Walking the Path of My Ancestors: The *Siksikastiapi* (Blackfoot Confederacy)

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Oki (Hello). My name is *Apooyaak'kii*. I welcome you to my article through the use of a Blackfoot traditional introduction. I am the daughter of Margaret Rose Hind Bull and Marvin Bevans. I am the granddaughter of the late Margaret Twigg and the late Morris Hind Bull (maternal grandparents), and the late Ruth Chipman and Oscar Bevans (paternal grandparents). I am a member of the Blood Tribe of the Blackfoot Confederacy.

The Blackfoot Confederacy traditionally occupied the land from the *Ponoká'sisaahtaa* (North Saskatchewan River), east to the *Ómahksspatsiko* (Sand Hills) in Saskatchewan, south to the *Otahkoika* (Yellowstone River) in the United States, and west to the *Miia'tok'yiss* (Rocky Mountains). The Blackfoot Confederacy is comprised of four tribes. Three of the tribes are located in Western Canada: the *Siksika* (Blackfoot), the *Piikani* (North *Peigan*), and the *Kainai* (Blood). While the forth tribe, the *Aamsskaapipiikani* (South *Peigan*), is located in northern Montana, United States. I am part of the Blackfoot tribe that is located the closest to the eastern side of Chief Mountain in southern Alberta, Canada. My People have the largest land base reserve in Canada, being just short of 1,500 square kilometres. We have a band membership of over 13,000 people.

Historically, many laws and agreements governing all aspects of Indigenous Peoples lives were written solely to benefit the British and French colonizers. Most notable for the far reaching impacts on my People are the following: the Royal Proclamation Act (1763), the British North America Act (BNA, 1867), Indian Act (1876) and Treaty 7 (1877). These acts dictated who could and could not be considered an "Indian" and what an Indian could and could not do. The acts dictated where we could live and travel, who we could marry, what we could digest, what level of education we could attain, what religion we could practice, and what cultural practices we could not do. The acts were oppressive and resulted in cultural genocide. In fact, the federal government systematically tried to strip us of our Blackfoot way of life.

Blackfoot scholar Dr. Betty Bastien teaches that Blackfoot "ways of knowing are dependent upon relationships, which create and generate knowledge" (Bastien, 2004, p. 77). Thus, relationships are foundational aspects of the Blackfoot way of life. Relationships exist with all of the cosmos. In the following pages, I will share with you three individual pieces of work. They represent a small portion of my life's journey as I have come to understand the Blackfoot way of life through relationships. The first piece titled "*Aanoo Itapaitapiiyopi* (where we live): A Photo-Journal," I share a photo journal of my People's traditional territory. The second piece titled "My Family Remembered: An Oblate Record Project," I share a research study in which I conducted archival research which uncovered my family's lengthy history. Finally, in the last piece titled "Bronze Hope," I present a photograph of one of my intricate pieces of beadwork. The significance of relationships in our culture, is furthered explained in the discussion of each of the three pieces of work.

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Aanoo Itapaitapiiyopi **(where we live): A Photo-Journal**

"Our land is not just geography, our land is our mother." Narcisse Blood, Blood Tribe.

As Indigenous People, we are very tied to our traditional land. We do not believe in ownership of the land but believe in being caretakers of the land gifted us by the Creator. Learning from the place/land is an important part of the Blackfoot educational system. The land is a powerful teacher when it is combined with story and experience.

"There is a relationship between place and knowledge" (Chambers & Blood, 2010, p. 2). The land is "imbued with meaning and history" as well as being a source of "knowledge and wisdom" (Chambers & Blood, 2009, p. 7). However, to glean knowledge and wisdom from the place, one must first experience these destinations through multiple visits. Littler Bear (2009) added that one must develop not only a physical relationship with place but an emotional one as well. Traditionally, a visit includes practicing a ceremonial offering, feeding, and narration (Heavy Head, 2005). A visit brings about many things; it causes the place, the stories, and the knowledge they contain to come alive (Chambers & Blood, 2009). The land is also viewed as a way to develop one's Blackfoot identity (Little Bear, 2009). Chambers and Blood (2009) warned the Blackfoot that "perspective cannot be given or transferred; it must be experienced and learned in the act of being at these places, visiting them" (p. 18).

While embarking upon my Master's Degree in 2010, my mentor and Blood Tribe Elder, Henry Big Throat, encouraged me to travel across Blackfoot country and visit the sites that are sacred to our People. I carved time out of my schedule during my data collection and the writing of my thesis so that I could do so. I remember this time fondly and hope to continue on with this journey as my children grow older. I invite you to come with me, as I share with you a selection of my journeys across Blackfoot Territory.

