A Thousand Steps from One: Towards Decolonizing and Indigenizing Pedagogy in Higher Education

by

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Abstract

In the Canadian educational context, higher education is committed to decolonization, reconciliation, and support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. This doctoral thesis documents and interprets my personal journey as a settler academic in an effort to contribute to a future that centres decolonization, interculturality, and Indigenous ways of learning, being, and knowing. As part of my learning journey of exploration, commitment, and action, I synthesize the knowledge I have gathered over the years, both in my ballet dance training and in my Indigenous studies, considering my past in conjunction with the present and future. Key research questions that guide my research are: how can we successfully integrate Indigenous ways of learning, being, and knowing into higher education when academia's foundations are Eurocentric and colonial? This thesis contemplates how my journey in decolonization of curriculum and towards Indigenizing pedagogy serves my students, my institutions, and my community. In particular, this thesis considers how my commitment, as a settler academic, to reconciliation, decolonization, and Indigenization is incorporated into how I take action to deconstruct the Eurocentric norms during my service work at my institution. The structure of this thesis follows the nine Haida principles of learning. In doing so, a path is created for self-exploration through storytelling method of learning and writing. These stories draw out my burning questions about academia and Indigenization, demonstrating parallels observed between my personal experiences and the academy's journey towards decolonizing and Indigenizing higher education. Through this effort, I theorize about potential ways to better my own engagement in reconciliation. Also, as a work in Appreciative Inquiry, this thesis shows how Indigenous ways of being guide my decision making, pedagogical approaches, assessment practices, and general approach to life on the land upon which I am situated.

Keywords: decolonization of curriculum and pedagogy; Indigenization of higher education; interculturality; storytelling; ballet dance; reflection

Dedication

To Rick, Caitlin, Curran, and Marlene. We did not see this coming. You have all been spectacular!

To my family. The Cameron Crew: Wendy (Mom), Marilyn (Sister/Aunt/Mom etc.), Sam (brother), and Alexandra (sister). The St. Jacobs Fam: Graham (Dad), Ann (stepmom), and Kayla (sister). One might read this as two separate groups, but in truth, they are all part of an incredible whole that have contributed so much to my development and growth, it would be impossible to explain it all. And we have grown in numbers and love through the addition of Samantha (sister-in-law), Blake (niece), and Jesse (Brother-in-law).

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I also owe a lifelong flow of thanks to Dr. Linda Pardy, the reason I started this journey, and the reason I am finishing. You had the vision to tell me to consider grad school at a time when I needed to pivot, and provided insight where I did not understand the procedure, expectation, or opportunity. You have always encouraged me, even during the hard times when I was not listening closely. You were kind enough to be patient and repeat yourself until I heard you. If I have achieved anything, it is because you pointed me in the right direction and kept your hand on my back so I would not get lost. I can never thank you enough.

I am deeply grateful for the exquisite composition supplied for this project by Canadian composer, Dave Genn. To have your piece as part of this project is an exceptional gift.

Additional gratitude to my family, my parents, my siblings, and the chorus of others who have supported me during this incredible journey, including Darcie Brown, Victoria Duffield, Jess and Shea Wind, and Katie Stobbard, Monica Vesely, Cherie Martens, Luke Pardy, Rashad Mammadov, Christopher and Carol Wilson, and Peter Quanz.

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List of Acronyms

ALIVE	Appreciate, Love, and Inquire, in order to Venture and Evolve
CTL	Cognitive Load Theory
EDI	Equity Diversity and Inclusion
GPA	Grade Point Average
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
ILO	Institutional Learning Outcome
ISW	Instructional Skills Network
SFU	Simon Fraser University
UFV	University of the Fraser Valley
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UN SDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Land Acknowledgement

I respectfully acknowledge that the campus of Simon Fraser University is located on the unceded, and ancestral territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the səl̓ilw̓ətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh), kʷikʷəƛ̓əm (Kwikwetlem), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations.

I also wish to acknowledge that my residence and work, the University of the Fraser Valley, are both located on the unceded and ancestral territory of the Stó:lō people, the people of the river.

The language spoken by the Stó:lō people is Halq'eméylem, and I wish to offer special acknowledgement of the current work that elders have undertaken to continue and grow the language for future generations by recording what is remembered and to work to bring new Halq'eméylem words forward, and to capture what has come into being for current and future generations. I have been told by an elder that the words for everything are there and that we just have to listen carefully to hear them. I will honour these words and be quiet enough to allow them to work without disturbance.

Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples of Canada have acted as stewards of these lands, waters, and skies. I recognize their lands, waters, and skies. This acknowledgment compels me to take explicit action towards reconciliation, commit to two and multi-eyed seeing, and base my curricular structures on Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and learning. In this way, I hope to be part of a future that fulfills what the Stó:lō Reconciliation website describes as "…the decolonization of Canadian society by helping contemporary Canadians see the ways in which they have inherited certain privileges that their ancestors achieved by undermining Indigenous culture and alienating Indigenous people from their land and resources" (stoloreconciliation.com).

Part I: Where Learning Emerges

Strong Relationships, Authentic Experiences, and Curiosity.

Locating Myself on This Land and Situating My Scholarship in the Stream of Decolonization

The Present

As I stated in my Acknowledgement, I resolve to take explicit action towards reconciliation, to commit to two and multi-eyed seeing, and to base my curricular structures on Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and learning.

By taking this action in the present, my hope is to be part of a future that fulfills "…the decolonization of Canadian society by helping contemporary Canadians see the ways in which they have inherited certain privileges that their ancestors achieved by undermining Indigenous culture and alienating Indigenous people from their land and resources" (stoloreconciliation.com).

To begin, I acknowledge the privileges that I inherited from my white settler ancestors to strengthen my resolve to dedicate my scholarship and teaching to the project of decolonization, and in reviewing my family's history below, I am able to articulate aspects of my upbringing that I assumed were part of an average childhood and identify the aspects that I thought were unique.

A Backward Glance

My mother's family hails from England and Scotland. Her grandparents moved to Montreal after World War II and settled there to raise their family. She spoke English and French, and her family had cottages in Québec until I was a teenager.

My father's grandparents were multigenerational Canadians who took care of my father when he was little because his mother (my grandmother) had polio and was not expected to live. My father's grandparents, Dean and Jim, had land in Ontario and would grant immigrants pieces of land to farm. It was always a point of pride in our family, that our ancestors had embraced immigration early. It was not until I was older that I realized they were offering to others land that did not belong to them.

I am a third-generation scholar. My grandfather on my father's side, Fred Strong, was the department head of Adult Education at George Brown University. My grandmother on my father's side, Jean Strong, graduated from McMaster University and

became the head of the Young Woman's Christian Association (YWCA). My father, Graham Strong, was the Director of the school of Optometry and Associate Dean of Science at the University of Waterloo (currently Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Optometry and Vision Science), my mother, Wendy Strong, was the Vice-Principal of the KW Bilingual School (a private school), my stepmother, Ann Plotkin, is a Clinical Professor Emeritus at the School of Optometry and Vision Science at the University of Waterloo, and my half-sister, Kayla Strong, worked in Risk Management at Cambridge University and is currently completing a PhD in Veterinary Medicine at the University of Calgary. My legacy association with the post-secondary environment, practices, and protocols has afforded me privilege and the ability to survive circumstances that may have hampered another student's ability to succeed.

In response to the benefits that I have enjoyed as a third-generation scholar, I firmly resolve to use my privilege to continue to explore Indigenous ways of learning, being, and knowing to facilitate and enhance my ability to:

- Actively listen to Indigenous voices and perspectives and act on their recommendations and suggestions.
- Incorporate and centre Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and learning into my curriculum, classroom, and assessment practises.
- Make space for Indigenous voices but not rely on volunteered work or make requests that increase the practical or emotional labour of my Indigenous colleagues or the Indigenous community.
- Amplify Indigenous voices, perspectives, and recommendations.
- Explicitly, and with intention, engage with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, with special attention to #62-65, those focused on education.

Commitment to such action will entail constant review of my own biases and lenses which formed as a result of my upbringing, the social influence of Christianity, television and popular media, and my early education. I did not consider how nuanced Christianity's influence was on my life, but when I was a child, my brother Sam and I

would often watch cartoons on Saturday mornings. One of them in particular contained religious messaging. It was just a cartoon, but upon later reflection, it subliminally informed our perspectives on right and wrong as religiously determined, and normalized prayer, God, and parent/child dynamics as existing within a heteronormative and religious structure. A parent assumes that a religious show will avoid violence and mature messaging, but the ultimate messaging is much more insidious. The normalization of Christianity elevates its messaging and destabilizes other ways of being and knowing in children, simply because the religious show is available and "parent approved" by default.

Looking Back to Look Forward

In the past, I have disregarded Indigenous perspectives and ways of being, laboring under the delusion that these were outdated, incompatible with modern technology, and insubstantial. I persisted in my delusion that Indigenous people could promote their languages and ways of celebrating within their community, but it had little to do with me as a modern woman moving through the world. I was oblivious to how I would possibly need to engage with Indigenous ways of being and learning. I was Canadian, and that meant I sang to the Queen, celebrated Canada Day and the Blue Jays winning the World Series, loved poutine, and proudly declared my English, Scottish, and French background. I was insulated in a Eurocentric narrative of Canada as my home and felt secure in my place within that society. Privilege purchases false security at the cost of havoc and carnage outside the gilded confines of one's privileged life.

When I was younger, my family supported me financially and emotionally. They ensured that I had money to attend Sheridan College and live comfortably. I lived on campus with friends in whose company I was safe. I had food security and additional funds for recreation. At the time, I was utterly unaware of how privileged I was. I saw my life much the way scholar, Peggy Mcintosh, first describes in "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack", and then in her chapter White Privilege and Male Privilege, I saw my life as, "morally neutral, normative, and average" (Mcintosh, 1989, p. 1, 2017, p. 30). To my way of thinking, Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and ways of being were outside the norm, ephemeral, and due to disappear into the mist of time.

I see things completely differently now. Now I see myself as a settler on Indigenous land, a beneficiary of colonialism, and a member of a community who bears a monumental responsibility to the original inhabitants and stewards of the land upon which I currently dwell. My life is morally tied to the past injustices committed by settlers who were my ancestors. It is not neutral. The entire situation burns like a massive fire lit by my ancestors to cause incredible harm to Indigenous people. My ancestors started this fire, metaphorically speaking, to clear the land of the Indigenous people and to claim the land as their own. And because of their actions, this fire will continue to burn for centuries to come.

I, as an individual, did not build the devastating fire and light it, and I have far less understanding of it than Indigenous peoples who know and have lived the brutal and devastating colonial history. I am unable to stop the fire. So, what can I do? The quandary reminds me of a South American indigenous story about a hummingbird.

The story goes something like this: There was a time when a huge forest caught fire. As the fire raged, all the animals cleared out of the burning forest. All except a single hummingbird, who bravely flew to a stream and picked up one drop of water, which she then dropped on the fire.

The little hummingbird flew back and forth. She deposited drop after drop of water on the fire. When the other animals asked what she was doing, she responded, “I’m doing everything I can.” (Yahgulanaas, 2010) If all I am capable of contributing to decolonization is one drop of water after another, that is one more drop of water than there would have been. And the fire can be reduced with enough drops of water. The work is vital even if it seems small. I must continue. I must do everything I can.

But the doing needs context and guidance. It is not for me to determine what action is to be taken. So, to start, I can listen to what Indigenous people say about the fire of colonialism and what they would like to see happen now that more people appreciate the scope of the disaster. I can share the messages I gather from those who value the nuances of where we are and how nature behaves. I can take responsibility for those who came before me who made terrible choices that continue to feed the flames. I can give thought to new ways of helping, but my voice works in a supporting role to amplify Indigenous contributions to addressing the issue. I can listen and ask questions

to better my own understanding, and I can look for role models of the desired action and behaviours as provided by Indigenous communities, representatives, and individuals, instead of trying to implement my own perception of what I hear. I can offer my ideas, my engagement, and my hardworking self to commit to bettering the community despite the fire. The work ahead is monumental, but I recognize that the faster decolonization and Indigenization become part of everyday discourse and self-reflection, the clearer the path to decolonization will become.

The start of my journey towards decolonization took a considerable amount of time and several informative stops along the way, but much of it began with my first undergraduate course at the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV): GEOG 130-Canada: Prelude to Federation. I read the stories of colonization, appreciating how land was originally traded, and how Indigenous people were treated as colonization took hold. I was unaware of much of the history of my own country, and my studies took me to a place of anger and confusion.

How often did I allow the assumption that Indigenous people were somehow prone to “laziness” and “binge drinking” pass through my mind with no thought to how I came to think that, or if it were true? I considered myself open and inclusive, and certainly not racist, but as the geography course unfolded, I began to adopt new thinking patterns but searched for the “correct” terminology and the “right” side of the argument. I did not want to be the villain. I railed against colonialism and spoke ill of my ancestors as though this would allow me to locate myself on the side of good: “This situation was not my doing. Other people did this. I just happened to be here now.” Thus, I was embracing my victimhood.

In third year, I learned of Residential Schools and the role played by intergenerational trauma in the lives of survivors, and I began to question my own biases and preconceived notions about racism in our country. I would never stand for blatant racism, but I had much to learn about implicit and systemic racism and the imbalance of power and agency that crept below the surface of society. On September 18th, 2013, UFV held an event called Indian Residential School Day of Learning. I took part by reading an excerpt from a letter where students described being put in an attic and locked in from the other side.

I initially volunteered to do the reading because I am a student who is willing to get involved in just about anything, but participating gave me incredible insight into the experience of attending a Residential School. The letter described students being sent into the school's attic to sleep overnight, and they were locked in the attic from the outside. The children were prone to discussing the possibility of a fire, and what would happen in such a circumstance. I found the letter difficult to read the first time. I read it over and over to find a way to read it aloud for an audience. It took several days to master my emotions enough to allow an audience to hear it when I read it aloud because I too am a "what if" person.

When my husband and I lived in a condo, I could not sleep at night for fear of what would happen in the case of an earthquake. Finally, my husband told me explicitly that I was to go out into the hallway where there was nothing that could crash into me. He is a civil engineer and knows exactly what will happen, so when he quietly added, "…well, if you can get out the door before the fridge bounces out and in front of it…" I tucked that vital information away for future knowledge. This is the worry I carry even though the chance of an earthquake is small. I have the ability to unlock the door and run out, but the children in the attic did not.

I kept thinking about the children being locked in the attic from the outside. How their terror ran through me as I read. The injustice of it held my thoughts for years after. This was one tiny aspect of their experience, it did not capture the beatings, labour, loss of language and family, punishments, abuse, and malnutrition, but it captured a larger picture of a complete loss of control and a fear that seeps across the entirety of a person's being. I was familiar enough with that to send my thoughts back in time to those children, to attempt to comfort them from the future. I had never had an inkling to even consider something so frightening before. But their fear drew me to the past, searching for a connection I could not manifest. Their experience in the attic stayed with me, and later, when I did more in-depth research into multigenerational trauma, the escape offered by substance abuse became clear, and I had an empathetic response as opposed to a judgemental response. But without the connection I had felt to those small children, huddled together, considering "what if" in the dark, empathic understanding would not have happened so deeply and completely.

In addition to my realizations about the past and how it played out in people's experience of the present, it was also disturbing to realize that the educational system I had grown up in was a colonial machination that forced Indigenous people to learn and be assessed in Eurocentric ways about Eurocentric topics and content. For example, I was deeply enthralled with Shakespeare's works and thought of him as writing plays for every person on the planet. There was the nuance of the diction and the opportunities for humour, the love stories, and the extravagant endings, be they happy or tragic. Then I read Thompson Highway's *The Rez Sisters*, which features a character called Nanabush, who is the Trickster. The role was originally played by Highway's brother René, and aside from the odd "Kaw" out loud, Nanabush spoke to the audience through dance.

In one scene, a mentally challenged character speaks in short broken sentences with an even tone, describing a horrific assault. The basics of the event are stated, but Nanabush dances the internal experience of the character. I was struck by the difference between Shakespeare's dextrous diction and fanfare, and the authenticity and depth of Highway's choices for his play. I had always been successful at reading into Shakespeare's dialogue and that had elevated me to my instructors. I took pride in my ability. But consider again the question of what is normative. How would a student who saw Highway as the master playwright interpret Shakespeare? How would they even begin? And how would I stand to offer interpretation or a personal perspective on Highway's work? Did my background, knowledge, and world view put me in a position to do well in an assignment? I thought it did, initially. I felt my experience as a dancer afforded me the requisite insight to offer a perspective.

In fact, I originally pitched my master's project on this topic. I was quite angry when a professor said, "Your perspective on Indigenous movement is perhaps not the one we need. What of Indigenous scholars?" I was the trained dancer. Classically trained, in fact. Should I not have something to say? Back then, I struggled with why my experience with classical dance was not seen as the normative perspective or the industry standard. Then, in 2018, I went to England to explore possible PhD programs, and I had a realization while I was there.

