

**Echoes of Water: They Called Her a Witch**

**AN INTERDISCIPLINARY EXHIBIT  
BY  
JULIANA NELSON GAGNÉ**

**A THESIS EXHIBITION PRESENTED TO ONTARIO COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN  
UNIVERSITY**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS  
IN  
INTERDISCIPLINARY MASTER'S IN ART, MEDIA AND DESIGN**

**OCADU EXPERIMENTAL MEDIA SPACE  
TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA  
MARCH 2026**

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## **Abstract**

*Echoes of Water: They Called Her a Witch* explores water, feminism, portals and family history through autoethnographic research followed by a creative research process of psychic automatism - resulting in an immersive multi-media installation that questions the possibility of water acting as a conduit through which one may access an inter-dimensional Portal to the Spirit-World.

Portals are represented in the visual components of my thesis work through the usage, symbology and multiplicity of circles which appear in multiple forms of media.

## **KEY TERMS**

Witch, water, portals, Spirit World, Place-Memory, stone, circles, fire, salt, Free Soul State, shadow

“The circle is a universal symbol with extensive meaning. It represents the notions of totality, wholeness, original perfection, the Self, the infinite, eternity, timelessness, all cyclic movement...As the sun, it is masculine power; as the soul and as encircling waters, it is the feminine maternal principle. “It implies an idea of movement, and symbolizes the cycle of time, the perpetual motion of everything that moves, the planets’ journey around the sun (the circle of the zodiac), the great rhythm of the universe. The circle is also zero in our system of numbering, and symbolizes potential, or the embryo. It has a magical value as a protective agent...and indicates the end of the process of individuation, of striving towards a psychic wholeness and self-realization.” (Julien 71)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis paper and exhibition were created and defended at OCAD University. Which is located on the lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Tkaronto, is also the ancestral territory for the Anishinaabeg, the Haudenosaunee and the Huron-Wendat who are the original stewards of the land and waters. Tkaronto is home to urban First Nations, Inuit and Métis who have been in relationship with this land since time immemorial. I am a newcomer to this land, slowly learning the names of the trees and plants that grow here, and yet the land has still held me in its embrace and helped me to feel at home in a new place.

Acknowledgments to all who shared their stories with me via interviews conducted. Thank you to: Chrisanne Nelson, Dr. Liane Nelson, Linnea Nelson, Megan George, Lorraine Zinnia Johnson, Kelly Costello, Todd Gagné, Thomas Gagné, Tanya Gagné, and Mary Ross.

Thank you to everyone who wrote me emails and shared documents, photos, poetry and stories with me: Megan George, Patricia Asiel, Nancy Willis, Joyce Varcoe, Toni Taylor, and Shannon Nelson-Deighan.

To my soulmate, Brendan, who left behind his life back home to follow me on an adventure to a new country. Who graciously learned how to cook to feed me after long days at school and who has always supported my dreams and aspirations without hesitation. I am so grateful for our beautiful family, I love you the most.

Aunts and Aunties: Michelle, Shannon, Kyle, Chrisanne, Donna, Linnea, Annmarie, Tanya, Judy, Barb, and Lisa: thank you for always being my role models, and for showing me all the different paths I could take in life. Thank you for all the crazy stories, inspiration and for being a non-judgmental ear to listen and offer advice.

My Grandmothers: Patricia, Denise, Yuhuan and Betty, thank you for always loving, encouraging, and teaching me. Thank you taking care of me all the days after school and school holidays, and for telling me growing up that I was *even smarter than the boys* and that I could *do anything that they could* I also want to thank you for teaching me your languages so we could understand each other better, whether it was Mandarin, German, or the language of baking, with the love evident in every bite.

Great-Aunt Megan, thank you for being the first person in our family to recognize my artistic talent and for always encouraging my photography. Thank you for your legacy as family genealogist and record-keeper, which has undoubtedly inspired my own interest in our family history and stories.

My Grandfathers: Tom, Sherman and Joe, thank you for always treating me like you would treat your grandsons, and for never telling me that I couldn't achieve something that I put my mind to. Thank you for always telling me that my education was the most important thing in my life.

To my memory of my Great-Grandmothers: Beatrice, Marian, Dea Mathilde and Elizabeth, thank you for paving the way and inspiring me to not only achieve my dreams for myself, but for all of you as well. Thank you for always reminding me not to take my education for granted, because only one of you had the opportunity to pursue their dreams and go to college. To Beatrice and Marian, thank you for passing down your artistic talent, I am so proud to be living out your Art School dreams.

My brother, Tommy, thank you for always lightening my mood with phone calls and memes. To my brother-in-law, Patrick, for all of your jokes and sports talk and for always being the voice I hear in my head telling me I need some, "calm deep breaths."-To Catherine for being the knowledgeable older sister-in-law that I always wished for.

My parents, Todd and Liane, thank you for supporting me even when you were unsure of my choice to pursue art professionally. Cheers Dad for finally realizing that maybe you should have gone to Art School

too. To my parents-in-law, Mary and Bob, thank you for always appreciating and for always finding ways to support my art. I always love being in your musical home and I am grateful that you recognize the value in a creative life.

To the memory of Kat, Ledell and Don Mulvaney, thank you for being among the first people in my life to support me and encourage me to pursue being an artist. Thank you for the unconditional love, for creating a safe space for me every summer, and for always telling me that I *was* good enough.-

To my beloved friends who agreed to open up to me and share both their families and their stories with an interview: Kelly Costello, chokma'shki baby, you are so funny and knowledgeable. You are my favorite moss woman, and I am so lucky to be your friend. To my dear friend, Lorraine Zinnia, thank you for being the best paranormal investigator and tarot card reader I know, I miss all of our adventures on the Cape.

Heaven Ender, thank you for always guiding me and my artistic practice. I would never be the artist (or witch) that I am today without you, and I can't imagine how different (and much less fabulous) my life would be. I am so lucky to be your friend.

My cohorts, I am constantly amazed and inspired by all of you. It has been an honor to work with and learn from you all. To my beautiful witches, Inéz Petrazzini and witch-Ancestor Kai Petrazzini, to Liv Qiu and Tavleen Lall, thank you for taking a chance on opening a Portal with me. I was so inspired by every conversation, and I really appreciated having a safe place to explore intense and heavy concepts. To my Crit Club, thank you for the encouragement and guidance throughout this thesis process.

A huge thank you to my advisors, without whom none of this would be possible. My primary advisor, Tannis Nielsen, thank you for your unending support and care and for taking the chance to work with me. My secondary advisor, Julia Rose Sutherland, thank you for all your guidance, expertise, and encouragement.

Thank you to my ancestors, those whose names I know and those whose names are lost to time. I hope I honor you and make you proud, and I hope I do justice to your stories and life experiences.

To all the little ones I have the great honor of being an Aunty/Uncle to: Aida, Darius, Connor, Claire, Nazeer, Chase and Gabriel. You are our greatest hopes, and I love each one of you with all my heart.

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My name is Juliana Nelson Gagné, and I was born on August 25, 1994, in Boston, Massachusetts (Turtle Island). As an artist, I have always been inspired by history, **Place-Memory**, the **Spirit World** and family stories. The wealth of these stories inspired my research questions; **how does water act as an inter-dimensional Portal to the Spirit World?** I also explored how various cultural beliefs and firsthand experiences could speak to the question of **what is the ability of water to act as an amplifier or boundary for Spirit?**

I have been researching my family members and Ancestors throughout this process. The following family members were instrumental in this thesis and those who are alive provided me records, stories and photos whenever possible. The family stories provided inspired my research question and helped me explore the mystery of such enigmatic research through my explorations of materials and form to reinforce my concept.

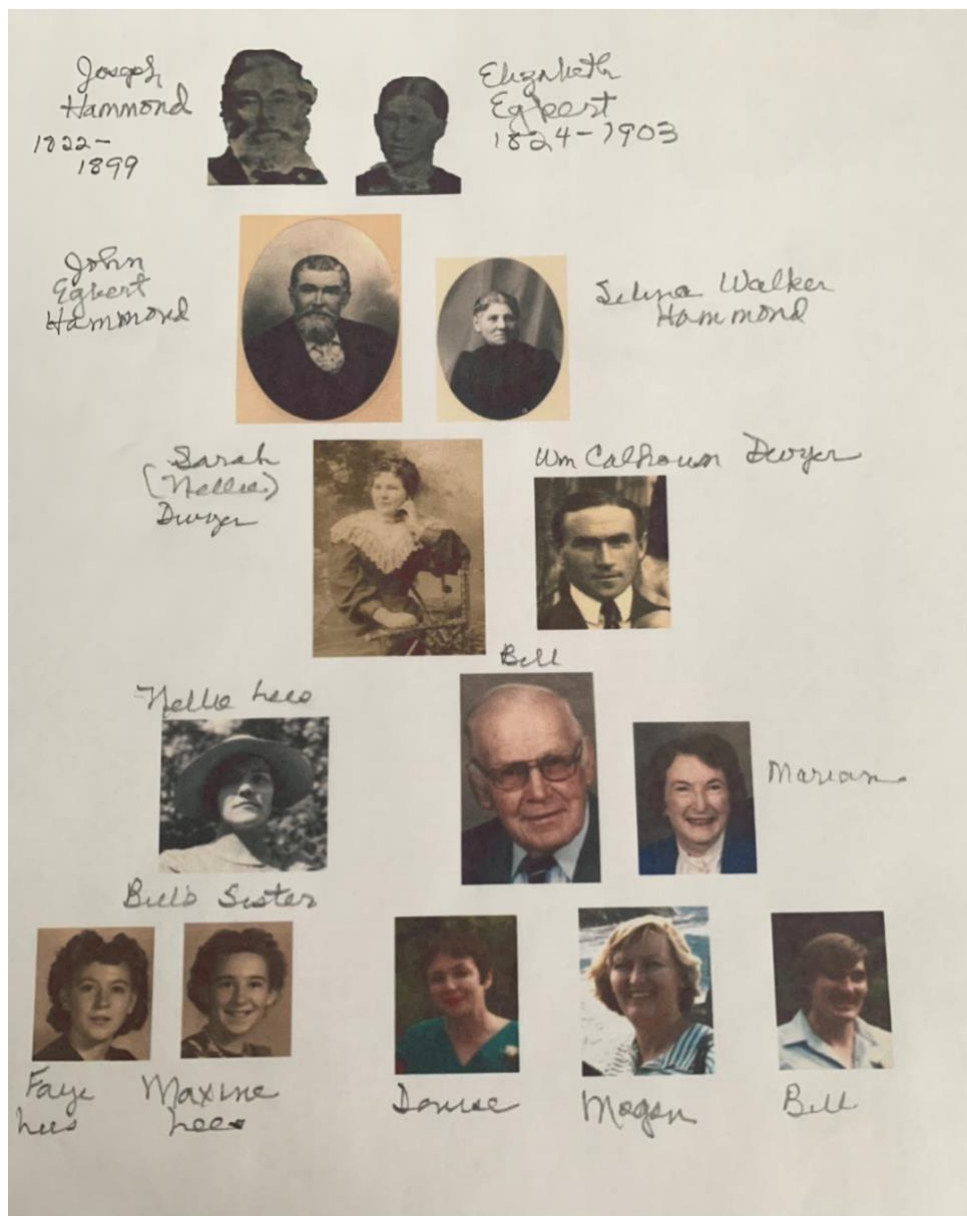


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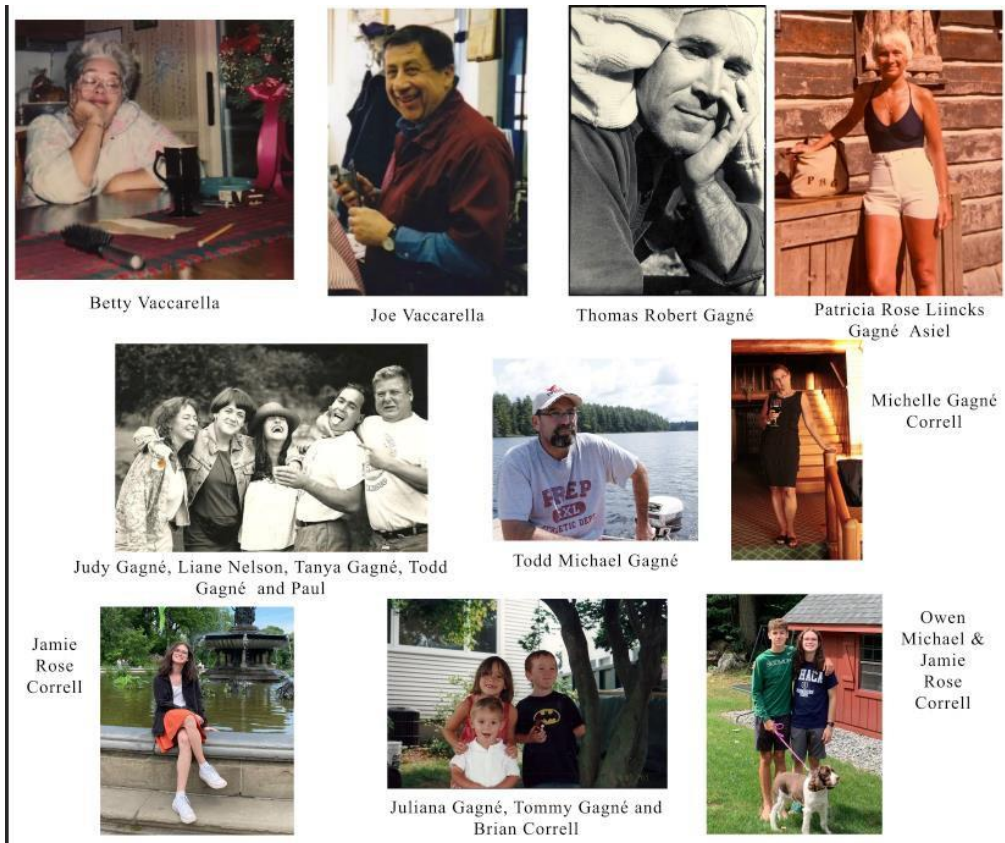


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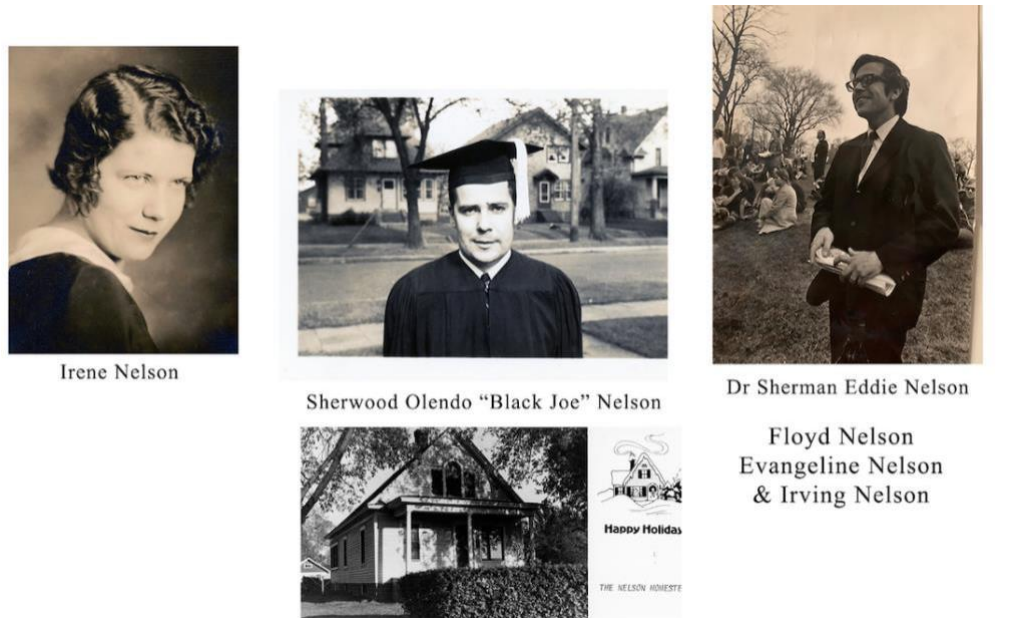


Figure 3. My maternal Grandfather, Dr. Sherman Eddie Nelson, and two of his five siblings, Irene and Sherwood "Joe" Nelson. Their family home in St. Paul, Minnesota



Sherm's 80th  
Birthday: Oakland, CA  
2013

(Front L-R) Laney Skeel, Michael Rothberg, Linnea Nelson, Liane Nelson,  
Juliana Nelson Gagné (Back L-R) Marcy Skeel, Kyle Nelson, Sherman Nelson, Shannon  
Nelson, Chrisanne Nelson, Denise Nelson



Linnea and Michael's  
Wedding Party:  
Central Valley, CA  
2011

(L-R) Mia Adriano, Caleb Saunders, Reed Saunders, Michael Rothberg, Linnea Nelson,  
Juliana Gagné, Liane Nelson, Wayua James, Ian Nelson James



Sherm's 80th  
Birthday

(L-R), Linnea Louise Nelson, Kyle Christine Nelson, Chrisanne Lynnette  
Nelson, Shannon Lynn Nelson-Deighan, Liane Elisabeth Nelson

Darius Austin  
Samone  
Nelson-Rothberg &  
Aida Elaine  
Nelson-Rothberg



Nauset, 2023

Figure 4: Nelson photo family tree, current generations. My Grandparents, Dr. Sherman Eddie Nelson and Denise (Dwyer) Nelson and my Mom, Dr. Liane Nelson. My aunts and uncles: Laney Skeel, Marcy Skeel, Shannon Nelson-Deighan, Kyle Nelson James, Chrisanne Nelson, Linnea Nelson, Michael Rothberg (not pictured: Matthew Nelson). The bottom photo is of my dear cousins, Aida and Darius Nelson-Rothberg.

## **FAMILY TREE**

### **PARENTS:**

**Dr. Liane Elisabeth Nelson:** born December 22, 1966, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

**Todd Michael Gagné:** born October 9, 1963, in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

### **BROTHER:**

**Thomas Nelson Gagné:** born October 22, 1996, in Norwalk, Connecticut.

### **GRANDPARENTS:**

**Patricia Rose (Lincks) (Gagne) Asiel:** born: December 31, 1944, in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

Remarried: **Harold Asiel**, born in New York. Children: Scott and Carrie.

**Thomas Robert Gagné:** born May 21, 1943, in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

Remarried: **Guo Yuhuan**, born in Harbin (China). Child: Alex.

**Denise Lillian (Dwyer) Nelson:** born August 20, 1935, in Los Angeles, California. Died November 17, 2023, in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

**Dr. Sherman Eddie Nelson:** born February 1, 1928, in St. Paul, Minnesota. Died February 22, 2017, in Oakland, California.