Montana, United States

1. *Ohpsskonaka'si*: Waterfall

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2. *Sspóóhtsi*: Skyward

3. Glacier Pools

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Many Glaciers, Glaciers National Park

4. Grinnell Point

5. Steadfast

Southern Alberta, Canada

6. New Life

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7. Stillness

8. The Seasons Converge

<u>*Kainai*: Blood Reserve</u>

9. *Moo'ko'waan'ssoiyii*: Belly Buttes

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***Áísínai'pi*: Writing on Stone Provincial Park**

10. *Áísínai'pi*: Hoodoos

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Paahtómahksikimi: **Waterton Lakes National Park**

11. Slumbering Giants

12. Tranquil Reflections

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13. Looming Winter

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***Okonok:* Saskatoon Blossoms**

14. Resurgence

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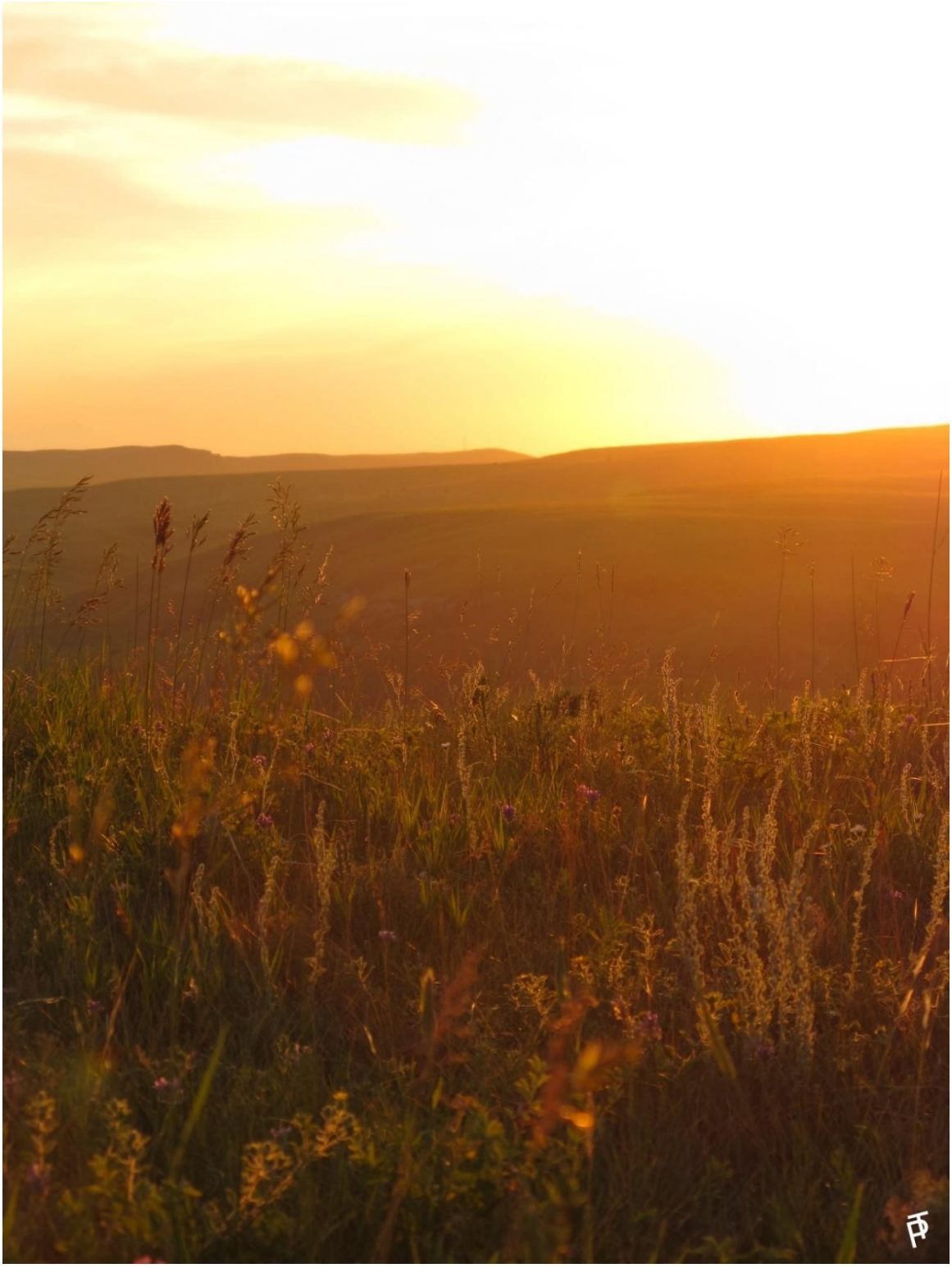
15. *Aapistsisskitsi*: Blossoming

Southern Alberta Foothills



16. Heritage Hills Sunset

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***Nínaiistáko*: Chief Mountain**

17. *Waahkayi*: Home

As I have travelled to these difference places in Blackfoot Country, there is a feeling of comfort and peace that washes over me. I am first in awe as I behold these magnificent natural creations that our Creator has given us. Second, I realize that my ancestors too have stood in these exact spots and beheld these magnificent creations. Last, I know that our progeny will also stand in these precise locations and marvel at these beautiful creations. I am also filled with gratitude and appreciation for my ancestors; for all that they sacrificed so that I could exist, and that our People will continue to exist on our traditional territory. I take comfort in knowing that these sacred places will continue to exist throughout time, and that our future People will come to know these places. They will feel connected to our land and experience an overwhelming sense of belongingness as they walk the path of our ancestors. "As long as the sun shines, as long as the rivers flow, as long as the grass grows and as long as the mountains stand" this will be the home of the *Siksikasitapi* (Alexander Morris, 1876, Treaty Commissioner, in response to how long the treaties would last).

