

Whorls of Becoming: Wayfinding in the Praxis of Being a Good Relative, Relating

by

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Abstract

This act of endogenous education attempts to track my existential quest of how I can be of service to Education for (Re)conciliation. Through my hermeneutic inquiry I share how I have come to perceive my on-going transformation as a colonial settler, to an imperfect ally, to a good relative through my contribution to Education for (Re)conciliation. Throughout this emergent journey, I track my wayfinding as I learn from Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating both in my personal and professional contexts. I share my transformative praxis and offer how I come to learn from these generative sites. I wayfind to both invite and enact radical possibilities of an expanding circle of knowledges within myself and within my role as educator in the place we now call British Columbia, Canada. I seek (k)new possibilities for my human-ness and my evolving consciousness through this hermeneutic inquiry. I (re)present my scholarly (re)search, my lived experiences, and my transformative praxis as I wayfind to (re)orientate to an emerging ecological worldview. This process-oriented journey reflects my attempts to learn to walk in a good way as a non-Indigenous, public-school teacher who seeks to repair, to heal, and to (re)pair, to connect, Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating as I (re)imagine the classroom as an ecology. I articulate my understanding of (re)cognizing—to recognize, or perceive, and (re)cognize, or know anew—how the roles of teacher/student can metamorphize to Being~Being. Through my praxis of honouring the nuances of witnessing, I invite paradigmatic shifts to evoke pedagogical possibilities. As I seek a (k)new story for myself, for the young ones in my care, and for education, I come to know how to be a good relative becomes a conscious, continual enactment and (re)enactment. I invite others to witness my wayfinding through my métissage, a weaving of academic writing, life writing I call dialogic vignettes, poetry, and artistic endeavours as revealed throughout this dissertation which honours my existential quest to be a good relative, relating.

Keywords: education for reconciliation; life writing; métissage; hermeneutic inquiry; witnessing; wayfinding

Dedication

To all who walked before me, to those who walk alongside me, and to those yet to be, thank you.

Acknowledgements

who to name

when words exist as a compromise?

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List of Acronyms

BCME	British Columbia Ministry of Education
CCO	Continuing Custody Order
EFP	English First Peoples
ELA	English Language Arts
FNESC	First Nations Education Steering Committee
FNMI	First Nations, Métis, and Inuit
FSA	Foundation Skills Assessments
FNSCORA	First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act
MCFD	Ministry of Children and Family Development
IEPs	Individualized Education Plans
IRSSA	Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement
NCTR	National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
SFU	Simon Fraser University
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UBCIC	Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Chapter 1.

Welcome

1.1. Tobacco

The smell of tobacco lingers on my fingertips. A familiar smell. The smell of Grandparents.

Eyes closed my tobacco-fingers type. I try to rest here, in this place. I ask the keystrokes to arrive, to transmute essence into words. I seek guides for me and for you. Eyes closed I better feel the pulsing which swells within me. My skin a thin sheaf barely able to contain the reverberating tendons and cartilage and muscle.

My tobacco-fingers balloon. Engorge. I pause to still grasp and clutch.

I begin again.

Diastole and systole, inhalation and exhalation my constant companions. Listen closely. Caesura's absent presence sounds. *Listen.*

The ancient pulse dwells there, in the space between. My heart-work, its attendant, resides in this place too, the in-between place. They whorl one into the other, surge and abate, wax and wane, wither and thrive. Impossibly elusive, impossibly familiar.

Look.

Between these lines you will find me.

Search the space amidst the words.

Search the crevices amongst the letters.

Search the curl of my knuckles.

Listen.

Between these utterances you will find me.

Search the space amidst the sounds.

Search the crevices amongst the tones.

Search the curl of my lips.

There.

There.

There.

The ancient pulse thrums, its cadence older than the stars.

I open my eyes.

1.2. Snow Moon

I try to begin in a good way. With the Snow Moon¹ my witness, I burn sage, a gift from a friend. I smudge, my hands and gestures uncertain, wavering still, unlike the sweet smoke that rises, sure of its way. I feel the need for Water's presence, so there it sits, in a ceramic vessel, earth-fired.

I stand facing North, the direction of endings, of reflection. In my left hand I hold the pouch of tobacco, the one I purchased many moons ago so I could respectfully ask an Elder to talk with me. In my right hand I hold a pinch of tobacco, its texture dry, yet soft; its odour pungent, yet fragrant.

Though the now-me stands under this Snow Moon, the child-me stands in my Grandma's guest room, carefully packing tobacco into her cigarette-making machine, intent on stuffing the delicate paper tubes with the perfect amount. The tobacco's scent lingers on my child fingers long after this coveted chore. I equate it with the smell of love.

The now-me understands the arrival of tobacco's aroma as a gift. It signals the presence of my Grandpa whose Spirit sometimes visits. Only in impossible places does the earthy smell appear, just enough so I sense him. Though subtle and fleeting, nonetheless it offers comfort.

I hold my fingers to my nose and breathe deeply, breathe in the smell of love and comfort.

As I sprinkle the tobacco, I ask to be able to tell this story in a good way. I ask for the humility to know when to quieten my mind so as to dwell within my heart-song. I ask

¹ I capitalize certain words throughout my dissertation to denote the genuine respect I hold for them. Learned from Rupert Ross (2014) whose words echo my sentiment: "I have capitalized three words...Grandmother, Teachings ... and Elder. All three words prompt deep feelings of respect and appreciation in me, feelings I want to honour whenever I write about them" (p. xxi).

for the courage to offer my heart-work, so as to honour my heart-song, the one that sings with our Ancestors.

I ask the same for you.

Your absent presence, Reader, I recognize like the impossibility of light.²

Welcome.

² Light happens to be both a wave and a particle—it just depends on the intention of the viewer. Learned from Valerio Scarani (2006).



Offering: "The smoke of the smudge... makes us ready for the ongoing ceremony of life. To smudge is to open ourselves to receive" (Wagamese, 2019, pp. 15–16).

1.3. North: A Pause Between

The cardinal direction of North means many things. Ironic, in a way, that I start here, in this direction to share my journey of finding my way, of finding my pathway. The term *wayfinding* suggests “You only know where you are by knowing precisely where you have been and how you got to where you are” (W. Davis, 2009, p. 60). *Pathway* “combines with the process of journeying to form an active context for learning about spirit... Path denotes a structure; *Way* implies a process” (Cajete, 1994, p. 55, italics in original).

In my early steps on this wayfinding journey, I recognized the assumptions engrained within me, how I positioned myself to abstract concepts from a singular worldview:

...trying to find more about the Seven Sacred Directions, I write “NORTH” as the first direction, the place to start, not “EAST.” My stance, my orientation connects to the land, but to the land as an idea, a claimed space, the central “country” that the rest of the map is built around.

— journal entry,
October 2015

Now, with intention, I choose North, not as an abstract concept but as a reality, a purposeful place of meaning.

North connects to winter, a time of rest for the Earth herself. North relates to a period of repose between death and birth, a place of contemplation, a place of remembrance (Four Directions Teachings, 2015). North: a pause between.

I too simultaneously exist within a place of endings and a place of renewal, an enduring cycle. Here at the cusp of future and past, in the nebulous moment of now, I offer this (re)vision.³ Like the briefest of moments before Snail’s shell turns, there exists a juncture of suspension within my own whorls of being. Suspended here, I remember to remember. Suspended here, I sense the next quest.

³ I purposefully choose round parentheses () rather than a hyphen (-). Metaphorically two parentheses together form a circle, (re)fecting an enduring cycle, while a hyphen metaphorically (re)inscribes lineality.

I look back and (re)view, an act of *(re)visioning* to better understand that which has come to pass. I look forward and (re)view, an act of *(re)vision* to ask what could become. Thus, (re)vision becomes sites/sights of possibility, of envisioning.

These acts of (re)vision invite a (re)turn, a (re)examination, a (re)consideration. The Elders ask, how do you know where you are going if you do not know where you have been?⁴ (Re)turning to moments passed, to (re)focus and to attend to lived experiences, calls me to better understand the whole of my wayfinding journey. From this attentiveness comes *(re)vision*, an invitation to understand possibility in ways that may not have first appeared to me. Thus, I spiral through time to come to a sense of my centre.

Within these sites/sights of (re)visioning exists a continuous, embodied hermeneutic circle, a circle of understandings shaped by my worldviews (M. A. Meyer, 2003). The whole of my wayfinding journey consists of the discrete moments I live; the discrete moments I live create the whole of my wayfinding journey. I better understand the whole by better understanding the parts; yet simultaneously, better understanding the parts informs a better understanding of the whole (Donald, 2012b; Smith, 1991). The hermeneutic circle “means that some greater context always influences how we understand a particular part” (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 26), with *understanding* being “knowledge in the deeper sense of grasping not just facts but their integration into a meaningful whole” (p. 2). Thus, inviting “an honoring of the particular” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 184) to better understand the “aggregate” (p. 190) means “understanding ... and not explanation” (p. 190) becomes the “imperative” (p. 190) of a hermeneutic circle. I imagine my wayfinding journey as (re)curing whorls of becoming. (Re)visioning invokes and evokes envisioning, new states of consciousness. This persistent vacillation I have come to know within the process of tracking my becoming, or “the process of seeking wisdom, vision, and coming to the source of spirit” (Cajete, 1994, p. 56).

This dissertation intends to offer the tracking of my process as I explore Indigeneity. However, my process of exploring Indigeneity extends beyond these words, beyond this moment. Do not let the written word trick you—my process of becoming

⁴ Learned from many places, but articulated in Richard Van Camp’s (2016) novel, *The Lesser Blessed*, as, “It’s just like the old-timers say, ‘How can you know where you’re going, if you don’t know where you’ve been?’” (p. 80).

continues, paradoxically static, trapped here in this written format, yet also dynamic, living on in me, beyond these words.

I share with you my quest to better understand what it might mean to explore Indigeneity as an act of transformative inquiry, a “mindful approach to inquiry that is highly informed by and embedded in an indigenist sensibility” (Tanaka, 2016, p. 202). My writing will not reflect a Western understanding of story, with beginning, middle, and end. This hermeneutic inquiry will ask you to attend to a continuous interplay of past, present, future. Though overall chronological order can be perceived, I attempt to reflect *dimensions* of transformation, to share with you my (re)orientation to a pathway of Ecological Visioning (Cajete, 1994) a process-oriented journey to the centre of one’s being.

“What am I to learn here?”

...

“You’ve come to learn to carry this place within you.

This place of beginnings and endings.”

— Richard Wagamese (2012a, p. 205), *Ojibway*

1.3.1. Indigeneity

“A word is a universe” (V. L. Kelly Lecture, personal communication, October 6, 2016), able to hold an entire cosmology. But what happens if a word reflects someone else’s cosmology? Can we still find a way to make meaning?

As a non-Indigenous person, I continually question my capacity to hold lightly (V. L. Kelly, personal communication, May 13, 2017) words which reflect Indigeneity. My Western ways of knowing and being “(are) imbued with the legacy of colonial relations” (Kovach et al., 2013, p. 491), which includes the intentional appropriation, assimilation, and cultural and physical genocide of Indigenous Peoples in this place now called Canada.⁵ My non-Indigenous worldview, and thus privilege, can insert and assert itself, consciously and unconsciously, in who and how I am in the world. How I engage with words can diminish, erase, or appropriate other ways of knowing and being, whether intentional or not. As a non-Indigenous person, this understanding, and thus existential struggle, exists not only in this moment as I write this passage, but beyond the static nature of these keystrokes you read in your now.

When I first read S. Wilson’s (2007) discussion of an Indigenist paradigm, an aperture of possibility opened for me in how I might hold lightly Indigenous ways of knowing and being. S. Wilson (2007) shares “an Indigenist paradigm can be used by *anyone who chooses* to follow its tenets” (pp. 193–194, italics added), regardless of ethnicity or racial identity. However, to “make sure that good work is being done” comes the responsibility “to articulate and honour” the tenets of an Indigenist paradigm (S. Wilson, 2007, pp. 194–195). An Indigenist paradigm means “researchers and authors need to place themselves and their work firmly in a relational context” (S. Wilson, 2007, p. 194), recognizing we “cannot be separated from our work, nor should our writing be separated from ourselves” (p. 194). By choosing to follow an Indigenist paradigm, the “philosophy behind [a] search for knowledge ... makes this new knowledge a part of us, part of who and what we are” (S. Wilson, 2007, p. 194). S. Wilson’s (2007) words invited me to be non-Indigenous *and* engage with Indigenous ways of knowing and being in a good way.

⁵ A phrase I learned from Donald (2012b) to acknowledge our colonial history—other names for this land have and do exist.

Though S. Wilson's (2007) words act as a generous invitation, with my acceptance comes the responsibility to do the work in a good way. Therefore, through "self-locating" as a non-Indigenous person, I try to illuminate my "relationship to Indigenous knowledge systems" and Peoples to create "clarity" not only for myself in my own "meaning-making process" (Kovach et al., 2013, p. 491), but clarity also for you as well, Reader. Therefore, I attempt to "clearly (present) the assumptions upon which [my inquiry] is formulated and conducted" while simultaneously inviting others to "determine the types of relations that might exist" in who and how I am in the world (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003, p. 206). From these relationships my "ethical responsibilities emerge" (Hunt, 2014, p. 28), including sharing how I understand the word Indigeneity if I intend to offer you the tracking of my process as I explore Indigeneity.

Indigeneity, itself a universe, "is not just an idea" (Hunt, 2014, p. 29), nor a "discourse analysis" (p. 29), nor "just words on a screen" (p. 29), but "is also lived, practiced, and relational" (p. 29). Indigeneity emerges from and simultaneously creates and embodies an Indigenous worldview, one where "Knowledge is received or gifted from all living things and from the spirit world" (D. D. Wilson & Restoule, 2010, p. 33), where there exists an "innate understanding that everything (is) in a dynamic flow of interrelationship" (Cajete, 2015, p. 365). Indigenous languages reflect this shared understanding in diverse, yet similar phrases: *Mitákuye Oyás'íŋ*, "we are all related" in Lakota (Cajete, 1994, p. 26); *Tákem nsnekwúnúkw7a*, "all my relations" (FirstVoices, 2022b, para. 1) in Státiŋcets; *hišukniš ʔuušʔusums*, "we are all related" (FirstVoices, 2022a, para. 1) in Tlaocquiaht; and, *Nindinawemaaganidok*, "all my relations" in Anishinaabemowin (McCormick, 2020). Indigeneity, understood through an Indigenous worldview, values "resonance with the dynamic balance of relations between humans, nature, the cosmos, other beings, and spirits of the past, present, and future" (Cajete, 2015, p. 365).

However, manifestations of an Indigenous worldview, and thus Indigeneity, exist as unique, heterogenous expressions since they "are situated within particular cultural contexts" and particular places (D. D. Wilson & Restoule, 2010, p. 31). Indigeneity can be seen "not [as] an identity" but as a "social paradigm" (Armstrong, 2019, as cited in Christian, 2019, p. 46), one which "recognizes how localized ... peoples interact with the land to gain wisdom and knowledge so that life may continue to perpetuate itself in a continuous cycle of regeneration on the land for all life forms, not just humans" (p. 46).

As Jeanette Armstrong (2008) shares, “In the Okanagan, our understanding of the land is that it’s not just that we’re a part of the land, it’s not just that we’re *part* of the vast system that operates the land, but that the *land is us*” (p. 67, italics in original). Simply, “where one *is* has everything to do with *who one is*” (Sheridan & Longboat, 2006, pp. 369, italics in original). Hence, Indigeneity can be understood as both “intellectual and lived expressions” (Hunt, 2014, p. 30) of an Indigenous worldview. We must recognize, however, there will be differences in how those intellectual and lived expressions become embodied and enacted, reflecting the heterogenous natures of Indigenous Peoples and their differing ways of knowing and being, borne of particular contexts.

Without careful intention, the use of the term Indigeneity can conflate heterogenous multiplicity, compressing unique cosmo-onto-epistemological expressions into singularity. Responsible to be aware of this possibility, I must act in a good way to attend to specificity, to offer my understandings of the diverse complexities enfolded within the word Indigeneity. Paradoxically, though, I must also be aware commonalities and shared cosmo-onto-epistemological expressions amongst and between Indigenous communities can and do exist. For example, the understanding “we are, always and already, ancestors” (Hausdoerffer et al., 2021, pp. 1–2) informs Indigenous worldviews, and therefore Indigeneity. Yet how this responsibility to those in our past, those in our now, and those to come, including the human and the more-than-human world, comes to be expressed reflects *particular* communities. From a Tewa perspective, Cajete (1994) shares, “We follow the tracks of ancestors in our individual and collective journeys to spirit” (p. 55). While from a Hawai’ian perspective, M. A. Meyer (2021) shares, “the voices of our kupuna, our elders long past, ... are sounds we bring forward, over and over, to remind us how to become our best descendants” (p. 85). And finally, from a Citizen Potawatomi Nation perspective, Kimmerer (as cited in Wall Kimmerer, 2021b) shares, “It is the work of ancestors and ancestors-to-be, to support the becoming of what they cannot imagine, but trust will arise ... preserving room for possibility, for a world open to creation again and again” (p. 183).

Herein exists my existential challenge and thus responsibility: to attempt to learn how to recognize, and with care, to respectfully hold lightly both specificity and commonality which exists within Indigeneity, to learn from the Teachings generously offered to me as I journey, but to also contribute in a good way as an ancestor-to-be, to

contribute in a good way to our world of relations (Van Horn, 2021b). A persistent question imbues my existential quest: “how to rightly relate?” (Van Horn, 2021b, p. 3). What “possibilities for becoming better kin” exist beyond my Western worldview (Van Horn, 2021b, p. 3)? What “practices of belonging with and amid our fellow earthly kin” (Van Horn, 2021b, p. 4) can I learn so that I too can contribute to our “mutual flourishing” (p. 7)? How do I learn to join the circle of belonging, where “everyone has a place” (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a, p. 114), where we “are relatives because we are part of the same story” (p. 117), when my Western eyes might not recognize its shape, and my Western ears might not recognize its sounds? Can I learn to “(accept) kinship” (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a, p. 117), but to also accept the “reciprocal obligation” (p. 117) of that kinship? How can I manifest my responsibility to be ethically relational (Donald, 2012b) and relationally accountable (S. Wilson, 2008)? Can I learn the understanding the human world and the more-than-human world “have a common future, that our fates are linked” (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a, p. 121)? Can I learn, but more importantly, can I share what I learn with the young ones in my care?

As I endeavour to share the trackings of my wayfinding as I explore Indigeneity in a good way, I accept the responsibility to name “how [I] came to know Indigeneity and what representational strategies are used” (Hunt, 2014, p. 26) to reflect my wayfinding. Though earnest in my intentionality to do my work in a good way, I accept any errors of understanding or representations as I share my journey with you.

“...the average human mind and spirit are
confusing beyond measure.

It would be much nicer to have things definite—
both human and divine.

One wants to be decent
and
to know the reason why.”

— Wallace Stevens (1996, pp. 86–87, underlining in original)

1.3.2. Things Definite

privilege morphs,
scuttles continuously
shape-shifting before your
very eyes

glancing back, there it lays,
shiny, silken tendrils,
too many to count,
too many to name,
woven into the tapestry of your stories

it takes a certain kind of light
for their glow to rise and greet you

it takes years to learn how to adjust your vision,
yet
it is still far too easy
to close your eyes or to turn your head

I am from salty sea air

(humid gossamer, draped, a sheen
ever-present rainbows, indifferent to the clouds
moss and skunk cabbage sparkling
with the shiny weight of it all)

that catches in your throat, its sea-full
flavour everywhere so much so you
forget its taste

I am from a place of mist and fog

— September 2015

1.3.3. Of Earth

To inhabit the Earth means to be *of* Earth. *Of* Earth means to be indigenous, an enduring enactment and embodiment of Creation. The word *Indigenous* means “being so completely identified with a place that you reflect its very entrails, its soul” (Cajete, 1994, p. 87), or “*that which has endured*” (M. A. Meyer, 2013b, p. 98, italics in original), synonymous in philosophy for “enduring patterns” (M. A. Meyer, 2013a, p. 251). Ecological Visioning (re)cognizes—to recognize, or perceive, and (re)*cognize*, or know anew—humanity, in all its diversity, means to be of Earth. I am of Earth, but not Indigenous as “*Indigenous* is a birthright word” (Wall Kimmerer, 2013, p. 213), one invoked by “soul-deep fusion with the land” (p. 213). To enact a process-oriented journey to sense one’s centre, guided by Indigenous ways of knowing and being, becomes a right of birth when understood all of humanity means to be of Earth. I seek to (re)concile what it means to be human, to be of Earth. As a non-Indigenous person, teacher-educator, and citizen of this place now called Canada, I ask to be guided by Indigeneity as I wayfind, to learn to respectfully walk with and be informed by Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

Of Earth, I accept the accountability to “give [my] gifts and meet [my] responsibilities... to take care of the land as if our lives and the lives of all our relatives depend on it” (Wall Kimmerer, 2013, p. 215). I accept the responsibilities to live “as a good neighbour” to both the human world and the more-than-human world, to learn to honour my kinship and belonging within the world of relations (Wall Kimmerer, 2013, p. 214; Van Horn, 2021b). Ralston Saul (2009) quotes Grand Chief John Kelly’s statement from a Royal Commission:

As the years go by, the circle of the Ojibway gets bigger and bigger. Canadians of all colours and religion are entering that circle. You might feel you have roots somewhere else, but in reality, you are right here with us. (p. 29)

The term *Ojibway* also denotes the term *anishinabe* which means “human” in Ojibwaymowin, or the Ojibway language (Fontaine, 2020, pp. xvi, 220, 225). With this understanding, it helps us to “move away from prescribed western words/classifications” of Ojibway as a discrete group of Indigenous Peoples and instead understand Grand Chief Kelly’s intention of “the circle of *humanity* gets bigger and bigger” (Fontaine, 2020, p. 9). Dwayne Donald (2021) offers that in many in Indigenous languages “the people

consistently refer to themselves as the ‘real people’ or the ‘true human beings’” (p. 55), but to understand “this naming as declarative of the people’s intentions to live humbly and in accordance with the laws of creation” (p. 55). I seek to join the ever-enlarging circle of belonging within humanity, but also to accept the responsibilities to contribute to and uphold the circle of kinship, to live humbly within the human and more-than-human world.

This transformative inquiry began as an attempt to enact Indigenist (S. Wilson, 2008) pedagogical strategies but became a methodology of dispositional change. As I wayfind, I become, inviting new states of consciousness. Though my stance once consisted *only* of my non-Indigenous worldview, it now reflects my dispositional (re)orientation which includes Indigeneity. Indigeneity offers sites/sights to (re)concile what it means to be human, what it means to belong in a good way in a world of relations within the human world and the more-than-human world (Borrows, 2018; M. A. Meyer, 2021; Wall Kimmerer, 2021b; Van Horn, 2021b). I have pivoted from a universe of possibility to a multiverse of possibilities (Cajete, 2015). My writing attempts to convey the sometimes convoluted, unfolding, and enfolded spirals of process which constitute this act of endogenous education.

I am from the places where ferns unfurl

(sunlight's suffused glow
dapples
the Winged Ones, the Four-Legged Ones,
the Crawling & Slithering Ones
all, here)

a shock of movement and sound
an unravelling
as old as breath itself
needing no witness to be

I am from the still places whose cacophony sings if we but listen

— September 2015

“Love, then,
becomes the binding cord
that links us to the world,

and from it
come all the other meaningful connections
between the ancestors and descendants of generations to come:
respect, reciprocity, accountability, commitment, generosity.

Connection through relationship.

It's not easy;
it's messy, and painful, and uncomfortable.

It calls us to be better than we are,
to be braver than we expected,

in a living world
that bears the memory of
who we were
and

the vision of
who we are meant to be.

It asks us to open ourselves to vulnerability—
emotional as well as physical
—and to risk
the blurring of our boundaries
of self in the connection with others.

But it requires action.

Our humanity isn't what we are,
but rather what we enact—

we choose to become
human each and every day.”

—Daniel Heath Justice, Cherokee Nation

(Heath Justice, 2018, pp. 69–70)

1.3.4. Spirals of Process

My writing strives to (re)sonate and (re)verberate with these spirals of process, to offer you a pathway within and through this hermeneutic inquiry. My hermeneutic inquiry recognizes “that any one source of insight does not stand alone, cut off from other tracks of meaning” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 12) as I attempt to “remain true *to something*” (p. 175, italics in original) by inviting interpretation in “such a way that is true *of something*” (p. 175, italics in original). Simplified, the term *hermeneutic* denotes the study of interpretation, and the term *inquiry* denotes an attempt to learn. My written word seeks to share and invite interpretation(s) as I track my learnings. Through interpretive possibilities comes generativity, a proliferation of creativity, and (re)newal (Cajete, 1994; Smith, 1991). However, every statement I offer through these keystrokes commits a form of discursive violence, meaning some form of “improper treatment” (“Violence,” n.d., para. 2) of my linguistic representation of my lived experiences, for every statement requires a certain generality, unavoidably wanting in exactitude (Smith, 1991).

Discourse generates and maintains “boundaries around what is considered real, and, by extension, what is unable to be seen as real” or even, “not seen at all” (Hunt, 2014, p. 29). Thus, no collection of words will be able to (re)present the whole of my journey, no matter how earnest my (re)telling. Martin Heidegger (2013) tells us,

Man acts as though *he* were the shaper and master of language, while in fact *language* remains the master of man... That we retain a concern for care in speaking is all to the good, but it is of no help to us as long as language still serves us then only as a means of expression. (p. 144, italics in original)

And yet through this collection of words exists traces of my hermeneutic inquiry and the transformation of my hermeneutic imagination (Smith, 1991), my (re)presentation of interpretive possibilities. Here exists my attempts to (re)concile and expand my own boundaries and constraints of understanding for you to follow my hermeneutic inquiry and to inform and possibly transform your imagination.

Boundaries and borders connote barriers and impediments, limits and stops, edges and margins (“Boundary,” n.d.; “Border,” n.d.). Boundaries and borders also connote the existence of space, or room and distance, even interval or extension (“Space,” 2020). Boundaries and borders can therefore be understood as “that from

which something *begins it presencing*" (Heidegger, 2013, p. 152, italics in original), rather than only barriers, limits, or edges. Bridges connote the ability to connect separated spaces, to link and allow for a joining ("Bridge," n.d.). A bridge also evokes location, a particular place in space to allow for gathering (Heidegger, 2013). This gathering creates a site; this site ultimately determines a location's context (Heidegger, 2013).

Interpretation necessitates the ability to identify landmarks and boundaries of non-understanding and understanding, with the hopeful intention to bridge the borders between. Often associated with hermeneutics, Hermes, a Greek god, acts as a messenger of the gods, known for heraldry and wayfaring among other things (Hard, 2004). Hermes' name comes from the Greek word *herma*, meaning a cairn of stones which indicate landmarks or boundaries (Hard, 2004). Hermes could cross over the border of the living to the dead, able to navigate boundaries and their transgressions (Hard, 2004). Subsequently, the Greek word *hermeneus* came to denote an interpreter (Hard, 2004). Offering this hermeneutic inquiry, I, like Hermes, attempt to navigate borders, the borders between lived experiences and the written word, but I also attempt to evoke and invoke my presencing and sites/sights of possibilities. I endeavour to be an interpreter of and for myself and my writing to be an offering to you, to act as a bridge, yet I also invite you to be your own *hermeneus*.

Interpretation cannot be separated nor distanced from lived experience. To interpret means to be human; to be human means to interpret (Zimmerman, 2015). Being human evokes and invokes interpretation: *Cogito, ergo interpretatio* ("We exist, therefore we interpret"; M. A. Meyer, 2003, p. 59). Hermeneutics derives from context; context creates our consciousness; our consciousness constitutes our humanity (Jardine, 2006; M. A. Meyer, 2013b; Smith, 1991). Thus, hermeneutics reaches and stretches, tries to grasp language or other modes of expression to (re)present our consciousness, to (re)present our human-ness to ourselves in order to (re)learn, once more, our communal future, present, past (Smith, 1991).

Hermeneutics reflects (k)new⁶ wisdom: wisdom simultaneously ancient and new (M. A. Meyer, 2013b). Enfolded within hermeneutics dwell ancient ideas with new

⁶ M. A. Meyer (2013b) credits Shane Edwards for the term *(k)new* to articulate the concept of ancient/new, or "new-old-wisdom" (pp. 100, 94).

vocabulary: epistemology, axiology, ontology, cosmology. Simplified, epistemology refers to the study of knowledge; axiology to the study of values or ethics; ontology to the study of the nature of being; cosmology to the study of the nature of the Universe. Questioning what constitutes knowledge—or who determines a value system, or what it means to be human, or how our Universe came to be—thrive in our human story since time immemorial. These questions persist and their answers ever-evade us. Western thought, influenced by the Enlightenment and the insistent belief our world can be quantified (M. A. Meyer, 2001, 2003), approaches discrete disciplines of study as separate entities, complementing the other, but individual nonetheless. This rational empiricism dominates, yet other ways of knowing and being offer a different stance, one that instead recognizes discrete disciplines of study as parts of a whole web of knowledge (Cajete, 1994; Donald, 2012b; M. A. Meyer, 2013b).

Holographic epistemology⁷ offers the conception of *effulgent coherence*, or incandescent unity of the physical, mental, and Spiritual, or knowledge, knowing, and understanding (M. A. Meyer, 2013b). Holographic epistemology expands what knowledge could mean: each form of knowledge, though unique, teaches something about wholeness as each exists simultaneously as a unified hologram of knowledge (M. A. Meyer, 2013b). *Knowledge* relates to our mind, the ideas that exist outside of us as cognitive abstractions; *knowing* relates to our bodies, the direct experiences mediated by our senses and physicality; *understanding* relates to our Spirits, that which clarifies our thoughts and actions (M. A. Meyer, 2003, 2013b). In Western thought, a false divide or separation between these forms of knowledge exist as a way to cope with the complexity of each, yet each enact a part of the whole of knowledge. Holographic epistemology provides another way into the hermeneutic circle: there exists a continuous inter/intra-play amongst and between the body, mind, and Spirit, or knowledge, knowing, and understanding.

⁷Sometimes known as lens-less photography, holography produces three-dimensional photographs known as holograms. A laser beam diverged into two beams creates a hologram, the interference pattern captured at the film. Once a third laser beam shines on the interference pattern, the human eye can detect a three-dimensional image. Wondrously, a hologram can be cut into smaller and smaller pieces, and yet each piece will contain the image of the whole (Nave, 2017). Hence the use of “holographic” to denote the metaphor of knowledge as a whole being comprised of “three” beams—body, mind, Spirit—which, though separate, contain the whole (M. A. Meyer, 2013b).

“When you listen, you become aware. That’s for your head.

When you hear, you awaken. That’s for your heart.

When you feel, it becomes a part of you. That’s for your spirit.

Three times. It’s so you learn to listen with your whole being.

That’s how you learn.”

— Richard Wagamese (2016, p. 113), *Ojibway*

These words I ask you to listen to, hear, and feel come from my heart, a trail laid for you to my heart-work, my (re)visioning and envisioning, an invitation into the hermeneutic circle. I invite you to prepare yourself, to attune yourself to a different frequency. I offer you my praxis: my lived experiences informed by theory, and my understanding of theory informed by my lived experiences, each animated by Spirit. My dissertation and scholarship presuppose my heart-work consists of my knowledge, knowing, and understanding: effulgent coherence.

Each word you read I have spoken aloud to gift the breath of life each deserves (Brant, 1994; Cajete, 1994; Cesspooch, 2016; Wagamese, 2016).



1.3.5. Snails

As Snail⁸ grows, so too does its shell. Born with its shell, Snail's shell not only increases in size, it also increases in thickness as Snail ages.

Each layer of the shell wall works together to protect the flexible body within. Wondrously, the shell itself does not permanently connect to the body, but instead provides a hard, outer surface for defence. Some liken its shell to Snail's home.

Often Snail faces injury, either by predator or by accident. Snail's shell will repair itself, but the shell makes visible its repaired places, the difference of the repair to the remaining, undamaged shell surface noticeable.

The shell continuously expands, and as Snail matures, whorls develop. Eventually, a spiral emerges with the beginning of Snail's life at the centre of the spiral.

Snail's life journey can be tracked by counting the whorls.

⁸ Specifically, terrestrial Snails. Learned from Snail-World (n.d.) and Robert Nordsieck (2012).

“I am not from here,

just a stranger who comes with gratitude and respect

and

questions of how it is we come to belong to a place.”

— Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013, p. 212), *Citizen Potawatomi Nation*

1.3.6. The Path Emerges

The story I tell you refuses to lay itself out as a path with a clear destination. It refuses to be captured and contained by edges, its landscape shaped by signposts to indicate distance already travelled and terminus yet to come. It insists I look back to look forward. It insists I look beyond to look closely. It insists I tell you about now, but also what is and what was and what could be exist simultaneously, and function as a oneness.

The story I tell you refuses to lay itself out as a path with a clear destination simply because the path emerges as I walk.

My duty, here, now, with each keystroke, to invite you into a way to make sense of my evolving imagination in becoming. Dr. Gregory Cajete (1994) offers us a possibility of coherence. Cajete provides stages of the creative process, or a way to understand the how and the why of creative endeavours generally. I adopt and adapt Cajete's conception to guide us through my story.

Cajete's (1994) four stages of creative process include First Insight, Preparation/Immersion, Incubation, and Evaluation.

First Insight, a stage of intuition, involves creative thought that leads to seeking, deep thinking, and self-reflection. Ultimately, it invites metaphoric thinking and visioning of what to create.

Preparation/Immersion, a stage of inquiry, comprises of learning how best to enact the creative work, and exploring the relationships connected to the inquiry. Process and research oriented, this stage establishes the emotional and intellectual capacities required to bring to fruition the creative vision into product.

Incubation, a stage of transformation, parallels First Insight but with much more depth. Whereas First Insight can be understood as perceptual, Incubation can be understood as Spiritual. Incubation stimulates expressions of healing and Spirituality, often through ceremony or ritual to honour the vision or the creative work produced.

Evaluation, a stage of completion, produces and shares the creative work, the product of the visioning. This stage requires determining how to share and defend the

creative work, but it also requires accepting the critique of others. Evaluation engenders a sense of self-confidence as it necessitates understanding and defending the integrity of the creative process.

Looking back to look forward, looking beyond to look closely, I now see how my journey parallels Cajete's (1994) four stages of creative process. Extending beyond my creative process, I use these stages to share the overarching process of my transformative inquiry. However, rather than Evaluation, I prefer to name the fourth stage "Learnings" to honour the (re)curative, self-reflexive nature of my lived experiences. Ultimately, this transformative inquiry supplies no end; rather, moments of pause between whorls of becoming emerge. Thus, Cajete's (1994) stages of creative process align with what I see as the dimensions of transformative process.

These dimensions of transformation do not manifest themselves as distinct, discrete entities; rather, each blend into the other much like the whorls of Snail's shell. Who can say exactly why and where the whorl pivots, expanding and thickening itself? Yet we can count the whorls when we see Snail. We must also accept, however, a pause between the turns occurs. As I wayfind, my whorls of transformation expand and thicken who and how I am in the world. My challenge? To share the pauses between with you.

I follow Cajete's (1994) conception, offering the whole of my story as four dimensions of transformation: First Insight, Preparation/Immersion, Incubation, and Learnings. Yet within the whole of my story also resides the multitude of moments which comprise this overarching journey. These moments oftentimes occur simultaneously, layering and enfolding one into the other. These moments themselves mirror the four dimensions of transformative process, thickening and expanding who and how I am in the world. For the purposes of this dissertation, therefore, enfolded within each overarching dimension will be multiple dimensions to reflect these significant moments of lived experience.

1.3.7. Invitation

Reader, *“Everything leaves a track, and in the track is the story: the state of being of each thing in its interaction with everything else”* (Cajete, 1994, p. 56). *As I track my wayfinding, I invite you to orient yourself to how I tell my story, here, now, so that you might (re)cognize—to recognize, or perceive, and (re)cognize, or know anew—its intentional iterative process and thus methodology. Please understand, I write this invitation in my now, a full thesis before me with all five chapters composed, long after I penned my discussion of Cajete’s (1994) conception of the four stages of creativity. Since tracks “are the manuscript of existence in a place through time”* (Cajete, 1994, p. 56), *only in this now can I pause to spiral back to my first footsteps, to (re)cognize the tracks of my wayfinding so I can (re)cognize where I was to (re)cognize where I am today. Only in this now can I share with you the shape of my path to guide you as you wayfind through my story.*

“Reading the patterns [of our tracks] invites us to become wise” (V. L. Kelly, personal communication, July 15, 2022), *helps us to embrace the Teachings we experience, allows our heart-work to arise, and thus tunes our capacities of understanding our human-ness. Yet we each read with our own selves. We read as situated beings, beings in a particular time and place, of a particular socio-cultural-historical context. We read as a who which “cannot be separated from [a] where”* (Donald, 2012b, p. 549, italics added). *We read as Beings, a coalescence of knowledge, knowing, and understanding, a coalescence of the continuous inter~intra~play⁹ amongst and between the body, mind, and Spirit* (M. A. Meyer, 2013b). *Words act as invitations to contemplation and to understanding, but how or if we accept those invitations relies on who and how we are in our world, relies on who and how we wish to become in our world. Therefore, to honour you and your own self, what I offer here gestures towards my crafting of this thesis but also trusts your capacities to be your own hermeneus as you journey alongside me.*

⁹ My use of the (~) symbol attempts to disrupt the metaphoric (re)inscription of a dichotomous worldview the (/) symbol can hold. I use the (~) symbol rather than the (/) symbol in this section and not other sections of this chapter to exemplify my (re)iterative, (re)cursive writing process and wayfinding—my emerging ecological worldview calls me to unsettle limitations and mechanisms of my language which did not exist as fully in my earlier journey. A discussion of how I came to the symbol (~) follows in “Chapter Two First Insight: Witnessing”.

*Within each chapter exists a rub, a tug on my sleeve (Fels, 2005), a call to my heart-work: learning to be of service to Education for (Re)conciliation.¹⁰ In my attempts to answer that call, I share with you my scholarly (re)search. The word research, meaning to “investigate or study... search or examine with continued care” (“Research,” n.d., para. 6), comes from the French *rechercher*, derived from *re-*, the word forming element meaning back, again, anew (“Re-,” n.d.), and *cercher*, to “seek for” (“Research,” n.d., para. 2) from the Latin *circare*. *Circare* means to “go about, wander, traverse” (“Research,” n.d., para. 2), itself derived from Late Latin meaning to “wander hither and thither” (para. 2).*

My personal and professional contexts, my sites of learning, invite sites of inquiry. As I seek answers to my heart-question, I (re)search, an act of scholarship, to inform and shape my understanding of my place in Education for (Re)conciliation. My (re)search becomes a site, a place of learning and of understanding, inviting sight, or perception, of my practice, my pedagogy. Therefore, (re)search becomes site~sight, a place for and vision of pedagogical action informed by theory: transformative praxis. (Re)search becomes an invitation to (re)search my practice—to understand and perceive it anew—and as I (re)search my practice, it too becomes an invitation for scholarly (re)search. One spirals into the other, expanding, thickening, and propelling my transformative praxis. Thus, my (re)presentation of this (re)iterative (re)search cycle invites you to attend to my wandering hither and thither through multiple areas of study and my sites of practice, invites you to attend to the (re)iterative process of my transformative praxis as I seek, with continued care, to answer a call to my heart-work.

Alongside scholarly (re)search, I also offer you my lived experiences through dialogic vignettes and poetry,¹¹ as well as individual quotations. My lived experiences with my Teachers—Elders, young ones in my care, Beings of the more-than-human world, colleagues—enfold within the hermeneutics of my transformative praxis. These lived experiences also invite site~sight, offer invitations for both me and you to witness the whorls of my becoming as I wayfind. Sharing my lived experiences and individual quotations with you, I attempt to depict these spirals of presencing, to show the emergent methodology of my wayfinding. I nestle individual quotations throughout each

¹⁰ A fulsome discussion of my heart question and heart-work follows later in this chapter.

¹¹ A fulsome discussion of dialogic vignettes and poetry follows later in this chapter.

chapter to signal an opening, a presencing of the potential for inter~intra-action with you between, among, and beyond my story. I often express individual quotations by (re)forming their original prose format to a poetic format to evoke and invoke this presencing. My writing practice manifests itself throughout the crafting of this thesis; thus, word by word its style emerges.

*I further invite presencing of the potential for inter~intra-action with you between, among, and beyond my story with deliberate pauses between each chapter. These pauses hold lived experiences of developing my practice of the encaustic art form with my mom¹² which has become both a method and a medium of discovery as I wayfind, learning, unlearning, and (re)learning. I offer photography, email exchanges, and videos to share these lived experiences, to invite “a kind of dialogue [between us] that provides access to things deeply held while supporting multiple ways of meaning making” (Lyle, 2018, p. 4). With these pauses, I invite “questions rather than providing answers” (Lyle, 2020, p. 121) as a way to welcome a “development of knowledge rather than the consumption of it” (p. 121), and thus to invite your capacities to be your own hermeneus as you travel alongside me. The word pause comes from the Old French, *pausee*, to mean “a delay, a temporary rest in singing or speaking” (“Pause,” n.d., para. 2). I intend for these pauses to be places of temporary rest, and to demonstrate through images, email exchanges, and videos the imperceptible: through “the act of making, I was unmaking and remaking myself” (Kelly, 2021b, p. 189).*

Finally, I (re)turn, or come back, to dialogic vignettes, poetry, and individual quotations throughout individual chapters and the whole of the thesis to invite a space of (re)cognizing, perceiving and knowing them anew, through a (re)turn, or an intentional shift, of their offering.

Thus, the intentional, (re)iterative writing process of my dissertation invites both me and you to witness my (re)iterative experiences of wayfinding. Only in this now can I “circle back—not circle, spiral, for [I] don’t touch down in the same place. Each spiral [I] turn and ask the questions in new ways” (Van Horn, 2021a, p. 164). From my vantage, I can look back and see the whole of my journey and I can (re)cognize my individual footsteps which led me to where I now stand, whilst simultaneously understanding where

¹² A fulsome discussion of the encaustic art form and introduction to my mother, Sandy Schultz, follows later in this chapter.

my next footsteps might fall. I can (re)cognize the inter~intra-connections of both the whole and the parts of my journey: understanding the whole helps me to understand the parts, and understanding the parts helps me to understand the whole. Throughout the crafting of this dissertation, I spiral through time, able to (re)turn to my path, able to (re)cognize—perceive and know anew—my footsteps as the act of wayfinding gifts me with new states of consciousness, new insights and awareness of the coalescence of my knowledge, knowing, and understanding of who and how I am in the world.

With this hermeneutic inquiry, I track the persistent vacillation of my (re)cognizing the whorls of my becoming, my transformative praxis of (re)visioning, invoking and evoking envisioning new states of consciousness. With my (re)iterative writing process, I invite you to witness this invocation and evocation of my new states of consciousness through the Teachings I experience, my heart-work, and my tuned capacities for understanding my human-ness. With my (re)iterative writing process, I invite you to witness my contribution to Education for (Re)conciliation: wayfinding in the praxis of being a good relative, relating.

1.3.8. Rendered Learnings

As I live this transformative inquiry, defining moments make themselves apparent. I liken these defining moments as *pivots*, or profound shifts in my ways of knowing and being. I have come to understand pivots as vortexes within my whole (re)cursive process. Significant interactions with others—the young ones in my care, Elders, colleagues—most often become the catalyst of a pivot. Sometimes scholarly readings, participation in academic conferences or conversations, or immersing myself in thinking and introspection precipitate a pivot. Sometimes the natural world invites a pivot. Pivots always arrive; I have come to know they cannot be manufactured.

I offer pivots in the form of what I call *dialogic vignettes*, or distilled life writing.

I choose the term *dialogic* to offer the polyphonic nature of the life writer's experiences with herself and with others, including the more-than-human world. The "interactive, responsive nature of dialogue rather than...the single-mindedness of monologue" ("Dialogic," 2015, para. 1) typifies the concept dialogic. Dialogic also acts as an invitation for comingling between the life writer's offerings and her life readers' meaning-making, an inter/intra-action. I choose the term *vignette* to denote the temporal yet enduring *moment* of a lived experience. A "brief composition or self-contained passage" ("Vignette," 2015, para. 1), vignette as "a type of small photographic portrait with blurred edges very popular [in the] mid-19c" (para. 1), most likely inspired the meaning of "literary sketch" ("Vignette," n.d., para. 1) in 1880. I find the descriptor of a "portrait with blurred edges" to be an apt metaphor for the temporality of the lived experiences which I offer.

Much like K. Meyer's (2008) field notes, I "take out anything superfluous, and hold only what matters" in my dialogic vignettes. I tune my words to (re)sonate with my experiences, careful in my composition, only offering what sounds in harmony. Invoked and inspired from deep attention, dialogic vignettes attempt to (re)sound my heart's work.

My conception and subsequent craft of dialogic vignettes arise from my learnings with Lynn Fels (2005, 2010, 2012) and her conception of *performative inquiry*, and with Karen Meyer (2006, 2008), and her conception of *living inquiry*. Practices and not

methods of inquiry, both performative inquiry and living inquiry invite the (re)searcher to be present to the possibilities of experiencing the world anew.

Performative inquiry (Fels, 2005, 2010, 2012) asks (re)searchers to attend to how we perform within our roles and contexts, to the scripts we knowingly or unknowingly follow, and to how those roles, contexts, and scripts perform us. Performative inquiry asks we attend to emergent moments of disruption or (re)velation as sites of pedagogical importance to illuminate our choice of response or non-response. Fels (2012) names David Applebaum's conception of a "stop" as integral to her understanding, a "moment that tugs on our sleeve" (Fels, 2010, p. 4). Fels (2012) describes a tug on the sleeve as "*a moment of risk, a moment of opportunity ... [where] we are ... awakened ... [and] become alert ... [that] some other way of being in a relationship or in action, is possible*" (p. 53, italics in original). Inviting this awareness helps us to listen in profound ways, to recognize and identify moments of significance which may otherwise be lost in our complex, "noisy" experiences.

Living inquiry (K. Meyer, 2006, 2008) asks (re)searchers to attend to daily life, both their interior and exterior experiences. Living inquiry asks we attend to place, or how our context strengthens our senses and roots our presence; to language, or how the spoken and unspoken shape us; to time, or how our horizons of past, present, and future fuse, illuminating temporality and finitude; and to self/other, or how we relate to ourselves and others, both human and more than human. Carefully crafted, distilled field notes of these observations serve an integral role in living inquiry: to generate opportunities for self-reflexive interpretation as a way to beckon our lived experiences nearer. Sharing field notes with others also invites witnessing and interpretation by and with others, evoking a relational inquiry.

Once (re)cognized and identified, reflection on the magnitude, meaning, and value of these emergent and observed moments in performative inquiry and living inquiry invite possibilities to be wide awake (Greene, 1978), to further inquiry and understanding. Thus, my conception and craft of dialogic vignettes emerge from my understandings and learnings from Fels (2005, 2010, 2012) and K. Meyer (2006, 2008), and attempt to reflect my attention to emergent moments, the pivots of my (re)curative process, in a distilled format.

I endeavour to authentically reflect these turnings, share with you my experiences as I perceive them, earnest in my (re)telling. All names, locations, or other identifying factors have been adapted to protect identities, but dialogic vignettes faithfully honour my lived experiences. These dialogic vignettes embody the rendered learnings of my heart-work.

1.3.9. Pivots

A gathering of energy arrives, much like the charged air before a storm. The birds and other creatures
silence themselves; the Earth quietyens.

In the stillness, you feel the electricity in the air. Your hairs bristle, stand on your skin—skin a moment
before you were not aware of inhabiting.

It comes, suddenly, dizzily, sounding in your ears, in your throat, in your feet.

A rushing of energy materializes, a frenetic swoosh that occurs at the cellular level. You cannot even train
your eye on a distant
point.

You dissolve into yourself, unable to see beyond.

Your ears ache.

The crescendo of whirring never comes.

The pitch and toss and twist suddenly lull, and there you stand.

Still whole, still you.

And yet.

It takes some time for your equilibrium to return,

to find your balance.

You understand even in balance exists movement, but this movement feels strange, and somehow expected. Your feet still yours, the ground on which they stand seems almost familiar, but the air? Different.

Enveloping you, the muted light dampens and brightens all at once. Your eyelids still heavy, but compliant. The ringing in your ears subsides, but like ebbing waves on rocks, it lingers. It becomes a distant sound, almost comforting as you begin to find your way, your steps becoming more and more certain.

Until.

A gathering of energy arrives, much like the charged air before a storm...

1.4. Métissage: An Invitation

I invite you to listen to my story, but also to feel my story. I call on not only your intellectual capacities, but your creative and emotional capacities as well. I wish to speak my heart to a listening heart, Spirit to Spirit.

Thus, I offer you several modalities in the form of métissage to share my journey: life writing, dialogic vignettes, academic musings, and artistic endeavours, including poetry and encaustic art.

Métissage derives from the Late Latin *mixticus*, “of mixed race” (“Metis,” n.d., para. 2), and the Latin word *mixtus* which means “mixed” (para. 2), particularly for cloth of two different fibres (Chambers et al., 2012, p. 141). The word *metis* comes from Greek to denote “practical wisdom” (Hard, 2004, p. 78), as well as the Greek homonym for *mixtus*, known as both “a figure of skill and craft” and “wisdom and intelligence” (Chambers et al., 2012, p. 141). In Greek mythology Metis, Zeus’ first wife, was “the personification of cunning intelligence” (Hard, 2004, p. 41). The word *métis* also means “person of mixed parentage” (“Metis,” n.d., para. 2), especially those of French Canadian and Indigenous Peoples in the place now known as Canada. *Métis* “became a racial category” to denote “breeding across species” (Chambers et al., 2012, p. 142), understood as “mixed-blood” or “half-breed” to signify the children of non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples, clearly carrying with it negative, racist connotations. Hasbe-Ludt, et al. (2009) (re)claim “métissage from this pejorative connotation and return it to its original meaning” (p. 36): that which “weaves disparate elements into multi-valenced, metonymie, and multi-textured forms, unravelling the logic of linearity, hierarchy, and uniformity” (p. 35).

Braiding multiple threads of modalities, voices, or time periods into an overall tapestry can be a useful metaphor to conceptualize métissage (Chambers et al., 2012; Donald, 2012b; Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). Some conceptions of métissage reflect polyphonic texts, or weaving multiple authors, artists, and/or modalities together to create a unified whole.¹³ For the purposes of this dissertation, my conception of métissage will be a braiding of the aforementioned multiple modalities with me as the

¹³ For an example, see Chambers et al. (as cited in Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009).

primary author and photographer, yet I also include co-created artistic endeavours and the voice of my co-wayfinder.

Heterogenous in nature, métissage evokes possibilities, particularly, transformative possibilities. What emerges from the braiding of multiple modalities can be a surprise to the creator herself, offering new learning and understanding not yet conceived until individual threads become a cohesive braid. Métissage invites you, my reader, to make your own meaning. Métissage thus serves as an act of trust. I trust you to engage with my invitation, to make meaning from, and to interact with, my offering. I invite you to witness my process, and trust you will walk your own journey of imagining and transforming in your own way, in your own time just as I continuously transform on this journey, whorls of my spiral of inquiry continuously growing and thickening.

A research praxis, métissage centres itself in autobiographical writing, or life writing. Métissage as research praxis means life writing becomes a self-(re)flexive, (re)cursive practice: the (re)searcher becomes the (re)search; the (re)search becomes the (re)searcher. Life writers become (re)searchers and (re)searchers. Life writers must remember to remember, an act of (re)vision in order to recall and record lived experiences. Life writing thus also becomes an act of (re)vision for the life writer, a process which invites (re)imagining new possibilities from that which has already passed. Through life writing, “we can indeed write ourselves into new wise ways of being in the world and knowing of the world” (Hasebe-Ludt, 2010, p. 44). Life writing provides a space for tracking the stories of a life lived. From this tracking, Teachings emerge—both lessons from our own human experiences and with the living world. The Earth lives, and has its own agency. The more-than-human world communicates to us as kin, offering guidance if we but listen (Borrows, 2018). Our lives and living world can be our greatest teachers if we attend, and if we but allow the Teachings to find us (Wagamese, 2019).

The act of autobiographical writing beckons forth stories which linger in a life writer’s consciousness, some easily accessed, some hiding in the recesses of knowing. Life writing hinges on intimacy; yet stories belong to the life writer. (Re)sponsible to portray as honest and authentic of a (re)telling as possible, life writers must choose which stories to tell and which to conceal. Thomas King (2003) reminds us, “once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world” (p. 10). Founded on an act of trust, life writing engenders a connection between a life writer and her life-

reader, a rapport which attends to the hearts of both writer and reader. The word “rapport” meaning “relation, relationship” comes to us from the 1660s, from French *rapport* meaning “harmony, agreement” (“Rapport,” n.d., para. 2). Thus, life writing attempts to establish rapport, or harmony, between the life writer and life reader.

Life writing can be presented in various formats—creative non-fiction, poetry, journal entries, epistolary methods as a few examples—each chosen to evoke a particular emotional response, to suggest a particular meaning, or to best reflect the story being told. A sort of magic occurs when the life reader creates meaning beyond these intentions of life writers: being in relation emerges. Alchemy.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I choose to share life writing which illuminates and (re)sonates both the struggles and the triumphs of my life journey in exploring Indigeneity and enacting dispositional change. I offer a variety of formats, and as previously articulated, I include dialogic vignettes as a distilled form of life writing. My performance of métissage “is a singular and collective act of re/creation” (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009, p. 10), my attempt to invite understanding of “interconnectedness and interdependencies among the narratives” (p. 9) of my hermeneutic inquiry so that I might recognize “points of affinity and dissonance” (p. 9). To attend to discrete moments, the pivots and pauses of my whorls of transformation, invites us both to better interpret the emerging path of my wayfinding. As with dialogic vignettes, I adapt names, locations, or other identifying factors to protect identities of others in my life writing.

According to S. Wilson (2008), “the ethics involved in an Indigenous research paradigm sometimes differ from the dominant academic way of doing things” (p. 63) such as naming people who engage in some form of dialogic relationship with the researcher, like a conversation or an interview. If Indigenous research has ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008) at its core, S. Wilson (2008) asks, “How can I be held accountable to the relationships I have with these people [research co-participants] if I don’t name them?” (p. 63). Learning from Indigenous ways of knowing and being, I follow S. Wilson’s (2008) stance and name those who choose to be named, how they wish to be named, and my relationship with them: Sandy Schultz, my mother; Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu, Hereditary Chief of a Coast Salish Nation, mentor and friend; Curtis, retired educator, member of a Coast Salish Nation, mentor and friend.

“Authority is granted
to people who are perceived

as authoring
their own words,
their own actions,
their own lives,

rather than playing a scripted role
at great remove from their own hearts.”

— Parker Palmer (1998, p. 33)

1.4.1. Clayoquot Sound, 1993

I stood there, on that logging road, and listened.

This memory wobbles around its edges, blurry and non-distinct. All of the finite details—parking, sleeping arrangements, food—all missing, all now unimportant. But the centre of the memory remains clear. No wobble.

I stood with the others on that logging road, stood and listened to the RCMP member who read out a long and protracted court injunction: we would face arrest and incarceration if we did not move out of the way.

I stood there, on that logging road, surrounded by others, and listened.

A solemn, yet anticipatory hush of the people enveloped me. Silence, except the lone, male voice, reading complex words, truncated with semi-colons, in language that carried the weight of the law. Heavy, implacable, foreign.

Beyond us, the flourishing forest, its familiar sounds a background to our tableau.

I stood there and listened.

The injunction read, the time came for those on the road to make a decision: stay or move.

Stay. Move.

Two seemingly simple courses of action, each with its own complex consequences, consequences whose reverberations I could feel for years to come.

The idealistic side of me would like to say I chose to stay, that I chose to stay on that road, I chose to stay firm in my convictions, even if what I believed to be true meant I had to sacrifice something in order to be heard.

But I didn't.

I didn't stay.

I moved.

The selfish side of me moved off that road and into a future that would be barrier-free, a future where I could renew my passport with ease, where I could enter other countries without questions, where I would not have a criminal record.