### **GREAT/GREAT-GEAT GRANDPARENTS:**

**Marian Langhorst (Jones) Dwyer:** born December 25, 1910, in Reno, Nevada. Died June 2003 in Sunnyvale, California.

**Elizabeth Ann “Betty” (Milne) Gagné:** born October 9, 1922, in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Died July 17, 2004, in Hancock, New Hampshire.

**Beatrice Rose Evans (Varcoe) Lincks: “Nonnie”:** born December 15, 1915, in Massachusetts. Died November 15, 2010, in Fairfield, Connecticut.

**George Frederick Lincks: “Boppie”:** born January 10, 1901, in Jersey City, New Jersey. Died in the carbon monoxide accident on April 9, 1994, in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

**Dea Mathilde (Tromsness) Nelson:** born January 3, 1889, in Crookston, Minnesota. Died March 22, 1964, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

**Albert Wilhelm Nelson (Nilsson):** born October 6, 1885, in Dassel, Meeker, Minnesota. Died April 26, 1933, in Minneapolis, Hennepin, Minnesota.

**Catherine Lillian (Langhorst) Jones:** born April 19, 1874, in Louisville, Kentucky. Died November 6, 1960, in Rural Reno, Washoe, Nevada.

**Thomas Lewis Jones:** born April 12, 1859, in California. Died December 30, 1925, in Reno, Nevada.

## **ANCESTORS FORMALLY ACCUSED OF WITCHCRAFT**

**Sarah Mary Wildes:** accused 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts Bay Colony. Convicted, maintained her innocence, hung to death in the gallows, later exonerated. My 10<sup>th</sup> Great-Grandmother.

**Edward Bishop:** accused 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts Bay Colony. Jailed, convicted, escaped, survived. My 10<sup>th</sup> Great-Grandfather.

**Mary (Staples) Harvey:** accused 1692 in Fairfield, Connecticut Colony. Jailed and acquitted. My 11<sup>th</sup> Great-Grand Aunt.

**Hannah (Harvey) Beach:** accused 1692 in Fairfield, Connecticut Colony. Jailed, acquitted. My 1<sup>st</sup> cousin 10x removed.

**Mary (Royce) Staples** accused 1653, 1692 in Fairfield, Connecticut Colony. Acquitted, jailed and acquitted. My 9<sup>th</sup> Great Grandmother.

**Ann Holland Burt:** accused 1669 in Lynn, Massachusetts Bay Colony. Verdict is unknown, not executed. My 11<sup>th</sup> Great-Grandmother.

**Jane Walford** accused 1656, 1669 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire Colony. Twice acquitted. My 11<sup>th</sup> Great-Grandmother.



## INTRODUCTION

My name is Juliana Nelson Gagné, and I was born on August 25, 1994, in Boston, Massachusetts (Turtle Island). I grew up primarily in southern Connecticut in the racially homogenous town of Uncoway<sup>1</sup>. I am a white, femme-presenting disabled, queer person of European descent raised middle-class.

My Ancestors come from: England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Holland, France (by way of Quebec), Germany, Norway, Sweden and Finland. My Ancestors practiced a variety of religions, they were Protestant, Roman Catholic, Ashkenazi Jewish, Mormon, Buddhist and Atheist.

I have also lived in: Oakland (CA), Boulder (CO), Brooklyn (NY), Berlin (Germany), Nauset (MA) and now I live with my husband, two cats and our dog in Tkaronto. I have a BFA in Fine Arts from Parsons School of Design (2018) and I spent a semester as an exchange student at Universität der Künste (Academy of Art, Berlin) in 2017 in Germany. My time in Germany was significant for my art; it was the first time I lived in a country where my Ancestors had emigrated from. When I decided to move to Tkaronto to study, it felt powerful like a powerful way to use my location and take advantage of **Place-Memory** and see what I could learn about my Ancestors by re-tracing their steps and returning to the places where they lived.



Figure 5. 35mm film soup photo of the cottage in Nauset, Juliana Gagne, 2018.

As a child, I was raised by the **water** on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean and my family owns a small cottage on Cape Cod that is haunted by the former owner, Hattie Jennings. In addition, I have always had an ability

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<sup>1</sup> Uncoway is more commonly known today as Fairfield

to communicate with **Spirits**. As a toddler I would play and talk to my deceased Great-Grandfather, George Frederick Lincks, whom I called “Boppie”. This ability to communicate with deceased family members ignited my curiosity about my Ancestors. The ability to communicate with **Spirits** and my many experiences while living around water led me to research **how water may act as an interdimensional Portal to the Spirit World**. I also explored **how does water act as a boundary or amplifier for the Spirit World?** This concept was inspired by my paranormal experiences, as with few exceptions every place that I have ever lived has been haunted. I realize in researching this query that it will be difficult to come to conclusive answers, as the **Spirit World** is a mysterious and theoretical subject.

However, it is this inexplicable quality to this investigation that inspires my research. I am open to the possibility of my research and investigations creating more questions than answers. Furthermore, when researching these topics not everyone is open-minded to discussions of **Portals** and the **Spirit World**. Even within my own family, my Father’s side is largely skeptical of the paranormal. While interviewing my Dad and Grandpa Tom they both reiterated to me, “I don’t really believe in any of that stuff.” I respect the role of the skeptic, and I think it is critical to always remain skeptical and to seek out logical explanations first.

It is only once the mundane can be ruled out that I find it appropriate to then explore more mystical theories for explanation. I myself am guilty of laughing at my younger cousin Brian, on a family vacation in the remote forest of the Adirondacks in 2014 when he came back from a bike ride pale and telling me quite seriously that he had seen Bigfoot. Being the mean older cousin, I immediately discounted his version of the story, but the joke would later turn out to be on me when watching a TV program one day I saw the area that we had vacationed in was apparently a Bigfoot hotspot. It is easy to dismiss reports of cryptids or **Spirits** when you haven’t experienced anything yourself. The mysterious nature of this topic excites me because I do not expect to find definitive conclusions, I can continue this research after my thesis ends and keep deepening my theories and collecting stories from authors, theorists, podcasters, family and friends.

Truly, the inspiration for this research began when I was a child and I was fascinated by the topics of the **Spirit World** and **witches**, reading through all the relevant books in my school library. In Europe they burned **witches** at the stake with **fire**, but I learned through books and historic records that my Ancestors were threatened by the use of other elements. In Salem during the **witchcraft** hysteria my Ancestor, Sarah Wildes was killed by wooden gallows and that same year Giles Cory was pressed to death with heavy **stones**. In the Connecticut Colony women accused of **witchcraft** were dunked in the **water** of nearby ponds and lakes. I always wondered if these innocent people, killed for being **witches**, left their stain on the land where their blood had fallen, and if their **Spirits** wandered, forever looking for redemption or justice for their alleged crimes.

My first questions about the idea of **Place-Memory** began to form when I was 8 years old and my Mom and I went to the *Fairfield Museum and History Center* to look for records on my 9<sup>th</sup> Great-Grandmother, Mary Royce Staples. Mary was accused of **witchcraft** in our shared town first in 1653 and then again in 1692. Through the records at the *Historical Society* my direct Ancestor, Mary, started to come alive for me, as I grew up I often thought of her and wondered if she had seen the seem trees that I did on walks in the woods, or if the Mill River looked different when Mary was alive. Did the same river that nourished my Ancestor remember her, and if I spent enough time by the river, would the **water** tell me stories of Mary Staples?

## FAMILY STORIES

In researching stories of the above-mentioned family, I found myself most inspired by the narratives that spoke towards the queer, feminine Ancestors. Those Ancestors who were accused of being **witches** solely for being truth tellers, healers, midwives and widows. As a white intersectional feminist, I've chosen to focus my thesis in honor of their lives. The women in my family have shown me what it means to be a "**witch**" through rejecting societal and gender norms. In my family this meant valuing education, equality and the truth, and to speak that truth even when it is dangerous. I do not want to lean on gender binary in discussions of **witches**, and I personally reject the gender binary. In my personal definition I define a **witch** as a woman, or man, or gender-nonconforming person, who rejects societal or gender norms. Queer people, particularly those who are Trans, fit into my definition of **witch**, regardless of the gender they were assigned at birth. In this paper, when I use the term woman or man, I am not referring to an assigned gender, but the gender that aligns with the individual. Historically, girls and women were largely the victims of **witchcraft** accusations, however, in my family history, there are six women who were accused of **witchcraft**, in addition to one man.

My family stories and records also greatly informed my research question and the process of my studio work. I borrowed their stories as impetus for my own and transcribed these stories into both digital and analogue imagery. Interviews with family and friends also provided a great primary source for the audio I selected as video soundtracks through a review method of interviews guided by psychic automatism. Family stories included topics of **witch, water, Portals, the Spirit World, Place-Memory, stone, fire, circles, salt, the Free Soul State, shadows, disability and intersectionality**. These provided me with the contextual grounding of my entire thesis. The first family story that I heard about **witches** was when I was 8 years old in 2003 and first learnt about my Ancestor, Mary Staples with my Mom at the *Fairfield Museum and History Center*. My Grandma, Denise, always encouraged my love of **witches** from the literal, buying me books about **witches** and **witch** costumes for Halloween. To the metaphorical, my Grandmother always encouraged me to defy gender norms, whether that was playing kickball with the boys at school or pursuing the science classes that were prohibited to my Great-Grandmother Marian, in college because of her gender.

### **Nascent Astronomer (2003)**

Denise Lillian Nelson

\*

shine

Juliana

grandchild

takes her new telescope

nascent astronomer collecting spangles, facets, and facts

luminous elements in unimagined sky.

We find crystals in primrose and

amaryllis, angles in what

we eat-carambola, anise, star apple

We sit on the right side of the sailboat-

little brother to the

port-Star Chamber-

gazing at clusters,

clouds, Asteroidea

Magen

David

\*

\*

## FAMILY STORIES -WITCHES

### #1. Witch- Mary Staples: Uncoway (Fairfield), Connecticut Colony 1653 and 1692

(Refer to list of Ancestors formally accused on witchcraft on page 11)

At age 8, I was assigned a project to research a historical figure from Uncoway, Connecticut. I told my Mom about my project, and she immediately knew who I should research. That weekend we went to the *Fairfield Museum and History Center* and told a woman working there that we were direct descendants of Mary Staples and we were interested in the records they had on her being accused of **witchcraft**. Among those dusty records and hard to-read cursive, this Ancestor came alive for me. I loved that Mary Staples was outspoken, that she shirked the gender norms of her time; I loved that she would likely be considered a feminist if she were alive today. I related to her; I came from a family of smart, outspoken women who weren't afraid to tell men when they were wrong.

The year 1651 brought Europe's **witch** hysteria to the new village of Uncoway. Uncoway was valuable for not just the quality of its soil, but for its proximity to **water**. Uncoway is on the southern coast of what is today called Connecticut, held in the belly of Long Island Sound. A major river cuts through the town, today called the Mill River, which enters the liminal zone of the marshes, the **water** becoming brackish before emptying into the Sound. This proximity to water made the fields of Uncoway particularly fertile.

Despite the fertile fields of this new settlement, famine conditions were beginning, and the mood grew tense in the village. War was threatening to break out with the nearby colony of New Amsterdam. Roger Ludlow, the colonizer who first named this village of "Fairfield," had begun to feel pressure from England as he had established Uncoway without the permission of the higher-ups, who were beginning to suspect that he might have enough hubris to try and form his own independent colony.

Records through the *Fairfield Museum and History Center* archives and website state that Ludlow had, "After the Pequot War of 1637<sup>9</sup> which reduced Native American power in Connecticut, Ludlow purchased a large tract of land from the local Paugussett tribe in 1639." The notion of buying land from someone in the decades following The Great Dying, and within two years of the end of a major and devastating war, one that saw many local Paugusset people slaughtered, does not speak to me of being moral and sounds like a decision made under duress.

It was in this year that, at a town meeting, at a time when a woman speaking in public at all was uncommon, Mary took it a step further. Mary spoke out against Ludlow at this meeting and accused him of being a liar on many subjects. Ludlow countered that it was Mary who "known for telling tall tales" (Boyce) and Mary denied the accusation and set before him a challenge to name a single untruth that she had spoken" (Boyce). Ludlow could not name one lie, and in that moment, the thought must have occurred to him of how to deal with his Mary Staples problem.

Mary Royce Staples was an English settler of "noble" blood, but her husband, Thomas Staples, was merely a hardworking farmer who was well respected by the other people in their village. At this time, women who were convicted of **witchcraft** not only lost their lives, but their husbands and families would lose any land they had. Mary and Thomas Staples were landowners with a particularly desirable plot of land, which bordered Roger Ludlow. Mary Staples was not a woman who listened to gender norms of her time; she was, "considered [a] scold[s]; women disrupted societal norms by their behavior or speech" (Boyce) and this was reason enough to imprison her.

By 1653, the hysteria was doing nothing to slow the gallows pace. At the execution of Goody Knapp, Mary called out that she was innocent, but the townspeople drowned out her cries. When Goody Knapp's still warm body was cut down from the noose, a group of women **circled** around to examine her. Adrenaline coursing saying through her veins Mary Staples said, "these are no more marks than I myself have" (Boyce). Mary was referring to Goody Knapp's moles, which had been declared **witches'** teats and were considered damning evidence of **witchcraft**. Before they knew it, Roger Ludlow had announced to the town that in the moment before her hanging, Goody Knapp had, "whispered in his ear that Mary Staples was a **witch**" (Boyce) and with this lie, Mary Staples was in grave danger. Thomas recognized the mortal threat to his wife and wisely decided to defend his wife's innocence through the fledgling court system. Thomas' legal action worked; in 1654, after losing the court case, Ludlow shamefully fled Uncoway and returned to England.

This reading inspired my research question as I would often wonder how the **water** in our town, like the Mill River, held the memory of my **witch** Ancestor, Mary Staples. This helped me explore my research questions through historical and familial lens, providing the details and alleged phrasing of what my Ancestor was saying and doing at the time of the **witchcraft** trials.

## #2. Witch-Mary Harvey & Hannah Harvey: Uncoway, Connecticut Colony 1692

(Refer to list of Ancestors formally accused on witchcraft on page 11)

In 1692, the **witchcraft** hysteria erupted again in New England. This time famously rearing its head in Naumkeag, which the *Pioneer Salem Museum* says is the original Indigenous name for what is now known as Salem, Massachusetts. The accusations of **witchcraft** were like releasing a poisonous gas into the air; this poison spread through the atmosphere and returned in Uncoway. At this time, Mary Staples was a widow, a particularly dangerous time for women to be accused of **witchcraft**. Mary was, unsurprisingly, once again the victim of accusations of **witchcraft**, but this time was quite different. Thomas was no longer alive to defend Mary; she was an elderly widow, and she was not the only one in her family accused.

Mary Harvey and Hannah Harvey were Mary's daughter and granddaughter, and while it wasn't rare for multiple family members to be accused, "it was rare to see three generations of women arrested simultaneously" (Boyce), and the three generations of women awaited their fate in jail. Luckily, the only evidence against Mary, Hannah and Mary was spectral and thus considered inadmissible at this point. The three women were eventually acquitted and released, and it was, "ordered that no evil should be spoken of them again" (Boyce) but life in this colony would never feel quite safe again. This story inspired me to explore **Place-Memory** as a research methodology and as inspiration to learn more about the rest of my Ancestors. This research was made evident through audio that I spoke in my soundtrack for the video, *Witches*.

## #3. Witch -Interview with Mom

Eight generations after Mary Staples was alive, my Mom found herself the subject of a modern **witch**-hunt. Mom discussed the Grunseth scandal of 1990 that she was at the center of after she went public that John Grunseth is a pedophile. When my Mom was 13 years old her best friend, Nina Grunseth, disclosed to her that Nina's stepfather, John Grunseth, was a pedophile who was regularly sexually assaulting Nina. At a 4<sup>th</sup> of July party at the Grunseth home, he and his friends plied the young girls with alcohol and told them they could only swim in the pool if they were nude. This incident involved Grunseth's 14-year-old daughter, Nina, and her friends who were 13-14, including my Aunt Liz Mulay, Aunt Lisa Hare and my Mom, Liane. My Mom discussed the emotions involved for her, the media was unanimously saying that my Mom and Aunts were liars, and that this story was a ploy to tarnish Grunseth's reputation because he was a

Republican. Audio clips from this conversation with my Mom was used in my videos titled *Witches*. The water acting as a silent witness in this story helped inspire my research question.

## **FAMILY STORIES-WATER**

### **#1. Water -Interview with Dad**

My Dad told stories about his childhood going to Nonnie and Boppie's house (his grandparents), and the well in their backyard in Pittsfield. My Dad was telling the story of sending his cousin Wendy down the well in a bucket and recollecting that she may have gotten stuck down the well.

“And there was a well, there was a well out back at her house too, crank a bucket down. Don't go down the well. Nonnie would talk about the well, oh I don't know. The mysteries about the well, about don't go down the well.”

This interview inspired much of the narrative and imagery in the video *Down the Well*. Audio excerpts from the interview included my Dad also mentioning Nonnie's stories about the unseen world, “Nonnie would talk about mermaids and stuff like that, fairies. Sometimes she went to the dark place.” This exploration of liminal places of **water**, where inter-dimensional beings were believed to exist greatly inspired my research into the unseen realms and the mysteries of the universe. In the video *Down the Well*, imagery of the full, **circular** moon covered by a video layer of the Mill River starts and finishes the video, alluding to the **circular** ways in which time moves as well as the connection between cultural beliefs around **Portals** and **water**.

### **#2. Water -Family Story-奶奶 Yuhuan**

My Grandmother Yuhuan<sup>2</sup>, told me the story of her first husband, who died very suddenly of a heart attack in his 40s when they lived in Beijing with their teenage son, Alex. 奶奶 said her husband's heart attack happened while he was at work and that by the time they called her, he had already passed. 奶奶 took Alex back home to their family in a village outside of Harbin to decide what to do next, and 奶奶 consulted the village fortune teller. The fortune teller said that Alex's Father's Ancestors were angry and that's why they had taken his father's life so young. The fortune teller said that to keep Alex safe, 奶奶 would need to send him across not only mountains but the *Ocean* so that the angry Ancestors could not follow. So, Alex was sent to New Zealand as soon as 奶奶 could arrange for him to continue school there. Alex stayed for two decades before it was decided that he was safe to return home to China. This family story influenced my questions about how our physical world specifically **water** can have rules for the **Spirits** who interact here and how **water** may act as a boundary for the **Spirit World**.