My Family Remembered: An Oblate Record Project

Abstract

This article articulates myself and my community's journey navigating the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) records written historically about our People (the Bloods) in order to identify who our ancestors are. Through the examination of historical texts, records and materials written by the Oblate missionaries of North-Western Canada, we were able to discover the hidden lived experiences of our People. The purpose of this study was to provide new scholarly insights into the texts and records of the Oblates regarding the Blood People. This research took place at the Alberta Provincial Archives over a seven-month period. This article reviews who the Oblates of Mary Immaculate were, and what measures were used to uncover our ancestors in the Provincial Archives. Data analysis determined that the individual archival records fragmented Indigenous Peoples and their history; however, collectively these records blend together to tell a story.

Introduction

That morning, as I sat in on my first meeting as a research assistant for the Community University Research Alliance (CURA) Research Project, "Aboriginal Healing Through Language and Culture"[i] at the University of Alberta, I had assumed that I would be engaging in research that would be of value to the Indigenous Peoples in the greater Edmonton area. I had not anticipated how the research I would come to engage with would bless my life tremendously. We were asked to choose a research project that would benefit our own Indigenous communities, as the personal investigator of the project wanted each of us to benefit from the research we would become involved with.

During that initial meeting, a term was used that I had never heard before: Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI). Each of our research projects would center around the use of historical OMI records of Canada to assist in "revitalizing [our] Indigenous cultures and languages as primary sources of knowledge related to the harmonious development of individual and collective Indigenous identities and histories" (CURA, 2016). Having never heard of an Oblate Priest before, I assumed that my People (the Bloods) had not historically been subjected to the Oblates of North Western Canada. I soon learned I was wrong. I knew that my reserve (the Blood Reserve) had two Residential schools on it, an Anglican and Roman Catholic one. I had not known that the Oblates were the ones who had run the Roman Catholic Residential School system in Canada. Being a part of this research project would allow me access to the restricted Oblate records that were written historically about my ancestors.

I have always had a love for my ancestors and was eager to learn more about them through the use of the Oblate records. There were two objectives for this research project: first, to review historical texts, records and materials written by the Oblate missionaries of Northwestern Canada and second, to provide new scholarly insights into the texts and records of the Oblates of Aboriginal communities. This article will describe my community's research

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journey in discovering our ancestors through the eyes of the OMI. To familiarize the reader, I will first provide a brief overview of the Oblates of North Western Canada.

Oblates of North Western Canada

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) are an order of French missionaries from the Roman Catholic faith, which was founded by Charles Joseph Eugène de Mazenod in 1816 (Blue, 1924). The OMI first arrived in Western-Canada in 1845 (Canadian Encyclopedia Online, 2011). The Blackfoot Peoples' introduction to Catholicism occurred when Father Lacombe visited Southern Alberta in 1863 (Alberta Online Encyclopedia, 2009a). However, permanent Oblate missions amongst the Blackfoot were not established until Fathers Constantine Scollen and Leon Doucet founded the first mission, Our Lady of Peace Mission west of Calgary in 1873 (Alberta Online Encyclopedia, 2009b). Calgary was later named the headquarters for the Blackfoot missions (Alberta Online Encyclopedia, 2009b). Nearly two decades later, permanent Oblate missions had been developed amongst all the Blackfoot Tribes. The signing of Treaty 7[ii] made it easier for the Oblates to establish missions on the Blackfoot reserves (Blue, 1924). Emile-Joseph Legal established the St. Francis Xavier mission at Standoff in 1889 making the Bloods the last Blackfoot Tribe to have an established permanent Oblate mission in Canada (Alberta Online Encyclopedia, 2009b; Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2000). Prior to this, the Bloods were visited by the Oblates by way of previously established missions in close proximity. These missions were found in Brocket (The Conversion of St. Paul, 1881) and in Fort Macleod (North West Mountain Police Post, 1880) (Alberta Online Encyclopedia, 2009b). The Fort Macleod mission was of particular importance, as it stood as the center of Catholicism in Southern Alberta, which allowed the Oblate missionaries to visit surrounding areas without missions.