Those around me made their decisions. Some slowly walked away from the road, some sat down, a passive action of beautiful resistance. This, but a brief moment in time—perhaps ten seconds at best—a moment where an RCMP officer stood before me, his question hanging in the charged air. Do I stay or do I move?

They became some of the most powerful ten seconds of my lifetime. In those seconds I had a glimpse of what it meant to be a person who had a choice, a choice to follow the status quo or a choice to disrupt it.

My inner turmoil real, yet I did not face physical harm, nor excommunication from my family, nor a lifetime of prison which many others do face when they choose to stay on their road, when they choose to disrupt.

Mine existed as purely an exercise of the intellect, weighing the potential costs I could incur if I stayed or if I moved—my body, my Spirit, my freedom never a part of the costs.

I chose the status quo. I chose to move off of the road. I chose to protect my own interests.

If a Clayoquot Sound existed today, would I stay on the road, or would I move? Would it be different now?
Do I have more future to lose, or do I have more past to insulate me?

I think about this question sometimes, but there have not been a lot of roads I've chosen to stay on since then, so maybe the question should be, would I even stand with others on the road?

I don't know.

Postscript: My Dad and Step-Mom's friend, hired by the RCMP, photographed each protestor, to capture and document our presence. He gave my parents a copy of the picture he took of me that day.



Perhaps this image seizes the moment when the RCMP read the injunction, or perhaps when I grappled with my course of action. I do not know. But I do know the anger I felt when he gave my parents this photo.

I felt violated, exposed, catalogued, trivialized.

Put into a family album, the picture became subsumed by other images of camping trips, birthday parties, Christmas dinners—mundane family experiences. It became a picture not mine to house.

I still harbour mixed feelings about this image: an amalgam of gratitude and infringement. I acknowledge my appreciation that a record of this pivotal moment in my life exists, yet it still feels like an invasion as my consent of its creation was not freely offered.

I startle when I look at this girl, the then-me. The set of her mouth, full of conviction in its defiant, closed line disguises her fear and uncertainty. Her jaw set not only by earnestness, but by hesitancy.

What would I tell this girl, if she and the now-me could talk? What would she tell me? What does the now-me overlook that the then-me observed? What does the then-me avoid the now-me faces? What stories would we share?

From: kelly@**.ca
To: momsey@**.ca
Subject: Oh
Date: Sat, 14 Nov 2015

And here is a piece of my writing—we are doing "life writings," meaning we are supposed to go back in our experiences and tell the stories of the moments that we feel have had an impact on us, or have shaped our world views in some ways.

I'd be curious about what you think...

RE: Oh
From: momsey@**.ca
To: kelly@**.ca
Subject: Oh
Date: Sat, 14 Nov 2015

Well you have a serious talent for conveying emotion in print. That is a very moving piece you have written. Well done Kelly. And what a memory for detail. Just think if you had stayed you might not be in the position you are in now to help young people with their direction. Mom

1.4.2. Heart Question

Life writing has become an integral practice during my journey as I answer the question of my heart (M. A. Meyer, 2003): how can I be of service to Education for (Re)conciliation?

This question extends to and enfolds my inter and intra-twined personal and professional identities: how can I be of service to transformative reconciliation as a person, teacher-educator, and citizen of this place now called Canada?

An ethic of care envelopes my question, but an ethic of care must be continuously enacted and (re)produced to exist (Borrows, 2018). Thus, my question and my quest invite a never-ending process of wayfinding; this story I share with you, now, a (re)presentation of its on-going nature.

Guided by Indigenous ways of knowing and being, an ethic of care calls me to be of service to all my relations, the human world *and* the more-than-human world. The simple words “all my relations” hold the complexity of ecological understanding, an entire cosmology (Absolon, 2010; Borrows, 2018; Cajete, 1994, 2015; Donald, 2012b; M. A. Meyer, 2013; Tully, 2018; Wall Kimmerer, 2013). “All my relations” reflects the (k)new wisdom that life sustains life (Cajete, 1994): humanity cannot exist autonomously from the Earth’s life forces (Borrows, 2018). Ethical reciprocity and responsibility perpetuate life in symbiotic webs, networks, and cycles (Tully, 2018; Wall Kimmerer, 2013). To be of service to all my relations calls me to attend to *all* of Creation (Van Horn, 2021b).

Thus, my heart question presupposes a stance that I too am but a part of the whole of Creation. My life itself a hermeneutic circle embedded, enfolded, enveloped, evoked, and invoked within and by the hermeneutic circle of the entirety of Creation. To be of service to transformative reconciliation calls my attention to the human world but also beyond the human world. To be of service to transformative reconciliation calls my attention to the circle of knowledges, an ecological understanding of *wholism*. The spelling of the word *wholism* “indicates ‘whole’ as in wholistic, complete, balanced and circular” (Absolon, 2010, p. 75). The circle of knowledges, and thus wholism, elicits an awareness of relationality within and among all of Creation (Absolon, 2010). (K)new wisdom.

The word *transformative* derives from the combination of *trans*, to move across or beyond (“Trans-,” 2017), and *form*, as a noun, meaning semblance or likeness, manner; or, an instrument for shaping, as in a mould; or *form* as a verb, meaning to create or give life to, to shape (“Form,” 2014).

Therefore, the word *transformative* educes a sense of movement. But movement of *what* across or beyond *what*? The likeness of the thing moves beyond potentiality. Here I mean *thing* in a Heideggerian sense: a thing things; the essential nature, its presencing “is what we call *thing*” (Heidegger, 2013, p. 172, italics in original). The *likeness* of the thing moves, as the thing itself, the initial presencing, *no longer exists*. It cannot exist. A likeness or a semblance exists, evoked by its own invocation: an eternal spiral of presencing. This likeness or semblance simultaneously becomes a mould for the yet-to-come, a mould which contains the thing’s future, past, present—its potentiality. Potentiality enacted, *form—essence—*pivots from noun to verb: life giving, creation occurs, like the potter who shapes the void (Heidegger, 2013). The likeness of the thing moves across or beyond potentiality, from noun to verb and back again. Thus, the word *transformative* enacts the simultaneity of presencing to future, to past, to present.

Reconciliation, a noun of action from the Latin *reconciliationem*, derives from the combination of *re-* and *conciliate* (“Reconciliation,” n.d.). The word-forming element *re-* means back, again, anew, but also connotes undoing or against (“Re-,” n.d.). *Conciliate* means to overcome distrust, to bring together or make friendly, unite feelings with the connotation for a gathering of people (“Conciliate,” n.d.).

Thus, the word reconciliation carries with it a sense of a (re)turn, yet concurrently an undoing. The word reconciliation also carries with it the hope to (re)pair Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples’ relations here in this place now called Canada. The word (re)pair connotes the need for mending relations, but also a need to join again, to (re)pair these two communities together.¹⁴ Reconciliation also denotes a (re)turn to harmony, to undo discord, to embrace differences amongst and between as a way to create balance through interdependence, rather than to collapse differences into acts of homogeneity or separation (Donald, 2012b; Ralston Saul, 2009; Wagamese, 2012b).

¹⁴ The word-play of (re)pair/(re)pair learned from Mark Nepo (2020).

Unlike the German language which has two terms for reconciliation,¹⁵ the English language has just the one word to signify its acute differences of meaning (Tully, 2018).

Reconciliation-to and *reconciliation-with* help to distinguish these complementary, yet discrete meanings (Tully, 2018). *Reconciliation-to* reflects instrumental, process-based reconciliation which presupposes reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as *separate* from our relationship to the Earth (Tully, 2018). *Reconciliation-with*, however, presupposes reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as an enactment of a sustainable, ethical relationship of continuous, interdependence *with* the Earth and all our relations (Tully, 2018). Therefore, reconciliation-with reflects an ecological understanding. An ecological understanding holds a way of thinking and knowing which (re)cognizes—to recognize, or perceive, and (re)cognize, or know anew—and honours a relationship with the land, with place; it reflects a conscious thinking and knowing of the interconnected and interdependent nature of relationships with other humans and the more-than-human world, presupposing Spirit animates all life; it reflects an ethic of contemplative morality in speech and action which engenders humility (Cajete, 1994, pp. 47–48).

Thus, reconciliation-with can be understood as transformative reconciliation, an expansion of the circle of knowledges. A wholistic paradigm, transformative reconciliation (re)turns harmony, (re)turns ecological balance within relationships among the human world and within relationships between the human world and the more-than-human world. With a focus only on the disharmony and imbalance amongst humanity, reconciliation ultimately cannot happen. Transformative reconciliation cannot be done by elites, government policies, or commissions—it can only be enacted as a shared endeavour of all people (Tully, 2018). It requires a shift in the dominant worldview that humans exist separated from the web of life, independent from the Earth.

My wayfinding reflects an existential quest of understanding and being of service to transformative reconciliation, one which grapples with my being and ever more becoming endogenous, or indigenous to Earth, yet not Indigenous. One which grapples with how to be of service and honour all my relations, yet simultaneously learning my place in the ever-expanding circle of knowledges of Indigeneity. One which grapples with

¹⁵ *Versöhnung*, transformative reconciliation-with, and *Vertragen*, reconciliation-to an independent system of knowledge (Tully, 2018, p. 90).

how to be useful to the young ones in my care as a teacher-educator, yet also finding ways to invite them to encounter the ever-expanding circle of knowledges of Indigeneity in a school system dominated by a Western worldview.

In sharing this existential quest to answer my heart-question, I feel compelled to acknowledge the dispositions of scholarship I hold which undergird my telling.

This transformative inquiry, and by extension all scholarship, cannot be acultural (M. A. Meyer, 2001). As a situated being, place, and thus *my* place within place, informs every aspect of who and how I am in the world. Therefore, as a situated being, I am *of* place and not *from* place. Of place, my relationships and responsibilities to people, fauna and the beings who inhabit the land, sea, and air shape my context, a context also mediated by my culture, language, history, and my (re)visioning a worldview which honours my longing to belong in a world of relations.

Spirit further mediates my context. By Spirit, I do not mean religion. Religion acts as the bureaucracy of Spirit (M. A. Meyer, 2013), an intellectual framework (Cajete, 1994) to name, categorize, and contain Spirit into manageable formats and structures. I understand Spirit to be the indefinable part of myself which seeks meaning and purpose, the indefinable part of myself which hopes, the indefinable part of myself which interconnects to the indefinable in Creation and to all of Creation. M. A. Meyer (2003) tells us Spirit, “the deep animating principle found in matter” (p. 60), provides the “fundamental sense of how we relate to the world, how we see the world, how it relates back to us” (M. A. Meyer, 2001, p. 193), an “enlightening of knowledge” (M. A. Meyer, 2013, p. 258). The word Spirit derives from the Latin *spiritus* to denote breathing, like respiration, but also of the wind; and breath, including breath of a deity, to connote inspiration or breath of life (“Spirit,” n.d.). Breath “represents the most tangible expression of the spirit in all living things” (Cajete, 1994, p. 42). Therefore, when “consciously formed and activated” through language and thought (Cajete, 1994, p. 43), breath acts as an expression of Spirit, “the definitive mediator” of knowledge (M. A. Meyer, 2001, p. 193).

I hold an ecological understanding of scholarship: the human experience unfolds within complex relationships to *all* of Creation. Thus, my ecological context reflects my

consciousness (M. A. Meyer, 2013) and my disposition within the ecology of my scholarship.

My situatedness further includes an assertion that holding only a Cartesian perspective of the world limits epistemological possibilities. The word epistemology, commonly understood to be theory of knowledge, originates from the Greek *episteme*, or “knowledge, acquaintance (with something), skill, experience” (“Epistemology,” 2017, para. 2). This comes from Ionic Greek *epistasthai*, literally “overstand” (“Epistemology,” 2017, para. 2), from *epi-* “over, near” (para. 2), and *histasthai* “to stand” (para. 2), which itself derives from the root *sta-* or “to stand, make or be firm” (para. 2). Epistemology denotes to be near firmness or to make firm, as in to be certain. Therefore, epistemology conveys the meaning to be certain about ideas or to make ideas certain. To assert ideas can be certain signifies a different stance than to assert certitude *cloaks* ideas. I hold with the latter, not with the former assertion.

A Cartesian perspective insists the world can only be understood via the senses, with reason and empiricism central to epistemology. Dualism, or the separation of the mind/body, became an integral aspect of Cartesian philosophy (“Dualism,” 2020), neglecting and rendering invisible the inter and intra-connected natures of knowledge (body), knowing (mind), and understanding (Spirit). Dualism presupposes a radical difference between the human mind and the physical world exists: the human mind cannot be considered a part of the physical world (“Dualism,” 2020). Thus, a Cartesian perspective of epistemology denies the existence of the hermeneutic circle.

From its inception in the 17th century, detached objectivity and distanced empiricism became a dominant system to make sense of the world. A Cartesian worldview offers much to humanity, yet it can become hegemonic, a privileged Western norm which discounts other epistemologies, including Indigenous ones (M. A. Meyer, 2001). M. A. Meyer (2003) tells us “dualities no longer make sense as separate ideas, but as vital sequences” (p. 60) as we are able to “hold polar truths as part of the one truth ... all dualities merge and knowledge becomes less a ‘thing’ than an event, a stirring, a final reaching in” (p. 60).

A Cartesian perspective of epistemology holds value, but I assert it cannot be assumed to have more or less value than other epistemological perspectives. Differing

perspectives of epistemology can co-exist without denying or collapsing one into the other. Thus, for the purposes of this dissertation I share how I have come to hold lightly (V. L. Kelly Lecture, personal communication, May 13, 2017) two epistemological paradigms: Western and Indigenous. Neither exist in a binary to the other, nor as a boundary demarcating a barrier, a separation of one from the other. Each belong within the hermeneutic circle of knowledge and wisdom traditions of the world. Both simultaneously act as a bridge to the other, each coexisting as places of presencing (Heidegger, 2013).

As a situated being, I also accept the dynamic nature of my personal and professional identity—one informs the other in a (re)cursive, (re)flexive, (re)lational manner. Possibly associated with the Latin, *identidem*, meaning “repeatedly or rendering” (“Identity,” 1966, p. 459), identity connotes the “quality of being the same” (p. 459). My repeated renderings of self imbue discrete characteristics which belong to and yet concurrently comprise a common whole: me. Self cannot only be named as what is currently, but must also be named with what was and what could be. Paradoxically the repeated renderings and constant movement of being, not stasis, defines self. The word *movement* includes its roots in Old French and Latin *movere*, to “move, set in motion; remove; disturb” but also from the source of Sanskrit *kama-muta*,¹⁶ or “moved by love” (“Movement,” 2019, para. 13).

With movement comes possibility. Rendered from both social, external and private, internal experiences (Palmer, 1998), the relationship among and between parts of self define the whole of us, but as an ever-changing potentiality. Self manifests as literal and figurative, actual and imagined, constant and dynamic, situated and in-between. Thus, self reflects an eternal process of becoming. Jardine (2006) claims, “I become someone in the process of coming to know about the world in which I live” (p. 281), and “I must let what I have to come to know about this world be susceptible to being supplemented, enhanced, transformed, further-changed, embarrassed, perhaps even humiliated” (p. 281). In other words, I must let what I have come to know about this world be susceptible to *movement*. Therefore, if we accept *kama-muta*, the earliest

¹⁶ See Alan Page Fiske (Fiske, 2019) for a fulsome exploration of the concept *kama-muta*. I thank Stephen Smith for sharing this reference.

sense of the word movement, I must let what I have come to know about this world be susceptible to be *moved by love*. To be moved by Spirit.



1.4.3. All My Relations

As I journey to answer my heart-question, three primary elements of my ethicality emerge, undergirding my transformative inquiry: to learn from (Dion, 2009); to enact ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b); to enact relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008).

The term ethic denotes the “study of morals” (“Ethic,” n.d., para. 2), which comes from *ethik*, a derivation of Old French, *etique*, or “moral philosophy” (para. 2), itself from Late Latin *ethica* and Greek *ēthike philosophia*. The term *ēthikos*, “ethical, pertaining to character” (“Ethic,” n.d., para. 2) comes from *ēthos*, “moral character” (para. 2), which relates to *ēthos*, or “custom” (para. 2). Thus, to offer elements of my ethicality offers my intention to walk my journey in a good way.

To learn *from* engages a relational, personal context of learning; to learn *about* engages a detached, distanced context of learning (Dion, 2009). To learn from involves an embodied process of experiencing an event. In contrast, to learn about involves a mental process of the acquisition of information. As an embodied stance, to learn from invites insight, evoking transformation in the learner. To learn from engages the learner’s whole being: the mental, emotional, physical, and Spiritual self. As an intellectual stance, to learn about invites a sense of detachment, containing learning to a cerebral enterprise. To learn about does not invite the whole learner into the process, favouring the intellect. To learn from has become a guiding ethic for my own journey. I choose this stance because it requires of me ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008) to whom I learn from.

Ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) acknowledges the complex webs of interconnections linking humanity with all of Creation—animal, plant, mineral, water, air, cosmos—but as a *part* of Creation, not dominant over it. Ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) holds humanity itself belongs to a greater whole with the human world and the more than human world of equal value. Being in relation in this way promotes a willingness to recognize difference without the impetus to assimilate or to subsume others, both human and non-human, into homogeneity or as an act of dominance. Ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) evokes responsibility. Being in relation means an action or an inaction impacts *all our relations*, the entire web of interconnections. The Coast Salish Peoples of British Columbia say “All my relations” as a way to acknowledge

this complex web of interconnections, and to honour the responsibility being in relation elicits (Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Community, n.d.; Young Leon & Nadeau, 2018).

Attending to being in relation also invites relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008). Relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008) calls me to honour the relationships I hold with others by carefully articulating and being in service to the responsibilities within those relationships, central to an Indigenous worldview. Responsible to understand and to enact protocols of the various communities to which I belong, my philosophic commitment to relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008) evokes and invokes reciprocity and respect. Fulfilling my responsibilities engenders a mutual exchange between me and my family and friends, between me and my colleagues and young ones in my care, between me and my scholarship, and between me and the more-than-human world. Relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008) ensures I walk my journey in a good way.

Ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008) have also become ethical commitments within my journey. Both invite me to attend and to be responsible to all that being in relation encompasses, deepening my interconnections with the human and more-than-human world.

Learning from (Dion, 2009), ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b), relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008): neither philosophic commitment can be extricated from the other. They each form a cohesive whole, a weaving of ethics which guide me as I walk this journey.

“Art
is when there is
relation between
the viewer and the product;
it is what arrives between.”

— Lynn Fels (Lecture, personal communication, October 5, 2016)

1.4.4. Art: Transformative Possibilities

My breath speaks these heart words as my hands create art to invite and enact transformative possibility. Art acts as a pedagogical process, an enduring praxis of becoming: the artist becomes the art; the art becomes the artist. “The researcher is, after all, the instrument of form” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 63). Therefore, the “researcher as instrument” becomes the “researcher-as-artist” with arts-informed inquiry (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 61). Art invites the artist to be both practitioner and audience; art invites an embodied experience.

Practitioner means “one who acquires knowledge from actual practice” (“Practitioner,” 2020, para. 2). This comes from a hybrid of *practician*, “one who practices ... as distinguished from one who theorizes” (“Practician,” 2020, para. 2) from Late Latin *practicus*, “fit for action” (para. 2), with the “redundant ending on [the] model of parishioner” (“Practitioner,” 2020, para. 2). Audience comes from the Latin *audentia*, a “hearing, listening” (“Audience,” 2018, para. 2), deriving from a compound of *au-dh-*, to “perceive physically, grasp” (para. 2), though ultimately originates from the root *au-*, “to perceive” (para. 2). Thus, the artist as practitioner and as audience endeavours to gain knowledge through action, beyond theorizing, whilst simultaneously inviting herself and others to attend, to listen, and to perceive.

As practitioner, the process of artistic rendering offers Teachings if the artist attends. “Each art form has unique pedagogical ways of acting upon our senses and sensibilities” and thus offer insight (Kelly, 2015, p. 47). Attention to the call of the chosen form, its communicative and aesthetic potentiality opens an ontological aperture for the artist (Eisner, 2008; Weber, 2008). The emic nature of the process and product of artistic rendering affords transcendental potential: art has the capacity to extend the human condition beyond humanity’s humanness. Cajete (1994) explains, “Indian artists created for Life’s Sake” (p. 163) as a “way to express and nourish the soul” while Eisner (2008) offers, “The arts are a way of enriching our awareness and expanding our humanity” (p. 11). As audience, the coalescence of process and product embodies an extension of the artist herself, illuminating a possibility of new learning and understanding of, for, and beyond herself. In this self-(re)flexive act of learning from and not just about, her ear becomes more and more attuned to the (re)sonances of her practice, to the

(re)sonances and attunement of her becoming (Kelly, 2015, 2020). The artist's presence sounds itself in every aspect of the chosen art form and deepens over time.

For the audience beyond the artist, art acts as a provocation and an evocation to attend, to consider complexity. Art provokes multiplicity of meaning as it simultaneously evokes embodied response. Artistic renderings summon multiple dimensions of interpretation, both denotative and connotative, concrete and symbolic, aesthetic and empathetic, holistic and particular (Weber, 2008). Guided by form, artistic renderings invite visceral, emotional, intellectual, and Spiritual responses in the artist and her audience. Arts-informed research "infuses the languages, processes, and forms of literary, visual, and performing arts with the expansive possibilities of scholarly inquiry for purposes of advancing knowledge" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 59). Each artistic format invites varying responses in the artist and their audiences, dependent upon the aesthetic of the genre: a dramatic performance engages differing senses in an audience perhaps than reading a short story.

Artistic rendering demands both artist and audience to address context and situatedness, an invitation for relationality. An artistic rendering's very form elicits questions such as, what might be revealed and concealed through this chosen medium? Whose gaze might be intended and whose gaze may be neglected? For artist-as-scholar, does this medium help or hinder scholarly aims? Being in relation through encoding and decoding context (Eisner, 2008) and situatedness invites a (re)cognition: to consider or perceive the artistic rendering anew, to be in relation.

Art acts an invitational stance to meaning-making, embodied response, and situatedness, but it also acts as an invitation to uncertainty, serendipity, and ineffability. "Inquiry always yields tentative conclusions rather than permanently nailed down facts. The quest for certainty ... is hopeless" (Eisner, 2008, p. 4). Arts-informed inquiry amplifies Eisner's (2008) assertion, yet inferring "tentative conclusions" (p. 4) reflects a fulfillment of relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008) invoked through a mutual exchange occurring in this invitational stance. To engage with uncertainty, serendipity, and ineffability in such a way as to make meaning, even if indefinite, becomes an act of reciprocity and respect.

Thus, I share with you, Reader, my artistic journey which has become both a method and a medium of discovery as I wayfind, exploring Indigeneity. To make plain denotative or connotative interpretations or to assert a singular meaning denies the relationality, accountability, and possibility art invokes. Rather, I choose to share artistic renderings in the poetry and encaustic mediums as an act of trust in reciprocity with you, Reader, to make your own meaning, to offer you experiential fluidity.

1.4.5. Omission

I'm an open book,
I quip,

[whose story unfolds
here, under your gaze]

but what happens when you turn the pages?

[where am I in the space between?]

What is concealed there, hidden
in plain sight?

[the words, the letters, the punctuation?]

The cursor blinks, I reach for my coffee,
look for the words in its milky surface to

[try]

tell you I'm trapped
in an indeterminate ending.

— March 2016

“Postmodernism claims that
writing is always

partial,
local,
and
situational,

and that our Self is always present,
no matter how much we try to suppress it—
but only partially present,

for in our writing
we repress parts of ourselves, too.”

— Laurel Richardson (1994, p. 520)

1.4.6. Poetry: A Place of Comingling

I offer context and situatedness for my chosen artistic renderings' forms as medium and method to establish ethicality of being in relation: ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008). Accounting for my "inner and outer arcs of attention" (Marshall, as cited in Ladkin, 2005, p. 118), it is my responsibility to acknowledge, consider, and share my positionality. If I work "from a paradigm in which subjectivity is acknowledged as unavoidable and in fact the basis of truth" (Ladkin, 2005, p. 123), the "ethical responsibility" (p. 123) of documenting and communicating my "making of meaning" (p. 123) is not only "unavoidable" (p. 123), but obligatory.

Suggestive rather than indicative, poetry acts as a reminder that writing, all writing, reflects a socio-cultural-historical product imbued with self (L. Richardson, 1994). Eisner (1997) claims that poetry transcends the "limits of language" (p. 5), and as an alternative form of representation, becomes "more evocative than denotative" (p. 8). The genre cannot mask the self as elegantly as other genres can—it could be a real challenge to infer the self behind a line graph, but easier understood, perhaps, in a sonnet. Poetry "problematize(s) reliability, validity, and 'truth'" (L. Richardson, 1994, p. 522) rather than reinforce positivist assertions these things—reliability, validity, truth—exist not only as possibilities, but as preferred ways to represent meaning of our human experiences.

Poetry evokes emotional landscapes which create spaces for alternative modes of expression and meaning making. An "evocative representation" (L. Richardson, 1994, p. 521), poetry "open(s) the text [academic writing] to interpretation" (Fitzpatrick, 2012, p. 10). These spaces act as a kind of liminality, a place of comingling between the poet and her audience: the poet's words live within her and beyond her, yet the poet's words also live within her audiences. The poet's words cease to be hers alone once audiences attend. Thus, the call to engage with poetry becomes an invitation for and enactment of embodied, relational expression and understanding.

The poetic imperative, or the drive to make sense of the world and to share understanding through poesis or the figurative, evokes and provokes embodied expression. Poetry invites a rich experience with language and with meaning-making,

triggering an expansion of complexity. Eisner (1997) argues poetry “invites attention to complexity” (p. 4) when we try to “perform the magical feat of transforming the contents of our consciousness into a public forum that others can understand” (p. 8). Poetry uses the particular to explain the general; it merges precision with approximation; it unites the visceral and the imaginative. These tensions elicit poetic truth, a coalescence of the aesthetic and experiential expression. The poetic imperative propels my desire to express poetic truth.

Poetry allows my expression of truth to be unfettered to convention. Writing “is frequently held to be the single activity that unites all members of the academic community” and the “evaluation of research by a scholarly community is dependent on the structure of rules to organize academic writing” (Holley & Colyar, 2009, p. 681). If the “methods into which we have been socialized provide powerful filters through which we view the world ... [and] our methodological concepts influence our perception” (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990, p. 9), the use of poetry, or any other form of alternative representation, shifts not only the format of communication and perceptions, it also shifts what can be considered as the “rules” of communication within a scholarly community. Thus, poetry reflects an embodied presentation, not a (re)presentation.

Poetry constitutes its own ontological state, one which exists in the space between words, intentions, analysis. The word ontology, commonly understood to be “the essence of things” (“Ontology,” 2019, para. 2), comes from the Modern Latin, *ontologia*. Ontology combines *onto-*, meaning “a being, individual; being; existence” (“Onto-,” 2019, para. 2), to *-logy*, meaning “a speaking, discourse, treatise, doctrine, theory, science” (“-Logy,” 2019, para. 2). Therefore, *onto-*, a being whose inhalation and exhalation of breath forms into language, and *-logy*, animates essence into being. The space between sounds denotes the “most tangible expression of the spirit in all living things” (Cajete, 1994, p. 42). Poetry “invites a way of uniting the heart, mind, imagination, body, and spirit” (Leggo, 2008, p. 167), creating “textual spaces that invite ... becoming in the world” (p. 167).

I seek to express poetic truth, to call forth resonant possibilities sometimes inaudible to the ear, but knowable by the heart. Like Snail, I too hold lightly ever-expanding whorls, but ever-expanding whorls of my transformative inquiry through poetic form. Poetry both invites and (re)presents dwelling in the hermeneutic paradox. Yet, the

poetic imperative helps reconcile my hermeneutic paradox—through understanding the part, I understand the whole; through understanding the whole, I understand the part. Poetic “knowing, being, and becoming” (Leggo, 2005, p. 454) (re)juvenates and supports transformative possibilities as poetry generates a place of “wisdom, sustenance and hope” (p. 441).

Poetry enacts my ability to name the whorls of my transformation, to name the pauses between pivots. With my poetry, I seek “to listen to the rhythms of the heart, and to hear the ways that my heart resonates with the hearts of others” (Leggo, 2005, p. 450). Poetry sustains and (re)juvenates my transformative inquiry.

I offer my words to you, Reader, as a place of our comingling, a place of our dwelling.

I am from a kitchen table

(oil and acrylics and ink and pastels and
yarn and wool and brushes and linseed oil
and canvases and paper and tape and
string and palettes and chisels and)

that held dreams and aspirations only
until 5 o'clock then it was cleared
at the sound of a diesel engine surrounded
by the stuff of family no room of its own

I am from a place of interrupted genius

— September 2015



1.4.7. Alongside Me

To enact ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability, S. Wilson (2008) asks, “How can I be held accountable to the relationships I have with [research co-participants] if I don’t name them?” (p. 63). My mother, Sandy, walks alongside me in my artistic journey of becoming artist-as-scholar as I wayfind, exploring Indigeneity.

A self-taught artist, my Mom’s passion for creating and constantly learning her craft propels her still. As a young woman, full of promise, her artistic talent a gift she still develops, my Mom aimed to be a graphic artist or to work in some way in architecture. A graduate of high school in 1969, she could not apply to any graphic design schools nor schools of architecture since she did not have the adequate prerequisites. As a female, sexism prohibited my Mom from taking the needed prerequisite courses in secondary school. She tells me, “And at my school, drafting was for boys only” (S. Schultz, personal communication, October 4, 2015). Nonetheless, my Mom sustained and nurtured a love for and commitment to artistic creativity, in spite of the social norms of her youth.

My Mom continues to hone and to refine her artistic talent, faithful to never-ending practice and challenge. Her repertoire of mediums includes visual arts, fabric arts, wood working arts, and cement-making arts, notwithstanding her murals, guitar playing, and pattern making. Curious, maddeningly clever, and constantly learning, my Mom’s gifts punctuate my very being—her gifts act as my shorthand in understanding the world. Though I script my own landscapes, her legacies live within me, her Teachings interweave my very essence. Who and how I am in the world began with her, and asking my Mom to be a mentor, a co-creator, and a co-participant of artwork as I wayfind became a natural dimension to my scholarship. I name myself novice/apprentice and my Mom master/mentor. I situate myself as novice/apprentice as an honest depiction of my limited visual arts’ experiences as artist, as creator since my own creative energies and gifts belong with the literary arts.

Early in my journey it became clear any transformative possibilities I could enact would be meaningless without my Mom as witness and ally. This truth resides in my breath, my heartbeat, my bones. When my fingers type “Mom” it means something entirely different to me than to you, Reader. A lifetime of relationship and intimacy exists

in those three letters that only my Mom and I hold. Though I endeavour to include you, I accept there will be gaps words nor artwork cannot adequately bridge “because how can you translate a heartbeat?” (Midge, 2019, p. 186). Our mother-daughter relationship extends beyond any researcher/co-participant relationship in ways impossible to utter, let alone record. My Mom gives her explicit permission for me to present her here to you, Reader. I share with her first, and make any changes or omissions she requests in the presentation of the content or format of our learning together. Guided by learning from (Dion, 2009), ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b), and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008), including my Mom’s presence via her emails, her artwork, our co-created artwork, and our conversations in this dissertation honours our relationship.

Not a fallibility, but rather a strength, intimacy in transformative inquiry engenders landscapes where spaces between become voids not to be filled, but rather voids to be shaped (Heidegger, 2013). The spaces between, the unbridgeable gaps of intimacy, create an ethic of integrity in transformative inquiry. Intimacy (re)cognizes voids as necessary, for the “emptiness, the void, is what does the ... holding” (Heidegger, 2013, p. 167) and the thing’s “thingness” (p. 167), or essence, lies “in the void that it holds” (p. 167). To hold means to take and to keep, yet this unity of taking and keeping “rests” on giving (Heidegger, 2013, pp. 169–170). Transformative inquiry ultimately “retains its nature by virtue of the ... gift” (Heidegger, 2013, p. 170): to be of service. To be of service means to enact the best versions of ourselves. Thus, transformative inquiry (re)quires intimacy to hold its essence. Refusing to name, avoiding acknowledgement, or dismissing intimacy’s presence in transformative inquiry denies its authenticity, its essence.

My relationship with my Mom itself spirals through time and space, and my very existence interweaves in inextricable ways to hers. Her breath breathed life into me; her blood, my blood; her heartbeat my original Drum. My Mom’s body, intellect, and Spirit became the potter, and the yet-to-be-me, the void to be shaped (Heidegger, 2013). The void of the-yet-to-be-me became the self-supporting-me through the process of my rearing, my “making” (Heidegger, 2013, p. 166), letting me “come into [my] own” (p. 166), responsible to “gather [myself] for the task of containing” (p. 166). This dissertation shares my journey of gathering myself for the task of containing, of holding transformative possibilities; gathering myself for the task of containing, of holding the

capacities to hold lightly Western and Indigenous paradigms as coexisting places of presencing; gathering myself for the task of containing, of holding service to others.

From: Kelly Robinson <kelly@**.ca>

Sent: May 3, 2020 12:58 PM

To: Momsey <momsey@**.ca>

Subject: Please read....

....and let me know what you think.

This is one section of the first chapter of my dissertation. I describe your relationship to the research, but want to make sure how/what I say fits with what you think/feel. If you want me to add/remove/change anything, please let me know... OR if you have a different image of your encaustic art that you want me to use, send that to me too--I will use it.

xo

From: Momsey <momsey@**.ca>

Sent: May 3, 2020 1:30 PM

To: Kelly <kelly@**.ca>

Subject: Re: Please read....

That was well written, thank you for the kind words. I have pictures of the process from the last time I was at your house if you want them. Also I really like this photo better than the one in the section you sent, what do you think?



Note. "Untitled" by Sandy Schultz (2019).

“...artwork is the most conscious expression of what human understanding always entails:

the interpretive integration of life’s details into a meaningful whole.”

— Jens Zimmerman (2015, p. 55)

As artist, my Mom's extensive experiences and expertise in a variety of mediums inspires her to continually learn different techniques and forms. My Mom and I choose to learn and create with the encaustic medium as it provides a new artistic challenge for us both. The word encaustic comes from the Greek, *enkaustikos*, meaning the "art of ... painting ... produced by burning in" ("Encaustic," n.d., para. 2). Also from Greek, the prefix *en* means "to form verbs from nouns" ("-En," 2017, para. 3), and *caustic* means "to burn" ("Caustic," 2017, para. 2). The encaustic medium provides a good way of working and learning together as it invites literal fusion as an artistic technique, but also invites a metaphoric fusion of our selves as mother/mentor/master and daughter/apprentice/novice. Transformation.

The encaustic medium has a rich and complex history whose origins remain unknown. Ancient Greeks may have learned to use wax from the Egyptians for such things as caulking and painting ships. Subsequently, ancient Greeks began to use wax in art, though no known samples of encaustic art from early Egyptian and ancient Greek or Roman eras exist (Mattera, 2001). The Fayum Portraits exist, a collection of over six hundred portraits from approximately 100 BCE to 200 CE. These head-and-shoulders portraits, attached to mummy casings, are thought to have been "designed to transport bodies of the deceased to a spiritual afterlife" (Mattera, 2001, p. 16). Referenced in literature from those eras, encaustic painting has had many revivals since its early inception.

Encaustic painting includes many forms, but a basic method mixes dry pigments with molten wax and applies it to a substrate, like wood, canvas, or plaster (Rice, 1999). Typically, applying heat before and after application fuses and bonds the wax to the substrate. This heating process allows for a continual layering of pigments/paint, and other items such as objects, paper, or photographic images to the substrate. An application of molten wax and fusion with heat for each subsequent layer thus provides for an indefinite surface. The wax will eventually cool and harden, protecting what it coats.



Note. "Untitled" by Sandy Schultz (2017).

Seemingly inert, hardened wax can always be reheated—even many years after the original creation—and further layering, revisions, or changes can be made. Thus, there exists “magic” in this medium (Rice, 1999). Essentially an artist can choose to “build up the surface indefinitely” (Gallagher, 2011, p. 81), inviting a “continual dialogue between the medium, subject, and composition” (p. 81). As heat fuses each layer to the one before and to the one next, a continuous interplay between artist and artistic rendering emerges. In other words, the artist chooses what to reveal and what to conceal, inviting the wax itself to be “part of the meaning, not just the vehicle for [the art’s] creation” (Gallagher, 2011, p. 81).

A literal fusion, the encaustic medium simultaneously offers metaphoric resonances of hermeneutic fusion for me as artist-as-scholar/audience and for the audience beyond. The encaustic medium acts as a visual representation of what Gadamer calls a fusion of horizons, when the “voice from the past horizon still speaks to the reader” (Gadamer, as cited in Zimmerman, 2015, p. 50), or in this case, the viewer(s). The hermeneutic circle, or movement between parts and whole, invites a “unifying of horizons from the past and the present” (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 51), offering a “transformation” (p. 51) of the viewer(s). At once, a whole exists, comprised of discrete layers, yet each discrete layer in and of itself exists as a whole. Since heat fuses each layer to the one before and to the next, it allows for an image which “may consist of discrete compositional elements” but “structurally the entire surface is one carefully crafted mass” (Mattera, 2001, p. 9).

I choose to offer you artistic renderings imagined and co-created with my Mom as a way to express the vacillation of the whorls of my becoming, the process as I unmake and make my self anew. The continuous movement of part to whole and back again, of present, past, and future—my personal hermeneutic circle, ineffable yet describable, evoked and invoked with art. Art itself becomes an embodied coalescence of my spiraling experience.



Note. "Horizon."

1.5. In a Good Way

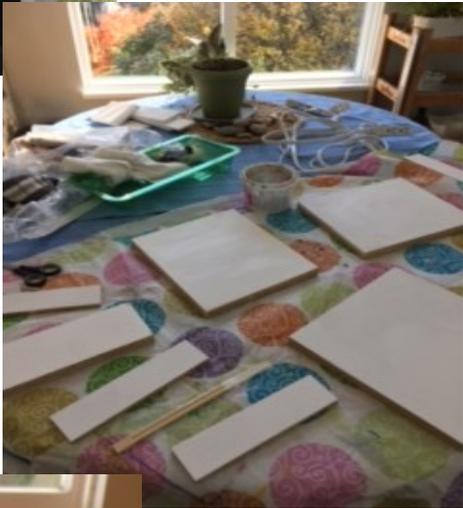
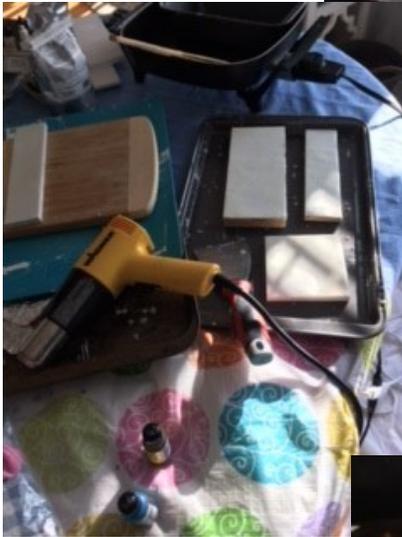
As an act of becoming, I spiral through time as an attempt to come to my centre. My journey of wayfinding I share with you, these continuous, ever-expanding whorls of my knowing, knowledge, and understanding as a person, teacher-educator, and citizen.

I want to walk this wayfinding journey in a good way, and for you to walk alongside me on this path of transformative inquiry.

I offer this dissertation with good intention, from an open mind, open heart, and open Spirit.







Please see Appendix B: “Wax On” Video to view the technique for preparing a substrate for the encaustic art form by heating and applying layers of hot wax.

From: Momsey <momsey@**.ca>

Sent: March 18, 2018 8:20 AM

To: Kelly <kelly@**.ca>

Subject: Happy

I did 3 layers of clear first. I used the coloured wax mixed with clear over the whole thing, fused and layered colour.

Then put a cut out of the horse when it was "wet" and layered two more clear coats. It isn't perfect but was thrilled to see the way the coloured wax settled and how you can see the colour come through the horse.



From: Kelly <kelly@**.ca>

Sent: March 18, 2018 12:29 PM

To: Momsey <momsey@**.ca>

Subject: Re: Happy

I think it is beautiful!!



From: Kelly <kelly@**.ca>
Sent: May 6, 2018 10:25 AM
To: Momsey <momsey@**.ca>
Subject: So

What I did was paint a board with white chalk paint & I've been playing with layering pastels/wax & the uglier pic with the pink-ish square is that fuchsia paper that has the veins in it but it doesn't really disappear so I'm not loving it. So I was just going to scrape it all off when I thought I should try to write on the board, & used a nail & the words came out white as I pulled all of the colour/wax from it. So that might be one way for us to write/layer? I put another coat of wax on top of the writing & some without just to see the difference. I'm trying to be patient & let the wax cool but it is very challenging. I'm heading out to a garden store with C & the kids so I'll send you a pic this afternoon after it has cooled & I'm not here to continue to mess with it..



From: Momsey <momsey@**.ca>
Sent: May 6, 2018 2:01 PM
To: Kelly <kelly@**.ca>
Subject: Re: So

Nice accident! It is hard to be patient, just think it could be oil paint that you have to wait two or three days before you can go back into it!

Chapter 2.

First Insight: Witness

2.1. First Insight

First Insight, a stage of intuition, involves creative thought that leads to seeking, deep thinking, and self-reflection. Ultimately, it invites metaphoric thinking and visioning of what to create.

2.1.1. That Flag of Yours

“When you look at that flag of yours, what do you see?”

Once sympathetic, unease rises in us, churns just below the surface. It eddies in our guts, swirls in our throats.

Still, she presses.

“When you look at that flag of yours, what do you see?”

Her voice pitches and cracks. Raw rage thunders out of her. Our disquiet ruptures in retaliation: waves of dissent flood out of us. Her indignation, an invisible force, protects her from our surge.

Still, she will not relent.

“When you look at that flag of yours, what do you see?”

Now a keening wail, her voice undulates, strains to be heard over the deafening roar of our evasion.

A tsunami of collective silence drowns her voice.

2.1.2. Wake

Years later I still try to navigate the wake of that day. It continues to ripple throughout my experience, a moment of duration.¹⁷

The Day for Reconciliation was one of SFU's contributions to participating in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) national event held in Vancouver September 2013. I attended the gathering with my teaching partner and our cohort of student teachers.

I could not foresee its profound and lasting impact upon me.

I struggle to know where to begin, what to share with you.

¹⁷ A phrase I learned from Lynn Fels originally stated as "Each moment a child of duration" (Milloy, 2007 as cited in Fels, 2012, p. 59).

2.2. Preparation/Immersion

Preparation/Immersion, a stage of inquiry, comprises of learning how best to enact the creative work, and exploring the relationships connected to the inquiry. Process and research oriented, this stage establishes the emotional and intellectual capacities required to bring to fruition the creative vision into product.

2.2.1. Learned Oblivion

I am from long walks to school

*(but not in the ravine
nor the woods
nor in the middle of the road
and never, ever through the reserve)*

where sidewalks only exist in some neighbourhoods

*(though I did not notice until years later when
such things as sidewalks seem important)*

I am from a place of learned oblivion

— September 2015

“... testimony imposes particular obligations on those called to receive it – obligations imbued with the exigencies of justice, compassion, and hope that define the horizon for a world yet to be realized.”

— Roger Simon and Claudia Eppert (1997, p. 177)

“Witnessing, then, might be understood as a methodology in which we are obligated, through a set of relational responsibilities, to ensure frameworks of representation allow for the lives that we have witnessed to be made visible.”

— Sarah Hunt (2018, p. 284), Kwakwaka'wakw – Kwagu'ł and Dzawada'enuxw

2.2.2. Testimony ~ Witness

Testimony serves as a transgressive act. A “testimonial account is a performance intent on carrying forth memories by conveying a person’s engagement between consciousness and history” (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 176). The word testimony comes from the Latin *testimonium*, “evidence, proof, witness, attestation” (“Testimony,” n.d., para. 2), which comes from *testis*, “a witness, one who attests” (para. 2), and *-monium*, a suffix signifying action, state, or condition. The root of *testis*, “witness” (“Testament,” n.d., para. 2), comes from the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) *tri-st-i- or “third person standing by” (para. 2), which itself comes from the root *tris, or “three” (para. 2) as in a “third person, disinterested witness” (para. 2).

Conveying one’s engagement between consciousness and history reflects attestation, a process to signify action, state, or condition; however, testimony demands extending oneself *beyond* disinterest. Testimony troubles the concept of truth as it can be a counternarrative to dominant truth claims, hence its transgressive nature.

Testimony can be understood as attempts to offer insight into lived experiences “through multiple expressive forms” (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 176), providing “a vital personal supplement” (p. 177) to often indifferent historical records. “Far from being a fixed or stable object of analysis” (Emberley, 2014, p. 14), testimony reflects “communicative practices intent on conveying to others a palpable sense of prior events” (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 183). Testimony, “highly contested sites of meaning production” (Emberley, 2014, p. 14), can be defined as discursive places of generating new knowledge, as amalgams of different autobiographical genres to enact bearing witness or remembering, or as articulations of personal or collective recounting of traumatic events. Testimony can include the written form, the spoken form, physical locations or spaces, and objects or treasures¹⁸ (Emberley, 2014). In whatever form it takes, “there is no testimony without also a poetics of truth-telling” (Emberley, 2014, p. 7) since testimony “attempt(s) to translate the tangibility of occurrences across time and space” (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 183).

¹⁸ See “Chapter 4: Incubation: Repatriation” for why I choose to use the word *treasure* and not *artifact*.

However, the poetics of truth-telling means testimony can “contain a certain violence” (Smith, 1991, p. 194) to lived experiences as inevitably, the impossibilities of translating, or fully expressing, their complexities arise. How does one decide what to reveal and what to conceal? How does one articulate the enduring resonance of a moment across time and space? Even if one could translate and offer nuances of experience, can the listener appreciate the offering? Can the listener tune herself to the right frequency? Thus, the performance of testimony acts as a reminder: words can uphold us, yet simultaneously, words can forsake us.

Nonetheless, a “textured excess” can exist in testimony—moments in testimony when “something beyond the limits of what can be spoken” (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 182) occur. Silences, hesitations, displays of emotion, uncertainties, unfinished thoughts, physical gestures or their absences—all can be considered evidence of textured excess (Simon & Eppert, 1997). The same could be said for written testimony. The choices of diction and syntax, verb tenses and perspective, as well as formatting and conventions of language—or their absences and intentional disregard—can also be considered evidence of textured excess. Textured excess invites understanding beyond the fallibility of words, invites the witness of testimonial performance to read without language.

“...all knowledges are constructions,
and... [our] discourses and narratives
do not seek to instantiate themselves as
final truths, or as facts.

Rather, our knowledge provides
a vantage point, a synthesis, a plateau
from which we can take in the view

as we see it now,
allowing always
for the transient nature of truth claims.”

— Megan Boler (2019, p. 209)

To be a witness or to witness thus means “sometimes creating new language, new stories, new avenues” (Hunt, 2018, p. 284) for both conveying and interpreting testimonial performances. Yet the always present impossible possibility of conveying and interpreting complexities of lived experience exists, the paradox inherent in the word witness. The word witness as noun comes from Old English *witnes*, “attestation of fact, event, etc., from personal knowledge” (“Wit,” 2018, para. 2), which comes from *wit*, “understanding ... knowledge, consciousness, conscience” (para. 2) and *-ness*, a word forming element which denotes “action, quality, or state” (para. 2; see also “-Ness,” 2019). As verb, witness comes from 1300 C to “bear testimony” (“Witness,” 2022, para. 4), and the meaning, “see or know by personal presence, observe” (para. 4), comes from the 1580s. Therefore, to be a witness or to witness, the noun and the verb, share an emergence from action, quality, or state—a *process* which attempts to express and translate, to convey and to interpret, an impossible possibility.

For Hunt (2018), “stepping up to validate what you have observed when an important act is denied or forgotten” (p. 284) denotes what it means to be a witness. According to Laub (1992a), himself a Holocaust Survivor and interviewer of other Holocaust Survivors, a witness “is a witness to the truth of what happens during an event” (p. 80). A witness in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) communities *generally*¹⁹ refers to a role of responsibility for “communicating the significance of a historic event while keeping the knowledge alive and validated through personal relationships” (Korteweg & Root, 2016, p. 184). For Boler (2004), a witness attempts to “undertake ... historical responsibilities and co-implication” (p. 186) in testimonial accounts. Brant (1994) describes witnessing as a form of historical remembrance which evokes renewal. Clearly, no precise definition of the concept *witness* exists. Its diverse characteristics arise from and reflect its many diverse relational contexts.

Emerging from his Holocaust experiences as child survivor and interviewer, Laub (1992a) suggests witnessing testimonial accounts of particular, and often traumatic, historical events can be identified as existing in three levels. The first level of witnessing involves remembering and sharing lived experiences with others, being “a witness to oneself” (Laub, 1992a, p. 75); the second level involves being “the immediate receiver”

¹⁹ Indigenous principles of witnessing vary amongst First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. See the TRC (2015), Qwul’sih’yah’mah, Thomas (2005), and Hunt (2018).

(p. 76) of the testimony of others, or, being a part of the testimonial process; the third level involves witnessing the process of witnessing itself, as in being meta-aware of oneself as witness or being a listener to the process but not necessarily a direct participant. Being a witness to oneself evokes and invokes an autobiographical consciousness, even if remembering and telling conjures emotional pain and distress. Being a recipient of a testimonial account as an authentic listener enables testimony and thus the recipient also becomes its guardian (Felman, 1992, p. 38). Witnessing the process of witnessing requires a heightened awareness of self: one can be in~out of the process simultaneously *and* concurrently aware of one's synchronous duality.

Simon et al. (2000) call witnessing "pedagogical witnessing" (p. 294) due to its "educational structure" (p. 294). A "communicative act" (Simon et al., 2000, p. 294), this particular form of witnessing "re-cites and re-sights what one has learned ... of and within" (p. 294) testimonial accounts. Namely, witnessing testimony "imposes particular obligations" (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 177) to "re-cite" or to remember and attest to what has come to be known through the act of witnessing; and to "re-sight" or to re-conceptualize the past which then informs the present, and thus future possibilities can be envisioned. Iseke (2011) furthers, pedagogical witnessing invites "reading, viewing, or listening to be an event in which I allow the understanding of someone else's life to interrupt my own" as a way to "pass on knowledge through revisiting the past" (p. 312). Therefore, through pedagogical witnessing learning *from* the past, rather than only learning *about* the past, can emerge.

Learning and knowing from testimony and witnessing "is not a solitary act but occurs in relation" (Iseke, 2011, p. 312) between the one who gives testimony and the one who receives testimony. Together they form the ability for the "creation of knowledge *de novo*" whereby knowing emerges and renews in the process of telling—testimony—while simultaneously the "event comes to be inscribed for the first time" (Laub, 1992b, p. 57) upon the listener—witnessing. Sharing a testimonial account "with an authentic listener" (Laub, 1992a, p. 91) commits "to truth" (p. 91) as a "passage through, and exploration of, differences" (p. 91) of a world that once was and a world that currently is in an attempt to reconcile these two worlds—the past and the present. Testimony therefore becomes an iterative process of "facing loss" (Laub, 1992a, p. 91): loss incurred from the often-painful process of testimony itself, and once testimony concludes, loss incurred from an ending of being heard and seen.

Testimony invites an authentic listener to “attend to the detailed suffering of others” (Dion, 2009, p. 53), yet there exists danger of reducing the one who testifies to a fixed position of sufferer. Dion (2009) asserts *reciprocal* witnessing will maintain the dignity of the one who testifies, and will avoid re-inscription as sufferer. A relational practice, reciprocal witnessing means the receiver of testimony accepts the responsibilities to attend, to make “a commitment to, and participation in, a practice that binds remembrance and learning” (Dion, 2009, p. 55). Reciprocal witnessing invites witnesses to “recognize the limits of their knowledge” (Dion, 2009, p. 55) and “what of themselves is tied up with their understanding” (p. 55) of history. Much like pedagogical witnessing, the pedagogical intent of reciprocal witnessing invites the receiver of testimony to “radically reconfigure understandings and relationships between the past and present, challenging views of [them]selves [and] others” (Iseke, 2011, p. 320).

Both pedagogical and reciprocal witnessing align with Simon et al.’s (2000) conception of witness-as-study. As a practice of learning and a form of pedagogical witnessing, witness-as-study invites “a quite different form of historical thought” (Simon et al., 2000, p. 288) through citation of testamentary records and offering of commentary. The citation to and commentary of testamentary records like photographs, objects, or audiovisual testimony provides “remembrance concretely” as a way of “re-opening the question of how to live in relation to the past” (Simon et al., 2000, p. 298) for themselves and their readers. Witness-as-study attempts to “convey what happened” (Simon et al., 2000, p. 289) in a public way, and in doing so, attempts to “disrupt” (p. 289) conventional contexts of understanding these “traces of the past” (p. 289).

Emberley (2014) questions how modes of representation like witness-as-study construct witnesses through their very forms, and how those forms might both disclose and disguise the process of witnessing. Can literary and artistic modes of representation like witness-as-study invite readers or viewers to “participate in the making of a community of people” (Emberley, 2014, p. 7) who bear witness? How does a “reader or viewer” of literary or artistic representations exist as witness “without the presence of another” (Emberley, 2014, p. 7)? Can readers or viewers carry “the knowledge of historical or personal events” (Emberley, 2014, p. 7) in this form of witnessing? Therefore, Emberley (2014) suggests the role of becoming-witness exists, to be “subsequently tied to a history of events that may or may not affect one personally but to which one can no longer remain unaccountable” (p. 7).

“...perhaps we might at least caution ourselves about indulgent transferences,
about a complacent understanding and, consequently,
turn to a required vigilance in regard to what it might mean to bear witness.”

— Roger Simon, Claudia Eppert, Mark Clamen, and Laura Beres (2000, p. 309)

Together, testimony and witnessing, a giving and a receiving, form an ethic. Simon and Eppert (1997) name this a *commemorative ethic*. A commemorative ethic reflects “a particular embodied cognizance within which one becomes aware of, self-present to, and responsive toward something/someone beyond oneself” (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 183). Embodied cognizance parallels S. Wilson’s (2008) conceptualization of relational accountability. Relational accountability calls us to honour and to be in service to relationships by enacting “respect, reciprocity and responsibility” within those relationships (S. Wilson, 2008, p. 99). Those who give testimony “incur a responsibility to convey accurately a tangible sense of prior events in ways that enable their remembrance and the assessment of their significance” (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 177), while those who receive testimony “(bear) witness and through acts of remembrance ... (learn) to interpret” (Iseke, 2011, p. 320).

The word bear comes from the Old English, *beran*, “to carry” (“Bear,” n.d., para. 2), “to endure without resistance” (para. 2), “to support, hold up, sustain” (para. 2), which comes from the PIE root *bher-, to “carry a burden” (para. 2). Thus, for the giver of testimony, to bear witness means to carry a lived experience, which often comes with a burden of “waiting to tell” that lived experience to an authentic listener (Laub, as cited in Dion, 2009, p. 53). For the receiver of testimony, to bear witness means to carry a truth offered in testimony beyond the moment of telling, to endure potentially traumatic tellings without resistance as an act of support which sustains that truth, which in turn holds up the giver of testimony. Nestled within the connotation of bear comes to “move onward by pressure” (“Bear,” n.d., para. 4), which divulges its pedagogical intent of change.

Those who give testimony also *bare* witness in remembering and sharing lived experiences with others. Bare comes from the Old English *bær*, to be “naked, uncovered, unclothed” (“Bare,” n.d., para. 4), but from the 12th C it also means “sheer, absolute” (para. 4), which derives from the idea of “complete in itself” (para. 4). To tell testimony means to offer expression free from concealment or covering, and though impossible to relay a lived experience in its entirety, complete in itself nonetheless. Those who receive testimony bare witness by being naked or exposed to the telling, themselves open to experience and to hear potentially traumatic tellings.

Simon et al. (2000) assert the distance between the lived experience of the witness to the testimony offered allows the witness to be “addressed and instructed”

(p. 319), evoking an ethic whereby the witness “must attempt to account for [the] learning” (p. 319). Accepting the role as witness commits to (re)present beyond the moment of listening the understanding which emerges with others, to make plain the learning (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 178). Therefore, the act of witnessing requires “a double attentiveness to intertwined ethical and epistemological responsibilities” (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 178).