## **FAMILY STORIES -PORTALS**

### **#1. Portals -Interview with Aunt Tanya**

We discussed aliens, **Spirits**, and the generally unexplainable. Tanya recounts two significant alien encounters when she experienced missing hours/a missing day. Aunt Tanya told me the first story, of being with her babysitter in the car as a child and seeing a flying saucer. The babysitter three weeks later slipped into a coma and died and we theorized together the possible connection (if any) between the sighting and the babysitter's fate. This interview furthered my theories about the connections between **Portals**, time, aliens and

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<sup>2</sup> I call my Grandmother Yuhuan, 奶奶 which means paternal Grandmother in Mandarin

the **Spirit** World through Tanya's recounting of her first-hand experience with UAPs. The first story about seeing a UAP with her babysitter who a few weeks later died reinforced my personal theory about UAP's being connected with bringing **Spirits** to the **Spirit World**.

## #2. Portals- Family story Mom

One of my favorite family stories told by my Mom is about my matrilineal Ancestors. Their surname was originally Wohlmaier; they were Jewish and lived in Germany. My female Ancestors were known in their community for having ESP and psychic abilities. My Mom and I coined the term "Meyer moments" to describe our moments of psychic intuition, or downloads, as I often refer to them. I always theorized that these premonitions were connected to my ability to communicate with **Spirits**. This story influenced my research into both the paranormal and the human mind. It also inspired my methodology of psychic automatism in the creation of my cyanotypes and the editing of my videos.

## FAMILY STORIES-SPIRIT

### #1. Spirit-Interview with Lorraine Zinnia Johnson

Zinnia and I discussed the history of Cape Cod, including theories as to why it is so haunted and how this was connected to the **water** that surrounds the Cape. I shared with Zinnia the story of the bridge acting as a boundary for **Spirit**, and Zinnia reminded me about our visit to the haunted Sagamore cemetery. Many of the bodies exhumed during the bridge construction were reburied, several were buried with the wrong headstones and must have been upset about their bodies being disturbed and wrongly reburied. At least, that is the local explanation for why the cemetery is so active. Zinnia shared personal stories about Cape Cod and paranormal experiences that she has encountered and we discussed experiences that we've had together, notably at Pine Grove Cemetery in Truro.

Established in 1799, Pine Grove is currently located in the middle of the coastal forest of Truro. Pine Grove Cemetery is pictured in a number of the videos I created and has a nearby vicinity to the Atlantic Ocean and Pamet Harbor which I infer supports my original suspicion that **water** may possibly amplify the **Spirit World**. Pine Grove is most famous for its connection to the media craze of 1969 around serial killer, Tony Costa who dismembered and buried his victims at the cemetery and in the woods behind it. The newspapers at this time were quick to mention that behind the cemetery, there is an old crossroads. Crossroads are considered in most European and New England lore and literature as a liminal place of special magical power; in Europe and the colonies these Thin Places were closely associated with **witches** and the occult. Only twice were Lorraine and I brave enough to drive the long dirt road through the trees to visit Pine Grove at night. The first time was in 2023, about two weeks before my UAP sighting that November, and as Lorraine recounts.

**LZJ:** We pull up as we're like driving down this completely dark dirt road...cause it was so dark but the moon was like basically full so you could like still kind of see everything.

**JG:** *It was right before Halloween.*

**LZJ:** Yeah...and I remember like pulling up and then I was sitting there and I had this like nasty feeling in my gut...I remember walking in and as we were getting started, I heard like two men just like talking outside the border...I could swear that I could see it like moving like **shadows**. I was looking around and I swore I could see people, like looking out from beyond like the gravestones. And it was...full head and shoulders...Just kind of peeking out. And then when I would look at them for too long, they would kind of slink back...It was horrific. I remember you poured libations [herbal tea] and then we

ran.

Lorraine's experience of seeing people who would then hide behind the tombstones was something that I observed as well, the second time we visited the cemetery at night. Lorraine and I have often theorized about the role all this **water** plays in the hauntings at Pine Grove. There are springs and underground aquifers that supply **water** on the Cape, and people often say the most haunted buildings on the peninsula are the ones that are located above underground springs. Zinnia and I enjoy conducting amateur paranormal research, and we regularly visited haunted places by the Ocean together when I was living in Nauset. This audio from my interview with Zinnia was also used in the video *Coven*.

## #2. Spirit -Interview with Mom

When I moved to our cottage in Nauset in 2018 I remember asking my Mom how she first came to believe that the cottage was haunted by the former owner, Hattie. Mom said that in the first year that we owned the cottage, my brother and I were trying to sleep in the bedroom, but we were being kept up by the sound of scratching coming from within the walls. The cottage is not insulated; there is no real space in the walls for an animal to be in, the walls are merely constructed out of beaver board. My Mom said that she was telling herself logically that it was some kind of an animal, but she said that Tommy and I were getting increasingly upset. She finally had a moment of desperation, and she burst out, "Hattie please stop! The kids really need to go to sleep, and you're scaring them!" The scratching stopped immediately, and my Mom had a chill run up her spine.

This story was the first time my Mom believed that we were experiencing interactions with **Spirit** and it ignited my curiosity in the paranormal at a young age. This experience led me to ask my parents to buy me books that we saw in tourist shops about the history of hauntings on Cape Cod specifically. I also use tell this story as part of the audio soundtrack for the video *Down the Well*, saying that "All houses on Cape Cod have a ghost. Ours was no exception. Our house was haunted by the former owner, a woman named Hattie Jennings, who died of carbon monoxide poisoning in 1999." I can never know for sure why it seems that Hattie's **Spirit** is still with us. However, once I asked our neighbors who knew Hattie and her husband Harold before they passed. Our neighbor said that Hattie and Harold were on vacation at a place where you could dig up small gold nuggets. Afterwards, Harold made her a necklace with the gold nuggets that she adored. Unfortunately, one day gardening in the yard Hattie lost the necklace. Our neighbor thought if I could find that gold necklace one day that Hattie might be at peace. My family is still searching for that gold necklace.

## #3. Spirit-Experiences with roommates from 2014-2018

While I was a student at Parsons School of Design, I lived in both of the two apartments in *The Trapeze Loft*, we referred to them as the front and back apartment, and they shared a front door and a hallway. My Aunt Tanya has had the lease for *The Trapeze Loft* for 30+ years which is in Williamsburg, Brooklyn near the **water**. The apartments were just three blocks away from the East River. I first moved into the front apartment at *The Trapeze Loft* by myself in October 2014. While I lived there, I would hear strange noises that I couldn't explain which unsettled me and other people who lived in the front apartment told me that they would see **Spirits** in there.

In July 2015 I moved into the back apartment, down the hall in *The Trapeze Loft* and during the first year that I lived there with two roommates, Jess Pantano and Amelia Lintern-Smith. Once we had a strange incident in which Amelia's pill bottles which she always kept in the same spot had been moved in the time it took her to turn her back on them. After 15 minutes of everyone searching and consequently giving up,

the pill bottles reappeared in their original spot.

*The Trapeze Loft* was a former warehouse that had 20-foot ceilings and was separated from our neighbors by a maze of temporary walls (a **fire** would have killed everyone) and strange rooms created from the illegal re-purposing of the building. During this re-design there was a room created in the back apartment over the bathroom that was separated from the back bedroom by a wall that we couldn't access. Colleen came downstairs one morning and began telling me about the strange, vivid dream that she had the night before. She said there was a very angry woman in the dream who told her that the room over the bathroom was *her space* so Colleen should *keep out!!!* Colleen said that this woman didn't like us and that she wanted us to stay away from her.

A few weeks later when I was in the apartment alone, I recorded a strange disembodied voice in a video. I reached out to my Aunt Tanya to discuss the strange things that had been happening. Tanya confirmed for me that there was a hostile female **Spirit** living in the room over the bathroom and that there was another male **Spirit** in the front apartment, but that he was more friendly. I asked Aunt Tanya if she knew who the **Spirits** were and she told me that she had researched the history of the broom factory that was the original building. Aunt Tanya said that no one had ever died there or been seriously injured, so she thought that the source of the paranormal activity was something older, possibly coming from the land. Aunt Tanya ended our conversation by telling me that, "Don't forget, the living can leave ties too, you know."

## **FAMILY STORIES-PLACE-MEMORY**

### **#1. Place-Memory-Family Story**

Dwyer, Marian Jones. *Ninety Years of Memories*. Western Printing and Publishing, 1974.

This book, *Ninety Years of Memories, Pioneer Living in Plumas County, California* was compiled by my maternal Great-Grandmother, Marian Jones Dwyer. The book is dedicated to "Minnie L. Church on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday November 24, 1973" and it also notes in the foreword that, Minnie's "birth was [being] forecast by Eilley Orrum Bowers, famed Comstock seer, who was a resident at the Twenty Mile House and was hired by some miners to read her crystal ball in hopes they could find the lost gold veins they were seeking." This book compiles family stories and photos along with a wealth of poetry. The poems are written by Minnie Church, her husband, Theodore, as well as Lillian Langhorst. **Place-Memory** is present in the poem that Minnie wrote about her father.

My Father-G.A. Langhorst

Long ago and  
far away In  
Bremen,  
Germany,  
A man sailed west upon  
the sea In search of  
liberty  
He crossed the growing  
U.S.A.-A great expanse  
of land-  
And settled in a timbered spot  
Where mining was at hand.

The Twenty-Mile-House, it was  
called, A tract with space to  
spare,  
Where stages stopped and freight trains  
too, And work was everywhere.  
(June 2, 1952)

The poem invokes his original ancestry in *Niedersachsen* and his eventual emigration from Bremen. My Grandmother travelled with her Aunt Minnie to visit extended family and see the Ancestral farms in *Niedersachsen* in 1953. I visited both Bremen and *Niedersachsen* in 2015 with my Great Aunt Megan, repeating the last 1953 trip in strange **circular** ways. It was at the original Langhorst property in *Niedersachsen* where I realized with a shock, that I had seen the property in a dream before. This book helped me explore my research question by providing a wealth of direct texts written by Ancestors while allowed me to view my research question through the lens of **Place-Memory** and the strange way that time and families seem to move in **circles**.

## **FAMILY STORIES-STONE**

### **#1. Stone -Memory with Nonnie (Beatrice Lincks)**

A few months before I was born, my Great-Grandparents, Beatrice (Nonnie) and Fred Lincks (Boppie), along with Beatrice's sister Gloria had an accident with carbon monoxide at home. Fred and Gloria both died and Beatrice was in a coma but ultimately survived. Beatrice, who I called Nonnie, came to live with my family once I was born and lived with us until I was 6 years old. Nonnie and I often walked by the Mill River and through the forest, and Nonnie would always teach me about the Cornish cosmology. She was particularly insistent to teach me about the *piskies* and Nonnie taught me to leave small offerings for them and that I should avoid telling them my name or taking food from them at all costs. Nonnie always told me that the *piskies* liked to be near **water** and that they especially liked old **stone** walls (regularly found in the Northeast). Nonnie taught me about other beings from the unseen world, like mermaids and *buccas*. As an adult I conceptualize these beings, *if* they do truly exist, then I theorize that they could potentially be inter-dimensional creatures.

## **FAMILY STORIES-FIRE**

### **#1. Fire -Story Grandma Denise, 1906 Earthquake**

My Grandma excitedly told me that she had something in the basement to show me. She unearthed a box of China plates that came from John's store, and I asked her why they were so dirty. "It's ash chicky!" my Grandmother said with enthusiasm, and she held the soot-tinged plate to my nose and instructed me to inhale the smell of the 1906 **Fire**. This story inspired me as a child about both history and the transformative effects of fire. Our lack of records for my ancestor John Dwyer, who immigrated from Ireland to the West Coast, was said to be because of the 1906 Earthquake and subsequent **fire**. My Grandmother always told me all our family records were burned with John's store in San Francisco. This also reinforces for me the importance of oral traditions and stories in families. My Grandmother always shared family stories with me and I try to share these same stories with my younger cousins to carry on the tradition. This encouraged my explorations into preserving oral stories of my family members through the act of recording my interview process.

## **FAMILY STORIES-CIRCLES AND SPIRALS**

### **#1.Circles/Spirals -Memory of Grandpa Sherm**

**Spirals** appeared in my mind as my Grandpa told me stories as a child about the immigrants from Scandinavia who were used to farming on mountains and fjords. Upon first immigrating to the Great Plains, the immigrants were laughed at for continuing to plant their crops in **spirals**. This was due to the long rows favored by US Agriculture on the wide, flat plains of the Midwest. The story always made my Grandfather howl with laughter. When I draw **spirals**, I think of my Grandfather and how the land influences the people that live on it, and how that memory sustains or changes when people leave their home country.

This story supported inquiries into my thesis question because our conversations reference the cyclical nature of time that is made evident in my video editing. This story inspired symbolic imagery in the exhibition. The spirals that my Grandfather conjured in my mind are also reflected through repeated **spiral** imagery in the cyanotype mobiles and within my videos, in particular the **spiral** drawn in snow in my video, *Pledge Allegiance*.

## **FAMILY STORIES ON SALT**

### **#1. Salt -Personal Experience**

In the summer of 2012 activity began to stir up in my childhood home in Uncoway. The activity strangely seemed to be targeting me, which made me think it was possibly poltergeist activity. I was 17 at the time and recently graduated from high school. Due to my family member's work schedules, I ended up spending a lot of time at home alone. The activity seemed to be constantly ramping up that summer, and it happened to me when no one else was home. I realized that something needed to be done, and being the **witch** of the family, I started reading the book from Heaven's Grandmother, *Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs*, for inspiration on dealing with this paranormal activity.

I followed Cunningham's advice and rubbed the walls in the most active hallway with fresh basil leaves from the garden. I burned rosemary and pine needles as incense, but it wasn't enough. Sitting on the couch in our living room one day watching TV the door to the basement started to slowly creak open. I had passed the point from scared to fed up and started yelling at whatever it was that was invisibly opening the door, "Is that the best you've got? Really? You're going to have to try a little bit harder!" The door seemed to respond to my cajoling and swung completely open before then quickly slamming shut and swinging open again. I returned to the Cunningham's book and took his advice about spreading **salt** down the active hallway and at all the doors to the house. Every day I poured **salt** and created strands of garlic cloves that I wore for protection on particularly active days. Eventually, the activity did settle down, but to this day our family home in Uncoway goes through periods of strange activity.

## **FAMILY STORIES ON FREE SOUL STATE**

### **#1. Free Soul State-Story from Grandpa Sherm**

My Grandpa Sherm was my spiritual advisor and the first person who taught me about meditation and mindfulness. He was a lifelong Zen Buddhist and was active at the local Zen Buddhism Center in the Twin Cities. Once while visiting my Grandparents I asked my Grandfather what was his most intense experience while meditating. Grandpa said that they were doing a weekend retreat at the Buddhism Center, and they

were told to go out in the grounds of the center to find a solitary place in nature to meditate. He said that there was a beautiful forest on the grounds there and he found a spot at the edge of a forest next to **water**, alongside the river. Grandpa told me that when he reached the zenith of his meditation, he felt his father, holding him in his lap and rocking him gently. Grandpa said that it was so profound because his father had died when he was only 5 years old, and that he had completely forgotten the sensation of being held and rocked as a child. He also told me that when he ended the meditation, he found **salty** tears on his cheek, he had cried out of grief and love for his father.

## **FAMILY STORIES ON SHADOW**

### **#1. Shadow -Personal Experience**

During the summer of 2012 when there was intense paranormal activity in the family home, one particularly jarring incident was the night I was up very late, watching TV on the first floor. I saw straight ahead into the hallway, the basement door was ajar but the light in the kitchen was on. I watched for about 5-10 seconds as I saw a **shadow** that looked like my Dad walk down the hall into the kitchen. I walked into the kitchen to ask him if he was okay when I realized there was no one there. I ran upstairs full of adrenaline and saw that my Dad was fast asleep. I couldn't understand the **shadow** I had seen; it looked just like my Father's **shadow**.

Zinnia and I would witness **shadow** figures on our paranormal investigations, particularly when we were at Pine Grove. I heard on podcasts like *Ghost Bunny* that some people think that **shadow** figures are just elementals, meaning that they are earth **Spirits**, as opposed to human **Spirits**, some people believe that **shadow** figures have never been alive. On one hand, I think that could be one explanation, especially when I would see **shadow** figures in nature. However, a **shadow** figure in my house that looked like my Dad, that doesn't seem as easily explained by this theory about elementals. This story inspired my use of **shadow** figures as layered imagery in my videos. It also inspired me to explore what literature, podcasters, or family members theorize about the experience of seeing a **shadow** figure. Although there can't be definitive answers to this query, I nonetheless enjoy exploring different theories.



Figure 6. My Great-Grandmother, Marian, often inserted herself into photographs by revealing her shadow in the lower third. Photo courtesy of Megan George.

## FAMILY STORIES ON DISABILITY & INTERSECTIONALITY

### #1. Disability & Intersectionality Memory of Grandpa Sherm

I was 6 years old when my Grandpa Sherm retired and he and my Grandma Denise moved to Connecticut to be closer to us. My brother was playing tee-ball one evening and my Grandpa and I were sitting on a picnic table watching his game and I asked him if he could tell me a story about his Pa or his brother Joe who had both died when my Grandpa was quite young. I will never forget the smile that broke across his face. He told me that it made him happy that I wanted to hear stories about them. My Grandfather's deep love left a strong impression on me, and it gave Great Uncle Joe and my Great-Grandfather Al great importance in my mind.

When my Grandpa would tell stories about Joe, they were often about the way he made my Grandfather feel special, or the fun things that Joe and his friends would bring him to do on weekends. The fact that Joe was openly gay in Minnesota in the 1940s was never the most important thing about him, but it was always a part of his story. Joe's sexuality became more significant to me as I got older and realized my own queer identity. In 2020, when I almost died from Covid, Joe's **disabled** identity became even more important to

me. It was that summer when I realized that I was nearly the same age Joe was when he died from complications of a bicycle accident on July 22, 1994. I was inspired by these stories to try and research my Uncle Joe further, asking my maternal family members if they had stories about Joe. Through my process of automatic writing and drawing I can enter a trance state, and I believe that in that state I can learn more about Uncle Joe. My Mom told me a story about Uncle Joe contacting my Grandpa through the family psychic, Eve Olsen. Her message allegedly from Joe was that he was very proud of his little brother, Sherm. This story inspired me to try and use psychic automatism to learn more about Uncle Joe.

This story helped me explore my research question by providing a personal and family background for the lens of both **disability** and **intersectionality** which in my personal experiences are linked. My family history inspired me to work with the concepts of **witches**, and through my life being raised by the **water**, I was encouraged to work with **water** as a concept, material and process. **Spirits** who have always communicated with me compelled me to look further into theories relating to the **Spirit World**. **Fire** as a transformative element was explored, and the concepts and aesthetics of the thesis come back to the concept of a **circle** ranging from the shape of the moon and sun, the **circle** representing visually the self or the ego (Jung), the **circular** ways time moves and including the **circular** nature of the **water** cycle. The theory of **Portals** and inter-dimensional beings being a possible explanation for paranormal activity fascinated me and inspired me to continue exploring these mysterious subjects.