The presence of the Oblate missionaries heavily influenced Native Peoples' education. Oblate mission schools were developed whose objective was to "civilize" Indians by assimilating Indigenous Peoples into a European paradigm (Barman, Hébert, McCaskill, & Nakoda Institute, 1986). The Canadian government provided funding for the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) to educate Indigenous Peoples (Buckley, 1992). However, the Canadian government and the Oblates attempt to assimilate Indigenous Peoples was not successful. Thus, the government's next step for assimilation was the creation of Residential schools, where Indigenous children would be removed from the influence of their family and community. The Oblate missionaries continued to teach Indigenous children through the Residential schools on the reserves.

The Canadian government claimed that during the Residential era Indigenous formal education focused upon creating and preparing Indigenous students for life on the Reserves (Hawthorn, 1967). The Indigenous educational regime consisted of substandard academics with a focus on agricultural education, which the government claimed was adequate for Indigenous Peoples who were living on Reserve (Hawthorn, 1967). All subjects were taught in mandatory English or French and there were harsh repercussions for speaking in an Indigenous language. Schissel and Wotherspoon (2003) described Residential education as:

> offering training, skills, and discipline that would be useful for integration into selected strata within Canadian society. In most cases, students were expected to combine studies with practical training oriented to domestic work, farm, labour, or other trades. This meant that the students' academic progress was limited, often complicated further by the absence of meaningful employment opportunities out of school. (p. 37)

The Blood Reserve's Roman Catholic school was operated by Oblate Fathers and staffed by the Grey Nuns of Nicolet, Québec (Niles, 1981). In addition to the creation of Mission and Residential schools on the Blood Reserve, Emile-Joseph Legal developed a hospital in 1893 where the Grey Nuns of Nicolet, Québec administered to the affairs of the hospital until 1954 (Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2000; The Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary, 2011). Three generations of my family attended the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) schooling. I am part of the first generation not to be subjected to such an educational upbringing.

Finding My Ancestors in the Records

I began this research journey by first receiving a tour of the Alberta Provincial Archives. During this initial tour, I learned what OMI records were available at this facility. I was truly blessed, as all the OMI records written for the Blood Reserve (my People) were housed in the Alberta Provincial Archives. I would spend the next several months, while a research assistant, visiting the archive to read about my ancestors. However, I was met with several challenges in finding and reading the texts written about my ancestors.

Challenge 1: Oblate Blackfoot

My first day of researching I was introduced to a record called the 'Cardston Liber Animarum.' This record was a register of the Blood People who were a part of the Roman Catholic faith. It provided details on head of homes, their wives, children, baptism dates and occasionally birth dates, death dates and who their grandparents were. This record seemed like an excellent way to begin the research process. To begin, I decided to start with one ancestral line and research all I could on that line. Being a Hind Bull, I decided to first start researching the Hind Bull ancestral line.

Being a product of colonization, I have grown up learning how to read and write in English. I am most poor at reading and writing in my own Blackfoot language. I have been taught the phonetics of my language and can phonetically spell out words. I have also been taught how to spell my name in Blackfoot. I opened the Cardston Liber Animarum and began to search for my ancestor named 'Sakoyistamii' (Hind Bull). What struck me immediately was that the record was written using a language I was unfamiliar with. Prior to the 1980s, there did not exist a set way of spelling the Blackfoot language. I have been taught the phonetics of the Blackfoot language through my own Peoples way of writing our language; we only use 24 letters in our alphabet. The Oblate missionaries had created their own way of writing the Blackfoot language. They used alphabets that I was unfamiliar with; thus, the spelling was very puzzling to me. I spent three hours that day trying to find the Oblate Blackfoot word for Sakoyistamii (Hind Bull) and did not find it.

I then realized I was going to need help from my community in order to continue this research. I called my mother and told her what had happened in the archives. I had her make a list of a few of our ancestors' names in our Blackfoot language. My mother then contacted a few Elders on our reserve to verify the spelling. I returned to the archives and used this list with much discretion to compare the Oblate Blackfoot writing to my Peoples Blackfoot writing (see Figure 1 below). In this manner, I was able to discern and find my ancestors in the Cardston Liber Animarum. Once I was able to find the ancestors on my list, my mother would make a new list with new ancestors to find.

Spelling Comparison	
Oblate Blackfoot	**Modern Blackfoot**
1. Sakoyestamik	1. Sakoyistamii
2. Pitasisaxinam	2. Piitasisakksinamm
3. Natosomarkaw	3. Naato's Oomaahka

Figure 1. Blackfoot Comparison

Challenge 2: Oblate Mother Tongue

Once I was able to discern my ancestors in the Cardston Liber Animarum, I would be led to a page with certain vital statistics information about this particular ancestor. Excited to learn more about this ancestor, I would start to read what was on the page. However, I discovered the existence of another language barrier. The mother tongue of the Oblate missionaries is French. The majority of the record was written in French, mingled with a few words in English. I am not fluent in French and could not read nor understand what was being written about my ancestors. The archive could provide a translator for a fee but warned that it may be months before the translations came back. Discouraged, I asked if I could bring in my own translator. They consented. Most fortunately, my husband is fluent in French and was allowed to accompany me to the archives and help with this research endeavour. This immensely hastened the research process.