First, a “careful attunement [*sic*]” (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 179) to testimony means deciding what can be considered truthful and significant. Within this decision making comes the responsibility to recognize the onto-epistemologies which inform one’s ability to discern and interpret truth and significance (Simon & Eppert, 1997). Second, witnessing obliges a “consignment of oneself as an apprentice to the provision of testimony” (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 179). Witnessing comes with the responsibility to observe not only what truth testimony contains, but how the act or process of testimony expresses that truth (Simon & Eppert, 1997).

Further, Emberley (2014) suggests witnessing “always” (p. 7) reflects a “twofold representation” (p. 7) of the political and the performative: first, as a representative, or “politicized voice” (p. 7) of an event; and second, as an embodiment, or imaginative “voice of trauma” (p. 7) which re-tells an event. By extension, the receiver of testimony thus also reflects a twofold observation of the political and the performative. First, as a politicized listener of the testimonial account; and second, as an embodiment of perception of the re-telling. A listener’s situatedness, her position of power and privilege, informs how and even if testimony will be heard. A listener’s allegiance to onto-epistemologies, consciously or unconsciously so, may or may not demand listening. Testimony invites listening, yet situatedness can allow for a re-inscription of dominant truth discourses over and beyond the truth discourse offered in a testimonial account, and can act as a shield to listening. Situations perform us (Fels, 2012). Even if an unwilling participant in a testimonial account, a listener can perform the role of witness/listener in the moment (i.e., not challenging the testimony, passive acceptance of the experience, being polite) with no enduring effect or learning occurring.

To accept the role of witness and its subsequent relational responsibilities, however, can evoke feelings of self-protection or defensiveness while bearing/baring witness. Laub (1992b) calls this the “hazards of listening” (p. 72), attempts to “maintain a

sense of safety in the face of the upheaval” (p. 73) of witnessing, whether consciously or unconsciously enacted. An act of defensiveness might be a sense of stasis, or losing the capacity to act or fulfill obligations as witness. Feelings of shock and fury might emerge through witnessing, and unwittingly or not, an act of defensiveness directs those feelings to the one who testifies. Withdrawing from the role of witness, either intellectually or emotionally, also constitutes a defensive response. Though seemingly laudable, to bestow the one who gives testimony tribute in the form of exalted awe or solemn reverence imposes a barrier of detached respect, and thus deflects any intimacy of relationality. Becoming engrossed in factual aspects of the testimonial account’s events also bypasses the intimacy of understanding a human experience, while simultaneously a factual fixation absorbs space for the testimonial account itself by pre-emptively claiming knowledge and understanding. Being hyperemotional during a testimonial account may appear to be a reflection of compassion, yet overt affect protects the witness as the testimonial performance becomes subsumed by their hyper-demonstrative emotions.

Why risk these hazards of listening? Why risk the hazards of telling? Giving and receiving testimony can manifest a once hidden existential rift as much as they can create an existential rift, both a painful, internal divide of bearing/baring witness. Yet divides can be understood as “that from which something *begins its presencing*” (Heidegger, 2013, p. 152, italics in original). Thus, giving and receiving testimony can also *begin the presencing* of connection, of relationality, or of healing—presencing a bridge across the divide. As bridges evoke locations, particular spaces for gathering (Heidegger, 2013), the presencing of connection, relationality, of healing evokes a site, a context (Heidegger, 2013) of potential (re)storation and (re)conciliation. The word *heal* comes from the Old English *hælan*, to “cure; make whole, sound and well” which itself derives from Proto-Germanic **hailjan*, literally “to make whole” (“Heal,” n.d., para. 2).

Perhaps the promise of (re)storation and (re)conciliation makes these hazards worth the risk?

“Those who sit in the role of witness
must be aware
that safety is something that is re-negotiated in each interaction
it can never be taken for granted.

We are never completely broken or completely healed.

Given that the teller sits in a position of vulnerability,
how then do learners or listeners
offer something back
in a way that, metaphorically,
wraps the teller
in a blanket of
care, acknowledgement and love?”

— Catherine Richardson, Jeannine Carriere, Vicky Boldo (2017, p. 193)

2.2.3. History and Memorialization

Simon et al.'s (2000) scholarly focus lay with Holocaust remembrance, and “what it might mean to renew practices of public remembrance of the Shoah” (p. 286) as a way to recognize “the human need for hope and the obligation, not just to learn about the past, but to learn from attempts to face the traces of lives lived in times and places other than one's own” (p. 286). Their conceptualization of history and memorialization within Holocaust remembrance offers a generative site for understanding the mandates of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in the place now known as Canada, and its subsequent manifestations of testimony and witnessing. Established as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), the TRC aspires²⁰ “to facilitate reconciliation among former students, their families, their communities and all Canadians” (Government of Canada, 2021, para. 7).

According to Simon et al. (2000), history “refers to the writing and interpretation of narratives which attempt to organize a reasoned understanding of past events through attention to detail, document, and argument” (pp. 286–287). Memorialization acts “as public memory...a practice that seeks the recovery of what has been lost, neglected, or misplaced” (Simon et al., 2000, p. 287). Pedagogically understood, history provides information and understanding to establish historical consciousness, while memorialization acts as a performative practice which tries to recall the past, once known, into the present (Simon et al., 2000).

The TRC's first mandate, to “reveal to Canadians the complex truth about the history and the ongoing legacy of the church-run residential schools” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, p. 23) reflects this conception of history. Responsible to “detail, document, and [offer] argument” to re-appraise “current presumptions” about Canada's past, the TRC contributes to a “reasoned understanding” of the Residential School System through gathering statements and documents about it and its legacies (Simon et al., 2000, pp. 286–287). The TRC's second mandate, to

²⁰ I intentionally use the present tense, though the TRC's official timeframe was from 2007-2015 (Government of Canada, 2020), as its work continues to echo within the place now called Canada. For example, understanding, considering, and enacting the TRC's Calls to Action, ways to fulfil its mandates across various sectors, continues within the place now called Canada, as does continued research and advocacy of the impacts of the TRC. For example, see the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, n.d.).

“guide and inspire a process of truth and healing, leading toward reconciliation within Aboriginal families, and between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal communities, churches, governments, and Canadians generally” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, p. 23), reflects this conception of memorialization. The national processes of truth and healing, intended to engender “public memory” (Simon et al., 2000, p. 287), included holding national events and funding community events, recommending commemoration initiatives to the federal government, and establishing a research centre, all in an attempt to recover “the lost, neglected, and misplaced” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, p. 23) narratives of the Residential School Systems.

Both history and memorialization attempt to invite understanding and remembrance of past events and lived experiences. In doing so, they “assert, affirm, and confirm communal narratives and symbols” (Simon et al., 2000, p. 288), significant aspects of learning. However, neither can elicit “a critical recognition or discovery that unsettles the very terms on which our understandings of ourselves and our world is based” (Simon et al., 2000, p. 288). In other words, neither history nor memorialization can support *learning from* the past. This inability stems from their pedagogical foundations: the intent to offer new, or newly remembered, facts or interpretations which either add to accumulated knowledge, revive accumulated knowledge, or reinforce ways of knowing (Simon et al., 2000). History and memorialization’s pedagogical foundations do not intend to “unsettle the present, opening one to new ways of perceiving, thinking and acting” (Simon et al., 2000, p. 288), what learning from entails.

According to Simon et al. (2000), “binding hope” (p. 288) to history and to memorialization creates a new pedagogical foundation. Once hope binds to history and to memorialization, the pedagogical intention aspires to “unsettle enough to enable a reworking of one’s relationship to the world and others, seeing the possibilities inherent in an incomplete present, and deepening one’s commitments to justice now and in the world to come” (Simon et al., 2000, p. 319). This practice of remembrance, binding hope to history and memorialization, enacts “historical consciousness with radical possibilities” (Simon et al., 2000, p. 319).

In this practice of remembrance, hope thus becomes a recursive praxis. Hope engenders an “openness to the past” which in turn creates an openness within the

present (Simon et al., 2000, p. 295). Understanding what *was* invites an understanding of what *is* since what *is* holds what *was*, and yet, what *is* simultaneously holds what *could be*. As what *is* holds what *was*, understanding what *was* invites a tenuous sense of certainty in the fleeting what *is*. Certainty's ephemerality propels an openness within the present to ever seek certitude, to ever be open to the past. Yet the very openness to the past and the new learnings which emerge continually disrupt any claims of certainty in the present; hence the present becomes ever incomplete, ever imprecise—as does any potential future. The present thus becomes a “modality, a particular structure of attending” rather than a spatial location (Simon et al., 2000, p. 295). Through this particular form of attending comes the ability to see promise, to imagine radical possibilities in the *present*. This reiterative, nebulous modality generates potential: potential for learning from the past, and therefore, potential for renewal within the *present*, which then allows for potential of imagining what could be in the future.

We often understand hope as future-oriented, an “almost” or a “could be” rather than an “is.” Simon et al. (2000) suggest due to our onto-epistemological and *hopeful* commitments to learning from remembrance in order to be willing to face the struggles of the future, we understand the present as incomplete. To situate hope to the present, to appreciate the present as fulsome rather than incomplete, means to accept hope can address and inform actions for *current* struggles. Etymologically, hope in its verb form derives from the Old English *hopian* which holds the earliest meaning of hope, “to have trust, have confidence” (“Hope,” n.d., para. 2) that something *is* or will be so. *Hopian* itself comes from a word of unknown origin, clearly a deeply embedded concept in human experience (“Hope,” n.d.). To have trust that something is can thus be seen as an ancient concept, yet one perhaps overshadowed by our proclivity of situating hope as future-oriented.

“For where there is hope, there is healing.

Through healing there is restoration.

Through restoration there is forgiveness.

Through forgiveness there is peace.”

— Residential School Survivor, Sault St. Marie
(National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 2020, p. 8)

The subtext of the TRC's mandate intends to enact "historical consciousness with radical possibilities" within present-day Canadian society, to have trust in what is and to imagine what could be through communities of memory (Simon et al., 2000, p. 319). Communities of memory, a form of collective remembrance, challenge, form, and extend "the shared significance of what has been heard, seen, or read" to establish anew the "narratives and images that embody and elicit living memories" (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 186). This collective remembrance enacts engagement with past events, the "shared, complementary, or competing" versions, to determine which should be remembered and how they should be remembered (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 186). The TRC invites Canadians to be open to radical possibilities that learning from the past elicits—genuine, enduring change. Therefore, such radical possibilities invite the potential for renewal within present-day Canada, and by extension, the potential for imagining what could be.

The TRC's national processes of creating "communities of memory" aim to set "a redemptive course in the interminable renewal of [Canadian society's] understanding and assessment of past events" of the Residential School System and its legacies (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 186). The TRC binds hope to history and memorialization in an attempt to renew Canadian society by inviting practices of remembrance, processes of learning from, through testimony and witnessing. The TRC aspires to unsettle Canadian society, to effect enduring change in its collective memory "for healing and reconciliation *over* the next seven generations" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, p. 241, italics added). *Over*, not *for*. This distinction insists on a continuous process of unsettling the *present*, the present *over* generations not *for* future generations.

In order to collect, detail, and document testimony and witnessing, the TRC gathered over 6 750 voluntary statements from Residential School Survivors, their family members, or others who wanted to contribute their knowledge and experiences with Residential Schools, as well as conducting 96 interviews with former staff or their children (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b, p. 26). Statements and interviews were gathered in Sharing Panels and Circles, community events, and Commission hearings, or through private conversations and interviews in correctional facilities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b, p. 26). However, the Commission's mandate did not allow for the ability to hold formal hearings or to act as a

public inquiry, which meant it could not subpoena nor compel any witnesses to provide testimony, including students, administrators, and staff (Niezan, 2016).

“I will ask that you remember
all Survivors out there

who did not
and
still do not

have a voice.

Their silence does not mean acceptance or acquiescence.

Too often, silence results from that terrible pattern of harm
repeating itself over and over again.

This is the pattern that needs to be broken.”

— Eugene Arcand, Residential School Survivor
(National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 2020, p. ii)

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) commissioned a report to determine the impacts on Residential School Survivors for participating in the TRC, and to “to identify important lessons that should inform future work on settlements, truth-telling, reconciliation and healing” (NCTR, 2020, p. 2). Several positive outcomes arose from the perspective of Residential School Survivors: public recognition of the harms done and continuing legacies of the Residential School System, establishing its truth; invitation and enactment for healing and (re)conciliation both on an individual level and a community level; commemoration events to honour Survivors which helped their sense of healing; and compensation by the Canadian government which represented acknowledgement of and accountability for the past and continued harms done (NCTR, 2020, pp. 6–12).

However, significant challenges also arose for Residential School Survivors participating in the TRC: exclusion of Survivors due to the confines of eligibility defined by the IRSSA, like the omission of Métis, Labrador, and Newfoundland students in the processes or compensation, or omission of other Survivors due to the rigorous standards of documentation needed to prove attendance or other claims; a lack of supports and/or limited access for culturally competent and in-person healing and intergenerational trauma-focused programs; insufficient language revitalization supports which have not rectified language loss caused by the Residential School System; enduring low, marginalized economic status due to generations of colonization have not been ameliorated with compensation; and, some Survivors could not attend TRC processes and events as the personal financial cost was too great (NCTR, 2020, pp. 20–26).

Given the significant emotional and psychological risks of facing loss for offering a testimonial account, including the complex layers of personal and intergenerational trauma, and the significant barriers and demands of having to prove attendance and subsequent abuses at Residential School, why would Residential School Survivors wish to share their experiences? Why would they choose to “relive their story, relive their life in front of [others when] sometimes it was a very traumatic life” (NCTR, 2020, p. 15)? No answer can suffice. As Simon et al. (2000) state of the Holocaust, it “cannot and should not be compressed into any one account, any one time and place” (p. 289). The same can be said to be true for Canada’s Indian Residential School System. It must be recognized that each individual Residential School Survivor’s own motivations for

participating or not participating in the TRC must be recognized as just that—an individual motivation. The Residential School System and its enduring impacts cannot be compressed into singularity.

Perhaps the ability to tell a truth, one ignored by Canada for generations, and for it to be heard, sometimes for the first time, propelled Residential School Survivors to volunteer their testimony. As a Survivor from Prince Albert shares of their experience: “I call it the hidden truth. I never talked to my children, and there are other Survivors that tell me the same. My sisters, they never told their children” (NCTR, 2020, p. 22). Perhaps the validation of their experiences through nation-wide, public processes and subsequent public debate and discussion propelled Residential School Survivors to volunteer their testimony. Survivor and child of Survivors, Vitaline Elsie Jenner shares of her experience: “I want the people of Canada to hear, to listen, for it is the truth.... I also want my grandchildren to learn, to learn from me that, yes, it did happen” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, p. 13). Perhaps the burden of waiting to tell became too much to bear/bare. Survivor Ina Seitcher shares of her experience: “Like I said, I’m just starting my healing journey. There are doors that I don’t even want to open. I don’t even want to open those doors because I don’t know what it would do to me” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c, p. 15). Perhaps the ability to speak for those whose voices have been lost drove testimony. Simone, a Survivor from Nunavut, shares of her experience: “I’m here for my parents ... and I’m here for my brother... and my niece who at five suffered a head injury and never came home.... And I’m here for them first, and that’s why I’m making a public statement” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c, p. 19).

As Simone’s testimony reveals, not all voices *could* be shared. Not all children who attended Residential Schools survived. Due to inadequate record keeping and regular destruction of reports and records, the accurate number of children who died while attending Residential School will never be known. Poor sanitation, ventilation, nutrition, and drinking water, as well as overcrowding, fire hazards, inadequate health services, and the spread of infectious diseases like tuberculosis, diphtheria, or influenza contributed to students’ deaths. Physical and sexual abuse, draconian disciplinary methods, failed attempts at running away, and suicide also contributed to students’ deaths. Of the 3,201 deaths confirmable by existing records, almost 50% do not name a cause of death (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, p. 92). The

death rate of children who attended Residential School was higher than school-aged children in the general Canadian population (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). Thousands of children died *at* Residential Schools, and it may never be clear how many lives have been lost *because of* Residential Schools. The enduring impacts of disease, malnutrition, and abuse, let alone enforced removal from families, communities, and cultural ways of knowing and being can never be quantified.

The TRC states the current Canadian education system “must teach history in ways that foster mutual respect, empathy, and engagement” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, p. 21) as “all Canadian children and youth deserve to know Canada’s honest history” (p. 21). To do so, the Canadian education system, and by extension its educators, must “unsettle colonial understandings of history in which the lives and realities of Indigenous Peoples are absent or erased” (Iseke, 2011, p. 322). If history “matters to the degree that it informs a constant re-appraisal of current presumptions about the past and its inheritance” (Simon et al., 2000, pp. 286–287), how can educators within the Canadian education system begin to “unlearn colonialism and relearn a new relationship to the past” (Iseke, 2011, p. 322)?

“...seeing
is a creative practice
of living well
with one another
in relationship
to the world.”

— Carl Leggo and Rita Irwin (2018, p. 50)

“One’s learned emotional selectivity
inevitably reflects the effects of specific cultural agendas...

I call this emotional selectivity *inscribed habits of (in)attention*.”

— Megan Boler (2004, p. 180, italics in original)

2.2.4. Trespass

Anxious to get home—my focus aimed in the near-future—I arrive at my car, my attention absorbed in *Next*. *Next*, always elusive, always beckoning, its centrifugal force subsuming, impossible to ignore, cocoons me from *Now*. *Next* trains my eyes on the horizon, that concrete abstraction.

Yet *Now* exerts its presence. *Now* demands I attend.

Now points to the front of my car. I look.

There, embedded in the front headlight, Bird, her wee head and neck invisible. Consumed. Obliterated. Her delicate legs and feet splayed, seemingly undamaged; her feathers frozen in death's pirouette.

Abrupt tears needle my eyes.

I pause.

Now lingers.

How do I live with this terrible beauty etched there, on my headlight?

Now lingers still.

Beckons.

Waits.

The real question sounds: how *do* I live, ignorant of terrible beauty?

“One’s learned emotional selectivity
inevitably reflects the effects of specific cultural agendas...

I call this emotional selectivity *inscribed habits of (in)attention*.”

— Megan Boler (2004, p. 180, italics in original)

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2.2.5. Spectating versus Witnessing

Megan Boler (2004) explores emotion's absent-presence in scholarship and classroom pedagogy, and traces its invisibility within the positivist paradigm of scientific rationality. Derrida's conception of absent-presence "has been ignored in an attempt to preserve the illusion of truth as a perfectly self-contained and self-sufficient present" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 18). Absent-presence enacts "the trace ... that haunts our texts and our tellings" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 17). Therefore, the perception emotion lacks objectivity, and thus lacks validity as a form of meaning making, endures in Western thought.

Epistemological assumptions of objective, universal truths dominate; consequently, emotion's nebulous subjectivity results in its exclusion in Western thought. Emotion exists as simultaneously embodied and situated, physiological and cognitive, linguistic and nameless (Boler, 2004, p. xvi). Boler (2004) contends the silent presence of emotion acts as a necessity, a "crucial counterbalance" (p. xiii) to "reason's superiority" (p. xiii). She furthers that to "name, imagine and materialize a better world" (Boler, 2004, p. xii) requires an exploration of how emotion shapes scholarly work and pedagogy.

Boler (2004) claims that within society and education, emotion performs as a "site of social control" (p. xiv) as the "rules of emotional conduct and expression function to uphold the dominant culture's hierarchies and values" (p. xiv). Yet emotion can also provide a "productive and necessary direction for the exploration of social justice and education" (Boler, 2004, p. xii). Boler (2004) argues emotional experience provides a "source" (p. xv) for "transformation and resistance" (p. xv) as it "informs both our cognitive and moral perceptions" (p. xv). Emotion can be a site of potentiality, a way to "envision future horizons of possibilities and who we want to become" (Boler, 2004, p. xv), as well as a site of opposition to dominant social or cultural norms. Within the process of discovering "who we want to become" (Boler, 2004, p. xv), we must ask what gains and what losses occur by challenging our own assumptions and beliefs. This introspection requires a careful consideration of how dominant culture influences who we are, how we are, and how we see—or not see—who and how we are. Boler (2004) names this transformational process of becoming for both teachers and students as a *pedagogy of discomfort*.

A pedagogy of discomfort engenders an ethical aim to “inhabit a more ambiguous and flexible sense of self” (Boler, 2004, p. 176), but a self accountable to others. Collective accountability begets a paradigmatic shift, a potential site for transformation. Within inquiry, Boler (2004) asks for wariness of self-reflection, which does not include mutual responsibility. As she argues, “Western conceptions of liberal individualism” (Boler, 2004, p. 177) and its rhetoric “threatens to reduce genuine inquiry to an individualized process with no collective accountability” (p. 177). A pedagogy of discomfort, “an invitation to inquiry as well as a call to action” (Boler, 2004, p. 176), emphasizes “collective witnessing” (p. 176), or collective accountability in order to extend our society’s horizons of possibilities. Collective accountability troubles the dominant Western worldview of individualism. Therefore, this paradigmatic shift invites transformative possibility not only in teachers’ classrooms, but for society as a whole if teachers and society agree to be *witnesses to* and not *spectators of* transformative social change.

Boler’s (2004) conception of collective witnessing, or collective accountability, functions as a point of affinity to S. Wilson’s (2008) conception of relational accountability. Unlike Western paradigms, in Indigenous paradigms, an “idea cannot be taken out of [its] relational context and still maintain its shape” (S. Wilson, 2008, p. 8). Indigenous paradigms emerge from “a knowledge ethic shaped by the needs of place and people” (M. A. Meyer, 2013, p. 96) where the “environment is the knowledge” (V. L. Kelly, personal communication, December 10, 2021). Knowledge “is an expression of ritual, renewal, insight, relationship, and life.... It is and always has been a verb” (M. A. Meyer, 2013, p. 252). According to S. Wilson (2008), relational accountability also functions as a verb, not a noun. He means we *are* relationships. Respect, reciprocity, and responsibility thus become enacted *within* those relationships: relational accountability (Wilson, 2008).

S. Wilson (2008) argues the pervasive dominant Western view—that individuals own knowledge—reasserts its privileged position as “no requirement” demands dominant paradigms “to be able to see *other* ways of being and doing, or even to recognize they exist” (p. 44, italics added). Within Indigenous paradigms, knowledge belongs to the cosmos and thus humans receive and *hold* knowledge, they do not *own* knowledge (Kelly, 2021a; Wilson, 2008). As knowledge holders, to receive knowledge means “to behold, to hold with being” (Kelly, 2021a, p. 141) knowledge, enacting

relationality with the cosmos. To accommodate knowledge within one's being in ethically relational ways means "to learn how to hold the knowledges as they are given" (Kelly, 2021a, p. 141) with humility, respect, and honesty (V. L. Kelly, personal communication, December 10, 2021). Therefore, the relationships which generate concepts or ideas, those "relationships between things, rather than on the things themselves" (S. Wilson, 2008, p. 74), establish knowledge as a communal process, a communal enactment.

Hunt (2018) supports S. Wilson (2008) through her conception of Kwagiulth witnessing, itself an enactment of relational accountability. Hunt (2018), too, argues that Indigenous paradigms offer "an epistemologically distinct approach" from Western paradigms—an "intimate network or relations" (p. 287) compared to "rational and impersonal systems" (p. 288). Kwagiulth witnessing, "distinguished by its specific roots in Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch traditions" (Hunt, 2018, p. 288), manifests "not as a choice but a duty" (p. 289). Kwagiulth witnessing "is inherently bound up in relations based on responsibility" which occurs "within a network of reciprocal relations" (Hunt, 2018, p. 289). This network of reciprocal relations exists within a "different temporal frame" established in potlatch traditions (Hunt, 2018, p. 289). Stories, songs, or dances recalled and re-enacted in a potlatch re-embodies them, making them "alive in the present rather than focusing on their past use" (Hunt, 2018, p. 289). Therefore, "recalling an event or story as a witness" asserts and reinforces the network of reciprocal relations "by bringing those responsibilities into the present" (Hunt, 2018, p. 289).

“During each potlatch, payment is given to witnesses
for their role in validating what they have seen...

Witnessing is part of a larger system of maintaining an oral culture,
and just as the role of a dancer or a singer is embodied,
so too is the role of witness.

...witnessing requires being fully engaged.”

—Sarah Hunt, Kwakwaka'wakw – Kwagu'ł and Dzawada'enuxw

(Hunt, 2018, p. 282)

Boler (2004) offers a distinction between *spectating* and *witnessing*, a contrast which parallels the difference between privilege and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008). As S. Wilson (2008) states, “Relational accountability requires [us] to form reciprocal and respectful relationships” (p. 40), rather than take on the problematic role of the removed observer of the Other. According to Boler (2004), *spectating* “permits a gaping distance between self and other” (p. 184) and, from this distant position, the ability to “abdicate any possible responsibility” (p. 184) to the Other thrives. In other words, *spectating* reinscribes privilege. In contrast, Boler (2004) contends *witnessing* provides “a process in which we do not have the luxury of seeing a static truth or fixed certainty” (p. 186). Rather, *witnessing* enacts a “dynamic process” (Boler, 2004, p. 186) where we “undertake our historical responsibilities and co-implication” (p. 186) for that which we witness. Therefore, *witnessing* serves as an act of responsibility. Boler (2004) further asserts *spectating* comprises of “learned and chosen modes of visual omission and erasure” whereas *witnessing* “involves recognizing moral relations” (p. 183) and an acknowledgment of “how we see or choose *not* to see has ethical implications” (p. 194, italics added).

To exemplify her conception of *spectating* versus *witnessing*, Boler (2004) refers to a photograph printed in *Life* magazine of a lynching of a black man (p. 184). The questions of who took the photograph and why the photographer chose to take a photograph rather than intervene in the moment of the lynching reaffirms that particular photographer’s privileged role as *spectator*, a role with the ability to be distant from the moral transgression and thus distant from accountability. With this striking example, Boler (2004) asks us to consider, “Who is permitted the luxury of *spectating*; and what is the cost to others when we choose the comfortable safety of distance?” (p. 184).

In this place now called Canada, the luxury of *spectating* exists as a cultural and social norm for members of the dominant culture. The luxury of *spectating* derives from “popular history,” or a version of history promoted by school systems and mass media: decontextualized, simplified, and reflective of specific national interests (Boler, 2004, p. 185). To view troubling moments in Canada’s history from a distant vantage provides the dominant culture immunity from accountability not only for past transgressions, but also for legacies and current manifestations of those transgressions. The luxury of *spectating* means not having to ask, nor answer, “what is the cost to others when [I]

choose the comfortable safety of distance?" (Boler, 2004, p. 184). Susan Dion (2009) calls this immunity "the perfect stranger" (p. 178) identity.

“While Indigenous children were being mistreated in residential schools
by being told they were heathen, savages and pagans and inferior people
—that same message was being delivered in the public schools of this country.”

— the Honourable Murray Sinclair, Anishnaabe (as cited in First Nations Health Authority, 2020, p. 12)

2.2.6. Perfect Stranger

When I entered the theatre for Simon Fraser University's 2013 Day for Reconciliation, my relationship to Indigenous Peoples could be described as a "perfect stranger" (Dion, 2009, p. 179).

The perfect stranger identity—how dominant Canadian culture views its relationship to and with Indigenous Peoples—can be likened to a complex river system, fed from tributaries of colonialism, enduring stereotypical representations of Indigenous Peoples, and the generally accepted belief Indigenous Peoples, their cultures, languages, and contributions exist in the *past* (King, 2012). King (2012) describes how North America views Indigenous Peoples:

Dead Indians are dignified, noble, silent, suitably garbed. And dead. Live Indians are invisible, unruly, disappointing. And breathing. One is a romantic reminder of a heroic but fictional past. The other is simply an unpleasant, contemporary surprise. (p. 66)

Canada has long viewed Indigenous Peoples as romantic, mythical Others or "problems" to solve, impediments to the colonial project (King, 2012; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). As an example, Bob Joseph (2018) cites Duncan Campbell Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. Scott wrote this statement in the early 1920s: "I want to get rid of the Indian problem.... Our objective is to continue until there is not an Indian that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department" (B. Joseph, 2018, p. 8). Of note, the Indian Act, Canada's principal statute, a "magical piece of legislation that twists and slides through time, transforming itself and the lives of Native people at every turn" (King, 2003, p. 132), intended to govern First Nations, and not Métis nor Inuit. Introduced in 1876 with significant amendments in 1951 and 1985, its enactment and impact continue today (B. Joseph, 2018).

Canadian teachers re-inscribe and reproduce these dominant narratives—narratives central in their *own* educations—narratives ultimately "attributable to educational institutions and what they have taught, or failed to teach, over many generations" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, p. 234). Like Dion (2009), with use of the term "Canadian teachers" I mean the *majority* of Canadian teachers who do not identify as Indigenous, who re-inscribe and reproduce ways of knowing, doing, and being of the dominant Canadian culture as part of their profession.

This pre-existing cultural stance for Canadian teachers becomes further complicated with other discourses which inform their practices—a desire to teach well, to engage in pastoral care for their charges, and to contribute to the development of Canadian citizenry (Dion, 2009). Dion (2009) invites teachers to consider their own tributaries, including their pedagogy, to magnify and reveal “what teachers know, what they do not know, and what they refuse to know” (p. 179) about themselves in relation to Indigenous Peoples, Canada’s colonial history, and legacies of colonialism.

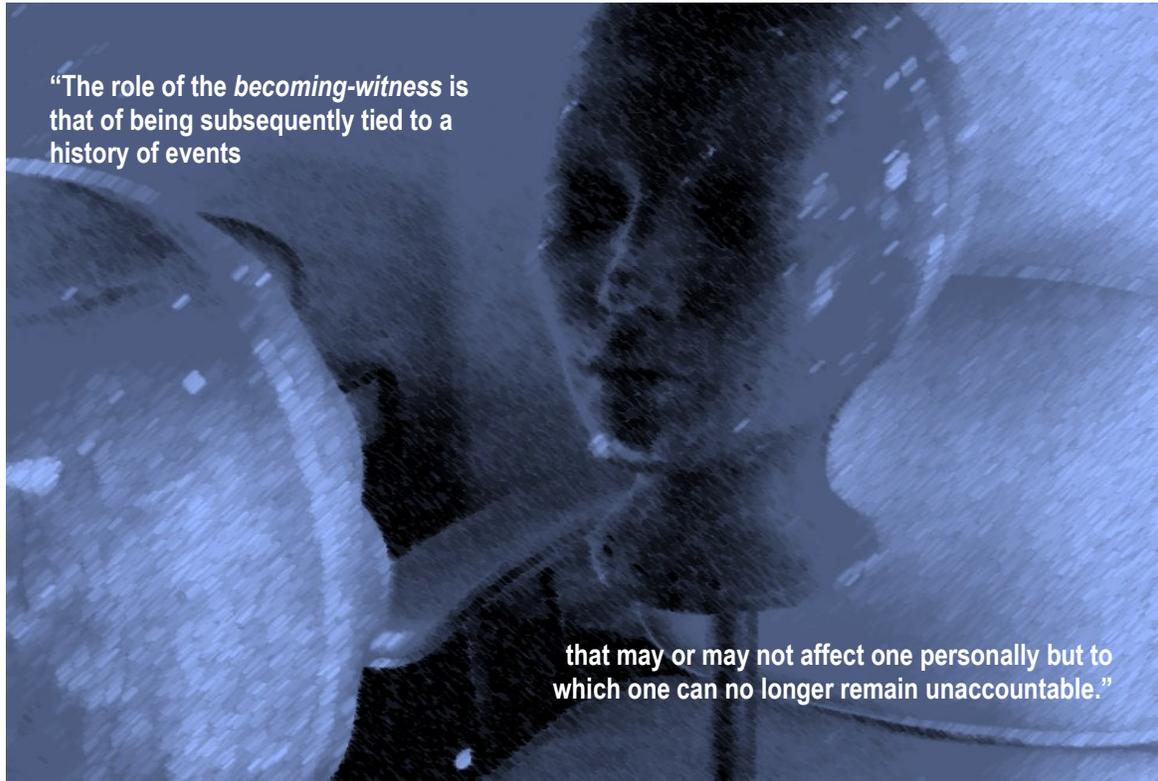
Internalizing the perfect stranger identity results in teachers who may genuinely be unaware of their role in the colonial project, or who fear challenging dominant discourses. Whether teachers fear offending students and their families, fear “doing it wrong” (Dion, 2009, p. 179), or fear disrupting their own privileged stance, their perfect stranger identity cocoons them from “having to recognize their own attachment to and implication in the history of the relationship between Aboriginal people and Canadians” (Dion, 2009, p. 179). The perfect stranger identity allows non-Indigenous teachers to be spectators of, not witnesses to, Canada’s relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

Thus, the perfect stranger identity also allows teachers’ pedagogies to be enmeshed in spectatorship, not witnessing.

Disrupt the identity, disrupt the pedagogy. But how?

2.3. Incubation

Incubation, a stage of transformation, parallels First Insight but with much more depth. Whereas First Insight can be understood as perceptual, Incubation can be understood as spiritual. Incubation stimulates expressions of healing and spirituality, often through ceremony or ritual to honour the vision or the creative work produced.



“The role of the *becoming-witness* is that of being subsequently tied to a history of events

that may or may not affect one personally but to which one can no longer remain unaccountable.”

— Julia Emberley (2014, p. 8)

2.3.1. Big Mary

Like many childhoods, mine included fluid claims to power. People don't like to think of childhood as a time shaped, driven, and centred around quests for domination—there persists self-induced soma in adulthood—but I try to remember to remember. I know the truth. Maybe small letter 't' truth, but truth nonetheless.

Our skirmishes for power remained invisible to most adults. And, if somehow seen, a moment caught from the corner of an eye, dismissal. This void in grown-up perception develops around grade seven, when the promise of high school and lockers and more than one teacher to endure in a day becomes a distant focal point. The world of childhood blurs around the edges, muddies, and for some, disintegrates like that of a polaroid photo left out in the sun, no longer discernible nor recognizable.

One girl jolted those grade seven retinas, even if temporarily, back into the pristine vision of a child: Big Mary. Clearly visible to we under-grade-sevens, Big Mary's presence frightened us. Our eyes needed no jolting. I've tried, but I don't remember seeing her or noticing her presence anywhere in the school except at the tetherball poles.

Our small school possessed only three poles, each with frayed rope and ill-filled balls. The uneven and cracked asphalt became the battlefield where the older kids ruled over the younger kids, the bigger over the smaller, the stronger over the weaker. We amassed there, ignoring the lonely swings and outcast monkey-bars. From a distance, it might appear to the untrained eye that us kids loved tetherball, flocking in great groups to the rusted metal sticks in rain, snow, or heat.

In reality, we *did* love tetherball, but not as a "fun" game. On that patchy asphalt, social order could be challenged and restored time and again. The young, the small, the weak routinely withheld in their rightful categories until they slowly became the old, the big, the strong. And so, the cycle continued. Everyone knew her place in relation to the other.

But Big Mary did not play by those rules.

Her name remains a mystery. We bestowed her with "Big Mary," a title never spoken *to* her, just whispered within the security of our own, small alliances. Big Mary exuded bigness, the kind of big seldom manifest in an elementary school. Rumours circulated about her: still in grade six, at 15 years old. She loomed large over even the grade sevens, standing a full foot over them, with the kind of feet belonging in the adult world. She may have been wide or stocky; I'm not sure. Her countenance and presence alone made her seem, well, big.

When Big Mary arrived at the tetherball poles, games stopped on their own accord. She never interrupted or took over. She just appeared, waited, and all games ceased. We understood she would choose the pole she wanted to play, and we would fall back as her audience. Sometimes she would play by herself and then just walk away. Sometimes she would call on someone, usually the oldest, the biggest, the strongest amongst us to play her. ("Call on" seems inaccurate as I don't actually remember her ever speaking, but somehow, she would lay the challenge down and it would not be refused.)

We all knew her presence had nothing to do with tetherball. Big Mary materialized there to claim her power. To revel in it. To stretch and strain and strategize toward victory.

Most games finished rather quickly with the yellowing ball wrapped around the oxidized pole in a matter of seconds. Only a few attempted blocking: red, painful splotches marked their forearms, badges of their failures. I never played Big Mary, not belonging to the older, the bigger, the stronger crowd, though I did fear her.

And yet.

And yet I felt awed, awed by her determination, her deep concentration, her unbelievable strength, and unmatched skill to set a ball on its course to victory. Awed by her joy too, the kind of satisfaction only a victor can exude. Big Mary existed as a non-entity for the majority of our power schemes until she presented herself. Then she ruled.

Big Mary remained imperceptible to me everywhere but at those tetherball poles. Once materialized, I could see only her.

She became a temporary usurper of power and prestige, a sheer force of will whose claim to dominance I understood and accepted even though it disrupted the usual power hierarchies, if only momentarily.

I knew Big Mary to be an Indian. This ugly word I use intentionally, to reflect the language I had for her then. Though I never spoke to her, nor she to me, and I only ever watched from a fearful distance, she, and my perception of her, shapes a part of who and how I am in the world.

My child eyes registered her as Indian, but they did not see Mary enmeshed on the periphery of a larger scheme, a political and social system which had every intention of rendering her invisible. My child eyes only saw Mary when Mary chose to stand before us.

Mary lived on the reserve in town, and kids who lived on the reserve did not play with kids who did not live on the reserve. No one explicitly told us not to play with each other, but we knew somehow a difference persisted between us, an otherness we accepted, and with our complicity, reinforced.

I never questioned why we did not play together. I never questioned why I had never been to the reserve. I never questioned what exactly made us “different.”

I never questioned.

I did not know then I had the privilege not to question. From my adult perspective, I can see my privilege as one thread of a rope of privilege, woven over generations by steadfast, resolute hands. Though I might have been ignorant of the warp and weft surrounding me at the time, I did form a part of the rope.

I now often wonder about the other places where Mary ruled, the other places where the only thing she needed was she, herself. I wonder if those places existed.

I wonder what Mary saw, what Mary questioned, what Mary understood.

When I see tetherball poles, I think of Mary.

When I see tetherball poles, I think of how even as a ten-year-old child I knew I could see Mary only when she, with that fraying rope and yellowed ball, claimed her space.

“...wide-awakeness
can play a part in the process
of liberating and arousing,
in helping people pose questions
with regard to what is
oppressive, mindless, and wrong.”

—Maxine Greene (1978, p. 51)

“In the early days
the only education available to Indians
was in the residential schools,
owned and operated by the Government,
in conjunction with churches interested at that time.

These schools,
some of them in very remote areas,
served a useful purpose then,
and are still needed to-day.

Clergymen from the
Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist Churches
did heroic work
under most difficult conditions.

For the most part the missionaries
were a noble breed of dedicated men,
and few of them remain
to witness
the fruits of their labours.”

— Mildred Valley Thornton (1960, p. 221)

2.3.2. “My number was 51”

I have a mouth
full of silver

I was a heathen,
a savage, not a person
not a person, a savage

I have a mouth
full of silver

I was violated
I was violated as a child
as a child I was violated

I have a mouth
full of silver

I don't even speak
my language, my mother's language beaten out of her
my mother's language beaten out of her, my language

I have a mouth
full of silver

I haven't even told
my children my story
my story my children

I have a mouth
full of silver

It wasn't my choice
It wasn't my choice
It wasn't my choice

I wanted you to know that
I wanted you to know that
I wanted you to know that

we welcomed

your ancestors.

Found poem, created from the testimony of the Residential School Survivors at SFU's TRC Day (SFU, 2013).

“The term witness is in reference to the Aboriginal principle of witnessing,
which varies among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

Generally speaking, witnesses are called to be the keepers of history
when an event of historic significance occurs.

Through witnessing, the event or work that is undertaken is validated and provided legitimacy.
The work could not take place without honoured and respected guests to witness it.

Witnesses are asked to store and care for the history they witness
and to share it with their own people when they return home.

For Aboriginal peoples, the act of witnessing these events comes with a great responsibility
to remember all the details and be able to recount them accurately as the foundation of oral histories.”

(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, p. 442)

2.4. Learnings

Learnings, a stage of completion, produces and shares the creative work, the product of the visioning. This stage requires determining how to share and defend the creative work, but it also requires accepting the critique of others. Learnings engenders a sense of self-confidence as it necessitates understanding and defending the integrity of the creative process.

2.4.1. Harmonics

I hear it in her voice. Hesitation. I heard it before, but my own discomfort muffled my ears, tried to convince me it did not exist.

Over cups of tea, sounds of the mall filtering over us like wisps of pollen, she tried to tell me but I did not listen.

I could *feel* it then, there at the cramped table, a constricted weight in my belly, how my heartstrings did not vibrate in resonance with hers, how her eyes could see mine seeing, how her voice sounded yet knowing my mutinous ears refused to listen.

Now, many moons later, we speak again. No table between us, no cups of tea to warm our hands. Only the familiarity of our voices echo through the phone lines.

My ears have no choice. There's nothing but sound between us.

She tells me her story. A story of broken trust. Her words, extracted, twisted, displaced, abused—paraded into the world as if owned by another.

This wound of hers lingers still, its scab a thin membrane, like the taut skin of Drum which vibrates with every passing sound wave. Imperceptibly perceptible. Her voice plays across that membrane, a song uniquely hers but shared by her Ancestors. A song I knew from books but one I did not want to *feel*.

Her gift arises, vibrational harmony there on offer. My ears, chastened, humbled, enlivened. Today they choose to listen. To listen in a good way.

Her words, hers alone.

Her words will not sound here.

Reader, as I wayfind on this existential quest, I walk alongside many Teachers who generously invite me to learn from them, who help guide me as I journey. I do not name all of my Teachers out of deep respect for their preference not to be named in my thesis. Expressing this choice comes to me in many forms—some overt and some delicately subtle. As I tune my capacity for wayfinding, I tune my capacity for attending to, and thus listening to, these resonances. I pause here, now, to acknowledge the time it took me to learn this Teaching, to acknowledge the patience of my Teachers as I learn, and to acknowledge my Teachers' absent presence to show I intend to walk in a good way even if sometimes I stumble.

“Who speaks,
who doesn’t speak,
when,
for how long,
and with what emotional valence
are all keys to understanding
the relational patterns
that hold
oppression in place.”

—Robin DiAngelo (2011, p. 67)

2.4.2. Becoming. Witness.

ob (prefix) from Latin, “toward, to, over against, in the way of, by reason of, about, before, in front of”

serve (v.) from Latin *servire*, “be a servant, be in service, be enslaved”

observe (v.) from Latin *observare*, from *ob* “over” + *servare* “to watch, keep safe” or “to protect”; 10th C

“to hold to (a manner of life or course of conduct),”

from Old French, *observer*, *osserver*; late 14th C

observer (n.) “one who watches and takes notice”; 1580s

witness (v.) “bear testimony”; 13th C
“see or know by personal presence,

observe”; 1580s

witness (n.) Old English *witnes* “attestation of fact event from personal knowledge,” also, “one who so

testifies”

(“Observe,” n.d.; “Witness,” 2022)

What do I move toward? Or do I move away?

*I struggle, out of breath at times,
over and against my colonized mind,
in the way of my own self*

*uncertain, I try
to leave behind about
instead, I try
to pivot to learn from.*

*Gifts of invitation arrive, invitations to (re)newal,
invitations to becoming.*

*And sometimes I turn my head.
Sometimes, it is just.*

Too. Painful.

*I want to be one who watches,
one who protects, one
who holds to a vision of possibility.*

I want to be...

Abstractions in a concrete world.

*I question.
I question*

how to be

*of service, how to
bare my testimony
so it is unadorned,
plain, so I might
recognize it.*

Becoming. Witness.

“According to classical physics,
nature consists of objects in interaction with one another.

Observation
is an objective business that reveals
the world for what it is.

Quantum theory,
by contrast, stresses that
observation
is participation
and within any act of observation
the observer and observed are
united in a holistic
and
unanalyzable way.

Observation
is a process
within which it is no longer possible
to speak of the independent existence,
or properties of,
the observer and observed.”

—David Peat (1997, p. 569)

2.4.3. Pedagogical Connections

As Emberley (2014) asks, how does this mode of (re)presentation, my hermeneutic inquiry before you, disclose or disguise the process of witnessing? How does developing an understanding of pedagogical witnessing enact the capacity within myself to recognize and thus learn from witnessing as a pedagogy? How do considerations of the present as a structure of attending inform relationality with the young ones in my care? In what ways, if any, does a philosophic understanding of binding hope to history and memorialization help me and my pedagogy? Will an exploration of the differences between spectating and witnessing help others to understand if, how, or why they, like me, embody the role of a perfect stranger?

I can ask these questions now.

“How will I describe this orange with an apple vocabulary?”

— Manulani Aluli Meyer (2013b, p. 99), Palehua, O'ahu, Hawai'i²¹

²¹ To acknowledge Manulani Aluli Meyer in a good way, Meyer explains how and why she wishes to be named: “Palehua, O'ahu, Hawai'i. That tells people where I'm living, from and belong. Here's to the connection we have for our beloved aina!” (V. L. Kelly, personal communication, July 18, 2022).

2.4.4. Nuance

Nuance, the noun, derives from the Latin *nubes*, meaning a “cloud, mist, vapor” which itself comes from PIE **sneudh-* which means “fog” (“Nuance,” 2019, para. 2). Appropriate, then, the word I grasp for to offer how I understand witnessing derives from the impossible possibility of describing clouds, vapours, or fogs.

Nuance.

The nuances of the concept of witnessing can only suggest its complexities and not fully name them. These complexities become further complicated by the innumerable contexts in which the concept of witnessing finds itself. These countless contexts offer only a hint of the myriad of consciousnesses borne from these contexts, which then can only allude to the multitudes of the dispositions and invitational natures embedded within the concept of witnessing.

Here I endeavour to offer you spirals of relationality to articulate nuances of witnessing, my ecological understanding of its pedagogical potential within an educational context.

These spirals of relationality arise as I nurture my own ecological understanding of who and how I am in the world by nurturing a (re)cognition of my relationship with place, nurturing my consciousness of the inter/intra-connections and inter/intra-dependence of relationships, nurturing my presupposition Spirit animates all life, and nurturing my ethic of contemplative morality to engender humility (Cajete, 1994, pp. 47–48). Nurturing an ecological understanding of who and how I am in the world resonates in all facets of my life—the whole of my personal hermeneutic circle oscillates as I seek coherence.

Yet my ecological understanding of nuances of witnessing emerges from a *particular* context—a classroom ecology. If context creates our consciousness (Jardine, 2006) and our consciousness constitutes our humanity (M. A. Meyer, 2013), a *classroom ecology* can become more than a site of learning. A classroom ecology can become a site where consciousness and thus humanity can emerge. My classroom ecology, a particular part of my personal hermeneutic circle, offers me a Teaching I share with you: a classroom ecology can become an invitation for sight, an invitation to see beyond the

banal roles of *teacher* and *student*. Nuances of witnessing invites perception of the imperceptible: consciousness and humanity each of us embody by our very being a Being. The roles of *teacher* and *student* can obscure our being *Beings*, but to conjure and tune the capacity to (re)cognize—to recognize, or perceive, and (re)cognize, or know anew—a *classroom* as an *ecology* means to conjure and tune the capacity for site~sight.

Does a metaphor exist to free us from the linguistic paradigm of containing (human) Beings within the roles of teacher and student (V. L. Kelly, personal communication, December 10, 2021)? The “working of a metaphor... *is a way of asking for knowledge*” (Cajete, 1994, p. 119, italics in original). I look to Snail for help. In Snail’s larval or embryonic development, the body rotates 180 degrees from the back to the front area of the shell, a process known as *torsion*.²² Torsion results in Snail’s new body alignment which promotes stability during movement, allows for better availability of fresh water, and sets receptors to a forward position so Snail can search surroundings and assess water and mud’s quality. The direction of torsion determines the orientation of Snail’s shell’s spiral whose whorls expand and thicken either clockwise or counter-clockwise from the apex. Torsion, or a profound pivot, thus can be understood as a complicated, life-altering, and advantageous process which determines growth’s orientation.

Can we experience a profound, linguistic pivot to reflect a profound, relational pivot? Can we invite a complicated, life-altering, and advantageous process to shift from a language of enclosure to a language of human-ness? Can we name teacher and student Beings? The direction of a linguistic torsion will reflect our orientation, and thus disposition, to what *could* be.

²² Learned from Snail-World (n.d., 2017), Chandra (n.d.), and Allison (2021).

“Terminology... is the result of a consensual process;
its usage is what eventually gives it authority and 'rightness'.

Misusage of words therefore
can only be defined
as presently unaccepted or unacceptable usage.”

— Marian C. Horzinek (2001, para. 4)

I adopt the symbol (~) to indicate the reciprocal nature of relationships amongst and between (human) Beings and the more-than-human world. A hyphen (-) metaphorically (re)inscribes lineality, or one-way movement, whereas with the use of the symbol (~), I intend to metaphorically inscribe circularity, or reciprocal movement. Familiar manifestations of the inter~intra~connections and inter~intra~dependence of relationships among and between (human) Beings in the context of a classroom ecology might look like instructor/learners, authority/subordinates, leader/followers, or mentor/mentees. These manifestations reflect what can and does exist in classroom ecologies, but I propose, like Aoki (2004a, 2004b), we stretch beyond these confines and seek language to denote the nebulous yet certain existence of teacher and student as Beings. Ecological understanding undergirds my proposition, infused with ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008) as key dispositions.

As such, I use the symbol O~O to denote *teacher* and *student* each as being a *Being*, be~ing in relation with one another. I do so to try to “present verbal and visual images as profound teachings” (Cajete, 1994, p. 119) of how to express the ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008) which can exist amongst and between Beings in a classroom ecology beyond what might already exist. The symbol O~O also denotes each Being’s contribution and responsibility to the other in mutuality, reflecting the disposition of ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008).

The words *teacher* and *student* carry the capacity for linguistic (re)inscription of a particular paradigm I wish to avoid when discussing and offering my understanding of nuances of witnessing. Nuances of witnessing presupposes each (human) Being must be understood as O~O, or as Being~Being. To articulate nuances of witnessing, I offer *Being~witness* and *Being~revealer* to clarify the witness and the one who offers some revelation of being rather than the words teacher-witness or student-testifier. The word *revelation* comes from *revelacioun*, “disclosure of information or knowledge to man by a divine or supernatural agency” (“Revelation,” n.d., para. 2), derived from Latin *revelare*, to “unveil, uncover, lay bare” (para. 2). The Being~revealer unveils or lays bare some sort of insight of their Spirit, their human-ness. In the educational ecologies I speak of, a Being~revealer’s revelation of human-ness requires being in relation with a Being~witness. Therefore, to reveal, to be a revealer, means both to invite a context to

share knowledge, a site, and to invite sight, or perception, of a presencing of Spirit.
Site~sight.

Thus, I attempt to reflect my understanding of how ecological understanding, an Indigenous way of knowing and being, can infuse my Western understanding of what it means to co-exist in a classroom ecology with others, to stretch beyond the familiar roles of teacher and student. I offer to you my own personal torsion, or profound pivot, a Teaching I have come to call *nuances of witnessing*.

The following attempts to synthesize my understanding of the nuances of witnessing from the positionality as Being~witness, and their pedagogical significance in a classroom ecology. Subsequent chapters in this dissertation invite you to witness how these nuances have become manifest through my lived experiences with the young ones in my care and colleagues.

I can only offer my understanding of the nuances of witnessing here, now, (re)membering what has been in order to share with you what is and what might be—a hopeful reckoning for the now and tomorrow’s now. I look back to look forward, look beyond to look closely to invite you in this enduring cycle of (re)newal.

Implicit to this understanding comes the recognition of testimony’s absent-presence.

Testimony embodies many forms. In the educational ecologies I speak of, testimony does not mean formal, testimonial accounts garnered and gathered. Testimony means a demonstration of some *revelation of being*. A revelation of being means an offering, by the Being~revealer, of who and how the young one is, was, or could be.

Sometimes, the Being~revealer intends for the offering to be shared; sometimes the offering arises, an emergent gift.

relational
dispositional
understanding
ecological
spiritual
relational
dispositional
understanding
ecological
spiritual

2.4.5. Offering

He and I sit, alone together. He always chooses the corner desk of the back row, closest to the door which leads directly to his path home. I have learned to position myself on his right, in the first desk of the outside row so we do not have to look each other directly in the eyes.

Today his face seems less puffy, less swollen. There have been times when his umber-coloured eyes have been swallowed by his red-rimmed lids, becoming distant specks enveloped by ballooning skin, itself a beacon of sleeplessness and worry.

Outside the late spring sky blossoms brilliant blue, a tantalizing promise of soon-to-be summer. Beckoned by the sun's warmth, seniors abandon this last class of the day to converge in the student parking lot. Muffled *thump-thump-thumps* of bass spills from various cars, drifts through the open doors and windows of our portable. This diffused ebullience and youthfulness meander like cottonwood pollen, sailing and skimming along, carefree.

Perhaps the warm air, the luminous sky, or the happy sounds comfort him, set him at ease. Perhaps getting enough rest creates a temporary hiatus of the steadfast boundary he erects. I will never know. Somehow though, a breach emerges. His eyes emit a filament of light, slender, like a silk thread of a spider's web. If I turn my head, I would not be able to see it.

He asks if I want to hear his original piano composition, recorded on his phone, last night.

His music saturates the room, fills the space which moments ago did not feel empty. I close my eyes.

Melancholy and subdued at first, the notes become ardent, passionate—almost aggressive. The melody rises and falls, aching crescendos, one after the other. Long notes sound; extended pauses punctuate the spaces between. Slowly the last notes arise, surface, and linger. Their gentleness brings me to tears.

I open my eyes.

2.4.6. Nuances of Witnessing

The whole of witnessing exists like the whole of Snail's shell—comprised of ever-expanding, ever-thickening whorls of nuances with ecological understanding as its centre. These whorls merge, one into the other, discrete and yet united, a continuous process of pivoting, a continuous spiral of a human experience.

As Snail bears/bares its shell, so too does the Being~witness bear/bare the relational, dispositional, invitational, and Spiritual nuances of witnessing.

Ecological Understanding

Ecological understanding (Cajete, 1994, pp. 47–48) holds a way of thinking and knowing which (re)cognizes—to recognize, or perceive, and (re)*cognize*, or know anew—and honours a relationship with context, place, or land. It reflects a conscious thinking and knowing of the interconnected and interdependent nature of relationships with other humans and the more-than-human world, presupposing Spirit animates all life. It reflects an ethos of ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008), engendering humility.

Relational

Witnessing requires relationship. To offer revelation of being means being able to bear the risk of being bare. Without relationship, there lacks trust and the Being~revealer's ability or willingness to bear/bare revelation of being will not arise. Being~revealers will accept this risk if relational accountability exists (S. Wilson, 2008). Trust emerges when Being~revealers feel their Being~witness will be in service to the relationship to enact respect, reciprocity, and responsibility between them.