I don't believe I can't definitively answer my research question, but as a former astronomy professor, Dr. Juri Toomre once explained to my class that in astronomy, scientists can rarely prove their theories or postulates definitively. This is because humanity cannot yet travel through the universe to observe these distant objects in space directly and gather data. I believe in that way, astronomy and art are similar, you can make personal observations, but you rarely come to conclusive answers to these complex and poetic questions and explorations. These personal experiences, thinkers in the field and family stories inspired my research questions about **how water may act as an inter-dimensional Portal to the Spirit World**, or through examining autoethnography experiences and familial experiences through interviews, I also explored how can cultural beliefs and personal experiences may speak to the **ability of water to potentially act as an amplifier or boundary for the Spirit World**.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

My research questions developed from this wealth of family stories told to me throughout my life. These family stories inspired me to develop my research question. I explored various concepts including, **witches, water, Portals, Spirit World, Place-Memory, fire, stone, salt, circles, disability and intersectionality**. I explored these terms through research of my sources and through material investigations in the studio process. I formulated the following research questions to guide my work on this thesis. I was excited to explore such complex and mysterious questions through the lens of personal and familial experiences, pop culture and literature. Although there can't be definitive answers, I have nonetheless used my research to further my understanding of the research questions and to ponder and be inspired by different theories I encounter and to use them as inspiration for imagery and concepts that were present in my exhibit, *Echoes of Water: They Called Her a Witch*.

Does **water** act as an inter-dimensional **Portal** to the **Spirit World**?  
How does **water** amplify or act as a boundary for **Spirit**?

**Water** is like a woman accused of being a **witch**,  
...neither can be controlled.

Through examining autoethnography experiences and familial experiences through interviews, I also explored how can cultural beliefs and personal experiences may speak to the **ability of water to potentially act as an amplifier or boundary for the Spirit World** You can only hold snow as long as it takes your body heat to melt the flakes and force them to change state. You can change the way **water** flows, but only temporarily. Over time, rivers will breathe and walk, carving deeper canyons and valleys. **Water** can change the land in all its forms. During the last Ice Age, the Laurentide Ice Sheet covered “much of Canada and the United States” (Clement) and the glacial retreat shaped the land we walk on today and links various places that I have lived on Turtle Island, bonded by centuries of ice.

As a child, all our vacations were spent at a small family-owned cottage in Nauset, long days spent at the Ocean, and chilly nights enjoyed in the backyard around the **bonfire**. My favorite book was about Cape Cod hauntings, and over the years, I would read the stories obsessively, committing them to memory.

Belief in **Spirits**, cryptids and UAPs is common on the Cape, and in my years working there, stories were often swapped during downtime or with customers about unexplainable experiences. Cape Cod seems to be a particular hotspot for this activity that is theoretically all connected by the idea of inter-dimensional **Portals**. I believe that my personal experiences that the moving **water** that surrounds the peninsula of Cape Cod may further amplify the area's natural quality of being a Thin Place, and at liminal times in Thin Places, I theorize that if these **Portals** do exist, that for ephemeral duration, the **Portal** could open. I used this definition of a **Portal** to inspire the concepts and form of my thesis show, *Echoes of Water: They Called Her a Witch*.

I believe that a **Portal** could theoretically be amplified by natural geology, **stones** and **water**, which could be why these mysterious experiences of the paranormal are so common on the Cape. As an artist, I have always been drawn to working with **water**, whether that was swimming with disposable cameras or taking photos of the bodies of **water** that I encountered in daily life. Through my creative research, I used principles of *mamatowisiwin* (Ermine), story-telling and dreams as research

(Wilson), and psychic automatism (Anapur) to create my art in the studio. My research question was explored by the literature review as well as through the methodologies below. The archival family materials in the mobiles which included “wet-style” cyanotypes that explored visually the concept of **water** as a **Portal** to the **Spirit World**. The use of layering in the videos and the non-linear narratives and imagery reflect the **circles** of time and repeated behavior throughout families, as well as the cosmological images of **circles** that recur throughout the videos.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout my journey exploring my research question ‘Does **water** act as an inter-dimensional **Portal** for the **Spirit World**?’ I found the following sources to be valuable in shaping my research and inspiring my creative process. I explored the theoretical idea of **Portals** from a paranormal perspective through readings, podcasts, personal experiences and interviews with family and close friends. These sources theorizing about **Portals** led me in a variety of different directions as I attempted to begin exploring the range of research around **Portals**, and how autoethnographic experiences could speak to the ability of **water** to act as a boundary of amplifier for the **Spirit World** through firsthand stories and cultural cosmologies.

## ON WITCHES

(Refer to list of Ancestors formally accused on witchcraft on page 11)

I utilized a variety of sources on the historical subject of witches, notably, Elizabeth Boyce’s article, *The Peculiar Trials of Mary Staples*, the New Hampshire Public Radio segment by Eric Larrabee about witches of New Hampshire, featuring my Ancestor, Jane Walford. In comparing the experiences of my Ancestors accused of witchcraft in the various historical colonies I also utilized the Peter Muise article *Was Ann Burt A Witch?* which provided further historical context about my witch Ancestors. The websites, *Fairfield Museum and History Center* and *Museum of Cambridge* provided further historical and cultural references for the era of witchcraft hysteria.

Links between witches and water are a common thread in the sources. This ranged from explanations of the symbolism of dunking witches as a test (Boyce) to discussing specific ponds that were used in the witchcraft trials (*Fairfield Museum and History Center*) and what (if any) marker or memorial is present at these sites of historical injustices. The sources also discuss the reasons for the witchcraft accusations, from Mary Staples “being a scold” (Boyce) and “Jane [Walford] reportedly worked on her skills as a healer. She even befriended the few Native Americans remaining in the area and incorporated some of their healing ways into her own.” (Larrabee) Meanwhile, Ann Burt, like Jane Walford was also accused for her role as a community healer (Muise). These sources illustrated for me the ways in which witchcraft accusations were attempts to enforce colonialism, white supremacy and the patriarchy. For a further grounding in historical and cultural context, the *Museum of Cambridge* explores the historical practice of hanging witch balls in the homes of England, a practice which then traveled to Turtle Island as well.

## ON WATER

### #1. Water

Anderson, Kim. Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health, Halifax, Nova Scotia,

2010, *Aboriginal Women, Water and Health: Reflections from Eleven First Nations, Inuit and Métis Grandmothers*, <http://www.pwhce.ca/womenAndWater.htm>. Accessed June 2025.

Kim Anderson wrote *Aboriginal Women, Water and Health: Reflections from Eleven First Nations, Inuit and Métis Grandmothers* through a series of interviews with various Grandmothers who imparted their cultural and Ancestral teachings on water. Statements from Grandmother Jan Longboat (Mohawk, Six Nations of the Grand River) describes the power of water.

“At wintertime, it was different than spring and summer and fall. And our old people truly, truly understood that. They understood that language of –what they used to say, it's the language of the universe. ‘You've got to understand the language of the universe.’”  
(Anderson 19)

This concept articulated by Grandmother Jan, “universal language” closely mirrored my own thoughts on water, through that language and connection of water is where I believe in part, comes water's ability to act as a Portal. This source helped me explore my thesis question and provided crucial perspectives from Indigenous, Inuit and Métis Grandmothers from the land that this art was created on. This helped to balance the numerous perspectives and teachings about water from my settler Ancestors.

## **ON PORTALS**

My interest in Portals started as an interest in Spirits. Through consuming pop culture like TV shows and podcasts, I started to come around to the idea that all paranormal activity (Spirits, cryptids, and UAPs) could potentially be explained by inter-dimensional Portals. I believe that Portals would most likely be found in locations referred to as Thin Places, if they truly exist. Thin Place is a more modern Celtic spiritual term referring to “places where heaven and earth seem only a few feet apart, where the veil between this world and the eternal world is stretched thin.” (Relph) In these thin places, for brief periods of time, the liminal site is activated, and I believe that at this time, phenomenon could possible cross through the Portal and inter-dimensional beings could bleed through into our dimension or universe.

### **#1. Portals**

Belyeu, Stephen. “Night Owl: Haunted Vision - Part II.” *Night Owl*, season 1, episode 37, Feb. 2023.

The podcast discusses the connections between water and the Spirit World as well as discussions of Portals, what they are and how they appear visually “glimmery” to psychic Sara Reeves. Episode 37 also touches on Stone Tape Theory and the theory of residual hauntings. Team member, Alexis Arredondo, who is a spiritual practitioner brings up these related theories and explains further how they are related.

“So, there’s a thing called the Stone Tape Theory and there are stones, underground, and around that have quartz in them, and quartz is basically like a memory keeper. So, when there’s things like quartz naturally on the property, or in the foundation, or something they’re brought in. But the brick, the stone, it magnifies or like, replays things that may have happened. So, for example every day that you come in and put your pen here and move it over here. And every day for like 5, 10 years. 30 years from now someone is gonna come in one day and see a pen here that will do this.” (Arredondo)

This was evident in my art through my thinking about how to visually represent Portals as having unique light that appears glimmery. It also encouraged me to incorporate the images of rocks and minerals directly in the videos, including *Pledge Allegiance*. This inspired my research question and my thinking about the

role of Portals related to paranormal phenomena.

## **ON SPIRIT**

I utilized a range of theoretical and popular cultural sources on the question of the Spirit World, from podcast *Ghost Bunny*, theorist Roland Barthes, author and collector of community ghost stories, Mark Jasper, and the *Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs* by renowned Wiccan author, Scott Cunningham. There are so many references in paranormal podcasts like *Ghost Bunny* to water acting as an amplifier for the Spirit World, as guest and psychic Tawney Lewis explains, “Water is absolutely a conduit for spiritual energy...it like amps them [Spirits] up.” Bridget often discusses with her guests their personal theories about the paranormal and the link between the Spirit World and water. Podcast host Bridget Marquardt believes in the importance of intersectionality in the paranormal field and has a diverse range of guests, including Tawney Lewis, whose lived experiences and cultural backgrounds adds a wealth of firsthand experiences to my research. Author Mark Jasper who published community ghost stories in his book *Haunted Cape Cod and Islands* also finds the importance of firsthand experiences and recording oral stories for future interest. Jasper records many community stories of the water surrounding Cape Cod seemingly acting as both amplifier and boundary for the Spirit World, depending on the story.

Similarly, Scott Cunningham’s *Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs* also records cultural beliefs around the Spirit World, psychic powers and witchcraft in his Wiccan manual that was given to me by my friend Heaven, via their Grandmother. This text theorizes less about the Spirit World and instead focuses on ancient pagan practices of Europe and the magical significance of various herbs, some of these plants are also considered as potential amplifiers for the Spirit World and psychic abilities. Cunningham gives an example on the relationship between witches and specific trees, “At one time, Hawthorns were believed to Witches who had transformed themselves into trees. Witches have long danced and performed their rites beneath the thorn.” (Cunningham 118) The *Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs* inspired the plants that I used in my cyanotypes and provided important historical and cultural beliefs around magic, witchcraft and the realm of the dead. Discussions of death and hauntings in these sources inspired my use of video for its natural connections to death, memory and Spirits.

Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* also addresses death and societal ways of mourning through the lens of photography. Barthes provides important theoretical context linking the Spirit World with the media of photography and the moving image (video). Barthes discusses the role of photos in mourning and relates it to his personal loss of his mother.

“It is said that mourning, by its gradual labour, slowly erases pain; I could not, I cannot believe this; because for me, Time eliminates the emotion of loss (I do not weep), that is all. For the rest, everything has remained motionless. For what I have lost is not a Figure (the Mother), but a being; and not a being, but a quality (a soul): not the indispensable, but the irreplaceable.” (Barthes)

Barthes mourning of his mother is impacted by his examination of photographs of her and discussion of the way in which photography creates eventual ghosts of its once breathing subjects. This theoretical analysis of the practice of photography is grounded in a sociological understanding of the Spirit World through Avery Gordon’s book, *Ghostly Matters*. In this text, Gordon discusses the necessity of examining the phenomenon of hauntings through a societal lens.

“Haunting is a constituent element of modern social life. It is neither pre-modern superstition nor individual psychosis; it is a generalizable social phenomenon of great import. To study social life, one must confront the ghostly aspects of it.” (Gordon 7)

In agreement with Gordon, I believe that if a significant portion of the population has a firsthand experience of hauntings or inexplicable paranormal phenomenon then it is a field worth examining. Regardless of if Portals truly exist or not, or for that matter, if the Spirit World really exists, people in our society believe it

to be true and this belief is behind a multi-million-dollar paranormal industry that exists globally and ranges from media to tourism. I find it interesting how belief in the Spirit World differs from place to place, when I lived in Germany it was considered esoteric to discuss hauntings. However, living in Nauset on Cape Cod, the Spirit World is a part of daily life for the many residents who live in allegedly haunted homes. Location determines not only belief or skepticism; it also deeply impacts which media I work in and the concepts that I explore in my artistic practice.

## **ON PLACE-MEMORY**

### **#1. Place-Memory**

Flusser, Vilém. “Exile and Creativity.” *Flusser Archive*, 1984.

This text explores the positive side of exile for the exiled, as Flusser was exiled for being Jewish during World War II. Flusser explains in the essay that, “In exile, everything is unusual. Exile is an ocean of chaotic information.” Despite this chaotic information, Flusser asserts that the only people who can view a place with true honesty are those who are immersed into exile, at least until they adjust themselves to their new country. Flusser also discusses the positive side of exile, that sense of freedom, and especially creative freedom, that can be felt through the confusion of their new surroundings.

This text inspired me to further examine how my location impacts my art and creative practice. Like Flusser, my matrilineal family line is Ashkenazi Jewish (although they left in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and I relate to the concept in Judaism that Jewish people were put into a spiritual exile by G-d. In my work I explore what objects or traditions relating to home that my Jewish Ancestors carried with them when they left Europe. For my family it was food, traditions and a beautiful decanter decorated with Stars of David that came wrapped carefully in a valise. This work did not directly influence my art but instead helped me explore my thesis question. The idea of home discussed by Flusser was an important grounding, especially during my interviews with family members.

## **ON FIRE**

### **#1. Fire**

Richardson-Read, Scott. “Saining Not Smudging- Purification, Blessing and Lustration in Scottish Folk Magic Practice.” *Cailleachs Herbarium*, 10 Feb. 2019, [cailleachs-herbarium.com/2019/02/saining-not-smudging-purification-and-lustration-in-scottish-folk-magic-practice/](http://cailleachs-herbarium.com/2019/02/saining-not-smudging-purification-and-lustration-in-scottish-folk-magic-practice/)

This text looks at traditional Scottish folk magic practices involving fire and smoke, and author Richardson-Read explain the purpose of saining that, “Saining practices are carried out primarily to remove influences of negative spirits on people, places, objects and livestock or to protect and keep folks from harm.” (Richardson-Read). It inspired me to further research the magical practices of my Ancestors and what plants would have been meaningful to them. It helped me explore fire as an element relating to the Spirit World. The research is evident in my use of fire and sparks imagery in the videos *Coven* and *Down the Well*. This work did not directly help me answer my thesis question but provided further cultural reference for my works with the imagery of fire.

## **ON CIRCLES**

As a clinical psychologist, my Grandfather spoke of Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud with reverence, along

with a healthy dose of criticism. Jung spoke of circles as representing the ego (Ross), which I agree with. In my own definition of circles are representative of Portals to other dimensions. Circles are shown in my work through the sun, the moon, the water cycle, epigenetics, snail shells, crab-apples and circles that I draw around figures represent their aura. Shawn Wilson also says that “Stories go in circles...part of listening involves getting lost.” (Wilson 6). I also view circles as relevant to my concepts around time and families moving in circles. Circles were a recurring symbol, one that I also related to psychoanalysis. My maternal Grandparents and Mother were/are trained clinical psychologists. Growing up, I heard so much about Freud and Jung, and when I was nine, my Grandparents decided I was old enough to learn more of the theories of psychoanalysis, which made me popular in elementary school. Carl Jung represented “the self” through a mandala, an influence of Eastern thought on his own psychoanalysis theory.

“A mandala configuration, a squared circle divided into four with a cross radiating to or from the center, carrying the promise of balance, union and the connection of opposites. For Jung the mandala was an expression of the psyche and a symbol of ‘self-realization and individuation’.” (Ross)

I agree with Jung that the circle is representative as a form for the psyche or the self, and I also am inspired by Jung’s theories about the collective unconscious, which can also be explained by another source, Dr. Leroy Little Bear in his explanations of frequencies of knowledge. Dr. Little Bear visited the hoodoos at Writing-On-Stone and explained through interviews with Don Hill that is a place where someone can receive energy waves of knowledge.

““The native paradigm consists of several key things, one of them is constant motion or constant flux. The second part is everything consists of energy waves. In the native world, the energy waves are really the spirit. And it is the energy waves that know, it is not you that knows. You know things because you are made up of energy waves or a combination thereof.” (Hill 7)

This quotation was inspiring for my thinking on the importance of energy waves and how they relate to the collective unconscious. This article also highlighted for me how Little Bear’s Blackfoot cosmology related to my understanding of Portals as a liminal space, or a Thin Place. The stone petroglyphs at Writing-On-Stone also feature imagery of circles, as well as Spirit beings.

## **ON SALT**

### **#1. Salt**

Jacobi, Zohare. “Jewitches Protection Pouch.” *Jewitches*, 2024, [jewitches.com/enca/products/jewitches-protection-pouch](https://jewitches.com/enca/products/jewitches-protection-pouch)

This website Jewitches is run by Zohare Jacobi who uses their personal experiences and research into Ashkenazi Jewish folk magic and the larger global Diaspora community. Jacobi provides information on various plants and objects that were historically utilized by Jewish people, including the role of salt.

“Salt is one of the ultimate purifying and protective substances within Judaism, afterall, we are taught that it is not a meal without salt. There are numerous rituals for protection and healing with salt, including removing and preventing the evil eye, as well as removing unclean forces.” (Jacobi)

This cultural background that I share with Jacobi inspired me to research the plants and objects that my Jewish Ancestors would have used in their daily folk magic practices. It helped me consider my thesis question in a new light by linking the salt in Ocean water to the larger cultural or religious beliefs around salt.

## **ON FREE SOUL STATE**

### **#1. Free Soul State**

Barclay, Emily. “The Sámi Traditional World View through Decline and Ascent.” *University of Texas Laits*, <https://www.laits.utexas.edu/sami/dieda/anthro/worldview.htm>.