I could hear the echo of carriages as I walked the streets and sensed my posture changing. I became longer and more upright. When I opened a door, my feet came

together, I tilted my head to the right, and slowly nodded at those who were exiting. I sat taller in my chair, spoke with my cleanest and most proper phrasing, sipped from teacups with careful thought to setting the bottom back into the saucer. I marveled at insignificant interactions and overheard turns of phrase that seemed somehow familiar though I did not recall ever hearing them before. My sister and I walked arm in arm in the park and happily explored our favourite aspects of the architecture. I had a rousing debate about Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* with a rabid fan of Shakespeare's works that was among my sister's colleagues. And I felt at home. I felt the dirt reach up to welcome my feet. I seemed to know the city, the people, the food, and the ways of moving through the space. I felt more like myself than I ever have. I did not have to think, I did not feel on edge, and I was dying to take in everything I could. Everything belonged there.

When I got home, it was like seeing Canada with new eyes. Shakespeare was embedded in the fabric and dust of England, and then parts of his essence were placed in Canada. He was a settler here as much as I. My realizations triggered thoughts of my own family and how people I was related to had come to Canada and worked to make their way, but instead of integrating into the environment, they tried to bring their home here and alter the space to be the same. And it was not the same. The land allowed my presence but did not welcome my feet the same way. I started to observe the creatures around me and appreciate living amongst their space instead of thinking of them living "in my backyard." I lived on land that I could not claim or connect to in the same way as the land I had been on in England. This is when I started to think of land acknowledgements differently.

I now acknowledge the stewardship of the Stó:lō people with genuine gratitude and consideration for the care they took of land I was now using. It makes me want to take care of the land, too. I often talk about the beavers who have a dam behind my house and how we share space. I benefit from the beauty of their efforts every day, and that work had not been easy. I also ask everyone to take a moment to think about their relationship to the land and how their feet feel in relation to the earth upon which they stand. My hope is always that people will pay better attention to how they feel about being on various pieces of land. Perhaps others will have a similar experience to mine, and more people will become aware of themselves on the land we now call Canada.

Each land acknowledgement restates historically blurred facts about the land and reinforces Indigenous ways of being and knowing into the flow of daily discourse. They also allow those present to reflect on the land as an important aspect of their life, and perhaps to also reflect on how this practice of repetition to reinforce information is preceded by colonial versions meant to do the same. I said the Lord's prayer at the start of every school day until I was in high school. It was not a choice, but rather a thing we did. As a kid, I were unsure why, but I did it anyway. By drawing attention to how and why land acknowledgements happen, future students will engage in the practice with purpose, and develop a personal way to "acknowledge the Indigenous peoples of the area and, in a symbolic way, recognize the colonial legacy of the institution in place and time (Pidgeon, 2016, p. 80). Though land acknowledgements only take a few moments to include, through careful and consistent delivery, a shift in thinking can be established in settler minds.

As young people, in addition to reciting the Lord's prayer and singing Oh Canada every morning, we were taught to sing, "This Land is Your Land Canada" (Guthrie, 1940). Even children's performer, Raffi, recorded a version (Raffi, 2014). It is, however, time to revise this song again. Respecting the Indigenous relationship with the land, we will not sing that the land was "made for you and me" at school. The land is not made for humans. Rather, humans, along with all other "people" ("bear people," "beaver people," and so on) are invited to live on land. Moreover, our revised song will need to reflect the history of the harm and damage inflicted on the Indigenous people and the land as unceded and ancestral to Indigenous peoples. Thus revised, the song we teach our children becomes an important way to remind and re-educate the population's ways of thinking of, and interacting with, the land. Educational representation of the truth of Canada's history and institutional dedication to decolonization, and Indigenization of spaces, ways of learning, being, and knowing works to address misinformation and a lack of information displayed by students like me.

As my education progressed, my personal journey deepened in accordance with my concern. I was able to see the privileged position my parents had been in, and their parents before, related to a genetic lottery ticket that happened to fall in our favour. Being a white female, raised to a Protestant mother, descendant of English and Scottish heritage afforded me behaviours, knowledge, and a personal presentation that opened doors for me. Or, at the very least, kept doors from closing. As I increasingly unpacked

my own privilege backpack, I realized how many advantages I had been awarded (Mcintosh, 1989, p. 1, 2017, p. 30). I could walk into any store and turn on my formal tone and be listened to. I could ask my parents for advice and their perspective was familiar with systems I did not yet understand, so I was favoured with information that my peers did not always receive. I grew to appreciate the difference between "…earned strength and unearned power" which I now recognize as an early step towards my own decolonization and Indigenization considerations and actions (Mcintosh, 1989, p.1).

In addition, I also became aware that I had a lesser chance of being attacked or killed, simply because I had safe places to live and money to address my needs. We had books, vehicles, nutritious food, medicine, and friends and family who would vouch for us and offer support. It was then that I started to consider how it was that my life had turned out the way it had when so many others had a life that had turned out quite differently, and I vowed to make space for students who had ideas, bravery, and unique perspectives but were perhaps not successful because they did not know the unwritten rules of the world within which they were attempting to operate, or they were not in a position to rely on anyone for assistance. As I move into the next chapter of my career, making this space for student success will be my primary focus. I will use every stitch of my privilege to shake the system loose and upend colonial frameworks, structures, and obstacles that are often designed to allow students who know how to engage to move forward while leaving the rest behind where they never quite finish their education, drop out, or sit on probation.

A Forward Glance

To further my commitment to decolonize the colonial education system partly by embracing student-centred approaches, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and anti-racist assessment strategies, I will need to continue to discover appropriate tools. Many such tools are found by conducting research and reading, and on social media channels like academic Twitter. A current resource I am exploring is written by Terry Mitchell, Darren Thomas, and Jackson Smith (2018), authors of the article, "Unsettling the Settlers: Principles of a Decolonial Approach to Creating Safe(r) Spaces in Post-Secondary Education." I connected with this piece partly because it is written by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars who live where I used to live in Ontario, so I know the land they are working on, and it offers me a sense of their perspective I might

not otherwise carry, but also because it captures excellent ideas for moving towards decolonization and Indigenization.

Mitchell et al. are speaking about the work I am now doing, from where I used to reside. They have also prepared a relational model of decolonization. In the article, Mitchell et al. state:

> As the foundation of the relational model of decolonization pertinent within and outside of the academy, we offer the following four principles of Decolonization:
>
> > Principle 1: Decolonization **is informed by Indigenous lens/worldview**, with Indigenous leadership and participation.
> >
> > Principle 2: Decolonization **interrupts colonial power dynamics**, holding non-Indigenous faculty and students responsible for understanding and engaging in respectful relations with Indigenous Peoples.
> >
> > Principle 3: Decolonization **progresses from conscientization to action**; begin with a foundational understanding of history and Settler-Indigenous power relations as a foundation to decolonial policy and action.
> >
> > Principle 4: Decolonization **transforms policy, curricula, and institutional spaces.** (pp. 360-361, emphasis added)

When I speak about the decolonization of teaching and learning in higher education, it is with this relational model in mind, especially with regards to Principle 2 of this model.

I am purposeful in asking openly what actions are being taken by my institution to address decolonization and Indigenization. I sit on a curriculum committee for the College of Arts where I question courses that lack explicit, Indigenized outcomes, and I push back when I see assessment listed as only essays. My hope is that by making the institution a place where Indigenous students and faculty want to be, a place where they recognize themselves, their perspectives, and ways of learning and expressing knowledge, our institution will attract those who are looking for an institution that values Indigenized outcomes and student-centered assessment practices. Having said that, my original focus was the act of asking questions or marking indications of lip service that promoted Indigenization without backing it up with action. I was behaving in a way that I perceived an ally should. I had to rethink this approach as Mitchell et al. address allyship by describing a study in which researchers found that “Indigenous participants viewed

allyship as a long-term deep relationship and friendship …[and] …non-Indigenous participants viewed an ally as someone who acts with solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and takes direct action" (Mitchell et al., 2018, pp. 359-360).

I thought that, by reading, attending workshops, engaging with scholars, and the Indigenous community to attend to my own knowledge building and capacity for allyship, I was moving forward in a good way. Just as the article by Mitchell et al. states, I saw quantitative action as important, whereas the article highlights the relationships I have with my Indigenous colleagues and students, something I certainly value, but assumed fell second to action. And focusing on relationships makes sense when we think about it. Indigenous people do not need me to jump up and take rash action as an act of allyship. Despite wanting to be of assistance, this is not the road to allyship, as I am again centering myself instead of centering community, relationships, and the greater whole.

One example of decentering myself and recentering on community and relationship that comes to mind a co-facilitation I did in 2016 at Simon Fraser University's (SFU) Academic Summer Camp for Indigenous Students. The students demonstrated a broad spectrum of engagement on day one, from deeply engaged to complete disengagement by facing away from the circle. One young man in particular had a hoodie drawn closed over his face as tightly as possible so that only a small hole allowed him to breathe. During day one, I offered the group stories about my life, we moved around, they engaged in discussion, and towards the end of the session this young man opened his hoodie just enough to voice one small contribution. I invited him to do so by name, and by that point he felt comfortable taking me up on it.

The following week, the hoodie was closed only around his face, and he was chatting and participating. During week three, we developed handshakes and greetings through movement. His hoodie was down around his waist, and his laughter rang across the room. At the end of the camp, he quietly pulled me aside and told me they had made drums that represented their hearts. An elder had instructed them to give their heart to someone special who had helped them. He wanted to give his to me.

We built a strong relationship based on mutual trust, the handshake and greeting that we had so much fun doing together, and the genuine enjoyment we each felt having conversations that interested us both. Our relationship grew and strengthened over time,

and I am still friends with him on Facebook. He is young enough that the only reason he has to go onto Facebook is to engage with older folks, like me, and I appreciate our interactions to this day.

I currently keep his drum in my office to remind me that relationships take time, students go at their own pace, and every single one of them has something to say, no matter how tightly their hoodie is clamped shut on day one. This student was incredible enough to trust me with his drum. His heart. And I cherish it. But what if I had taken the role of the enforcer by mandating everyone respect me by remove their hoodies? What if I had tried to “save” him by framing his experience through a conversation that focused on his disengagement? All these options would centre me as the facilitator instead of looking for ways to cultivate strong relationships. This is an aspect of decolonization I am working on all the time.

Self-centredness is part of the colonial mindset which focuses on productivity, measuring success, and tangible outcomes as evidence of success. It also centres a mindset that promotes European values like etiquette and manners as a way to observe and consider others and how they fit into your environment and hierarchies. Is the person you are meeting well-bred with manners that satisfy colonial customs? Do they dress according to colonial fashion standards? Do you treat them as part of your people because you recognize yourself?

I was taught by my school, the media, and the church that people needed help if they appear unmannered, unfashionable, in disarray, or different. For example, I was told to be kind to those who are less fortunate. This implied that I was more fortunate, so I identified myself as a fortunate person who acted through charity. Another example of how I was guided to be kind and care for others, was when I was asked to donate to a shelter by a group standing on a corner with signs depicting unhappy mothers and children looking unkempt. The marketing implied that the shelter would benefit because mothers and children frequented the shelter. But, as a by-product of this exposure, I began to assess for myself who may or may not be attending the shelter based on how they looked. Did they match the marketing? If so, thought I should probably be kind and help them. As time went on, I learned to identify my desire to help people who I decide as needing my help. Furthermore, I learned to see such desire as an insidious form of good intention that was closer to a white saviour complex.

Oppressive systems and attitudes are actually reinforced through “good intentions” and white saviour leanings. For myself, as I stated earlier, I tend to center myself in the world, but I am desperate to be good. In the stories I love, the “good guys” take action, step up, and are willing to throw themselves into the line of fire, because it is the right thing to do. But I need to remember that my focus should not be a showing of force, of my interpretation of support, or action alone. My focus benefits from centering long-term relationships with my colleagues and students. This is why my experience with that young man was so profound and memorable. The good that came of our time together was the by-product of a strong relationship. He reminded me of the importance of looking people in the eye, asking questions, and remaining curious and open.

I was gifted with insight into how to approach the young man who gave me the drum by a former student, Peter Quanz. I met Peter when he was 14 years old. He was elegant and graceful even as a teenager, but he was uncomfortable with personal proximity. I would take a step towards him, and he would take a step back. We were constantly engaged in this improvised waltz of me attempting to get closer to him to help with corrections, and he instinctually moving away from me. Our relationship, trust, and mutual admiration took time, engagement, and moving my awareness from imposing what I wanted to do to help him to instead always centering what he needed from me and finding ways to help him that were comfortable for him.

It was freeing to let him dictate the parameters of my assistance. I was able to hear what he needed from me by listening with all my senses to how he received what I offered. I changed my approach when he moved away and stayed with what made him to feel comfortable. I used my voice, gesture, metaphor, and eventually, when he asked me to show him, hands on corrections. The trust we built was based on a series of experiences that let him know I would not push him to be in a situation that was uncomfortable. He has become a treasured friend in my life, one who knows to call when I am having a difficult time, and I do not need to tell him, he just knows. I will not share such a bond with all my students, but leading with that internal listening has made space for a plethora of unique relationships that each have their own flow. But I have thus far touched only on my interactions with students. My non-Indigenous colleagues are a little different because they tend to be, for the most part, entrenched in the action-oriented colonial approach to work relationships. I used to be that way myself, and it has taken

me a long time to wake up, gradually, from the unconscious colonialism. I am still waking up.

Within the context of these action-oriented mindsets, I am curious about how I can foster friendships that are genuine and lasting that include supporting my non-Indigenous colleagues to engage in the same. But it seems like an odd way to frame fostering relationships. As I said earlier, engaging in strong relationships may foster the environment encouraging others to behave in a particular way, but centering the result destroys that possibility. And, trying to guide my non-Indigenous colleagues along in a particular direction, verges on acting based on good intentions. I am unable to force anyone to move through the inner journey necessary for personal realization, no matter how good my intentions may be. At the same time, doing nothing will only allow colonialism, racism, and oppressive structures to replenish and flourish.

In answer to the question of what to do, Mitchell et al. state plainly and simply: “good intentions are not enough” (2018, p. 360). Instead, the article points to specific actions that institutions can take:

> We see a significant opportunity for post-secondary institutions, faculty, and students to create: (a) welcoming spaces for Indigenous faculty and students; (b) links between Indigenous students, Indigenous scholars, and community leaders; (c) a greater number of dedicated Indigenous faculty positions; (d) course content on Indigenous history, issues, and by Indigenous authors, across the curriculum; and (e) respectful partnerships with Indigenous communities, leaders, and community organizations. (p. 363)

It is worth noting that although the actions indicated by Mitchell at al. have a positive sheen to them, perception of what is meant may vary between Indigenous readers and non-Indigenous readers. I would want to know how the Indigenous community interprets a welcoming environment and respectful partnerships. And having just spent considerable time directing my personal focus away from action, this attention to action items may seem to be a juxtaposition to previous statements, but there is a difference between the action and intention of people and the action and intention of an institution.

The institution needs directives to guide institutional focus and the article’s action items are centered around building strong relationships within the institution and with the community. Similarly, University of Fraser Valley’s (UFV’s) Strategic Enrollment Plan

(SEM plan) centres itself around creating a welcoming space, increasing the number of Indigenous instructors, increasing engagement and partnership with the Indigenous community, and working to include Indigenous content. Reading this article makes me wonder if the entire SEM plan is based on the work done at Wilfred Laurier University (WLU) so beautifully detailed by Mitchell et al., but appreciating the depth and care of the work at WLU through this article draws my attention to UFV's plans, and I worry.

I have worked with Indigenous students. I have heard their concerns and the stories of how they are treated. Good intentions are, indeed, not enough. To further the point, in the book *The Tao of Raven: An Alaskan Native Memoir*, author Ernestine Hayes explains this phenomenon in no uncertain terms:

> Intergenerational trauma does not produce dropout statistics and suicide rates. Intergenerational trauma produces heartbleed sweat tears bruises neglect hugs babykisses grief confusion raucous silence and love love love. It is the people who perpetuate the trauma-those who come to save, to study, to educate-who produce failure ridden statistics, the suicide rates, and the damning reports of all those good intentions gone wrong yet again, good intentions gone wrong yet again, good intentions paving freshly scraped landscaped, bulldozed roads to hell. (2017, p. 31).

Hayes highlights people imbued with saviourism and good intentions as a problem. Considering initiatives that look to engage Indigenous people and communities through the excerpt from Hayes, considering what happens when there are no established relationships becomes paramount. Mitchell et al. highlight relationships as a focus of allyship as do the Haida principles that will be described later in the thesis. Where do the good intentions that Hayes sees as doomed to go awry come from? Who has the idea? Why? Who benefits? I have been in higher education long enough now to see good intentions play out as fancy words that make the assembled audience clap, then disappear into the air the moment the catering closes up, and partly because I have observed it myself, this section left me asking, "What action am I taking that is appropriate, relationship-based, and informed?" This was one of the questions that moved me in the direction of capturing my considerations of Indigenization.

This project is part of my personal journey as a settler to contribute to a future that centres Indigenous ways of learning, being, and knowing. As part of my personal journey of exploration, commitment, and action, I am synthesizing the knowledge I have gathered over the years, continuing to learn and explore, and considering my past in

conjunction with the present and future while interweaving my knowledge about Indigenous perspectives and ways of being to identify points of intersection. Through this work, I will move past identifying familiar or parallel points, to appreciation and perception of how Indigenous ways of being will guide my decision making, pedagogical approaches, assessment practices, and general approach to life on the land I am situated upon.