Challenge 3: Partial records

After discerning the correct Oblate spelling for my ancestor and translating the text from French into English, I then was tasked with making sense of the record. The manner in which the Oblate missionaries recorded information in the Cardston Liber Animarum made it very difficult to follow ancestral lines, as they are only partial records. This presented a few challenges. First, lineage was not recorded. Let me expound by explaining in more depth about the record written about my ancestor Hind Bull. Hind Bull is listed as the head of the home. His wives are listed numerically, and his children are listed numerically by wife. However, there is no detail given about who Hind Bull's parents are, neither is any information given about who his wives' parents are. This makes it almost impossible to research any further on Hind Bull's ancestral line. I had to rely on my own family's oral history to find the other ancestors in that line.

Secondly, Hind Bull's children are listed in his record. However, this is also only a partial record. Those children who are already grown up and have families of their own are not recorded as being the children of Hind Bull. I would not know of their existence if it were not for my oral history. As well, the children are listed according to their Christian name. When the children were baptized into the Roman Catholic Church, they were given Christian names. Their given names (Blackfoot names) were not recorded in the record. It was not common to use a Christian name on my Reserve until around the beginning of the 1900s. Therefore, I cannot further research Hind Bull's children's ancestral line, as they did not use their Christian names after baptism.

Making Sense of the Information

After four months of collecting records about my ancestors from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) records at the Alberta Provincial Archives, I returned to my reserve and presented to my family what I had found. My parents, aunts, uncles, siblings and cousins were present for this discussion. I gained permission to record audio and video recordings of our session. I presented to my family what I had found and passed the records around. We then took turns talking about how we felt about the records and the accuracy of the records. Our oral history was shared from what was taught from our Elders. Phone calls were made to other relatives and Elders to confirm accuracy of the OMI records and our oral history. Each person present had an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings. Here is what that they shared.

First, my family was very thankful that I had this opportunity to work as a research assistant for CURA. As this assistantship had allowed me access to records that would otherwise not be made public to my People. My family encouraged me to continue with this research. Collectively, our oral knowledge only went back so far. My family wanted me to continue with this research so that I could find the names of those ancestors that we could no longer identify. My family gave me additional names that they would like me to look up in the OMI records. As well, my family wanted me to talk with and interview certain family members from the across the Blackfoot Confederacy to gain a deeper knowledge of who our ancestors are. Through their help, my family put me in contact with family individuals who were able to help deepen this research effort. This research project became much more than only using the OMI archives records exclusively. It became a community and family project that we are continuing to work on together today. Separately and together, we have travelled to different relatives across North America and spent time with our family members to learn more about our history and ancestors.

Second, it was clear that the records contained inaccuracies about my ancestors. My family emphasized that the Oblates recorded this information to the best of their ability. However, the Oblates could not comprehend how we as Bloods (*Niitsitapi*) communicate our family relationships, as well as our relationships with others. To us, family is represented through our actions and the way we communicate. It is embedded in our language and our conduct. It was felt that this was not something that the Oblate missionaries during this period understood, so these records are partial truths.

Last, there has never been a doubt in my mind that the oral history that was handed down to me was not true. Neither was there a doubt in each of my family member's minds. Although we would accept our own oral knowledge over the records we had found in the OMI archives. We were each thankful that the Oblate missionaries had kept records concerning our ancestors. Even though the archival records fragmented my People, the records were precious as it helped us to piece together the character of our ancestors. In some cases, it would testify of the stories that were handed down orally.

For example, little anecdotal records existed within the OMI records regarding any of my ancestors. We had to employ a critical analysis of the records we had found to decolonize the documents, as they were written from the point of view of a colonizer. Stories of my ancestor John Cotton had been passed down about his compassion for others. The Cardston Liber Animarum had recorded him having more wives and more children than he actually had. This record spoke to the quality of compassion he had for his fellow People. John Cotton was known

for taking in individuals who were without someone to care for them (including widows and their children). My family and I had come to the conclusion that, because of the language and culture barrier between my People (the Blackfoot speaking Bloods) and Oblate missionaries (French speaking), that when John Cotton came to the Roman Catholic church with everyone who was a part of his household, the Oblates assumed that everyone there was his family. The Oblates would have mistakenly listed the woman and children whom John Cotton was taking care of (but not married or related to) as his family and recorded it so. Therefore, the OMI records are an inaccurate depiction of John Cotton's family. However, we felt that these records were of value to us as they supplemented our own oral history.