This text explores the Sámi traditional world view regarding traditional beliefs of animism and describes the various dimensions that Sámi people traditionally believed in. Barclay discusses the concept in Sámi cosmology of the “free soul state” which is defined as the time when a soul is free to leave its physical body and travel in different dimensions. It inspired me in thinking about the “free soul state” and the idea of the soul existing separately from the physical body. The text also connects to the writing of Shawn Wilson through Harold Gaski’s explanation of the Sámi way to tell a story.

“The Sámi scholar, Harold Gaski writes, ‘—The Sámi way of telling a story is to tell a lot of stories simultaneously – one digression leading into another into another and so on’ (Gaski 1992). It is difficult, as a westerner, to write about the Sámi traditional worldview without dissecting it and displaying the myriad parts in geometric fractions, but such a compartmentalization would insult the profound way in which the Sámi applied their worldview to their everyday lives.”

Much like for Wilson, the Sámi way of telling a story is to tell them in circles, with stories in between the other stories. These concepts were made evident in art through the shadow figure in the videos that represented the soul freed from the physical shell, it also reinforced for me conceptually this idea of the circle as the primary metaphor for this thesis. This text helped me research my thesis question by providing an influential perspective for my studies into different cultural beliefs around the Spirit World and inter-dimensional travel. In exploring family and cultural stories, it was important of me to also provide an Indigenous perspective, as people of the land since time immemorial. That deep knowledge of the land, the animals and the cosmos provides an important and invaluable perspective on relationships with Ancestors, land and waters.

## **ON DISABILITY & INTERSECTIONALITY**

### **#1. Disability**

Wong, Alice. *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century*. Vintage Books, a Division of Penguin Random House LLC, 2022.

This book explores first-person stories about lived experiences with disability. It inspired me in my readings on intersectionality/disability and to consider the role of storytelling in the disabled community. It helped me connect further theoretically to my disabled and chronically ill Ancestors and family members. Alice Wong wrote that, “Storytelling can be a resistance. It leaves evidence that we were here in a society that devalues, excludes, and eliminates us.” (Wong). This reading was made evident in the use of empty medicine blister pill packs as part of my cyanotype mobiles. It also expanded my view on a Portal through Wong’s quote, “Disability is a portal, a way of focusing our gaze and sharpening our lens on the intricacies of humanity.” This quote reminded me that a Portal does not just have to be viewed from a paranormal viewpoint. From a non-normative disabled perspective, disability can also act as a metaphorical Portal.

All these above sources provided insight into my research questions, and through my explorations into the mystical and unknown, I was greatly inspired greatly through the concept, process and final form of my exhibit. I explored; **how does water act as an inter-dimensional Portal for the Spirit World? How does water act as a boundary or amplifier for the Spirit World?** These readings, websites and podcasts encouraged me to approach creative research methodologies in the studio as a form of arts-based research, which often leads to more questions and answers that are not obvious or fully explained. I value the ability of art to reflect enigmatic subjects through various visual forms and inspiration for concepts.

## **ON CREATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Inspired by the above texts and podcasts, I began to seek explore my research questions through my creative research methodologies in the studio. I worked with cyanotypes and video installation to explore; **how does water act as an inter-dimensional Portal to the Spirit World? How does water act as a boundary or amplifier for Spirit?** I further explored family stories, family documents and in conducting interviews with family and friends. Following a research process of *mamatowisiwin* (Ermine), the role of dreams and storytelling as research methodologies (Wilson), as well as psychic automatism (Anapur), and exploring **Place-Memory** (Flusser) as a research methodology.

I have always been drawn to working with **water** in my film souping process of analogue photography. When I lived in Nauset and took photos at the Ocean I would soak my disposable cameras in the **water** and take them swimming in Cape Cod Bay. I take disposable cameras and destroy them in the process of shooting. In Tkaronto the cameras are dipped into L a k e Ontario and in Uncoway I dunk them like **witches** in the Mill River. My experimental film photography practice of film soup embraces the changes of state for **water**. Through “film souping” the camera is soaked in a mixture of various liquids, detergents, spices and chemicals. The souping is relatively brief, from 2-16 minutes, and the entire disposable camera is souped without the film canister first being removed, the Gagné Method, as I have coined it. After souping the camera is run under cold **water** before drying. I often leave cameras outside during storms, or I will leave the camera in a freezer for several days or weeks. Once the camera is removed, it thaws, dries out again and is then developed and scanned.

The **water** molecules in the camera are forced to repeatedly change state before the camera is exposed to **water** again: mirroring the many small deaths of a roll of film, from the death of each image to the death of the roll (Barthes). Photography has always been a medium closely associated with death and other mysterious forces in the universe.

## **ON CREATIVE RESEARCH, MAMATOWISIWIN**

*Mamatowisiwin* is a Cree concept describe by Willie Ermine in *Aboriginal Epistemology*, and it was a guiding source in my creative research. Moments of *mamatowisiwin* show me that I was on the right track through trusting my inherent creative instinct, synchronicities and signs from the universe. I also followed my intuition and the whispered words I heard from the Spirit World. Willie Ermine explains a basis for Aboriginal epistemology,

“In the Aboriginal mind, therefore, immanence is present that gives meaning to existence and forms the starting point for Aboriginal epistemology. It is a mysterious force that connects the totality of existence-the forms, energies, or concepts that constitute the outer and inner worlds.” (Ermine)

I am naturally drawn to the mysterious forces that Ermine discusses, both those in the outer world and the inner world, which I conceptualize as the unconscious mind. I believe that when the unconscious mind is in control it becomes easier to listen to Spirits and to acquire new knowledge from the collective unconscious (Jung). I tried to listen more closely to the land that I am living on and to become acquainted with the plant species that are new to me here.

On my daily walks with Soup, I followed *mamatowisiwin* through collecting medicinal and magical “weeds” growing in the cracks of sidewalks and flowers that Soup and I grew on our balcony. This practice connects me more deeply to the land I’m living on and the plants that also live here. I would tell the trees about the art I imagined, and they would respond. In the fall, the magical rowan tree would drop small branches with berries still clinging to the ground and in winter, my tree friends would leave me pinecones and pieces of broken cedar resting atop the fresh snow. I took videos on our walks, of myself, of Soup and of the snow and our tree friends, observing how they transform throughout the years, endless circles of dark and light seasons. Walks are calming for me, and they put me into an almost psychic automatist trance state, especially when Soup and I are alone in the park.

## **ON CREATIVE RESEARCH, DREAMS & STORYTELLING**

### **#1. Dreams, Storytelling**

Wilson, Shawn. “Foreword and Conclusion.” *Research Is Ceremony*, Fernwood, Halifax, Winnipeg, 2008, p. 6

Following his principle of Indigenous research methodologies I explored story-telling and dreams for their role in the research practice. One of my primary forms of research has been interviewing family members and friends. The other primary form of research has been reading records, memoirs, stories and autobiographies from our family and public archives.

I have been lucky for years to experience dreams in which my family members and Ancestors communicate with me. I kept a dream diary from the start of my thesis, and when I saw the shapes and patterns of UAPs in my dreams repeated in my photos, I decided that this meant that I was on the right track. Willie Ermine also mentions the importance of dreams.

“The spirit is the haven of dreams, those peculiar images that flash symbolic messages to the knower. Dreams are the link to the spiritual world from whence our spirit comes, and they are linked with ‘undivided wholeness in flowing movement’ (Bohm 1980)...Dreams are the guiding principles for constructing the corporeal.” (Ermine 107)

At times, I would hear disembodied whispers in my apartment while I was creating art, and instead of discounting them as the chatter of a tired brain, I would write them down and tell Tannis what the voices said in our meetings. During my experiments with ITC and water scrying, I heard a strange voice whisper in my ear, “Now you see.” I added these strange, whispering voices to the audio of my videos in nod to these Spirits.

“Stories go in circles. They don’t go in straight lines. It helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside and between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. Part of finding is getting lost, and when you are lost you start to open and listen.” (Wilson 6).

Upon commencing my interviews, I realized I had carried the decolonial methods of non-extractive relationship and research that is built on relationships and respect. My interviews have been reciprocal; they

have been less an extractive one-sided interview than a conversation. I give weight to the oral histories as well as the physical records, and in following these stories. I go in circles, and I get lost for hours among the names, dates and photos of the dead. Stories go in circles. Families go in circles too, past actions influencing the present generation, even when the stories have never been told to them. Families that don't learn their history are doomed to repeat it.

Storytelling is one of the most important methodologies that I followed for this project. I have been collecting written family memoirs, records and stories in my interviews with family and close friends. Within these interviews, there is also a reciprocity in that I also share my own answers to the question being asked of my family member. There are stories and laughs exchanged, as well as moments of heaviness and grief. Even in the moments where we discuss deep familial traumas, there is a release in saying hard truths out loud. There is a relief in crying together and holding space for each other, and for all of the feelings that questions of family and home can bring up. Sometimes, the tears didn't feel like mine; instead, they felt like Ancestral pain and grief. This pain is the kind of echo that lingers in our own cells, something my Mother explained to me through the study of epigenetics.

My Mom said that our Ancestors experiences are literally coded into our body, these experiences impact the following generations on the DNA level. In finding these threads of generational trauma and resilience, I began to find my way back home to my Ancestors and the lives they led. As Shawn Wilson said, "There are stories inside and between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home." (Wilson 6) For me, these interviews where my family shared stories with me, were a way for me to find my way home, home to my Ancestors.

## **ON CREATIVE RESEARCH, PSYCHIC AUTOMATISM**

The Eli Anapur article *How Does Pure Psychic Automatism Work in Art?* was a guiding principle on the use of psychic automatism in art. Anapur describes the process, "In its pure state...dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern." (Anapur) It inspired me to continue using psychic automatism in my video and audio editing as well as in my writing and my automatic drawings. I also followed psychic automatism in picking objects to create photograms on cyanotypes and through the quick, automatic arranging of the objects. I was inspired by the article *Anna Atkins's Cyanotypes: The First Book of Photographs* written by Kerry Lotzof discusses Atkins botanical cyanotypes and through the process of psychic automatism and *mamatowisiwin* I was inspired to create experimental cyanotypes that I exposed to the natural elements, and in particular storms that featured water in all its forms: rain, sleet, hail or snow, leaving it up to the mysterious forces of the universe how the cyanotype would appear once exposed and fixed with cold water.

## **ON CREATIVE RESEARCH, PLACE MEMORY**

### **#1. Place-Memory**

Hill, Don. "Listening to Stones." *Alberta Views*, 1 Sept. 2008, <https://albertaviews.ca/listening-to-stones/>. Accessed July 2025.

This text is an interview conducted by Hill in conversation with Dr. Leroy Little Bear, who discusses ideas of flux in the universe and places that may amplify knowledge from the Spirit World or other intangible sources.

"I have a hunch that special places, such as Writing-on-Stone, might function and act

like an amplifier. ‘To give you more juice,’ I say, an antenna to extend the range of human perception. ‘Very much so,’ Little Bear agrees. ‘That’s the reason why there’s certain locations, whether they be medicine wheels or locations like Milk River, Chief Mountain and the Sweetgrass Hills; they’re all connected. It seems that’s where all these energies come together. It’s not that it can’t happen elsewhere. But there are certain places that act as amplifiers of energy waves that flow through you and me and everyone else.’” (Hill 8)

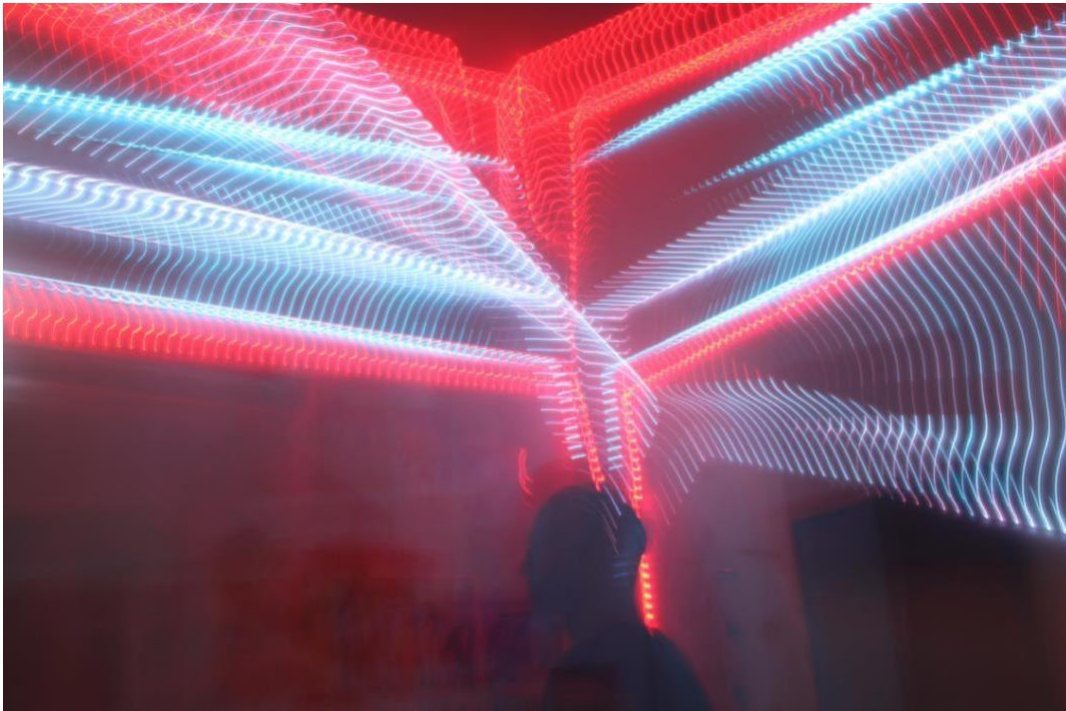


Figure 7. Digital photo by Juliana Gagné showing flux and energy waves, 2025.

This quote in particular inspired my Place-Memory research and my trip to Campbellford and the Petroglyphs Provincial Park, which also influenced my artistic visualization of Portals. This reading emanates throughout the cyanotype mobiles, which represent flux and frequency waves bringing knowledge, as well as imagery in the videos. This reading provided crucial theories in researching my thesis question. Little Bear discusses various conceptual topics that touch upon ideas of flux, energy waves of knowledge and as he and Don Hill refer to as “special places” which I refer to as Thin Places in my research.

Through the wealth of sources explored, I built my primary concepts around ideas presented by Barthes, Cunningham, Flusser, Barclay, Boyce, Hill, Jasper, Anderson and the podcasts *Ghost Bunny* and *Night Owl*. Creative process was informed conceptually by Willie Ermine, Shawn Wilson, Eli Anapur, and Dr. Leroy Little Bear. I was inspired to continue working with these supporting concepts and theoretical framework as I continued my research in the studio using materials and form to reinforce my concepts. Through the show I organized, *Opening Portals*, I also practiced feminist collaboration, with myself and the other three artists, Liv, Tavleen and Inéz to have discussions and be in conversation with each other’s work and theories surrounding a belief in **Portals**.

I do not feel it is possible to definitively answer my research question, given the current mystery that surrounds discussions of the **Spirit World**. However, my explorations of my research questions and connections and theories that I have discovered through the facts of my first-hand experiences that are reflected in the concept and form of my thesis show, *Echoes of Water*. The materials and form emphasize the concepts of **water** possibly acting as a **Portal** to the **Spirit World** through multi-layered videos that combined storytelling with **circle** imagery that I used to symbolize **Portals**. I invoked the state of flux in the universe through the cyanotype mobiles and wall hangs, which were made through experiments with **water** and the cosmos. The videos represented non-linear and **circular** narratives and passage of time. The frequency measuring instruments of the prisms also represent visually the energy waves of knowledge that Little Bear discusses which I used to create photograms in the cyanotypes and video filters for every video that I created.



Figure 8: 35mm film souped arm self-portrait with the Atlantic Ocean

## CREATIVE RESEARCH METHODS-STUDIO MAMATOWISIWIN & CYANOTYPES

Through my creative research, I used principles of *mamatowisiwin* (Ermine), dreams and storytelling as research (Wilson), and psychic automatism (Anapur) to create my art in the studio. Inspired by ideas of flux (Hill) and a memory with my Grandma Denise, I created cyanotype mobiles and wall hangs. The material of cyanotype was greatly inspired by pioneering scientist, Anna Atkins. Videos were visual engagements with the sentient elements of **water** and **fire**. Videos contained many layers with images of figures overlaid on top of each other, **shadow** figures **circling** and repeating the actions with a noticeable delay, suggesting a disorientation of time and the idea of multiple converging timelines and stories.

My creative research explored the northern sun through cyanotypes, experimenting with how light and seasonal shifts shape the images that I created. The cyanotypes I create are primarily done in the “wet style”,

meaning that the mixture of potassium ferricyanide and ferric ammonium citrate, each mixed separately with **water**. The two chemical mixtures are then combined in equal parts and applied to the paper. The image is exposed before the chemicals are dried. I use the natural sunlight to expose my images and the plants I use as photograms are also collected on my daily walks, I then dry and press the plants for repeat use. Other objects I use to create cyanotypes include personal and family jewelry, brass **circles** (featured in the mobiles) medicine, pill packets, altar candle spoons, beaver teeth, prisms, a deer rib, and pieces of glass that I have written or drawn on in oil marker Sharpie. On my daily walks with my dog, Soup and I collected interesting weeds growing in the cracks of sidewalks and flowers that have fallen to the ground. I identify them and save them to create photograms during my cyanotype process. This practice connects me more deeply to the land I'm living on and my neighboring plants.

Cyanotypes are historically instrumental in creating blueprints (hence where the 'blue' in 'blueprint' originates) for architecture and construction. This is where the *mamatowisiwin* starts to align with my personal and family history along with the materials and creative process. My Dad owns a contracting business, and there were always blueprints around growing up. There are many names for the color of cyanotypes, from Prussian blue to Berlin blue to Paris blue. Each of these city cyan namesakes are places where my Ancestors are from, and in the case of Berlin, even a place that I have personally lived. Blue in my work is also significant for its own ability to act as a metaphorical **Portal**. Blue is not only the color of sky and water, but also the color of my Mother's eyes, a link to our Ancestors who shared my Mom and Grandmother's blue eyes.