As a result of the work I have already done, I view myself as a settler and an uninvited guest. I see my responsibility as focused on gaining knowledge about how Indigenous people have conducted stewardship and then emulating the practices to contribute to a positive impact through my presence. As an uninvited guest, I must learn about those who are now hosting me and honour their ways of being. While it is impossible to erase the effects of colonization, we can counter them by eroding the mindset of colonialism. This is the educational project of decolonisation. In keeping with this understanding, I listen to how Indigenous people wish to move forward and honour their need to "reconnect with the spiritual bases of their existence" (Arthur, 2005, p. 22). I can create welcoming spaces for Indigenous students who attend my classes, respect the traditions and teachings of the Indigenous people I live among, and amplify the voices of Indigenous scholars, teachers, writers, and community members. Most importantly, the action I am currently focused on is considering my own positionality and experiences to continue my journey towards decolonizing myself and in turn, identify aspects of myself that align with and offer connection to Indigenous ways of learning and teaching practices. Indigenization starts with decolonizing my perception, my habits of mind, and my patterns of action; Indigenization also guides me to build ways of being and acting that are supportive of "all my relations."

Inspirations for Structuring This Thesis

One of the major works this thesis engages with is *Potlatch as Pedagogy: Learning Through Ceremony* (Davidson & Davidson, 2018). This book is interwoven across the thesis as I use it to frame my pedagogical approach. By embedding what I learn from *Potlatch as Pedagogy* in my thesis, I hope to honour the intended spirit, but I do not claim to fully understand and appreciate the nuances beyond what I am currently seeing. It will take years and decades to increasingly discern such nuances through committed enaction and practice. However, I do believe that the pedagogical principles

laid out in the book are representative of values, practices, and hopes for future students I share with the authors, Sara Davidson and her father Robert Davidson. But again, my perspective lacks personal experience with Haida culture, and I shall look for every opportunity to be better acquainted with Haida culture. In the meantime, their book continues to have a measurable impact on my pedagogical approach, curricular development, assessment practices, and general view of academia.

In addition to broadening my perspectives on teaching and learning through the Haida principles, Davidson and Davidson's book offered insight into the history of the Haida people and how they were affected by colonization. The Haida people's population was reduced through colonization in accordance with an attempt by the Canadian government to eradicate their ways of knowing and being. To gain perspective, Davidson states that, "…in 1835, there were 6000 Haidas, which dropped to 800 in 1885, with a population low of 588 in 1915" due to smallpox (2018, p. 4). In addition to loss of life, in "1884, the Potlatch Ban was enacted" (p. 4).

Potlatch is vital to Haida society. Resources and social standing in the community were distributed and achieved through ceremony, including "the route to chieftancy", celebrating birth and mourning death, and "walal": "housebuilding and totem-raising potlatch" (Blackman, 1977, p. 40). Further to the opportunities presented through Potlatch, a lack of engagement directly impacted one's place within the community. It was "the legal foundation of our social structure and ensured the transmission of our cultural knowledge" (Davidson, 2018, p. 4). To resist acculturation, the Potlatch evolved to focus on the feast to both resist and maintain within the constraints imposed by both Missionaries and the government (Blackman, 1977, p. 52).

To articulate the impact of the attempted eradication of the practice on the present population, Davidson states:

> For nearly five decades, my father has worked to relearn our traditional Haida ceremonies from Haida Elders and used the potlatch as a way to share and redistribute this knowledge following the repeal of the Potlatch Ban in 1951. (2018, p. 5)

Potlatch was a way to engage with the community, learn, and celebrate. Consider events where houses and totems were erected. The community would come together and work as one to create through ceremony. Skills and crafting methods would be

passed along as generations worked alongside one another. Davidson's book focuses on the strands of past and present that align through teaching and learning within Haida culture.

The Haida language has words that engage with the transfer of information and the reception of information. I touched on this at the beginning of my thesis, and here Davidson explains in detail:

> The Haida word for "teach" is *sk'ad'ada,* and the base of the word "teach" is *sk'ada*, which means "learn" (J. Bedard, personal communication, May 3, 2018). The connection between these two words reflects my own [Davidson] understanding of teaching-that it is impossible without learning. There are nine *sk'ad'a* principles that teach us from where learning emerges, how learning occurs, and what learning honours. Learning emerges from strong relationships, authentic experiences, and curiosity. Learning occurs through observation, contribution, and recognizing and encouraging strengths. Learning honours the power of the mind, our history, and our stories, as well as spirituality and protocol. (Davidson, 2013, p. 13)

Because the words to teach and learn are closely associated, the word for learning is an extension of the word for teaching and Davidson takes it further to suggest that without teaching, there is no learning. This ties the teacher and student to one another and suggests that if there is no measured reception of information, teaching has not actually occurred. Think of the lecturer standing tall at the podium, pontificating and extravagantly parading their extensive collection of diction to a 400-seat lecture hall with no regard for who is in the seats, how much they hear, or what they understand. Davidson articulates the relationship between these two parties and identifies that without active engagement with, and reception of, the information, the lecturer is just that, a lecturer, but no teaching is taking place.

Living Learning Through Authentic Experiences

The Haida words for teaching and learning are so closely bound that they use the same letters, sound similar, and are recognized by the Haida people as linked. And learning is not reserved for a particular room, it takes place as part of life and living. Davidson explains the experience of learning songs from her father, and how she would first listen to her father, next practice alone, and finally sing for him. He would then offer comments and "correct [her] when necessary" (2018, p. 9). This system of observation,

mimesis, and performance resembles the way I taught dance. I would execute the steps, the students would then do them with me, then they would do it for themselves. Davidson articulates the connection through the image of a rope:

> My father believes we are “all connected to the past by a thin thread. And when we come together as a group, then those threads form quite a thick rope” (Davidson in Seltzer & Davidson 1994, 99). I learned those songs because I did not want to be the one to weaken the rope that connects us to our ancestors. (9)

My own experience working with students offers a shadow version of the process described by Davidson. My instruction is layered with my past experiences and the experiences of my instructors before me. All teachers were once students, and as I studied dance, I became more like my teachers. I did not have the same perspective on the learning process, so my learning lacked a distinct element that separates my experience from Davidson’s.

Dance was hammered into the next generation through force and occasionally fear. It was not exploratory, it was prescriptive. The process of potlatch as pedagogy is tied to an intrinsic understanding of self, family, community, loss, survival, and reclamation. The interwoven history of the learning experience affects Davidson’s engagement as a listener, learner, and eventual performer for her father as “echoing the past from our ancestors” (p. 10). An explicit appreciation for the process offers weight to the demonstration of what was learned that is not otherwise present. In this way, Indigenous ways of learning offer a nuanced approach to the material as it has such deep ties to the past, community, and personhood. There is also a recognized reciprocity that further deepens the learning and an appreciation for the learner’s journey, in that, shared engagement is part of the process. In the book, there is an excellent example that I believe captures the potential for the learning process, and perhaps deepens non-Indigenous people’s perspective on how committing to Indigenous ways of learning can benefit students and instructors.

In the book, Davidson and Davidson share nine Haida principles as a guide for learning: strong relationships, authentic experiences, curiosity, observation, contribution, recognizing and encouraging strengths, the power of the mind, our history and our stories, and spirituality and protocol. It seems fitting that one way to amplify my

appreciation is to use these principles as the scaffold to guide the presentation of my work.

The book taught me that the “Haida word for “teach” is sk’ad’ada, and the base of the word “teach” is sk’ad’a, which means “learn” (Davidson, 2018, p. 13). Further to this, nine sk’ad’a principles are explained as “teach[ing] us from where learning emerges, how learning occurs, and what learning honours.”

OVERVIEW OF THIS THESIS

The thesis has been divided into three parts by observing sk’ad’a principles:

- Part I examines from where learning emerges: strong relationships, authentic experiences, and curiosity.
- Part II focuses on how learning occurs: observation, contribution, recognizing and encouraging strengths.
- Part III finishes with what learning honours: The power of the mind, our history, and our stories, spirituality and protocol.

This first section, Part I: Where Learning Emerges, is focused on the strong relationships I have with my family: coincidentally, our family name happens to be Strong. Part I has also considered parts of my personal journey and authentic experiences as I have grown along my academic journey. And strong relationships and authentic experiences are discussed across the entirety of this work. Curiosity, however, has a special place, because curiosity is what drove me to examine my experience within the context of the experiences of others. It also drives my exploration of how higher education in Canada will address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, and how we will further address decolonization and Indigenization. Indeed, curiosity is one reason for this project. Curiosity is also the reason that I often tell my students to think past what they know will work or what they think might work, and to allow their minds to consider instead *what is possible*.

Part II: How Learning Occurs follows the Haida learning principles of observation, contribution, and recognizing and encouraging strengths. I contemplate my most significant learning experiences in my life: as a dance student for more than 10 years

and then as dance instructor for another 25 years, wherein I used observation as my first point of instruction. I then allow the principle of contribution to guide appreciative observations of some scholars who caught my attention. In addition, I make a tribute to teachers who saw my strengths as a human being and as a dancer and were supportive of me early on and continued to passionately encourage my strengths. I reflect on how their attention altered the trajectory of my life.

In following the Haida principles for How Learning Occurs in Part II, I present the content in the structure of a typical ballet class. My rationale for this seemingly incongruous move I make here is two-fold. First, I recognize that most valuable learning for me has occurred within the context of studying and training in ballet over a sustained period of decades. Secondly, I have come to see that decolonization and Indigenization in education cannot be a matter of categorically condemning, eliminating, and disregarding anything that originated in the historical colonial cultures. I will have more discussion on this issue in Part II. For now, I will just mention that, following the ballet class structure, PART II starts with a stretch, moves to the *barre* to warm up the body, then launch into the centre for bigger jumps and turns. (I do save the bows and curtseys, or reverence for closing section of the thesis) For this project, the *barre* represents the introductory research and framing of scholarly voices and concepts for later discussion.

In Part III: What Learning Honours, I use the Haida principles of the power of the mind, our history, and our stories, spirituality, and protocol to guide further contemplation of my personal experiences and the theoretical landscape of education. It should also be noted that the book captures “our histories, and our stories” within the Haida tradition, and I will draw attention to when I am quoting Davidson and when I am not, because when I refer to “our histories and our stories,” I will also occasionally be referring to my own stories and histories within my personal experiences. I recognize that Haida observation of histories and stories draw from a deep well of experience and history, where my own stories and history relate to my own recent past.

Methodology

I had originally considered ethnographic narrative as a primary methodology for this project, but I acknowledge and subscribe to Australian scholars Louise Gwenneth Pillips and Tracy Bunda explanation of the difference between narrative and storytelling:

> We, like storytelling scholars Sobol, Gentile and Sunwolf, see an air of "pretension" and "over-intellectualization" in the term narrative (p. 2). We argue for the place of story in research, and we do so because it is everyday language used by people across cultures, ages, classes, disciplines and sectors. (2018, p. 4)

Taking Philips and Bunda seriously, then, I see that narrative ethnography is simply not an appropriate approach for this project. It would be counterproductive and a disservice to the voices I am working to amplify to pursue this project; for, I certainly do not wish to affirm Eurocentric modes of elitism and promotes affected modes of scholarship. Instead, I frame this project through the storytelling lens presented by Phillips and Bunda, who "see storying as inquiry, as theorising, as sharing/presenting research" (p. 5), and as *"writing-stories"* (italics are the writer's) (Richardson, 2000, p. 931) which Richardson frames as "contextualized, historically situated" (2010, p. 34).

My stories are situated within my own life experience. I use storytelling not only to highlight and honour storytelling as one example of Indigenous ways of teaching and learning but also to inquire and theorize, to draw out, my burning questions about academia and Indigenization. This is not to say I am using Indigenous storytelling, or telling Indigenous stories, rather I am considering my own experiences while remaining curious about how my past can inform my future. Indigenous scholars have explored the complexity of including storytelling in an academic setting, notably Jo-Ann Archibald in 2008. Archibald suggested bringing in an experienced storyteller and asking for permission to tell Indigenous stories. Further, she cautions: "Non-Native people must recognize that they don't have this cultural authority, even though they may acquire the expertise (Archibald, 2008, pp. 105-151). It is with this caution in mind that walk my ideas alongside the Haida principles while drawing on what I notice through the process. I may have expertise to explore my experiences through storytelling, and I may carry knowledge about Indigenous storytelling, but I do not have the cultural authority to tell Indigenous stories or to tell my own stories with a view to prescribe Indigenous

storytelling principles. Instead, I wish to consider parallels I observe between my personal experiences and the academy's journey towards decolonizing and Indigenizing higher education and theorize about potential ways to better my own engagement in reconciliation.

I now turn to another research method that I am using for my thesis—for its research and writing: appreciative inquiry. How did it come about that I lean on appreciative inquiry?

The approach I have taken to researching and writing about Indigenization of higher education is one of engagement, contemplation, and personal discovery. No recommendations will be made. Instead, I am focused on decolonization and interweaving Indigenous ways of learning, being, and knowing into my work and life as realization of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. The project is not one of conclusions and action items, but one of personal exploration of past experiences to draw out points of familiarity and interest between my stories and the Haida principles of learning. The more I learn about these points, the more I am filled with gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity that I have in learning about decolonization and Indigenization. In short, I am approaching my whole thesis project as a project in Appreciative Inquiry.

Appreciative Inquiry is often associated with the Four D Model (discover, dream, design, deliver) (Trinh et al., 2021, pp. 797-799). For the purposes of this project, the ALIVE model (Appreciate, Love, Inquire, Venture, Evolve) better captured my intentions. As Joan McArthur-Blair and Jeanie Cockell (2018) state in *Building Resilience with Appreciative Inquiry*: "… we are struck by the power of appreciative inquiry to open people up to seeing one another's strengths, perspectives, and worldview, as well as their own" (p. xxviii).

The truly exciting aspects of this methodology lie in its flexibility and range of applicability, as the idea of exploring a career in dance and dance instruction in parallel to Indigenous ways of learning, being, and knowing does not sit within one particular discipline. In the chapter, Research Frameworks: Where Does AI Connect with Research? Jan Reed explains:

> This is not a simple process of slotting AI [Appreciative Inquiry] into a particular school of thought, as the fit is not as straightforward as that; rather, AI can be linked to a number of ideas and traditions across a range of methodologies, but it cannot be said to fit exclusively or exactly to any one school. (p. 45)

Within the flexibility afforded by Appreciate Inquiry, I am able to tell my stories and ask questions (p. 20) that are drawn from the Haida principles for learning (Davidson & Davidson, 2018, p. 13). By working through the stories with Appreciation, Love, and Inquiry, I am able to contemplate my past experiences and how they relate to my current work in higher education, but more importantly, I can use the insights to Venture further along my journey towards decolonizing pedagogy, curriculum, and self and then to Evolve by intentionally incorporating the Haida principles of learning into my curriculum and pedagogy.

One additional comment to insert into this methodology section: The Haida learning principles include aspects that are intercultural, if not transcultural, in that they are shared learning principles embedded in other, non-Indigenous cultural practices, such as certain aspects of the Western ballet study and training that I underwent. To clarify, I am not implying that all Western ballet study and training embody the Haida learning principles. Here, I make no such categorical claim at all. Rather, my theoretical understanding (Eppert, Vokey, Nguyen & Bai, 2015) and personal observations about interculturality encourages me to further see how I could build bridges to Indigenization of curriculum and pedagogy through identifying those elements present in non-Indigenous cultural experiences that are congruent with the Indigenous learning principles (Simard, 2020; Williams, 2019; Wilson & Nelson-Moody, 2019;), such as the Haida learning principles (Davison & Davison, 2018). At least this is the way I hope to proceed with making sense of how I contribute to decolonization and Indigenization of higher education. I invite from my readers careful and caring criticisms of my work.

I believe the kind of cultural bridging that I propose avoids what I see as a fundamental error in thinking: seeing all aspects and elements, as well as people, of the Western (or Modern, or White) cultures as colonial and subjecting them to categorical condemnation and exclusion (Milne & Wotherspoon, 2020). Indeed, the Haida learning principles of observation, contribution, and recognizing, and encouraging strengths apply to my own case-making. Let us carefully observe what is damaging and harming in any cultural paradigms (Walker, 2015) and accompanying worldviews and values and what

is not, as well as what is contributing to, strengthening, and encouraging wellbeing and flourishing of a given culture and community and its members. I sincerely believe that cultural bridging, as part of interculturalism, when done with knowledge, wisdom, and skillfulness, is a helpful practice for moving forward higher education's commitment to Indigenization of curriculum and pedagogy.

Part II: How Learning Occurs

Observation, Contribution, and Recognizing and Encouraging Strengths

First Steps

Observations of My Early Education

Every journey begins with a single step. In my case, the first actual step was preceded by a million pre-steps. As a kid, I ran and jumped. I spent my childhood pretending, imagining, acting out little scenes, and making up games for the local kids to play. School was a box that contained me during the day. My teachers found it difficult to keep me focused. I did not want to sit or stay still. I probably would have been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) if I were tested.

Anything with structure, like spelling or math, seemed impossible. I remember sitting with the teacher while she tried to explain to me how the ‘greater than’ sign worked. It made no sense to me. She dutifully told me that the alligator would eat the bigger number: 2>1, and I fixated on the fact that the alligator was hungry and would gladly eat the lower number instead, or as well. It was hungry! Thinking back on it, I am sure my teachers were driven to distraction by my inability to see the rules and follow them. I know that I was deeply confused by their inability to see beyond the rules to whatever else might be possible.