Strategies used to Uncover my Ancestors

There were a number of research strategies I used to uncover the identities of my ancestors. The majority of these methods are considered unobtrusive, that is "examining and assessing human traces" (Berg, 2009, p. 268). I would like to share them with you, in case any readers would also like to find their ancestors using unobtrusive measures. The research strategies listed below will give a general idea of where and how to begin. I will break the list into two subheadings: the OMI archival records (restricted to the public), and; non-OMI archival records that are available through the Alberta Provincial Archives (open to the public) itself. I have indicated next to the title which measure comes from the OMI archives

OMI Archival Records

Liber Animarum (OMI)

The Liber Animarum is a book of communion from the Roman Catholic parishes and missions that were served by the Oblate Priests. I had the opportunity to view three different Liber Animari that were kept for three separate Blackfoot reserves. The Liber Animarum was by far one of the most useful records I discovered during this project. The Liber Animarum is filled with critical information in regards to my ancestors such as: English and Blackfoot names of husband and wives; the names of the wives' fathers; children's names; baptismal dates; and death dates.

Oblate Name Cards (OMI)

Oblate name cards are found at the Alberta Provincial Archives and include extracts from the Roman Catholic parishes and missions that were served by the Oblate Priests. To use the Oblate name cards, one requests the cards using surnames; these cards may hold information about baptism, marriage and burial dates. Although these cards did contain Aboriginal surnames, I did not find my ancestors in them.

Photographic Records (OMI)

I had a chance to review the Grandin Collection of Oblate Missionary photos at the Provincial Archives of Alberta. I started by looking for individual names of my ancestors; however, this only worked for four of my ancestors. I was able to find a sixth-generation grandfather, while the other three were fifth generation grandfathers. A number of photographs

existed for the Blood Reserve; however most of them were titled ‘Blood Indians’ or ‘some Blood Indians.’ Although I did not recognize these individuals, there is a possibility that these nameless individuals may be my ancestors. I am certain that if my Reserve could have access to these photographs these individuals would no longer be nameless. The photographs also documented the construction of the different buildings that the Oblate missionaries built, such as the Grey Nuns Hospital and the St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Residential School.

Baptismal Records (OMI)

Baptismal records originate from church records and divulge information such as birth dates, baptismal dates, and parentage. I had the opportunity to review both the Roman Catholic and Anglican Diocese Baptismal records for the Blood Reserve. Although I did not find many baptismal records for my own genealogical line, I did find relatives. These records were also an excellent way of discovering the names of my ancestor’s children, thus I was able to discover who my great aunts and uncles are.

Burial Records (OMI)

Burial records may document death and burial information for individuals. I had the opportunity to review both the Roman Catholic and Anglican Diocese burial records for the Blood Reserve. Occasionally the burial records would include the cause of death and an approximation of where they are buried on the Blood Reserve. Unfortunately, I didn’t find anything regarding my ancestors.

Marriage Records (OMI)

Marriage records originate from church records and divulge information such as marriage date, groom, bride, minister and if there were any witnesses. I had the opportunity to view limited Roman Catholic and Anglican marriage records. Occasionally these records may divulge additional information. For example, I did not know that one of my great grandfathers was a widower before marrying my great grandmother.

Non-OMI Archival Records

Census Records

The Census of Canada is a national statistic that documented the name, age, country of birth, nationality, religion and occupation of Canada’s residents. I looked through numerous editions of the Census of Canada. However, this census did not record Aboriginal Peoples as residents prior to 1902.

I had the opportunity to examine the Census of Blood Indian Tribe 1902. This census revealed to me the names, gender, and age of family units living on the Blood Reserve during 1902. However, it did not record the relationship between each of the individuals in the house hold; hence, I could not decipher if an elderly individual was a grandparent or someone whom this family was taking care of.

Newspapers

A newspaper is a regularly scheduled publication containing news of current events, articles and features advertisements. The Provincial Archives of Alberta houses collections of numerous historical newspapers. Through the use of microfiche, I searched through the *Fort MacLeod Gazette* newspaper to find marriage announcements and obituaries. Unfortunately, I did not find any marriage announcements or obituaries that pertained to my ancestors. I also had the opportunity to view several newspapers courtesy of the University of Lethbridge library's digitized collection. The first newspaper I searched was *Cardston News*. Cardston and the Blood Reserve exist right next to each other and the newspaper often reported on the Blood Reserve happenings. However, this newspaper was not of much value for finding my ancestors. The second newspaper I searched was the *Kainai News* (a newspaper written by and from the Blood Reserve), which was useful in searching for my more recent ancestors. For example, I never had the opportunity to meet my grandfather. Through searching the *Kainai News*, I was able to follow his life starting from the time he entered Residential school until he passed away.

Vital Statistics

Vital statistics refer to life events such as, births, deaths and marriages. The Provincial Archives of Alberta have an index entitled *Birth, Marriage and Death Registrations* which documented the births, marriages and deaths prior to 1905; however, this index was not useful at uncovering Aboriginal Peoples.