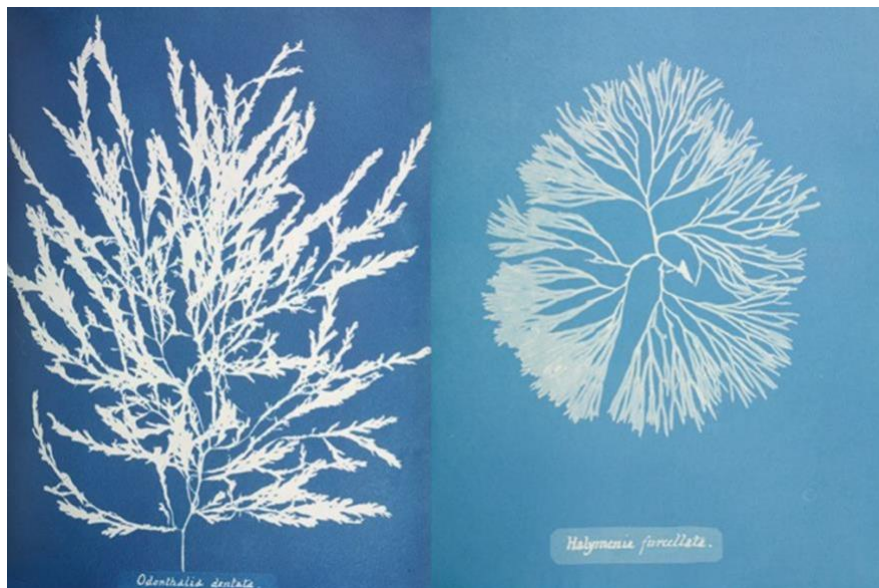


Figure 9. Algae from Anna Atkins' Photographs of British Algae, ca. 1843–53, courtesy of the New York Public Libraries Digital Collections.

In working with the elements and in my foraging of plants for use as photograms, *mamatowisiwin* is an ever-present and guiding force from the universe. I associate the color blue with memory and **water**. I also acknowledge that I don't see blue like most people. Another inherited trait from my Ancestors is mild red-green colorblindness. For me, the hardest colors are those that fall in the blue-green-gray spectrum. I may see fewer shades of blue, but I see many more shades of gray. I don't consider the way that I view colours differently from someone with typical color vision, because nearly every person in my family also has a degree of color blindness. I create art primarily for my family, and the way that my family and I view the

world is unique. My use of bright colours is one way that I work with color in my art practice. I don't avoid the nuanced shades of colours that I don't see well; The "grays" are present in my cyanotypes, which to my eyes range from green, gray, blue and violet.

My cyanotypes also naturally reference the seminal works of Anna Atkins and her 1834 book "Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions" (Atkins) which was the first modern photography book. I'm drawn to Anna Atkins' work for not just its aesthetic qualities, but also for Anna's scientific knowledge, which was not common for women of her time. Anna Atkins would have been called a **witch** if she had had the displeasure to live in colonial New England. She was a feminist who didn't accept that women shouldn't be involved in science or art. Anna Atkins's father opened the door for her in the patriarchal world of 19<sup>th</sup> century England. Anna's "'Father was a well-respected scientist...which in turn opened doors for Anna to participate in science that would not have been possible for many women at that time.'" (Lotzof) I work directly with the cosmos, using the sun to expose my cyanotypes. During hot exposures, **water** condensation forms where the glass rests on the wet watercolor paper. The cyanotypes took an experimental turn in the cold winter months of Tkaronto.

I have been working with multiple layers and exposures, letting the **water**/chemical solution pool and drip, often sprinkling **salt** on the wet surface allowing it to crystallize. I have been working with the elements, leaving out cyanotypes during snowstorms, buried and exposed over days, sometimes stained by mud. This supports my thesis question in my explorations into the power of **water** that has been transformed, as mentioned previously by Grandmother Jan. "Jan learned from her elders that when **water** changes form—as it does in the spring—it is given a 'brand new power.' The benefits of engaging with this power are evident, for example, when snow and ice change to liquid form." (Anderson 11) I was conceptually interested in playing with the power of **water** that is transformed and by experimentally engaging with the winter storms and low-UV light conditions of the Tkaroto winter. Once the snow during a storm makes contact with the unfixed cyanotype print exposing, it forever leaves a ghostly palimpsest of the snowflake that was once there before melting. The cyanotypes that were buried under the historic snowstorm are also now a visual relic of a historic durational event, compressed into a single image, acting as a visual **Portal** to the snowstorm.



Figure 10. Detail shot of an experimental cyanotype that I layered and exposed multiple times.

## **CREATIVE RESEARCH USING DREAMS & STORY-TELLING**

By following my intuition, listening to dreams and disembodied whispers; I place significance in Indigenous research methodologies. I asked my Ancestors to call out to me, and they answered me in subtle and mysterious ways. This ranged from being called to the **water** of the Trent River in Campbellford, ON, without knowing my family history in the town. My Grandparents became involved in my research, reaching out to distant family members for more stories and information. My undertaking became a family project, one that my Grandparents and Parents are invested in; their interest reassured me of the value of this undertaking. My underlying questions are explored and supported through the methodology of keeping a dream diary since the beginning of my thesis. Through these dreams, my Ancestors gave me inspiration and imparted knowledge about my family members through these dreams.

Shawn Wilso also talks about the importance of storytelling, which was a primary source for me during my interviews with family and friends. As Wilson says, “Stories go in **circles**. They don’t go in straight lines.” (Wilson 6) This was indeed true as I found myself getting lost in the **circles** of stories told during interviews. Through the cacophony of new realizations, facts and anecdotes, I found myself again lost, walking in **circles**, but through that feeling of being lost, I was also finding my way home to my Ancestors. There are many ways to metaphorically return to my Ancestors, and one way is through the languages that they spoke. I realized at a young age that the more languages someone spoke, the more people they could communicate with, and the more stories that they could understand and share with others. I am interested in using Ancestral languages and theorizing that these words are way to connect to my Ancestors and hypothetically open a **Portal**. In the process of immigration and assimilation, many Ancestral languages in my family were lost to time.

However, not all Ancestral languages were lost in my family; I was lucky enough to learn words and phrases

in foreign languages through my Grandparents and Mother. My Mom helped me learn French in school and my Grandma, or *Oma*, started teaching me German when I was 17. Most importantly, my Grandmother Yuhuan, 奶奶, taught me Mandarin when I was 14 because my high school teacher wasn't effective. 奶奶 and my Grandpa Tom would come to Turtle Island during the winter and summer school vacations. 奶奶 was a headmistress of four elementary school and Grandpa was a guidance counselor, coach and teacher at international schools. During these school vacations I spent a lot of time with my Grandparents and for 奶奶 there was never a missed opportunity for her to practice her English and for me to practice Mandarin.

Learning Mandarin was humbling and slow progress, so different from my previous experiences learning Indo-European languages. Luckily 奶奶 is a skilled teacher, and my Aunt Linnea also speaks Mandarin with excellent tones, she would also make me practice with her during phone calls and visits. Slowly, as I learned I tried to teach the rest of my family too, coaching Tommy to tell 奶奶 *thank you for the presents, I love you Grandma* and most importantly, *I'm full!* I felt most special in the moments when 奶奶 would forget how to say a word in English and she would turn to me to translate for her. I think of 奶奶 grabbing my hand to write characters in my palm with her fingers, while trying to teach me the right stroke order.

Language was always a way to express myself, and learning other languages allowed me to connect with even more people. These languages also connected me to my family and my Ancestors. When I returned to the family farms of *Niedersachsen* in 2017 with my Parents and Tommy my family there was overjoyed to see how much German I had learning studying in Berlin. I had pride in how much I had learned and I was able to understand the conversations around the dinner table in the family house in Borg. It gave me much more depth of knowledge hearing these family stories and being able to understand them, and later I was able to tell those stories again for my English-speaking family. My Mom would often nudge me at the dinner table and ask me to translate or to repeat what someone had said.



Figure 11. Photo by Juliana Gagné of the back of a cyanotype wall hang. The text reads in Norwegian “*Dea Mathilde Tromsness giftet seg med Albert Wilhelm 27. Januar 1909*”. The English translation is, “Dea Mathilde Tromsness married Albert Wilhelm on January 27, 1909”.

Through my personal experiences, I have always understood the power of sound to connect with people. Recent research into singing bowls and their effect on physical and mental health has led to surprising data. Scientist Cai Yiqing and their team have started to attempt to quantify how sound impacts our health stating, “These evidence summarized indicate as a safe intervention, singing bowl therapy may help the body relax and stimulate brain waves.” (Cai) My Grandfather’s prized singing bowl that I received after his death is featured in the soundtrack of some of the videos, referencing sacred and healing frequencies, as well as the idea that certain frequencies can connect us with the **Spirit World**.

My experiences with my family have greatly informed not only my video soundtracks and audio art, and also my imagery, photographic references and aesthetics. My Great-Great-Aunt Louise was an avid photographer who inspired me aesthetically; I often wonder if I channel my photographer Ancestors when I take photos. I incorporated photos taken of and by Louise into the cyanotype mobiles. Louise’s sister is my maternal Great-Grandmother, Marian Jones Dwyer.

Marian and her husband Bill were both amateur photographers. Marian’s mother, my maternal Great-Grand Grandmother, Lillian Langhorst Jones also enjoyed photography. She also expressed herself through writing her lifelong diaries which were published by my Great Aunt Megan. On my Dad’s side of the

family, my Great-Grandfather, Thomas Amos Gagné, was also a lifelong photographer from his first job after high school to his hobby in retirement. Each family member was intrigued by the apparatus of the camera, peering at the world through the **circular** glass lens, creating their own perspective through framing and composition. This family history of photography compelled me to connect with my Ancestors through analogue photography, and in reimagining their process I would film soup the cameras. Thinking of the next avenue in photography, I also began creating digital videos where I would layer my analogue photographs with digital videos.



Figure 12. My maternal Great-Grandparents, Marian (Jones) Dwyer and Bill Dwyer, taking simultaneous portraits. Date circa 1930s, location likely somewhere in Nevada.

### **CREATIVE RESEARCH USING PSYCHIC AUTOMATISM**

I assembled the videos using psychic automatism to make cuts and select audio and layer images. I am also influenced by receiving “downloads” from the universe, occasions where suddenly I have knowledge that I should not have access to. Dr. Little Bear in his conversations with Don Hill provides what I think is an important theory for how my downloads occur.

“Talking about these energy waves, it’s almost as though you act simply as a conduit, like a radio picking up these energy waves that are always there and flowing through you

and happening at the same time. It just depends where you're tuned.'" (Hill 7)

When these "downloads" occur, I suddenly feel knowledge that I shouldn't have, it is clearly external, yet I am receiving it as if it is my own thought. Dr Leroy Little Bear deftly explains my downloads in terms of flux and energy waves of information that can be absorbed. Thinking about these frequencies and energy waves of information led me to use frequency-measuring instruments of prisms and sun catchers as filters for the videos.

Using analogue forms of photographic visual effects is an interest of mine, whether that is through using unusual filters, double exposures or long exposures. I have long been fascinated by **Spirit** Photography since I first encountered it in the 5th Grade when my teacher presented a unit on the US Civil War. The book we were reading as a class incorporated **Spirit** Photography; in the book one of the characters who is a Union Soldier is having his portrait taken when a stray bullet hits him during the exposure. A ghostly image is left that the other soldiers assume is a visual representation of their friend's soul leaving his body. Historians assign William H. Mumler as the inventor **Spirit** Photography in my birthplace, the city of Boston. My digital portraits taken over the summer invoked **Spirit** Photography, and in this tradition, I decided to try to create the ambience of **Spirit** Photography through my videos.

I layered videos of **shadow** figures along with these kaleidoscopic and prismatic videos to act as visual filters. In the video *Coven* multiple channels playing the video of me, Inéz, Liv and Tavleen dancing around the **Portal** for our performance piece for the show *Opening Portals* and the videos are layered. With each layer of us dancing, I adjusted the opacity to create ghostly traces of figures. By not aligning the videos chronologically, I played with non-linear representations of time. Through these videos I created digital **Spirit** moving images. In the contemporary study of **Spirit** Photography, there is a new push to examine the photos in a modern, **intersectional** light.

The thesis paper, *The Role of Women in Victorian-Era Spirit Photography: A New Narrative*, published in 2015 at Concordia University by Felicity Tsering Chödrön Hamer. Hamer discusses the role of women in the world of **Spirit** Photography. Hamer considers the modern legacy of women associated with the movement of Spiritualism.

"I'm tired of William Mumler being the inventor of **spirit** photography.' This reaction, from the art historian, Lucy Traverse, upon learning of my research, demonstrates that I am not alone in wanting to question the absolute primacy of Mumler in accounts of the development of **spirit** photography. Given their critical involvement in mourning practices, the readiness to dismiss women as active participants in the invention defies a certain conceptual logic...[instead Hamer positions] Helen F. Stuart as creator or co-creator of this new genre of photography.'" (Hamer 2).

Through Hamer's assertion that Helen Stuart was instead the creator of **Spirit** Photography, she references the extensive involvement of women in that era with "mourning practices" (Hamer 2). This insight into women's association with mourning is also referenced by Bridget Marquardt in conversations around Spiritualism and **Spirit** Photography through the interviews on her podcast. I represent this **intersectionality** through my decision to reference in my cyanotype work Anna Atkins, a pioneering female artist instead of centering the male inventor, Sir John F.W. Herschel.

While Herschel is regarded as the inventor of cyanotypes, I assert that it was Anna Atkins who first achieved mastery in the creation of cyanotypes. It was of course Atkins' work that was the first published photography book. Atkins use of botany and algae to create her photograph cyanotypes had a strong visual influence on me and became a way to incorporate magical plants into the cyanotypes, adding

both form and concept to my practice. After the cyanotypes are fixed and dried, I would often work on them, adding pen illustrations to emphasize the forms or create dense patterns in the positive or negative space.

Drawing has always been my way to process information and practice self-care. My drawing practice, using Micron pens and creating dense and intricate patterns, takes place during a meditative state through psychic automatism (Anapur), through the manifestations of *mamatowisiwin*, and including my dreams, I channel my Ancestors and tap into the collective unconscious (Jung). The best method to achieve this was to work from a trance state (Anapur) and allow my Ancestors to work through me in my automatic drawing, editing of videos and my automatic writing.

“Dreams, the voice of the inner space, given rise to the holy and prescribe all ceremonies on the physical level...The Old Ones, and the culture they developed, understood that dreams were invaluable in understanding self and sought to manipulate the external so that dreams might happen. It is through dreams that the gifted in our Aboriginal communities ‘create’ experiences for the benefit of community through the capacity inherent in *mamatowiwini*.” (Ermine)

Drawing is a very dream-like activity to me; I empty my head of thought (Anapur) and through psychic automatism I created the pen drawings on the back of the cyanotype mobiles. Drawing is a way to enter a trance state; it is my most reliable contemplative activity. Through the creation of the cyanotype mobiles, I research the Ancestor featured on the cyanotype **circle**. I look at photos of them, read their writing, and look for significant dates and events in their life. My distant Ancestors, even those whose memory was forgotten in our family, were resurrected, brought alive again through photos and reading between the lines of official records. Through drawing, I open the **Portal** for my Ancestors to speak with me and give me new knowledge.

The drawings are time-intensive, particularly the smaller, more detailed ones, often taking many hours. Through these hours spent looking at photos of Ancestors and researching their lives, the drawings were an act of veneration and memorial. The drawings are inspired by the work of Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (Áillohaš), particularly the illustrations in his book, *Ruoktu Váimmus*., The English translation of this book was titled *Trekways of the Wind* which is a book of my Grandpa’s that he gave to me when he moved. Grandpa met Valkeapää in Minnesota during his Turtle Island tour and he autographed the book.

Aubrey Beardsley is another great inspiration and having been stricken with tuberculosis as a child and **disabled**, Beardsley was in ill-health for much of his short life. For me, drawing is often a way to exercise tight control over something in a body that frequently makes me feel out of control. Much of Beardsley’s political satire was influenced by the rising Women’s Rights movement in England in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among other societal changes of the Victorian era, a time of particular fascination with seances and the **Spirit World**, which greatly influenced the Spiritualist movement.

The Spiritualist movement, unlike other religious movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that sprang forth from the Burned-Over District (including the religion that convinced my Ancestors to convert, Mormonism) it was only Spiritualism that centered women. This movement gave women not only a voice, but power as well through their ability to communicate with the **Spirit World** directly through seances and mediums. This history of feminism and feminist collaboration at the Spiritualist village of Lily Dale is mirrored in my feminist collaboration with three other female artists for the group show I organized, *Opening Portals*. I produced a video for the show, *A New World*, and in creating the audio I used psychic automatism and picked random segments of the long audio recordings to find my inspiration for the soundtrack. At the beginning and end of *A New World*, I use audio of myself and each of the artists counting in their native tongue.

## CREATIVE RESEARCH THROUGH FEMINIST COLLABORATION

I organized a small group show called *Opening Portals*, which ran from October 24-30, 2025, at 205 Richmond St W in the Graduate Gallery, hallway and Experimental Media Studio. I invited Liv Qiu, Tavleen Lall and Inéz Petrazzini to share their work because I saw so many conceptual and aesthetic connections amongst our work. I also asked curatorial and criticism student, Bri Christie, to assist us. During meetings to prepare for the show, we discussed the historical and cultural significance of the symbols that we were working with that represented **Portals** to us.

Liv told us during one of our final meetings that she was afraid to open a **Portal**, as we could not control what might come out of it. I felt then that it was my job to find ways for all of us to feel protected, and I began creating what I originally intended to be necklaces of protection for us to wear during the performance piece where we opened the **Portal**. The necklaces were red thread strung on with dried marigolds, snail shells, and garlic, pungent with protection. This idea of objects from daily life and foraged plants or ones grown in my garden, evolved and inspired me for my final exhibition. Plants are historically believed to amplify the effects of **Portals** and the **Spirit World**, and they can also protect the viewer if they believe in that plant or have a personal connection to the object.



Figure 13. Screenshot from *Opening Portals* group performance documentation:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIZ\\_djITIKY&t=4s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIZ_djITIKY&t=4s)

At the opening reception of *Opening Portals*, the exhibiting artists had a group performance along with Peter Morin, who played Liv's **circular** glass instrument. It has dried seed pods hanging from the glass and when shake or touched the seeds produce a sound like rain. We started the performance by having a group talk in the Experimental Media Studio and we shared a glass of canned sweet **water** (sap from the Maple tree) to ground ourselves in the **Portal** of **water**. Through a group ritual dance with red ribbon connecting the four artists around the "**Portal**" which we constructed from the structural pole in the center of the Grad Gallery. This scene of the four of us dancing is an image that is layered multiple times in my video *Coven*.

Through my research, I've encountered the idea that **Portals** might come in pairs; they have a theoretical entrance and exit. *Opening Portals* was the metaphorical entrance **Portal** for my thesis, with the show, *Echoes of Water: They Called Her a Witch*, acting as an exit **Portal**. The **Portals** both take place in the Experimental Media Studio, and the shadow portrait clips presented in *Pledge Allegiance* were filmed in the Experimental Media Studio (EMS) to the backdrop of the previous video, *New World*, which was another layer of previous filming of my **shadow** in the Experimental Media Studio. Another **circle** through time and the idea of **Place-Memory** again as I continued to film my shadow in the EMS over my latest video projects through a period of months.