I dreamed of a world where school meant going outside to look around, asking questions, and feeling the world under my fingertips. I wanted to observe my surroundings and ask a million questions. When I asked a plethora of questions at school, the teacher would get irritated that I was holding the class up or disrupting the teaching. I would then tune out because whatever I was asking about held me back from following the lesson further. It was not unusual to find me staring out the window or visiting the inside of my own mind. (I now call it “going inside my head for a while”.) It was also important for me to explore.

I remember asking to go to the bathroom when I was in grade four. It was St. Patrick’s Day, and I needed to get out of the room and wander a bit. I was dressed for the day in green tights and a green dress, and tootled around the halls of our school until I happened on the kindergarten class. They were sitting in circle, and I walked up to the door and gently knocked on the frame. The teacher looked a little surprised to see me, but I confidently strutted into the room saying, “Hello little children! I’m a leprechaun and

I have been sent to tell you all a story!" The teacher welcomed me into the circle, and I sat down and told them some story I made up, stayed about 20 minutes, answered some questions, and headed back to my own class.

As an adult I have wondered about conversations that undoubtedly took place in the staff room about my wandering. To this day, I have no idea how I was empowered to do things like that. School was unbelievably boring and uninspiring. I guess I wanted to jazz things up a bit. Most of all, I wanted to feel animated and expressive. All these pre-steps led to my first actual step. It happened when I was twelve.

Recognizing and Encouraging My Strengths

I attended a summer camp in Kitchener-Waterloo. Unbeknownst to me, my mother had pleaded with the administration to admit me. Cindy Toushan was a dancer and Stage Manager at Stratford, and Betty Anne Keller was Loreena McKennitt's manager. They must have been moved by my mother's plea. They were probably sensitive to the unique ways of artistic teens. However, I was two years too young. Undaunted, my mother begged and begged. She told the managers that I was different from the kids at school. She told them tearfully that she was afraid for my future. I had no idea that this conversation had taken place, but reluctantly, they admitted me.

The thing was, I had never done any artistic training beyond singing in the Inter Mennonite Children's choir. I was fortunate that my mother happened upon this experience and equally fortunate that Cindy (Cynthia Toushan) and Betty (Betty Anne Keller) were kind enough to let me in. This was my first experience with education providing an opening where an opening might not otherwise exist.

The School for Performing and Visual Arts was a summer camp that introduced kids 14 and older to visual and performing arts. The first day, I was in the beginner dance class with Cindy. She asked us to try jazz runs. I watched as she bolted across the floor. Her hair flew as she vaulted across the studio floor, flying and free. I observed then copied her tearing across the studio. A jazz run is where you shoot one foot forward and drag the back foot along the floor behind you. What I did that day was to jump in the air in a full split on both sides. I thought I was copying Cindy and doing exactly what she did. This was my first actual step.

At the end of the day, Cindy asked to speak to my mother and advised that I be registered for dance classes. I remember her holding my mother's arm and saying excitedly, "Register her, today." The next day, I was moved to the advanced class. All the other students had experience. They knew what to wear and how to behave. I spent every second watching, listening, drinking every speck of information I could gather, and I emulated every movement I observed. I was terrible, but Cindy saw what I would be, not what I was. This entire experience was extremely important to me: for, I learned from Cindy to look for potential. I learned that drive, excitement, curiosity, and engagement held promise for future ability. Cindy taught me to see the qualities that held potential.

Figure 1. Hannah Celinski Assists Lift

Photographer: Unknown

Image Description: Young Hannah Celinski assists with a lift at The School for Performing and Visual Arts in the 1980s.

Cindy and Betty invited me into their space. Cindy observed me, and I observed her. Cindy and Betty contributed to the community by allowing me to attend the camp outside of their usual parameters and contributed to my development as a person by modeling work ethic, discipline, and artistic techniques in a way that allowed a newcomer like me to participate and grow. And without a doubt, they both recognized and encouraged my strengths. Although there have been others who have had

monumental impacts on me as a person (many will be discussed in later sections), it was Cindy and Betty who started the process.

The value of an invitation, community, and inclusivity is currently under deep consideration by the academic community, some engaging through an approach that deeply values the student experience, others framing the work as healing, and others yet who view these values as assisting students to understand reconciliation in an embodied way (Pelletier, 2019; Williams, 2019; Wilson & Nelson-Moody, 2019).

Once I received the invitation to start dancing and felt included in the community, I had no problem with focus, concentration, and discipline. The student who could not stay still used every ounce of her energy to stay perfectly still and remain so. The student who wanted to wander about and ask a million questions flew around the room and across the floor, unloading a never-ending barrage of questions to teachers who were delighted to answer in great detail. Here, again, was my curiosity as I drank information at an unbelievable pace, working alongside my instructors, trying, failing, and trying again. I loved the daily pursuit, the sense of community, and deep self-satisfaction that came from burrowing my way into new steps, styles, and histories. Dance taught me that communication takes on a multitude of forms from diction, images, and icons, to sounds, gestures, and nuanced looks.

Contributions from my Teaching Experience

At 15, I was offered an opportunity to teach my first class. As we saw, my exploration of the importance of invitation, community, and inclusivity started way back with my first dance experience, but it became a critical consideration when I became an instructor, which I will discuss in more detail in Part III. This first-time teaching was my first experience with the Haida principles for how learning occurs: observation, contribution, recognizing and encouraging strengths.

The principle of observation played a central role in my teaching in that I mirrored what I learned from observing my own instructors. I taught the way I learned with the confidence that I learned well. Also, I was so young that I taught while I learned, and in doing so discovered that becoming a good teacher means remaining a diligent student. The intimate connection between teaching and learning that I witnessed and embodied

in my own life became my research interest, which too will be explored in more details later in this thesis.

I felt connected to my instructors, and to their instructors before. I felt that my students related to me, and through me to my instructors, and I could see the imprint of lessons I had learned as they passed onto my students, almost as though my past was stamped on their bodies as a result of the connection. I knew that dancing alongside my students infused the air with confidence and connection. It allowed students to merge their movements with mine so they could eventually execute the steps on their own but there was always the sense that the long line of instructors, including me, was guiding them.

Considering, again, the Haida principles of where learning emerges (strong relationships, authentic experiences, and curiosity) and how learning occurs (observation, contribution, and recognizing and encouraging strengths), I taught, instinctually, from a place of engaging on a personal level with my students, offering opportunities to perform for the rest of the studio or their parents, observing to see where each student needed specific instruction or guidance, and constantly encouraging them to become who they would become but at their own pace, with no arrival time to worry them. I also answered their questions. Their never-ending, detail oriented, dinosaur-littered questions. (I recommend that everyone who spends time with small children learn a few dinosaur facts. They will tell you or you will tell them. Either way, I have yet to meet a child who is not interested.) I choreographed to their strengths, worked on their weaknesses, and refused to do only what they had already mastered to ensure high standings at competition.

I also encouraged my students to seek out other instructors. I told them, “The more instructors you have, the more imprints you will have on your own movement. This is how professional dancers do it.” But there came a point, later in my career, where I was concerned by how quickly my students excelled and how their physical abilities toppled my own at their age. When I was 17 one dancer in the area could swing her leg behind her and grab her foot over her head. My students could do that easily, but further to that, they would extend that bent leg into a full split behind them. (See below.) As shows like *So You Think You Can Dance*, *X Factor*, and *World of Dance* exploded on the scene, their abilities continued to evolve. It occurred to me that they were privy to so

many instructors that the “imprints” I had preached as helpful were overloading their systems. If the growth process is moving through individual timelines and through a supportive lens, how do we manage the fine line between encouragement and stemming the flow of information? For context, the following images feature my dance students.

Figure 2. Brynne Klassen in Pike Position

Dancer: Brynne Klassen, Photographer: Brynne Klassen

Image Description: Dancer stretching right leg into Scorpion position while balancing on left knee and hand.

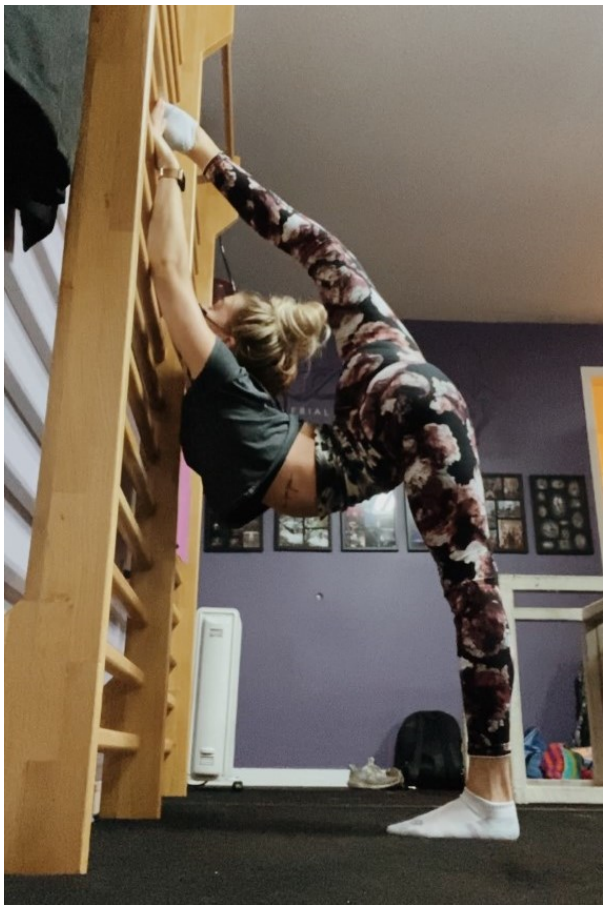

Figure 3. Brynne Klassen Stretching

Dancer: Brynne Klassen, Photographer: Brynne Klassen

Image Description: Dancer stretching in Scorpion position during a training session.

The Flip

Figure 4. The Flip 1

Figure 5. The Flip 2

Figure 6. The Flip 3

Figure 7. The Flip 4

Figure 8. The Flip 5

Dancers: Nalani Wakita, Kayla Cunningham, Brittany Wyllie, Danielle Wyllie, Victoria Duffield, Burkely Duffield. Photographer: Hannah Celinski

Image Description: Dancer runs up the backs of others and executes back flip.

I was thrilled with their progress, abilities, and continued exploration and excitement. Yet, in the back of my mind, I wondered how far the human body could go. I saw students from other studios get injured, but a crisis did not occur while I owned my studio. I was incredibly fortunate, in addition to being careful. When you have students like Brynne Klassen (pictured earlier) and Emma Ellery (pictured below), it is easy to forget that the body has limitations, but there is only so far that a back can bend.

Figure 9. Emma Ellery on Rods

Dancer: Emma Ellery, Photographer: Kathy Ellery

Image Description: Dancer, balancing in an elbow stand on rods, holds legs in double attitude.

Figure 10. Emma Ellery on Box 1

Figure 11. Emma Ellery on Box 2

Dancer: Emma Ellery, Photographer: Kathy Ellery

Dancer performs contortion tricks on top of rolling box.

When I started teaching at the university level, I continued to unknowingly engage with what I now recognize and attribute to the "sk'ad'a principles that teach us from where learning emerges, how learning occurs, and what learning honours" (Davidson, 2018, p.13). As I worked alongside my students, stories continued to inspire and to foster confidence and connection. My previous learning and instructors intertwined with the lessons I was teaching and also the previous knowledge of my students, which all holistically promoted student learning and growth. I was delighted by the similarities to teaching dance. But my delight quickly reverted to concern because the same crisis that had come to my attention through my dance students was now manifesting in my university students.

Some students slept through class because they were working two jobs and came to my 8 am class fresh off an overnight shift at MacDonalds. Others handed in papers using Wikipedia as the only source, or arrived at office hours with shellshocked faces and confusion around how to locate a suitable source. It did not matter how many library sessions I booked or videos I provided about what constituted a scholarly source, they were so overloaded with information that these processes passed them by. They could not see what I was showing them, no matter what I tried.

I started listening carefully to the experiences of my peers during hallway chats, department meetings, and conferences. Everyone said the same thing: students are overwhelmed. There was a dislocation. It was difficult for me to form strong relationships, arrange to walk students through experiential learning opportunities to foster authentic experiences. They were too tired to remain curious. I was observing an unintentional lack of contribution, and the strengths I should have been recognizing and encouraging were clouded beneath a shroud.

I began asking myself why and how this was happening and once I considered the situation carefully, I realized that students were receiving a massive volume of information from their teachers. But in addition to that avalanche, they were receiving a massive amount of information through technology. The sheer volume of information available through our devices is extraordinary. A plan is needed to address the influx of information flowing from our devices to support student growth, while also avoiding burnout. This is how my first step became considering my next steps carefully, as I see the opportunity to further my dedication to amplifying Indigenous voices and ways of being, while also contributing actively to reconciliation.

My next steps rose out of the challenges that I faced in the work I have done through dance and higher education. These challenges left me grappling with no end of issues. The rest of PART II: How Learning Occurs will document my grappling with challenging issues that I encountered in higher education. Synchronistically, my entrance into higher education coincided with higher education’s commitment to Indigenization, which gave me incredible opportunities to see that the issues and challenges I ran into could be addressed as part and parcel of my efforts to decolonize. It is out of this synchronistic context that I formulated my “burning research questions,” as my doctoral supervisory committee member calls them. In other words, these burning

questions emerged in response to my commitment to decolonizing and Indigenizing at my institution.

Examining the parallels of my two experiences, namely my dance study and training in ballet and my ongoing engagement with Indigenous study will reveal exciting opportunities for discussion, particularly when we consider my institution's dedication to Indigenization. UFV's institutional focus and planning centre around opportunities for decolonization and Indigenization. In this context, I wish to document my current experiences as a member of an institution that has committed to actively contributing to the amplification of Indigenous voices and ways of being and knowing and that has been engaged purposefully with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

Here, I would state upfront that as a settler, I am not the person to answer questions about how Indigenous people wish to proceed, but this work allows me to share my own experiences working to engage with Indigenous initiatives, perspectives, ways of being and knowing, and the Truth and Reconciliation Report's Calls to Action. In this way, I am inviting others to observe my thoughts and experiences as a point of discussion for their own pedagogical explorations and personal instructional practice. As well, certainly, I would benefit from critical feedback to my evolving work.

In the next section, I will first consider my own questions on the topic of growth and becoming, by moving through the reflective format of a ballet class's structure. I have done some of my deepest thinking at the barre, where the familiarity of the exercises allows my body to move, my spirit to be joyful, and my mind to wander freely. Let us now move to the virtual barre.

Please Move to the Barre

About the Barre

The barre runs along the wall of a dance studio and offers support to dancers as they move through the first round of exercises before they move to the centre. When a dancer starts their training, they may grip and lean into the barre for support, but each dancer holds the barre less precariously as they grow and improve. The barre is always there for you, at each step of the journey. It holds you up when you start, when you first balance on the tips of your toes, when you are about to fall, and sometimes when you cry after class. There are few supports so giving, non-judgemental, and everlasting as the barre.

An Overview of Ballet Class, Theorists, and Burning Questions

As a settler in higher education, I am dedicated to furthering reconciliation through my position, committee work, and pedagogical practice. The Indigenous scholars whose voices I amplify through this project include Sarah and Robert Davidson, who challenge Western pedagogical approaches through Indigenous ways of learning. I, as a settler scholar, observe the approaches they champion and make note of the ways in which I interact with and incorporate Haida practices into my classes. To interrogate my own instructional style and how it relates to Indigenous ways of learning, I invite Maxine Greene, who explores the notion of sedimentation which I frame as a parallel between learning at the post-secondary level and learning to dance. Decolonization, reconciliation, and addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action may seem daunting, but using self-reflection and contemplation through my own experiences allows me to accentuate points of overlap that are accessible for settler scholars while also promoting the timeless pursuit of reconciliation.

"I am who I am not yet" (Pinar, 1998, p.1). When Maxine Greene made this statement, she was an established academic, speaking with William Pinar in front of an audience that could be considered learners. In a sense, she had become who she was growing to be over time and continuing to show her potential for the future. When I read this quote, I was a conglomeration of potential, success, and failure. Much like Maxine Greene, I was who I was not yet.

If Maxine Greene had hoped her statement would allow students to appreciate their potential and the beauty of learning as a journey through their university experience, she would be unimpressed with the current state of higher education. In the current educational environment, students are expected to be who they will be, now. There are daily demands on their time, energy, and physical self by instructors and institutions. A student's Grade Point Average (GPA) holds the key to future opportunities, funding, and status. If a student can demonstrate that they are who they will be, now, they are liable to be successful in this environment. But if that is true, what is the role of higher education? Is it a place where students are rewarded for arrival, for completion, for perfection, or is it a place to grow?

Further to this, globalization is altering the demographics of our classes, and non-Eurocentric knowledge and ways of being and knowing interfere with a student's ability to succeed because they are working in an unfamiliar structure where the expectations for engagement and assessment do not align with their previous experiences. It a student's perception of learning is journey-based, detached from linear time, or otherwise misaligned; how can they possibly be expected to succeed?

If students are who they are not yet, then they are ready to embark on a journey. And if education is a journey, then celebrating only an arrival that satisfies a subjective completion seems insubstantial when compared with the magnitude of the journey, the learning, and the evolution. The becoming, or transmogrification of a student to who they were not when they arrived, that is the truth of higher education to me.