Consolidated Pay Sheet for the Blood Tribe

The purpose of the consolidated pay sheet was to record families according to Band number, the year, number of men, number of women, number of children, total number of individuals in the house hold, amount paid to the family, the total amount paid to the family in the previous year and occasionally any remarks about this particular family. The remarks may include information about deaths, marriages, adoptions, relationships and reason for a decrease or increase in the amount paid to the family. The names of the individuals in the family were not named, only the man of the household; however, the remark section made this record very valuable. For example, it is family knowledge that we are related to Red Crow; however, we can no longer remember how this is so. We learned that our great, great, great grandfather, One Spot, is a close relative of Red Crow from one of the consolidated pay sheets. Thus, if I continue searching One Spot's line, I might be able to determine exactly how I am related to Red Crow.

Indian Agent Correspondence Letters

This book is a compilation of letters written by the Blood Reserve's Indian Agents to Indian Affairs Ottawa. The letters consisted of monthly reports which documented the most important things that happened with the Blood Reserve members. The Agent wrote mainly about the Head and Minor Chiefs of the Bloods, as well as described the conversations that they had between these individuals. The letters were interesting to read, as they revealed what some of my ancestors were doing on a monthly basis. From these letters, I gathered that it was a confusing time after the signing of our Treaty (which is Treaty 7). The agents were in regular correspondence with each other, as well as the Canadian and United States Government regarding the whereabouts of the "Indians" (traditionally the Blackfoot territory consists of land

in both Canada and the United States. Thus, there existed many Blackfoot People who traveled back and forth from both countries). If any Bloods were discovered amongst the towns, agents had the right to confiscate their family's ration tickets as punishment.

Burial Records

Burial records may document death and burial information for individuals. I first used the Alberta Genealogical Society Surname Database, which is located at the Alberta Provincial Archives. This database has compiled burial records for Alberta. Searching an ancestors' name in this database may provide you with death date and the cemetery in which your ancestor is buried. This endeavour was fruitless for me.

Biographical Books

Biographical books include detailed description of someone's life. I had the opportunity to read Hugh Dempsey's book entitled *The Amazing Death of Calf Shirt and Other Blackfoot Stories: Three Hundred Years of Blackfoot History*.[iii] One of the stories is about my great, great grandfather Joe Healy. Through Dempsey's own research, he was able to piece together a large portion of Joe Healy's life. Reading this story matched the oral stories that were handed down to me regarding Joe Healy. I also read portions of *Kitomahkitapiiminnooniksi: Stories from Our Elders*,[iv] this book is a compilation of stories from the Elders on the Blood Reserve. One of my great aunts is interviewed in this book; in her interview she reveals that her father was adopted and who his real parents are. Reading biographical books added yet another dimension of knowledge of who my ancestors were.

Talking Circle

A talking circle is a gathering of people where they collaborate and share ideas. After I had gathered the preliminary findings of the ancestors I had knowledge of from the *Liber Animarum*, I presented these findings to my family members. My parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and siblings examined the records and then we discussed the accuracy of the records. Several phone calls were made to Elders on our Reserve to verify information on the records. My parents, aunts and uncles recounted the oral knowledge that had been handed down to them. Stories were told about our different ancestors. My family members talked about how they felt about the *Liber Animarum*. They also let me know where they thought my next step in the research process should be. They also named different places and family members that I could speak with to further this research. Thus, the Oblate missionary records were only a starting point for this research.

Interview

An interview consists of a conversation between the person of interest and the person(s) interested in information. I was particularly interested in one ancestor, as his identity is a mystery to me and to my family. This man married my great, great, great grandmother and we know no name for him. Therefore, during the talking circle my family members suggested speaking to my great, great aunt about this man's identity. I had the opportunity to meet with my great, great aunt and speak with her along with my mother, an aunt, and her friend Harry. My great, great aunt only speaks Blackfoot, so Harry and my mother spoke with her and translated for us. This was a wonderful way to learn more about our ancestors. Through this interview we discovered

that this unknown ancestor and my great, great, great grandmother met at Old Agency on my Reserve where they both worked.

Reflections

This research project was unique as its participants were my present family members, as well as my family members from the past. I have been very blessed to be a part of the CURA Project, as it has helped to aid me in strengthening my relationship with my family. Through this project, I have been able to uncover six generations of my ancestors. As well, I have learned a lot about my People and my family. I have gained a better understanding of who I am as a Blackfoot woman and where I come from. The importance of family has always been emphasized to me. My grandfather passed away before I was born, and my grandmother passed away when I was quite young. I never had the opportunity to know my grandparents, to have a personal relationship with them, or to be taught by them. All I have left are the stories that are shared with me about them.

I feel as though through this research, I have been able to establish a relationship with my grandparents by coming to know my ancestors. Having been able to collect the names of my ancestors has allowed me to learn about them at the same time. In this way, I feel as though I am beginning to come to know my ancestors. That I am able to develop a relationship with them as I seek them out and learn about their lives. This project has helped me to strengthen my own family connections and come to understand my People's epistemologies and ontologies better.