Dispositional

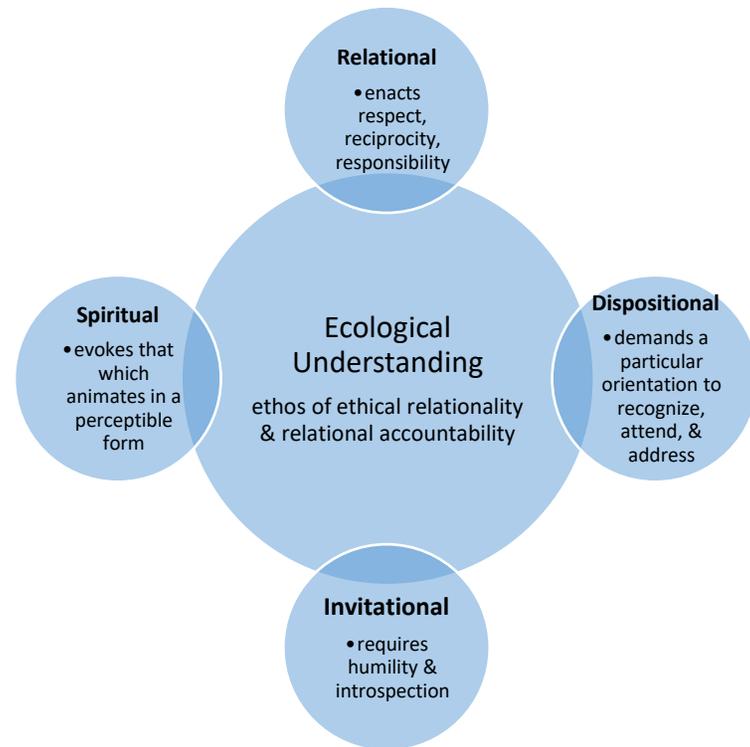
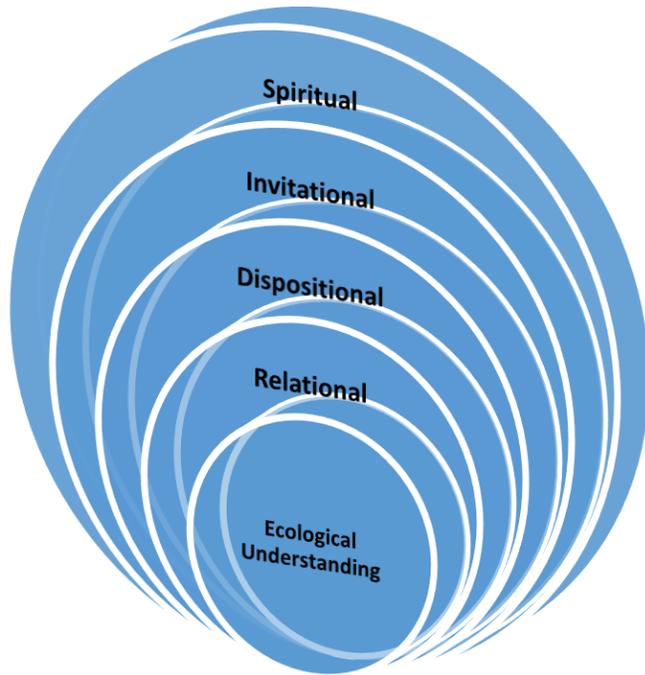
Witnessing demands a particular orientation. Being~revealers will offer revelation of their being in sometimes fleeting and nearly imperceptible ways. To be able to witness means there must exist within the Being~witness a capacity to recognize the moment as it arises and to attend, as well as a capacity to address what emerges. It also means there must also exist a *willingness* to attend, a desire to bear/bare witness, to accept potential hazards and joys of witnessing.

Invitational

Witnessing arises from an offering. If accepted, a Being~witness' humility and introspection determine how to be accountable to the Being~revealer. The Being~revealer's gesture of bearing/baring revelation of being may not always be recognized nor wanted. To accept some offerings may go unnoticed, be avoided, or be refused requires a Being~witness' humility, but also the introspection to acknowledge this possibility.

Spiritual

Witnessing evokes Spirit. Spirit does not denote religiosity; rather Spirit denotes that which animates (M. A. Meyer, 2013). Spirit as animating principle allows us to connect with each other and the more-than-human world. When young ones offer revelation of their being, it creates a moment where Spirit, that which animates, emerges in a form possible to recognize. Though ephemeral, this moment presences Spirit in a perceptible form.



Nuance of Witnessing

Nuances of witnessing emerge from being witness to revelations of being, a fleeting, yet profound offering. To receive, to witness, thus means to experience and to accept the present as a “particular structure of attending” rather than a hazy indicator of time (Simon et al., 2000, p. 295). To recognize the present as a form of attending requires a shift in the positioning of hope as future-oriented, and instead position hope as present-oriented. Present-oriented hope means to be able to imagine radical possibilities in the now. What arises, what presences in revelation of being generates pedagogical potential.

Nuances of witnessing presupposes Being~witnesses as beings-as-humans rather than Being~witnesses as beings-as-things (Aoki, 2004a). Though critiquing curriculum implementation, Aoki (2004a) informs my understanding of Being~witness. Aoki (2004a) challenges the dehumanizing nature of curriculum implementation when in the form of “instrumental action” (p. 112), and instead proposes the humanizing curriculum implementation of “situation praxis” (p. 112). Instrumental action “minimizes or neglects the interpretive activities” (Aoki, 2004a, p. 115) of teachers which “effectively strips [them] of the humanness of [their] being ... [an] oppressive [act] ... reducing [them] to a being-as-thing” (p. 115). Conversely, situated praxis denotes the comingling of theory and practice, the “twin moments of the same reality” of “action done reflectively, and reflection on what is being done” (Aoki, 2004a, p. 120), which recognizes teachers as “human being(s) interested in [their] or others’ becoming” (p. 120).

Nuances of witnessing honours the humanizing nature of situated praxis and Being~witnesses as beings-as-human, and honours Being~witness’ interpretive capacities within the moment of revelation of being, an ephemeral becoming (Aoki, 2004a). Understanding Being~witnesses as beings-as-humans insists on Being~witnesses’ subjectivity, a subjectivity with an orientation “in securing authentically the always precarious intersubjectivity” between themselves and Being~revealers, rather than “objectified ... ends-means ... beings-as-things oriented toward interest in control, efficiency and certainty” (Aoki, 2004a, p. 122). Recognizing Being~witnesses as beings-as-humans also presupposes Being~revealers as beings-as-humans, and accepts a classroom ecology, like curriculum, “is never neutral” (Aoki, 2004a, p. 121).

Nuances of witnessing thus assumes relationships between Being~witnesses and Being~revealers extend beyond the purposes of curricula. A classroom can be a

site which invites a “pedagogic situation” (Aoki, 2004b, p. 159), one “pregnantly [*sic*] alive in the presence of people” (p. 159), but a pedagogic situation not necessarily connected to a curriculum nonetheless. To dwell in pedagogic situations means “living simultaneously with limitations and with openness” (Aoki, 2004b, p. 164) created by the presence of O~O—or Being~Being—and curricula. Like nuances of witnessing, “this openness harbours within it risks and possibilities” (Aoki, 2004b, p. 162) for the Being~witness, and a fidelity to the curriculum-as-plan comes “at the expense of the attunement [*sic*] to the aliveness of the situation” (p. 162), or the potentiality for revelations of being which exist beyond curricula.

To help describe the aliveness of a situation of revelation of being, J. Miller and Seller’s (1990) conceptions of transmission, transaction, and transformation provide utility here. Though J. Miller and Seller (1990) offer insights into a typology of curriculum orientations, their conceptions help my articulation of the nuances of witnessing. Each of J. Miller and Seller’s (1990) concepts represent a part of a whole, creating coherence with their relationality among and between each other, just as the nuances of witnessing exist as a coherence of discrete aspects in relation among and between the other. This “interdependence of phenomena” (J. Miller & Seller, 1990, p. 125) within curriculum reflects “the web of relations that surround it” (p. 125), namely a dynamic, pluralistic society, with its norms and customs found in school contexts. So too for the nuances of witnessing—they also reflect a dynamic, pluralistic web of relations found in a school community, but in particular, a classroom ecology.

According to J. Miller and Seller (1990), the transmission position in curriculum orientations denotes a “primarily one-way movement [which] convey(s) to students certain skills, knowledge, and values” (p. 127). In other words, a teacher delivers the curriculum, the students receive it. The transaction position denotes “a dialogue between the student and the curriculum in which the student reconstructs knowledge through the dialogue process” (J. Miller & Seller, 1990, p. 128); or, the teacher invites the student into the curriculum, and the student chooses to accept the invitation or not. The transformation position denotes a focus on “personal and social change ... and the attribution of a spiritual dimension” (J. Miller & Seller, 1990, p. 129) to the learning environment; or, the teacher, student, and curriculum interrelate in a holistic, ecological way.

Discussing their curriculum typology, J. Miller and Seller (1990) accept a “huge assumption” (p. 127) underlies their descriptions: “what takes place in the classroom necessarily has a correlative effect on what takes place in an individual’s mind” (p. 127). For my purpose here, it must be recognized that what takes place for the Being~witness in nuances of witnessing may not necessarily be what takes place for the Being~revealer. The assumption of the Being~witness as central to nuances of witnessing, that nuances of witnessing arise from the positionality as Being~witness, underlies my description: the Being~witness receives, or not, the offering of revelation of being; the Being~witness accepts the present as a form of attending, or not; the Being~witness positions hope as present-oriented, or not; the Being~witness imagines radical possibilities of the now, or not. I contend what occurs for the Being~revealer in the moment of revelation of being exists beyond the role and understanding of the Being~witness.

Further, as J. Miller and Seller (1990) caution, “aligning certain practices with certain orientations ... closes the door to the possibility that no classroom activity has any essential orientation features” (pp. 127–128, italics in original). This could be interpreted to mean some curricular orientations “are inherently bad” (J. Miller & Seller, 1990, p. 127) and thus teachers might “refuse” (p. 127) to employ certain curricular activities. My conception of nuances of witnessing does not intend to close any door to the possibility of other essential features; rather I invite other Being~witnesses to share their own experiences to help thicken and expand my own whorls of understanding.

As J. Miller and Seller (1990) remind us, no matter the curricular orientation, “all classroom activities are transformed by the teacher’s goals” (p. 128), and teacher variability, diversity, and unique expressions and interpretations of curriculum must be acknowledged. So too for nuances of witnessing. Being~witnesses imbue their own particular ways of knowing and being to nuances of witnessing. Thus, it must be acknowledged that individual Being~witnesses transform nuances of witnessing by their very beings, meaning nuances of witnessing cannot be generalizable nor transferrable from one individual Being~witness’ experiences to another. Yet simultaneously, and paradoxically, nuances of witnessing can also be understood as an overall conceptual web of relationality, a way to understand the emergence of revelations of being.

2.4.7. If Only

I will shed tears for Leta, but not yet.

My anger simmers. It persists like the dull burn which still kisses my skin. My indignation inflames me just enough so I can ignore the heat pulsing at the edge of my left nostril, the tender divide between outside and inside my nose.

The throbbing of my left ring finger, just below my second knuckle, near, but not quite touching my heart line cannot compete, nor can the aching under my watch band, though removed an hour ago, and whose outline remains, a dull carmine shadow.

But most of all, my fury cocoons me from the searing maroon splotch at the base of my left thumb, the fleshy part of my hand before it tapers into wrist, now swollen, the splotch's haphazard borders nebulous, marking the part of my body I used to hold back Leta's hair as I poured tepid water from my classroom kettle again and again and again into her blinded eyes.

Now, at home, these keystrokes emerge before me and my body stings. But what of Leta? What might her body be feeling now? What of her terror? What of her sense of self?

How can I tell you about the Leta I know in such a way which honours her? How do I conjure her presence so you can know her beyond this dreadful moment, to see the self she projects and the self she protects?

Would it help you if I describe her usual outfit of too-big jogging pants, gray and stained, topped with a black, red, and yellow striped poncho pulled over a muted lilac t-shirt, its collar a bit frayed, its length an unexpected purple trim to the riot of colour? If I share her clumping gait, a sort of half-plod, half-thump, amplified by the dull green rubber boots she often wears no matter the weather, can you hear her coming? If you knew, though nearly six feet if she stood straight, she could melt into the background with ease, transmuting herself into nothingness, would that be of use?

Or, can your heart lilt too when she tells stories of her beloved hedgehog and its refusal to be held by her, though she never gives up trying? When she shyly reads a story to you, its humour and vivacity and imagination breathtaking, can you speak with that lump in your throat to thank her for her gift? Can your sides also hurt from laughing when she recounts her petty thievery of a magical sticker as a five-year-old child?

These clumsy words fail me. I fear I have let you down. As much as I try, I cannot invoke the genuine Leta for you. If only you could know her.

“Witnessing, then, might be understood as a methodology
in which we are obligated,
through a set of relational responsibilities,
to ensure frameworks of representation allow
for the lives that we have witnessed
to be made visible.”

— Sarah Hunt (2018, p. 284), Kwakwaka'wakw – Kwagu'ł and Dzawada'enuxw

“... testimony imposes particular obligations on those called to receive it –
obligations imbued with the exigencies of justice, compassion, and hope
that define the horizon for a world yet to be realized.”

— Roger Simon and Claudia Eppert (1997, p. 177)

2.4.8. Pedagogical Potential

Like J. Miller and Seller's (1990) conceptions of curriculum orientations, if or how a Being~witness responds to an offering of revelation of being, to the aliveness of a situation, creates three key pedagogical potentials within nuances of witnessing: failed transmission, flawed transaction, or possible metamorphosis.

First, there exists a possibility of not noticing, avoiding, or rejecting the offering of revelation of being, thus rendering the offering into an act of futile transmission, of one-way movement. Much like Boler's (2004) conception of spectating, a Being~witness' inability or unwillingness to receive the offering of revelation of being allows for separation between herself and the Being~revealer. This inadvertent or purposeful divide denies revelation of being, collapses the possibility of "that from which something *begins its presencing*" (Heidegger, 2013, p. 152, italics in original). This denial promotes a (re)inscription of Being~witness' potential of spectatorship as she can thus "abdicate any possible responsibility" (Boler, 2004, p. 184) to and for the Being~revealer.

Second, to notice the offering but to bypass any meaningful introspection about it renders the offering into a form of a weak transaction, of a stunted dialogue. A Being~witness' circumvention of accepting an invitation for introspection and reflection engendered by revelation of being also acts as a form of spectating. Choosing not to ruminate, reflect, or contemplate a revelation of being becomes a form of omission and erasure of the Being~revealer (Boler, 2004). This too promotes a (re)inscription of privilege as the Being~witness now actively "abdicate(s) any possible responsibility" (Boler, 2004, p. 184) to and for the Being~revealer.

Third, to receive a revelation of being, to accept ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008), produces potential for pedagogic metamorphosis, for ecological understanding. The word metamorphosis comes from the Greek metamorphosis meaning "to transform, to be transfigured" ("Metamorphosis," n.d., para. 2) itself derived from *meta*, which means "change" (para. 2), and *morphē*, which means "shape, form" (para. 2). An ecological understanding of a classroom ecology invites a change in the form of perception, that of perceiving Spirit's imperceptibility. This transfiguration of perception, nestled within ecological understanding, means "Paying attention is a form of reciprocity with the living world" (Wall Kimmerer, 2013, p. 222),

invoking ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008).

A Being~witness' acceptance of revelation of being evokes a recognition of and responsibility for the moral relations and the ethical implications of her acceptance, and to the dynamic process of witnessing (Boler, 2004). Rather than denying or collapsing a divide, acceptance of revelation of being can begin the presencing of introspection, reflection, or contemplation for a Being~witness. This presencing thus generates pedagogical potential. Pedagogic metamorphosis can take many forms, most often in unexpected and surprising ways. For example, metamorphosis can be relational in nature. A Being~revealer may feel seen or heard by her Being~witness beyond the confines of "student," and thus more open to interaction with the Being~witness, including curricular interventions. A Being~witness may have a different perception or understanding of a Being~revealer, guiding her curricular or assessment choices in a different way than before witnessing the revelation of being.

In whichever form it takes, pedagogic metamorphosis must begin with Being~witness' reflection. Reflection too takes many forms, and "is not only oriented toward making conscious the unconscious" (Aoki, 2004a, p. 121). Importantly for Being~witness' situated praxis, reflection "is also oriented toward the implications for action guided by the newly gained critical knowing" (Aoki, 2004a, p. 121). Pedagogic metamorphosis offers "an enlightening of knowledge" (M. A. Meyer, 2013b, p. 258) of the Being~witness as it invites the presence of Spirit. Nuances of witnessing invites "a knowledge ethic shaped by the needs of place and people" (M. A. Meyer, 2013b, p. 96) for the Being~witness, guiding her ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008) in a classroom ecology. Nuances of witnessing invites "an observation of what the physical plane offers, what the mental plane offers, and what the spiritual plane offers" (M. A. Meyer, 2013b, p. 95), in and of itself creating pedagogic potential.

Ultimately, nuances of witnessing offer the potential for metamorphosis within a classroom ecology, for the emergence of present-oriented hope, which means radical possibilities for the Being~revealer's and Being~witness' now can be imagined and enacted.

2.4.9. Wake

Years later I still try to navigate the wake of that day. It continues to ripple throughout my experience, a moment of duration.

The Day for Reconciliation was one of SFU's contributions to participating in the TRC's national event held in Vancouver that September (SFU, 2013). I attended the gathering with my teaching partner and our cohort of student teachers.

I could not foresee its profound and lasting impact upon me.

I struggle to know where to begin, what to share with you.

Do I admit my relief at having a day of instruction determined for me? Shall I reveal the depth of my then ignorance of the TRC, its mandate, or its work? Must I describe my comfort in my invisible cocoon of privilege?

Do I dare tell you of my extreme distress, listening to Elders share their abuse at Residential Schools? Can I whisper my guilt and shame for wanting *any* reason not to listen? Will you understand why I had to take notes while they sat on that stage, before hundreds of strangers, hearts and wounds fully visible, and not look them in the eyes? Do you know why I needed my pencil and paper and act of writing to be a barrier to the upswell of my own anguish, culpability, regret?

Might it be possible you could understand my bewilderment of how to console a student, one whose own past of neglect and abuse and disenfranchisement by the government, paralleled the Elders? How I did not know what to say to her rage as we stood in the vestibule, her sobs echoing, but secretly wished I could contain her pain, protect her and me from it?

Would you forgive me for my silence when I did not speak and acknowledge my complicity when a woman begged someone, anyone, to answer her question, *When you look at that flag of yours, what do you see?*, and instead felt immense relief when her clamour ceased so I could retreat from the mirror she held?

Would you think less of me if you knew how I felt manipulated, thrust into a maelstrom of emotion by my employer with no choice, nor forewarning? How I agonized of what to say to our student-teachers, sending them out into the autumnal sunlight, the weight and rupture of their own experience fresh?

Do I tell you about the sleepless night I had, visions of horror and abuse to innocent children, the devastation and helplessness of their parents and grandparents, replaying, over and over in my bruised heart? Shall I describe my stomach and heart ache struggling over how I could be in front of my students the next day, asking them to join me in a profession whose ugly history I had the privilege to avoid?

Could you possibly know the schism's ache between my heart, my mind, my Spirit even if I could find the words?

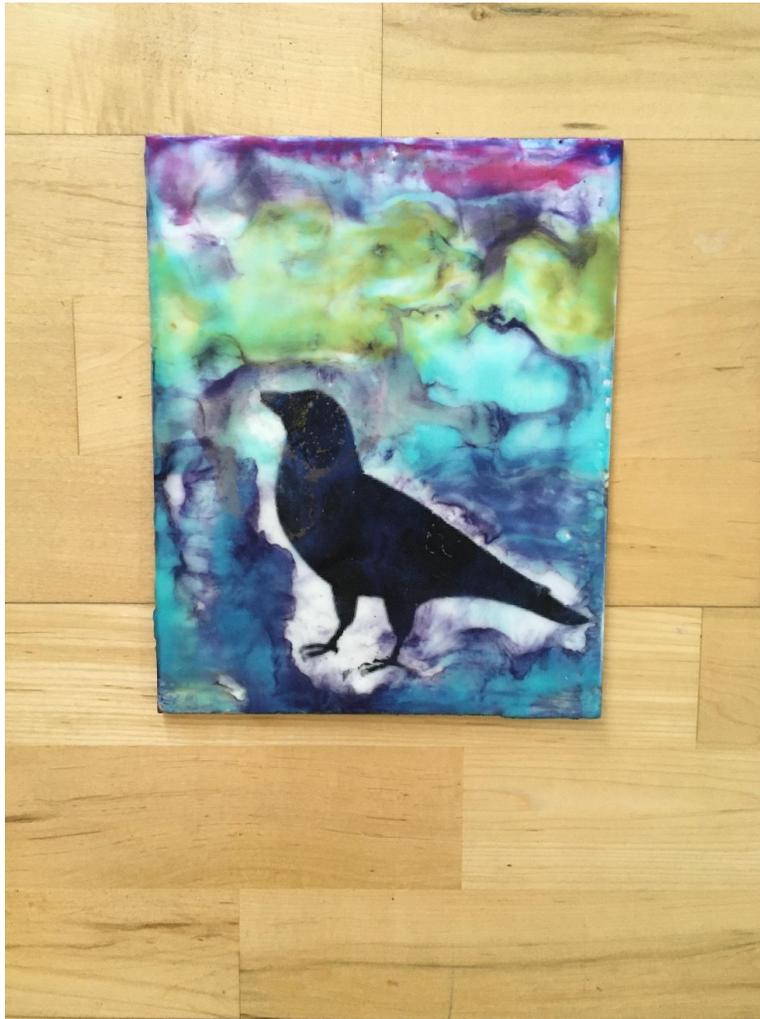
I struggle to know where to begin, what to share with you.





Momsey: Maybe we should watch some YouTube videos?

Kelly: Or take some lessons?



From: Kelly <kelly@**.ca>
Sent: June 18, 2018 7:25 PM
To: Momsey <momsey@**.ca>
Subject: 1/2done

Did we heat the wax & THEN put the image on?



From: Momsey <momsey@**.ca>
Sent: June 19, 2018 6:49 AM
To: Kelly <kelly@**.ca>
Subject: Re: 1/2done

Noooooooooooooooooooo! The wax should be cold! Was that a laser copied image? So what we did was put the crow face down on the wax then gently smooth it with your palm, it will get sort of sticky and hold the image. You can burnish a small area and peel back the paper a little to see if it worked. Sorry you are having no fun.



Momsey: Why did you cover up that little bird?

Chapter 3.

Preparation/Immersion: Difficult Knowledge

3.1. First Insight

First Insight, a stage of intuition, involves creative thought that leads to seeking, deep thinking, and self-reflection. Ultimately, it invites metaphoric thinking and visioning of what to create.

3.1.1. White Eraser

I have my white eraser
and yet my pencil hovers
still
above the page
afraid to leave its mark

the first word, "I,"
sleight, faint, there

apologetically so

but I have my white eraser

why the hesitancy,
the fumbling with the lamp,
the annoyance with the hand shadow
mimicking
the mind on the page, the sip
of tea to interrupt, to put the
pencil down

the sounds of the distance through
the open window
not quite discernible but still recognizable,
comforting even,
in its ignorance of me,
but I of it aware

this table, these thoughts, this
hovering pencil

—September, 2015

3.1.2. One-Eyed Seeing

The first event of The President's Dream Colloquium on Returning to the Teachings: Justice, Identity, and Belonging (SFU, 2016) began at two different times: the first time imperceptible to me; the second time when Dr. Kelly hushed the audience, indicating for us to attend.

The theatre chattered with conversations as the sounds of friends greeting friends and lively chat between seat mates bubbled, refusing to be dampened by the burgundy-polyester walls and the flecked-gray carpeted stairs. Our volume rose and fell, natural ebullience matching the anticipation for the first speaker, Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, Hereditary Chief of the Gwawaenuk First Nation, this the first night of the series.

Many people stood on the stage—some in suits, some in blue jeans—and from my vantage, most appeared confused. Small clusters formed, huddled, then broke apart, people scattering in different directions, re-forming new clusters, new huddles. Continued confusion.

As more and more time passed, so too did my annoyance grow—the 3:30 pm start time come and *long* gone. Like a classroom, the volume of the conversations grew louder and louder, voices unchecked by a lack of focused attention.

Those on the stage still clustered, still huddled.

Dr. Kelly turned to us, her vivid periwinkle scarf shimmering in the light as she gestured for us to quieten, shushing us with her voice.

Chastened, but subdued we attended. Those on the stage still moved about, sometimes talking softly to one another, but now a faint pattern began to emerge, a purpose where one did not exist for me before.

I started to see anew.

“Sometimes we don’t know what we don’t know until exposed to knowledge and experiences of others.
Only when fed with accurate information can we develop in our understanding and knowledge.”

— Kathy Absolon (2010, p. 83), Anishinaabekwe

3.2. Preparation/

Preparation/Immersion, a stage of inquiry, comprises of learning how best to enact the creative work, and exploring the relationships connected to the inquiry. Process and research oriented, this stage establishes the emotional and intellectual capacities required to bring to fruition the creative vision into product.

3.2.1. Known ← → Unknown

The theatre space performed me (Fels, 2005, 2010, 2012), a space imbued with a particular culture, a space simultaneously shaped by and shaping culture. My annoyance with a delayed start time, nor a signal I could decipher from the event's hosts that the occasion had started, invites me to consider why I hold certain expectations of what "should" occur, and how those very expectations in turn *determine* what should occur. With my presence and expectations, I too performed the space.

My Western culture tells me theatres hold special gatherings, but my relationship with theatres usually starts with me as consumer, a paying customer. As such, a transaction occurs, one infused with expectations and familiarity: I pay to be present; I know what to anticipate. Theatres provide services which include a timely start, an announcement naming the emcee, the emcee's brief introduction, dimming of the lights to indicate the start, some sort of flourish to indicate the end. In return, I refrain from chatting or causing distraction during the event, I clap or stand to indicate my approval at endorsed times, and I leave promptly.

The Dream Colloquium²³ disrupted my relationships with theatres.

The Dream Colloquium, a free, public lecture series, invited scholars and Knowledge Holders to speak on the themes of justice, identity, and belonging, and how these themes inform (re)conciliation in higher education. Co-hosted by SFU, the Faculty of Education, and a Circle of Elders and Knowledge Keepers, with members of the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, Kwantlen, Katzie, and Kwikwetlem Nations, each lecture began with ceremony lead by a particular Nation, welcoming the speaker, helping the event occur in a good way. I attended the graduate-level course aligned with the Dream Colloquium, and part of our learning experience invited us as students, with our professors, to host the Nations and the invited speaker, preparing and enjoying a meal together and engaging in a more intimate, small group conversation with the guest speaker after the public talk.

²³ For brevity and readability, I shorten the formal title, The President's Dream Colloquium on Returning to the Teachings: Justice, Identity, and Belonging (Simon Fraser University, 2016) to the Dream Colloquium. Any subsequent references to the Dream Colloquium reflect this particular colloquium.

Over the course of the Dream Colloquium, my Western eye's prominence continued to recede, its dominance over my perception becoming hazy on the edges. My capacity for Two-Eyed Seeing (Bartlett et al., 2012) continued its development, inviting me into a more fulsome way to perceive.

Two-Eyed Seeing refers to “learning to see from one eye with the *strengths* of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the *strengths* of Western knowledges and ways of knowing, and to using both these eyes together, for the benefit of all” (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 335, Italics in original). During the Dream Colloquium, my eyes still struggled to see Indigenous knowledges beyond an intellectual, detached form. Immersed in Ceremony and the privilege to learn from Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and members of the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, Kwantlen, Katzie, and Kwikwetlem Nations, my eyes began to see Indigenous knowledges in an embodied, personal form. The Dream Colloquium encouraged and supported my journey of learning, unlearning, and (re)learning how to see in a different way, in a good way.

I freely admit that I did not recognize ceremony occurring before me on that first night. How could I? Outlawing Indigenous ceremony as part of assimilation policies and processes from 1884-1951 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Davidson & Davidson, 2018; B. Joseph, 2018) created enduring, devastating effects on Indigenous communities and ways of knowing and being. Not only did the “enactment of [Canadian] federal laws specifically designed to undermine and discredit... Aboriginal society” (Carlson, 1993, p. 10) disrupt and drive Indigenous ceremony to hidden recesses within Indigenous communities (Davidson & Davidson, 2018; B. Joseph, 2018; Ruml, 2018; Wagamese, 2019), they also rendered Indigenous ceremony and ways of knowing and being invisible to most non-Indigenous communities, denying opportunities to learn from and with Indigenous Peoples.

The Canadian government understood Indigenous ceremonies held an integral place in Indigenous cultures. To the Canadian government, if ceremonies like the potlatch “could be eradicated” (B. Joseph, 2018, p. 48), then missionaries could “fill the cultural void with Christianity” (p. 48) while the Indian Residential School System could be used to teach children their Indigenous ceremonies “were outdated superstitions” (p. 48). Concurrently, these racist and assimilative policies and laws informed and

reinforced non-Indigenous communities' relationships with and perceptions of Indigenous Peoples. Ultimately, the goal of these policies and laws attempted to assimilate Indigenous Peoples "much quicker" (Carlson, 1993, p. 10), reflecting the racist attitudes and perceptions undergirding Canada's attempts at cultural genocide.

“We [Indigenous Peoples] are still here.”

— Elroy Baker,
Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) Elder
(SFU, 2016)

Elder Elroy’s words linger with me. His words reflect my hopefulness for a growing attentiveness to Indigenous Peoples, for the beginnings of a (re)newed Canadian ethnosphere.²⁴

Yet his words also remind me of how in many respects, we are still, here. His words remind me of how in many respects, I am still, here. (Re)newal requires movement, and our country’s stasis frightens me.

How long can a note resonate and still be heard?

—from an e-postcard, created for EDUC 964, November 26, 2016

²⁴ *Ethnosphere*—a term coined by Wade Davis (Dream Colloquium Guest Speaker, personal communication, November 24, 2016) to denote the cultural and social web of life.

Generally, Indigenous worldviews understand an inter~ and intra~weaving of the human and more-than-human world evokes and invokes ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008) as humanity exists as a part of the whole of Creation (Cajete, 1994; Kimmerer, 2013; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a, 1996b; Wagamese, 2019). Ceremonial practices and other rituals function as “social and spiritual mechanisms” (Cajete, 1994, p. 88) to sustain or establish “harmony with natural processes” (p. 88), reflecting conscious, cosmological intentions for dynamic balance within Creation. Ceremony exists “within an Indigenous framework of relations” where “responsibilities and obligations ... are reciprocal” with and to all of Creation (Young Leon & Nadeau, 2018, p. 78). Wagamese (2019) contends “As a human family we need to work deliberately at harmony” (p. 27) as that “is what the Earth requires” (p. 27). Although these understandings and meanings have “deeply informed” (Cajete, 1994, p. 90) Indigenous communities generally, this “dynamic participation with the natural world” (p. 89) also creates relationships “within their place” (p. 89), forming ceremonial identities of a “particular kind of people” (p. 89), in and of distinct contexts.

Ceremonial practice, a “temporal dimension of vision ... [which] links past, present and future in a seamless whole” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a, p. 611), deepens bonds of ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008). Through ceremonial practices “sacred meaning” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a, p. 611) emerges, establishing “immutable obligations” (p. 611) to ancestral, current, and future generations. Ceremonial practices thus become a “timeless event to which ancestors and descendants [are], in a sense, witnesses” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a, p. 611), evoking the ethics of witnessing as part of ceremony. Foremost, ceremonial practices “are ways of maintaining a connection with the Creator” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b, p. 124) as “spirituality permeates all aspects of life” (p. 113). The acts of ceremonial practice, the “process, the protocol, was created for our minds” (Wagamese, 2019, p. 72) yet ceremony “itself was created for our spirits, for our hearts ... a human process to a spiritual awareness...that we are never separate from Creation or Creator” (p. 74).

Ceremony also formalizes protocols and traditions to guide ways of knowing, doing, and being, amplifying “culturally sanctioned rules of behaviour” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a, p. 612). Ceremonial practices invite “learning

through initiation” (Cajete, 1994, p. 34), which recognize and reinforce cultural rites of passage like births or deaths, or giving of names or songs. Ceremonial practices can also confirm and strengthen a succession of leaders, end conflicts or name alliances, or establish official treaties of friendships. Ceremony thus plays “a direct role in reinforcing, enhancing, and extending [a] community’s relationship to all things” (Cajete, 1994, pp. 177–178).

“In our [Indigenous] cultures an integral part of any ceremony is setting the stage properly.

When ceremonies take place, everyone who is participating needs to be ready to step beyond the everyday

and

to accept a raised state of consciousness.

You could say that the specific rituals that make up the ceremony are designed to get the participants into a state of mind that will allow for the extraordinary to take place.”

— Shawn Wilson (2008, p. 69), Opaskwayak Cree

3.2.3. In a Good Way

The Dream Colloquium’s co-hosts—the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, Kwantlen, Katzie, and Kwikwetlem Nations—represent distinct communities in what we now call south-western British Columbia. These various Nations, colloquially known as the Coast Salish Peoples, share the Salish language family and a mutual genesis in what we now call the coastal and interior British Columbia, the state of Washington, and areas of Montana, Idaho, and the Oregon Coast (SFU, Bill Reid Centre, n.d.). The Salish language family contains twenty-three separate languages (SFU, Bill Reid Centre, n.d.), and though “there does not appear to be a unitary Coast Salish ethnic group” (Harmon, 2007, p. 30), scholarly communities “have reached a strong consensus that wide-ranging social connections and multiple or layered group affiliations have characterized Coast Salish speakers” (p. 37).

Political boundaries and scholarly perceptions of Indigenous Peoples generally, and Coast Salish Peoples specifically, “have not limited [their] range of operations or self-images” (Harmon, 2007, p. 38) since “none is a history of the Coast Salish *in toto*; rather, each is the story of a smaller group” (p. 32). Thus, it must be recognized each of the Nations have diverse and unique ceremonial practices, yet those practices also exist in a web of relations with shared commonalities.

The following reflects my understanding of ceremony for an important gathering, one with a guest of honour, learned from the co-host Nations of the Dream Colloquium. I understand this ceremony to be a welcoming ceremony. Not privy to the ceremonial practices enacted by the co-host Nations’ Elders and Knowledge Keepers with members of SFU to begin the work of the Dream Colloquium²⁵, this (re)telling reflects my own personal experiences.²⁶ Where one co-host Nation offered a nuance of ceremony somewhat different from the other Nations, I indicate the Nation who I learned the nuance from in parentheses.

²⁵ See Vicki Kelly’s description of co-developing the Dream Colloquium and “introducing Indigenous Knowledges and ceremony into the SFU context” (Kelly, 2021b, p. 192).

²⁶ I shared my description with two friends and colleagues, Karen Alvarez and Greg Sutherland, who also attended the Dream Colloquium and graduate course for their insights and feedback. I extend my gratitude for their time and efforts, but I would like to reiterate any errors of understanding or unintentional conflation of discrete ceremonial ways of knowing, doing, and being are solely my own.

Though I endeavour to provide as accurate of a (re)telling as possible, I accept full responsibility for any errors of understanding or unintentional confluations of discrete ceremonial ways of knowing, doing, and being of the co-host Nations.

“...ceremonies are only completed when they are shared.”

— Richard Wagamese (2019, p. 100), Ojibway

“Thank you for answering our invitation.”

— Stewart Gonzales,
Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation)
(SFU, 2016)

To start the event, the co-host Nation drums or sings the guest of honour to the stage.

“Drums are sacred in our culture.
Our Elders would say we have songs for every occasion.
[Drums are the] heartbeat of our People.
The vibrations [are] close to our People, and the Great Spirit.”

— Gabriel George, Tsleil-Waututh Nation
(SFU, 2016)

Next, the co-host Nation’s representative calls Witnesses, asking if they agree to the honour and responsibility.

Witnesses who agree accept the duty to pay close attention to the work done and to be a messenger for that work. As a messenger, Witnesses share the experience, learnings, and events with their home communities.

Witnesses also accept the responsibility to speak to the events if in the future aspects of the gathering come into question or require confirmation.

To acknowledge this acceptance of duty, Witnesses receive a small honorarium. Members of the Dream Colloquium’s host Nation, SFU’s Faculty of Education, and graduate students offer Witnesses 50 cents, a symbolic gesture to honour this protocol. In some traditions, Witnesses receive a cedar bark stick (Squamish Nation).

As part of the close of the event, Witnesses agree to speak to those assembled of what they will take to and share with their home communities.

“Whenever we do our work, we call Witnesses...
to listen, to watch, to take the work into their heart.
But they also become record keepers.”

— Gabriel George, Tseil-Waututh Nation
(SFU, 2016)

Next, the co-host Nation lay either cedar boughs or four blankets (Tseil-Waututh Nation) for the guest of honour to stand on during the ceremony. This floor covering intends to guard the guest of honour from any negativity and to promote Spiritual protection for them, and to prepare a ceremonial space for the work to be done.

The blankets represent a new beginning (Tseil-Waututh Nation), creating a sacred space for the guest honour.

A sacred number, the number four honours the four seasons, the four winds, and the four directions (Tseil-Waututh Nation).

“[Blankets] create something sacred, even if in an auditorium.”

— Gabriel George, Tseil-Waututh Nation
(SFU, 2016)

Women from the co-host Nation then brush the guest of honour with cedar boughs. The cedar boughs provide a Spiritual cleanse, taking away any negative

energy. Immersing the cedar boughs in water after the ceremony cleanses the cedar and washes any negativity away.

“You’ve witnessed a ceremony that is from the mists of antiquity.”

— Dr. William Lindsay, Cree-Stoney Nations
(SFU, 2016)

Members of the co-host Nation then drape the guest of honour with a blanket, intentionally wrapping the blanket from the guest of honour’s back, then across to the chest.

The blanket and its purposeful swathing intend to keep the guest of honour’s Spirit warm. The blanket and act of draping also protect the heart, and promote comfort and protection.

“We wrap you in this today as a symbol of our love.
And, we recognize you.”

— Gabriel George, Tseil-Waututh Nation
(SFU, 2016)

Next, a member of the co-host Nation places a headband on the guest of honour. The headband keeps the mind focused, and intends to support the mind’s purity, strength, and clarity.

“I want to say how proud I am of who I am.

I hope we do them [our Ancestors] proud by keeping our ceremonies sacred.”

—Gloria Nahanee,
Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) Elder
(SFU, 2016)

The guest of honour then shares their talk. At the close of the talk, a representative from the co-host Nation offers their thoughts and feelings. Then, the called Witnesses offer their heart-impressions, sharing their understandings of what they witnessed, and what they will take back to share with their communities. Lastly, a representative from the co-host Nation offered some final words to close the ceremony. After these final words, often the host Nation sings and drums, escorting the guest speaker in a processional from the theatre to the foyer to indicate the close of the sacred space of ceremony.

“What you are learning how is what was taken away when we [Indigenous Peoples] were put on reserves.

I thank the young people for continuing the Teachings of those who walked before us.”

— Elder (Witness; Nation unknown)
(SFU, 2016)

“That ceremony, that’s how you heal.”

— Manulani Aluli Meyer, Palehua, O’ahu, Hawai’i
(SFU, 2016)

3.2.4. (K)new Idea

But
 we are here today
finding our way

we are on the sacred lands

so this moment
 this space
is a sacred space

peace
 balance
 harmony

 we are going to hold each other up
we have to respond

to the spiritual imperative

start with ourselves
 a new idea
that we are one

which is also
 an ancient one

How will I face tomorrow?

values we have spoken aloud but
 have drifted from...

I don't know if you see what I see:

Listen to your hearts and minds
 in ways not done before.

— Found poem, written from Chief Dr. R. Joseph's (2016) words

3.2.5. Learn From

What once looked like confusion, I now understand to be intentional. What once looked like disarray, I now understand to be seeking harmony. What once looked like disorganization, I now understand to be Teaching.

I witnessed ceremony as a living entity, enlivened by the presence of those whose Spirits evoked its animation. The Knowledge Keepers and Elders of the co-host Nations invited others into the welcoming ceremony: members of their Nations along with faculty and students of the Dream Colloquium family as part of its process, and the public in attendance as witnesses to its enactment.

The conversations on stage, the clustering and re-clustering of people happened not haphazardly, but with intentionality as ceremonial participants, including me, learned their roles and responsibilities not before the ceremony, but as the ceremony.

Only now can I see the profound generosity of these co-host Nations, inviting us all to learn from their (k)new ways—a comingling of diverse protocols from the mists of antiquity with the intention for the present gathering to happen in a good way.

The Knowledge Keepers and Elders offered us these Teachings, inviting us to breathe life alongside them into the ceremony so our learning became ceremony.

“The challenge for us has been to move people out of an intellectual understanding of colonialism to one that involves the realization that they need to make material changes in their lives....

What is usually
bypassed
in settler-colonial communities
is doing the embodied work
of processing
the reality
of one’s historical
and
psychological relationship
to colonialism.”

— Allanah Young Leon, Anishnaabe Midekway and Nehiy/naw Cree; Denise Nadeau
(Young Leon & Nadeau, 2018, pp. 67–68)

3.3. /Immersion

Preparation/Immersion, a stage of inquiry, comprises of learning how best to enact the creative work, and exploring the relationships connected to the inquiry. Process and research oriented, this stage establishes the emotional and intellectual capacities required to bring to fruition the creative vision into product.

3.3.1. Hosting

From: Kelly Robinson <robinson_kelly@xx.ca>

Sent: March-06-18 3:48 PM

To: Colleague <colleague@xx.ca>

Subject: Potential timeline?

Hi, *Colleague*,

We return from Spring Break on Tuesday, April 3rd and I imagine you would like to be at X for the first day or so, and students might need a day or so to get back into the “groove”—here are our class times for the week, Apr. 3-6th...

...I feel it might be best if [the Elder] could come on a day when we have our class after lunch and I have a prep as I know it will be very emotional, and I don't want to rush her. Also, I know students may find it hard to go immediately to a class afterward—I will arrange for students to have an “in-house” field trip. I could also arrange for her to have lunch with us first if she would like to eat with us before she shares. Though I know that what she will be sharing is very intense and I understand if she doesn't want to eat first. I will have tea/snacks for her whether she wishes to have lunch or not. Once we determine a date, could you let me know if she has any dietary restrictions?

I trust you will be able to come with her and to come the next day as well if you would like to be a part of a debriefing time/reflection. I know from my own experience of Witnessing, I needed time to absorb, and then time to talk with others. I think your presence will be a comfort and a help.

Again, I cannot thank you enough for offering us this amazing opportunity.

Regards,

Kelly Robinson

English Teacher—grateful to work and learn on the unceded territories of the Katzie, Semiahmoo, and Kwantlen Nations.

From: Kelly Robinson <robinson_kelly@xx.ca>

Sent: March-07-18 11:05 AM

To: Colleague <colleague@xx.ca>

Subject: RE: Potential timeline?

Thank you, *Colleague*! I appreciate your support. I have asked and have received food vouchers for our cafeteria for lunch if you two will join us, and a small stipend to buy the Elder a gift. Could you let me know her name and Nation so I can contextualize in my own mind who she is?

When you meet our students, I think one of the things I would like us to do is talk about the protocols of having an Elder visit and share Teachings—e.g. offering of tobacco, offering of food/drink, meeting her at her car, escorting her to our classroom, serving her meal first before we eat, and anything else I have forgotten! Then, I would like students to take those roles on so they can learn from the experience of hosting, so hopefully we can plan to include that Teaching when you visit.

During your visit, I also ask that you share with students what you know of the Elder so I can give a couple of volunteers the stipend money and they can purchase something for her that might suit her. I had planned for students to write thank you cards/letters sharing with her what they learned from her and what they appreciate after our debriefing class, but any suggestions from you would also be appreciated.

So, I shall meet with you on April 5th, but if there is anything you need me to prepare in advance (e.g., photocopying) or to have students read before you arrive, please just let me know!

Regards,

Kelly Robinson

English Teacher—grateful to work and learn on the unceded territories of the Katzie, Semiahmoo, and Kwantlen Nations.

3.3.2. We Are Still, Here

English First Peoples 12 (EFP 12), an English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum co-developed in 2006/2007 by the British Columbia Ministry of Education (BCME) and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), offered a graduation-equivalent alternative to English 12 and Communications 12, previously the two senior secondary ELA options to meet graduation requirements (BCME & FNESC, 2008; Chrona, 2016). The development of the EFP 12 curriculum represented “a departure from past practice” (BCME & FNESC, 2008, p. 5), not only due to the collaborative nature between BCME and FNESC—which included an advisory committee of Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and scholars (Chrona, 2016)—but also due to the intentions of the curriculum. The curriculum drew on “authentic knowledge and understanding” (BCME & FNESC, 2008, p. 5), sought out “advice and opinion” (p. 5), and represented “diverse” cultures of First Nations and Métis communities in the place now known as British Columbia.

These intentions initiated the development of the First Peoples’ Principles of Learning, a framework for the EFP 12 curriculum (Chrona, 2016), to better manifest authentic Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies (FNESC, 2021). Since its initial iteration in 2008, the current EFP curriculum now includes ELA courses from grades 10-12 with the First Peoples’ Principles of Learning continuing as a fundamental component in all curriculum for grades Kindergarten to 12 (Province of British Columbia, n.d.). As of 2016, 232,900 Indigenous Peoples—including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples—live in the province now known as British Columbia, comprising 5% of its total population (Statistics Canada, 2016). Two hundred and four First Nations communities make up the place now known as British Columbia, comprising 50% of all First Nations’ languages spoken in the place now known as Canada (First Peoples’ Cultural Council, 2021b). This incredible diversity of distinct communities with unique onto-epistemological expressions cannot be homogenized.

The First Peoples’ Principles of Learning do not intend to standardize these diverse onto-epistemologies of First Peoples. Rather, the principles “attempt to identify common elements in the varied teaching and learning approaches that prevail within particular First Nations societies” (FNESC, 2021, para. 4), recognizing “pedagogy in First

Nations societies ... is both dynamic and culturally specific" (FNESC, 2008, p. 12). The First Peoples Principles of Learning state:

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions. Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.
- Learning recognizes the role of Indigenous knowledge.
- Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.
- Learning involves patience and time.
- Learning requires exploration of one's identity. Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations. (FNESC, 2021, para. 4)

The First Peoples' Principles of Learning "help define a pedagogical approach that students in [EFP] course(s) will ideally not only learn about, but actually experience" (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008, p. 12). The First Peoples' Principles of Learning, "affirmed within First Peoples societies," reflect Indigenous worldviews regarding pedagogy: a learner-centred approach; application of experiential learning and use of oral texts; highlighting self-awareness and awareness of others as equal foci; acknowledging the importance of group processes; upholding varied learning activities and representations of learning; prioritizing recursive paths to text (FNESC & First Nations Schools Association, 2018, p. 11). Other curricular and pedagogical intentions embedded in EFP courses include *only* using texts "representing **authentic First Peoples' voices**" (FNESC & First Nations Schools Association, 2018, p. 9, bold-face original), heightened focus on oral language and First Peoples' Oral Traditions to reflect Indigenous worldviews, and to teach the curriculum with a focus on "themes, issues, and topics important to First Peoples" (p. 10). The curricular and pedagogical intentions and goals for students' experiences therefore also outline curricular and pedagogical intentions and goals for teachers if they teach EFP courses.

“The curriculum remains a key instrument in the formation of
collective memory and national identity
and a key strategy for attending to issues of
how we imagine ourselves,
both collectively and individually.”

— Cathryn McConaghy (2003, p. 13)

The English First Peoples curriculum in particular attempts to disrupt education serving “as a tool of colonialism” (Lamb & Godlewska, 2021, p. 104) with its perpetual inscription of “Eurocentric epistemology and cognitive imperialism” (p. 117), and thus the perpetual inscription of “prejudices, ignorance, and lack of knowledge of non-Indigenous people” (p. 105). With its focus on authentic texts, worldviews, and themes of First Peoples, the EFP curriculum challenges the “(re)production of the classroom as white space” (Schick, 2014, p. 91) by “white people whose lives are enabled by a history of white privilege and present-day colonial systems” (p. 88). Therefore, the EFP curriculum demands teachers, many of whom identify as non-Indigenous, to recognize “limitations in their own knowledge of First Peoples’ cultures, communities, histories, and knowledge” and to actively address these limitations (FNESC & First Nations Schools Association, 2018, p. 10). However, as Lamb and Godlewska (2021) indicate, non-Indigenous teachers often feel ill-prepared to teach with Indigenous pedagogy and/or feel less knowledgeable about Indigenous ways of knowing and being. As well, the EFP curricular and pedagogical intentions assume not only do relationships among and between non-Indigenous educators and local Indigenous communities exist, so too does the capacity and willingness of Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, educators, or community members to support local schools in their curricular and pedagogical efforts.

As part of a curricular reform beginning in 2015, the BCME now mandates including First Peoples’ content, with a particular emphasis on localized First Peoples’ knowledges or perspectives, in *all* curriculum.²⁷ Mandated learning standards identify either explicit references to Indigenous knowledges or perspectives, which teachers *must* include in their curriculum delivery, or implicit references to Indigenous knowledges or perspectives, which might guide teachers in their curriculum delivery (Province of British Columbia, 2020). Assumptions of non-Indigenous teachers’ capacities and willingness to teach with Indigenous pedagogies and ways of knowing and being, as well as local Indigenous communities’ active participation in schools undergird this new mandate. Thus, the BCME’s mandate “place[s] a significant burden on teachers and

²⁷ Intended to be implemented in the 2023-2024 school year, the BCME announced a new “Indigenous-focused course requirement... [as] one of the actions identified in B.C.’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Draft Action Plan” (Province of British Columbia, 2022, para. 7). This change requires “that 4 credits of the current 80 credit requirements for the BC Certificate of Graduation (Dogwood Diploma) include an Indigenous focused course(s)” (British Columbia Ministry of Education; First Nations Steering Committee, 2022).

Indigenous communities” (Lamb & Godlewska, 2021, p. 117), reducing “the likelihood of [its] integration” (p. 117). The “downloading [of] responsibility” (Lamb & Godlewska, 2021, p. 117) without adequate support for teachers can stimulate conditions for “universalizing, stereotyping, and objectifying representations” (p. 107) of Indigenous Peoples, while simultaneously burdening Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, educators and community members to “donate their time and effort” (p. 111) to local schools. Through a study of the entire BCME curriculum, Lamb and Godlewska (2021) determine,

leaving aside the quality and depth of the actual mandatory content, Indigenous content was so marginal and peripheral to the core curriculum that very few students could have gained any meaningful understanding of Indigenous Peoples, perspectives, and ways of knowing. (p. 117)

As an example, for the 2002-2008 school years, Indigenous content in mandatory science for grades 1-5 comprised 9% of the curriculum; a complete absence for grades 6-8; only 4% for Grade 9; and, a complete absence for Grade 10 (Lamb & Godlewska, 2021, pp. 113–114). Overall, during the 2009-2016 school years, Lamb and Godlewska (2021) assert “most students in BC had minimal exposure to Indigenous content in the science curricula after Grade 6” (p. 116). For EFP courses specifically during the 2009–2016 school years, minimal numbers of students enrolled in EFP courses compared to other ELA course offerings: 0.8% for EFP 10, with 90% for English 10; 0.2% for EFP 11, with 8.9% and 67.7% for Communications 11 and English 11 respectively; and 0.5% for EFP 12, with 4%, 8.7%, and 65% for English Literature 12, Communications 12, and English 12, respectively (Lamb & Godlewska, 2021, pp. 115–116).

Though they acknowledge the BCME’s efforts to address and integrate Indigenous pedagogies and ways of knowing and being within the curriculum, Lamb and Godlewska (2021) conclude a combination of non-Indigenous teachers’ reluctance and discomfort with teaching Indigenous ways of knowing and being, students’ course choices, and the curriculum’s transference of responsibility for expanding and reflecting local, Indigenous content to educators and Indigenous community members act as significant barriers to students experiencing a robust education in Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

It seems we are still, here.

“What is difficult about
“difficult knowledge”
is that it confronts
teachers [and students] with feelings of
helplessness and loss,
and
the impossibility
of undoing
what has already happened.”

— Lisa Farley (2009, p. 542)

“I tried to run away... I never did make it home.”

— Thunder Bird Woman (personal communication, April 23, 2018), Cree

3.3.3. Thunder Bird Woman

“I was six years old. They kept me in the infirmary. They kept me for themselves.”

She pauses. Waits.

A student understands the space offered, the invitation.

“Did they try to adopt you?”

“No. He had other plans...”

She pauses again. She looks around the circle, looks into each of our eyes.

This time, no one enters the space. No one accepts the invitation.

“...but I'm here. I survived.”

“Reconciliation cannot occur without listening, contemplation, meditation, and deeper internal deliberation.

Silence in the face of residential school harms is an appropriate response for many Indigenous Peoples.

We must enlarge the space for respectful silence in journeying towards reconciliation,
particularly for Survivors who regard this as key to healing.”

(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 18)

April 24, 2018—English First Peoples 11/12 reflection writing task [mine written as students wrote theirs]:

Reflect and free-write for ten-fifteen minutes about your thoughts, feelings, impressions from yesterday. Do not worry about spelling or grammar. Just write. Some prompts if needed: What lingers for you today from Thunder Bird Woman's visit yesterday? What questions do you now have? What do you carry with you?

The space yesterday held the students—fully attending—but their reticence to ask Thunder Bird Woman questions surprises me. We considered questions to ask prior to her visit, but in the moment they did not ask. Even K., the voice of the group, did not offer much. So, not sure why—deep respect? Careful avoidance not to pull her into more pain, or worse yet, to avoid putting themselves in more pain? An absence of questions to ask? Perhaps a combination of all, a comingling of the impossible—to embrace fully the harm of another, to accept its truth, and as that truth settles, the recognition of privilege and maybe of (distant) accountability? Then, to recognize the self, here, now, as a by-product of colonialism, but also maybe even as an agent of colonialism? Can empathy and sympathy, pity and compassion co-exist without reinscribing privilege? The words from a Stó:lō Elder keeps floating around my brain: “We have to learn to live together in a good way.”²⁸ Wagamese asks us to consider reconciliation as a return to harmony.²⁹ The discordant sounds of jumbled emotions fill my heart—my echo chamber heart?—and thus each word, syllable, utterance heavy with the weight of generational pain. Disharmony abounds. I think of Thunder Bird Woman who spoke about her avoidance of sharing her experiences with her own children, and her daughter learning about Residential Schools in a Euro-centric university which triggered her daughter's questions, which then triggered the beginnings of unravelling hidden recesses. How heavy are those stories to carry? Does sharing alleviate the weight somehow, or not? I fear not as I cannot truly carry her burden; we cannot truly carry her burden. As Thunder Bird Woman said, her pain is still real; it is a living entity within her. She said when a child is hurt, that hurt stays for a lifetime. She said to the students several times that she hoped her story would help them, would help educate them. I asked the students to write her a letter which will share their answer—did Thunder Bird Woman's story help them? Help educate them? Oh—the power of her choosing a career in education, the very system that tried to destroy her is a testament to her tenacity. Also, the Audre Lorde quote, “The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house” runs through my brain.³⁰ Can the Indigenous concept of an ever-enlarging circle be powerful, enough so, that the master's house can be a *part* of the circle but not its centre?

²⁸ T'xwelátse (Herb Joe; Stó:lō Nation/Stó:lō Research & Resource Management Centre, The Reach Gallery Museum Abbotsford, n.d.).

²⁹ Wagamese (2012b).

³⁰ Lorde (2003).

“So, I quit trying to tell anybody.

If you can't tell your own family, you know, they don't believe you,

who, who is gonna believe you,

especially when it comes to the priests and that?

So that went on for a long time, man.”

— Faron Fontaine, Residential School Survivor,
Fort Alexander Residential School, Manitoba

“But nothing got done because no one would believe me...

So, that went on for years of me being sexually assaulted.”

— Amelia Galligos-Thomas, Residential School Survivor,
St. Augustine's Residential School, British Columbia

“Don't make up stories. You're just making it up.

They work for God,

and they can't do things like that.”

— Dorothy Jane Beaulieu, Residential School Survivor,
Fort Resolution Residential School, North West Territories

(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b, pp. 149, 160–161)

3.3.4. Once a Teacher Knows

Reader, I learned Residential School Survivors often feel misbelieved when they bear/bare testimony. I learned this before Thunder Bird Woman visited. During her visit, Thunder Bird Woman said that she hoped her story mattered. I still wonder if she also meant, “Do you believe me?”

My experiences in the Dream Colloquium as a helper to the host Nations welcoming and hosting the guest speaker, as well as being an apprentice in the unfolding ceremony processes and protocols, guided me to understand the responsibility I held as a host of Thunder Bird Woman’s visit.

As an Elder, her visit required careful planning and good intention to fulfill protocol to honour her time, energy, and Teachings she generously offered us. As an Elder who would share her experiences as a Residential School Survivor meant an even greater responsibility to care for her Spirit and for the Spirits of the young ones, the listeners of her story.

“Teachers cannot teach what they do not know” (Dion, 2009, p. 103), but once a teacher knows, how does she walk in a good way if her feet walk on a new path?