We are a grand collection of our experiences, successes, failures, and moments of in-between. Our students are all of that, with a dash of global pandemic, a sprinkle of economic tension, a gallon of technological advances, and tidal wave of climate concerns. They are unlike any cohort in the history of education, and it is our obligation to shepherd them through the process of becoming who they are not yet. We need to take this role seriously, bear the burden with grace and empathy, and face the challenge as brave guides to future agents of change. Without us, they are lost. Instructors have the honour of walking alongside students to support, inform, and guide them through their journey. Focusing on strong relationships throughout the institution, neighbouring academic spaces, and our communities will foster support and opportunities to engage

in authentic experiences. Such interconnectedness allows the student to grow. It also facilitates institutions and communities to become “what they are not yet.”

Questions: ***How do I how do I foster strong relationships with my colleagues, students, and the administration? How do I manifest authentic experiences for my students?***

Pliés

“Bent, bending. A bending of the knee or knees” (abt.org).

Pliés are executed as a slow bending at the knee, followed by stretching to a barely straight leg before bending again. The quality of the movement is slow and deliberate, arriving at the fully bent position or the barely straight leg position at the last possible moment, only to begin the process again. It is said that if you are sweating fully by the completion of pliés, you are doing it properly.

Every ballet class starts the same. We all enter the room and quietly stretch, preparing our muscles for the warm-up at the barre. The exercises start with pliés, and follow a formal structure, with small deviations to prepare the body for centre work away from the barre. Each exercise has a purpose and a place. Some find the repetition boring because it is the same thing over and over. I find it relaxing, enjoyable, and centring. I always knew what was going to happen, and no matter how well you executed any given step, it was never enough. Never high enough, long enough, fluid enough, sharp enough, or perfect. And it never would be. It is the beauty and the curse of dance.

As pliés are always one of the first steps, the endless return to the step can make it lose its lustre for some dancers. I found it to be fascinating because within the safety of knowing exactly what was expected of me, I found space to explore the deepest minutia of the step. I was forever visiting different parts of my body to wonder how it worked, what I might do to train it in other ways to better my execution, and how the blood and synapses worked together to produce movement. I also observed what other students were doing to see who I wanted to emulate and what I would do differently. The security of the repetition allowed me to be curious about all aspects of the learning.

Occasionally, while I was brooding, my efforts would be rewarded with a compliment from the instructor. To receive a compliment in an environment where so much is always in development is extremely joyful. My instructors were focused on growth and development, and it meant a huge amount to me when they did offer a compliment. And you may think that dancers fall into despair within such a critical environment, and some do, but my relationship with my instructors was strong. I celebrated when they complimented me. I also knew that they were equally recognizing and encouraging my strengths when they gave corrections. My instructors were watching me closely enough to comment on my execution. Their observations often went past what they could see and also reflected what they could sense, be it hesitancy, pain, fear, or delight. Our strong relationships made all the difference in my ability to process feedback and corrections that resulted from their observation while remaining curious throughout the process.

Questions: ***How do I make space for curiosity? What role does observation play in how learning occurs?***

Battement Tendu

"The working foot slides from the first or fifth position to the second or fourth position without lifting the toe from the ground" (abt.org).

Battement tendu is executed by sliding the foot slowly along the floor to a pointed toe that is still connected to the floor. You stand as tall as you can, lifting yourself out of your supporting leg to make space for the working foot to slowly extend. The heel leaves the floor first, and every speck of the foot that follows leans into the resistance of trying to keep as much of the foot connected to the floor as possible, while also arriving at the completed battement tendu position.

Before we move to larger or more difficult steps, it is important to work the body in preparation. In a battement tendu, the toe stays connected to the ground, and much like a plié, your body should be working from the tip of your toes to the highest standing hair on your head if you are doing it properly.

But youth is impatient and wants to soar before warming up properly. It is hard to get students to see the beauty and fulfillment of process when they so desire to rush down the road and begin to jump and spin. I was guilty of this in my youth, wanting to

bypass duller exercises in favour of exciting jumps, but I was fortunate to have instructors who stayed my hand and allowed me to see the importance and beauty of process.

Tendus may seem like an easy step. The dancer points their toe to the front, side, or back, and they are finished. But like pliés, the more a dancer works the battement tendu exercise, the more they gain from the practice. Yet, it is a delicate balance. The dancer may focus on that step for an extended period of time, looking for the “correct answer” or the perfect battement tendu.

Colonial society subscribes to limited standards of perfection and ballet is an excellent example. Dancers exhaust themselves working for perfection of the minutia, and eventually burn-out due to lack of sleep, food, and rest. As I said in the plié section, strong relationships ease the sting of critique, but students are driven to succeed in a competitive world, and some are unable to stop reaching for a productive result.

As instructors observe well past what they can see, recognizing and encouraging a student’s strengths, while watching for cases of potential burn-out, becomes important for the safety of the student. An additional aspect of the issue is hustle culture (a societal obsession with productivity, working harder than the next person, and achieving success). Hustle culture is present and prevalent in Canadian society. Engaging with battement tendus until they are perfect stops the dancer from moving to other steps. It essentially derails their journey. There is much to see beyond battement tendu, so remaining at this stage until it is perfect works against the student’s larger goals and growth.

In higher education, process can be complicated by a myriad of factors: holidays, illness, fire alarms, traffic, transit, the semester layout, and the time of day a class is offered. But it can also be an incredible opportunity for laddering, strategy, and intentionality.

Questions: ***How can I recognize and encourage my student’s strengths without contributing to potential burnout?*** **Is education’s Eurocentric focus (hustle culture, productivity, a quickening) interrupting my students’ ability to learn?**

Temps Développé

"Time developed, developing movement. Through common usage the term has become abridged to développé. A développé is a movement in which the working leg is drawn up to the knee of the supporting leg and slowly extended to an open position en l'air and held there with perfect control" (abt.org).

A développé draws the toe to the knee in a turned-out position, use the standing leg as a support. Once the working leg's toe arrives at the supporting leg's knee, the working leg slowly extends to the front, the side, or the back. The dancer maintains their turnout in both the working and supporting leg, avoids clenching the quadriceps, and thinks of keeping the hips square while lifting the working leg from beneath. The working leg is extended as high as possible while maintaining proper posture and turning out both legs.

How well I remember standing at the barre with my hand gripping the wood, sweat running down the back of my neck while I attempted to emulate the instructor's willowy frame easily drawing her toe to her knee, and slowly extending her leg in a beautifully turned-out line in front of her. My thighs seemed to resist even the notion of fifth position as I struggled to follow along. It seemed to take forever to complete temps développés, or simply développés as we called them. When we got to take our legs to the side, in second position, it was always a bit easier and a bit harder. It was easier because my body did not rebel in second position. It was harder because Miss Sandra would fetch her lighter.

Now, my memory on this is quite vivid, but as an adult I often wonder how much I understood about what was happening. Miss Sandra would walk along the line of dancers, standing with our foot suspended in the air, and slowly light the flame. Then she would make firm eye contact, set the flame just under your ankle, and say things like, "I know it hurts now, and if you drop your foot, it will only really hurt for a moment." In my memory, the heat of the flame was like a furnace leaping towards my foot, set to engulf the entire studio if I was the one so weak as to drop my leg. This portion of the class always seemed to take forever. It loomed in my mind each week, eclipsing other aspects of the work I should have focused on.

I have often wondered how this came to be. A grown woman was threatening teenagers with fire, and their parents were paying for it. If Miss Sandra had considered

what she wanted from us, whether that be respect for the art form, higher développés, or stronger bodies, I can't help but think there must have been a better way. But Miss Sandra was teaching at a variety of studios, working for the National Ballet of Canada, and balancing her personal life amongst all this. If she had time to contemplate the whole of our dance education, how would this lesson have figured into the big picture?

The dance world is competitive and only a few will ever move on in a professional capacity. I knew I would never be a ballerina, but I also knew my ballet technique would serve me. Every week I would trudge into the studio and will myself to survive the lighter. How did this help me grow? As an adult I am appalled by the idea of scaring young people to make them work. And what if my foot had fallen into the lighter? It would have burned me. It would have hurt me. Failure was not part of growth, it was punishable. I can't help but think of other options for this aspect of my training. What about using the power of my mind to visualize my leg going higher and higher? And what if your leg falling resulted in feedback and suggestions to make it better next time? How would that have altered my experience? I already stated that my mind wandered to important aspects of my training when I was doing pliés. I wonder what I would have thought about during the time I was terrified of the lighter.

Questions: *How can my students and I honour the power of the mind*? What role can failure have in higher education? What does assessment look like in this environment?

Pirouette

"Whirl or spin" (abt.org).

Pirouettes start from a variety of positions, but usually the supporting leg lifts tall while the working leg extends in a battement tendu to the side, then a turned-out preparation in demi-plié with the working leg to the back. Pliés are practiced as barely arriving at the deepest bend only to lift to a stretched position so that the preparation works properly when pliés are used with other steps. Just as the dancer comes to the deepest demi plié (the preparation), they lift the working toe to the supporting knee in a turned-out position, while rising to the highest demi-point position with the supporting leg (high on the ball of the foot). The head whips around to arrive at the same spot it started in as quickly as possible, and the spin is executed.

Pirouettes are freeing and dizzy-making, and wonderfully fun to practice, but it is the preparation that is the important part. Without a proper preparation, the turn is doomed before it even begins. The trick lies in the plié. If a dancer arrives at the deepest bend of their knee and hesitates, all is lost. A well-trained dancer will see the plié not as arriving at the deepest bend but moving through the deepest bend to capitalize on the created momentum for multiple spins. And using uninterrupted momentum allows the dancer to lift onto the highest perch of their supporting leg's demi-point (on the ball of their foot with a lifted heel) while reaching into the ground to balance out the energy and the turn.

Explaining all this to a group of six-year-olds is not easy. They are busy with their own minds and all the talk of "capitalizing on momentum" is boring. Instead, I approach it from the angle of a baseball pitcher. I tell them a story about a pitcher who is having trouble throwing the ball far enough to make it to the batter. I tell them how the pitcher winds up by making a circle with the ball, then brings the ball back into their mitt while they lift their front leg… and… I stand there, frozen. The students inevitably yell, "Throw the ball Miss Hannah! Throw it! You're ready!" So, I throw the imaginary ball and it plonks down right in front of me. Then we talk about how the story could have a different ending, and they tell me that I shouldn't stop, I have to keep going so the ball will travel far enough to hit the plate. We change the ending, and everyone knows to use the momentum to complete a turn. The power of the story is that the students are invested in the simplicity of the pitcher, while enjoying exploring the nuance of the preparation for themselves.

Another aspect of this approach is that older students have heard the story too, so it becomes a common experience for students to discuss as they grow older. Everyone knows the story and later they figure out why I tell it the way I do, so the story and the knowledge become part of our studio as a whole. We were not open long enough for it to be considered history, but within the short timeframe the studio was open it could be considered representative of the potential of knowing the history of a story or people. But the real question is, how would this fun moment of exploration with my six-year-old dancers transfer to higher education?

Question: ***What role do our histories and our stories play in learning?***

Grand Jeté en Avant

"Large jeté forward. A big leap forward preceded by a preliminary movement such as a pas couru or a glissade, which gives the necessary push-off. The jump is done on the foot which is thrown forward as in grand battement at 90 degrees, the height of the jump depending on the strength of the thrust and the length of the jump depending on the strong push-off of the other leg which is thrust up and back. The dancer tries to remain in the air in a definitely expressed attitude or arabesque and descends to the ground in the same pose. It is important to start the jump with a springy plié and finish it with a soft and controlled plié" (abt.org).

Jetés consist of a preparation and a leap in the air in the splits. The dancer does a chassé (a gallop forward) to provide speed and momentum, and then takes one step to prepare before leaping into the air in the splits. The working leg unfolds (building on battement développés), and the supporting leg pushes off the floor to increase the height and length. It is best if the dancer inhales in the air but keeps the shoulders and head neutral to allow the leap to look natural and effortless.

A jeté is a thrill. I love jetés. I love the culmination of years of pliés, tendus, and développés that fund the pursuit of exceptional jetés. Pliés develop the muscles you use to take off and land properly, tendus work the foot so that your toes are pointed in a long line while you are in the air, and développés ensure that as you leap, your front leg will unfold. While your front leg reaches out into space, your back foot leaves the floor and you look into the mirror and see yourself in the air, for just a moment, in flight. It is wonderful to feel the air rushing by as you watch yourself soar.

To prepare for this aspect of the class, dancers stand in the corner of the room and wait their turn to move across the floor. While waiting, it is expected that the dancers will honour the protocols of the studio and the class. Some classes expect waiting dancers to stand silently in a prepared position, with their arms lightly hanging but placed in "bras bas" (arms down) and held in position until it is their turn. This is out of respect for the focus of the other dancers and the pianist, and to make it easy for dancers to hear the piano clearly and for the pianist to hear the instructor clearly. Other classes are rambunctious and noisy with everyone cheering each other on as they have their turn to leap. I used to take a modern class where the protocol was for everyone to take a turn drumming for the other dancers. As you went to line up, you would eventually be handed the drum and asked to accompany the dancers by drumming as they went across the floor.

The protocol depends on the format, the discipline, and the needs of the dancers. Experienced dancers are fast to figure out what the protocol will be just from entering the room and observing other dancers. If the others chat and lounge and laugh, the class will probably be relaxed and loud, but if the other dancers enter silently, remove their shoes, curtsey, or bow to the space before entering, or otherwise demonstrate honouring, acknowledgement, or observance of procedures or protocols, it is respectful to observe and participate when you deem it to be appropriate.

If ever in doubt, just ask another dancer or someone affiliated with the class. It has been my observation that studios do not want people to feel uncomfortable. Any particular protocols are shared with enthusiasm and a welcoming spirit. Dancers recognize that training takes a plethora of differing tracks. Different ways of being and knowing are welcomed, and new dancers are brought into the fold. No dancer wants to return to a place where they are not made to feel welcome.

This goes for higher education as well. Students do not want to attend a space where they are not made to feel welcome, and much like a new dancer to a new class, students may not know the particular protocols and ways of being that are commonplace at an institution. This may stem from attending school in a new country, in an additional language, being a first-generation scholar, attending an institution where many people have the same religious beliefs as one another, while these beliefs may be new to the student. There are many reasons why a student may feel unfamiliar with the environment's protocols and ways of being and knowing, while simultaneously grappling with how to participate in the new environment through their own protocols and ways of being and knowing.

At the dance studio, it is not unusual to ask what the protocols and ways of being look like. Do university students have access to information about protocols and ways of being through inclusive and accessible modes of communication? And are the student's own protocols and ways of being honoured within the institution? If no, then why not?

Questions: How can I honour spirituality and protocol in higher education? How do I incorporate multiple ways of being and knowing?

To the Pointe

My thesis is divided into three parts. It is arranged to engage with Haida principles of learning, as presented by Davidson and Davidson (2018). I have organized the project in this way to present my own experiences and stories in a format that fosters connection for me as a non-Indigenous person to Indigenous ways of learning. I wish to develop a stronger relationship with Indigenous ways of learning in the broadest sense and have selected Davidson and Davidson's Haida approach to learning specifically as one of many possible Indigenous learning pathways, because it provides a clear 9-point framework for me to work within. This does not mean it is the only pathway, but it is one that has been offered in this moment which outlines key principles and ideas that integrate learning with living in an Indigenous and wholistic way, as a way of casting a light for me on my own life and practice, and on colonial and oppressive ways of conceiving of learning, teaching, education, and living.

To review the structuring of my thesis, the nine Haida principles of learning are divided into three sections:

Part 1: Where Learning Emerges

Strong Relationships, Authentic Experiences, and Curiosity.

Part II: How Learning Occurs

Observation, Contribution, Recognizing and Encouraging Strengths

Part III: What Learning Honours

The Power of the Mind, Our History and Our Stories, Spirituality and Protocol.

The nine principles and three sections became the foundation for questions relating to my observations of the structure of a ballet class in conversation with my own curiosities around education, decolonization, and Indigenization. The questions that emerged include the following:

- ***How do I foster strong relationships with my colleagues, students, and the administration?***
- ***How do I manifest authentic experiences for my students?***
- ***How do I make space for curiosity?***
- ***What role does observation play in how learning occurs?***
- ***How can I recognize and encourage my student's strengths without contributing to potential burnout?***
- Is a Eurocentric focus (hustle culture, productivity, a quickening) interrupting my students' ability to learn?
- ***How can my students and I honour the power of the mind?***
- What role can failure have in Higher education? What does assessment look like in this environment?
- ***What role do our histories and our stories play in learning?***
- ***How can I honour spirituality and protocol in higher education?***
- How do I incorporate multiple ways of being and knowing?

Questions directly stemming from the nine Haida principles are indicated in ***bold and italic font*** throughout my thesis.

In gathering these burning questions, I noticed the following themes emerge:

First, student experience and how we consider learning. Post-secondary institutions are committed to pursuing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action, which include limiting barriers to Indigenous student engagement, increasing the number of Indigenous student completion rates, increasing the number of Indigenous faculty members, and supporting Indigenous ways of learning, being, and knowing to foster success for all students, but especially those who do not subscribe to Eurocentric values, assessment practices, and modes of expression.

Second, a continued maintenance of Eurocentric structures, methods, and values despite the institution's commitment to furthering reconciliation by prioritizing and interweaving Indigenous ways of learning, being, and knowing. Are institutions trying, really and truly trying, to Indigenize and decolonize their structures, methods, and values? It is incredible to me that UFV is introducing

Knowledge Performance Indicators (KPIs) and a Strategic Enrollment Plan (SEP), both of which are recognizable within a business model, while listing Indigenization and reconciliation as top priorities of both initiatives. How can this work?

