decide to unite together to hunt down *le loup*, which they do so successfully in solidarity.

It is important to acknowledge within the story that *le loup* was not as horrific of a monster as he was made out to be. *Le loup* was friendly and gentle with children and kept to himself. Other than killing sheep for food, he does no serious harm. *Le loup* symbolizes the fear and hatred held within the community between both groups of inhabitants. It is only at the expense of killing *le loup* that the communities unite together. This story is more so an example of how hatred and fear embedded within our communities through colonial systems of cultural superiority leads to lateral violence and harm within and between communities themselves. *Le loup* would not have had to be killed if the community was not divided from the start and instead embraced ethical practices interculturality and decolonial love.

The writing of queer Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) has helped me think through the possibilities of moving toward a new consciousness, a consciousness that will help us re-stitch and re-build alternative worlds grounded in Indigenous internationalism and nation-to-nation/community-to-community intercultural solidarity that form ethical, transformative, and expansive relationships of co-resistance and collaboration.

Anzaldúa's concept of *la mestiza* is one that "faces the dilemma of the mixed breed" and is "cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their values systems" (p. 100). Anzaldúa shares with us:

> La mestiza constantly has to shift out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes. (p. 101)

[13] ***Aabitaawizinini*** **translates to half man.**

Embracing Anzaldúa's theory of *mestiza consciousness* offers a framework for identities that live within the borderlands to transcend toward a new consciousness, one that "changes the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave" (p. 102). Anzaldúa opens up new possibilities for imagining worlds of love and forms of identity outside of and beyond the colonial consciousness.

It is within this new consciousness that new identity spaces can be created. It is within this new consciousness that we can come to understand the power of diversity and inclusion. It is within this new consciousness that we can re-stitch alternative worlds grounded in ethical praxes of respect, reciprocity, empathy, consent, and love.

Worlds that do not cut community away

Worlds that stand with community in solidarity

Worlds that do not attempt to demobilize and divide

Worlds that mobilize inclusiveness

Worlds that do not compel individualism, colonial recognition and convolution of capitalism

Worlds that honour kinship systems and partake in actions of collective love.

FIGURE 4 we carry our homeland(s) close to our heart. Detail of filleting our trout using my grandpa's filleting knife. Photo by Lori Woods in Tiny, Ontario.

STITCHING OUR LOVE: NURTURING *AABITAAWIZIININIWAG* MEANING THROUGH MAKING

I closed my eyes

and dreamt about what we would wear

in these alternative worlds of love.

The creative production of this research involves the design, construction, and assembly of four garments that through methods of dreaming and re-imagining, physically and conceptually re-stitch alternative worlds of love. Each garment prioritizes aspects of care through embedded intention and attention to craft and detail, while offering high performance functionality that centres an *Aabitaawizininiwag* worldview. Each garment is carefully designed and technically considered to support, enhance, cherish, celebrate, hug, and love my *Aabitaawikwe* body. Their function prioritizes everyday relationships to the land and water, relationships to family, relationships to kin, relationships to non-human relatives and supports ethical practices of respect, empathy, reciprocity, consent, and love found within all of these relations (Figure 4).

These garments produce, carry, and nurture *Aabitaawizininiwag* meaning in relationship to my family, my *Aabitaawizininiwag* Ancestors, my community, and our kinship systems. This meaning is found within space(s) that reject the politics of recognition (Coulthard, 2014) and that mobilize Indigenous intercultural solidarity and nationhood. This meaning re-stitches bodies in ethical relationships to each other and to the land. This meaning holds the answer to how I engage within my world(s) in a way that makes sure I recognize my community in two years, five years, ten years, and twenty years. This meaning makes sure that when my great-great-great grandchildren look out into Georgian Bay, they see all of who they are looking right back at them.

The making process of each garment began by drafting my *Aabitaawikwe* body's pattern (Figure 5);

I gather a pencil and my deer hide.

I lay tobacco.

I find a string the length of my arm span.

using the string, I transfer each outline of my body onto the hide.

I mark the placement of my heart.

my body is the pattern.

a body inherited from my family

my family is the pattern.

a body stitched with 193 years of profound diasporic love

my community is the pattern.

a body that when lost, can always follow a concession road home

the land is the pattern.

a body that feels the water's warm reflection even on a cloudy day

the water is the pattern.

Each garment prioritizes two different assembly methods that simultaneously work together and contribute to the making of meaning found within alternative worlds that nurture and cherish collective acts of love.

waawiyegwaade it is sewn in a circle.

aaboojigwaade it is sewn inside out.[14]

FIGURE 5 body and land as pattern. My body's pattern blocks in veg tanned deer hide (bodice, pant, torso and sleeve blocks). Photo taken in Tiny, Ontario.