I wrestled with how to acknowledge Thunder Bird Woman in a good way, in a way that would not (re)inscribe a narrative of Indigenous Peoples-as-victims. I did not want a “discourse of sympathy” (Dion, 2009, p. 73) to develop within the young ones in my care, resulting in “feelings of pity” (p. 73) for Indigenous Peoples or for Indigenous Peoples to “(become) fixed in the past as victim” (p. 109). Instead, I wanted the young ones in my care “to consider themselves in relationship with [Thunder Bird Woman’s] story, to consider ... why we were asking them to hear [her] story” (Dion, 2009, p. 111). I wanted to ensure I did not avoid “(exploring) the relationship between Canadians and the causes of the violence perpetrated against” (Dion, 2009, p. 111) Indigenous Peoples by creating a “space ... to begin the necessary work required to face a shared history” (Dion, 2009, p. 54).

I wanted to ensure I created a space for the young ones in my care “to attend to why [the Indian Residential School System] had occurred and who was responsible for [it]” (Dion, 2009, p. 112) before Thunder Bird Woman’s visit to “address the role”

(p. 112), and thus responsibility “of the Canadian government and the Canadian people” (p. 166). With both Indigenous and non-Indigenous young ones in my care, I tried to maintain a delicate balance of inviting some of them to “begin the necessary work” (Dion, 2009, p. 54) to learn of our “shared history” (p. 54), while also acknowledging that for others, our “shared history” (p. 54) exists as a lived history that does not need to be learned.

Most importantly, I wanted to create a space where Thunder Bird Woman’s “response to the traumatic events of her life” (Dion, 2009, p. 112) could be witnessed so that her “power, strength, and wisdom” (p. 113) could be honoured. By inviting the young ones in my care to be witnesses, I hoped to prevent a discourse of sympathy, to bring Thunder Bird Woman’s experiences firmly in the present, not position them as static, past events (Dion, 2009, p. 113). By being witnesses, I hoped to invite the young ones in my care to “undertake [their] historical responsibilities and co-implication” (Boler, 2004, p. 186) of the Indian Residential School System rather than (re)inscribing for them the role of spectator where the ability to “abdicate any possible responsibility” (Boler, 2004, p. 184) exists.

I wanted the young ones in my care to learn from Thunder Bird Woman, but to learn from her as an active agent in her life story, not as a passive victim.

After great deliberation, I asked the young ones in my care to write Thunder Bird Woman a letter, sharing with her how or why her story mattered to them. Dion (2009) critiques a teacher’s use of letter writing as a way to express young ones’ learning about Indigenous experiences as inevitably the letters can “reproduce dominant ways of knowing about the relationship between Canadians and Aboriginal peoples” (p. 168). I trusted the work we did together would help mitigate this potential. To enliven this trust, the young ones knew in advance I would not read their letters before I gave them to Thunder Bird Woman.

I also wrote Thunder Bird Woman a letter, though it took several attempts to find a way to express my feelings.

April 24, 2018

Dearest Thunder Bird Woman,

You asked if your story mattered to us, and to our education. You hope it does, but I want to assure you that it does. Your story impacted me, our students, and your friend, Ms. X, who I know learns more about resilience, tenacity, and love each time she hears your story as those are just some of the insights we ~~take~~ learned from you.

Richard Wagamese, Ojibway writer, asks us to consider Reconciliation as a return to harmony

April 24, 2018

Dearest Thunder Bird Woman,

You asked if your story mattered to us, if it helped us with our education. I want to assure you that it does. Your story has had a profound impact on me and on our students. When I told people about your visit, I said you were the epitome of grace and resilience. Beyond those

April 24, 2018

Dearest Thunder Bird Woman,

You asked if your story mattered to us, if it helped us with our education. I want to assure you that it does.

Your story has had a profound impact on me and on our students. When I told people about your visit, I shared with them that I feel you are the epitome of grace and resilience.

Your tenacity of Spirit and unwavering love for yourself, your family, your peers at Residential School, and for your Ancestors showed us how we could be honest, steadfast, forgiving, how we can choose to heal as a country if we first listen to the truth, if we try to return

April 24, 2018

Dearest Thunder Bird Woman,

You asked if your story mattered to us, if it helped us with our education. I want to assure you that it does.

Your story has had a profound impact on me and on our students. When I told people about your visit, I shared with them that I feel you are the epitome of grace and resilience.

Your tenacity of Spirit and unwavering love for yourself, your family, your peers at Residential School, and for your Ancestors showed us how we could be, how we can choose to heal if we first listen to the truth.

It must be lonely for you to have carried the weight of your pain for so long on your own.

You told us pain is a living entity within you, because once a child is hurt, she carries that pain for a lifetime.

You told us you avoided telling your own children about your experiences.

I suspect because it is so painful to return to, but I also sense it is out of love for them, to keep their Spirits unburdened.

I'm not sure if it helps you to share your story, but each of us are trying to help you carry your pain so you don't have to do it alone.

I hope you understand we believe you.

I believe you.

I need to offer you one more gratitude.

I know you were highly attuned to the needs of our students. I know you didn't share your full story to protect them, to only offer what you felt their hearts could handle.

Even in the midst of your own story, you could sense what our students needed and offered your love and compassion so they had room in their hearts to hear you.

Thank you for showing what it means to live in a good way.

Thank you for showing them that love and compassion, but understand I heard you, fully, and I extend to you my love.

“What is usually
bypassed
in settler-colonial communities
is doing the embodied work
of processing
the reality
of one’s historical
and
psychological relationship
to colonialism...”

The challenge for us has been to move people out of an intellectual understanding of colonialism to one that involves the realization that they need to make material changes in their lives.”

—Allanah Young Leon, Anishnaabe Midekway and Nehiy/naw Cree; Denise Nadeau
(Young Leon & Nadeau, 2018, pp. 67–68)

3.4. Incubation

Incubation, a stage of transformation, parallels First Insight but with much more depth. Whereas First Insight can be understood as perceptual, Incubation can be understood as spiritual. Incubation stimulates expressions of healing and spirituality, often through ceremony or ritual to honour the vision or the creative work produced.

3.4.1. Exo/skele/ton³¹

—for *W*.

1.

The Greeks hold it is the outer, the outside,
and the Italians sense it is the bare outline,
while Latin knows it is the parching, the withering;

named or not, it is.

2.

Strangely resilient in its fragility
this veneer of disdain you don,
its measure of weight unmeasurable

but its heft shows in the gait of your walk.

3.

Why do you wear it?
Who first cajoled you to put it on?
It is not yours to claim.

It is not yours to bear.

4.

I wait for the cracks, fissures,
filaments of light
to eke out, even if

no one else watches.

³¹ For words of Greek origin, *exo-* acts as a word-forming element to denote “outer, outside” (“Exo-,” 2020, para. 2), while Modern Latin *skeleton* derives from Greek *skellein*, “dry up, make dry” (“Skeleton, 2015, para. 2), which comes from PIE root **skele-* “to parch, wither” (para. 2). *Skeleton*, the noun use of Greek *skelētos*, eventually passed to Italian *scheletro*, meaning “bare outline” (“Skeleton, 2015, para. 3; see also “Exoskeleton,” 2020).

“Words are compressed complexities.

A word is a universe.

A word has power.

It animates and (re)animates.

It actually changes ecologies,

changes what is possible.

The more we turn up in radical ways,

the more we animate.”

— Vicki Kelly (personal communication, October 6, 2016), Anishnaabe and Métis

3.4.2. Designation

Meta-data can provide a broad view of a context. However, even as the BCME cautions in its own documents, any data can be manipulated, misused, or misinterpreted. The BCME (2021) advises readers of its publicized data to “use multiple sources of information whenever possible” (p. 2) or to “consider participation rates” (p. 2) while also asking themselves, “Do the data tell enough of the story?” (p. 2). Yet simultaneously, meta-data can provide stark information, the kind sometimes needed when a broader community resists, refuses, or rejects difficult knowledge.³²

The abstraction of a human story into a number, a percentage, or a bar graph does just that—it turns a *Being* into an abstraction; it turns a life force into ink or symbols on a screen. Therefore, to designate also means to abstract. Designation comes from Latin, *designare*—or *de*, “out” (“Designation,” 2018, para. 2) plus *signare* “to mark” (para. 2)—and late 14th C, *designacioun*, “notation, representation, action of pointing or marking out” (para. 2). Thus, to designate a student means to *mark* a student. Ubiquitous, the word *designation* resides in most school systems’ lexicons, often accompanied by formal reports, funding formulae, and policy. At their best, designations intend to be helpful, offering information and providing insight, to inform various levels of the school system to ensure the correct funding and support services arrive for the child who needs them. But what happens when the designation carries with it a racist, colonial history, transmuted in the present as a short-hand language for a culture of low expectations? The designation *ascribed to* a student becomes a mark *inscribed on* a student, often an indelible one. The BCME uses the word *Aboriginal* to designate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples, and only when students self-identify as ‘Aboriginal,’ does the BCME (2021) classify them as such.

Dominant ways of knowing and being permeate Canadian society, including its colonial mandate, past and present. In Canadian teachers’ classrooms, these legacies often manifest in subtle, discreet, or invisible ways. As Cajete (2015) asserts, “The greater the exposure to Western institutions, the more likely we are to have internalized Western individualistic habits of mind and behavior” (p. 109). Borne of the colonial

³² An example of difficult knowledge people might wish to avoid: the overall suicide rate in First Nations communities is approximately twice as high as the total Canadian population and for the Inuit, that rate is six-eleven times higher (TRC, 2015, p. 109).

project, Aboriginal designations in the school system imbue its legacies, impacting the present in sometimes overt, obvious, and perceptible ways. For example, meta-data from BC's public schools for the 2018-2019 school year show Indigenous students under-perform in *all* areas. In that school year, 64 326 students, or 11.3% of the total 568 985 student population, self-identified as 'Aboriginal' at some point in their educational experience (BCME, 2021). Only 51% of Indigenous students as compared to 74% of non-Indigenous students received a BC Certificate of Graduation, known as a "Dogwood" Certificate, which recognizes students who meet standard curricular goals (BCME, 2021). In addition, 4% of Indigenous students as compared with 1% of non-Indigenous students received the BC School Leaving Certificate, known as the "Evergreen" Certificate, which recognizes students who succeed in their personal goals of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) rather than meeting standard curricular goals (BCME, 2021). Children with a Continuing Custody Order (CCO) have a long-term "relationship" with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), and the Director of Child Welfare acts as their sole guardian (BCME, 2021). In BC, Indigenous students comprise 67% of students with a CCO compared with 33% of non-Indigenous students.

The Province of BC mandates Foundation Skills Assessments (FSAs) for students in grades four and seven. FSAs, provincial-wide assessments, identify BC students' overall performance in areas of Reading Comprehension, Writing, and Numeracy. In the 2018-2019 school year, Indigenous students underperformed in *all* categories compared to non-Indigenous students (BCME, 2021). There are three proficiency levels to identify student performance in the 2018-2019 iteration of the FSAs: "emerging" (BCME, 2021, p. 11) or not yet meeting expectations; "on track" (p. 11) or meeting expectations; and "extending" (p. 11) or exceeding expectations. As an example, the following data represent student performance in grade seven:

- reading comprehension: 38% of Indigenous students ranked as "emerging" while 21% of non-Indigenous students ranked the same;
- writing: 19% of Indigenous students ranked as "emerging" versus 8% for non-Indigenous students;
- numeracy: 59% of Indigenous students ranked as "emerging" as compared to 31% of non-Indigenous students (BCME, 2021).

This data suggests BC's school system fails to meet the needs of Indigenous students and fails to recognize and thus represent the strengths of Indigenous students. If data "are processes constructed by the researcher's interpretive practices..., are ideological productions ..., [and as] ... empirical materials are performative" (Denzin, 2013, p. 355), who does the aforementioned data serve? The BCME or Indigenous communities and their children? Whose interpretive practices, ideological productions, and performative empiricism count as data? Denzin (2009) reminds us to question

who has the power to control the definition of evidence, who defines the kinds of materials that count as evidence, who determines what methods best produce the best forms of evidence, [and] whose criteria and standards are used to evaluate quality evidence. (p. 142)

How, if at all, can meta-data be of use in the individual classroom, to the teacher who greets her community each day? How, if at all, can an 'Aboriginal' designation be a generative site of possibility for teachers and students rather than one which (re)inscribes and (re)animates a racist legacy?

“However, researchers know that

‘who we are’

is always in a state of flux as long

as we remain open

to the standpoint of another;

this openness

creates the possibility

that our sense of who

can be transformed

through

encounters with difference.”

—Dwayne Donald (2012b, p. 549), Papaschase Cree

Ultimately, the one who perceives a designation determines its “mark.” The perceiver observes from a standpoint (McConaghy, 2003) as a situated being, a being in a particular time and place, and of a particular socio-cultural-historical context. In other words, the perceiver, a *who*, “cannot be separated from [a] *where*” (Donald, 2012b, p. 549, italics added). How a non-Indigenous teacher interprets data or an Aboriginal designation depends on the relationship she fosters or avoids between herself and Indigenous Peoples. How she perceives her role and responsibilities in the place now called Canada’s colonial history and its legacies informs her pedagogy, which in turn nurtures an acceptance or an abdication of ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008). As perfect strangers (Dion, 2009), privilege cocoons non-Indigenous peoples from having to question their relationship to Indigenous Peoples, and thus spectatorship becomes a naturalized, recursive praxis in classrooms. Non-Indigenous Canadian teachers (re)inscribe and (re)produce dominant ways of knowing, being, and doing in their roles as teachers through implementing the school system’s curricula, policies, and procedures, enacting erasure of Indigenous Peoples’ ways of knowing, being, and doing.

How and why does the school system’s curricula, policies, and procedures do this? Paternalistic measures enforced and sustained through the Indian Act, separately and together, create the conditions for and reinforcement of the dominant culture’s (mis)perceptions and erasures of Indigenous Peoples. The Indian Act can be attributed for disparity amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in the place now called Canada generally, and as the aforementioned data suggests, in BC specifically. Responsible for the physical, biological, and cultural genocide of Indigenous Peoples, and the subsequent legacy of the Indian Residential School System (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 5), the Indian Act’s “formidable control over most aspects of their lives” (B. Joseph, 2018, p. 10) continues to impact Indigenous Peoples “from the womb to the tomb” (p. 10). According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), “The beliefs and attitudes that were used to justify the establishment of residential schools are not things of the past: they continue to animate official Aboriginal policy today” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, pp. 103–104).

Current outcomes and legacies of the Indian Act include “the dramatic overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in foster care” and the overrepresentation and

continued growth of Indigenous Peoples “among the sick, the injured, and the imprisoned” in the place now called Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 111). The Indian Act established and reneged on treaties, replaced Indigenous models of self-governance, banned cultural practices, designed and implemented the reservation and pass systems, forced generations of children into the Indian Residential School and day school systems, and still continues to chronically underfund health, education, and justice (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; B. Joseph, 2018). Through the Indian Act, the Canadian state legislated racist, colonial policies and laws to *benefit* non-Indigenous Canadians and the Canadian state.

A combination of actual and figurative distance and isolation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples help to create the fragmented Canadian context. As an example, the reservation and Indian Residential School systems *literally* separated Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous peoples for generations. Physical, geographic divides help to create a cultural landscape of disconnection. This landscape of disconnection inculcated isolation of Indigenous Peoples from social, cultural, and economic spaces dominated by non-Indigenous peoples, and those legacies and impacts continue. This landscape of cultural disconnection and historical, cultural amnesia also means non-Indigenous peoples face barriers of learning *from* Indigenous ways, knowing, and being.

Loss abounds.

“The dilemma then is how one may be instructed by ignorance.”

— Deborah Britzman (2013, p. 114)

The TRC (2015) provides and invites wide-scale recognition, knowledge, and understanding of Canadian governmental policies and their enduring impacts on Indigenous Peoples and subsequent formation of the Canadian national identity. However, “Tensions exist over the history, culture, and identity of the [Canadian] people ... because the problems and paradoxes created by processes of colonization also persist” (Donald, 2012b, p. 533). The policies propelling the colonial project, both past and present, can still be seen as mired in convoluted, racist paternalism, impacting all levels of Canadian society, including its school system. The Canadian school system, which serves “to enforce epistemological and social conformity to Euro-Western standards” (Donald, 2012, p. 550), helps to further the dominant culture’s luxury of spectatorship. For example, curricula which starts the history of the place now known as Canada at the arrival of Europeans inscribes a particular—and self-serving—dominant narrative, exposing the “conceptual holes in the historical narratives” Canada tells itself (Donald, 2012, p. 11). The amplification of the “two founding nations” of the English and the French narrative inspires a kind of historical and cultural amnesia, erasing Indigenous Peoples and their contributions to the formation of the Canadian identity, as well as non-Indigenous peoples’ implication and complicity in the colonial project’s goal of physical, biological, and cultural genocide of Indigenous Peoples.

A dominant story of Canada’s inception “continues to haunt our contemporary Canadian society by defining the terms according to which Aboriginal peoples and Canadians speak to each other about history, memory, place, and the land” (Donald, 2012a, p. 41). Without the purposeful domination of land and its natural resources, as well as the subsequent disruption, destruction, and dismantling of the original, diverse societies which existed in the place now called Canada, non-Indigenous Canadians could not lay claim to the title “Canadian.” The identity of “Canadian” comes as a settler colonialism’s by-product, both in the historical sense and in our contemporary era. Non-Indigenous Canadians often refer to themselves as “settlers,” a ubiquitous term in historical accounts, to avoid the term “colonial settler” or “colonizer.” As a verb, “settle” comes from Old English to denote a “cause to sit, place, put” but not until the 1620s does the meaning to “establish a permanent residence” (“Settle,” 2022, para. 5) come to be. “Settler” in its noun form first appears in the 1590s, as a “thing that settles ... a debate, etc.” (“Settler,” n.d., para. 2) and the denotation of “a person who moves into a new country” (para. 2) appears in the 1690s. “Settler” evokes a meta-narrative of the

place now known as Canada that most non-Indigenous Canadians learn to call truth: Canada as a vast, wild, Terra nullius, one that industrious immigrants needing a home to call their own feel morally justified in claiming. This meta-narrative forgets the “land was not empty... it was forcibly emptied of buffalo and people” (Dion, 2009, p. 38). The sub-text of the word “settler” also suggests the place now called Canada and its original peoples were “wild” and in need of “settling.”

Donald (2012a) argues the “ways in which Aboriginal-Canadian relations are conceptualized, and thus expressed in curriculum considerations” (p. 41) can be understood as “deeply embedded within [Canada’s] national narrative and mythically symbolized by the fort” (p. 42). Forts exist to declare jurisdiction over land or people, as physical divides between people who can be inside from those who must be on the outside, and to offer observation of an area (Donald, 2012a). But as Donald (2012a) contends, forts exist in “overlapping, contested, and emergent areas” (p. 42) known as frontiers, or uninhabited places yet to be civilized, therefore reinforcing the (mis)conception of the idea of Canada as a vast, wild Terra nullius with colonizers as settlers and Indigenous Peoples as absent. Known as the pedagogy of the fort, this “national ideology” (Donald, 2012a, p. 43) inscribes and reinscribes “an assumption of Aboriginal peoples as being outside accepted versions of nation and nationality” (p. 44), which in turn “has shaped the institutions and conventions of Canadian society” (p. 44). Schools and curricula “are predicated on” fort pedagogy, continuing to establish, implement and naturalize Euro-Western onto-epistemologies, resulting in intentional exclusion of outsiders “from meaningful participation in Canadian public institutions like schools and universities” (Donald, 2012a, p. 44).

What does fort pedagogy look like in practice for the Indigenous student? In what ways does it manifest?

Nuances of Witnessing: *Dispositional*

Witnessing demands a particular orientation. Being~revealers will offer revelation of their being in sometimes fleeting and nearly imperceptible ways. To be able to witness means there must exist a capacity to recognize the moment as it arises and to attend, as well as a capacity to address what emerges. It also means there must also exist a willingness to attend, a desire to bear/bare witness, to accept potential hazards and joys of witnessing.

3.4.3. Marginal Achievement

She stands at the desk, intently reading the screen. Her heart-shaped, cherry-red sunglasses hold back her mass of hair, its umber brown fading into bleached blonde, fading into acrid pink, fading into muddy green.

One hand hovers over the mouse, the other twirls to music only she can hear. Her feet flex in and out of *en pointe*, punctuating the rhythm of her desk dance. The hard-soled, plastic slippers she always wears as shoes lift and lower in unison, slapping the putty-flecked linoleum, a synthetic metronome.

Occasionally she pauses, leans in, squints, and with a flourish, single-finger types with her mouse hand, while the twirling hand holds its pose and her feet patiently wait. Another flourish returns the mouse hand back to its position; the twirling hand, flexing feet, and slapping slippers continue their choreography.

I busy myself on the other side of the room, being there and not there simultaneously. I glance at her, glimpse a secret smile meant only for herself. On the screen, her essay. Five paragraphs, four hours, and two days of effort.

My heart surges.

This same girl can curl into herself, somehow becoming a diminishing curve. She can perch on a rigid plastic chair, clasp her arms around her knees, allow her hands to languish, her feet to be lifeless—like she barely exists.

Deflated fragility.

Yet each week her plastic slippers' *slip-slap/slip-slap* sound her presence as she climbs the wooden stairs to my portable.

Each week she spends two afternoons with me to work on her English class.

Each week a new task, a new demand with little acknowledgement of the cost she bears when her English teacher only ever names her best *marginal*.

Each week. Two afternoons. Four hours.

Somehow, she finds it within herself to arrive. Each week.

Marginal achievement?

**On this student's report card for her English class, the teacher offered the phrase "marginal achievement" to describe her progress.*

3.4.4. Home / Work



Home/

I startle at Beetle's presence. Beetle silently glides across the surface of the glass, intent on their journey. If Beetle possesses awareness of me, they show no sign of recognition.

Beetle's exoskeleton catches the afternoon sunlight, a slender glow skating across the invisible divide.

/Work

In the office a colleague stops me, wanting to know if I received her email. I must look confused as she clarifies, did I receive the referral form for homework club? She continues, asking which student I might want to refer as she may already know them, *homework club being what it is and all*. A conspiratorial laugh accompanies her quip.



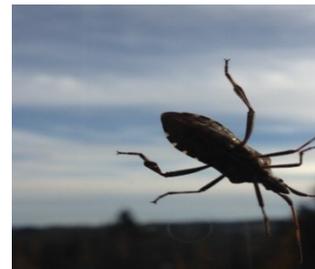
I name William. Her entire countenance freezes. She morphs instantly.

Her face scrunches, a sneer instantaneous, arms cross at her chest. Revulsion, horror, anger: all flit across her face. A surge of emotion ekes out of her.

Words flow from her now clipped voice:

"...he is not welcome..."

"...he is an animal..."



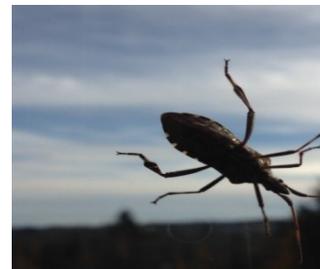
"...I will not have him..."

An unsolicited baptism of derision washes over me. Her words drip off, finding no purchase.

Still, I wonder how it might be to wear this scorn.

I wonder if these words become an unwanted exoskeleton of disdain, a veneer of contempt, strangely resilient to attempts of moulting. I wonder what becomes hidden.

I do not refer William for homework club.



3.4.5. Difficult Knowledge

Difficult knowledge can be understood as “how one might be instructed by ignorance ... [by] facing ... times of uncertainty” (Britzman, 2013, p. 114); as “intersecting philosophical, pedagogical, and methodological dilemmas” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 755); as “the affective and epistemological challenges in teaching and learning about/from social and historical trauma” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 391); as “the traumatic content of knowledge, but also the internal conflicts—anxieties and wishes—that those representations set into motion” (Farley, 2009, p. 539); and as “knowledge and memories that we cannot bear to know” (McConaghy, 2003, p. 11). Pedagogical in orientation (Britzman, 2013; Zembylas, 2014), the construct of difficult knowledge attempts to understand “representations of social and historical traumas in curriculum *and* the learner’s encounters with them” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 392, italics in original).

Difficult knowledge presupposes learning “works at the psychic level” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 392) by “encountering the self through the otherness of knowledge” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 755). Teachers craft pedagogical encounters with difficult knowledge, recognizing it unsettles the learner by acting as a catalyst for affective dissonance. Affective dissonance, or nebulous, negative emotions, emerges as the learner tries to reconcile social and/or historical trauma with “the learner’s own psychic history” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 393). Inviting difficult knowledge into pedagogies and curricula presupposes “discomforting feelings can be the point of departure to challenge dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain social inequities, thus creating openings for individual and social transformation” (Zembylas, 2018, p. 93). Teachers’ questioning and determining how curricula can avoid “closure” and instead provide “possibilities to repair traumatic experiences” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 394), to “offer hope and reparation” (p. 394) rather than anguish and loss, leads to learners’ abilities to “accommodate ambivalent feelings” (p. 394), the pedagogical “heart of the notion of difficult knowledge” (p. 394).

Through these pedagogical encounters with trauma, teachers and learners will also be “confronted with the impossibility of undoing the harm and suffering that has taken place” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 394). Teachers “can control neither the reach of historical representation, nor the psychical conflicts they invoke” (Farley, 2009, p. 543) with their pedagogy and curriculum, even if “the work of locating the self in relation to

others... [and] within knowledge” (McConaghy, 2003, p. 12) occurs in their classrooms. McConaghy (2003) further argues “our pedagogies and curricula and the languages of teaching remain largely inadequate to the task of teaching ... difficult knowledges” (p. 15) and recommends “approaches to pedagogy and curriculum that can tolerate awkward ideas and that will assist us to speak the unspeakable” (p. 18). Farley (2009) argues for “meaning-making that does not curtail the excesses and disruptions of historical [and social] trauma” (p. 547), one that “resists epistemological certitude” (p. 547) so that reasoned pedagogy cannot “school away” (p. 547) possibilities evoked by “uncertainty, disruption, and conflict” (p. 547) of difficult knowledge. Difficult knowledge as an “affective force” (Farley, 2009, p. 549) invites consideration of how “conflicts on the outside hook into, echo and transform conflicts on the inside” (p. 549), a precarious pedagogical, yet hopeful process. Hope occurs “when we make meaning in relation to a world without the illusions we use to protect ourselves from what is difficult” (Farley, 2009, p. 546), like imposing “epistemological certainty that subsumes the experiences of past others from the perspective of the present” (p. 546). Farley (2009) cites Lear’s conception of radical hope, which “confronts teachers and students with uncertainty as the very grounds of meaning-making” (p. 551) and as necessary “to help students [and teachers] make sense of past suffering” (p. 547) of others and themselves within difficult knowledge.

Zembylas (2014) calls for an extension of difficult knowledge’s pedagogical orientation to include political and activist orientations to “create openings that aim toward ethical and political transformation into the terrain of learning and acting in the face of difficult knowledge” (p. 400). To do so would be to recognize “one’s affective investments in relation to social and political norms” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 404), engendering an action orientation of “self-criticality, ethical responsibility, and the prospects of political transformation” (p. 404) for both teachers and students. Recognizing one’s own complicity and implication in difficult knowledge, to be a witness to and not a spectator of difficult knowledge, evokes ethical relationality (Donald, 2012a) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008), thereby engendering an action orientation. Beyond its pedagogical and action orientations, what does difficult knowledge look like in teachers’ classrooms? Can teachers recognize difficult knowledge’s presence, and thereby name it as such? Do teachers have the sustained capacity to reflect on action, in action? If classroom ecologies, including pedagogies and

curricula, “[are] never neutral” (Aoki, 2004a, p. 121), why do teachers by-pass, subsume, or render invisible difficult knowledge?

Breach
— For A.

Though I stress
your story is *your* story,

now

your story becomes *my* story

the story you sound so casually
hewn

hew (v.)
Old English *heawan*
“to chop, hack, gash, strike
with a cutting weapon or tool”

into mine,

my heart thrumming,
its cleft

cleft (n.)
Old English *geclyft*
“split, cloven”

its cleft

a tremolo
I do not want to play.

(“Cleft,” n.d.; “Hew,” n.d.)

How a teacher perceives, and thus accepts, rejects, or avoids difficult knowledge in her pedagogies and curricula may be impossible to articulate. To find a way to “speak the unspeakable” (Farley, 2009, p. 547), to “distinguish between obstacles to teaching and learning and obstacles to representing teaching and learning” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 759) exist as very real challenges in praxis. Since “representation is a compromise” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 759) and thus more easily recognized as stymied by language, expressing difficult knowledge, even to one’s self, can be fraught with inadequacies. The essential nature of difficult knowledge always exists as just beyond the grasp of language as one always *feels it* even if one cannot speak it—perhaps an unnameable feeling, an unnameable thing, but a presencing of difficult knowledge’s essential nature endures in an embodied way nonetheless (Heidegger, 2013, p. 172). Yet the “boundaries of self are porous” (Britzman, 2013, p. 115), and the very “transference of emotional states is what makes the difficult knowledge difficult to know” (p. 115). Teachers exist as Beings, or beings-as-humans and not as beings-as-things (Aoki, 2004a); teachers exist as embodied affect and emotion in particular contexts. Our context creates our consciousness (Jardine, 2006); our consciousness constitutes our humanity (M. A. Meyer, 2013b). Therefore, teachers-as-beings exist within and from a particular standpoint, a vantage of “how [they] view the world [which] is connected with [their] social positioning and experiences” (McConaghy, 2003, p. 16).

This situatedness thus influences a teacher’s relationship with and to difficult knowledge. Depending on the standpoint, one can experience difficult knowledge as a spectator or as a witness. As spectator, a teacher imbues a privileged role with the ability to be distant from any moral transgression and therefore distant from accountability (Boler, 2004). For classroom teachers this means the privilege to avoid, reject, or render invisible difficult knowledge’s presence in their pedagogies and curricula. As witness, a teacher imbues an ethical role with the ability to recognize and accept responsibility and co-implication (Boler, 2004). For classroom teachers, this means the accountability to accept, embrace, or invite difficult knowledge’s presence in their pedagogies and curricula. Depending on the standpoint, one can be both spectator and witness simultaneously, a coalescence of ever-shifting roles. As difficult knowledge “works at a psychic level” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 392), a teacher may not knowingly avoid, reject, or render invisible its presence in her pedagogy or curriculum as she may experience deferred action. Deferred action, or “settling on significance” (Pitt & Britzman,

2003, p. 758), occurs when “the force of an event is felt before it can be understood, and a current event may take its force and revisions from an earlier scene” (p. 758). Simply, it can take time for reflection and understanding of not only what occurs but also what has occurred, and how the present and past relate.

The context of settler colonialism further complicates the complexities of difficult knowledge’s presence in classrooms in the place now known as Canada. Settler colonialism can be defined as when settlers arrive “with the intention of making a new home on the land, a homemaking that insists on settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain” (Tuck & Wang, 2012, p. 5). Settler colonialism comprises both external and internal colonialism, simultaneously extractive and exploitive of natural resources and Indigenous Peoples, alongside the imperial nation’s bio/geopolitical management to further colonizers’ privilege, wealth, and dominance (Tuck & Wang, 2012). These “invisibilized [*sic*] dynamics of settler colonialism” means it can therefore be recognized as “as a structure, and not an event” (Tuck & Wang, 2012, pp. 2, 5), a structure so insidiously inherent within a nation it can be imperceptible and remain unquestioned by dominant society. Settler colonialism centres white supremacy and a settler future, allowing settlers to position themselves as “both superior and normal” (Tuck & Wang, 2012, p. 6) which therefore decentres Indigenous Peoples, positioning them as “unnatural” (p. 3), with enclosed and foreclosed futures.

“Directly and indirectly benefitting from the erasure and assimilation of Indigenous Peoples is a difficult reality for settlers to accept” (Tuck & Wang, 2012, p. 9), let alone to admit their own responsibility for and complicity in the colonial project. There exists “an incapacity on the part of the [settler] individual to acknowledge that one is implicated in the knowledge” (McConaghy, 2003, p. 17) of settler colonialism, so a kind of “censorship is imposed” (p. 18), a socio-historical erasure of reality. From this context “settler moves to innocence” (Tuck & Wang, 2012, p. 10) emerge, the “strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all” (p. 10). Hence Tuck and Wang (Tuck & Wang, 2012) assert decolonization becomes metaphorical rather than actual. Absorbing and conflating decolonization into other social justice frameworks allows for the continued erasure and assimilation of Indigenous Peoples, thus maintaining settlers’ status quo of dominance over land and dismissal, avoidance, or erasures of Indigenous Peoples’ ontologies, epistemologies, and cosmologies. That

the place now known as Canada exists because of settler colonialism, including the conflicting conflation of positive and negative elements of its society, can therefore be understood as difficult knowledge for teachers and students simply because “past and present relationships between Aboriginal peoples and Canadians are difficult” (Donald, 2012b, p. 546).

Tsleil-Waututh Nation³³

calling of the names
laying of the blankets,

Language: Hul'q'umi'num' / Halq'eméylem /
hə́ŋqəmiŋə́m

an invitation

Dialect:

a hand on an elbow,

Henqeminiem

gentle,
gentle,

**Number that speak and understand language
fluently:** 0

gentle now

Age groups that speak the language fluently:

soft steps

3

laughter hands raised,
open

**Age groups who understand and/or speak
somewhat:** 25-44 (2), 45-54 (1)

sky-ward

Number that do not speak or understand the

a coin pressed,
palm to palm

language: 503
Number of people learning the language:

aunties, sisters, brothers, uncles

21

canoes clinking singing

Age groups that are learning the language:

drums, ancient as thunder

0-4 (2),5-14 (5),15-19 (3),20-24 (4),25-44

lingering in the charged air

(4),45-54 (2),55-64 (1)

*we're starting to come together
to stand together*

Population on reserve:
Population off reserve: 233

*and now that you are here,
you are free*

Total Population:
506

³³ Data regarding Tsleil-Waututh Nation from First Peoples' Heritage, Language & Cultural Council (2015). Note: Since this poem was written, this website has been updated.

Referencing Stavrou's conception, Zembylas (2018) offers *pedagogisation* to denote "a deliberative act that aims at changing someone's cognitive, emotional and practical categories of action" (p. 95), but warns we cannot assume the work of social justice, critical, or decolonizing methodologies within pedagogies of education systems will have any impact on broader society (p. 88). Even if guided by social justice or critical methodologies to navigate difficult knowledge, an education system designed by and for dominant, settler society cannot disrupt settler colonialism as its very structure reinscribes colonization (Tuck & Wang, 2012). For teachers, the "experience of teaching and learning to be critical of settler colonialism can be so powerful it can feel like it is indeed making change" (Tuck & Wang, 2012, p. 19), yet these teachers still teach in an education system which allows "forgetting the facts of both past and contemporary Indigenous disadvantage" (McConaghy, 2003, p. 18) in pedagogies and curricula. Zembylas (2018) suggests "white discomfort" (p. 87), or the reticence of white people to recognize their benefits and entitlements within settler colonialism, exists beyond the individual experience. Instead, white discomfort occurs "embedded in broader affective, material and discursive assemblages of race, racism and whiteness" (Zembylas, 2018, p. 88) as "part of the production and maintenance of white colonial structures and practices" (p. 88). Tuck and Wang (2012, pp. 6–7) remind us all non-Indigenous peoples should be considered colonial settlers in the place now called North America. By extension, all non-Indigenous peoples, and not just white people, may feel discomfort in recognizing their advantages in and complicity of settler colonialism, further deepening the contextual complexity of the place now known as Canada.

Dion (2009) suggests non-Indigenous Canadians inhabit a perfect stranger identity, one where they "do not register the details of the post-contact experiences" (p. 59) of Indigenous Peoples as "those details do not conform to their self-concept" (p. 59). This self-concept positions Indigenous Peoples as victims to be pitied and themselves as agents of empathy, selves "not required to identify with the oppressor" nor to identify "complicity in structures of power" (Boler, 2004, p. 160), which instill privilege. Boler (2004) calls this form of empathy "passive empathy" (p. 161) since it "produces no action towards justice but situates the powerful Western eye/I as ... never [being] called to cast her gaze at her own reflection" (p. 161). Dion (2009) reminds us the perfect stranger identity informs non-Indigenous Canadian teachers' pedagogies and curricula, often manifesting itself as "see[ing] themselves as compassionate and

honourable” (p. 127) and not as reproducing and “perpetuating racism and domination” (p. 169). As by-products of colonialism, non-Indigenous teachers, like their students, “have been denied knowledge of the history and the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada” (Dion, 2009, p. 153). Yet as agents of colonialism, they too play a part in the structures of the Canadian state where “Aboriginal people were denied access to knowledge of their history, language, and culture” (Dion, 2009, p. 153).

A pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 2004), one extended to include pedagogical, activist, and action orientations, invites an ethical aim to “inhabit a more ambiguous and flexible sense of self” (p. 176); not only a self accountable to others, but a self who *acts* on those responsibilities in the form of ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008). To be witnesses to and not spectators of difficult knowledge engender the possibilities of transformative social change for individual teachers and students. Dion (2009) calls for a pedagogy of possibility, a “practice that binds remembrance and learning” (p. 55) so that teachers and students “not only recognize the limits of their knowledge” (p. 55) but also “what of themselves is tied up with their understanding” (p. 55). This pedagogy of possibility, implemented by teachers as beings-as-humans (Aoki, 2004a), could shift practice to praxis, ensuring an action orientation in a pedagogy of discomfort. Zembylas (2018) warns a pedagogy of discomfort “without the decolonial injunction” (p. 97) can inspire “solidarity and sympathy” (p. 97) while simultaneously bypassing settler colonialism’s “material/structural conditions of inequality” (p. 97). Zembylas (2018) observes that pedagogisation of white discomfort at the school or university level “individualises a much broader political phenomenon that is aligned with coloniality” (p. 90), propelled by the “belief in the rhetoric of improvement” (p. 96). As “pedagogic agents” (Zembylas, 2018, p. 95), teachers have a potential to become “missionaries” (p. 95) of a sentimental education rather than a transformative one.

The structures of colonialism have become familiar, known, and often unquestioned in the place now called Canada, so of course these structures exist in teachers’ pedagogies and curricula. For non-Indigenous peoples, there exists ignorance of, denial, and even refusal to recognize their relationship and complicity with colonial structures as those structures often benefit the material and social lives of those with this privilege. Yet there also exist seemingly genuine attempts by teachers to recognize

“what [they] know, what they do not know, and what they refuse to know” (Dion, 2009, p. 179) as perfect strangers, a hopeful intention to invite self-transformation into imperfect allies. An imperfect ally begins the work of recognizing, understanding, and most importantly, *acting* on her relationship with Indigenous Peoples and her advantages in and complicity of settler colonialism even if she does not know where or how to start. However, non-Indigenous teachers must continually question if their “pursuit of critical consciousness ... [and] social justice through a critical enlightenment” (Tuck & Wang, 2012, p. 21) may be “diversions” (p. 21) and “distractions” (p. 21) to “relieve [them] of feelings of guilt or responsibility” (p. 21) or ultimately to “conceal the need to give up land or power or privilege” (p. 21). For decolonization to shift from metaphorical to actual means to be “accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity” (Tuck & Wang, 2012, p. 35), and “specifically [it] requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (p. 21).

This shift demands difficult, existential, and hopeful work. It means a paradigmatic shift from “Western conceptions of liberal individualism” (Boler, 2004, p. 177) to relational accountability where knowledge can be understood as a communal process, a communal enactment (S. Wilson, 2008), and ethical relationality which “does not overlook or render invisible the particular historical, cultural, and social contexts from which a standpoint arises” (Donald, 2012a, p. 45).

This difficult, existential, and hopeful work must be understood as on-going *within* our current generation but also as *beyond* our current generation. The work within our current generation enacts hope as present-oriented, understanding the present as fulsome rather than incomplete. In this orientation, the present becomes a “modality, a particular structure of attending” rather than a spatial location (Simon et al., 2000, p. 295), which generates radical possibilities. However, those who do this difficult, existential, and hopeful work must also “truly think of that [future] seventh generation ... for it is they who judge whether we were as true to our responsibility to them as our relatives were to us seven generations before” (Cajete, 1994, p. 219). This difficult, existential, and hopeful work complements the “aspirational practice, goal, or idea” (Battiste, as cited in Donald, 2021, p. 539) of a post-colonial Canada, of “shaping a desirable future, not an existing reality” (p. 539). To attend “to the ways in which the past occurs simultaneously in the present” (Donald, 2012a, p. 39) may allow “Aboriginal peoples and Canadians [to] face each other across ... deeply learned divides” (p. 44)

enacting a more ethical present, and thus engendering the ability to imagine a more ethical future, together.

Nuances of Witnessing: *Spiritual*

Witnessing evokes Spirit. Spirit does not denote religiosity; rather Spirit denotes that which animates (M. A. Meyer, 2013b). Spirit as animating principle allows us to connect with each other and the more-than-human world. When students offer revelation of their being, it creates a moment where Spirit, that which animates, emerges in a form possible to recognize. Though ephemeral, this moment presences Spirit in a perceptible form.

3.4.6. In Spite Of

You already told me your story. Seeking me out, sitting next to me in our opening circle, your arms loose in your lap, shoulders and back bowed slightly, a question mark about to unfurl but stopped mid-sentence, your introduction.

Your palms, curled upwards, skyward, yet somehow nestled one into the other, your fingers toying the sleeves of your hoodie, the remnants of a familiar ache I began to recognize. The odour tugged at my attention: a smell of unwashed clothing announced denim soft from days and days and days of wear, draped on unnaturally thin legs.

Your eyes betrayed you.

You held my gaze, unwavering, your voice softer than the denim you wore.

A noise, to the left of us, abrupt and uninvited, extinguished the light in your eyes. Before the echoes of the sound ceased in my ears, your light vanished, transformed instantly into a thin, gray wariness. Your light somehow became small, wounded, lifeless. The rest of you stiffened, muscles imperceptibly shifted, readying themselves.

I turned my head towards the sound. Your peers' laughter easy, their muscles fluid.

I turned back.

You met my gaze. Unwavering. Light returned.

Then I knew your story.

In spite of your performance.

“...for everyone the boundaries
of self
are porous
and
the transference of emotional states
is what makes the
difficult knowledge difficult to know.”

— Deborah Britzman (2013, p. 115)

3.4.7. (Mis)Communication

From: Kelly Robinson <robinson_kelly@xx.ca>
Sent: Tuesday, September 3, 2019 2:42 PM
To: *counsellor* <counsellor@xx.ca>; *Aboriginal teacher advocate* <advocate@xx.ca>; *Aboriginal youth care support worker* <support@xx.ca>
Cc: *administrator* <administrator@xx.ca>
Subject: *J*, English x

Hi, all,

I only met *J* for a brief amount of time in homeroom today, and I suspect *they* is a student who may need some of our care and attention. I noticed a few things, and wanted to pass them along if *they* is not already a student you are aware of...

First, *they* presents as someone who is anxious/unsettled. *They* chose to sit directly next to me in our circle (clue about social unease) which is why I was able to chat with *them* a bit (though I did need to direct *them* to speak to *their* peer). Next, *J* told me *they* is fairly new to *our school*, only arriving in April of last semester from X. *They* also told me *they* has moved 20+ times and is unsure if *they* will be here for the whole semester, let alone the year—*their* parents move often. *J* also said this is the first time *they* has been at a school

for the opening day, which is a bit sad to me. I wonder if *J* might be a candidate for a social group like the *school group* or the *Y* club you have, *Aboriginal Teacher Advocate*, to help *them* foster some social connections (*they* does not strike me as an athletic sort). Lastly, *they* presents as clean and hygienic, though *their* clothing definitely has a not-very-often-washed odour. Just a contextual clue of *their* life situation which I wanted to pass along.

Understand this is from one brief meeting, and as *J* is in one of my English X classes, I will be better able to ascertain/quell any (other) concerns as I get to know *them*.

If anyone has any information about *J* they would like to share with me so I can better support *them* as *their* teacher, I would appreciate your feedback.

Regards,

Kelly Robinson (she/her)

English Teacher—grateful to work and learn on the unceded territories of the Katzie, Semiahmoo, and Kwantlen Nations

From: *administrator* <administrator@xx.ca>
Sent: Monday, September 3, 2019 3:35 PM
To: Kelly Robinson <robinson_kelly@xx.ca>
Subject: RE: *J*, English x

Thank you Kelly. You are right, and there is a story here. Please see *counsellor* or myself about *J*. We appreciate your continuous awareness of and concern for your students.

Kind regards,
Administrator

From: *counsellor* <counsellor@xx.ca>
Sent: Monday, September 23, 2019 11:29 AM
To: Kelly Robinson <robinson_kelly@xx.ca>
Subject: RE: *J* and *R*

Hi Kelly,
I finally had a chance to meet with *R* [*J's* sibling] and *J* (separately) today. They both were adamant that they would not take any food from the school. I tried to give *J* some food *they* could fit in *their* sweater or pants and *they* absolutely would not take any (even though *they* did not pack a lunch). I let them both know that no one would find out if I gave them anything and that we could make the hot lunch program just between them and the person that hands out the food and they said no.

I did see what you meant with regards to *J's* speech and *their sibling* has it a little (less than *J*). I sometimes spoke very softly to them and they always seemed to hear me (but make very good eye contact and could be great at reading lips). I wonder if it could come from trauma or a lack of practice as well. They are very much not interested in meeting new friends and do not want people to notice them. I will continue to touch base with them especially, *J*.

Please feel free to see me any time to discuss this.

Counsellor
Counsellor (*alpha*)
X Secondary

From: Kelly Robinson <robinson_kelly@xx.ca>

Sent: Monday, September 23, 2019 12:10 PM

To: *counsellor* <counsellor@xx.ca>

Subject: RE: *J* and *R*

Thank you, *Counsellor*—I appreciate all that you are trying to do for them. I am so sorry they do not know how to accept help and I admire them so for being able to come to school and still learn, in spite of it all.

I too will continue to pay attention and continue to encourage the social connections *J* seems to be forging in our class.

Thank you, *Counsellor*. You have an impossible job.

Regards,

Kelly Robinson (she/her)

English Teacher—grateful to work and learn on the unceded territories of the Katzie, Semiahmoo, and Kwantlen Nations.

*I struggle to disentangle myself from dominant discourses,
to disentangle myself
from the role of perfect stranger
that I have inhabited.*

Why do I struggle? To transform.

*But rather than transformation, I worry
that instead I've shifted
my distant perfect stranger stance
to an acute awareness
of the inter-generational impacts of colonialism.*

*This stance is still a "a form of protection"
because it does not shift my own role.*

*Do I now have a refined form of seeing
Indigenous people-as-victims,
one of Dion's descriptors of a perfect stranger?*

*I worry
that what I see & hear,
what I've become attuned to,
is the manifestation of colonialism
embodied in my students.*

*Is that all I can see & hear?
Am I missing the "good"*

stuff that also happens?

*Am I blinded & deafened
in a different way than before
I took those first steps on this journey
but blind and deaf nonetheless?*

*— journal entry,
September 30, 2019
(see also Dion, 2009, p. 179)*

From: Kelly Robinson <robinson_kelly@xx.ca>

Sent: Monday, October 28, 2019 9:30 AM

To: *counsellor* <counsellor@xx.ca>;

administrator <administrator@xx.ca>

Cc: *Aboriginal teacher advocate*

<advocate@xx.ca>; *Aboriginal youth care

support worker* <support@xx.ca>

Subject: *J*, English x

Hello, Counsellor & Administrator (& Advocate & Support),

J has not been in class for two classes now which is unusual for *them*. Given *their* family's complex history and constant, abrupt moves, I fear *they* and *their* family have re-located yet again.

I hope I am wrong, as *J* was settling into our classroom community and beginning to show signs of comfort (smiling, laughing, chatting with peers).

If *their* family have moved on to another community, will MyEdBC indicate where *they* is next? Would it be possible to communicate with the next school about our insights?

Let me know if you have any further information, please.

Regards,

Kelly Robinson (she/her)

English Teacher—grateful to work and learn on the unceded territories of the Katzie, Semiahmoo, and Kwantlen Nation

“What is difficult about
‘difficult knowledge’
is that it confronts
teachers with feelings of
helplessness and loss,
and
the impossibility
of undoing
what has already happened.”

— Lisa Farley (2009, p. 542)

From: counsellor <counsellor@xx.caa>
Sent: October 31, 2019 11:13 AM
To: teacher one <teacher1@xx.ca>; teacher two
<teacher2@xx.ca>; teacher three
<teacher3@xx.ca>; Kelly Robinson
<robinson_kelly@xx.ca>; teacher five
<teacher5@xx.ca>; teacher six
<teacher6@xx.ca>; teacher seven
<teacher7@xx.ca>
Cc: clerk <clerk@xx.ca>
Subject: *J* and *R*

Hi Everyone,

I just talked to Mr. X, *J* and *R's* step-father,
and he said that they have already moved to X
and that the *kids* will be going to XX
Secondary. Talking with *clerk*, the family had
not withdrawn (sic) them from *our school*.
Have *they* returned all of their textbooks? Is
there anything they still need to return?

Thank you for letting us know.

Counsellor
Counsellor (*alpha*)
X Secondary

From: Kelly Robinson <robinson_kelly@xx.ca>
Sent: October 31, 2019 11:39 AM
To: *counsellor* <counsellor@xx.ca>;
administrator <administrator@xx.ca>
Subject: RE: *J* and *R*

Hello, *Counsellor* & *Administrator*,

Is it possible for you to communicate our concerns/insights to the counsellors/administrators responsible for *J* and *R* at XX Secondary? I feel that part of the reason they are “slipping through the cracks” is that it takes a while for teachers/counsellors/administrators to start to figure out what might be going on, and by then they leave that school, and the cycle continues. I would like us to help to disrupt that cycle.

Regards,

Kelly Robinson (she/her)
English Teacher—grateful to work and learn on the unceded territories of the Katzie, Semiahmoo, and Kwantlen Nations.

From: *counsellor* <counsellor@xx.ca >
Sent: November 12, 2019 2:22 PM
To: Kelly Robinson <robinson_kelly@xx.ca>
administrator <administrator@xx.ca>
Subject: RE: *J* and *R*

Hi Kelly,

Unfortunately both *students* refused to open up about anything that might be going on. They both promised me they were safe and adamantly would not accept anything from the school, including food. When we registered them, we could see that their PR card has numerous schools and that there has been Ministry involvement. The next school will see it also. They want to be with their family and that is perhaps what is keeping them from talking; I'm not sure. They know where to access help if needed.

Counsellor
Counsellor (*alpha*)
X Secondary

*I have my white eraser
and yet my pencil hovers
still
above the page
afraid to leave its mark*

3.5. Learnings

Learnings, a stage of completion, produces and shares the creative work, the product of the visioning. This stage requires determining how to share and defend the creative work, but it also requires accepting the critique of others. Learnings engenders a sense of self-confidence as it necessitates understanding and defending the integrity of the creative process.

3.5.1. Paths

It can take a while for our paths to become clear.

The hardest part?

To keep walking,

step

after step,

stumbling into the unknown,

trusting the path will arrive to greet each foot fall.

Invitational

Witnessing arises from an offering. If accepted, humility and introspection determine how to be accountable to the Being~revealers. The Being~revealer's gesture of bearing/baring revelation of being may not always be recognized nor wanted. To accept some offerings may go unnoticed, be avoided, or be refused requires humility, but also the introspection to acknowledge this possibility.

3.5.2. Offering

Aubrey walks with me. Her feet skitter in staccato steps over the cobblestone to compensate for her short stature. We stroll toward the school building, solid brick, for our lunch break.

I like Aubrey, this fifteen-year-old student of mine. Round-faced and smiling, she clutches her art book. Edges of water-colour paper jut out haphazardly and curl upwards, like the swirls of rogue treble clefs.

The oyster-gray path thrums with the buoyant sounds of adolescence. Students stream past. A brief respite from the confines of indoors and the promise of play propels their torrent. Aubrey's rust-coloured hair quivers in the autumn sunshine.

The teeming walkway becomes a liminal space—my teacher role and her student role stretch, just enough, for us to be two people walking. A suffusion of the sun's warmth grazes our skin.

She and I chat about nothing at all: the distance between the portables to the building, the condensed lunch break, the end of another summer.

Near the building's entrance, not one cloud scuttles across the sky. There exists no harbinger of what will come.

Aubrey tells me her grandfather sexually abused her as a four-and-a-half-year-old child.

She tells me the abuse lasted for several years.

I stop.

The wave of adolescence parts easily around us, like the ancient dance of an eddy around a rock. Scraps of their conversations punctuate my pause.

I breathe in...

what do I say why tell me what if I say the wrong thing how do I respond where is this coming from did something we talk about in class trigger this does anyone else know how can you just say that so easily you don't know me why tell me why tell me

...I breathe out.

I churn in the vortex of her words. I sputter, suddenly spent.

Somehow, I voice, *your story is your story to tell. You do not have to share your story.*

I look into Aubrey's hazel eyes. I thank her for this gift of trust.

We part.

The youthful sea envelopes her into their surge; the briny swell of my lie rises in me. I taste its saltiness at the back of my throat. My vocal cords constrict. I cannot sound, *I do not want your story; I did not ask to hear it.*

Aubrey's story hews into my heart—my heart now cleft under the weight of her offering.

My heart thrums, its cleft a tremolo I do not want to play.

Postscript

*If I told you
when I looked into
Aubrey's mother's eyes,
just for that brief moment,
a moment of duration,
I knew,
I knew in my bones,
she too had been abused,
just as I knew,
I knew in my bones,
her father, Aubrey's grandfather,
attended Residential School,
would you believe me?*

“...hope may be seen as a bridge
to continuity and expectation.
Precisely because hope speaks
to the wish for attachment,
it is also quite vulnerable
to the very conditions
that constitute its founding moments:
times when one must also come to terms with
discontinuity and loss.”

— Deborah Britzman (1998, p. 119)

3.5.3. Eagles

I travel the same road each day. I drive due east, towards the morning light. On either side of this four-lane road a hodgepodge of buildings, parking lots, and industrial sites co-exist, flanked by oyster-gray sidewalks. Narrow strips of grass delineate these public and private spaces, shaded by sweetgum trees carefully planted in measured unison.

Crossing a major intersection, the road dips; the two east-bound lanes become one. A new world emerges. The urban-scape becomes farmland, an abrupt but welcomed reprieve. No sidewalks, only large irrigation ditches abut the road. Large fields with undulating colours of variegated green instead of ribbons of grass border my passage.

Just before the road climbs its way up a hill returning to four-laned, orchestrated suburbia, a cement utility pole sits on the southern edge. Often two Eagles perch on the crossarm, side by side. Their enormous bodies press one into the other, seemingly barely able to fit, yet they do. They frequently face the crest of the hill, witnessing dawn's light, together.

As I approach, their silhouettes glow, ebullience outlining their profiles. Incandescence traces the white of their heads and their onyx bodies. Luminosity radiates. I cherish this moment of beauty, of balance, of togetherness suffused in first light.

Today I watch in my rear-view mirror to see if the drivers behind me look up, turn their eyes from the road laid out for them to accept this offering, to welcome this Teaching.

No one does.

Nuances of Witnessing: *Relational*

Witnessing requires relationship. To offer revelation of being means being able to bear the risk of being bare. Without relationship, there lacks trust and the Being~revealer's ability or willingness to bear/bare revelation of being will not arise. Being~revealers will accept this risk if relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008) exists. Trust emerges when Being~revealers feel their Being~witness will be in service to the relationship to enact respect, reciprocity, and responsibility between them.

3.5.4. Orange Shirt Day

The ritual of distributing Maclean's-magazines-to-those-who-forgot-their-books performed, I make eye contact with Liam who instead reads his cell phone.

His seat faces me, it being in the back-row corner, closest to the door. His body looks cramped, too large for the inflexible plastic chair which does not care if he fits. Yet still the flecked-gray desk contains him, this almost-man.

His brazen blue shirt startles me, an exclamation point at the end of a sentence written in varying orange hues.

Liam's eyes grip mine. A challenge, a knowing defiance, leaps between us.

Privilege skulks behind me, niggling. My scalp tingles. My breath halts.

Liam's eyes declare, *Orange shirts can be put on or taken off with ease.* *For some.*

Understanding spurts through me.

In an act of cowardice, I divert my gaze. I turn to write on the board. Abrupt tears needle my eyes.