Third, our relationship with time. This refers not just to the linear path of time in Higher education, but the lack of time for faculty to contemplate the future, prepare properly to address student needs, and think and plan for intentional curricular design across departments, programs, and the institution as a whole. It also brings forward the constraints of semesters, class blocks, and spaces that regulate time. Classes have the room during their block, and many must vacate immediately to allow the next class to enter and use the space. It always feels as though time is against you, or time is running out.

Fourth, failure. It is not an option. If a student's GPA is tied to funding, their Visa, the future, or the opportunity for permanent residency, they must protect it at all costs. What about the transformative learning that flows from failure? If failure is not an option, what lengths will students go to avoid it?

Within these themes lies further observations I will explore through several stories of my teaching and dancing career. (Those mentioned have offered consent or have since passed away.) First, I consider the journey of teaching and learning, and how the two are connected by delving deeper into Davidson and Davidson's book: *Potlatch as Pedagogy: Learning Through Ceremony*. Davidson and Davidson explore the relationship between teaching and learning, the interweaving of experience and exploration through practical process, and student experience as spiritual.

I then move to stories about my own instructors, our relationships, their encouragement of my pursuits, and what happens to a student as they gather information. I introduce Maxine Greene's theory of sedimentation and consider her views on the student experience within the context of the global pandemic of COVID-19. One aspect of decolonization is revising the structures and making spaces where Indigenous students feel welcome. Creating spaces that Indigenous students and faculty wish to inhabit. Greene's observations of the student as stranger create a conductor for consideration of a new student's experience in parallel with the experiences of Indigenous students.

The third story is about a former student, Victoria Duffield, who I have worked with since she was six. I consider Victoria's work ethic as a young student and how that parallels the demands on students in Higher education due to the massive information deluge students experience in education from their instructors and technology.

The fourth story details a massive fall I experienced on live television, and what that experience taught me, and what it now offers my students. The tumble also made me consider how failure relates to success, risk, authentic experiences, and assessment, which I consider alongside Indigenous ways of learning, knowing, doing, and being.

The fifth story recounts a life changing opportunity to work with Broadway legend Gwen Verdon and the lessons I learned from Gwen about humility, storytelling, modeling behaviour, and the role of legacy in my own learning. I connect these lessons to a former student, Kiali Bright, and I consider the relationships between dance, Hawaiian culture, spirituality and learning, inclusion, and time.

The final story recounts a transformational trip to Martha Graham's studio in New York. (Martha Graham (1894-1991) was the mother of Modern dance.) This section describes what I learned about my own spirituality and perceptions of protocol in conjunction with my experiences with time as a dancer and as an academic.

The stories are meant to draw out personal experiences to promote discussion around my burning questions and highlight cross-over moments that allow me to identify the Haida principles of learning. By considering my own life journey alongside the Haida principles I am facilitating my own reflection and consideration of how my life, experiences, and reactions are framed within a colonial context. Furthermore, I can observe where Indigenous perspectives allow me to consider alternate ways of viewing these experiences. The hope is that I will emerge with a greater ability to recognize, support, and engage with Indigenous ways of learning, being, and knowing, and become a more informed instructor, colleague, and faculty member within an institution that is on a parallel journey towards decolonizing and Indigenizing.

Part III: What Learning Honours

The Power of the Mind, Our History and Our Stories, Spirituality and Protocol

Story 1. Ten Thousand Steps, From One

One of the most common dance steps taught to new dancers is called Lindy Ball Change. It is a gallop to one side, then a back foot, front foot change of weight. It is easy, fun, and almost every beginner dance routine in competitive dance includes this step. I am unable to contemplate the number of Lindy Ball Changes I have done in my life. Thousands? Tens of Thousands? Hundreds of Thousands? It boggles the mind.

I heard a story that a wonderful dance instructor from Toronto, Brian Foley, changed the name to something that sounded more like the step so kids could say it and do it at the same time. He called it “hitcheycoo-ball-change”. I adopted that strategy because it added to the fun of the step and made the learning easier for students. Now, imagine standing in front of a class full of 5-7yr olds, galloping back and forth in front of the mirror yelling, “hitcheycoo-ball-change” over and over, for 35 years. I did that.

The Value of Repetition

I genuinely believe that remembering that I was doing hitcheycoo-ball-change for the nine-millionth time but every other person in the class was doing it for the first time, is why I was such a successful teacher. It never got old. The joy in their voices, the volume of their cries, and the inevitable stumbling feet and lack of coordination for the first weeks (or months, or years) was beautiful to watch. In that first step, students learned that they would never ever get it right the first time. They would have to try and fail, and grow and evolve, and watch and learn in order to grow. Learning was a process. I didn’t like to talk while students danced. I danced with them. That is how I ended up doing so many hitcheycoo-ball-changes, but each time was someone’s first time. And, as I used to say to these beginner dancers, “Doing it wrong is the only way to do it right”.

If every student starts with the same step, the instructor becomes intimately aware of which aspects will prove challenging and how to avert issues before one arises. My studio, and my students, were focused on successfully attending local dance competitions. We were not focused on dancing for the freedom of movement and the joy of dance alone. So even beginning with hitchey-coo-ball-change, I was already teaching them to work within the mentality of competition: eyes up, smile, use a strong and decisive approach to each action, and above all else, match the students around you.

The journey had a trajectory of measured engagement with the content to satisfy a particular gaze, the adjudicator, who would eventually assess a student's standard of ability as either bronze, silver, gold, or platinum, for example. Dance competitions are public. Considerable time, money, and effort are expended. Everyone becomes involved in the success of the children and their ability to be victorious in that unique environment. The child's journey, interaction with their instructors, interactions with each other, and the quality of the experiences become either secondary to the adjudication, or a bonus aspect of the experience. Competitive dance is product-oriented or materially measured through medals and ranked standings as opposed to community-minded and an opportunity for growth.

This is not unlike higher education, in that, a student values their GPA above all else to secure success in the course and their scholarly experience as a whole. If a high GPA and excellent letters of recommendation are instrumental in a successful bid for funding, it makes sense that students become laser focused on this aspect of their education. If they work to please their instructors, chase grades, work for extra credit, and focus their effort on achieving the highest GPA possible, they will have more opportunities to move forward, engage with opportunities like Teaching Assistantships (TA), and Research Assistantships (RA), not to mention the potential for financial awards that consider the GPA score as a large part of the determining factor. By limiting the scope of their experience to the path that results in the highest GPA, students in higher education may have the same experience as my dance students: their journey, interaction with their instructors, interactions with each other, and the quality of the experiences become either secondary to the GPA, or a bonus aspect of the experience. So, what is lost?

Higher Education's Journey

In the case of the dance student, what is lost is the joy of movement for movement's sake, the eased experience of working to be better than you were yesterday, the pace of growth that is entirely aligned to you and not an attempt to keep up with the number of pirouettes your competition can execute. It is much the same concern for students in higher education. The journey through the work and ensuing discoveries, eureka moments, and self-reflexive exploration are diminished in pursuit of a high GPA. Students submit safe, tested and true responses, assignments, and work.

Taking a risk becomes exponentially more dangerous if the result has lasting reverberations on the student's future.

To offer an example of how this situation plays out, consider students with weak grammar and writing skills, who are then susceptible to instructors who primarily focus their assessment strategies on these aspects of writing. Students with learning disabilities, students with English as an additional language, and students who struggle with foundational aspects of grammar are immediately at risk in this class. It may have nothing to do with the course itself, but it is a way for an instructor to grade within a black and white, or right and wrong framework. It also maintains antiquated views that identify "educated students" as those who have memorized the rules of writing and can operate perfectly within their parameters. What of imagination? Diversity? Creativity? Anything operating outside of narrow constraints of established norms is in danger of suffering during the grading cycle, as the work does not line up with commonly employed rules with uninspired rubrics.

As I considered my options to address this phenomenon, I returned to the book, *Potlatch as Pedagogy: Learning Through Ceremony* (2018). A pathway opened through Davidson and Davidson's descriptions of the Haida principles of learning, allowing me to consider my own teaching, and how students learn from me and alongside me through an interwoven and excited exploration of the book.

There are not explicit answers in the book. Instead, I discovered a conversation was happening that allowed me to ask questions I did not know I had about higher education and my teaching practice. The narrowness of a competitive dance trajectory had always bothered me, but I had never identified what about competitive dance seemed rigid and unfulfilling.

In higher education, my student's dedication to their grades made me hyper vigilant in my grading, and I felt it was my duty to identify which students were worthy of moving ahead into the rare air of exceptional scholarship, and which students should be relegated to the probation list. I wanted to know why students who took chances and were curious were at risk of probation, because they operated out of the narrow laneway of safe scholarship, and bland and unremarkable students were successful because

they knew how to operate within the confined space of the institutions assessment practices.

I am ready to consider other options beyond grading essays for formatting, citation, and clear and concise thesis statements. There is a place for precision, to be sure, but that is merely one way to demonstrate learning. I want to upend assessment and allow curiosity and exploration to be at the forefront. I want my university students to have a similar experience to my young students going back and forth across the room, hollering, “hitchey-coo-ball-change!” at the top of their lungs.

My current students are much older, but they are also embarking on a journey, and they are excited to do so. I see their excitement plainly, but the question remains, ***how do I manifest authentic experiences for my students?*** And students are not the only one’s embarking on a journey. So, too, are higher education institutions across Canada. The journey includes staff, administration, faculty, and students. I must also ask, ***how do I foster strong relationships with my colleagues, students, and the administration?*** I have noticed multiple points of similarity between my experiences as a dance student and instructor, and the Haida principles of learning. I find identifying points of familiarity reduces my worries around being unsure in how to approach decolonizing and Indigenizing my classes, curriculum, and self. Staring with what is familiar allows me to engage outside of my comfort zone by making a path that feels familiar at first. To explore the points of familiarity, it is first important to know more about the Haida people.

Student and Master to Master and Student

Davidson explains that her father learned to carve by “‘carving the other half’ of his father’s and grandfather’s masks and totem poles” (Davidson, 2018, p. 14). The experienced carver commits to completing one half of the intended carving and leaves the other half for the novice or learner carver to complete. Trust expressed in that act also offers potential failure, as the piece now features the work of both experienced and novice carvers, but the process is understood and respected and expectations are not held in accordance with measurement of the finished product as a material output. The beauty in such creation is the existence of the past, present, and future simultaneously.

When I was teaching my dance students, we would commit to a similar form of mutual manifestation and creation. I danced with my students while demonstrating, spoke to them, drew on their strengths, and fortified their weaknesses. I trusted that learning had occurred for that student, at their pace, in their own way. When they performed their piece, they used my demonstration and guidance as the first half and delivered their half to the audience. I did not anticipate perfection, nor did anyone who understood process. (Some students were so focused on their competitive standing that they did have the same experience.) Despite the odd exception, the student, parents, and I would marvel at the performance and improvement. The older the student got, the more like my demonstration and guidance their dancing became, until the dancing started to take on characteristics that were unique to the student and they were ready to create entire routines and performance pieces for themselves, and perhaps for novice dancers.

The journey from learner to experienced performer or carver is part of the experience, but what of the granular moment-to-moment experiences of learning? How does an experienced dancer know from training with me that they should set their eyes to the balcony and shine energy from the middle of their chest, jut their chin to the right when they walk down the centre of the stage, and inhale when they jump? And how do even beginner dancers learning “hitchey-coo-ball-change” know to reach through their middle finger first, letting the other fingers follow? I wonder about that. I have always wondered how it worked. Then I reached the part in Davidson and Davidson’s book where Robert describes imitating his uncle digging for clams, and how “being taught in this authentic way [he] also learned about what he referred to as the subtleties of each activity” by emulating what he observed while working alongside his uncle (Davidson, 2018, p. 15).

The process is the focus and not the final result. Learners are not expected to be perfect immediately, they are expected to move through the process over a period of time and adopt the ways of being through observation, listening, and feedback. The frequency of events like potlatch offers community members the opportunity to observe, practice, and engage on a regular basis. This allows the community to grow together, so that skills are developed over time and with continued execution to produce gradual growth. The learner grows and develops from engaging with the process, but the instructor also gains from offering information. Davidson says her father, “believes that

sharing our knowledge allows us to gain new insights and that withholding information stunts our ability to grow" (Davidson, p. 13).

Another example comes from Sarah Hunt's article "Ontologies of Indigeneity: The Politics of Embodying a Concept" (2014). Hunt explains her first potlatch as an event she participated in with little to no instruction about what to do. She was excited to participate, "with the sound of drums and song holding [her] up as [she] moved around the fire" (p. 30). She continues:

> When the dance was over, and we all walked into the back of the building again, I was scolded for two major errors: chewing gum and smiling. I was not given any additional instruction but was simply sent out to dance again, following in the footsteps of my aunties as I learned over and over what it is to perform our law, our business, our spiritual obligations and relationships. There was a productive confusion in this way of learning, one which would not have been possible had I been told in a linear way how to dance at a potlatch. No guidebook or PowerPoint, no essay or instructional video could have given me this type of knowledge. Even though I have since read many books and articles about the potlatch, none of them have captured what I know the potlatch to be. The ontological differences are difficult to explain yet that is where their power lies – in the spaces between intellectual and lived expressions of Indigeneity. (p. 30)

Though Hunt's article focuses on ontology, her description of the transfer of knowledge in this case reflects the experience of Robert Davidson learning to carve. There is an experiential engagement within the community to allow the learner to explore potlatch for themselves. There is no examiner watching and offering weight to one or another dancer, the community is gathered to participate together. Some are more experienced, others, like Hunt, are new and it makes me wonder if these dancers are invited to stumble through their steps with the joy of discovery, curiosity, and authentic experience, gleaning what they need to know as they go along. Perhaps this allows them to relax and enjoy the experience, but the fear of missing something important may keep them on their toes.

Hunt goes on to note the "partiality of knowledge" and how in the journey of "com[ing] to know something … we are always at risk of just missing something" (Hunt, p. 31). So, their attention is held through respect, not fear of watchful eyes judging and offering the audience acknowledgment of a less than perfect showing through presentation of a low medal. And what of the audience? I wonder how they feel watching the dancers at the potlatch. The parents at a dance competition are watching those who

are pitted against their children. How does this effect the community? The ability of an elder to support a young person? I know how parents react to competition, how they clap and cheer for their own kids. But how would it be if everyone were genuinely excited for everyone because they love dance and their community? And what if just missing something allowed you to be curious instead of worried that your standing in the competition will be affected and everyone will know?

Examining Indigenous experiences with potlatch and learning as a settler, my conversance with the literature becomes a connection point for my own experiences and learning. When Hunt speaks of the risk of "just missing something" in "com[ing] to know something", I am reminded that there is little doubt that I will miss extensive nuances and implications as I learn about potlatch as pedagogy. Without examination of Hunt's experience, I would only have my personal experiences to draw from.

Those experiences look back to competition, where missing something results in shame and hurt that plays out in front of an audience. I am now considering what happens when missing something helps you come to know something as a gradual experience in a supportive and community-oriented environment. What would that look like in higher education? How would that alter assessment? If you were able to get the answer wrong, but it did not mean your grade would become problematic?

In one of my classes, we run the midterm test with 20 minutes of silent work, answering the questions you know, then the students can use their textbook for 20 minutes, then they can talk to each other for 20 minutes. It allows them to identify what they are missing, so they can then go and find it. It also allows them to discover the joy of sharing what they know and watching the happiness and relief it brings others. For what is knowledge if it is not shared? And how can we learn about the relationship between teaching and learning as in *Sḵ'ad'ada,* and *Sḵ'ada* if students are never exposed to the relationship and how that is connected to sharing authentically with others?

To further consider this, I return to Hunt's article, which closes with a question:

> If I say I am dancing, what does it mean to you now? I am dancing not for you, but in the footsteps of my ancestors who taught me how to resignify Indigeneity, or more specifically Kwakwaka'wakw knowledge, such that it does not lose its meaning and power in the face of colonial constraint. (31)

Colonial constraint welcomed my dancing. I never considered that it would not be accepted. I danced because I loved to dance. It is part of my lens as a person and an academic, but I am unable to truly appreciate Sarah's experiences dancing, as her engagement with movement stems from a connection to something greater. I am unable to imagine the joy felt by one who loves dance as I do and has the opportunity to locate that love in something so profound as "the footsteps of my ancestors".

Would institutions do well to further incorporate opportunities for students to learn about Indigenous perspectives and ways of being, to better appreciate and engage with opportunities for learning? Meaning, would decolonization and Indigenization open the door to transformative learning through authentic experiences and relationships instead of grades meant as a measure of a student's success? How will learning change if the focus is teachers and students, connecting as part of the community to share and pursue knowledge together, without the strain of a GPA's hold on the student's prospects? Sara Davidson captures the potential in the opening of *Potlatch as Pedagogy* when she frames the book thus:

> It is an invitation to reflect on how some of his [Robert Davidson] approaches to learning and teaching might be applied in the classroom. Furthermore, it is an invitation to consider how we might add more depth and meaning to the ways in which we bring Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and pedagogies into our classrooms. (P. 6)

An appreciation for the history of potlatch, the role of history and how we relate to those who came before, and articulation of the destructive force of colonialism might facilitate a settler observing the classroom as a place to welcome Indigenous perspectives and modes of expression, while actively interrupting "colonial constraint" (Hunt, 2014, p. 31) so as to adjust and alter the trajectory to realize Sara Davidson's "invitation" to "add depth" (2018, p. 6).