[14] The terms *waawiyegwaade* (it is sewn in a circle) and *aaboojigwaade* (it is sewn inside out) are terms shared with me by fluent *Anishinaabemowin* speaker, language teacher, member of my community, and friend Mitchell Akerman. *Miigwetch* Mitchell for sharing these terms with me for my research.

waawiyegwaade (Figure 6) involves the stitching together of two circular seams of a garment. This stitching method relies on a series of circular relationships where two separate cylindrical pieces of material are joined together with a circular stitch that begins and ends in the same stitching position. This stitching method prioritizes relationality and circularity with focus on the importance of nurturing interconnected and interdependent loving relationships with each other, with the land and with all of creation. Mohawk scholar Sandra D. Styres (2017) shares with us how circularity "is a sacred representation of wholeness and interconnectedness that brings all of creation together in a circle of interdependent relationships grounded in Land" (p. 30). Circularity is inherently relational. It is both a physical and conceptual gesture that fosters ethical, consensual and reciprocal relationships that generate meaning and knowledge in the world.

aaboojigwaade (Figure 7) involves the stitching together of two seams inside out where the *seam allowance* is exposed, instead of hidden on the inside of the garment.[15] This stitching method physically and conceptually refers to re-stitching spaces that are flipped inside out — alternative spaces that look forward within new orientations and temporalities. As Dylan Miner (2018) shares with us:

> Because Indigenous ontologies are never linear, they are capable of simultaneously moving backward and forward in time; migrating upward towards the skyworld and diving deep underwater into the realm of Mishibizhii // the underwater panther. Indigenous ways of being (and "working") challenge and push mainstream systems beyond the centrality of capitalist notions of time and temporality. (p. 132)

FIGURE 6 waawiyegwaade (it is sewn in a circle) detail on gauntlet sleeves. Photo by Lori Woods in Tiny, Ontario.

FIGURE 7 aaboojigwaade (it is sewn inside out) detail on shoulder seam of quilted duck vest. Photo by Lori Woods in Tiny, Ontario.

[15] *Seam allowance* is the space between the fabric edge and the stitching line when two or more layers of fabric are stitched together.

This stitching method mobilizes a space where we can see systems of kinship in practice with focus on collaborative and relational process found within a praxis of decolonial love.

I love you as much as all the stars in the sky.

I love you as much as all the beads in the universe.

When it was time to start the beadwork, I travelled up north to my family home in Tiny, Ontario. On my family's kitchen table with the help of my mom, we beaded the seams and edges of each garment using a picot edging stitch (Figure 8)[16]. As we made a stitch and picked up two beads, made a stitch and picked up two beads, took a sip of tea, then made another stitch and picked up another two beads, we stitched hours and hours of unconditional amounts of love into each piece of clothing.

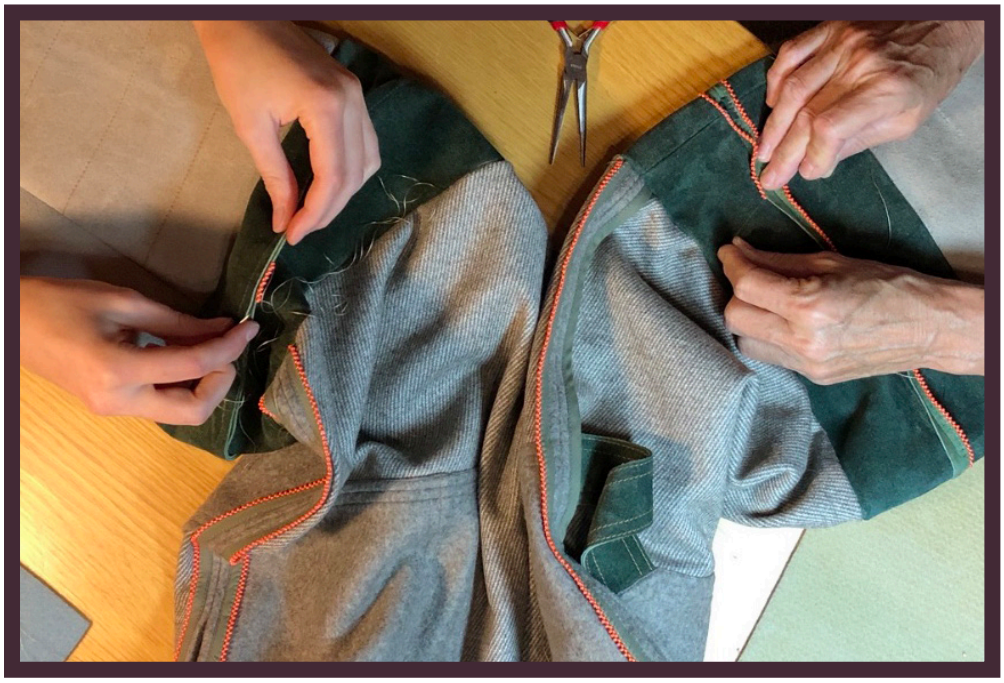

FIGURE 8 process documentation of my mom, Lori Woods, and I edge beading the bib pants on my family's kitchen table in Tiny, Ontario.