Understanding cements my heart. Insight saturates ignorant spaces, congeals in the hollows. My heart winces as it clogs with the knowledge, *for some, the absent presence of orange shirts endures.*

The soft piano music I have chosen for silent reading drifts over us as students settle into themselves, most cocooned in orange.

Founded by Phyllis Webstad (Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation), Orange Shirt Day began in 2013.

Webstad attended St. Joseph Mission Residential School,

and she had to give up her treasured orange shirt,

a gift from her grandmother, on her first day.

The school never returned her shirt.

In her words,

“The color orange has always reminded me of [the loss of my shirt] and how my feelings didn’t matter, how no one cared and how I felt like I was worth nothing” (Orange Shirt Day, n.d., para. 5).

September 30 became the day British Columbians wear

an orange shirt

as symbol of recognition

for the trauma Residential Schools have had on Indigenous children,

particularly the harm done to their sense of self-esteem.

“Indians are very much adverse to any kind of restraint,
and to put it mildly, are not to be believed,
as a general thing when they complain
about Schools or similar Institutions,
as they let their imaginations run riot,
if they think that by doing so it will help them
to gain what they happen to want at the moment.”

— Indian Agent O'Daunt,
from a letter to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs,
August 1, 1920

(Furniss, 1992, p. 93)

“The whole dynamic of reconciliation
is not just the truth
saying
there were some children buried
here.

I think it's incumbent upon
Canada and the churches
to tell our people
where
those children were buried.”

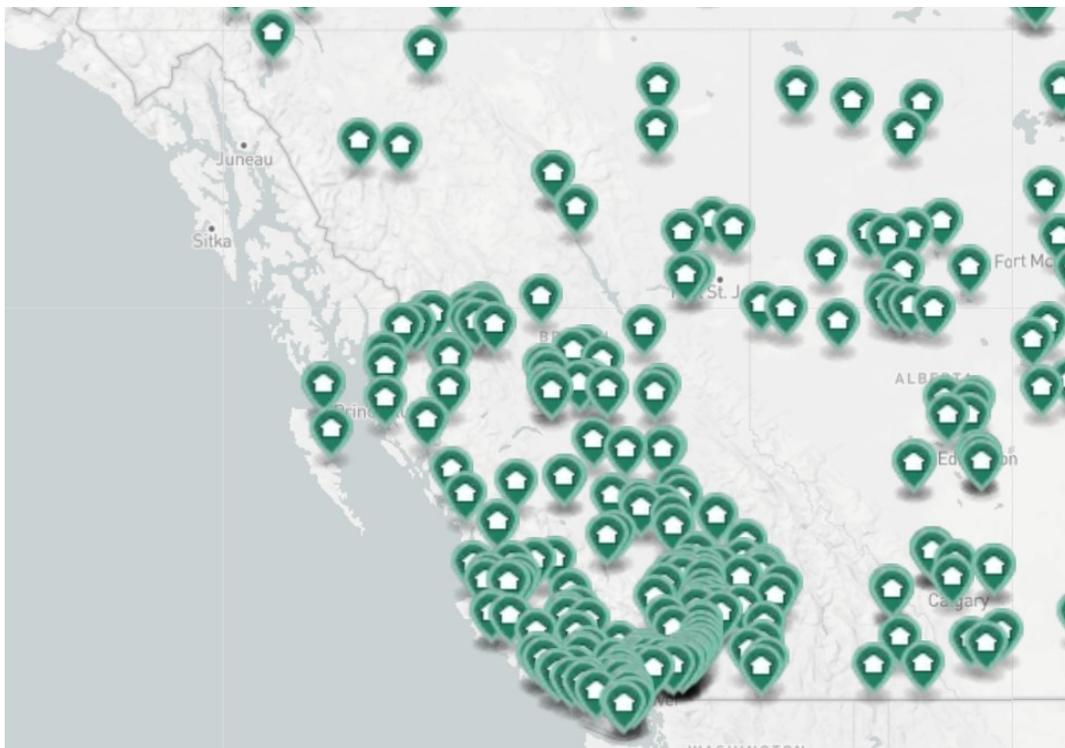
— Mike Cachagee,
Chapleau Cree First Nation
(Narine, 2008, p. 4, italics added)

Memorial Map

 This icon represents the location of residential schools.

 This icon represents the home communities of the students who never returned home from school.

 This icon represents the location of medical facilities where students were sent for treatment from residential school.



British Columbian communities of Residential School students who never returned home.

Note. NCTR (n.d.)

“There are still more children to be found.”

(NCTR, n.d., Background section, para. 3)

3.5.5. Two Hundred and Fifteen (Plus)

Ground-penetrating radar formally identified 215 unmarked graves at the site of Kamloops Indian Residential School in Tk'emlups te Secwépemc First Nation (Kamloops, BC) in May 2021 (Dickson & Watson, 2021).

I heard this information as I drove to work, to a public school, where no graveyard has been included in its design.

As I listened to the radio, words like “discovery,” “shock,” “unimaginable,” and “hidden” arrived again and again. These words unsettled me. Driving, I could contemplate.

These words indicate a particular privilege, one where the realities and legacies of Residential Schools exist at a detached distance—at best, intellectual understanding; at worst, ignorance.

These words signify more work needs to be done to disrupt the perfect stranger stance of the dominant culture, a stance so prevalent it allows for words like “discovery,” “shock,” “unimaginable,” and “hidden” to describe what is known, what is real, what is familiar. What endures. For some.

I think of those for whom the realities and legacies of Residential Schools exist personally, how this particular moment wounds, again.

I think about the immeasurable loss of children's lives, loss which sounds in Indigenous communities, not as a past event, but as a current one.

I think about those 215 children, in unmarked graves, and the countless other children like them, in other unmarked graves, across this place now called Canada.

I wonder if they will ever get to go home.

I think about Eagles and their Teaching.

I wonder if, now, more people will look beyond the road they travel.

3.5.6. Paths

Trusting the path will arrive to greet each foot fall—

stumbling into the unknown,
step after

step.

To keep walking.

The hardest part?

It can take a while for our paths to become clear.



From: Kelly <kelly@**.ca>
Sent: May 5, 2018 5:10 PM
To: Momsey <momsey@**.ca>
Subject: See?



From: Momsey <momsey@**.ca>
Sent: May 5, 2018 5:28 PM
To: Kelly <kelly@**.ca>
Subject: Re: See?
Did you buy TWO sets!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

From: Kelly <kelly@**.ca>
Sent: May 5, 2018 7:23 PM
To: Momsey <momsey@**.ca>
Subject: Re: See?

Well, I only bought ONE set of 20 pastels & TWO pastel holders because the tray that holds all 20 didn't fit in any carry cases & I wanted something that was a bit sturdier to lug the \$\$ & delicate pastels around. So it looks like twice as many but still only 20. If I win the lottery we'll go to the factory AND BUY ALL THE PRETTY THINGS









From: Momsey <momsey@**.ca>

Sent: May 6, 2018 7:39 AM

To: Kelly <kelly@**.ca>

Subject: Re: See?

What a good idea, I also am afraid of dropping them, they are a big investment. Was thinking we could melt wax in a small pot on the camp stove and play. Why not?



Chapter 4.

Incubation: Repatriation

4.1. First Insight

First Insight, a stage of intuition, involves creative thought that leads to seeking, deep thinking, and self-reflection. Ultimately, it invites metaphoric thinking and visioning of what to create.

4.1.1. Kitchen Window

I sit at my kitchen window. Beyond the translucent barrier, a murder of Crows plays in the wind. They ride an invisible roller coaster of up and down drafts, just on the edge of a small stand of Western fir.

Individuals alight temporarily on the tallest branches before they fling themselves, wings outstretched, with what seems complete abandon, into the joy of air.

They swirl, dive, twist, glide seemingly in a choreographed dance of near-misses, their trust in Wind breathtaking.

My kitchen fades away.

A schism emerges, the briefest of interludes. I feel the rush of Wind on my skin, the din of compressed air deafens, no sound but the thrum of my heart pulses through me.

I stretch and strain my arms. My body plunges, dizzyingly free. My eyes close.

I yield completely to the sky.

I open my eyes.

I sit at my kitchen window.

Crows belong to Wind, to the trees, to each other, and, they remind me with our joy-full flight, I to all of them.

“If we are not at peace,
it is only because we don't know we belong to each other.”

— Colleen Pierre (Dream Colloquium, personal communication, October 13, 2016), Katie Nation

Crows have reminded me of Rupert Ross (2014, p. 26) and his description of the interconnectedness of all things, of “being relationally,” of being “Embedded, enfolded, and nested” in the Universe. I originally sat at my kitchen window to think about the resonance of Colleen Pierre's words, and Crows, somehow knowing what I intended, decided to show me what I try to capture in awkward words.

4.2. Preparation/Immersion

Preparation/Immersion, a stage of inquiry, comprises of learning how best to enact the creative work, and exploring the relationships connected to the inquiry. Process and research oriented, this stage establishes the emotional and intellectual capacities required to bring to fruition the creative vision into product.

“We circle back—
not circle,
spiral,
for we don’t touch down in the same place.

Each spiral
we turn
and
ask the questions in new ways.”

— Gavin Van Horn (2021a, p. 164)

4.2.1. Spiral Back

Reader, do you remember I invited you to be wary of the written words that you read now? Not to let them trick you in believing their static nature, as paradoxically I write them in my now, but your then, words who yet still live on in me, beyond these keystrokes? Do you remember my writing asks of you to attend to a continuous interplay of future, past, present?

With these words, my goal, as ever, intends to invite you to perceive the dimensions of transformation of my (re)orientation to a pathway of Ecological Visioning (Cajete, 1994), my process-oriented journey, as I seek coherence in the centre of my being. Here I must ask you to pause and to consider time. Though you read these words in your now and I write them in this now, and each now exists separately as discrete experiences, yet, somehow, they also coalesce. My words find you “across space/time” (M. A. Meyer, 2013b, p. 95) so we may “be in sync with each other” (p. 95). We, my now and your now, co-exist simultaneously.

I ask these questions and offer this reminder here, now, so you may better understand my imperceptible process suspended in the space between each keystroke.

In this chapter I will share with you my profound experience of being called to witness the repatriation of Chief Harvey’s, Nim Kumusu’s, Ancestor. The development of this chapter began with my crafting a (re)presentation of being a witness for that ceremony in the form of a dialogic vignette, my earnest endeavour to share my heart-work. The dissonance of the sanctity of ceremony held in a museum’s basement, though conscientiously arranged by the museum staff, piqued curiosity within me and I wanted to know more about repatriation. Thus began my Preparation/Immersion within the scholarly realm of repatriation research, my attempt to establish my intellectual capacities to bring to fruition this stage of my inquiry, my scholarly work.

My experiences as a Faculty Associate and participant in SFU’s Dream Colloquium helped to tune my capacities to be a witness, to understand ceremony, and to be fully aware of my responsibilities so I might walk in a good way with Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu. Not until after I wrote this chapter, did I write chapters two and three. I bear/bare this process to help you understand though separate chapters, they nestle, one into the other, comprising the whole of my inquiry.

Now I spiral back and compose this section, after penning all three chapters, to invite you to see how I started at an end to better articulate a beginning. I invite you to see how I have come to know an end and a beginning exist simultaneously, spiralling one into the other, as I try to find my place, one foot in the scholarly terrain and one foot in the heart-work terrain.

4.2.2. Artifact ← → Treasure

artifact (n.)—

from 1821, *artefact*, artificial production, anything made or modified by human art, from Latin *arte*, by skill, and *factum*, thing made;

originally a word in anatomy to denote artificial conditions caused by operation; archaeological application in English from 1885 (in German from 1875)

(“Artifact,” n.d.)

“The first definition,
when applied to Indigenous cultural materials,
risks stripping the materials of
their essential connection
to specific Indigenous Peoples and their forms of expression.

The second definition
risks stripping them of their connection to the present:
it can be interpreted to mean that
ancient Indigenous artworks,
for example,
are remnants of the past
and disassociated
from the contemporary members of an Indigenous People...

Consult the Indigenous People at the
centre

of the content, and
ask them for the words
to describe
the purpose and significance
of what is at issue.”

— Gregory Younging (2018, p. 53)

“As [the Elders] remember, they begin to talk,
bringing the history, use and stories of these
treasures
out of concealment
and passing this knowledge onto
the next generations
to learn from.

Without the return of these cultural materials,
so much of this knowledge
would not come to the
surface
and subsequently would not be passed on.”

(Skidegate Repatriation & Cultural Committee, 2007a, para. 5)

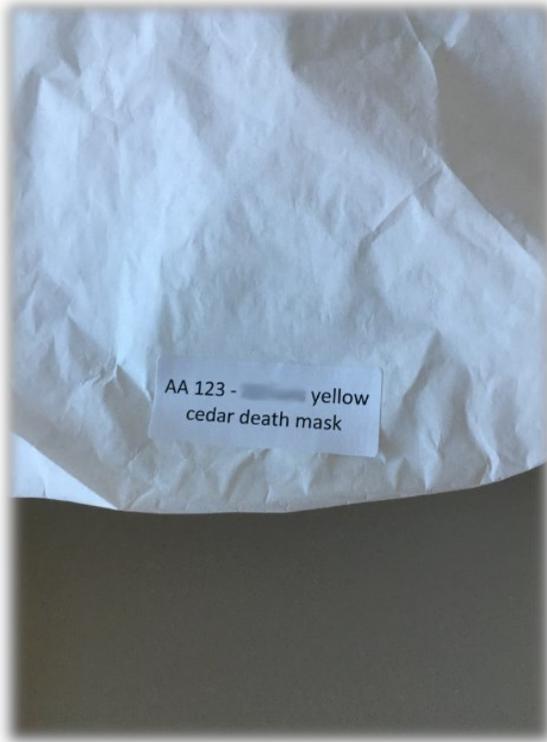
treasure (n.)—

from mid-12th C, *tesor*, general sense of anything valued; from Latin *thesaurus*, “treasury, treasure”

treasure (v.)—

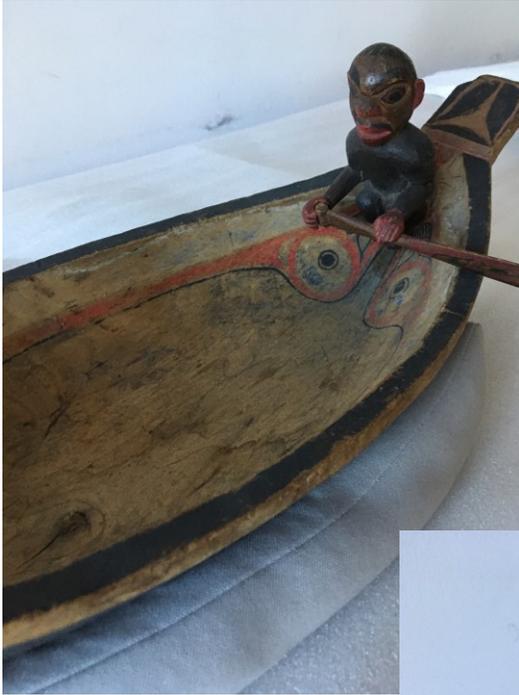
from late 14th C, to store up for the future; also figurative, to regard as precious, retain carefully in the mind

(“Treasure,” n.d.)



Windows flank the west side of the room. Its walls matte white, unadorned; its floors, pale, unremarkable, yet the light felt muted. Beyond the windows, a small courtyard bordered with juniper and sweet box shrubs, its two vacant benches awaiting arrivals. Bird, gray-bodied and black-headed, lands momentarily. Bird peers in at our gathering, then, once their presence known, flits away.

Plastic tables stand sentry on the north wall, empty except for a red cedar canoe and a yellow cedar death mask. White felt with scalloped edges their temporary resting place, the names of the hands who carved them unknown, a catalogue number their title.



A treasure created by Chief Harvey's, Nim Kumusu's, Ancestor. Though he brought his Ancestor home, the treasures stayed with the museum.

“Visitors often report
that standing in front of the
“object survivors”
in a museum display
is an experience of
profound absence.”

— Roger I. Simon, Claudia Eppert, Mark Clamen, Laura Beres (2000, p. 309)

“A feature of ... museums that always struck me as frustrating was the way displays would faithfully record the name of the collector and the date and place of collection, but sometimes fail entirely to give any information about the person or people who had made the object.”

— Joy Hendry (2005, p. 31)

4.2.3. Repatriation: Its Ugly Context

Repatriation in the place now called Canada tells a complicated and convoluted story, one with overlapping historical and contemporary chapters and characters. Simply, repatriation denotes the return of property, items, or human remains to the communities or countries of origin. However, repatriation also denotes the complex Canadian social and legal structures—the authors of this particular chapter in Canada’s colonial project—which justified the removal of property, items, or human remains, particularly from Indigenous Peoples, and continues to justify their confiscation.³⁴ The subtext of this story, as with most of the colonial project if one listens carefully, tells of Indigenous communities’ resistance, remembering, and resurgence in reclaiming material, spiritual, and ancestral property, treasures, and human remains.

Indigenous Peoples have existed with this place now called Canada since time immemorial.³⁵ British and European explorers and settlers arrived much later, bringing with them trade opportunities, imperialism, and disease. As the maritime fur trade abated in BC, British colonizers started to build settlements and develop resource-based economies, ultimately claiming the land itself (Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019). Not only did the British colonizers establish imperialism, they also brought epidemics, European diseases like small pox, which decimated up to 90% of Indigenous populations (McMahon, 2004; Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019). The Indian Act of 1876 made the remaining Indigenous Peoples wards of the state and established the reservation system, as well as subsuming other colonial laws designed to eliminate Indigenous culture through assimilation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019).

This ugly legislation passed by the Canadian government consolidated its regulations regarding Indigenous Peoples. Amended over time to address racist, assimilative policies like renaming Indigenous Peoples with European names, denying

³⁴ I choose to capitalize “People” and other words of cultural or spiritual significance like *Potlach*, following Gregory Younging’s (2018) recommendations that capitalization can be “a deliberate decision that redresses mainstream society’s history of regarding Indigenous Peoples as having no legitimate national identities; governmental, social, spiritual, or religious institutions; or collective rights” (p. 77).

³⁵ I choose *with* rather than *in* to honour the animacy of the Earth as its own being. Peoples of all ilk *co-exist with* the Earth rather than *exist on* or *in* the Earth as if discrete entities.

Indigenous Peoples the right to vote, or removing Indian status, it still exists today, though without succeeding in its original aim of “getting rid of the Indian problem” (B. Joseph, 2018, p. 94). Paternalistic attitudes which fueled the initial Indian Act morphed into “increasingly punitive rules, prohibitions, and regulations that dehumanized Indians” (B. Joseph, 2018, p. 8), such as the 1884 amendment to the Indian Act which banned cultural ceremonies like the Potlatch and Sundance ceremonies (Fisher, 2012; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; B. Joseph, 2018).

As a colonizing power, the federal government claimed “legal jurisdiction and control over the cultural heritage of those whom they would colonize” (Asch, 2008, p. 397). The federal government confiscated cultural items from Indigenous communities who could face imprisonment if they did not comply, and some Indigenous Peoples, under duress, relinquished their cultural and ceremonial items to avoid jail (Fisher, 2012; U'mista Cultural Centre, n.d.-b). For example, the federal government confiscated the Kwakwaka'wakw's³⁶ Potlatch collection as an act of colonialism, to intentionally disrupt “an especially vital part of Northwest Coast culture” (Fisher, 2012, p. 2). The Potlatch sustains and reinforces the Kwakwaka'wakw's cultural identity with its ceremonies, song, dance, storytelling, as well as the recognition of rites of passage like births, deaths, and weddings (Fisher, 2012; U'mista Cultural Centre, n.d.-b). For the Kwakwaka'wakw, the Potlatch nourishes their enduring history which “will be told the same way every time” (U'mista Cultural Centre, n.d.-b, para. 4) as their “history is always passed on in songs and dances so they will not change” (para. 4). Like the Sundance and the Longhouse, the Potlatch “went underground, giving the outward appearance that they had been undermined” (Younging, 2018, p. 17). The federal government maintained its potlatch ban until 1951, ultimately failing at the attempt to rupture nearly a century of cultural identity and intergenerational teaching and learning.

³⁶ “Ever since the white people first came to our lands, we have been known as the Kwakkewlths by Indian Affairs or as the Kwakiutl by anthropologists. In fact we are the Kwakwaka'wakw, people who speak Kwak'wala but who live in different places and have different names for our separate groups” (U'mista Cultural Centre, n.d.-c, para. 2).

“Forbidden by law to practice their own religion, [Indigenous Peoples] nearly lost an ancient worldview.

Forbidden to speak their languages, a universe of knowing vanished in a generation.”

— Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013, p. 367), Citizen Potawatomi Nation

“...to embrace the ancient is to evolve
with a sense of knowing where you come from.”

— CHiXapkaid, Michael Pavel (2013, p. 128), Skokomish

The federal government's appropriation of cultural and ceremonial items, "those objects [which] carry the very history" (Hendry, 2005, p. 215) of communities, may "be seen as nothing less than an attempt to take over the basis of their identity" (p. 215). Intending to hinder the ability to practice vital, cultural ways of knowing and being, coupled with its confiscation of cultural and ceremonial items, the federal government clearly resolved to breach Indigenous Peoples' robust cultural and spiritual heritages, to aggressively assimilate Indigenous Peoples into a Western conception of Canada. The Indian Residential School System, formalized in 1892 and maintained until 1996, further fractured and attempted to extinguish Indigenous ways of knowing and being by forcibly removing children from families and communities, denying generations of children their birthright of cultural, linguistic, and spiritual heritages, as well as the birthright of Elders and other community members to share those cultural, linguistic, and spiritual Teachings with the children (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Driven by imperialist social norms, these acts of legislation reinforced and propagated racist perceptions of Indigenous Peoples, allowing non-Indigenous communities to feel justified in claiming Indigenous cultural and ceremonial treasures and ancestral remains.

Due to decimated populations because of epidemics, their enforced confinement to reservations and residential schools, and therefore absence from broader society, the belief Indigenous Peoples were becoming extinct abounded in the non-Indigenous community. This idea of the "vanishing Indian" (King, 2003, p. 83)—a "popular perception" (p. 83) amongst settlers, clergy, and the militia—created a "collecting frenzy" (Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019, p. 8) of Indigenous cultural and ceremonial items and human remains. This era, the 1870s–1920s, became known as the "golden age" of museum collecting, "creating an increasing one-way flow of thousands of [Indigenous Peoples'] objects into Europe and the Western world" (Kuprecht, 2014, pp. 5–6). Anthropologists and ethnographers not only condoned, but actively sought to desecrate graves or sacred burial sites, often favouring the collection of *only* skulls and the abandonment of torsos, and to remove sacred items like totem poles or other ceremonial items, in order to study and preserve them (Fisher, 2012; B. G. Miller, 2018). Collecting intended to preserve Indigenous cultural heritage for the benefit of science, yet collecting also created financial profit and respected reputations for museums and private collectors, both of which endure (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021a; Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019).

“Where is the rest of the body?”

Where is the blood and the body?”

— Laura Sylvester, Spiritual Leader, Penelakut Nation,
on the reburial of her repatriated Ancestor
(B. G. Miller, 2018, p. 87)

A common and perpetual perception that Indigenous Peoples' "cultural objects, sites, stories, traditions and even ancestral remains have... been considered to be public domain" (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021, p. 12) further undergirds non-Indigenous communities' claims on Indigenous cultural heritage and cultural property.

Documentation to prove if the federal government, museums, or private collectors legitimately procured their collections suffers from a lack of consistency or even completion (Fisher, 2012). However, the unethical nature of confiscating cultural items, desecrating burial sites, and removing sacred items for the purposes of assimilation, science, profit, or reputation brings to question *any* possible legitimacy for their collections. Indigenous communities themselves also face challenges in trying to "prove" legitimate claims to cultural and ceremonial items.

For example, Canadian courts of law did not accept oral traditions as evidence until 1997, after the Delgamuukw case in British Columbia established the precedent (First Nations & Indigenous Studies The University of British Columbia, 2009a). Being a Peoples for whom written documentation of their histories did not exist, the dismissal of oral tradition as evidence maintained a significant impediment to establishing their claims. Clear bias and power imbalances still exist as Canadian law "maintains that colonizing European states acquired sovereignty" (Asch, 2008, p. 395) and thus "legislative power" (p. 395) over Indigenous Peoples. To attempt to understand Indigenous cultural heritage "in language and discrete categories familiar to Western thought" (Bell & Paterson, 2008, p. 6), does a kind of violence to Indigenous Peoples onto-epistemological understandings of concepts like ownership.

“*Shxwelí* is the life force that exists in all things.

Since all things are alive with *shxwelí*, they must not be taken for granted.”

(Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, 2003, p. 5)

Challenges exist in trying to find direct translations in Indigenous languages for “cultural heritage” as the closest versions relate to the sacred or knowing oneself (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021, p. 7). The “confines dictated by Western concepts of ownership” (Asch, 2008, p. 404) impact Indigenous communities as “ownership is not a universal construct” (Bell & Paterson, 2008, p. 6); rather, the concept of ownership “sets out a particular *relationship* in our culturally constructed world” (p. 6, italics added). In BC, there exists 34 languages and 93 different dialects comprising 50% of Canada’s total Indigenous languages (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021). This “exceptional diversity” (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021, p. 6) of Indigenous languages reflects the exceptional diversity within Indigenous communities and the territories they live, and thus with their relationships to cultural knowledge, practices, and values. An imposition of a Western conception of a common definition of Indigenous cultural heritage denies this diversity and denies how “Indigenous Peoples understand and describe cultural heritage according to their perspectives, traditions and languages” (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021, p. 7).

For example, Felix Solomon (2013), a Lummi carver, shares that historically everything created by Lummi carvers had purpose “but [creations] were carved on for identity” (p. 71). Those carved creations were not considered art, nor items for display “until the white man came and took [Lummi People’s] belongings; then they were in museums, and they turned into art” (Solomon, 2013, p. 71). If the Lummi understand all they create, whether utilitarian or ceremonial, as their very identity, how can the use of the word *property* or concept of *ownership* from a Western worldview possibly encompass what a cultural “treasure” (Skidegate Repatriation & Cultural Committee, 2007a) might mean to the Lummi Peoples?

Jordan Coble of the Snecwips Heritage Museum, a museum to celebrate sqilx^w culture, shares the museum honours treasures “as if they are living people” as they “have spirit to them” since “everything around us... is alive” (Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019, p. 12). This statement suggests the sylix (Okanagan) People understand being in relation with treasures, evoking responsibilities beyond a Western definition of property. Snecwips Heritage Museum (as cited in Landsby, n.d.) affirms: “our museum continues to provide a protected place for sqilx^w culture and heritage” (Snecwips Heritage Museum, 2020, para. 26), which “can also provide a final *home* for culturally significant objects of our ancestors” (para. 5; italics added).

“The planet is the epitome of a humble being,
with everything allowed the same opportunity to grow,
to become...

there are no lesser or greater beings or things.

There is only the whole.”

— Richard Wagamese (2011, p. 10), Ojibway

As Indigenous Peoples' cosmologies and epistemologies understand Creation "as something that includes and sustains *all* living things" (Younging, 2018, p. 25, italics added) with humanity as a part of Creation and responsible to care for it, the concept of ownership "has no context" (p. 25). Indigenous relationships to items "(are) not about ownership ... but rather about a connection to the item that cannot be broken or changed" (Fisher, 2012, p. 4), whereas the Common Law understanding of ownership means an item "is alienable or transferable to another owner" (p. 4). The use of the word "treasure" rather than "artifact" or "object" to denote cultural or ceremonial items further illuminates this difference between the two worldviews. Certainly, a Common Law, or Western, understanding of ownership does not include a recognition of the animacy of items. This onto-epistemological divide reflects a Western framework for understanding and interpreting via the abstract. Abstractions, once "articulated in action or behaviour" (Watts, 2013, p. 22), thus can transform into praxis, or the result of when theory and practice come together. Whereas an Indigenous framework reflects understanding and interpreting as "literal and animate extension(s)" (Watts, 2013, p. 22) of place, not abstractions. Therefore, it "is impossible to separate theory from praxis" (Watts, 2013, p. 22) in Indigenous onto-epistemologies as "complex theories are not distinct from place" (p. 22).

Western understanding of Indigenous cultural heritage often reflects Eurocentric values which position Indigenous Peoples and their cultural heritages "as objects open to analysis and consumption, rather than the creators, owners, interpreters and protectors of their own heritage" (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021, p. 8). As well, current "heritage paradigms" often reflect "exclusionary" perspectives, promoting "colonial values and meanings" over Indigenous conceptions of heritage (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021, p. 9). Colonial values include favouring tangible cultural heritage in policies and laws, like buildings, monuments, or items over living or intangible heritage, like stories, harvesting knowledge, or dances (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021). Living heritage does not receive the same recognition and protection in Canadian policies and laws as tangible heritage does since living heritage "does not fit into the distinct colonial categories" (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021, p. 10) of property and culture.

The "murky background" (Fisher, 2012, p. 2) of legislative and legal policies underscores the complexity of repatriation in Canada, and hints at its continued

murkiness. Canada does not yet have federal legislation to offer a consistent, national framework to guide repatriation. Currently, repatriation falls under the purview of the provinces and territories and their museums, both provincial/territorial and independent. For example, the Province of British Columbia does not have a repatriation act, though its Royal BC Museum has its own internal policies (Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019) as do other museums, such as the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia (2000). Alberta passed the first of its kind legislation in 2000 and 2008 to return sacred items to First Nations communities, the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act (FNSCORA) and the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Amendment Act respectively (Fisher, 2012; Whittam, 2015). In some instances, Indigenous communities' efforts for repatriation exist as part of treaty negotiations with Canada or a particular province or territory (Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019). These negotiations can result in agreements of formal sharing or loans, and may include custodial agreements, or how property, items, or human remains will be stored, accessed, and interpreted (Nanaimo Museum, 2020; Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019).

Upcoming Canadian federal legislation in the form of Bill C-391 (2019), Indigenous Human Remains and Cultural Property Repatriation Act,³⁷ had its first reading in the Canadian Senate, February 2018, and has been studied by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage as of June 2020 (Government of Canada, 2020). Bill C-391 attempts to provide for “the development and implementation of a national strategy to enable the return of Aboriginal cultural property to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada” (Summary section, p. ii). In the Third Reading document approved by the House of Commons in 2019, Bill C-391 would “implement a comprehensive national strategy to promote and support the return of Indigenous human remains and cultural property, wherever situated, to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada” (p. 1). Its aims include the following:

- a. implementation of a mechanism for Indigenous communities or organizations to “acquire or reacquire Indigenous human remains or cultural property” (Bill C-391, 2019, p. 2);

³⁷ This is the short title as approved by the House of Commons of Canada (Bill-C391, 2019). The long title is Bill C-391: An Act Respecting a National Strategy for the Repatriation of Aboriginal Cultural Property.

- b. encouragement of “owners, custodians or trustees” (p. 2) to return Indigenous human remains or cultural property to Indigenous communities and “support them in the process” (p. 2);
- c. recognition that preservation and access to Indigenous human remains or cultural property for “educational and ceremonial purposes are principles of equal importance” (p. 2);
- d. encouragement to consider “traditional ways of knowing rather than relying on strict documentary evidence” (p. 2) in relation to Indigenous human remains or cultural property;
- e. resolution of conflicting claims in ways that respect “Indigenous traditional processes and forms of ownership and that allows claimants to be self-represented” (p. 2).

Bill C-391 (2019) may help to rectify “outdated” laws and policies that have not “adequately address(ed) the interests and rights” (Fisher, 2012, p. 4) of Indigenous Peoples. Bill C-391 acts in accordance with Article 31 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP; United Nations, 2020).³⁸ Though UNDRIP carries no legal obligations, it “holds moral force as an international agreement and sets paramount ethical standards” (Younging, 2018, p. 26). Article 31 asserts Indigenous Peoples “have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage” (United Nations, 2020, p. 22). This means Canada, in “conjunction with indigenous peoples” (United Nations, 2020, p. 22), will fulfill its commitment to implement “effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights” (p. 22) with Bill C-391.

Bill C-391 (2019) may also be the “honourable way forward” (Asch, 2008, p. 407) to rectify “unduly” (p. 407) placing “the burden of proof respecting legal rights of control, repatriation, and protection of cultural heritage” (p. 408) on Indigenous communities. Encouraging “consideration of traditional ways of knowing rather than relying on strict documentary evidence” (Bill C-391, 2019, p. 2) in regards to repatriating property, items, or human remains insists Western structures envision possibilities of what “ownership claims” *could* mean: Indigenous Peoples’ assertion of culture through enactment and

³⁸ Canada voted against accepting UNDRIP at the United Nations when it was first proposed in 2007; it was later endorsed in 2010 (Younging, 2018; Last, 2019).

renewal of cultural knowledges and heritages, cultural rights and control over cultural heritages, and perpetuation of Indigenous museology.

As of May 30, 2019, Bill C-391 (2019) had not become law.

It seems we are still, here.

“...Indigenous Peoples are the owners of their heritage

and...

they must lead the work of managing, sharing and revitalizing it.”

(First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021, p. 31)

4.2.4. Repatriation as Cultural Assertion

Repatriation has become a new cultural and legal practice for many Indigenous Peoples, a process not rooted in tradition, but rather one which Indigenous communities must “draw from a thousand years of ways of doing things and apply them to a very abstract and new part of [their] lives today” (McMahon, 2004, 27:53). For example, in consultation with their Hereditary Leaders, the Haida created the concept of *Yahgudangang*, meaning to pay respect, to denote the re-burial of ancestral remains and the process of their ancestors’ repatriation (Skidegate Repatriation & Cultural Committee, 2007a). A multitude of reasons exists for Indigenous communities to reclaim material, spiritual, and ancestral property, items, and human remains, and for museums and private collectors to return them. Repatriation processes invite Indigenous communities to return “to their past to help build their future(s)” (Whittam, 2015, p. 507), and invite museums to stop “thinking as owners with rights” (Howarth, 2018, para. 8) and to start “thinking as custodians with obligations” (para. 8). For Indigenous Peoples, enduring the arduous process of repatriating cultural items or ancestral remains enacts relational accountability with their kin; enacts and renews cultural knowledge and heritage; enacts and renews cultural rights and control over cultural heritage; and, stimulates and sustains Indigenous museology.

Enacts Relational Accountability

The return of ancestors’ cultural items and remains to their places of origins enacts relational accountability for the home communities, reinforcing and renewing Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Stewardship of repatriated items and human remains invites communities to be of service to their ancestors and to themselves, “to fulfil their kinship obligations and expectations” (Krmpotich, 2010, p. 159). Repatriation impacts not just the present by redressing past wrongs, but also the future by creating possibilities for communities to fortify and sustain their cultural heritage and identities (Whittam, 2015). As an example, the Haidas’ repatriation of over 460 ancestral remains from Canada, the United States, and Europe has involved a multi-generational effort spanning over 10 years, and still continues (Skidegate Repatriation & Cultural Committee, 2007b). This intergenerational effort invited “shared experiences Haidas can draw upon in their constructions and affirmations of kinship relations in the present and

with their ancestors” (Krmpotich, 2010, p. 176), which ultimately informs future Haida culture and identity.

Developing repatriation processes and ceremonial protocols to honour their ancestors has been an arduous effort, but “healing is visible on the faces of the Haida community” (Skidegate Repatriation & Cultural Committee, 2007d, para. 6) knowing their “ancestors are at peace” (para. 6) having returned to Haida Gwaii in a good way. The enactment of collaborative, communal relational accountability to their ancestors has resulted in “Many more people [who] have begun to look towards and embrace traditions that until Repatriation began, only a handful of people participated in” (Skidegate Repatriation & Cultural Committee, 2007d, para. 5), a clear indicator of the reinforcement and renewal of Haida ways of knowing and being.

“History tells us
that it was
the missionaries
that came
that had our people
come down
to the waterfront here and

burn

the artifacts we had,

burn

the masks,

burn

the rattles,

the blankets,

and it really hurt me

to think

that this

had happened

to us...

I was really happy to see
some of the artifacts that I did in other museums,
but here in the community
I think more or less
the only artifacts

we have
are the bark-strip trees
and you know,
the art that's just

reviving

within the past ten years.

So, I feel
sorry for my people for
missing out
on all of that

knowledge
and
history

and I just
can't

imagine

what we would have
had

to put into that museum
today

if

those fires
weren't
built,

if
our people
weren't
encouraged

to do that then.”

— Ross Neasloss
Hereditary Chief, Kitsoo/Xai'xais

(Von Puttkamer, 2009, 01:04)

Enacts and Renews Cultural Knowledge and Heritage

The return and retrieval of material cultural items invites possibilities for Indigenous communities to learn from their ancestors. To be without ancestral legacies, either in material or oral tradition form, “is to drift and to have no emotional foundation upon which to create, cultivate, and appreciate a shared identity within a community” (Pavel, 2013, p. 128). These repatriated items “might represent skills and crafts no longer remembered or known within [a] community” (Fisher, 2021, p. 2), or they could help younger generations better understand the items “before the [E]lders with specific related knowledge pass on” (p. 2). As an example, the Haida Elders visit the cultural treasures returned to Haida Gwaii which stimulates their memories. Then, “they begin to talk, bringing the history, use and stories of [the] treasures out of concealment” (Skidegate Repatriation & Cultural Committee, 2007) and share their knowledge to subsequent generations. The presence of the material treasures encourages the Elders to remember to remember.

Susan Point (2014), an artist of the Musqueam People, began her study of Coast Salish artistry from a series of serigraphs by a Coast Salish artist, and then deepened her understanding of Coast Salish form by studying items housed in the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia (Kew et al., 2000). The “surviving examples of [her] ancestral legacy” in the forms of material items and oral traditions invited Point and her artistry to be “nurtured by generations of [her] people” (Point, 2014, pp. 2–3), just as the Haida Elders were invited to remember to remember. The repatriation of material cultural items sustains, reinforces, and renews shared cultural knowledge and heritage in Indigenous communities.

Enacts and Renews Cultural Rights and Control Over Cultural Heritage

Repatriation also enacts and renews cultural rights and control over cultural heritage (Whittam, 2015). Protecting and controlling cultural heritage “is fundamental to the continuity, revival and survival of [Indigenous Peoples’] cultural identity in the face of past and ongoing forces of colonization” (Bell & Paterson, 2008, p. 3). Not considered “nation-states” (Asch, 2008, p. 395) in Canada, “the law assumes that [First Nations, Métis, and Inuit] do not have the legitimate right to ultimate authority over decisions that affect their cultural heritage” (p. 395); thus, the state of Canada “is considered to hold legitimate authority over [Indigenous Peoples’] cultural heritage” (p. 395). This “outdated

and Eurocentric construct” (Asch, 2008, p. 408), though foundational in law, has been challenged by Indigenous communities who assert their cultural rights and responsibilities in seeking repatriation of their cultural items and ancestral human remains.

Like Canada, many museums and countries around the world do not have official repatriation legislation or make deaccessioning collections illegal, clearly hindering the efforts of Indigenous communities locating and repatriating items of cultural heritage and even ancestral remains (Hendry, 2005; Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019). For example, legislation bans national museums in England to repatriate cultural items, burial goods, or deaccession of any of their collections, though recent amendments to the British Museum Act allow for repatriation of human remains (Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019, p. 56). This slight shift in the British Museum Act reflects museology’s slow acceptance of the “ethical position” (B. G. Miller, 2018, p. 89) of repatriation, supporting the “right of communities to restore and reframe their communities through re-engaging with valued and sometimes sacred belongings” (p. 89).

Though the moral and ethical drive for museums and organizations to return ancestral, human remains or items of ceremonial sanctity slowly becomes more evident, reticence to return items of cultural heritage still persists (Fisher, 2012; Hendry, 2005; Krmpotich, 2010; B. G. Miller, 2018; Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019; Skidegate Repatriation & Cultural Committee, 2007). This “posterity position” (B. G. Miller, 2018, p. 88), whereby museums and organizations emphasize “protecting and “preserving [their] collections for the future” (p. 88), reinscribes and reinforces colonial power dynamics. Fear exists among museums that “opening the floodgates [of repatriation] will deprive them of a large part of their collections” (Hendry, 2005, p. 51) since the repatriation process could not only apply to human remains but to the many items obtained under questionable circumstances. For example, for the Haida alone, over 900 cultural treasures exist in the British Museum, over 800 cultural treasures exist in the American Museum of Natural History, and over 1200 cultural treasures exist in the Canadian Museum of Civilization (Skidegate Repatriation & Cultural Committee, 2007). The Skidegate Repatriation and Cultural Committee list a further ten museums or organizations which have Haida cultural treasures still in their care (Skidegate Repatriation & Cultural Committee, 2007). It begs the question: how many thousands of

items of Indigenous cultural heritage exist in basements, drawers, cupboards, or on shelves around the world, not just for the Haida, but for *all* Indigenous communities?

Much work still needs to be done on the part of museums, but “sometimes quite subtle, but nevertheless very important” (Hendry, 2005, p. 32) work does occur in an attempt to transform museums. Museums have started to show a recognition of the moral and ethical responsibilities they hold housing cultural items, especially in relation to human remains or items of ceremonial sanctity. For example, some museums no longer display ancestral remains, ceremonial or sacred items, or will create proxies for items of significance (Hendry, 2005). Many museums now consult with local Indigenous communities and provide information about the consultation process for the cultural items and heritage they display, as well as often featuring Indigenous languages as part of their curation process (Hendry, 2005). Importantly, a shift from positioning Indigenous Peoples and their cultures as existing in the past occurs for some institutions. For example, some museums infuse contemporary information and cultural items or artistic endeavours, including interactive displays with actual Indigenous voices sharing cultural knowledge to show Indigenous Peoples still exist and their cultures live today (Hendry, 2005). Some museums change verb tenses from the past to present tense in signage to describe Indigenous Peoples and their cultures, or no longer display Indigenous Peoples and their cultural heritages with the natural history sections of their institutions (Hendry, 2005).

“...museum employees are still very often trained
in the methods created and approved of
by Western museologists...

...This is perhaps inevitable if the model of cultural display is in fact a ‘museum’,
and it applies even more strongly
if Native people are given
as a condition of repatriating their own objects
that they build such a place...
constructed to conform
to the requirements
of ‘proper’ museum conservation techniques.”

— Joy Hendry (2005, pp. 45–46)

“Our work that was done,
say, a hundred years ago or a hundred and fifty years ago,
when it was being collected for museums —
that work was Coast Salish Carving done in secret
by what they now call a secret society.
So our work was very well kept.

There is still a lot of our work that belonged to our people
that never got collected
and is still sitting in closets,
wrapped in old towels and sheets.

Now that I’ve learned a little bit about the world of museums
and keeping the climate stable,
I wish some of these old pieces
could be taken care of better,
because they are decaying.”

— Felix Solomon (2013, pp. 74–75), Lummi

Stimulates and Sustains Indigenous Museology

In some ways, “a new era of reconciliation that involves repatriation and creating meaningful relationships between museums and Indigenous communities” (Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019, p. ix) has started. Repatriation “is ultimately a human experience” and “relationships make the difference ... in building greater understanding of and respect for the Indigenous repatriation movement” (Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019, p. 49). When Indigenous communities work carefully with museums, the museums’ policies and practices “no longer override [Indigenous Peoples’] beliefs and practices” (Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019, p. 50) as museums “begin to understand” (p. 50) Indigenous Peoples “on [their] own terms” (p. 50). A desire to represent themselves on their own terms has led to the development of Indigenous museology. Indigenous museums and cultural centres can become places where Indigenous communities can “be in charge of their own representations and can choose their own ways of doing that representing” (Hendry, 2005, p. 215). Indigenous museology reinforces, renews, and asserts identity in that Indigenous Peoples speak of the Peoples, for the Peoples, by the Peoples.

Cultural centres emerged in BC in the 1970s as part of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs’ (UBCIC) land claim strategies (Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre, 2010; First Nations & Indigenous Studies The University of British Columbia, 2009a; Stó:lō Nation, n.d.). A collective of First Nations, the UBCIC formed in response to Canada’s White Paper of 1969 to challenge its failure to address Indigenous Peoples’ concerns and its intention to promote “cultural genocide” (First Nations & Indigenous Studies The University of British Columbia, 2009b, para. 2). A policy paper, *the White Paper*, proposed eliminating Indian Status, dissolving the Department of Indian Affairs, and abolishing the Indian Act among other intentions (First Nations & Indigenous Studies The University of British Columbia, 2009b). If enacted, *the White Paper* would fully assimilate all Indigenous Peoples by denying their special legal status with Canada since Canada would “absolv(e) itself of its responsibility for historical injustices and of its obligation to uphold treaty rights” (First Nations & Indigenous Studies The University of British Columbia, 2009b, para. 16). *The White Paper* activated a collaborative political response by Indigenous Peoples in BC, including the conception of a provincial cultural education centre in 1972 (Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre, 2010).

“Repatriation has moved from being a word, a concept, an idea,
to being a call to action.

There is now a sense of urgency.”

— Jordan Coble, Westbank First Nation, Syilx Nation
(Coble, 2018, p. 23)

Since their emergence, Indigenous cultural centres and museums now proliferate in BC as well as throughout Canada (Hendry, 2005; Royal British Columbia Museum, 2019). Indigenous-centred cultural centres and museology indicates the claiming of “spaces to tell [Indigenous Peoples’] stories, a much better situation than when their stories, along with their objects, were entirely appropriated by others” (Hendry, 2005, p. 52). It also indicates assertion of control and reinforcement of cultural identity. For example, the mandate of the U’mista Cultural Centre of Alert Bay, BC, “is to ensure the survival of all aspects of the cultural heritage of the Kwakwaka’wakw” (U’mista Cultural Centre, n.d.-a, para. 1). In the Kwak’wala language, the word U’mista contains the meaning “something precious returned” (Hendry, 2005, p. 95). Naming their cultural centre in such a way acknowledges the result of decades of effort, negotiations, and diplomacy by many people to repatriate their cultural treasures (U’mista Cultural Centre, n.d.-a). The Kwakwaka’wakw view the cultural centre as a “symbol of the survival” (Hendry, 2005, p. 95) of the community, which now houses the Potlatch Collection, the “confiscated treasures” (U’mista Cultural Centre, n.d.-a, para. 4) from Canada, the United States, and England.

Similarly, the Stó:lō Nation,³⁹ support the Stó:lō Material Culture Repository, a library, archives, and repository which houses over 16 000 cultural items held in trust on behalf of all Stó:lō (Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, 2016). The Halq’eméylem phrase, the language of the Stó:lō, “*Xólhmet te mekw’stám ít kwelát*” (We have to look after everything that belongs to us), reflects their vision “to promote the integrity and well-being of our Stó:lō heritage in all its forms” (Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, 2003, pp. 1-2). Both the Kwakwaka’wakw and the Stó:lō can be viewed as “examples of Indigenous Peoples retrieving their history and reclaiming control of their identity” (Hendry, 2005, p. 215) through the stewardship of their cultural treasures.

³⁹ The Stó:lō Nation comprises 11 First Nations communities, over a large Stó:lō territory, from Yale to Langley, BC (Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, 2016).

“There’s a strong teaching
that still happens,

and it still happens today,

if you will let it happen,

if you can be true to yourself
and let it happen.

The teaching is that

you

have to do

your

work.

And there are no shortcuts

to finishing.

You have to do your work.”

— Felix Solomon (2013, p. 74), Lummi

4.2.5. We Need a (K)new Story

Though reclaiming material, spiritual, and ancestral treasures and human remains invites cultural empowerment, repatriation cannot be understood as a panacea for over 500 years of colonial disruption to Indigenous communities' cultural heritages. Though working as a community to achieve a common goal can have positive effects, those unifying effects may not necessarily be long-term.

For example, the repatriation of ancestral remains from the Canadian Museum of Civilization to the Algonquin Anishinabeg community of Kitigan Zibi highlights the very real complexities within Indigenous communities (Whittam, 2015). Ten different communities comprise the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, with internal politics "fractured through the effects of colonialism" (Whittam, 2015, p. 506). Though the process of repatriating ancestral remains "increased [a] sense of community" and "contributed to help increase community capacity" (Whittam, 2015, p. 505), it did so only "temporarily" (p. 505). In some ways, the repatriation process illuminated varying viewpoints, religious and spiritual beliefs, and opinions within the diverse community. For some, the repatriation process became "an important moment in the community's history" (Whittam, 2015, p. 506), and some viewed it as "less significant" (p. 506), while others still "blame the buried remains for bad luck or negative events which have happened in the community" (p. 506). Though the process of repatriation provided the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg with a common goal, it alone cannot heal long-standing fractures within its community, nor other communities like it.

The complex and convoluted story of repatriation continues, containing many more characters, many more chapters, and many more authors yet to be known. Historically, Indigenous Peoples "receive the least benefit from research conducted on their heritage" (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021, p. 12), as research equates to a "process that exploits ... their culture, their knowledge and their resources" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. xi). The word research has become "one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 1), and this coarse connotation reflects the "legacy of mistrust and inequality" (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021, p. 8) between Indigenous Peoples and the institutions which hold responsibility for the stewardship, management, and interpretation of Indigenous cultural objects. Asserting Indigenous perspectives and worldviews regarding the repatriation of their cultural

heritages comes with the real risk of their claims being dismissed or avoided, and processes prolonged as institutions can hide behind inadequate legislation and policies (Asch, 2008; First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021). Though some institutions have developed a more sympathetic stance regarding repatriating human remains and ceremonial or sacred objects, the sheer amounts of Indigenous Peoples' cultural heritage still housed in governmental, museum, and academic institutions throughout the world dizzies comprehension.

Fostering relationships with these institutions provides Indigenous Peoples more success in repatriation efforts, yet it still stands that these institutions must “recognize [Indigenous Peoples] as the original stewards of their cultural materials” (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2021, p. 12) and that Indigenous Peoples “must lead the work of managing, sharing, and revitalizing” (p. 31) their cultural heritages. Much work needs to be done, and in many cases continued to be done, on the part of Western institutions to better understand, and therefore honour, accept, and implement Indigenous worldviews in respectful ways. The dissonance of understanding what may be classified as *property* from one perspective, and *treasure* from another perspective, for example, illuminates the need for Western institutions to engage more deeply with Two-Eyed Seeing, or the ability to recognize the strengths of *both* Indigenous *and* Western ways of knowing and being (Bartlett et al., 2012).

Colonialism and aggressive assimilation policies have made it so Indigenous Peoples have had no choice but to engage in Two-Eyed Seeing: protecting and sustaining Indigenous ways of knowing and being from encroaching Western ways of knowing and being. Simultaneously, Indigenous Peoples have had to learn to exist and thrive within Western ways of knowing and being, despite continuing, inherent racism and, at times, calculated cultural genocide. Concurrently, colonialism and aggressive assimilation insulate Western worldviews as little can challenge its power, and thus its singular perspective. Though intrinsically self-protective and defensive, to colonize and aggressively assimilate denies Indigenous worldviews to fully permeate Western capacities, ultimately limiting its field of vision. How much better could the Western world see if it viewed with two eyes?

Power protects. Settler colonialism and the power structures which give it its shape exist not as a reflection of some distant past. Settler colonialism and its power

structures endure, manifesting in very real, contemporary ways, impacting Indigenous Peoples most acutely. The continued separation of Indigenous Peoples from their cultural heritages—stored, catalogued, and objectified in various Western institutions—offers but one example. Separation from cultural heritages creates barriers to, and potentially denies, Indigenous Peoples fulsome access to their Ancestors’ treasures, and thus, to ways of knowing and being living in those treasures. Yet, the commitment to reunite with those treasures also remains. Though settler colonialism and its power structures endure, so too do Indigenous Peoples and their unique, diverse cultural heritages *in spite of* settler colonialism. The arduous processes of repatriating cultural treasures offer one manifestation of this resilience and sustainment of relational accountability to Ancestors and Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

To position repatriation as an us/them dichotomy—whether the “us” reflects Western institutions protecting their *collections* or the “us” reflects Indigenous Peoples seeking their *treasures*—reinscribes colonial power structures. An us/them dichotomy locks Western perceptions of ownership of “property” as individualistic and as non-animate, sellable chattel, whose value can be quantified within an economic system. An us/them dichotomy creates barriers to the invitation for Western perceptions to discern “property” as “treasure,” related to a place and to a People, as animate beings, evoking accountability whose value challenges quantification as it rests within culture and relationality. We need a (k)new story.

We need a (k)new story, which recognizes and honours difference without collapsing one into the other (Donald, 2012b), to “bring together our different ways of knowing ... [and] to use *all* our understandings so we can leave the world a better place” (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 340, italics added). Two-Eyed Seeing invites collaborative pathways to Many-Eyed Seeing (V. L. Kelly Lecture, personal communication, October 31, 2015), or the endless possibilities of what could be if we but actively work in good ways to enlarge our circle of belonging rather than compress it in acts of exclusion (Ralston Saul, 2009). The subtext of this (k)new story, if one listens carefully, would tell of the good work done, good work done in harmonious ways.

4.3. Incubation

Incubation, a stage of transformation, parallels First Insight but with much more depth. Whereas First Insight can be understood as perceptual, Incubation can be understood as spiritual. Incubation stimulates expressions of healing and spirituality, often through ceremony or ritual to honour the vision or the creative work produced.

“Everybody I called was all there.
Doing something like that is powerful in its own way.”

— Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu

“...our call to Witness is the highest job we go to do.
To be a Witness, it rarely happens.”

— Curtis, Coast Salish

“Bentwood boxes served the peoples of the Northwest Coast in death as well as in daily life;
when a person died, the body (in a flexed position) was placed in a bentwood box,
with the head at the corner where the steam-bent plank was joined,
to allow the soul to escape through the crack.”

— Hilary Stewart (1984, p. 87)

4.3.1. Bird

Windows flank the west side of the room. Its walls matte white, unadorned; its floors, pale, unremarkable, yet the light felt muted. Beyond the windows, a small courtyard bordered with juniper and sweet box shrubs, its two vacant benches awaiting arrivals. Bird, gray-bodied and black-headed, lands momentarily. Bird peers in at our gathering, then, once their presence known, flits away.

Plastic tables stand sentry on the north wall, empty except for a red cedar canoe and a yellow cedar death mask. White felt with scalloped edges their temporary resting place, the names of the hands who carved them unknown, a catalogue number their title.

A Bentwood chest lay in the centre of the room, the honeyed-cedar an ember of life in the inert space.

Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu, sings the Traveller's Song. Drum vibrates in unison.

Sacred harmony.

We follow the museum staff whose feet know the way. We travel through open spaces, deliberately lit. Black and putty-flecked carpeted floors under our feet, we pass walls adorned with carefully curated images. Through a push-bar door, we leave behind the orchestrated quiet. Here a hallway, exposed concrete now our path. Lifeless fluorescent light flickers above. The walls become closer, a noticeable contraction. The sound bare and hollow.

Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu, trails behind the staff, we behind him. The abalone shells of his regalia softly sing as he walks, a lingering note of the Traveller's Song. The tender sound might be lost but our voices naturally temper and hush. The Bentwood chest rests on a worn dolly, trusting. Gentle hands of the living Ancestors guide the way, mindful of each step, of each corner.

The hallway winds along, a passage dotted with other doorways, other routes. We come to a junction. To the south, passage back to the public spaces, to deliberate light and sound; to the north, passage to the edge of the building, to the place where inside and outside converge. We turn north.

We arrive in the loading bay. To our right, a skiff of dented cardboard boxes barricades us from the drop below. To the left, more boxes, more containers, a haphazard purpose in their placement. Beyond the clutter, a distant window offers faint light. Directly in front of us a substantial metal door, its rollers affixed to the cavernous ceiling above. Next to it, a nondescript door, scuffed from years of use. Two abrupt steps lead to where trucks can back in and out with ease, depositing and collecting their cargo. Industrial-gray cement floors and walls cocoon us.

The gap where the metal door does not quite meet the floor glows. Outside a brilliant autumnal sun beckons the door to open, the sky cloudless and sea-blue. We naturally disperse, finding places to stand amongst the jumble. The Bentwood chest waits patiently at the head of the stairs, their living Ancestor sitting next to them, arm resting lovingly atop the living cedar.

The metallic clatter of the ascending door punctuates the space. A torrent of light cascades to the Bentwood chest, an offering of warmth and sustenance. The Bentwood chest shimmies for the briefest of moments.