Story 2. Janice, Scott, & a Million Others

This is the story of my many, many teachers. There are too many to name, and several I have forgotten, but more remain present in my mind. Those who stand out do so because of how they taught. You see, when instructors want to pass choreography on to a dancer, they often start by demonstrating the movement. The hope is that the body of the instructor will set the desired tempo, accent, and overall style that is required of the movement. It is rare that an instructor begins with the fully intended piece, rather, they often begin with one sequence, step, or technical aspect of the movement and feed laddered information to the dancer. The instructor will sometimes add information verbally and slow or speed up particular moments to facilitate explanation. The dancer watches the instructor and uses the power of their mind to discern the sequence of the steps, as well as nuance and style.

When I became an instructor myself, I often thought of how much my teachers had helped me navigate being a teenager and how I appreciated them. When I considered the steps they had taken, I realized it was more about our relationships than anything else. I wanted to work for them because I respected and cared for them. I was also asking myself how I might foster strong relationships with my students, and in turn, my colleagues, and my administration? One way each of my teachers created strong relationships was by facilitating authentic experiences for me. How many people get to do barre at a kitchen counter with a major Canadian choreographer like Jacques Lemay? Building on the established importance of strong relationships and authentic experiences, I next ask, ***how do we make space for curiosity***? To approach these pieces, I will first consider the question of the ***role played by observation in how learning occurs.*** For the minutia of learning, and how a dancer or a student builds their knowledge explains the importance of strong relationships and authentic experiences. To explore this realm, I do intend on discussing the impacts of the global pandemic. The challenges we have and continue to face are part of the current landscape of learning, especially pertaining to relationships, authentic experiences, and the power of the mind.

Sedimentation

I benefitted greatly from the variety of instructor's that my high school dance instructor, Janis Price, arranged for us. But my progress did not show immediately.

Students evolve over the course of a semester, a year, or a certification. The growth is captured through ever-more-difficult classes and experiences. For example, my personal journey through higher education has taken more than ten years and will continue for eternity. But every once in a while, I realize I have grown, and I can sense the difference. But what accumulated? Was it ideas, knowledge, inspiration, realizations, and connections? Was it what some call transformation and others synthesis? What was *it*?

My dance students experienced exponential growth at times, and I always thought of the volume of information they took in, the *observations*, the nuggets they acquired from other dancers, teachers, and demos, and the ability to immerse themselves so completely that everything else disappeared into the background. The mind gathers all of these pieces, and according to theorist Maxine Greene (2005), in her chapter "Curriculum and Consciousness" from the book, *Curriculum Studies Reader (Vol. 2),* this can be attributed to sedimentation, which is a product of accumulative, residual changes in a learner. When a student engages in learning, the result is a sediment transferred from the instructor that remains on the student (Greene, 2005, p. 143).

Sedimentation aligns with Davidson and Davison's description of learning as taking place over a period of time, with the teacher moving through the process alongside the student as the student gathers experience and information. I might say that the process becomes the focus, not the product. This description of sedimentation works to explain the process students go through to grow and evolve as students, scholars, and future community members. Through the various forms of observation, bits of information, knowledge, and other pieces the student gleans from the instructor, environment, or experience, accumulate to induce growth.

But, within the gathering and synthesizing of this information, Greene also marks a quickening of the student experience within their education and the world as a whole. But she also offers a caution: "change has speeded up and … forces are being released which we have not yet learned to control" (p. 141). We are experiencing a quickening related to technology (which I discuss in Story 3) and productivity as part of the neoliberal agenda moving our society forward at a faster and faster pace. As a result, sedimentation accumulates faster than we have seen in the past. What, then, becomes of the flow of the experience, the teacher moving alongside the student, and the process

of learning? What “forces” did Greene warn us to watch for? Could this quickening of the sedimentation process and movement away from the learning process described by Davidson and Davidson result in a mental health crisis, an overwhelmed education system, and overwhelmed students?

Student and Teacher

When a dancer observes movement, they begin the process of learning. Once the dancer has watched, the instructor can perform the steps again, but this time the dancer who is learning can move alongside them. By moving with the demonstrator, the learner is able to begin the process of physicalizing the movement while also observing in the mirror. When they have learned the sequence for themselves, they can begin to practice on their own. I learned much of this from Janis Price, my high school modern instructor. She faced us, and danced with us as a mirror image, while we watched her in front of us. We aimed to be what we were looking at. Then there was Scott Kufske, my competitive dance instructor, who would face the mirror and talk to us through the class. We were with him while we danced, and he would cheer us on with positivity and continuous enthusiasm. You can see from his smile in the image below the energy and joy he exuded.

Figure 12. Sandra Darcie, Hannah Celinski, and Scott Kufske

Photographer: Wendy Strong

Image Description: Hannah Celinski stands smiling with her dance teachers, Sandra Darcie, and Scott Kufske.

Nadia Potts was my classical ballet instructor at Ryerson. She would ascend into the room, demonstrate flawless technique, dance with us, for us, and around us. The very poise with which she stood spoke to us about the effort we should be expending, and we followed suit.

Gifted with such rich information and modeling from my own instructors, I synthesized the information I was provided about movement, and aspects of each genre inevitably made its way into the others. I taught Hip Hop with elements of the years I spent dancing the night away at underground raves, ballet through my exposure to Vaganova, Chacetti, and the Royal Academy of Dance, Modern with the force I had observed in Danny Grossman's dancers and the dedicated edge I picked up at Martha Graham's studio in New York, but always with the voice of Janis Price guiding my instructions to my own students. When I taught Jazz, it was a wild fusion of Scott's buoyancy, humour, and drive, the workshops I attended with Frank Hatchett, Sam Fiorello, Brian Foley, Allain Lupien, Tyce Diorio and the extended rehearsal time I spent working with Jacques Lemay and Janis Dunning, Donna Feore, and certainly Gwen Verdon. In addition to these instructors were layers upon layers of information that I had gathered from my castmates, classmates, fellow audience members, and peers.

My teachers taught me that relationships matter, that the more handprints you had on your technique, the better you would be. Each of my instructors valued their own instructors and had deep respect for the privilege of teaching. They saw their students as important. Many recognized that their students would exceed them. This is the closest I came to "dancing … in the footsteps of my ancestors", as Hunt put it (2014, p. 31). Janis Price wanted us to explore a multitude of styles and people. She introduced us to instructors from everywhere to add texture to our knowledge.

One example I remember fondly and with much admiration was Emerita Emerencia, who taught us The Gumboots Dance. At the time, Emerita told us that it was a dance performed by miners to celebrate surviving another day, but it functioned past the versions performed at the end of their workday. The dances were also a form of communication because the miners were not permitted to speak in the mines. Instead, the miners communicated by slapping their bodies and boots. Specific movements alerted other miners of potential danger, police moving through the mines, and the presence of their bosses (Mills, 2017, p. 67). My experience with Emerita was my first

glimpse into how people create art as a response to the oppressiveness of their colonial contexts. I still remember the main step in the sequence she taught us to this day, and I consider it a one of the first steps of many towards the work I do today.

Janis also brought us an instructor form the National Ballet of Canada, Neil Procop. Neil taught us impeccable ballet technique while seated in a chair wearing a sweater, jeans, and sneakers. When he stood up and demonstrated, there was no doubt what he wanted, as his movement transcended his deceptive garb. Then one day we arrived to find him dressed to dance with us, and he taught us traditional Ukrainian dance, because he knew it would further our experience and deepen the subtleties of our movement. I remember fumbling with the footwork and how my eyes bulged when I saw Neil jump. Just observing his height made me believe I could jump higher.

Teacher and Student

In addition to exposing us to a multitude of experiences and instructors, both Janis and Scott spent time with us before and after class, talking us through life and teenagehood. They stoked our dreams, bolstered our confidence, and mentally prepared us for life well beyond dance. These authentic relationships took a back seat for me at the time, but I became deeply aware of the value of having such inclusive, engaging, and supportive mentors as I struggled to find work later in my career. And my career had started strong.

Janis Dunning and Jacques Lemay hired me for my first big gig. It was a national tour. I will talk more about that experience later in the thesis, under Celine, but the important part here was that when the tour finished, I moved to Vancouver and when I needed a place to live, they took me in. Jacques taught ballet barre at the kitchen counter. We would line up in the morning and have a brief barre before we went about our day. It was a communion, a ritual, and a kindness. They kept me safe and focused while I continued my journey. Now, all of my instructors held me as I developed as a dancer, a member of the artistic community, an instructor, and a person. They each left special specks of themselves on me that I carry to this day, synthesized into the person I have become.

Figure 13. Jacques Lemay, Hannah Celinski, Janis Dunning, and Anabel Ho in August 2019

Photographer: Rick Celinski

Image Description: Jacques Lemay, Hannah Celinski, Janis Dunning, and Anabel Ho gathered together.

My Students

I loved watching my dance students grow and usually physical growth was accompanied by intellectual growth. This does not mean acquisition of knowledge but rather experiences that challenge students to think and thus grow. The dance studio that I owned between 2004 and 2011, Aerial Dance & Acro Academy, attended dance conventions in Vancouver, Seattle, Denver, Waikiki, and Maui. Over the course of the weekend, my students would immerse themselves in class after class and move from instructor to instructor. At the end of the event, they would return to the studio exhausted, but supercharged with energy, vitality, and an edge to their movement that was not present before.

I had always valued the relationships and growth I experienced from my long-time instructors, but my students would spend around 5 short days with some of the

world's greatest choreographers and dancers, observing new styles and steps, their minds working in overdrive to accommodate all the new information, nuances, and choreographic structures. It was a controlled environment, with little other stimulus, and they grew rapidly. The change was so obvious and fast that I was able to observe it. Another factor was the opportunity to experience these events as a group. They worked hard and bonded firmly to one another and to the instructors. It was part of the controlled environment. It speaks to the importance of relationships and how knowledge transfer can be impactful even if the exchange is brief. But how does learning occur?

Learning has long been considered a process, but details of how this process unfolds vary depending on the content, environment, and instructor. There are pedagogues who believe that information can be lobbed into space where it becomes the responsibility of the student to gather it up and apply it, others subscribe to memorization and regurgitation, and there are others yet who believe that a participatory experience is key to learning. Within each version of how learning might occur, observation plays a massive role. I consider observation to include looking at what is happening, feeling externally and internally but also listening, smelling, tasting, and reaching out with the inner self to sense what is happening. When I speak of observation, I am speaking of the entirety of the experience.

Identifying what was, and is, not working (racist assessment practices, gate-keeping, and colonial institutional structures) will be necessary to recognize how these structures became so deeply entrenched in our educational system so we can avoid repeating these mistakes in the rush to rediscover our equilibrium and familiarity upon a full return to campus. This is indeed an unpredictable environment and that the speed at which the quickening is happening limits our ability to see how this process will resolve.

Sedimentation in the Age of COVID-19: Post-Pandemic Newcomers

If we do not know how this will resolve, and it is a great unknown indeed, our educational system has an opportunity to change. What I currently observe as an instructor is massive unrest, anxiety, and confusion amongst my students, my colleagues, and myself. Our minds are indeed powerful, but they are perhaps over stimulated. I see balance in the Haida principles, where there is room for growth, even exponential growth, but relationships open doors for discussion when things get hectic, and the role of observation makes space to take a beat and look around you, the

relationship to the histories and stories allows for a pause to consider what has happened to others and what can be learned from their experiences.

I do not feel these opportunities or a connection to any of that as part of my day-to-day experience as a person in post-pandemic academia. I feel rushed. I feel pushed to expect the rapid accumulation of sedimentation experienced by my dance students in exceptional circumstances, but I am expecting it every day. There continues to be much happening because of the global pandemic (COVID-19), the massive flooding that took place in November of 2021, which effected my community of Abbotsford, British Columbia, and the reverberations of moving back and forth between modes of delivery. I am also trying to ease the trauma of my students, and although I have made use of the mental health supports my institution offers, I am not properly equipped to support and mentor a student who had a cardiac event at 19 years old, was resuscitated with a defibrillator, put in a coma for two days, brought out of the coma on a Friday and attends my class the following Monday because he is worried about his student visa. So, I now worry about trauma sedimentation.

While we continue to engage with “the new normal” by finding an appropriate flow to our pedagogical approaches, and simultaneously grapple with face-to-face, hybrid, and high-flex possibilities, the upset has been so extreme that every student and instructor at every level of education have become newcomers, with their own brand of uncertainty. Greene framed the experience, but through the eyes of a new student, but I propose it applies to what we are experiencing throughout academia:

> Turning from newcomer to learner (contemporary learner, in our particular world), I am suggesting that his focal concern is with ordering the materials of his own life-world when dislocations occur, when what was once familiar abruptly appears strange. This may come about on an occasion when “future shock” is experienced, as it so frequently is today. Anyone who has lived through a campus disruption, a teachers’ strike, a guerilla theatre production, a sit-in (or a be-in, or a feel-in) knows full well what Alvin Toffler means when he writes about the acceleration of change. “We no longer ‘feel’ life as men did in the past,” he says. “And this is the ultimate difference, the distinction that separates the truly contemporary man from all others. For this acceleration lies behind the impermanence—the transience—that penetrates and tinctures our consciousness, radically affecting the way we relate to other people, to things, to the entire universe of ideas, art and values.” (Greene, 2013, p. 140-141).

Academia is rife with opportunities for uncertainty, from getting into school, to funding, to landing a job. It is everywhere. But the pandemic has introduced an additional layer, in that the *strange* Greene introduced will bear a layer of existential incongruence through a filter of pandemic-related alienation.

We have returned not just to the classroom, but to life. Sort of. The acceleration of this change is due in part to the length of time we have been away. The University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) paused classes on March 17th, 2020. This was in line with major institutions around the world. Many instructors did not return to campus until Fall 2021 and future fall semesters will continue to include the usual discomfort experienced at the beginning of a semester and additional reverberations due to the utter disruption experienced globally.

The first time I read the earlier passage by Greene, it reverberated with me within the context of the changes experienced with the addition of technology in my lifetime. The quickening of the transfer of information, and the unstoppable "nowness" of each second, pressing into the next. It brought the mindset of my students to the forefront and made me wonder if they were aware of the extent to which technology avalanched information into their lives and how they might be interested in discussing the topic. But reading this on the heels of the pandemic was a shock to my system, as the past seems to be everything pre-March 2020, with time accelerating into a massive vortex of staggering Canadian numbers:

- 4,647,673 total cases
- 51,763 deaths (canada.ca, as of April 17th, 2023)

These numbers are captured alongside inconceivable events like the heat dome (culminating in the hottest temperature in Canada's history, 49.6°, recorded in Lytton BC, on Tuesday June 29th, 2020 (Uguen-Csenge & Lindsay, 2021, cbc.ca) days before the entire town burned to the ground.

Students have experienced upheaval, isolation, uncertainty, some have lost family and friends, others have battled the illness, but they all share "future shock", and it will be important to approach future semesters with careful attention to how we engage. It is true, "We no longer 'feel' life as men did in the past", we now carry a heightened

awareness of the instability of the norms previously taken for granted, employment security, and personal health (Greene, 2013, 140-141). As Greene saliently predicted, in the wake of such a monumental event, the “impermanence” revealed through the pandemic has altered consciousness and is indeed “radically affecting the way we relate to other people, to things, to the entire universe of ideas, art and values.” As we return and forge the new normal, we will have opportunities to recognize aspects of education and even society that were not working and seize upon the affective shifts to bring about change.

Working to alter educational systems that have cemented into formal structures simply as a result of replication is difficult business, but the current uncertainty about what the “new normal” will include serves to pinpoint weaknesses and cracks in these structures that will be ripe for penetration. And to capitalize on what are albeit microscopic spaces, academics with vision will be required to move in uncomfortable ways. They will need to act.

Greene describes an interaction between characters from Kafka’s novel *Amerika* that captures my own sense of urgency. It takes place between Karl Rossmann and his uncle, where Karl is counselled to avoid staring into the unfamiliar with an eye to observe, instead, Greene maintains that “[a]ction is required of him, not mere gazing; *praxis*, not mere reverie” (p. 142). To me, Greene is making explicit the difference between discussion and reflection that is followed by hollow contemplation, and discussion followed by reflection and action. One results in nothing but wandering around considering the issue in a reverie, the other results in change. The difference is further explained in Paolo Freire’s (2005) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: “…my defence of the praxis implies no dichotomy by which praxis could be divided into a prior stage of reflection and a subsequent stage of action. Action and reflection occur simultaneously.” (p. 128) Then he adds, “Critical reflection is also action.” Change is the focus, but change founded in reflection and examination of the topic. It is no wonder that the term praxis is so popular amongst my colleagues at this time. We seek change, and not mere reverie.

Perhaps the slow pace of change in academia makes praxis seem as though it is part of pedagogy and not the larger discourse. But the lockdowns may have changed that because praxis has become the centre of research and pedagogical approaches. It

appears regularly in course outcomes, course descriptions, and course titles I see as part of a Curriculum Advisory Committee. Perhaps all the time at home brought a need to bring a new perspective to participatory structures or goals in course offerings? During the lockdowns, we baked, knit, played with our dog outside, and played cards with one another every night. We were looking to engage and learn to do things, just to keep busy, and now praxis dominates the discourse of the new normal as we seek to sense-make of the future through the complexities of decolonization, Indigenization, misinformation, racism, classism, and Trumpism. Reflection is needed to ensure the best path forward.