[16] The decision to edge each garment with a picot stitch was an aesthetic choice determined through the material exploration and initial experimentation of the research.

When designing the way(s) I could incorporate beadwork into each garment, I wanted to dream expansively about the functionality of beads and the imagined possibilities of beadwork in a world of decolonial love. When I was a young girl, my mom would always say to me: *Justine, I love you as much as all the stars in the sky.* Similar to the way the stars live in the sky, the beads live on each garment as extensions of love. The number of beads stitched on each garment is equal to the amount of love that garment holds.

As each garment is worn, the beads act as transmitters, producing wave lengths of love between my body, the land, and the world(s) around me.

They extend the love I carry within my heart for my community, for the land, for the water, for my family, for my kin, and for my *Aabitaawizininiwag* Ancestors (Figure 9). They mobilize new orientations for the way my body moves as an *Aabitaawikwe* within these re-stitched alternative worlds of love. They are embodied code for decolonial love.

FIGURE 9 we carry our homeland(s) close to our heart (full view). Full arm length gauntlets sewn in deer hide and edged with size 11 seed beads. Photo by Lori Woods in Tiny, Ontario.

Beads = Love.

WEARING OUR LOVE: *AABITAAWIZININIWAG* IDENTITY IN PRACTICE

Love poured out of the seams like water

adorning the land with droplets of glitter.

Once each garment was complete, it was time to activate their love (Figure 10).

Each garment holds a purpose and supports the motions and responsibilities of my body while practicing *Aabitaawizininiwag* identity in my home territory. They support my body in multiple ways, providing warmth, protection, and mobility while engaging in everyday acts of decolonial love in relationship to the land and the water alongside my family and kin.

Each garment has shown me that we all have the capacity to love in ways the world has never known before. They have shown me how to honour and celebrate all of the relationships that make up my identity as an *Aabitaawikwe* of Penetanguishene. They have shown me how to nurture these relationships through a praxis of decolonial love. They have shown me how to love my diasporic self and how to honour the land(s) I am from. They have shown me the endless amount of expansive possibilities when we begin to dream and imagine beyond colonial limitations.

FIGURE 10 a love that creates land and shapes water (alternate view). My dad and I ice fishing on Georgian Bay. Photo by Lori Woods on the ice of Georgian Bay, Ontario.

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Standing out in the middle of Kitchikewana's palm, I watch my fishing line dance softly with the water's movement underneath the ice. My beaded overalls keeping my heart and body warm from the cool February wind. I look out at Snake Island and think about the lure my dad and I found there years ago nestled between a couple of rocks. That lure caught us a giant pike once. We now call it our lucky lure. The land holds our memories for us and will continue to hold them even if we one day forget. The land will hold this memory for me.

I look over at my mom and my best friend Aliyah, and then my dad who is over a couple feet fishing out of another hole. This is decolonial love. I can feel it. We are in it, surrounded by it, immersed in it. I think about my community and my cousins and about how lucky we are to love this land and this water and for this land and water to love us equally back.

I think about how fierce and courageous our Aabitaawiz-ininiwag Ancestors are who gifted us with these practices that make up who we are as Aabitaawizininiwag of Penetanguishene. These gifts we hold within ourselves are embodied acts of love that only we ourselves can activate because they are coded for our diasporic bodies. These gifts we hold to pass down to our children and little ones who will grow to become expansive and profound thinkers of love. Who will continue to dismantle the colonial with love and work hard to sustain and nourish ethical relationships with our Anishinaabe kin, our Red River Métis kin, and other nations. Who will one day take on the responsibility and commitment I carry within my heart to practice my identity as Aabitaawikwe every day within a praxis of decolonial love. To unconditionally love others, show compassion, and find the gift even when it might be difficult. To engage in acts of love that will contribute toward a more loving world.

As I sit here and look around me at our world(s), I feel hopeful of the work we can do together.

I return to the thought of my question: How do I make sure that when my great-great-great grandchildren look out into Georgian Bay, they see all of who they are looking right back at them?

The answer is with love.

DIASPORIC LOVE OF OUR *AABITAAWIZININIWAG* BODIES

I stand wearing a waistband of water

my toes buried under the waaseyaagami-wiikwed sand[17]

I look northwest towards our homeland

and behind me at the land we call home

every muscle in my body clenches with tension, then a release

I give our home(s) a hug.

[17] *Anishinaabemowin: waaseyaagami-wiikwed* means *Bay of Shining Waters*, also known as Georgian Bay.

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