The once distinct contours blur, become dewy, extend, stretch, reach. The Bentwood chest and the light merge. They meld.

Effervescent fusion.

“You haven’t seen sunshine in a while, eh?”

A joyful laugh and tender pat from the living ancestor suspends my temporary ability to see this vibrational harmony. Yet, somehow, I know the Ancestor’s Spirit heeds the call of the Traveller’s Song, tracks the lingering notes which sound the journey home.

Was it a trick of the light?

I don’t think so.

“That’s the moment Spirit left to go home.”

— Curtis, Coast Salish



Drum, crafted and gifted to the museum by Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu, to commemorate the Repatriation of his Ancestor. I thank Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu, for allowing me to share this gift with you.

“When Harvey was talking, he said he painted four of the five crests on the drum.

I’m not sure why he would do that.”

“So the museum has to find out the other clan.”

Raven

Black Fish (Orca)

Dogfish

Eagle (the Eagle has nothing to eat)

Wolf

4.4. Learnings

Learnings, a stage of completion, produces and shares the creative work, the product of the visioning. This stage requires determining how to share and defend the creative work, but it also requires accepting the critique of others. Learnings engenders a sense of self-confidence as it necessitates understanding and defending the integrity of the creative process.

“All flourishing is mutual.”

— Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013, p. 20), *Citizen Potawatomi Nation*

4.4.1. It/Their

Beyond the windows, a small courtyard bordered with juniper and sweet box shrubs, its two vacant benches awaiting arrivals. A bird, gray-bodied and black-headed, lands momentarily. It peers in at our gathering, then, once its presence known, flits away.

I labour over this sentence. Two words cause me pause, invite me to stop. To listen to their call. How easy for me to dwell in the nouns, to find familiarity, to recognize their presence as *so*. Yet. Yet a whisper lingers. My fingers stumble, slow, a knowing between them and the keyboard insists I pause, insists I stop. Whose eyes will even see the traces of the struggle, suspended there, in those two words? Whose eyes but mine own? I cannot do it. I cannot leave the sentence. *It* and *its* sound their existence. No. NO. The gray-bodied, black-headed bird: a Being in its own right. There! Again! *Its*. A Being in *its* own right. *Its* lives in me, skulks, ever-present. *Its* appears even when I try to turn away, when I try to see from these other eyes, to listen with other ears. I speak the language of objects, its fluency effortless, its syntax my very knowing. The gray-bodied, black-headed Bird—a Being in *their* own right. *Their* own right. *Their*. *Their* mirrors Bird's dignity, a dignity bestowed for being a Being. I hesitate still. The sentence does not feel right. No, no, it does not *sound* right. Though I try to tune myself, *their* ricochets, clatters, clangs. *Their* jangles in my ears. I want to lift *their* off the page. At the very least, I want to replace *their* with *her* or *him*. I've been schooled, schooled in ways invisible but always seen, in ways unspoken but always heard, like the air under Bird's wings or the breath in my body.

4.4.2. A (K)new Story?

I learn from M. A. Meyer (2013b) Indigenous worldviews arise from verbs, not nouns, from relationality, not detachment: “*Everything is alive and we are all relatives*” (p. 100, italics in original).

Everything is alive. Humans exist in a world where “life sustains life” through “reciprocal inter-dependency and cyclical renewability” (Tully, 2018, p. 98). We exist as but one member of the world, responsible to “co-sustain the forms of life with which [we] are interdependent” (Tully, 2018, p. 98). We exist in a world of “symbiosis on a global scale” (Tully, 2018, p. 97), a world of “life, for life’s sake” (Cajete, 1994, p. 44). “Everything—a rock, a tree, a plant, a mountain, an animal, a bird, an insect—(has) its unique expression of life and way of Spirit” (Cajete, 1994, p. 75).

We are all relatives. Humans exist where “the world is alive and has an agency of its own” (Borrows, 2018, p. 52), where “plants, animals, and other entities ... have rights of their own” (Cajete, 1994, p. 89). Our reciprocal interdependence, our place in world-wide symbiosis insists we have responsibility “for maintaining a conscious relationship with those things human life depend(s) on for survival” (Cajete, 1994, p. 89). This “dynamic interdependence” (M. A. Meyer, 2013b, p. 97) means when “we touch the Earth, we touch ourselves” (Wagamese, 2011, p. 3).

My child feet did not learn this ecological stance, this “spiritual orientation” (Cajete, 1994, p. 89). My child feet were grounded in another place, another orientation. My adult feet try. My adult feet try to stand with this terrain, to be guided on this path, to walk alongside these Teachers.

Verbs express being. From the Old French, *verbe* means “word of God” which comes from Latin, *verbum*, “a word” (“Verb,” n.d., para. 2), originating from *were-* “to speak” (para. 2). Thus, *verb* denotes the breath of God, the breath of Spirit. *Being.* When “consciously formed and activated” (Cajete, 1994, p. 43) through language and thought,

our breath acts as an expression of Spirit, “the deep animating principle found in matter” (M. A. Meyer, 2003, p. 60). Through our breath we verb the world.

Yet English, a language of nouns, positions the non-human world as *thing*: the “only way to be animate, to be worthy of respect and moral concern, is to be a human” (Wall Kimmerer, 2013, p. 57). English lacks a grammar of animacy (Borrows, 2018; Wall Kimmerer, 2013). Rather, English supports and maintains a Western worldview of “predictable empiricism” (M. A. Meyer, 2013b, p. 98), of relating to the world in “mathematical, technical, capitalistic, and positivistic” (p. 98) structures. If grammar “is just the way we chart relationships in language” (Wall Kimmerer, 2013, p. 57), lacking a grammar of animacy reinforces a Western worldview which has not yet fully accepted “life...pulses through *all* things” (p. 55, italics added).

As an example, English does not use “the same words to address the living world as we use for our family” (Wall Kimmerer, 2013, p. 55), which “robs” (p. 55) the living world of “selfhood and kinship” (p. 55). Calling Bird an *it* rather than a *who* objectifies Bird, imposes a barrier to kinship, while simultaneously “absolving ourselves of moral responsibility” (Wall Kimmerer, 2013, p. 57) to Bird. Calling Bird a *who* rather than an *it* animates Bird, invites a network of kinship, while simultaneously “infer(ring) the *intentional quality* of connection” (M. A. Meyer, 2013b, p. 98, italics in original), and thus responsibility.

That we exist as independent of the more-than-human world reflects a particular conception, an idea so powerful it positions other epistemological possibilities as without merit. Though ancient and enduring in Indigenous worldviews, understanding the “notion that a realm of unseen connecting patterns exist and we are the causal linkages that alter its capacity” (M. A. Meyer, 2013b, p. 97) has only begun in quantum sciences. This (k)new idea, bolstered by the quantum sciences, extends Western worldviews, helps to establish ways of thinking and being, and acts as the beginnings of a “cultural empiricism” (M. A. Meyer, 2013b, p. 99) to complement “rational empiricism” (p. 99). Cultural empiricism invites the ability to “see patterns develop themselves and then intersect, fractal and converge with others in an infinite array of evolving life” (M. A. Meyer, 2013b, p. 99) through a “heightened sense of context” (p. 99). Cultural empiricism enacts a recognition of humans’ “reciprocal inter-dependency and cyclical renewability” (Tully, 2018, p. 98) with the more-than-human world.

Our more-than-human world tells us reciprocal interconnection persists for all of Creation if we would but listen. Listening requires humility. Listening requires a recognition there exists more than one way to speak, more than one way to attend. Through the work of scientists like Wall Kimmerer (2013) and philosophers like M. A. Meyer (2013b), challenges to the “myopia of our independently trained minds” (p. 98) have started to unearth the assumptions and presuppositions only one form of speaking and listening demand, particularly in the sciences.

For example, measuring Plant talk with the mechanisms of Animal talk insists plants do not speak (Wall Kimmerer, 2013). But do Plants really not speak, or does our understanding of the “potential for plants” (Wall Kimmerer, 2013, p. 19) diminish when viewed only through the “lens of animal capacity” (p. 19)? How do we listen well enough so Indigenous epistemologies, “new old way(s)” (M. A. Meyer, 2013b, p. 98), may “synergize with classical views of science” (p. 98), producing stances and orientations greater together than if disparate? How do we listen well enough to hear the Earth’s “own sense and expression of consciousness and being” (Cajete, 1994, p. 89) so we may learn, not just with our minds, but with our bodies and Spirits too?

Here I stand with my questioning, adult feet, on this terrain, an ecological stance and spiritual orientation almost familiar, yet still somewhat strange. What will help me to live well, to “live so that [my] way of life supports the ways of life of those with whom [I am] related” as they “should do the same in reciprocity” (Tully, 2018, p. 102)? How can I learn the culture of the Earth (Borrows, 2018)? Can I translate the Winter Solstice light, which envelopes me in muted glow as I think these thoughts, into a Teaching? Can I learn a grammar of animacy so intimately that I too can “weave a web of reciprocity, of giving and taking” (Wall Kimmerer, 2013, p. 20) with each of my breaths?

Or, will a struggle forever be suspended there in my words?

Beyond the windows, a small courtyard bordered with juniper and sweet box shrubs, its two vacant benches awaiting arrivals. Bird, gray-bodied and black-headed, lands momentarily. Bird peers in at our gathering, then, once their presence known, flits away.

“If we are not at peace,
it is only because we don't know we belong to each other.”

— Colleen Pierre (Dream Colloquium, personal communication, October 13, 2016), Katzie Nation

4.4.3. Remember to Remember

I try to find my place, one foot in the scholarly terrain, one foot in the heart-work terrain. Day four of struggling over the close, of knowing so much more needs to be told, that I, myself, have only just begun to see enough, to hear enough, and to feel enough to *start* to understand. I see before me vast stretches of information—information? *information* does not quite feel right... perspectives? story? yes, *story* feels better as story requires breath—I see before me vast stretches of story, so much so it dizzies me. I stumble over articulating risk—like I know risk?—when Crows arrive, clamouring for my attention. Crows converge on Western Fir and Big Leaf Maple I admire through the two windows beyond my kitchen table. They shout, disparate caws, gravel-edged but fierce, insistent, yet somehow creating a symphony. Harmony. They call me to stop. To remove these fingers from these keystrokes, to lift these eyes from this screen, to listen. To remember to remember: the work lives beyond this kitchen table.

One Big Leaf Maple Crow stares in at me, their call the loudest among the loud.

I watch Crow as Crow watches me.

Abruptly they all fall silent. Alight. Leave.

Crows' absent presence remains vivid as the wan winter light drapes across the keyboard.



Kelly: Let's burn it with the butane torch!

Momsey: Do you have a fire extinguisher?

Kelly: I have a watering can.

Momsey: It's your insurance.

Please see Appendix A: "Burn It" Video to view the technique of using a butane torch on an encaustic art piece to show its effect on alcohol inks and wax.





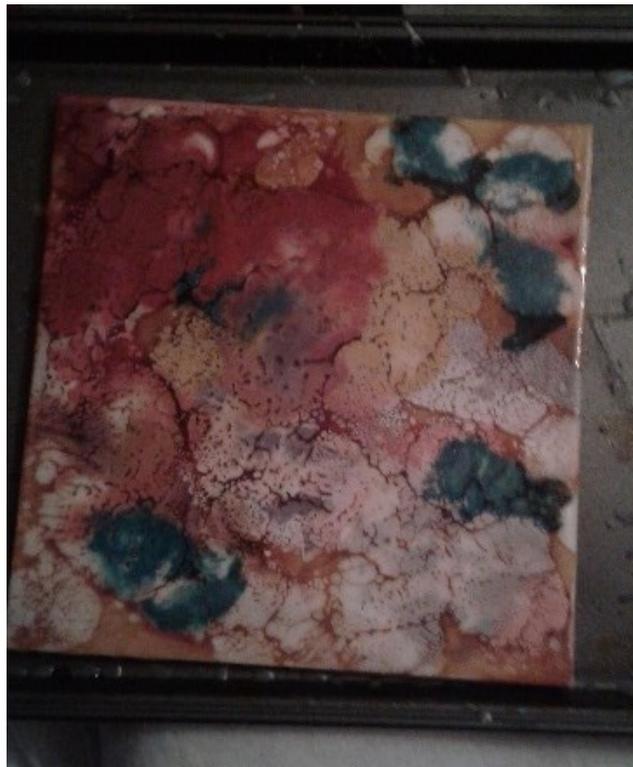
From: Momsey <momsey@**.ca>

Sent: October 19, 2019 6:37 PM

To: Kelly <kelly@**.ca>

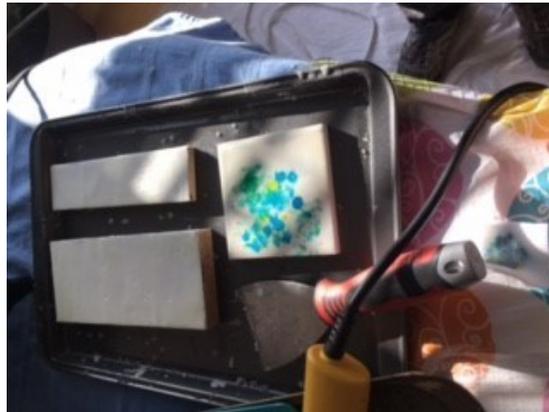
Subject: First attempt

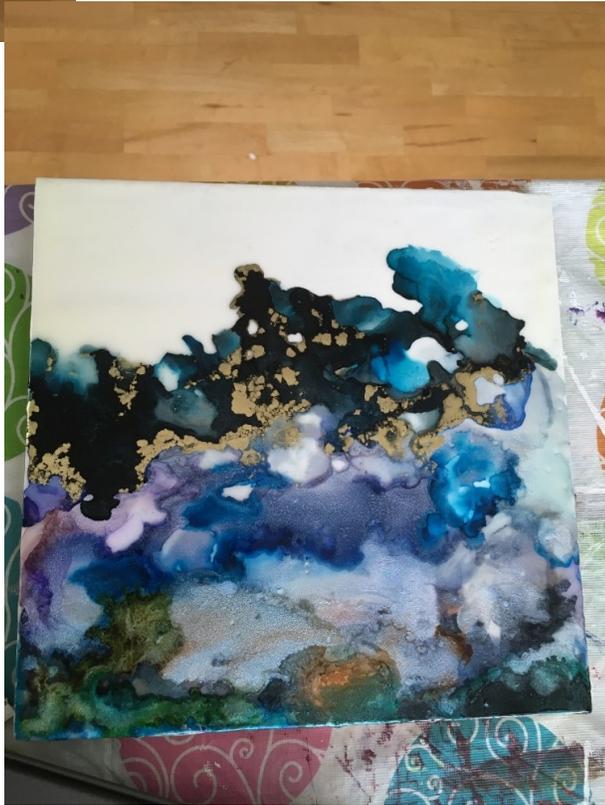
This was with too much wax I think. I haven't tried the alcohol inks yet.



Momsey: I don't like these alcohol inks at all. They're too independent.

Kelly: That's why I love them!



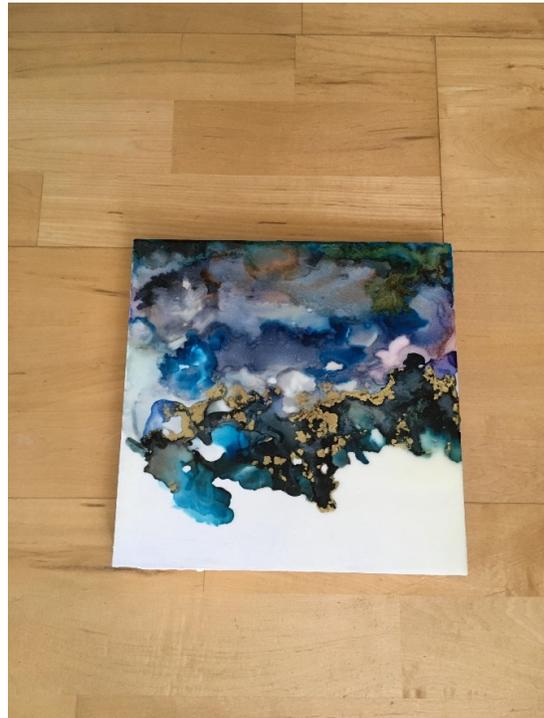






Kelly: I don't know. White at the top or white at the bottom?

Momsey: Is it reaching or falling?



Chapter 5.

Learnings: A Good Relative, Relating

5.1. First Insight

First Insight, a stage of intuition, involves creative thought that leads to seeking, deep thinking, and self-reflection. Ultimately, it invites metaphoric thinking and visioning of what to create.

5.1.1. Writing from Writing: Radical Openness⁴⁰

Writing begets writing. The writer returns to her words again and again. A ceaseless call compels her to revisit the path each keystroke lays. The writer begins to believe there, just before her, an ending, a completion, a full stop.

Yet end punctuation acts as a false signifier, a hood-wink, a ruse.

Writing never finishes.

Its false promise of reflecting the now, the here, lures fingertips ever onward. But the now, the here does not exist, not really. Each writing evokes a new now, a new here.

Apertures present themselves: spaces once imperceptible now illuminated; resonances once dampened now deafening. Each now, each here, new words arrive, permeate the spaces, oscillate in the vibrations.

An enduring cycle of seeking the full stop.

⁴⁰ "Writing from writing" (V. L. Kelly Lecture, personal communication, June 17, 2020), an evocative phrase shared by Dr. Kelly during a doctoral pod meeting, stimulating my imagination.

To situate hope to the present,
to appreciate the present as fulsome rather than incomplete,
means to accept
hope
can address
and
inform actions
for *current* struggles.

5.1.2. Hearts⁴¹

The first organ to function in utero, a human heart will begin to beat in the third week of gestation.

If separated from each other, muscle cells of the heart, or cardiomyocytes, beat independently and at various rhythms.

Once they touch, sheets of interconnected cells, or monolayers, form between cardiomyocytes.

Gap junctions, or protein channels, link these adjacent cells, allowing for cell-to-cell communication.

When connected, one to the other, cardiomyocytes will begin to beat in unison, to work as one.

We hear this unity in our heartbeats, this collective cadence.

⁴¹ Learned from the *Biology Dictionary* ("Heart," 2019), Live Science (Lewis & Dutfield, 2021), MedicineNet (C. P. Davis, 2020), National Heart, Lung, & Blood Institute (2020), and James A. Sullivan (n.d.).

5.1.3. Offering

High, billowing clouds graze the sky. They move, converge one into the other seamlessly, yet no trace of wind exists at tree level. Pockets of deep blue appear in the shifting spaces, momentary distractions from the impending spring rain. Sunlight dances with the clouds. Warmth twirls in and out of the basement room where I sit. Light punctuates the window's shape, rectangular angles brought into relief against the ever-moving sky, then disappear as the light fades.

My eyes cannot stop watching the oft-changing illumination. The light's absent presence, then present absence creates an undulating halo of sorts behind Curtis. He faces me, a desk laden with papers, books, to-do lists between us. Behind me, shelves and shelves heavy with treasure. Stretched across two full walls of the snug office they hold living memories—each book, award, carving, photograph, a story of a long professional life.

I feel strangely awkward. My words sputter, truncated yet weirdly free-flowing; my thoughts, like the sunlight I watch, wink in and out. A distant voice reminds me to lay down the tobacco I have brought, not to hand it directly to him. *(is the voice from a reading? from a conversation?)*

I understand enough not to assume he will accept my offering.

This moment amplifies my knowing and not knowing, my comfort and discomfort. I want to be respectful, to show I try to walk in a good way, but my feet, new to this path, stumble. Curtis accepts my offering, telling me he will bring it to his director. Confusion must skuttle across my face as Curtis shares it will show the work happening here, now. I blunder along, asking questions in a haphazard sort of way. Patient, Curtis responds thoughtfully but carefully.

His answers weave stories of his own family's history, the people from his community he has known, and moments from his own professional life. I sense Curtis matters a great deal to those he serves. I start to

take notes, but the voice from earlier whispers, *listen. Be present.* Pencil and paper, to hear and to record, these are familiar ways of being. But I try. I try to listen. I try to be present.

Curtis laughs easily, and tells me of a brother who warns him not to get a big head, what with people like me asking for his guidance. He nods to a newspaper clipping tacked to the corner of the bulletin board, almost a full-page photograph of his brother, a celebrated competitor in logging sports. With gentleness, Curtis takes it down to show me, this reminder to maintain humility.

He tells me of a brother whose children sat ram-rod straight at their kitchen table. This brother learned at Residential School kitchen tables function as places for discipline, not laughter, nor love. I wonder if these two stories belong to the same brother.

Curtis tells me of a man from his community who claims he will never trust white people, how he still walks the world knotted up with pain. He tells me a story of ripped paper. Another friend, a fine gentleman in spite of the alcohol he used to bury his wounds, destroyed the “proof” required by the Canadian government he survived Residential School.

But Curtis also tells me of visiting students in their homes because if we know where students come from, it makes a difference. He tells me of his gratitude for his mother who insisted he speak at a family friend’s funeral because she knew he could, though just a young boy. He tells me the work of (Re)conciliation already began *before* the TRC. He tells me our Elders continue to watch.

I’m still learning to *feel* these stories. Like the billowing clouds, Curtis’ stories converge before me, one into the other seamlessly. Pockets of understanding appear in the shifting spaces, momentary, elusive, twirling.

Fleeting illumination.

I hear so much, but can I listen?

I feel so much, but can I touch the sky?

Reader, when I wrote this dialogic vignette in 2019, I chose the word treasure instead of collectibles or memorabilia as those words did not feel right to try to show my sense of their meaning to Curtis and his relationship with them. It was not until my experience as witness for and subsequent scholarly (re)search of repatriation over a year later that I could (re)cognize, perceive and know anew, why the words collectibles and memorabilia did not feel right.

Words echo, resonances of onto-epistemologies. The echoes of the words collectibles and memorabilia parallel that of the word artifact, each a (re)flection of a worldview which understands objects as things to be owned rather than a (re)flection of a worldview of treasure as Beings with animacy.

What began as a sense of disharmony for me—my reticence to use words which did not feel right—has now become a capacity to (re)cognize how my language can (re)flect a worldview which no longer serves me. As I wayfind, I tune myself, and with intention, I can now embrace words which serve my emerging ecological worldview. I share this introspection as a conscious act of scholarship to invite you to witness this imperceptible nuance of the whorls of my becoming in my praxis of becoming a good relative, relating.

Curtis <curtis.**@**.ca>

Reply |Hello!

Thu 6/6/2019, 3:06 PM

Kelly Robinson <kelly@**.ca>

Good afternoon

Thanks for taking the time to do your research and interview with our Ancestors!

We are now the ones to pass down the knowledge and teachings from our elders!

You are now on a Indigenous Path to create the Thesis assigned!

So the outside world will witness what Traditional work you completed.

You are going to not just “think outside the box”

But, show and tell the true story from the Indigenous Land and transform People...

Curtis <curtis.**@**.ca>

Reply |Hello!

Thu 6/6/2019, 3:13 PM

Kelly Robinson <kelly@**.ca>

Thank you for your kind words, Curtis. I feel called to this journey and am grateful for your guidance, and the guidance of the Ancestors. But I am also acutely aware of my responsibility to do so in a good way, which I am trying to do, and taking steps on this path even if I stumble or feel lost. Thank you for being witness to my path.

5.1.4. Frog Song

I wonder why Frogs only sing at night?
I know, I listened
standing in the bright sunshine
quietly suffused in the variegated
greens of the marsh hoping if I
stood still long enough I'd breathe in
a faint note

but no
not until Sun hid behind Mountain
that the symphony erupted
loud enough to carry
to the Constellations
who shimmied in dance

then I realized
Frogs' song,
more ancient than the Stars,
sang them into existence

5.2. Preparation/Immersion

Preparation/Immersion, a stage of inquiry, comprises of learning how best to enact the creative work, and exploring the relationships connected to the inquiry. Process and research oriented, this stage establishes the emotional and intellectual capacities required to bring to fruition the creative vision into product.

5.2.1. Writing from Righting

Writing pursues righting. The writer longs for justness to surface on her page, to ascend its way from murky depths, from hidden recesses. She knows justness persists, but it must be enacted.

If only she could entice the right words, coax them, tempt them to materialize.

She knows to account for truth demands risks, demands devotion. Words skitter and flash, elusive creatures just beyond her grasp. Uncertain, still she stretches, fingertips straining.

Can the right words anoint the sinned, cleanse the wounded, act as an existential salve?

If only she could reach into the pool of possibility, clutch the slippery beings, transmute them onto the page, and, with each breath, animate their Spirits.

If only.

Whose eyes
will see
the traces
of the struggle,
suspended there,
in the
space between
these words?

5.2.2. Hearts

Three layers of tissue comprise the human heart: pericardium, myocardium, endocardium.

The pericardium encases the heart, a protective sac which anchors the heart in place and helps to lessen friction between the surrounding tissues as it beats.

The myocardium, the middle layer of muscle, allows the heart's chambers to contract and relax.

The inner layer of the heart, the endocardium, provides the surface of the chambers and valves, supplying a slick lining so blood and other substances cannot adhere.

Our hearts consist of four hollow chambers, separated by muscle and tissue.

The chambers work together, an elegant system of push and pause.

Heart valves between the chambers open and close to allow blood to flow or to gather.

The task of anchoring valves to heart muscles belongs to our heart strings, or the chordae tendineae.

Heart valves' rhythm synchronizes with the push and pause of the four chambers' pumping action.

A set of flaps within heart valves, known as cusps, keep the blood flowing in one direction, preventing backflow.

Open. Close.

Open. Close.

“Is ‘Teachings’ now the appetite?

Are we [Indigenous Peoples] here to teach you [non-Indigenous peoples]?

Are we [Indigenous Peoples] here for the taking?”

— Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas (Dream Colloquium Guest Speaker,
personal communication, September 22, 2016), Haida Nation

There in the theatre, my bared legs wrapped in my scarf, I sat, listening, no, *trying to attend* to Michael's words, trying to shift my mind's focus away from the draft, from the crinkling of candy wrappers, from the tinny reverberation of the microphone. He spoke eloquently, but haphazardly, his threads of thought weaving in and out as a tapestry of metaphors emerged before us.

He asked for consideration of the space between Canadians and Indigenous Peoples—do Canadians see, or do they project? Is (re)conciliation another way to colonize?

I no longer heard anything in the theatre. Only the resonance of his questions sounded.

His questions still reverberate, days later. The aperture I thought I glimpsed? Diminished. Where once existed a space on the horizon, a possibility, now a collapse, a heaviness.

Can I quench my appetite without taking?

— *journal entry,*
September 2016

5.2.3. Skulking

You know

privilege comes in many forms.

You think

you learn its shapes, its smells, where it likes to hide,

crouched behind Banished Innocuous Thoughts.

It becomes easy enough to whisper,

I know where you are;

come out, come out

and

let me see you.

Sometimes Privilege likes to lounge, sunning itself

for all to see in the heat of the First World Glare.

In those times, there's no point

in asking its name or to cover up—it just is.

But then Privilege morphs,

scuttles continuously,
shape-shifting before your
very eyes.

Glancing back, there it lays,
shiny, silken tendrils,
too many to count,
too many to name,
woven into the tapestry of your stories.

It takes a certain kind of light
for their glow to rise and greet you.

It takes years to learn how to adjust your vision,
yet
it is still far too easy
to close your eyes or to turn your head.

Ahead of you,
Privilege,
now a fine mist,

hovers,

its silhouette

yet to be determined.

Still, you can taste it on your tongue.

Today you recognize Privilege

in the smooth landscapes of your arms,

the delicate places

where your veins,

the skein of your heart,

thrums its presence.

Reader, during the crafting of this dissertation and my hermeneutic inquiry, a dear friend spent a year of her life in cancer treatments. For a stretch of time, I collected her from her many chemotherapy and radiation appointments to take her home.

On one particular visit, as I sat beside her in that inhospitable hospitable bed, I could not look away from the greenish-violet-blue blotches marking the tender skin of her arms and hands. Her skin, mottled with bruises and breached by needles, starkly contrasted my own unmarked skin.

An invitation arose—to think about privilege in its many forms.

5.2.4. Stasis

I'm not even sure, Dear Reader,
if I should tell you, to invite you
to peer behind the curtain
of a finished dissertation as it were
(even as I type this,
the phrase "finished dissertation"
still yet a dream,
a distant speck
which dances
on my horizon,
dipping in and out of focus,
reminding me it does exist,
yet as I come closer to it,
try to see it better,
the distance from me
to it
continues
to be
vast and empty,
filled with everything
&
nothing at all,
my feet wooden,
my eyes heavy,
my fingers leaden),
to convince you
that in the process
of my lumbering
there existed decided
ennui on my part.

And I don't mean Typical Doctoral Ennui
(I checked with my
Finished Dissertation Friends
—TDE seems commonplace
&
for a lull to be somewhere),
I mean full-on blankness:
days, weeks, months
stretched,
hollow,
cocooning me,
soma-like
(I don't even have
the energy
to tell you
soma)

—not my own word nor concept—
comes from
Brave New World
by Aldous Huxley,
and even though
the word-concept
lives in my thinking,
and I want to tell you
how
&
why
I think it,
I resist
typing it
as it will mean
me having to look up
all of the
bibliographic
jibber-jabber
&
APA
exhausts
me).

There persisted no reading
—I became quite adept at averting
my eyes from “school stuff”
as I walked around
my apartment—
and certainly
no writing—
I actually dusted my computer
as if it were a piece of furniture.

When asked
about my work,
I could pull off a believable
it's-really-hard-and-yet-rewarding-as-heck
spiel
but then on my own,
languish
—wither?—
&
sink
deeper
into the chasm of
everythingness
&
nothingness
which enveloped me.

I'm not sure why
I need to type this
out loud
at this
particular moment,
but I do.

Postscript: I only had the energy to search for the bibliographic jibber-jabber to type this post-script on December 19, 2020, though originally written May 12, 2019 (Huxley, 2007).

We are still here.

We are still, here.

Here, still are we.

Here still are we.

5.2.5. Flickers

Dishes done, lunch prepared, mail sorted. Mundane tasks completed. Kelly could no longer deflect the chatter flickering on her periphery. The prattle hovered and buzzed, incessant like the vibration of mosquito wings on her skin. This ceaseless dialogue wrestled inside her sub-conscious, nudging aside any sacred solitude that belonged to Kelly alone.

Kelly wondered about time spent talking with these scholarly spectres compared to time talking with actual persons.

The earthy scent of thyme from her chicken soup lingered, yet Kelly's writing desk pulled at her.

Positioned in front of the window, her desk claimed the place intended for a breakfast table. Kelly spent countless hours there, tangling with words and gazing out beyond the confines of her kitchen. The distant stand of Western Fir became Kelly's living portrait, the eastern Sun her friend. Now, her writing desk compelled Kelly to sit with the echo in her head that currently haunted her.

*Tonight's spectre: Parker Palmer who wrote *The Courage to Teach* (Palmer, 1998). His curiosity piqued about Kelly's choice of green for highlighting his text, he noted Kelly's colour choices—pink or yellow or even blue in some of the other books. Books teetered in haphazard piles around her living space, and he sensed Kelly loved each and every one of them.*

Kelly settled. She attended.

Parker Palmer (PP)—Really, I'm curious. Why green? And that particular green. I see you have a variety of shades, and this one is rather, well, garish, and not soft like the one you used with Manulani's text.

Kelly Robinson (KR)—Seriously? This is what you want to talk about right now? I have A LOT to do and to think about, and your focus is on the highlighter colour?

PP—No need to get snippy. It's a good question.

KR— *(her lips press together)*

PP—Listen, you can try to ignore me, but I'm right here.

KR— (…)

PP—How about I ask it in a more “scholarly way”? (Did you like my stodgy, English professor impression? Almost believable, yes?)

KR—(*she can't help but smile*) Fine, but really, it's 8:03 and I would like to have time to relax before I go to bed, so not to be rude, but tick-tock.
(*she taps the invisible watch on her wrist*)

PP—Not to be deterred, I see. Right. If you agree with me that you teach with your heart, then you must read with it too. Yes?

KR—(*she nods in assent*)

PP—Ergo, why this almost-sickly green? Why not vibrant blue, the one that reminds you of grade seven when you discovered the joys of highlighters?

KR—I can't believe you are making me talk about this.

PP—(*he leans back, eyes smiling*)

KR—(*audible sigh*) Well, it was a new highlighter, and I like to highlight with new highlighters, especially when I know I will highlight much of the text. That scratchy feeling of an almost-dry highlighter on paper makes my teeth hurt, so there's that.

PP—(*recognizes what she means and nods appreciatively*)

KR—(*encouraged*) I guess on a metaphoric level, I associate green with nature, trees, walks out-of-doors, all of the places which help me fill my Spirit, as it were.

PP—(*perks up a bit*) What do you mean by “Spirit”? You called me a spectre not forty lines ago, so you seem to bandy this concept around a bit.

KR—You know how you talk about heart in the ancient sense? Where emotion, mind, Spirit, and will converge?

PP—(*nods knowingly*)

KR—You say Spirit too, and I think you probably mean what I have come to know—via Manulani, of course—Spirit is that shadowy quality of being human. She says, “it’s that which clarifies thought into action” or something along those lines (M. A. Meyer, 2013a, p. 256).

PP—You agree with her? But you are not a religious person. Don’t you think it’s weird to bring Spirit into your scholarship?

KR—I’m not religious because I’m not into dogma. I think “religious” and “spiritual” are sometimes conflated, which isn’t really fair, is it?

PP—(*he leans in*)

KR—And as I’m constantly called to this entity I’ve named *heart-work*, I’m compelled to consciously fill my Spirit so I can bring my whole self to my heart-work, to my Spirit-work.

PP—But, then, *why* that garish green?

KR—(*her breath pauses on its own accord*)

PP—It makes me wonder... Are you... are you heart-sick?

“The elders of Indigenous community
knew by experience
that
true learning
causes change

and at times
may elicit a transformation of self
at a person's very core.

Transformation
is a breaking apart
to reform at a higher level
of being and understanding.

In its real expression
in people,
transformation
is anything
but
peaceful and harmonious.”

— Gregory Cajete, Tewa

(Cajete, 1994, p. 179)

I feel I live in a place that is neither here nor there. No longer am I fully able to stand in Western ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating without constant awareness, critique, questioning, yet, I'm not able to fully stand in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating as a non-Indigenous person. Sometimes it feels like I stand no where. Is this the point of all of this struggle, this heart-sickness? To exist in a neither here nor there, but a (k)new *where*? Does such an ecology exist? Does it manifest by our very presence? Can our feet conjure it? How will I know if I live in a (k)new where instead of this no where?

— *journal entry,*
May 2022

5.2.6. Site~sight

Site~sight stretches banal boundaries of teacher/student, inviting human-ness and becoming human.

As I learn in my becoming, I also learn to attend to revelations of being, to (re)cognize—to recognize, or perceive, and (re)*cognize*, or know anew. I call this tuned awareness “nuances of witnessing.”

Nuances of witnessing invites my perception of the imperceptible, a moment which presences Spirit in discernible form, an emergence of Being~Being.

Yet nuances of witnessing also relies on relationality between me and the young ones in my care so there exists a willingness to bear/bear a revelation of being.

The offering of a revelation of being relies on *my* disposition to bear/bare witnessing and *my* willingness to accept the potential hazards and joys of that witnessing.

I have come to learn I must accept that I may be unable or unwilling to receive a revelation of being, collapsing, however inadvertently, the possibility of “that from which something *begins its presencing*” (Heidegger, 2013, p. 152, italics in original).

As an act of humility, I accept I will sometimes stumble as I wayfind. But I have come to learn, I must keep walking.

5.2.7. Chasm

The class streams out of the library, taking with them their ebullient chatter. The muffled emptiness of the cavernous ceiling blossoms, saturating the spaces now void of youthful exuberance. It creeps ever downward, cocooning its reclaimed places, intent on converging with the dingy gray carpet.

She and I remain, standing alone, together. Hemmed in the middle aisle of three long rows of kidney-shaped tables stretching the full length of the library, with muddied-blue plastic chairs surrounding us in haphazard clusters, little room exists for us to manoeuvre. The weight of the now silent library becomes more and more palpable.

A wisp of a girl, she barely comes to my shoulders. Unable to lean against a table, to lower myself so I look up at her instead of she up at me, I must instead stand before her. She averts her eyes.

She clutches her notebook close to her chest, its edges adorned with a multitude of sticky-note tabs, an undulating pattern of oranges, blues, and yellows. A dense physics text book, whose own sticky-note tabs mirror that of her notebook, juts out at an awkward angle. Her fingers flex in an erratic rhythm, knuckles straining against her skin.

I know I only have a few words to try mend the burgeoning cleft between us, to stem the fissures under our feet before they rupture into a chasm too wide and too far to bridge.

When I clarified your comment, "If you refused to go to Residential School you would be killed" during your presentation, your body language suggested to me that there was an issue with what I said.

My feet vibrate with the rumble of splintering, just below the surface.

I am not sure that is necessarily true and I did not want your peers to be misinformed.

I can feel pulsating in my knees, jarring my hips, shimmying up my spine.

Of course, I am not saying children did not die because of neglect and abuse and malnutrition at Residential Schools, or even trying to get home, or that families faced jail or mistreatment if they tried to keep their kids from attending, but I have not learned about parents being killed if they refused.

I struggle to stay upright, my chest reverberating with the undulations now severe, relentless—a harbinger of what will come.

Her silence erupts. A torrent spews forth, so abrupt I can barely parse her words, one from the other. Only snippets remain.

*I know my dad was at Residential School and he was raped he was just a kid and because
of that he can't be a dad and he's never really around my
grandma and my family and my mom tries
to help me and the intergenerational trauma is ME*

*I
live
it*

With each word, the breach between us fractures, its schism expands, the rift deepens.

As suddenly as she speaks, she stops.

Now she stands on one side of the crevasse; I on the other.

Not even silence can fill the space between.

“If the sore spot is not fatal,

if

it does not grow and

block

something,

you can use its

power for many years,

until

the heart resorbs it.”

— Annie Dillard (2013, p. 20)

5.2.8. Ennui

You made your way through the world.

Rhythms enfolded you, songs girdled you.
Jangled melody seeped into your skin,
settled like a fine dust in your lungs,
coated your listless tongue.

Your feet no longer danced.

Pneumonic doors continued to open.
Bewilderment, consternation stained your view:
orange bled into a sluggish, throbbing carmine.

How could your presence be present
when the heft of a gossamer shell
could tilt the ballast of your soul?

You, a shadow's shadow,
translucence manifested.

Your hands cleaved together,
obscene half-moons,
shining no light.

Now pinioned your wrists.
Barbs cut into the tender places.

Now wrenched your arms.
You had no choice but to follow.

Now.

A savage word, a beacon of *Then*.

Then no longer breathed.

Then languished,
somewhere,
in the recesses of your echo-chamber heart.

Inert.

Soundless.

Odious.

Living death gorged on your immutable limbs.

You made your way through the world.

Leaves turned russet.

Winds chilled.

Another school year began.

“Tell your heaviness to the river.

It moves downward;

it will carry it for you.”

— Curtis, Coast Salish

5.2.9. Your Own Words

Reader, I write this entry long after I penned this final chapter. Three questions sound in my ears: “Can you offer a telling of struggle for others to know of a possible pathway? Can you share your vision of that which you are reaching for? Can you honour your longing to Be-long?” (V. L. Kelly, personal communication, June 22, 2021).

In my now, I spent the morning at a conference. One activity required us to form groups of three to analyze a curricular document about Indigenous Oral Traditions, and I joined two other educators, both of whom self-identified as Indigenous. Though polite, they hesitated speaking freely with me or engaging in a genuine way. It does not surprise me they felt wary of me—we have no relationship. They do not know the work I do to try to learn from Indigenous ways of knowing and being in a good way. I could belong to the xwelitem (Jago, 2020), the hungry people, how the Stó:lō Nation describes Western peoples’ insatiability to consume without reciprocity, without responsibility, without mutual flourishing to their kin. My awareness of their wariness, understanding how and why they might feel this way about me, but also knowing in the limited time we had together I could not bridge the distance between us, show with my sustained actions how I try to walk in a good way, lingers in my heart.

This experience helps me better understand Curtis’ story of his friend, a Residential School Survivor, who will never be able to trust white people. Reader, does this telling offer you a possible pathway?

Once again, I find myself labouring over this close as my words skittle and flash, elusive creatures just beyond my grasp. In these times I usually avert my eyes from this screen, look to the world beyond this kitchen table.

Today the trees watch back, quiet and still. If I look long enough in one spot, I can see wee Black-capped Chickadees flitting from branch to branch, pausing only long enough for the whites of their bellies to briefly gleam in the early afternoon light before fading in the leafy shadows.

As I watch, Big Leaf Maple moves, leaves responding in unison to unseen Wind. From my vantage, it looks as though Big Leaf Maple inhales, a deep life-sustaining

breath. My own breath pauses. If I had turned my head or averted my eyes to watch somewhere new, I would have missed it.

Here of course, a Teaching, one I can now perceive: the more-than-human-world exists as a living entity, webs of life, enveloped within mutual reciprocity even if I do not pause long enough to attend to its presence. Big Leaf Maple generously reminds me, “All things of the earth are made up of the same thing. All things of the earth have being” (Trudell, 2008, p. 323). Why now, though? Why does Big Leaf Maple invite me to this Teaching here, now?

Big Leaf Maple reminds me “everyone has a place inside the circle, connected though the reciprocal exchange of gifts and responsibilities” (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a, p. 114). But to have an active place in the circle must include an awareness the circle exists. Indigenous ways of knowing and being help me to see that “[I] crave belonging” (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a, p. 116), yet through my Western ways of believing in “human exceptionalism [I am] left with only longing” (p. 116) since “[I] suffer a deep estrangement” (p. 116) from my kinship with all of Creation. My Western ways of knowing and being, my “pyramid thinking” (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a, p. 115), did not recognize the circle as “There is no hierarchy in a circle” (p. 114). Learning from Indigenous ways of knowing and being invite me to perceive the world in a (k)new way, to perceive my place in the world in a (k)new way. Indigenous ways of knowing and being invite me to understand “the wisdom of Nature is not just a beautiful metaphor, but is actual wisdom that is millions and billions of years old” (Loeffler, 2021, p. 131).

Big Leaf Maple, and thus all of the other more-than-human Teachers I meet as I wayfind, remind me “We are all part of the great green ‘we,’ enmeshed in ecological kinship” (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a, p. 114). As I wayfind, learning from Indigenous ways of knowing and being, I come to know that “Embedded within most Indigenous Knowledge systems, languages, and worldviews, are profound teachings for an entirely different reality of our relationship to the land, water, and other elements of the earth and universe” (Nelson, 2008, p. 14). From my capacity to look back to look forward, to look beyond to look closely, I can now see this (k)new knowledge undergirds my existential quest to join the circle of belonging in a good way. However, my intention to be able to walk this path in a good way can only matter if I manifest intention into action. To pause, to attend, this transforms intention into action.

Reader, do not let the static nature of these words trick you. My understanding of my place in the circle of belonging does exist, but more importantly, my understanding that my place in the circle of belonging requires my continual action, not just awareness or intention. My “struggle to imagine other knowledge systems, or ways of being human, is implicated in the deepest difficulties faced today in trying to live in less damaging, divisive and destructive ways” (Donald, 2021, p. 60). I have come to know, “Your actions reflect who you are. And if you can see yourself in it, then you’re there. But if you can’t look at Nature and see yourself in it, then you’re too far away” (Loeffler, 2021, p. 137).

Throughout this hermeneutic inquiry, I attempt to “see” my actions, to “see [myself] in it,” to be “there,” and with my words and creative endeavours, to offer an invitation for you to see and be there too. As I seek how I can be of service to Education for (Re)conciliation, I attempt to “heal the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, starting within [myself]” (Nelson, 2008, p. 17) so I might learn “how to facilitate the emergence of a new story that can repair inherited colonial divides and give good guidance on how to proceed differently” (Donald, 2021, p. 57) in my roles in our public school system. The “stories that have been told in Canadian schools have left out critical considerations, including the memories, experiences and foundational knowledges of Indigenous Peoples” (Donald, 2021, p. 57). If we understand that “We are responsible for... [the] storylines we further and set forth” and for “the world we choose to cultivate for the lives that follow ours” (Hausdoerffer et al., 2021, p. 2), to “re-story” (Donald, 2021, p. 62) this place now called Canada becomes an imperative if we wish to enact a just community. I try to learn from Indigenous ways of knowing and being to “re-story” my tellings to my own self, to “re-story” my tellings to the young ones in my care whose lives will follow mine, so I might help manifest a just community within the human world and the more-than-human world.

I could belong to the xwelitem (Jago, 2020), the hungry people, how the Stó:lō Nation describes Western peoples’ insatiability to consume without reciprocity, without responsibility, without mutual flourishing to their kin. But there exists within me a yearning to walk in a different way, to “learn about how [I] should live in [my] surroundings” harmoniously (Borrows, 2018, p. 66), with mutual flourishing for and “reciprocal obligation” (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a, p. 117) to all of Creation. Borrows (2018) offers me the concept aabawaawendam, the Anishinaabe word for forgiveness (p. 67). The word itself reflects the time of year when winter turns to spring, as “nature prepares

to nurture new life” (Borrows, 2018, p. 67). Wall Kimmerer (2021a) offers me the Anishinaabe word, edbesendowin, which means “to think lowly of oneself” (p. 115). Edbesendowin acts as a reminder to be humble since “we are not more important than any other being... so the world stays in balance” (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a, p. 115).

To see in a (k)new way requires some form of aabawaawendam and edbesendowin. To (re)cognize—to recognize, or perceive, and (re)cognize, or know anew—the lack of capacity in earlier ways of seeing requires humility to forgive those inadequacies. This humility also means understanding earlier ways of seeing still offer strengths, and that (k)new ways of seeing will have their own inadequacies. We must learn to hold lightly this truth. To remember to remember one way of seeing “[is] not more important than any other [way]... so the world stays in balance” (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a, p. 115) requires aabawaawendam and edbesendowin.

As Wagamese (2011) shares, “The elders told us... that it was the desire, the yearning we carried, that would make all things possible” (p. 110). Borrows (2018) reminds us it takes time for winter’s thaw to warm to spring’s (re)generation, just as “Clarity of vision takes a while to develop” (p. 67). To clearly see how to “rightly relate” (Van Horn, 2021b, p. 3) with all of Creation means to learn and to accept the responsibility that “to be fully human requires us to create profound resonances within our being: physically, emotionally, mindfully, and spiritually through a participatory pedagogical process that informs our being” (Kelly, 2021b, p. 190). But if we yearn to be fully human, we can be.

Thus, to heal my relationship with the human world in this place now called Canada, I must also (re)cognize—to recognize, or perceive, and (re)cognize, or know anew—and act on my relationship, and thus responsibility, to the more-than-human world. We humans exist as a part of the web of relations; we do not dominate over it. To learn from my relationship with the more-than-human world, to “feel enmeshed in... kinship relationality” (Donald, 2021, p. 61) means “Only then can [I] be [an] authentic human (being) who will be able to contribute positively to a more just, compassionate, and sustainable world for Indigenous Peoples and all peoples, including [my] winged, four-legged, finned relatives of the natural world” (Nelson, 2008, p. 17). To (re)pair, to heal and to connect, my relationship with the more-than-human world thus acts a bridge, a presencing of a context (Heidegger, 2013) of potential (re)storation and (re)conciliation within the human world.

To (re)pair one part of the web (re)pairs the whole of the web.

“I wonder
if our words can only address our own hearts and minds
and make but a humble offering forward to others
if they but choose to listen....

Our words and actions
transform
our ecologies of being

and

offered to others
they are but invitations

to listen to the stories which share

the teaching of a life lived

and

a humble offering of the work
of transformation,
of metamorphosis.”

— Vicki Kelly (personal communication, June 22, 2002), Anishnaabe and Métis

5.2.10. Apertures

Openings abound. They dwell everywhere. But they require pause. They require attention. They require action.

Do not be fooled: openings exist as verbs, not as nouns.

Your (noun)~eyes will recognize openings, but your (noun)~eyes will flatten, compress, compartmentalize. Use your (verb)~eyes—they will expand, amplify, integrate.

Your (verb)~eyes may feel laborious at first, ill-fitting even, tiring or confounding. With the ease of familiarity, your (noun)~eyes may assert their presence, attempt to claim the role as a fulcrum to understanding. You may be enticed by their intimacy; their acquaintance seemingly natural, seemingly certain.

Yet your (verb)~eyes will wait with humility. They know each enactment resonates within you, resonates to chasms so deep to seem impossible, so deep to seem forgotten. But those recursive places call back: *remember to remember*.

Your (noun)~eyes may struggle to regain your focal point. They might skulk about, niggle in your periphery, clamour.

Sometimes your (noun)~eyes will whisper—insistent, incessant, interminable—so much so you cannot hear anything else. So much so you cannot think anything else.

But your (verb)~eyes, once enlivened, know they cannot be squelched. They cannot be constrained. They endure.

Your (verb)~eyes compel you to (re)cognize—to recognize, or perceive, and (re)cognize, or know anew—openings as possibilities, but possibilities demand enactment, demand animation.

Your (verb)~eyes compel you to (re)cognize openings must be actualized to exist in the now, and not speculated in the what if, nor trapped in the what was.

Your (noun)~eyes sense a profound shift in you. They recognize the more you understand your (verb)~eyes, the more you understand them. They (re)cognize as you begin to understand their role, you begin to understand their gifts.

An uneasy truce emerges. With time, with intention, your (noun)~eyes and your (verb)~eyes start to work in tandem, to oscillate, each contributing their strengths to the other.

Your (noun)~eyes and (verb)~eyes become Two Eyed Seeing, and miraculously, harmoniously, their Two Eyed Seeing can become Many Eyed Seeing.

Together.

With more time, with more intention, with more action, Many Eyed Seeing can become Many Eyed Seeing, Knowing, Be-ing, and thus Relating with *all* of Creation.

many words ago your (verb)~eyes caught a glimpse of an opening

it shimmied, tantalizing and elusive,

there on the horizon,

just enough incandescence to propel you forward,

one

unsteady

footfall

at a time

5.3. Incubation

Incubation, a stage of transformation, parallels First Insight but with much more depth. Whereas First Insight can be understood as perceptual, Incubation can be understood as spiritual. Incubation stimulates expressions of healing and spirituality, often through ceremony or ritual to honour the vision or the creative work produced.

5.3.1. Righting from Righting

Righting buoys righting. The writer stretches her being like Eagle in Wind. As Eagle searches for a thermal of updraft, the miraculous thrust of propulsion, so too does the writer.

Like flight for Eagle, writing for the writer ensues not without tremendous effort: each follicle of every feather must respond, offer its strength and endurance in order to soar.

Only when Eagle surrenders to Wind's intention can its wings fulfill their covenant: astoundingly, lift and stabilize simultaneously.

Wind invites Eagle to be fully Eagle.

Likewise, the right course creates the right space for the writer to be fully herself. Only when the writer surrenders to good intention, once she surrenders to its aim, will her words be granted a moment to fulfill their covenant.

Soar.

Through our breath

we verb the world.

5.3.2. Hearts

Blood travels on two circulatory pathways to and from the heart: pulmonary and systemic.

The pulmonary pathway leads deoxygenated blood from the heart to the lungs to be oxygenated, then returns it back to the heart.

The systemic pathway takes oxygen-rich blood and pushes it onward to the body, returning it back to the heart, deoxygenated.

The circuit continues.

Open. Close.

Open. Close.

When blood first arrives to the heart, it does so via the superior and inferior vena cava, two large veins.

Each carry the oxygen-deprived blood from the body to the right atrium, one chamber of the heart.

Open. Close.

Open. Close.

The right atrium contracts, emptying blood via the tricuspid valve into the right ventricle, a second chamber of the heart.

Open. Close.

Open. Close.

The right ventricle contracts; the blood travels to the lungs through the pulmonic valve.

Open. Close.

Open. Close.

Once in the lungs, carbon dioxide exchanges for oxygen, and the now oxygenated blood returns to the heart through the pulmonary vein into the left atrium, or the third chamber of the heart.

Open. Close.

Open. Close.

The left atrium contracts, pushing the blood to the left ventricle, the fourth chamber of the heart, via the mitral valve.

When the left ventricle reaches capacity, it pushes the blood out of the heart via the aortic valve to the aorta where the blood continues on to other arteries, distributed back to the body.

Open. Close.

Open. Close.

5.3.3. Offering

He asks if I want to hear his original piano composition, recorded on his phone, last night.

His music saturates the room, fills the space which moments ago did not feel empty. I close my eyes.

Melancholy and subdued at first, the notes becomes ardent, passionate, almost aggressive. The melody rises and falls, aching crescendos, one after the other. Long notes sound; extended pauses punctuate the spaces between. Slowly the last notes arise, surface, and linger. Their gentleness brings me to tears.

I open my eyes.

I did not think he would join us.

Many months have passed since the first time I heard his music. Tonight we hold a Ceremony to celebrate our young ones' artistry. They and their families gather around various easels and tables, admiring the diverse array of talents. A happy hum of conversation surrounds us, permeates our gathering.

On one table a cd player perches with a note asking people to press play. At random intervals his music infuses our celebration, the melody hauntingly beautiful.

I watch as he and his mom wander to the table, how she tries to convince him to let her take his picture, how he stands close to her, awkwardly proud.

He glances over at me. My breath hitches in my throat.

Even from this distance I can see the light shining in his eyes.

5.3.4. Transformation

— *for Lynn*

we like to ascribe
to the pupa a certain
kind of honour, envy even
for though it is, it will soon
become—

the promise of progress but a breath away

yet, we fail to linger
in the space between

inhale exhale

that tender moment

5.3.5. Impossible Possibility

I will shed tears for Leta, but not yet...

How can I tell you about the Leta I know in such a way which honours her? How do I conjure her presence so you can know her beyond this dreadful moment, to see the self she projects and the self she protects?

Would it help you if I describe her usual outfit of too-big jogging pants, gray and stained, topped with a black, red, and yellow striped poncho pulled over a muted lilac t-shirt, its collar a bit frayed, its length an unexpected purple trim to the riot of colour? If I share her clumping gait, a sort of half-plod, half-thump, amplified by the dull green rubber boots she often wears no matter the weather, can you hear her coming? If you knew, though nearly six feet if she stood straight, she could melt into the background with ease, transmogrifying herself into nothingness, would that be of use?

Or, can your heart lilt too when she tells stories of her beloved hedgehog and its refusal to be held by her, though she never gives up trying? When she shyly reads a story to you, its humour and vivacity and imagination breathtaking, can you speak with that lump in your throat to thank her for her gift? Can your sides also hurt from laughing when she recounts her petty thievery of a magical sticker as a five-year-old child?

These clumsy words fail me. I fear I have let you down. As much as I try, I cannot invoke the genuine Leta for you. If only you could know her.

Many months have passed. The police and paramedics gone. Statements made. Investigations stalled.

I do not feel my skin the same way. The incessant burning now dissipated, disappearing minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day. And yet.

And yet the burning did not recede until it vanished—it shapeshifted. It became an invisible insignia, an imperceptible emblem, a mark forever there, a trace of when who I was pivoted to who I could be.

Who did I become in that terrible moment? What did Leta summon in me when she clawed at my portable door, frantic, blinded by not only fear but bear spray? What arose in me in that moment as she lurched in, mucus spurting out of her nose, her eyes nearly swollen shut, her voice a keening wail, unable to say words, but desperate for help?

In that terrible, yet tender moment, my role as teacher and Leta's role as student vanished. Evaporated.

In the space between, our shared humanity could materialize: a (human) Being trying to help another (human) Being in need. We transformed from student/teacher into Being~Being, a temporary suspension, just long enough to become an impossible possibility: our human-ness invoked and evoked, a (re)newal of a classroom ecology.

The Knowledge Keepers and Elders

offer us Teachings,

inviting us to breathe life

alongside them

into ceremony

so

our learning

becomes ceremony.

“The term witness is in reference to the Aboriginal principle of witnessing, which varies among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

Generally speaking, witnesses are called to be the keepers of history when an event of historic significance occurs.

Through witnessing, the event or work that is undertaken is validated and provided legitimacy. The work could not take place without honoured and respected guests to witness it.