Figure 14. Screenshot of the video *Witches* taken by Juliana, 2026. Featuring my cousins, Aida and Darius, who spontaneously “sacrificed” mushrooms to the fire and then danced around it, while chanting, “Mushroom spirit, mushroom spirit.” The legacy of magic and ritual is alive and well in the younger generation.

## FORM: ECHOES OF WATER

Entering the first-floor hallway from the Graduate Gallery, the viewer is confronted immediately with walls full of cyanotype circles hanging from foraged branches and dangling from the ceiling, featuring every shade of blue and hues of green, gray and violet. Footsteps creaking on the worn wood floor, the wind generated by the movement of the viewer activates the cyanotype mobiles, sending them gently twisting in **circles** with brass **witch** bells dangling from the mobiles softly chiming.

The cyanotype installation in the liminal hallway and stairwell space was loosely inspired by a guided meditation I experienced in 2014 in Colorado. I wanted to signal to the viewer that they were entering a transitory and introspective place. Each **circle** has a cyanotype image on the front, and on the back, there is the evidence of my research and creation of family archives that I integrated through a process of automatic drawing and writing. The viewer could choose to interact with the mobiles, and most investigated and discovered more information by flipping the cyanotype **circles** to reveal both sides.

I asked questions to my Ancestors on the back of the cyanotypes, there were also family and personal photos, drawings, writings and records, signaling the family archive, and the research that was conducted to create this show. When researching genealogy and family, there are often questions that remain unanswered, and those questions and mysteries take their own weight in the larger archive. This is similar to the way in which I explored cultural and firsthand beliefs about the **Spirit World**, through my research process, I was often left with more questions than answers. The absence of firm answers reflects the mystery of the unknown and the allure of such complex and mysterious notions, it is exactly the absence of conclusive answers that compels me to continue working with these topics.

Through *mamatowisiwin* I explored the seasonality of the northern sun through cyanotypes, experimenting with how light and weather shape the images that I created. The cyanotypes I created ranged from standard dry prints to various levels of “wet style” cyanotypes. I experimented with multiple layers and exposures and used large amounts of **salt** on the wet cyanotypes. I left cyanotypes outside during storms and sometimes the voracity of the storm would leave very little discernable image, just palimpsestic impressions. I drew Ancestral rivers on recycled glass with oil sharpies tracing the shapes of the St Lawrence River, Kalix River, Mill River, Mississippi River, and Connecticut River which I used alongside plants and personal objects to create the cyanotype images.

My parents drove the eight hours north from the Mill River in Uncoway for my exhibit and upon arriving my Mom carefully handed me the bag containing the brightly colored vintage glass **witch** balls. The glass orbs wrapped in jute come from Nonnie and have always hung in the front windows of my childhood home, quietly reflecting sunlight and protecting me from evil. The **witch** balls hung in the first-floor stairwell and from the ceiling inside the Experimental Media Studio, casting a hypnotic reflection on the video projection, *Down the Well* which featured my Dad discussing Nonnie’s house in Pittsfield and the well in the backyard. While my family’s voices echoed within the Experimental Media Studio, noise was also generated in the hallway by the brass bells suspended from black or red string, while the cyanotype **circles** spun lazily revealing both sides.

Flux and frequencies are represented through my material use of bells as audio in the videos and the physical bells which were used in my cyanotype mobiles. If the movements of the viewer were strong enough, they also activated the flux of the mobiles, sending them spinning in **circles**, with each movement, fronts and backs of the cyanotype **circles** newly revealed information alluding to flux. The jingling of the **witches’** bells, brass bells and silver medicine packets reference frequency waves (Hill).

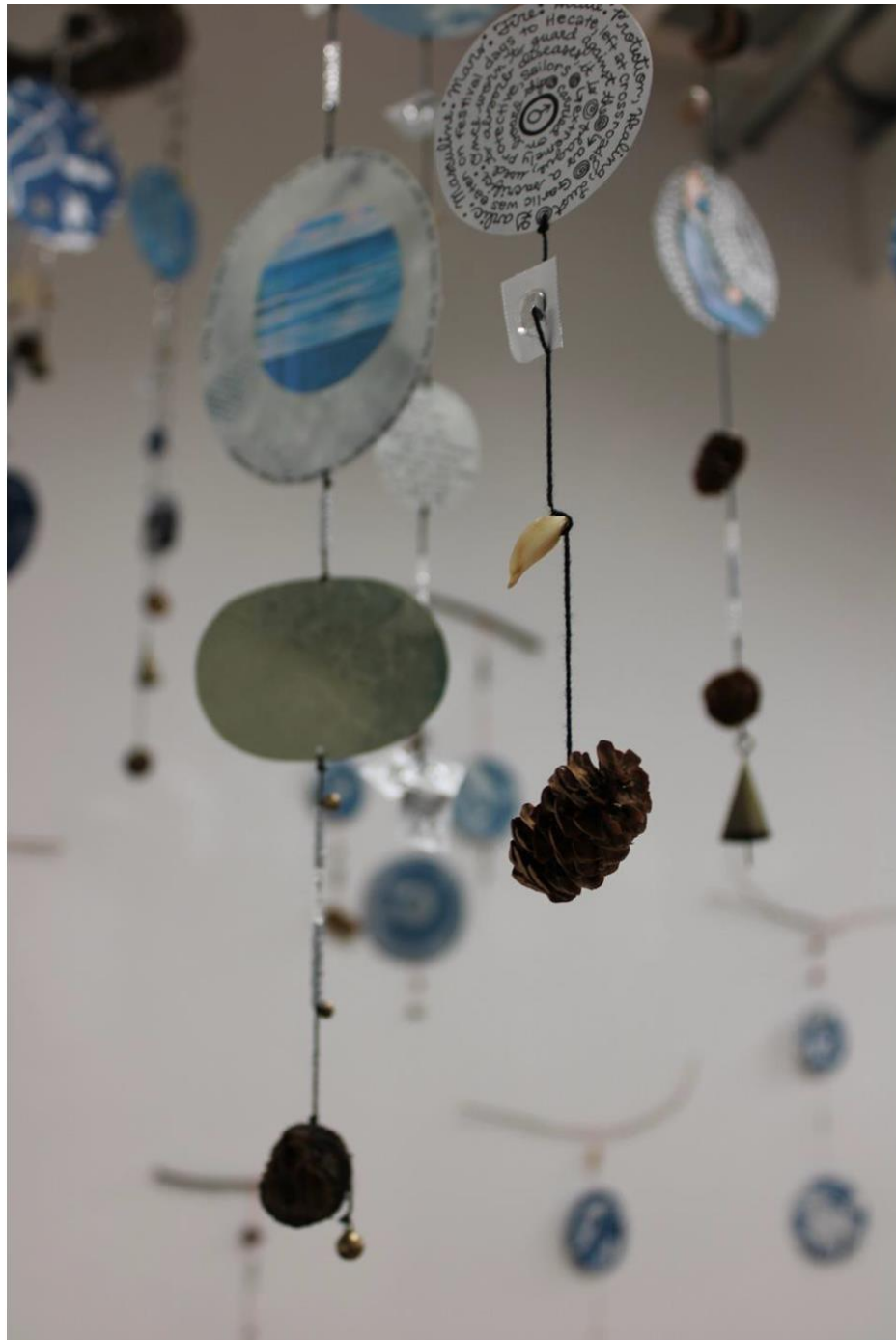


Figure 15. Detail photo of cyanotype mobile, garlic, pinecones, brass bells, walnut shell, garlic, glass beads, empty Pepcid blister pill pack. Juliana Gagné, 2026.

My **disability** is also reflected in my artwork by the pieces of mundane daily medical ephemera, trash that I turn into objects of significance for my mobiles. They are moved by unseen forces which represent a state of flux in the universe mirrored in the state of flux that my body is always in. I have been lucky to live with my dog, Soup, a labradoodle who is not trained but has learned to signal me before medical episodes or when I'm having strong symptoms. Soup can alert me to a migraine before it happens, which helps as it is difficult to manage in public when I experience auras.

Migraines run in my family, and for my Grandmother her aura attacks were so severe she couldn't talk while they occurred. My auras sometimes appear without full-blown migraines, and the severity and duration have greatly increased since my first covid infection. My auras are often in the form of sparks; they appear in every color of the rainbow, dancing around which has a visual influence on the art I create. Sometimes I have **circular** orbs or small stars during my aura attacks, and sometimes I don't see any shapes; there is just a strange distortion in the center of my vision like looking through a funhouse mirror. My photos and videos mirror the visual effects of these auras and share the sense of disorientation. I often seek to emulate the way our vision is altered when we are in a state where our unconscious mind is in control.



Figure 16. My Grandmother Denise admiring a Calder mobile at SFMOMA, Juliana Gagné, 2019.

I inherited my migraine auras from my Grandmother, and I also inherited her love of Alexander Calder and his mobiles. When I visited her in California, we would visit San Francisco Museum of Modern Art to see his work, and with a wink she showed me how to activate them by blowing in their direction from a respectable distance. The first time we went out into the sculpture garden and saw the Calder mobile installed there, she asked me if I would go touch it to activate it so she could watch it spin. I walked over and confidently started to push the thick metal when a security guide came running over yelling at me not to touch the art. When I walked back embarrassed to my Grandma she told me, "It's not your fault Julesy,

a mobile should really spin you know.” I hope my Grandma likes the mobiles that I’ve made, I’ve told viewers her trick of blowing gently to activate them, so they go spinning in **circles**.

Family items and artifacts are carefully collected, and beads, letters and photos are embedded into the wall hangs and mobiles. Through using these objects, I honor the **Spirit** of my Ancestors that may linger in the physical items. The materials age and decompose, reflecting the natural **circle** of life. Everything alive dies. The presence of decay in the artwork reinforces the idea of death and **Spirits** and emphasizes the passage of time, rebirth and renewal which are also cyclical. New life is also visible in the green shoots sprouting from the garlic as it dried over six months. The plants in combination with the cyanotypes reflected cultural beliefs around the magical powers of plants which I believe were amplified by the use of **water** in the emulsion and fixing process of the cyanotypes.

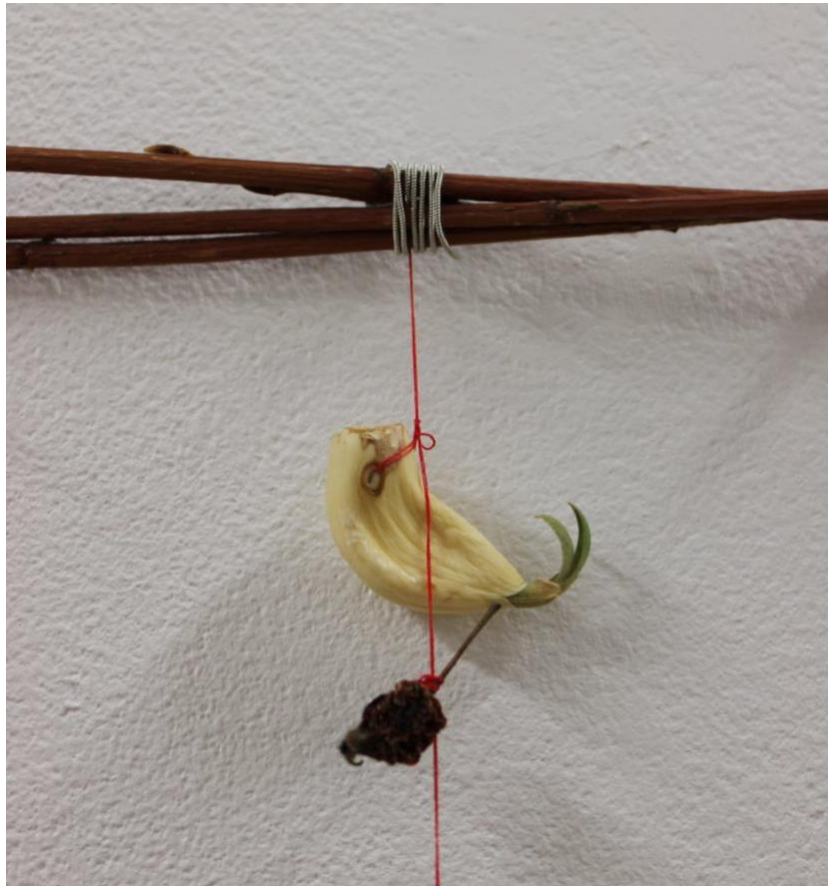


Figure 17. Detail of garlic sprouting on cyanotype wall hang, Juliana Gagné, 2026.

**Water** is present throughout the exhibit from physically using **water** to create the cyanotype images as well as the recurring videos of **water** layered atop other imagery. In the hallway, I am physically with my Ancestors, experiencing the flux in the shifting images and writing revealed in the cyanotype mobiles hanging from the ceiling. I wanted the viewer to be aware of the threshold of the Experimental Media Studio and that they were entering further “into the **Portal**”. The doorframe was guarded by a thick row of **salt**, an old Ashkenazi folk tradition my Mother taught me for protection. I wanted the viewer to feel like they have entered a trance state and found themselves within the symbolic **Portal** that I created through immersive video installation. Within the “**Portal** room”, the viewer is immersed in four hypnotic videos, created by

many overlapping layers and numerous non-linear stories.

**Circles** are ever-present from the imagery of the full moon to the bright sun to the **circular** view of peering into a kaleidoscope. I loved kaleidoscopes as a child and the *mamatowisiwin* (Ermine), the synchronicities aligned when my friend Jean Mathew gave me their partner Kee's kaleidoscope necklace before they moved to Australia. That same week, Brendan asked me if I had ever seen the "garden kaleidoscope" at the fancy private school in our neighborhood. These synchronicities led me to include a layer to my videos filmed through the kaleidoscope necklace. The videos were created through layering several channels as well as multiple layers of audio clips, sourced from my archive of sounds and interviews with family members.

In the videos the multiple narratives are non-linear, although often unified thematically. Sound bites repeat and reverberate with eerie echoes, and voices overlap. Numbers and short phrases in my Ancestral languages were used in the beginning and end of videos; this conceptual choice was my way to hypothetically invoke a **Portal**. This linguistic choice highlights the history of language loss and assimilation within my family. It also highlights the importance of reconnecting with Ancestors, one way I believe that I can do this is to learn languages that my family members or Ancestors spoke. I believe that to fully understand a culture requires learning the language of said culture. There is vital knowledge embedded into languages, ranging from the uses for plants to history and weather. The video, *Witches*, begins and ends with the counting in Ancestral languages and the same **fire** and **water** imagery, reinforcing to the audience that time moves in **circular** motions.

I filmed video through various objects that act as a filter, reflecting the way in which our lived experiences filter our view of the world. I shot video through prisms, kaleidoscopes, and sun catchers. Prisms are a frequency-measuring instrument at their most simple, capturing light frequencies. Representing the ideas of frequencies in my art manifested through the form of sound and light. The objects that I use as filters are also used to create photograms in my cyanotypes, I enjoyed playing with the different visual effects you can achieve through creating a photogram with a prism.

The videos themselves also feature the cyanotype image, the **spiral** cyanotype image in *Down the Well circles* through the video and represents moments of the story when a **Portal** was symbolically open. The videos also included the cyanotype while it is being exposed or during the fixing of the image with a cold-**water** bath. The cyanotype mobiles are evidence of research and archive, while the videos are the synthesis of that research and archive. The video projections installed in the Experimental Media Studio represent to me the inside of a **Portal**, a space which I hypothetically envision as a disruption of the spacetime continuum. I interpret that being inside a **Portal** would be experienced as a barrage of everything that had ever happened or would ever happen. In this place, I believe that you could speak to your Ancestors, past, present and future and understand them regardless of the language that they spoke in life. The cacophony of family stories and layered images represent to me the convergence of these multiple overlapping timelines, reflected by the playing with time and layering of **shadow** figures. Aesthetically, the images were brightly colored and kaleidoscopic and were flecked with light flares reflecting the visuals of my migraine auras.



Figure 18. Screenshot from the video, *Coven*, Juliana Gagné, 2026. Created from the video of the performance for *Opening Portals*.

The audio for the videos contains selections of interviews I conducted as well as sounds that I have recorded in everyday life. In *Witches*, the video begins and ends with me counting in some of my Ancestral languages to invoke a spell and open a **Portal** through ritual. The use of foreign languages in my video work references the history of immigration and language loss through assimilation in my family history. By speaking these Ancestral languages, even if just by learning how to count to 10, I am making a decolonial statement to reconnect with my Ancestor's native tongues.

Growing up with a Mom who was partially deaf made me very conscious of language, sounds and volume. In thinking about how I could make art for my brother-in-law, Patrick, who is blind, I realized that sound art would be most effective. Patrick has memorized over 200 bird songs, and as a nod to him I regularly include birdsong in my videos. My research began to lead me in the direction of sound and frequencies, and I began to research healing frequencies. My Grandpa had a Tibetan Singing Bowl that I inherited upon his death, which I used as an element of the soundtrack for some of my videos. It always amazed me how the sound not only calmed me down but also drew my three animals to it like moths to a **fire**. All beings resonate with sound frequencies and singing bowls are a particularly healing sound for our bodies (Cai).



Figure 19. Video installation, Experimental Media Studio, Juliana Gagné, 2026.

There was a juxtaposition of the healing frequency sounds as a base for my videos layered with disembodied voices telling snippets of eerie stories and firsthand accounts of my family members experiences. By using the audio from interviews, I physically brought my family members into the **Portal**, including audio of my Grandma who passed in 2023. I was in a way, creating an audio **Spirit** for her to once again give advice and tells me stories about our Ancestors. This paired with abstracted and surreal layers of imagery contributed to the immersive experience of the viewer.

Prisms in a variety of size and shape were used as filter, along with kaleidoscopes and sun catchers, which created the vibrant **circular** shapes, especially during my visit to the Basilica Notre-Dame of Montreal on a research trip in February. I used these clips as a filter layer in my videos, a visual connective thread that ran through every projection. The videos also feature recurring symbols: **circles, spirals**, the moon, the sun, and orbs of light. I believe that time (as our human minds perceive it) stops in a **Portal**; everything that has ever happened or will ever happen is happening simultaneously. To allude to the strangeness of time within the **Portal**, the audio (taken from family interviews) echoes and reverberates, as if you are hearing it from within an echo chamber.