Conclusion

This research project revealed multiple lenses, or points of views about my People (including my ancestors). First, I learned how my People were viewed through the eyes of the Oblate missionaries. Second, through the newspaper articles I learned how the colonizers viewed my People. Last, I learned how the government officials viewed my People through reading government documents written specifically about them. It was essential to take all these multiple perspectives and critically analyze what was written about my People to make sense of the data. Despite the need for a critical analysis, these multiple records give witness to the fact that my ancestors lived.

The multiple records helped me to deconstruct my own understanding about my Peoples' experiences during colonization from past to present time. What I previously understood came from my own experiences as a Blood Native and as a survivor of colonization. As well, my understanding has been shaped by my educational experiences that was taught by colonizers who disseminated the colonizers point of view. Much is taught in schools using a Eurocentric lens to teach about the wars that went on between Britain and France over ownership of North America. However, not much is taught about what happened after the peace treaties were made. How Indigenous Peoples went from a vibrant flourishing Peoples to a Peoples who suffer from socio-economic distress, poor health, the most likely ethnicity to be incarcerated, and the least likely to be homeowners in their own homeland at this present time (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003; Smith, 1999; Sockbeson, 2011; Statistics Canada, 2013).

Learning these different perspectives has helped me to better understand the challenges that my People faced and why they continue to face these challenges. In my mother's lifetime, she experienced living on a closed and then open reserve (where one needed permission from the Indian Agent to leave the premise of the reserve, to now where one can freely move-on and off reserve). Reading the historical newspaper articles was very disheartening; they manifest the very blatant overt disregard for Indigenous Peoples. A movement existed where the colonizers desired that all the Indigenous Peoples of Canada would be removed to one large remote reserve in the most northern part of Canada. This was the colonizers' solution to the Indian problem, where Indigenous Peoples would be out of sight and out of mind. In the Indian Agent Letter Books, the Indian Agents and Government Officials spoke of my People as possessions and not as human beings.

All these perspectives have helped me to better understand what life was like for my ancestors and exactly how it has brought much change to my People. Moreover, these accounts reminded me of the love of my People, my ancestors, and what they sacrificed so that I could exist. Richard H. Pratt (1973) described the aim of the Colonial education as "kill the Indian in him and save the man" (p. 260). Nevertheless, after three generations of my family being subjected to Mission and Residential schools, I am still here, I am still Indian, and I am proud to be Blood Native. This is part of the legacy my ancestors have given me.

Notes:

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Endnotes:

[i] The CURA Project promotes objectives and activities that focus on individual and community healing through language and culture.

[ii] Treaty 7 was signed in 1877 between the Dominion of Canada and the following Indigenous groups: Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika (Blackfoot), the Kainai (Blood), and the Piikani (Peigan)), Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee), and Nakoda (Stoney).

[iii] Hugh A. Dempsey, *The Amazing Death of Calf Shirt and Other Blackfoot Stories: Three Hundred Years of Blackfoot History* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1994).

[iv] Flora Zaharia, Leo Fox, Marvin Fox, and Kainai Education Board, *Kitomahkitapiiminnooniksi: Stories from Our Elders* (Edmonton: Donahue House Publishing, 1995).

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Bronze Hope

Title:	**Bronze Hope**
Date:	2015
Mixed media:	Deer leather, felt, nylon string, seed beads, cut beads, rhinestone banding, Swarovski bicone crystals, acrylic bicones, Swarovski crystal rhinestone, bronze chain and clasp.
Dimensions:	8 ¾” x 9 ½”
Photo credit:	Tiffany Prete

Artist Statement

As a five-year-old, my mother let me pick out my own porcelain dyed beads and then taught me how to string beads onto a thread. My love of beading blossomed. My mother took care to teach me how to thread a needle, tie a knot, pick the correct size of beads for my needle, and how to let my creativity develop. She also helped me later in life learn bead looming and leather working.

It was fascinating to learn the different techniques of beadwork handed down in my family. When I reminisce about beading, I think of cookie tins. This is where my grandmother's generation stored their beads and projects. I can smell tanned dear hide, the type of leather that my Blood People use in modern days (buffalo was used traditionally); and beeswax used to tame unruly strings. I can recall the distinct feeling of pricking my fingers over and over again with my needle while I learned to bead. As well, the stinging feeling of my fingers bleeding and blistered from learning to bead with a tight tension.

My mother inspired me with stories about how she had learned to bead from her mother and the projects that she had worked on. I was always in awe of her own beautiful beaded collection of jewelry and regalia outfits that she had made, or her mother and relatives had made. I wanted to grow up and make and wear beautiful beadwork too. I have inherited different beaded pieces from my mother and my grandmother, and I cherish them dearly. I look forward to passing our beading tradition on to my children and bestowing my beaded jewelry and this beaded collar to a future granddaughter who I hope will proudly wear it.