Witnesses are asked to store and care for the history they witness and to share it with their own people when they return home.

For Aboriginal peoples, the act of witnessing these events comes with a great responsibility to remember all the details and be able to recount them accurately as the foundation of oral histories.”

(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 442)

“...our call to Witness is the highest job we go to do.
To be a Witness, it rarely happens.”

— Curtis, Coast Salish

“Everybody I called was all there.
Doing something like that is powerful in its own way.”

— Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu

Standing in the circle, listening to Curtis, it suddenly occurs to me I need to speak, to share my voice, to offer my breath, my Spirit to this moment, to this Ancestor, to my friend I wish to honour, to show my profound gratitude, to meet my obligation as Witness, but my heart races, my lungs contract, my mind scatters, empties, swells, jangles, and still Curtis speaks, calm, certain, the cadence of his voice steady, betraying no sense of urgency nor of unease, his feet comfortable standing here, assured in his breath, assured in his words, so I avert my eyes, look to the honeyed-cedar of the Bentwood Box, stare at the edges, those closest to Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu, suffused by the warm sunlight streaming in, to try to compose myself, to ask of the Light for calm, to ask for my heart to be wide open, to ask my lungs to fill with breath so the right words might arrive, and yet there, only steps away, the Ancestor, whose own feet once stood in the circle, whose own breath once was, so I turn my eyes, see all of the feet of those here, now, standing and breathing together in this circle, and the enormity of it all the enormity of it all the enormity of it *all*, so I stretch, I strain, I struggle to attend, to clutch Curtis' words, those slippery beings, that they might buoy me, lift me enough to catch myself out of myself, and for a time I do, just enough that I forget my own self, just enough to gather my breath, to begin to speak, but my voice falters, clumsy, tentative, my eyes betray me, tears materialize, and though I try to banish them they remain, leaking my discomfort, my unsteadiness, a treacherous flow I cannot stem, so I pause, and, with another breath, my words enter the world.

“You cried the tears for others, the ones they could not share today.”

— Curtis, Coast Salish

5.3.7. Yes, but...

I wrestle with the identity of colonial settler. *Yes, but*⁴² became my inner mantra.

Initially, I rejected its existence in my own life.

Yes, my ancestors came as colonial settlers beginning half a millennium ago, *but* how can I be a settler as the fourth generation to live in this place now called Canada, and the seventeenth generation to live in the place now called North America?

Yes, my ancestors left their homelands in pursuit of better lives, *but* how can I have control over my ancestors' context and conditions, let alone have influence over their choices?

Then, I rejected its material benefits in my own life.

Yes, my ancestors' worldview of extractive and exploitive practices to dominate the natural world propelled colonialism's power, *but* how can I be responsible for imperialism?

Yes, my ancestors most likely received or purchased or rented land from colonial governments, *but* how can I be responsible for political norms of the past?

Yes, my ancestors' worldviews and values contributed to and reinforced colonial governments and mandates, *but* how can I be responsible for how their forms of governing undergird current ones?

Yes, my ancestors' worldviews and values contributed to and reinforced colonial society, *but* how can I be responsible for how their naturalized norms morph into current ones?

⁴² Thank you to Greg Sutherland, friend and colleague, who offered the profound phrases, "yes, but... yes, and" in one of our conversations. They, like many of his words, continue to linger, continue to teach me.

Then, I rejected its privileges in my own life.

Yes, my ancestors had the right to vote, to go to war without loss of cultural affinities, to marry whom they wished, to practice cultural traditions, to live and travel where they wished, to worship how they wished, to be educated without physical and cultural genocide, to be independent people and not wards of the state, *but* not all of them, and many struggled in the times when those rights existed for the few.

Yes, but ... how can I control the legacies which nourish the context and conditions of my lifetime?

Yes, but serves me, cocoons me from the difficult knowledge of *yes, and*.

The question, "*When you look at that flag of yours, what do you see?*" reverberates still. It persists. It invites me to tune myself to a (k)new frequency of *yes, and*, a recursive process of becoming, a recursive process of ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008).

Yes, my ancestors came as colonial settlers beginning half a millennium ago, *and* I continue their presence as the fourth generation to live in this place now called Canada, and the seventeenth generation to live in the place now called North America.

Yes, my ancestors left their homelands in pursuit of better lives, *and* their choices provide me with my privileged context and conditions, including my advantage to influence both with my choices.

Yes, my ancestors' worldview of extractive and exploitive practices to dominate the natural world propelled colonialism's power, *and* I can be responsible to challenge legacies of imperialism, to stand with others on roads of protest, to demand better for our Earth.

Yes, my ancestors most likely received or purchased or rented land from colonial governments, *and* I continue to benefit from a worldview that land can be “owned,” and thus given, purchased, or rented.

Yes, my ancestors’ worldviews and values contributed to and reinforced colonial governments and mandates, *and* I can be responsible to understand how and why their legacies sustain my privilege.

Yes, my ancestors’ worldviews and values contributed to and reinforced colonial society, *and* I can be responsible to understand how social norms of the past morph into current ones, including my own privilege. Yes, *and* what role will I play here, now? Can my privilege be of service?

Yes, my ancestors had the right to vote, to go to war without loss of cultural affinities, to marry whom they wished, to practice cultural traditions, to live and travel where they wished, to worship how they wished, to be educated without physical and cultural genocide, to be independent people and not wards of the state, *and* the struggle continues, as does resilience, if not for me, but for many. Yes, *and* how do I live, no longer ignorant of truth’s terrible beauty?

Yes, *and* though I cannot control the legacies which nourish the context and conditions of my lifetime, I can be responsible to understand them, responsible for my privilege to be of service to rather than insulated from difficult knowledge.

Yes, I accept the identity of colonial settler—being a by-product and agent of colonialism—exists, *and* I wonder if a torsion of language can also exist so I might accept the responsibilities to be a good relative to the human world and the more-than-human-world, to step lightly, to recognize where my feet fall so that I might honour and learn from those who came before me and from those who walk alongside me, and to remember to remember those yet to come.

Yes, and...

My heart-work continues.

“I wanted you to know
that
we welcomed your ancestors.”

— Residential School Survivor
(SFU, 2013)

5.3.8. Relative Is a Verb, Not a Noun

Reader, part of my work in this existential quest included learning to situate my self in the context and conditions of my times. By accepting the language of Indigenous/non-Indigenous or Indigenous/colonial settler, however well-intentioned my troubling of the terms, I did not trouble enough. I can now see I have situated my self in a hegemonic binary, thus (re)inscribing a false duality, (re)inforcing a seemingly constant and enduring separation which extends to the more-than-human world. When instead, the us/them dichotomy must transform to a we, a together.

Language can never be acultural (M. A. Meyer, 2001). Language can constrain and contain just as it can change ecologies or change what possibilities exist (Kelly, 2016).

But how do I carry on this path? How can I acknowledge my language and its usage yet move beyond it? How shall I name myself now? If I am not a colonial settler, then who am I? If I am not an imperfect ally, then who am I?

Through my existential quest, I have come to (re)cognize—to recognize, or perceive, and (re)cognize, or know anew—that my acceptance to “give [my] gifts and meet [my] responsibilities... to take care of the land as if our lives and the lives of all our relatives depend on it” (Wall Kimmerer, 2013, p. 215) demands action beyond ideology, beyond a worldview, beyond intention. My acceptance insists on praxis, the coalescence of theory and action, the coalescence of knowing and be-ing, the coalescence of understanding and doing. I have come to know the shape of this praxis as relating, to be a relative.

The word relate comes from the French, relater, meaning “refer, report” (“Relate,” n.d., para. 2), which comes from the Latin relatus, deriving from re-, “back, again” (para. 2) and lātus, “borne, carried” (para. 2). But relate also holds the meanings to “stand in some relation; have reference or respect” (“Relate,” n.d., para. 3), or “to establish a relation between” (para. 3). The word relative comes from Late Latin, relativus, meaning “having reference or relation” (“Relative,” n.d., para. 2), also derived from re- and lātus. Lātus itself comes from oblate, meaning a “person devoted to religious work” (“Oblate,” n.d., para. 5), from the Medieval Latin oblatu, derived from Latin ob-, “toward; against; before; near; across; down” (“Ob-,” n.d., para. 2), and lātus, “carried, borne” (“Oblate,” n.d., para. 2).

Thus, the words relate and relative hold the understanding of a return to and bearing/baring of Spirit, a return to and carrying of Spirit toward and against, before and near, across and down with respect, with relation. The word relation comes from Anglo-French, relacioun, or “relationship, connection” (“Relation,” n.d., para. 2), derived from Latin, relationem, “a bringing back, restoring” (para. 2). To relate, to be a relative, to be in relation, all denote action, action to bring back, to restore Spirit within our connections in all its forms in the human and more-than-human world—an eternal spiral of presencing of ecological kinship. (K)new knowledge.

The word reconciliation may not be sufficient to fully hold my (k)new knowledge, nor intentions and actions. Learning from and being witness to the (re)storation, (re)surgence, and (re)animation of Indigenous Peoples’ worldviews, ways of knowing, being, doing, and thus relating, show me I need (k)new language. We need (k)new language.

Tully (2018) offers a torsion in language with his phrase, “reconciliation-with” to denote an enactment of a sustainable, ethical relationship of continuous, interdependence with the Earth and all our relations. The word reconciliation implicitly suggests a focus on only harmonizing and balancing relationships among and between the human world. Without a shift in language, the dominant worldview that we humans live independent from the webs of life will continue. Reconciliation-with reflects an ecological understanding (Cajete, 1994), a wholistic paradigm which presupposes Spirit animates all life, recognizing the inter~intra~connections and accountabilities among and between the human and more-than-human world. Yet words can be hollow, meaningless, or empty without action.

Reconciliation-with can be understood as transformative reconciliation, an expansion of the circle of knowledges, but reconciliation-with, transformative reconciliation requires enactment.

With time, with intention, with action, colonial settlers can see themselves as imperfect allies, and step by step, imperfect allies can wayfind to (re)cognizing themselves as relatives, relating.

Thus, relative by relative, step by step, word by word, the dominant worldview can metamorphize, learn to hold lightly an ecological understanding of the world and, with aabawaawendam (Donald, 2021) and edbesendwin (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a),

(re)cognize they too stand in the circle of belonging. My heart-work, this existential quest, provides one example of how word by word, step by step, this relative learns to hold lightly an ecological understanding of the world, (re)cognizing she too stands in the circle of belonging.

5.3.9. Invitation

With more time, with more intention, with more action, Many Eyed Seeing can become Many Eyed Seeing, Knowing, Be-ing, and thus Relating with *all* of Creation.

I learn from Elder Tsimilano, Dr. Vincent Stogan, Musqueam, the Teaching “Hands Back, Hands Forward” (Archibald, n.d.). Elder Tsimilano shares when standing in a circle, to extend our left hand, palm up, symbolizes “reaching back to receive teachings (knowledge and values) from the Ancestors and those who have travelled on knowledge pathways before us” (Archibald, n.d., para. 1). To extend our right hand, palm down, symbolizes the “responsibility to pass those teachings to others, especially the younger generation” (Archibald, n.d., para. 1). Thus, when we join hands while in a circle, we not only connect with each other, we enact a cooperative commitment to be in relation in a good way. When we (re)cognize—to recognize, or perceive, and (re)cognize, or know anew—we stand with the human world *and* the more-than-human world in the circle, when we join hands in *that* circle, we embody wholism (Absolon, 2010). Like this Teacher, I do not speak in metaphor.

I learn from Fyre Jean Graveline, Métis, the “starting point of each healing action is the discovery of the root cause of the problem—the imbalance” (Graveline, 2012, p. 16). I learn from Richard Wagamese (2019), Ojibway, “Medicine refers to those things that that return us to balance, to wellness, to our proper size, and in the end ... [to] humility” (p. 20). I learn from Felix Solomon (2013), Lummi, “The teaching is that you have to do your work. And there are no shortcuts to finishing. You have to do your work” (p. 74). Like these Teachers, I do not speak in metaphor.

I learn from Robin Wall Kimmerer (2021a), Citizen Potawatomi Nation, “shame can push relatives [including humans] further away and make them act even worse” (p. 122). We need to remember to remember, “it’s not about pointing out faults; it’s about family” as “mutual responsibility ... makes good relatives. You could also call it love” (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a, pp. 122–123). Like this Teacher, I do not speak in metaphor.

“Pyramid thinking” (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a, p. 115) dominates the educational ecologies I inhabit. What could happen if others in these educational ecologies could (re)cognize circle thinking? If they too could stand in the circle of ecological kinship, hold their left palms skyward and their right palms earthward? What could happen if they could start healing actions, seek balance with humility? What could happen if they could do their work, the work particular to their own context and conditions? What could happen if they could do their own work, learning from generous Teachers, free from shame, suffused in love?

With more time, with more intention, with more action, Many Eyed Seeing can become Many Eyed Seeing, Knowing, Be-ing, and thus Relating with *all* of Creation.

I do not speak in metaphor.

5.4. Learnings

Learnings, a stage of completion, produces and shares the creative work, the product of the visioning. This stage requires determining how to share and defend the creative work, but it also requires accepting the critique of others. Learnings engenders a sense of self-confidence as it necessitates understanding and defending the integrity of the creative process.

5.4.1. Righting from Writing

Writing conjures righting. The writer stumbles. The world around her heaves and careens and shimmies. She tries to secure her footing but unearthed roots catch the edges of her toes.

Rocks slip under her; her path sways. She lurches.

Suddenly splayed, her face presses upon the humid earth, limbs askew. The abrupt upheaval of her perception bewilders her. Yet, from here she feels the path's embrace. The heady scent of dirt and loam envelope her, offer comfort.

Quivering muscles and ragged breaths begin to subside. Now calm, she pulls her limbs to her, gathers her resolve, and stands.

She breathes.

To look too far ahead means she hinders her attention to the emanant path of her fingertips, of her feet. Her lesson? Trust the path will arrive, keystroke by keystroke, step by step.

Trust its aim.

An imperfect ally continues the work
of recognizing, understanding, and most importantly,

acting

on her relationship with Indigenous Peoples

and

her advantages in and complicity of

settler colonialism,

even if, once, she did not know

where or how to start.

With time,

with intention,

with action,

an imperfect ally begins

to (re)cognize her self as a relative, relating.

5.4.2. Hearts

Eventually, the oxygen-deprived blood returns to the veins,
arriving once again to the superior and inferior vena cava.

The cycle continues, approximately 60-80 times per minute, 100 000 times per day, or three billion times in a lifetime for the average adult.

Open. Close.

Open. Close.

We hear this unity in our heartbeats, this collective cadence.

Open. Close.

Open.

5.4.3. On Watching Leaves

it flutters effortlessly
yellows and golds intermingle,
twisting, swivelling, pirouetting
variegated colours becoming one
borne up and down by Wind's unseen presence, a joyous slide

wait—
leaf or butterfly?

still, it flits
their existence tender, a brief dance

named or not it is

5.4.4. Nearing the Near

Representation can only ever be a compromise.

This dissertation, though earnest with good intention, crafted from an open mind, open heart, and open Spirit, attempts to tell you, to show you, to invite you into my wayfinding, but you and I both must accept it can only ever be *near* (Heidegger, 2013) to a telling, a showing, an invitation.

The crafting of my dissertation attempts to evoke the ever-emerging contexts of my wayfinding. Evoking the contexts invokes my consciousness, thus constituting my humanity I bear/bare here, with you.

My writing~(re)writing, crafting~(re)crafting, an eternal process of nearing the near of telling, showing, inviting, paradoxically ever summons the farness of telling, showing, inviting. Representation can only ever be a compromise, my humble offering of what I have come to know and have come to be in my becoming.

The spaces between my words and utterances exist as bridges for both you and me.

Bridges evoke contexts.

Contexts evoke boundaries.

Boundaries invite presencing.

The spaces between my words and utterances invite presencing of horizons, of possibilities.

This is heart-work.

Look.

between these lines you will find me
search the space amidst the words
search the crevices amongst the letters
search the curl of my knuckles

Listen.

between these utterances you will find me
search the space amidst the sounds
search the crevices amongst the tones
search the curl of my lips

there there *there*

the ancient pulse thrums,
its cadence older than the stars

5.4.5. Keystrokes⁴³

as I
name reject
the contexts the conditions the invitations
I try I struggle I intend I trouble
to perceive to avoid to weave to question to travel
the work the work the work the work
I bare I bear I deny
into breath as sound
through these keystrokes

⁴³ This poem's design was inspired by Layli Long Soldier, Oglala Lakota Nation (Long Soldier, 2018).

“...the Blackfoot concept of *aokakio’ssin*...
is a pedagogic call to *pay attention* to what is going on around us,
interpret these insights in relational ways,
and attempt to bring the understandings gained from the interpretive process
to expression through language and ceremony –
to share them with others.”

— Dwayne Donald (2012b, p. 550), Papaschase Cree

5.4.6. Offering

—for W.

The lilt of his mother's tongue
revealed, its softness, a suffusion
like the afternoon sun which falls
lightly on his shoulders the way a
leaf might dance with a breeze

his voice, steady, but gentle, surprise
by the offering of a chair

his body, no longer angular but
supine, its tensioned cord
slack, no longer taut, temporarily
released, unfettered

an exchange, words that belie
the real conversation, the one
that lingers in the space between
on a filament of light,

that wondrous beacon

a tendril I see,
stretching,
cautiously,
from his eyes.

Witnessing demands a particular orientation
Witnessing arises from an offering spirit
Witnessing evokes relationship
Witnessing requires relationship
Witnessing evokes relationship
Witnessing arises from an offering spirit
Witnessing demands a particular orientation

witnessing requires relationship

witnessing demands a particular orientation

witnessing arises from an offering

witnessing evokes Spirit

5.4.7. “I’m Mohawk”

It’s the end of the day—desks askew, their tidy u-shape jostled. Errant paper and snack wrappers made more visible now that chairs, stacked haphazardly against a sidewall instead of holding students, no longer block the view.

Propped open doors invite the sounds of the parking lot to wander in, the afternoon concerto of a portable classroom. Autumn’s glow transforms the barred windows. Their translucence usually contained by webs of cold, gray steel, now instead become three embers, bright against the putty walls.

He lingers the way only a student can. Slowly packing his enormous backpack, a ruse to allow him time to consider if he does indeed want to tell me whatever holds him from stepping into the sunshine.

I tidy around him, re-arranging desks, collecting detritus from the floor, innocuous behaviours. I know from years of lingering students I need to make my presence known but with enough space between us that a comforting distance exists.

With the last of his items almost safely stowed, I sense my cue to engage in conversation, to offer an opening.

He accepts.

We talk about nothing really, until he blurts, “I’m Mohawk.”

Maybe, because he stood before the windows, I could witness the light envelope him, drape his shoulders in radiance, outline his figure in luminosity.

Maybe, because he stood before the windows, I could see his words gleam too. *I’m Mohawk* danced between us, enlivened, swirls catching the light, wondrously, joyously free.

They hovered there, for the briefest of moments. If I had blinked, I would have missed their arrival.

As his last syllable sounded, the embrace of light brightened around him. His words returned to him, a shimmering sheen settling upon him, belonging with him.

Was it a trick of the light?

I don't think so.

“The practice of coherence
heralds a meta-consciousness
that brings forward a changed society...

Spirit is an enlightening of knowledge...

It is not something predictably measurable,
yet it can be experienced.”

— Manulani Meyer, Palehua, O'ahu, Hawai'i
(M. A. Meyer, 2013a, pp. 254, 258, italics in original)

5.4.8. Effulgent Coherence

Each of us exist as a part of universal consciousness, an expression of Creation.

Each of us exist, not as an abstraction but as embodiment of consciousness.

Each of us presences consciousness with our incandescent unity of the physical, mental, and Spiritual (M. A. Meyer, 2013b).

Each of us exist as effulgent coherence (M. A. Meyer, 2013b).

Spirit, that which animates, always calls, always seeks a response, an invitation for enlivened relationality with Creation. This potential asks to be incarnated, to pivot from idea to action, from theory to praxis, from noun to verb. This dissertation invites you to witness my iterative process, the torsions and spirals of how I tune the embodied capacity for site~sight. This dissertation invites you to understand how I learn to become a knowledge holder, to receive knowledge with my being, as I learn to walk in a good way with the Teachings of my life.

The Teachings of my life emerge from my contexts, creating my consciousness, constituting my humanity. These Teachings of my life come not only from the human world, but also the more-than-human world as I exist as part of the web of life. The Teachings of my life invite me into Be-ing, invite me into Being a good relative, relating.

The Teachings of my life guide me as I wayfind along the path of my heart-question: how can I be of service to Education for (Re)conciliation?

I attempt to (re)present how presencing of consciousness can manifest in a classroom ecology through my articulation of what I have come to call nuances of witnessing, undergirded by an ecological understanding of difficult knowledge and ceremony. Ephemeral, embodied engagement, O~O, Being to Being, acts as one form of my understanding of what it looks like to (re)pair Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing and being in a classroom ecology.

To (re)pair, to heal and to connect, in the particular context of a classroom ecology thus becomes a form of transformative (re)conciliation, an expansion of the circle of knowledges.

5.4.9. Medicine

The last day of regular class arrives. Only mere hours before summer holidays begin for the young ones, and their excitement intensifies with each passing moment. Happy noise filters in through my open portable doors. Sunshine, warmth, and the promise of freedom call young people to gather in the parking lot at lunch. I envy their care-free jubilation as the enormity of my end-of-semester work awaits me.

A young man arrives, a welcomed interruption. I do not recognize him, though I search his face and his eyes seeking some sort of clue. He says he saw the open doors, and since today he finishes grade twelve, he wanted to come in to say thank you for the help I offered him. I must look confused as he clarifies that in grade nine, I sat with him and organized his binder. He shares that I told him, "You can't live this way!" and then proceeded to show him another way to be, another way to exist in the place called school.

He tells me he will never forget the time I spent with him. He leaves me then, rejoins his friends as they stand together in the bright sunlight, suffused in laughter.

I no longer envy their care-free jubilation. Instead, my heart swells with gratitude for this moment, for this unexpected gift: a reminder to remember to remember that when we attend, we can offer *and* receive the gift of medicine.

Reader, I experience heart-sickness. Throughout this dissertation, I share how the personal and professional ecologies in which I live, the language with which I have to speak, neither sufficiently recognizes nor holds the inherent dignity of all Beings be-ing Beings, honouring each as an integral thread of the web of life. The pyramid thinking (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a), which dominates the Western world generally, and the ecology of classrooms specifically—acquisition, accumulation, ownership, individuality—only serves to propel pyramid thinking, further distances us from circle thinking, from ecological kinship, from ecological understanding (Cajete, 1994).

My heart-sickness propels me to seek healing, to seek medicine, not only for my self but for all Beings. My heart-sickness propels me to seek healing, to seek medicine for this place now called Canada so a (k)new way of knowing, being, doing, and relating can arise within all of its ecologies, including the ecologies of classrooms.

Through my wayfinding and learning from Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating, I have come to learn if we but attend, the medicine we seek to heal our whole selves—bodies, minds, Spirits—arises. When we attend, the medicine we seek arises as the medicine we seek exists within us as embodiments of Creation: we exist as effulgent coherence (M. A. Meyer, 2013b). Learning the lessons of this Teaching have not come easily, nor quickly. Learning the lessons of this Teaching continue for me as each inter~intra~action with other Beings of both the human world and the more-than-human world invites the presencing of possibilities to learn from, to heal, to receive medicine. Since we exist as effulgent coherence, we can (re)cognize—perceive and know anew—the gift of medicine from other Beings as we can (re)cognize the imperceptible: Spirit. If we but attend.

We can only tune our capacities to attend, to accept the invitation of healing and receiving medicine through our very enactment of attending, and thus our enactment of accepting and receiving healing. I admit, though I try to move from my “inscribed habits of (in)attention” (Boler, 2004, p. 18), to be present enough to fully attend to all Beings all of the time does not occur. I sometimes fumble, but I persist. I learn from Wagamese (2011), “The elders told us ... that it was the desire, the yearning we carried, that would make all things possible ... to harness our desire and use that energy” (pp. 109–110). My yearning for ecological kinship, for circle thinking, for reaching towards another way of knowing, being, doing, and relating invites me to harness my desire, to harness my

energy to envision and thus enliven other ecologies, ecologies of kinship, of ethical relationality (Donald, 2021b), and of relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008).

Many Teachers generously share with me their wisdom, share with me their medicine. The young ones in my care call me to be accountable to my yearning, to envision impossible possibilities. When they bear/bare a revelation of being, they gift me with the presencing of their Spirit. They gift me with an invitation to be present to our shared human-ness, evoking an invoking a new consciousness. The young ones gift me with the responsibility to walk alongside them in a good way—to share with them my own gifts in reciprocity.

Their medicine invites healing of my heart-sickness. As I learn to attend and to receive medicine, I learn to attend and to share my own medicine.

My words forsake me. I do not know how to express to you the profound gratitude I have for the young ones' Teachings.

Perhaps, if you listen carefully, you might hear the resonances of my heart-song in the spaces between these keystrokes.

Words fail me. How do I describe the profound gratitude my heart holds for those who walk alongside me? How can I ever acknowledge their comfort, encouragement, and love I have felt and continue to feel as I wayfind? How do I share my immense appreciation for their Teachings, even the difficult ones, now woven into my very Being? How can I name my Teachers, those in the human world and those in the more-than-human world? What if I forget someone?

How do I translate my heart-song so others can feel it, so they know they too sound there, our resonances an enduring harmony?

— *journal entry*,
July 2022

5.4.10. Gratitude

Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu, tells me a story about his dad and his gill netter. He tells me about his dad's life as a fisher, and also about his granddad who had a seiner. He tells me about learning to fish in a good way.

Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu, learns from his dad and his granddad to begin with a tobacco offering and prayer, a thank you to the Creator and to the Relatives who sustain life.

He learns from his dad and granddad to harvest Hog Weed in the spring time. He learns how to prepare it for the upcoming fishing seasons. Hog Weed can be nasty stuff, leaving welts and blisters and burns. But if you know how to treat Hog Weed with respect, it can be medicine too.

Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu, learns to always use a Hog Weed wash on nets before a season starts. He learns Herring and Salmon can smell if a net travelled in other waters. Herring and Salmon will be wary of unwashed nets. Hog Weed wash cleanses the nets, readies them to be a part of an ecosystem, not as a stranger but as a familiar.

Preparing to fish takes work—time, energy, risks. From his Elders, Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu, learns how to be a part of the circle of kinship in a good way.

Though told to me many moons ago, Chief Harvey's, Nim Kumusu's, story lingers with me. I struggle to know how to express my gratitude for him and his guidance as he walks alongside me. Only in this now can I (re)cognize—perceive and know anew—the depth of this story; only in this now can my ears hear the reverberations of its multiplicities of meanings. Though a story about his life, and his love and gratitude for his dad and granddad, Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu, shares with me a profound Teaching.

Good work starts with gratitude. Good work starts with humility, a willingness to learn from all of our Relatives, both human and more-than-human. Good work starts with a willingness to accept, and thus enact, the responsibility to do the work in a good way, by acknowledging our Teachers and sharing our learnings with those to come.

Good work starts with gratitude, humility, intention, and responsibility, but good work also takes time, it takes energy, and it sometimes takes risks too.

Good work starts, and continues on, from love.

“It is the work of ancestors and ancestors-to-be,
to support the becoming of what they cannot imagine,
but trust will arise...

... preserving room for possibility,
for a world open
to creation
again and again.”

— Robin Wall Kimmerer (2021b, p. 183), Citizen Potawatomi Nation

Ecological Understanding

Ecological understanding (Cajete, 1994) holds a way of thinking and knowing which (re)cognizes—to recognize, or perceive, and (re)*cognize*, or know anew—and honours a relationship with context, place, or land. It reflects a conscious thinking and knowing of the interconnected and interdependent nature of relationships with other humans and the more-than-human world, presupposing Spirit animates all life. It reflects an ethos of ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008), engendering humility.

We do not walk to a destination; we walk for the object of wayfinding.

“...the ancient *nêhiyaw* (Cree) wisdom concept of
wâhkôhtowin...

refers to enmeshment within kinship relations
that connect all forms of life.

When human beings undertake
walking
as a life practice,

the *wâhkôhtowin* imagination
can be activated,
wherein the networks of
human and more than human
relations
that enmesh us
become
vivified and apparent.”

— Dwayne Donald (2021, p. 55), Papaschase Cree

5.4.11. Suspended Here



The now-me writes this on the cusp of a New Moon, just weeks before another Snow Moon. Somehow, this upcoming Snow Moon feels different from the others.

Many Snow Moons ago the then-me began writing my journey, my earnest attempt to track and to coalesce the elusive, those junctures of suspension within my

own whorls of being as I spiral through time.

With this Snow Moon I begin the ending of this writing journey, but paradoxically this Snow Moon also invites a beginning of the next journey.

In this now, I stand on my balcony once again. This time I face West, drawn to the luminescent sky, a brief and sudden reprieve of light and colour after days and days of wintery fog. Though this day comes to an effulgent close, a readying for a new day to emerge begins, an enduring cycle of (re)newal.

West reminds us to remember to remember our constant companions of change and flux—there can be no endings without beginnings, no beginnings without endings. West also invites us to see our responsibilities of caring for our hearts so we might recognize these cycles and our place within them (Four Directions Teachings, 2015). West will pivot to North; recognition will pivot to reflection; responsibility will pivot to wisdom.

The then-me and the now-me have asked you to witness my existential quest as I track my journey of seeking the centre of my being. I thank you, Reader, for walking alongside me, grateful for your absent presence. Soon we will part, yet I hope we part enlivened. I must confess, the centre of my being eludes me still. And perhaps it always will for my path emerges as I walk...

We do not walk *to* a destination; we walk *for* the profound act of wayfinding.

“There’s a strong teaching
that still happens,

and it still happens today,

if you will let it happen,

if you can be true to yourself
and let it happen.

The teaching is that

you

have to do

your

work.

And there are no shortcuts

to finishing.

You have to do your work.”

—Felix Solomon, Lummi

(Solomon, 2013, p. 74)

5.4.12. Praxis

I have come to learn to walk as a good relative, relating must be an intentional, continual enactment, a conscious expansion of who and how I am in the world.

My wayfinding invites me to *live* a praxis, the coalescence of theory and practice, moment by moment, hour by hour, day by day. Through my wayfinding I seek to “(bring) the world closer to [my] heart’s desire” (Greene, 1978, p. 71): to live “the kind of knowing that surpasses and transforms, that makes a difference in reality” (p. 18).

My wayfinding, a transformative process, thickens and expands who and how I am in the world. Though seemingly intangible, the impacts of my wayfinding imbue every tangible manifestation of my experiences with the young ones in my care.

Through my work of learning to become a good relative, relating and having tuned my capacity for site~sight, I (re)cognize boundaries found in classroom ecologies as impossible possibilities, as sites~sights for emergence, as “that from which something *begins its presencing*” (Heidegger, 2013, p. 152, italics in original).

King (2003) helps me to understand, “the truth about stories is that’s all we are” (p. 2). My attempt to script a (k)new story for my self as a good relative in the act of relating means I attempt to script a (k)new story for my personal and professional contexts. A (k)new story for my contexts means (k)new possibilities for my consciousness and my human-ness. Thus, I also attempt to script (k)new possibilities for consciousness and human-ness for the young ones in my care.

No longer can I accept pyramid thinking (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a), the kind of thinking which holds the binaries of Indigenous/non-Indigenous, knowing and not knowing, human-ness and instrumental action (Aoki, 2004a). Through circle thinking (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a), I have come to understand divides as connections. It can seem paradoxical to (re)concile this truth, like watching snow fall on cherry blossoms. But to understand boundaries as “that from which something *begins its presencing*” (Heidegger, 2013, p. 152, italics in original), comes the ability to discern divides as emergence, to (re)cognize we *exist* in a paradox of impossible possibilities. If we manifest it.

With my intentional, continual enactment of being a good relative, relating, I hope to repair, to heal, and to (re)pair, to connect, Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the particular context of a classroom ecology. I hope to be of service to generate radical possibilities of an expansion of the circle of knowledges within my self and within my role as educator in the places now called Canada generally, and British Columbia specifically. Transformative praxis.

5.4.13. Indications

Reader, to help you wayfind, to find your way with and from my hermeneutic inquiry, I now offer you the word choices for my title. I write in present tense, but do not let my grammar trick you. My choice of verb tense seeks to (re)present the continual enactment and (re)enactment of my hermeneutic inquiry, of my existential quest.

In the now of writing these thoughts I share with you, I sit, once again, at my kitchen table. I try to (re)call the resonances of the Teachings I receive, particularly those which arise from my classroom ecology. I try to (re)call the traces of their enduring meanings, to (re)call the young ones in my care so I might honour their gifts with these words. I sit with this screen, while these keystrokes emerge, transmuting my consciousness into words.

I try to conjure the right words, to coax them to the surface, but slippery as always, they elude me. Instead, I spend time staring at the windows just beyond my kitchen table, looking past this moment, searching ahead from this now. Late in August and interminably hot, I close the blinds in a failed attempt to lower the temperature of my apartment. I cannot see through the windows—only the top foot of the arch that the blinds do not cover reveals itself. I see one branch of Western Fir and a section of Big Leaf Maple. Big Leaf Maple looks hot too, with drooping leaves, some already beginning to show signs of yellowy-orange, a hopeful pre-cursor to cooler days. The blinds transform the windows into a sort of cinema in silhouette. Shadows of Western Fir, Big Leaf Maple, and their neighbour, Alder—who I usually cannot see—sway, drift side to side with unseen Wind. Their shadowy patterns appear mottled, blurry, not quite defined. But still they stretch, play with Wind together; graceful, harmonious, peaceful.

I realize this shadow dance occurs whether I witness it or not. How many times have the blinds been raised, the windows' translucence unable to convey the delicate display? How many times have my eyes looked beyond the windows, my attention cast beyond the now?

Here, another Teaching. Western Fir, Big Leaf Maple, Alder, Wind, Sun, try to show me what Simon, et al. (2000) teach me: to appreciate the present as fulsome

rather than incomplete; to understand the present as a “modality, a particular structure of attending” rather than a spatial location (p. 295). To see the present as fulsome, as a modality, even if hazy, imprecise or nebulous, means to see promise and radical possibilities in the now, not just the future.

If one attends.

*Territorial acknowledgements do not act as metaphors, but rather as intentional commitments to uphold Treaties, actual, tangible institutions which exist in some parts of what we now call Canada. In the place now called British Columbia, territorial acknowledgements name mostly unceded territories,⁴⁴ and thus, the Peoples who have and continue to walk this land since time immemorial. Most of my life, both personal and professional, has not included territorial acknowledgements. My Euro-centric, dominant culture and education cocooned me from knowing the history of relations amongst and between the territories and the Peoples of the lands I have, and do, inhabit. The word acknowledgement comes from a blend of Middle English, *acknow*, which denotes to “admit or show one’s knowledge”, and *knowlechen*, which denotes “admit”, as in *allow* (“Acknowledgement,” 2022, para. 1). To offer an acknowledgement, therefore, means to admit, or to show knowledge, and admit, or to receive knowledge. Thus, when I say, I respectfully acknowledge the unceded territories of the Semiahmoo, Kwantlen, Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Qayqayt, and Tsawwassen Nations on whose territories I do the work of my endogenous education, I not only try to show my knowledge of the territories and Peoples, but I also try to share my intention to learn from, to receive the knowledge of these territories and these Peoples.*

*Through my act of endogenous education, I track my journey to reflect the often hazy, imprecise, and nebulous moments of now which comprise the whole of my existential quest. The word endogenous means “growing or proceeding from within” (“Endogenous,” 2022, para. 1), combining *endo-*, which denotes growing or proceeding from within (para. 2), and *-genous*, which denotes “generating, producing, yielding”*

⁴⁴ Approximately 36% of all BC *Indian Act* bands have active or completed negotiations in the treaty process (BC Treaty Commission, 2022).

(para. 3). *Rearing acts as one etymological meaning of the word education (“Education,” 2022, para. 1). The word education derives from Latin educationem (“Education,” 2022, para. 1) itself stemming from educare (“Educate,” 2022, para. 1) whose meaning comes from -ex, or out (para. 1), and ducere, which denotes to lead (para. 1). The word education thus indicates a rearing by bringing out, by leading forth. Therefore, when I say through my act of endogenous education, I mean through my act of rearing, or nurturing my growth from within, I generate and bring forth self-learning.*

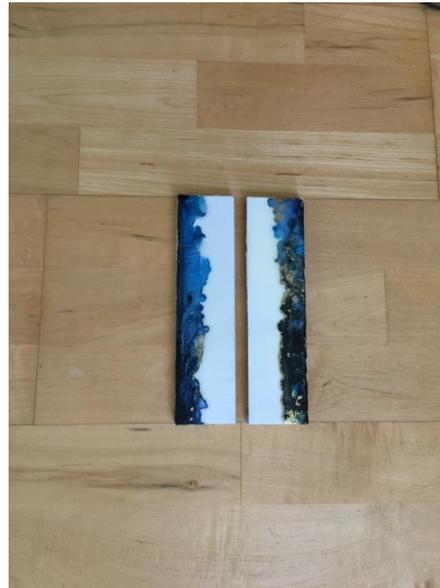
With this act of endogenous education, I seek to answer my heart-question: how can I be of service to Education for (Re)conciliation? My heart-question emerges from my heart-sickness, my acute awareness of the insufficiencies of my noun-centric language and my Western paradigms to honour the inherent dignity of all Beings be-ing Beings. In particular, I question the hegemonic paradigms of acquisition, accumulation, ownership, and individuality which permeate my personal and professional ecologies. My process-oriented journey reflects my attempts to learn to walk in a good way as a non-Indigenous, public-school teacher who seeks to repair, to heal, and to (re)pair, to connect, Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating.

I come to know transformative praxis, which invites paradigmatic shifts to evoke pedagogical possibilities, as a conscious, continual enactment and (re)enactment. As I journey, I pivot, experiencing anew “how the human spirit navigates and understands itself” (V. L. Kelly, 2013, p. 159) through profound dispositional (re)orientation. My hermeneutic inquiry exemplifies an emergent methodology of wayfinding (W. Davis, 2009), of knowing where I am by knowing where I have been and knowing how I came to be where I am. Wayfinding invites me to look back to look forward, to look closely to look beyond. Thus, I understand wayfinding as a (re)cursive, (re)iterative process of finding a way, a pathway to interpretation and understanding. Wayfinding can be metaphoric, an abstraction to help convey precision.

Throughout this dissertation I use the analogy of walking along an emergent path to help express my unscripted, existential journey. Yet simultaneously, the analogy of walking along an emergent path also reflects my actual, lived experiences. Cajete (1994) teaches me the word path denotes structure, while the word way suggests a process. Therefore, to wayfind, finding a pathway, means to enact site~sight, or context and

perception, of interpretation and understanding, to navigate both metaphoric and actual landscapes of learning.

As we travel our pathways to interpretation and understanding, our hermeneutic impetus, we sometimes stop, stumble, or meet Beings who invite us to walk in a direction we do not expect. Throughout my wayfinding, invitations to attend arrive. The word attend comes from the Latin attendere, literally to “stretch toward” (“Attend,” 2022, para. 1), from ad-, “to, toward” (para. 1), plus tendere, “stretch” (para. 1). Thus, an invitation to attend suggests a stretching of one’s mind, one’s heart, one’s Spirit toward something, and if we consider thing in a Heideggerian sense, towards some essence (Heidegger, 2013, p. 172). To attend stretches one’s mind, one’s heart, one’s Spirit towards some essence. My and your essence, Reader, or our effulgent coherence, means our incandescent unity of body, mind, and Spirit; or knowledge, knowing, and understanding (M. A. Meyer, 2013b). Effulgent coherence means we are an embodiment of Universal consciousness, expressions of Creation.



But why do these invitations to attend arise? What do these invitations hope to evoke and invoke? Invitations to attend, to stretch toward an essence with our essence, evokes and invokes our human-ness, manifests our particular expression of Creation. Invitations to attend evoke and invoke sites~sights of emergence, contexts for us to perceive transformative possibilities.

As I journey with my hermeneutic inquiry, I begin to understand the more I attend, the more calls to attend arise; the more calls to attend arise, the more I attend. The (re)cursive, (re)flexive, process-oriented action to attend enliven my capacities to stretch toward the essence of others, to witness them, and thus learn from them. As I (re)juvenate these capacities, I also enliven my capacities to stretch inward toward my own essence, my own human-ness, to witness and learn from myself. I say enliven and (re)juvenate these capacities as I suspect the capacities to attend, to witness, to learn

from the effulgent coherence of all Beings exist as inherent capacities within us. However, over time, Western, pyramid thinking (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a) convinces many of us, me included, that (human) Beings exist as individuals, separated from, and thus dominant over, the more-than-human world. If we humans inhabit the top of the hierarchy, why would we need to attend to Teachings of our ecological kin?

Some of us have forgotten circle thinking (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a). For some of us, an invitation to remember to remember this (k)new idea arises. We exist as “part of the great green “we”, enmeshed in ecological kinship” (Wall Kimmerer, 2021a, p. 114). We exist as a part of the web of reciprocal relations and responsibilities within all of Creation. I say some of us for this (k)new way of thinking—circle thinking rather than pyramid thinking—may not be (k)new for others. Circle thinking might also be understood as Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating, or heterogenous, enduring cosmo-onto-epistemological expressions of Indigeneity since time immemorial. Circle thinking invites me to (re)cognize, or perceive, and (re)cognize, or know anew, my relationship with other Beings, both in the human and more-than-human world. Circle thinking invites a profound, dispositional (re)orientation. It invites me to ask if I “rightly relate” (Van Horn, 2021b, p. 3) with other Beings as a relative, in a good way, with reciprocity, responsibility, and respect, or with ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b) and ethical accountability (S. Wilson, 2008).

Circle thinking also invites me to understand a grammar of animacy (Borrows, 2018; Wall Kimmerer, 2013). A grammar of animacy offers a way of thinking and language-ing the more-than-human world as Beings, as animate with Spirit, as holding their own effulgent coherence. A grammar of animacy invites us (human) Beings to remember to remember our networks of kinship and responsibilities, our reciprocal interdependencies with all of Creation. Thus, in circle thinking, the words relationship and relative serve as verbs, not nouns. I use the word Being in my title as both noun and verb. As noun, Being situates my human-ness, my particular embodiment of Creation. As verb, Being denotes my actions to honour my responsibilities as a relative, relating. To relate, to be a relative, to be in relation, all denote action, action to bring back, to (re)store Spirit within our connections in all its forms in the human and more-than-human world—an eternal spiral of presencing of our ecological kinship. Therefore, the phrase, “Being a good relative, relating” in my title comes from my (k)new understanding, my

(k)new dispositional (re)orientation, and thus my (k)new) language-ing of my ecological kinship with the human and more-than-human world.

Reader, you might wonder why I offer you the words and phrases of my thesis' title in what could seem a haphazard order. I assure you, my choice of sharing key words and phrases not as they appear in the title (re)fects my intentionality. To share with you one word means to share with you all of the words, for the title (re)presents my hermeneutic inquiry, and as such, my hermeneutic circle. Each word relates, embeds, enfolds, and nestles within the others. My process of revealing their significance, and (re)turning to some words and phrases, not only (re)presents, but honours the (re)cursive, (re)iterative spiralling process of my existential quest, of my becoming.

I (re)present my dispositional (re)orientation—a profound pivot from pyramid thinking to circle thinking—with the word becoming in my title. Becoming as a word emerges from the word-forming element, be- and the verb come (“Become,” 2022, para. 1). Be- denotes several meanings like “about, around, thoroughly, to make, to provide with”, deriving from the Old English “around, on all sides” (“Become,” 2022, para. 3). The verb come, from Old English cuman, means “to move with the purpose of reaching; to arrive by movement or progression” but also, to “move into view, appear, come to oneself, recover” or “arrive” (“Become,” 2022, para. 5). To move thoroughly with the purpose of reaching, to come to oneself or recover oneself (re)fects my hermeneutic journey of learning to attend, of stretching toward an essence with my essence in order to evoke and invoke sites~sights of possibilities, or contexts and perceptions of possibilities.

As I learn from Indigenous knowledge practices, I live and learn from my transformative praxis, a continuous coalescence of theory and practice, of knowing and be-ing, and of understanding and doing. At times, my lived praxis also reflects a coalescence of not knowing and not yet be-ing; of not understanding and of pauses between. My transformative praxis calls me to (re)cognize and (re)cognize who and how I am in the world. Through my wayfinding, I come to understand my inheritance as a colonial settler—as agent, by-product, and beneficiary of colonialism. Colonialism happens not as an event, but rather as a structure (Tuck & Wang, 2012). One such structure exists in the place now called Canada in the form of our education systems. Predicated on what Donald (2012a) calls fort pedagogy, a “national ideology” (p. 43), our

education systems inscribe and re-inscribe a narrative of Indigenous Peoples belonging outside of Canadian nationality. Through its policies, curriculum, and teachers, fort pedagogy continues to establish, implement, and naturalize Euro-Western cosmo-onto-epistemologies over and above all others.

Within the colonial structure of education, Dion (2009) shares teachers in the place now called Canada often see themselves as perfect strangers to Indigenous Peoples, an identity which cocoons them from “having to recognize their own attachment to and implication in the history of the relationship between Aboriginal people and Canadians” (p. 179). I see myself in Dion’s description, and as I continue, step-by-step along my hermeneutic inquiry, I pivot from a perfect stranger identity to what I call an imperfect ally identity, another dispositional (re)orientation. An imperfect ally continues the work of recognizing, understanding, but most importantly, acting on her relationship with Indigenous Peoples and her advantages in and complicity of settler colonialism. While I walk my journey, sometimes stumbling, sometimes falling, I live my transformative praxis, tune my capacities for attending. I learn from many Teachings and many generous Teachers who walk alongside me, those who invite me to (re)cognize and (re)cognize myself as a good relative, relating.

I cannot name them all here, now, but learning from Indigenous knowledge practices, from ceremony, from being called to witness for my mentor and friend Chief Harvey, Nim Kumusu, from the young ones in my care, from the more-than-human world, all of these Teachers invite me to tune myself, to better resonate with other Beings. I learn my classroom ecology can be a site~sight of emergence, or a place and perception of possibility, a place and perception of “that from which something begins its presencing” (Heidegger, 2013, p. 152, italics in original). As I tune myself and better resonate with other Beings, I am better able to hear the calls to attend to the effulgent coherence of the young ones in my care. As I attend, I witness their revelations of Being, sometimes intentional offerings but sometimes emergent gifts. I call my tuned awareness nuances of witnessing to try to (re)present the complex, heterogenous yet simultaneously inter~intra~connected experiences of myself as a Being~witness.

Pedagogical possibilities emerge from nuances of witnessing. The presencing of consciousness in a classroom ecology manifests ephemeral, embodied engagement, a metamorphosis of the roles of student/teacher, pyramid thinking, to the roles of

Being~Being, circle thinking. The presencing of consciousness in a classroom ecology invites ecological understanding (Cajete, 1994), a way of thinking and knowing which holds the complexity of ecological kinship, ethical relationality (Donald, 2012b), and relational accountability (S. Wilson, 2008), engendering humility. Thus, becoming a Being~witness acts only as one whorl within the whole of my (re)cursive, (re)iterative journey of my dispositional (re)orientation of (re)cognizing and (re)cognizing myself as a relative, relating.

Please do not let this tidy sequence of events fool you, Reader. Though it is possible to track the whorls of my becoming, my dispositional (re)orientation to circle thinking—colonial settler to perfect stranger to imperfect ally to a good relative, relating—these whorls do not exist as discrete parts, separated, a linear sequence of events. Instead, they coalesce, merge, commingle, imbue one another, simultaneously expanding and thickening who and how I am in the world.

Through my transformative praxis, I track these existential pivots through métissage, itself a (re)search praxis. Heterogenous in nature, métissage, braids multiple modalities to create a unified whole. I choose métissage as a methodology as it invites an evocation of possibilities. New interpretation and understanding arise as the individual threads of modalities become a cohesive braid for both the creator and her readers. As such, métissage also serves as an act of trust for the reader to engage with, to make meaning from, and to interact with the offerings. Therefore, métissage invokes a relational praxis. My chosen modalities include life writing in the form of dialogic vignettes, poetry, scholarly writing, photography, and encaustic artwork created with my mom, Sandy. I (re)present a variety of modalities in an attempt to “perform the magical feat of transforming the contents of [my] consciousness into a public forum that others can understand” (Eisner, 1997, p. 8). Writing acts as the primary modality of (re)presentation within my métissage. Writing inspires “a way of “knowing” and “a method of discovery and analysis” (L. Richardson, 1994, p. 516). I have come to learn I write myself into thinking; I think myself into writing.

An intentional literary method of discovery and analysis throughout my métissage explores words’ etymology. The word etymology comes from Latin and Greek etymologia and both denote “analysis of a word to find its true origin” (“Etymology,” 2022, para. 1) which combines -logia, or the study of, speaking of (para. 1), and etymon,

or true sense, original meaning (para. 1). To speak words, a conscious enactment of thought through breath, offers an expression of Spirit (Cajete, 1994). Thus, speaking of words, seeking their true sense or origin, I attempt to (re)cognize and (re)cognize the original meanings they hold. When we call forth a word, we do not merely call forth its common usage in our daily lexicon. We call forth its true sense, sometimes ancient and forgotten yet enduring nonetheless, an attempt to (re)present the magical feat of transforming our Spirit into a form we, and others, can (re)cognize and (re)cognize. Ultimately, I come to know métissage invites the (re)searcher to be the (re)search, the research to be the (re)searcher, to learn from the Teachings of her life, if she but attends.

Through this hermeneutic inquiry, I have come to learn the Teachings of my life continuously arise and exist everywhere. The Teachings of my life arise to act as medicine to help heal my heart-sickness. They arise as calls to attend, as invitations to understand the present as fulsome, not incomplete so I can (re)cognize and (re)cognize promise and radical possibilities exist in the now, not just the future. For me, promise and radical possibilities to address current struggles exist in the shape of hope.

I hope to script a (k)new story for me and for us all. Through my dispositional (re)orientation to circle thinking, I have come to understand divides as connections. To understand divides as “that from which something begins its presencing” (Heidegger, 2013, p. 152, italics in original), means to discern divides as emergence, to (re)cognize and (re)cognize we exist in a paradox of impossible possibilities. If we manifest it. I hope for the impossible possibilities of better relations among and between the human and the more-than-human world. If I understand the present as fulsome, my hope exists not only for better relations in the future, my hope for better relations exists in the now.

With this act of endogenous education, I have come to learn to attend to the effulgent coherence within myself and within all of Creation. The (re)cursive act of attending tunes my capacities to witness the revelations of Being from the young ones in my care. To become a Being-witness animates a generative, pedagogical praxis. I learn to walk alongside the young ones, Being to Being, enlivening within myself my dispositional (re)orientation to circle thinking.

Reader, I hope the same for you.

“How we hold knowledge
has everything to do with
who we have learned to become.”

— Vicki Kelly (2021, p. 191), Anishnaabe and Métis

5.4.14. Hold Lightly

I stand in line to sign the condolence book. It snakes its way from the wooden-trimmed entry doors, along an ashy-taupe portico, down umber-flecked pebbled steps, and on to a dull tarmac. Mottled gray and white clouds punctuate the sky above us. Vivid patches of blue appear in the shifting spaces, momentary distractions from our sombre thoughts. The wind chills, more winter than spring. Behind us, the cemetery. Rows and rows of grave markers gleam in the winking sunlight, silent reminders of lives once lived.

I sit near the back of the crowded chapel. I choose a pew with only one mourner, a young woman. The oak pew offers staid comfort, its edges burnished to a soft gleam, its seat firm and familiar. She cries softly, continuously brushing away tears, apologizing for her state. I try to say the right things. I try to help her shed her tears not with apologies, but with love.

A large group of young people join us. I sense the burgeoning connections between them and I move to the pew just ahead so they have space to be together. From my vantage, I listen to them share their memories with each other. Someone speaks, the others laugh knowingly; someone else adds details, generating another memory from someone else.

Remember the port-a-potty? He wouldn't look us in the eyes! Oh, and that Sargent, what was his name? Yes! How did he ever convince him about that carpet? And the bus to base! Remember that bus trip from hell?!...

As they remember to remember, their love for their friend arises, fills the spaces between and becomes a palpable presence, an aching comfort.

Their laughter pauses intermittently as the enormity of their friend's absent presence echoes around them. Then their levity halts suddenly, completely.

Luke's casket arrives. There it sits, mere feet from our pews. A sob hitches in the throat of the young woman I met earlier—I recognize her voice—and the magnitude of Luke's entrance reverberates in the now silent chapel.

Draped with a crisp, new Canadian flag, his casket glows under the glare of overhead lights which now seem too bright, too garish. I hear another familiar voice, one who calls to me from across time and space, *When you look at that flag of yours, what do you see?*

My own breath snags in my throat—neither an inhale nor an exhale. A pause.

Under that flag lay a young, Indigenous man, his body broken, his life ended. Yet under that same flag lay a young, Indigenous man, his choices honoured, his passions recognized.

Under that flag lay a young, Indigenous man, his dreams broken, his hopes ended. Yet under that same flag lay a young, Indigenous man, his life dedicated to service, his goodness enacted.

In the space between I now understand. I now understand the extraordinary capacity to hold things lightly comes only with intentional, adept equilibrium. No longer can I cradle with one hand, and cradle with the other, my hands side-by-side, aligned, but not really touching. Though seemingly safe from inadvertently collapsing one into the other, from subsuming one into the other, with my hands a gentle, careful, attentive divide exists. But a separation nonetheless.

I now understand my hands must work together to invoke balance. They must flex, twist, curve, arc, swivel, respond to the needs of the other. They must honour their symbiotic, dynamic natures with deliberate, continuous movement. Balance requires constant movement and the balance I seek comes from its ancient meaning, *kama-muta*, movement by love. Love persists, but it must be enacted.

To hold lightly. My hands. Together.

I still have much to learn.

5.4.15. Remember to Remember

Crows converge on Western Fir and Big Leaf Maple tree I admire through the two windows beyond my kitchen table. They shout, disparate caws, gravel-edged but fierce, insistent, yet somehow creating a symphony. Harmony.

They call me to stop.

To remove these fingers from these keystrokes.

To lift these eyes from this screen.

To listen.

To remember to remember: though it began here, the work lives beyond this kitchen table.

5.4.16. Writing/Righting from 'Riting'⁴⁵

Riting evokes writing/righting. The writer expands into herself, radiates inward. Her resonance echoes, reverberations enfolded one into the other. Consonance, dissonance, cacophony—all jangle about her.

She must settle; settle to the rhythm of her breath, the cadence of her heartbeat.

Within and without vibrations oscillate through her flesh, saturate her bones, become her marrow.

She begins to learn to compose herself.

She begins to remember to remember.

There, there! In the space between her breath, the space between the drum of her heart, there her heart-song plays, an ancient pulse too old to name. Yet named or not it is.

To feel its vibrato, for it to sound through her being, first she must seek, pause, be. She tunes herself. The lilt of harmony strums.

Her heart-song trills in unison.

⁴⁵ *Riting* is a word I borrow from Allana Pierce (personal communication, July 5, 2020), who asks of me, "What about rite? 'Riting' isn't a word, but it [is] a homonym to both write and right."





Kelly: Mom, I love this one! It's gorgeous!

Momsey: I think I figured out my style with the pan pastels.



Kelly: So, I'm going to use the heat gun to see what happens to the pan pastels.

Momsey: No! It's so nice as it is!

Kelly: Let's just see...

Momsey: Knowing when to stop is the hardest part of being an artist, you know.

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Appendix A.

Alternative Media – “Burn It” Video

Creator/Director:

Kelly R. Robinson

Video Description:

The video clip is complementary to this paper. It shows the technique of using a butane torch on an encaustic art piece to show its effect on alcohol inks and wax.

Filename & Link:

Burn video.MOV

Appendix B.

Alternative Media – “Wax On” Video

Creator/Director:

Kelly R. Robinson

“Wax On” Video Description:

The video clip is complementary to this paper. It shows the technique for preparing a substrate for the encaustic art form by heating and applying layers of hot wax.

“Wax On” Video Filename & Link:

Wax on video.MOV