Much like my film photography practice, my video is on the experimental end of the spectrum, differing from traditional videos through imagery and narrative structures. Sitting in the Experimental Media studio, whether it was in a **circular** bean bag or on chair the viewer experienced a near-constant stream of voices and sounds. Some sounds were quiet and even whispered, invoking disembodied whispers of the **Spirit World**, which were only heard in moments when the louder videos paused between words. The effect on

the viewer was trance-like as I watched people become immersed in the bright colors and psychedelic images, finding themselves getting lost in the **circles** of the stories (Wilson).

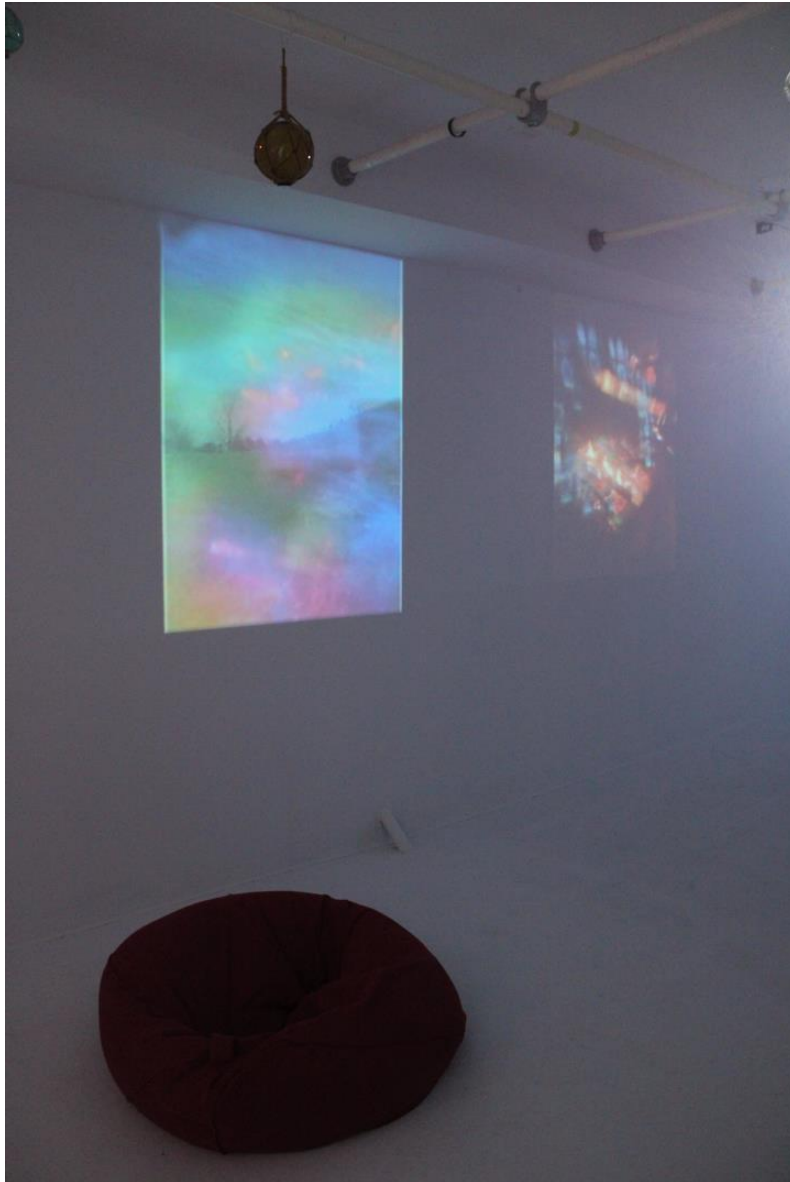


Figure 20. Photo inside the Experimental Media Studio, the Portal room. Juliana Gagné, 2026.

The familial and found materials emphasized the concepts that informed my research into *mamatowisiwin* (Ermine), dreams and storytelling as research (Wilson), **Place-Memory** (Hill), as well as psychic automatism (Anapur). Family photos of my modern **witch** Ancestors are represented visually on the backs of the cyanotype **circles**, and through handwriting their diaries entries and poetry I found a new association with my Ancestors words and thoughts. I knew I was literally walking in the footsteps of my Ancestors, and sometimes I think I channeled them.

In the evening of March 11, I had a short performance piece at the opening reception for my show. I began the performance by telling everyone that I needed a quick nap before laying down in the bean bag chair

with Brendan (so he could keep people away). We both closed our eyes and tried to slow our breathing for a few minutes before my Mom started her role in the performance. Using our family dinner bell, my Mom started ringing it in the hallway, calling to me in the Experimental Media Studio, “Wake up Jules, you’re going to be late for your opening!” While I called back from the bean bag chair, “Five more minutes Mom, please!” In homage to the years of my Mom struggling to wake me for school. I did a big stretch and put on my pair of antlers (this antler headdress is what I used to create the images of **shadow** figures) and I slowly walked to the platform next to the stairs as I whispered, “What if I can’t wake up...What if I can’t wake up...What if I can’t wake up...” My Mom then rang the dinner bell 7 times, signifying the beginning of the **water** ritual.

In front of me on the platform next to the stairs were items of divination; two mirrors, a large empty crystal basin, a sun catcher and pair of deer antlers gifted from a family member. My Dad, my Aunt Linnea and Brendan each brought me a cup of **water** and with every cup they said the name of one of my Ancestors accused of **witchcraft**, seven cups of **water** total for each Ancestor accused. Each family member would hand me the glass and state the name of a **witch** Ancestor, and I would respond by repeating the name, I would then pour the **water** into the basin and stir the **water** with my finger, moving counterclockwise. After the final glass of **water** was poured, I was at the crux of the performance. I told the story of my accused **witch** Ancestor, Mary Staples, as well as her daughter and granddaughter, Mary and Hannah Harvey. I felt strange all evening and for the opening I was unexpectedly disassociated. The next day I could hardly remember what had happened at the opening. I wondered if Mary Staples had possessed me for the night, so she could finally tell her story in her own words.

## CONCLUSION

Everything returns to the **circle**. Time, snail shells, the **water** cycle, the self, the cycle of epigenetics in families. Glass **witch** balls, cyanotypes cut into imperfect **circles**, videos with orbs of light and layered over images of the total solar eclipse. In England I saw in a friend's historic home the concentric **circles** that were carved into the beams of the house as signs of protection called **witch** marks. **Circles** and **spirals**, since our Ancestors first etched petroglyphs into **stone**, have historically symbolized a **Portal**.

I investigated my research questions through the research methodologies of *mamatowisiwin*, valuing dreams and storytelling as research as well as using psychic automatism. I applied these methodologies to my creative research practice in the studio, and I began to explore the complex question, **how does water act as an inter-dimensional Portal to the Spirit World?** I also looked at a variety of sources to explore a secondary question; **how does water amplify or act as a boundary for Spirit?** These sources included literature (Jasper), historical museums (*Fairfield Museum and History Center*), podcasts hosts and psychic mediums such as Tawney Lewis, as well as European theorists (Flusser). I was also guided by Blackfoot physicist Dr. Leroy Little Bear and Indigenous, Inuit and Métis Grandmothers (Anderson). These Indigenous sources were added for the distinct cultural cosmologies and teachings around water that they shared, they also helped to balance the written sources of my European settler Ancestors.

However, for much of the research that falls into the realm of the metaphysical, theories and more questions are often all I am left with. It is this ambiguity that intrigues me in exploring metaphysical and paranormal through arts-based research. In the absence of definitive answers on the nature of such enigmas as **Portals** and the **Spirit World** I let firsthand experiences of family and friends, as well as cultural beliefs act as lenses to explore these questions. I explored my research questions through my personal lens of experience, my **disability** and queer identity as well as through the lens of my European Ancestors and their many religious belief systems. The journey of exploring these questions inspired my use of familial and found materials, which reinforced the concept and form of my final thesis exhibit, *Echoes of Water: They Called Her a Witch*. In not being able to completely answer the research questions, I left room for the magic of the unknown.

In the absence of conclusive answers to my research questions, my metric for success shifted towards a focus in connecting personally with the viewers who came to my exhibit. I felt that my work was successful because of the rich conversations generated with viewers. I gave a casual tour of my work to two students who came to view my show, and I was left being fulfilled after a long conversation with them. The students were from Mexico and connected strongly to my use of marigolds in the cyanotype wall hangs and the cultural connections between the marigold and its ability to call in **Spirits**. They also connected strongly to my use of **salt** in the threshold, telling me that in their religion **salt** was highly symbolic and protective.

Other viewers focused on the more esoteric and mystical aspects of my work, including one man who talked to me at length about star seeds and the fifth dimension. While other viewers told me they had their own personal and cultural connections to the symbols that I was working with. One woman told me that she connected deeply to the **spiral** imagery, telling me that in her home country the graves often feature similar **spiral** imagery. Through my use of family interviews my viewer felt comfortable enough to confide in me about the recent loss of her Grandmother and she explained to me that her Grandmother's grave had just been vandalized. We shared tears together as she asked me for my advice in making sure that her Grandmother was resting at peace. Sometimes I get the feeling that someone has crossed paths with me for a reason, so I could pass on a message or assist them, and I had a strong feeling that her Grandmother had sent her to me so I could comfort her and give her advice. She thanked me for reassuring her that her Grandmother was at peace and reminding her that she could still talk to her, even if she was now in the **Spirit World**. I gave her a glass of **water** to collect herself and after sharing a hug she told me that she was going to follow my advice and departed.

**Water** is a vital element necessary for life on our planet, it is present with us even before we are born, floating in the liquid of the amniotic sac. In Kim Anderson's report, Grandmother Pauline describes **water**, "as a conduit in the womb, stating 'you are in the womb for nine moons, which is the foundation for your life...everything within the surroundings of that water.'" (Anderson 8) Indeed, **water** is present as well when babies are born, we use **water** to bathe them and welcome them into this world.

When my parents and I first left the hospital four days after my birth, they took me immediately to Nauset, and to the Atlantic Ocean. The Ocean is my first primordial Mother, she will hold me and rock me in her waves long after my Mom passes away. My Mom was the first researcher in my life, and the first person who told me family stories as a child. The family stories shared with me often changed in shape and detail over the years, depending on who was telling them. As I grew older the conversation in the US around the colonial **witchcraft** hysteria began to shift from the occult references and commercialization to a more nuanced discussion around the reasons that these alleged **witches** were accused. **Witchcraft** accusations were a way to reinforce power structures and to uphold colonialism, Christianity and the patriarchy.

My Ancestors were called **witches**, and maybe I'm a **witch** too. The tale of Mary Staples and her family was constantly being told and re-told by my Mom and myself over the years. It is a story that I have carried with me, in each of the places that I have lived and studied. In researching my paternal family since 2020 I have found even more Ancestors who were called **witches**. They were believed to be **witches** because they were outspoken women, midwives, healers, and widows. They disregarded societal and gender norms and in some cases were accused of learning about magic or medicine from Indigenous people. Calling a woman a **witch** was a way to control her and often a way to kill her if you didn't like how she dressed or what she had to say. I believe that in some way, these **witches** dunked in the **water** of my hometown must leave some of that memory forever in those **water** molecules.

Through my investigations about the idea of **water** acting as an inter-dimensional **Portal**, I have come to hypothesize that perhaps **saltwater** acts as a sort of battery, using the natural electricity that powers our bodies. **Water** seems to act as an amplifier; a belief shared across different people and cultures that I researched through literature, podcasts and their firsthand experiences. Since our bodies are primarily composed of **water**, I infer that people may also act as amplifiers of the **Spirit World**. We can channel our Ancestors, and practice speaking with them and we can learn how to listen to their wisdom. As Little Bear said, "It is the energy waves that know...It is not you that knows. You know things because you are made up of energy waves..." (Hill 6) It is not me that knows, the truth about my questions flows on energy waves from the **Spirit World** and the answers are not yet for me to have. They come in the fleeting moments when my unconscious mind is in control, when I am in a trance, drawing or during my dreams and visions. As soon as I return to my conscious mind, I am left again only with my theories and the facts of my personal experiences.

My personal experiences with **Spirits** guided my research as did the stories shared by family and friends in interviews. I explored the history of Spiritualism and that movement's insight on the connections between women and the **Spirit World**, as well as providing theories on psychic abilities. Eve Olsen, my Grandparent's psychic friend was a Spiritualist, and she would give my family members direct messages from their Ancestors who had passed. My Mom often repeated these stories about Eve to me while I was growing up, shared around the **bonfire** in Nauset. The imagery and audio soundtracks of **fire** also evoke an Ancestral connection; humans are still just as hypnotized watching the flames. **Fire** can sustain or create life, but it is also an element that can be a destructive force, that must be respected as **fire** can also take life away.

**Circles** were an important visual metaphor for **Portals** and the non-linear view of time. The shape also symbolized celestial bodies, the **water** cycle, the self, epigenetics and the way that stories move in **circles** (Wilson). I do believe, after the culmination of my research, that **Portals** may possibly be an explanation for the connection between disparate paranormal activity like **Spirits**, cryptids and aliens. I have come to

believe through personal and firsthand experiences that **water** may act as an amplifier for **Portals**, but that Oceans and mountains may also act as physically derived boundary for **Spirit**. The importance of **water** as a boundary for the **Spirit World** was repeated to me by my 奶奶 in the story she told me about protecting my cousin Alex from his father's angry Ancestors. I can't claim to have the answers, no one does. The question of the **Spirit World** and discussions of **Portals** are topics that are enduring mysteries for the human race. In pondering these large and complex questions, I am connected to my Ancestors who also laid back on the ground at night and gazed at the stars, wondering if there was anything else out there.

I felt that I had succeeded with my research, even if I wasn't left with clear and definitive answers. My success was felt through the involvement of my family members in my research, and the validation I received from everyone that I interviewed that my research project and efforts to build a family archive were very important. My methodologies also proved successful in developing deeper connections to my Ancestors. Two years ago, my Dad's side of the family tree still seemed unfamiliar to me, I had names, dates and records but the people they were referring to hadn't come alive to me yet.

I often wondered about my family members and Ancestors that I didn't remember or had never met. Would my Great-Grandmother, Elizabeth "Betty" Ann, have liked me? Would we have gotten along? In my interview with Aunt Tanya, she told me that Nana (Betty) had taught Tanya to knit, crochet, sew and make quilts and they bonded through these activities. I imagined how much I would have enjoyed designing a quilt with my Great-Grandma and choosing the fabrics and patterns with her. In my interview with my Grandpa Tom he told me that he thought if his Mom and I could meet, "Oh you would get along really well together!" Today, I feel deeper familiarity with my Milne and Gagné Ancestors. I found what might be the only photo of me and my Great-Grandma Betty, she holds me beaming in her beach chair on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. I knew her once and through the conduit of **water** she can communicate with me and pay me visits in **Spirit** form. As Aunt Tanya said during our interview, "I know Nana is protecting me, I feel her with me all the time." I hope that I too, will begin to feel my Great-Grandma's presence.



Figure 21. Family photo of my Great-Grandma Betty Gagné and me at the Atlantic Ocean.

There are many cultures around the world that believe that **water** holds memory. The greatest disrespect we can do to both **water** and to our Ancestors, past, present and future, is to pollute **water**, to fill it with microplastics, oil or radiation. Clean drinking **water** is an inherent right that an increasing number of global citizens lack, “**freshwater**—what we need to drink and irrigate our farms—is only 3% of the world’s **water**.” (Gordon) A new technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), is the latest threat to our **water** sources. I only believe in using this technology, AI, for medical and scientific advancement, with proper human oversight and regulation. It might unlock new pharmaceutical treatments for our family’s genetic curses. As an artist and writer however, I am extremely against the idea of *generative AI*.

Generative AI steals living artist’s work, even down to their signatures. It charges for its theft, and the “art” or “writing” it creates is darkly soulless. You need a soul to create. I now believe that you need to be made of **water**, to have a soul. Meanwhile AI “data centers [are] using cooling towers and air mechanisms to dissipate heat.” (Gordon) There is an increasingly large need for **water** and energy to power these AI centers. This lazy use of generative AI for everyday tasks like writing emails has a dire environmental cost. Artificial Intelligence is one of the greatest growing threats to **water** and our environment.



Figure 22. Louise Mabel Langhorst (Jones) Stetler. 1920s, Los Angeles, California.

On the East Coast, they didn't burn **witches** at the stake with **fire**. They hung them in wooden gallows, pressed them with **stones** and drowned them in **water**. **Water** remembers each of its reincarnations through its cycle. **Water** gives life, and it takes it away. In birth and in death, the first and last task is always bathing the body that lies on the threshold between our world and the **Spirit World**.

**Water** is our sacred **Portal**, the unbroken link between all living beings and Mother Earth. Her heartbeat is the **circling** storms with **water** in all of its incantations; we cannot exist without our Mother. I had a strange dream the other night, I was falling through the blackness, outside of my body when I heard familiar voices singing. The song was a foreign language, one that I had spoken long ago when I was a child, but I had almost forgotten.

I followed the voices to the edge of the Ocean where all my Ancestors called to me. All the ones I dreamed of, the ones who passed long before me, even those whose names I had forgotten. I saw my Ancestors there that had been lost in the living memory of our family; and they embraced me for finding their photos, and for recovering their names. They told me that they had always sung to me while I slept, sending me memories and protecting me. I saw my loved ones there, the ones I had known but who passed before me; I saw my Grandparents, Great-Grandparents and all of my cousins; those whose voices I haven't heard for years, I had almost forgotten the sound.

I saw the future Ancestors too, the ones that I dream of. They can take the work that I have started and carry



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## **GLOSSARY**

**Free Soul State:** *a word to describe the Sámi noaide's trance state*

**奶奶 Nainai:** *Maternal Grandmother in Mandarin*

**Noaidi, Noaide:** *this is a North Sámi word that roughly translates to medicine (wo)man or shaman, historically siida each had their own noaidi who could mediate between different dimensions and with gods and goddesses*

**Nauset:** *this word refers not only to the original stewards of the Land where I lived on Cape Cod, but also refers to the area, Nauset roughly translates to "a place between [land and sea]", now commonly known by the colonized name of Eastham, Massachusetts*

**Piskies:** *distinctly Cornish word referring to small elemental land spirits, often called "fairies" in English*

**Sápmi:** *the North Sámi (Davvisámegiella) word referring to the Sámi people's Ancestral homeland. In English it is also called Saamiland*

**Siida:** *North Sámi words that refers to large family structures of reindeer herders whose herds graze together*

**Tkaronto:** *a Mohawk word to describe what is now often called Toronto, roughly meaning "the place in the water where the trees are standing"*

**Uncoway:** *the original name for the land that I was raised on, commonly referred to now by the colonized name of Fairfield, Connecticut*

**Unidentified Anomalous Phenomenon (UAP):** *the latest term which replaces the classification of Unidentified Flying Objects)*