For students, this will have different implications. Part of their return to campus may be grappling with a loss of balance and unfamiliarity by interweaving examination of their altered perspectives and sense of stability through pedagogical approaches. As Greene suggests, “His learning, I am saying, is a mode of orientation—or reorientation in a place suddenly become unfamiliar” (2013, 141). Though returning students are familiar with campus, they will need to create a post-pandemic relationship with the space. Classrooms, cafeterias, and coffee stops will have new social parameters and expectations. Spaces with or without hand sanitizer will feel familiar, sterile, or unsafe, depending on the student. An utter revision of the relationship will take place with every person returning to scholarly spaces they understood to function a certain way.

Why go Back to Normal?

Approaching campuses and learning spaces through one set of eyes will do little to satisfy the needs of the populace. If we want to change the space, now would be an excellent time to do so. What is needed currently to foster empathy, ecological protection, wellness, and moving forward in a good way? What is needed for learning to emerge? A self-aware and reflective approach to education bring the student into alignment with other students, the institution, and the world around them. But without *curiosity* to fund the exploration, the pursuit lacks luster and appeal. We want our students to be curious about the world, their place within it, and the secrets of life that lay ahead.

Our students are asked to consider complex problems about the world, their future, and their potential. They are faced with existential threats such as environment

collapse, fascism, racism, and the global pandemic. Often, students are called lazy or unmotivated to do the work properly. In *Landscapes of Learning* (1978), Greene states:

> The opposite of morality, it has often been said, is indifference—a lack of care, an absence of concern. Lacking wide-awakeness, I want to argue, individuals are likely to drift, to act on impulses of expediency. They are unlikely to identify situations as moral ones or to set themselves to assessing their demands. In such cases, it seems to me, it is meanlingless to talk of obligation; it may be futile to speak of consequential choice. (43)

She goes on to say that this is not a North American phenomenon, but a global issue. Meanwhile, the current global response to the pandemic has been a return to normal, and in that I have observed students that sit with glazed eyes and listless engagement. The apathy is palpable. Students are exhausted from the cycles of lockdowns and restrictions, and now they return to an academic space where they already felt constrained and immobile, only for the misery to worsen where they hoped it would ease. I should also frame Greene's argument as focused on morality, which she contends is usually framed as a decision "between two goods" feeding the family by stealing versus breaking the law. The decisions are intermingled with societal norms, expectations, and laws. In this way, morality becomes the compass (48).

If, in 1978, Greene was already reporting "…that, for too many individuals in modern society, there is a feeling of being dominated and that feelings of powerlessness are almost inescapable", then the past three years have unimaginable impacts on our students, and we must look for ways to bring them around, to awaken their truest selves, and to spark them into aspiring to realize their full potential (43). By returning to the article by Terry Mitchell, Darren Thomas, and Jackson Smith (2018), "Unsettling the Settlers: Principles of a Decolonial Approach to Creating Safe(r) Spaces in Post-Secondary Education" and focusing on principle 4: "Decolonization transforms policy, curricula, and institutional spaces", an opportunity is presented to consider how Indigenous students and faculty would like to see our spaces transformed to become welcoming (p. 361). This is the institution's opportunity to be curious. The new normal can be whatever we want it to be, and I wish it was less like it used to be. This is our chance to work outside, invite the community in, and shake off the structures around space and the institutional schedule.

If institutions forefront strong relationships with students and authentic experiences that move them out of the current apathetic state (seemingly induced by the pandemic), all students will receive the support and opportunity to reignite their curiosity and observe (within the multipronged context discussed earlier) in meaningful and developmental ways. Why can't higher education be rife with spaces where learning emerges so that learning can occur? And, since Mitchell at al. framed decolonization as transformative to the curriculum, policy, and institutional spaces, both the paths of decolonization and engaging with the Haida principles lead to student success.

Story 3. Victoria

When I first arrived in British Columbia, I had a student who wanted to do a Jazz solo. She was six. She came bright eyed and ready to work at her first private choreography session. I was impressed that she worked steadily for the full half hour, understood how steps would work together to create movement phrases, and was willing to try jumps and turns she had never done before. Watching her that first day, I had no doubt she would master them before she hit the stage.

At the end of the 30 minutes, I told her that the time was up. She looked up at me in genuine dismay and said, “But the routine isn’t finished yet.” I told her she would come back next week, and we would continue working on it. She thought for a moment, then suddenly sputtered, “But I can’t do a double pirouette yet!” I was stunned. The work ethic, the willingness to explore and devour information, the complete focus of her attention in the mirror came to me in a flash. She was six.

Figure 14. Victoria Duffield and Hannah Celinski

Photographer: Richard Celinski

Image Description: Victoria Duffield at 7 years with Hannah Celinski

This student ended up completing high school while she was touring nationally with a hit single. Her work ethic, determination, and desire to excel resulted in her success. She was a force of nature, asking questions, encouraging others to practice, and pushing her physical powers to the absolute limit. I had to draw on every ounce of

my abilities to fuel her rate of growth and I watched in awe as she achieved my ultimate goal for all my students: she grew past me and became more than I am. And as that happened, more and more of my students began to do it. They were stronger, faster, more flexible, and more daring as we went along. They drank information from me, other instructors, workshops, Cirque du Soleil, television shows, Youtube, Tik Tok, and music videos.

Hustle or Hinderance?

My students achieved unbelievable feats. From standing on one leg atop another's shoulders, to flying backwards over scaffolding to catch themselves by their feet, two stories up. They never ceased to amaze me. But they were now contorting themselves so far past anything I had ever seen that I began to worry for their safety. At my dance studio, we were extremely careful and technically guided by an exceptional staff, but we were also lucky. We existed before you could learn the art of contortion from 30 second snippets on the internet. Yet my students were already moving at a pace that concerned me deeply.

And as I said, my students in higher education note the same concerns that Victoria did. They worry that they must be ahead of the others. They ask for extra assignments, take on more than they can handle, and live for their GPA because it opens doors for financial support, research positions, and prestige, which leads me to ask, ***how can I recognize and encourage my student's strengths without contributing to potential burnout?*** It is worrisome, because the journey is important, and Greene's sedimentation contributes to a legacy piece that allows for future generations to benefit from a variety of instructors speaking through one person's synthesized presentation of the material they have collected during the sedimentation process. But when does the sedimentation accumulation begin to be too much? ***Is a Eurocentric focus (hustle culture, productivity, a quickening) interrupting my students' ability to learn?***

Cognitive Overload

When I examined potential contributors to the issue of vast amounts of information overwhelming students, I was most interested in an article written by Justin Sewell, Lekshmi Santhosh, and Particia O'Sullivan (2020) called, "How do Attending

Physicians Describe Cognitive Overload Among Their Workplace Learners?" The students in the article were moving from practical engagement with material to experiential placements where the setting was less predictable, but the issues they experienced still described my students extremely well.

The article focused on cognitive load theory (CLT), which addresses moments where inputs and stimuli surpass the brain's ability to maintain its working memory (Sewell, et al., 2020, p. 1130). The paper described "four types of evidence: performance, non-verbal physical manifestations, verbal utterances, and interpersonal conflicts" (p. 1132). The evidence for performance related to repeating the same thing over and over without improving, non-verbal physical manifestations through "posture… crying… and general appearance or countenance" (p. 1132), verbal utterances where the student is sighing or expressing concern, and interpersonal interactions where students appear to be "in their own head" or responding with short, vague statements like, "oh", or "okay" (p. 1133).

The students in Sewell et al.'s article suffered due to constant exposure to a monumental amount of information. I have noticed that my own students are exhibiting the same sorts of behaviours identified in the article as evidence of cognitive overload and I wondered how this could be happening.

Jaikishan Rajput, a medical student, in a letter to the editor entitled, "Cognitive Overload During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Student's Response to Sewell et al", bolstered my interest in the notion of "cognitive overload" through his response from the perspective of a student:

> Although some cues may appear vague, when they are noticed it would take fairly little effort to ask students how they are coping with current circumstances. Doing so can have considerable benefit as support from co-workers can improve well-being and reduce negative emotions related to the work environment. Creating a more welcoming atmosphere and encouraging increased student participation in duties with the rest of the medical team may itself alleviate the anxiety students face with regard to COVID-19 and thereby improve both our learning experience and our learning. (2021, p. 275)

There is a considerable amount to unpack here. First, I need to be clear that Rajput is a medical student responding to an article directed at the medical environment, and the response is framed around COVID-19 in particular. The pandemic is at a different point

than it was in 2021, but students continue to experience reverberations. It is also worth noting that the students I teach at the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) had the added complication of a major flood in winter of 2021. Their potential cognitive overload must be considerate of that circumstance as well.

Figure 15. Flooded View of Highway 1 at Sumas Way, November 2021

Photographer: Hannah Celinski

Image Description: Cars parked on the side of the road. In the background, the return of Sumas Lake due to flooding covers Highway 1 at Sumas Way in Abbotsford, BC.

Figure 16. Post-Flood View of Highway 1 at Sumas Way, March 21st, 2023

Photographer: Hannah Celinski

Image Description: Open farmer fields behind Highway 1 at Sumas Way in Abbotsford, BC.

During this event, one of my international students and her roommate returned home from school to find their basement apartment flooded. All they had were the clothes they were wearing and what they had in their backpacks. They retreated to a friend's house where the landlords let them sleep in the attic. They called me about homework questions from the attic. They had no food, and the electricity was out, so one held their phone as a light while the other spoke to me about the assignments on Facetime. Other students were attending class, then rescuing animals and removing carcases of the animals they lost during the afternoon and evening. Others were evacuated from flooded homes with no schedule for when they may return, or what they would return to.

Fast forward one year, and my students demonstrate a countenance of exhaustion, sigh, tell me they do not know what to do, stare at me blankly, and exhibit signs of cognitive overload on a daily basis. In Rajput's letter, it is suggested that the cues may be vague, engaging students in discussion about their personal state and creating a "welcoming atmosphere and encouraging student participation … may … alleviate the anxiety students face" (2021, p. 275).

Though the anxiety named in the letter is related to COVID-19, I suggest that because the shared anxiety of my students and Rajput is COVID-19, the added complication of the flood deepens the shared anxiety, highlighting the benefit of Rajput's suggestions in relation to students at UFV as opposed to complicating or negating said suggestions. In addition, as stated in the previous section, UFV has highlighted the importance of "creating a welcoming environment for Indigenous students" (Stage 2, Part 1, UFV SEM Plan).

There is also further study to be done on the effects of the compounded cognitive overload on Indigenous students in Abbotsford, as the return of Sumas Lake, first called Semá:th by the Stó:lō people, reverted the land to its original state for a few days, until the Barrowtown Pump Station got running properly and redrained the water. But for the moment, I return to Rajput's recommendations for engaging students in processes to stimulate them and ease anxiety. This would allow the focus to return to where learning

emerges and how learning occurs, which would further align the answer to part of the issue with cognitive overload. I say part, because this phenomenon is indicative of three elements, two of which we have discussed. The first is the volume of information that instructors have synthesized to pass on to students, the second due to anxiety and complications through events like the global pandemic and the flood, and the third is technology.

Technology: The Quickening

Prior to modern day, the flow of information was passed at a rapid rate through studies, lectures, and research, but we as a society have arrived at a juncture in history where we must "respond to the accelerating rate of technological and social change associated with the knowledge age and globalisation" (Wegerif & Mansour, 2010, p. 326). As previously stated, students are now located between a funneled pressure point of their instructors teaching, the pressure of large-scale events like the global pandemic and flooding, and the colossal tidal wave stemming from a sea of information and stimulus constantly arriving through technology: phones, computers, watches, glasses, cars, and home assistant devices. Navigating the steady flow of information has led to "'jet-skiers' skimming across the surface of the sea of information" (Wallace, Clark, & White, 2012, p. 6).

Take a moment. Think about the last time you searched for information and tried a variety of search engines, proceeded past the first page of suggestions, or moved to an alternate research database that might offer deeper resources beyond popular or funded sites that arrived at the top of the list? If you did not pursue the topic further than the initial search engine selections, you "jet-skied" across the ocean of information available to you. So, if skimming across the top of the body of information is easy to do, how does one dive into the middle of the ocean and look for a particular strand of seaweed? It is possible, but it takes practice, preparation, and the proper tools to become an academic scuba-diver.

When I was a student, I had to walk to the library, head to the card catalogue, find my books, go to the stacks, and begin the search for materials. There was something incredible about standing in the mess of books, reaching out with my mind to will a book with pertinent information to find my hand. One had to hope the books were properly put in the stacks, and once in a while you would stumble into an area with a

huge number of books that looked promising, or a book that had been set down would catch your eye and you would have made an exciting discovery. The act of physically searching for the information gave the moment an intimacy and an excitement.

Now, a student says, “Hey Siri. What is phenomenology?” And Siri will dutifully read out the Wikipedia entry about the definition and origins of phenomenology. Technology has placed the bulk of humanity’s information at our fingertips. It is miraculous. How can we blame students for using Wikipedia so willingly, when the entries are immediately at the ready? There are advertisements and paid entries if you spend time on the screen, but that does not negate the fact that that the entirety of the World Wide Web sits one “Hey Siri” away at all times. This is equivalent to me going to the library in the 1980s, opened the card catalogue and discovering small orange cards that advertise clothing, pornography, and influencers tucked between the actual cards. I would want to poke around.

And many students are conducting research, writing papers, and accessing learning management systems through their phones, with implications extending to, as we have seen in the articles previously mentioned, medical educational environments. One study of such an environment concluding: “Data from the interviews suggested that the use of mobile computing devices was widespread and frequent, and that it occurred in all settings where learners and teachers were present, from classrooms to hospitals” (Wallace, Clark, & White, 2012, p. 3). But even at this level of study students identified concerns around the quality of the information available to them, one participant stating: “One of the biggest limitations is just trying to find (sources) that are good and reliable, because I don’t like using Wikipedia; it’s good for definitions and stuff but I don’t like relying on it for treatments” (p. 4).

Even a student who has moved through their scholarly journey to arrive at a medical residency is mentioning Wikipedia in a discussion about reliability of resources. It should be noted that the study found students were also accessing online books and resources like medical calculators, but 50% used Google and 15% used Wikipedia to define unfamiliar terms, while 60% used devices to access medical journal websites (p. 3).

The article also identifies the issue of users who become the aforementioned "'jet-skiers' skimming across the surface of the sea of information instead of 'scuba-divers' who take time to descend more deeply" (p. 6). This relates to the experience of students who have to conduct research with little time, few resources, and a lack of experience with scholarly scuba-gear (research databases, Ask Away, and other sites to assist with research).

One distraction that leads students to "jet-ski" across the information they are working to explore is the environment that awaits them when they enter the World Wide Web. The systems in place to help them search are equally co-opted by capitalistic networks that promote consumption. And research databases present equally frustrating barriers due to "the different interfaces in the search programs" (Advid & Eklund, 2010, p. 229), specificity of key-word searches, the volume of information, and dislocation of their entrance from the main pathways students are accustomed to.

The embodied experience of research can be frustrating for students. For example, a study conducted in 2012 examined database usage at the G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology's library. The study found that scholars "complained about the difficulty of the search language" (Navqi, p. 3). Graduate students were identified as needing to "acquire and practice the skills" needed to "exploit" resources available in research databases. The study concluded that postgraduate students struggled with skill, "whereas research scholars were not using due to lack of time and poor facility" (p. 7), further recommending "awareness campaigns … and prizes… as methods of promotion", and "orientation assistance to users and a one credit course" to allow their scholarly community to make full use of the available resources (p. 8). This is not to say that library and institutions are not already working to bridge the gap between practice, knowledge, and resources, but to demonstrate that the gap persists despite these efforts.

To appreciate the expanse of this gap, scholars are interrogating the perception versus reality. Though the article "Searching Reference Databases: What Students Experience and What Teachers Believe That Students Experience" was written in 2010, I have recently observed some of their findings in my own classes. Authors Anders Avdic and Anders Eklund concur that "University teachers and librarians are not always satisfied with the way students use the reference database resources", but also affirm

that “students are not getting even close to the potential of database use” citing “more frequent and skilled use of databases would significantly increase the quality of student’s work” (p. 225). They also state that an “underlying problem of poor and inefficient use of reference databases is that students often prefer to use internet search engines such as Google” (p. 225), but later in the article, students state that “it takes too much time to search for articles” (p. 228) and it should be noted that teachers agreed (p. 230).

A new perspective on strategies that serve students through a guided process would engage with initiatives already in progress but adjusted to capitalize on students pre-existing mindset and abilities. To offer context to the experience of students engaging with library databases, Jean McLaughlin (2011) examined how student research intersects with personalization features of sites like Amazon.com to capture how librarians can assist students to maximize the potential of research databases.

McLaughlin also cites “information overload” as a primary issue partly because, “[t]he ability to create new information content has far outstripped the ability to process and search it” (McLaughlin, p. 606). There is also student perception of personalization features in research databases, as McLaughlan states that “[u]ndergraduates may not perceive value in library database personalization features according to the study report from [the Joint Information Systems Committee]” (p. 613). I am curious about how Indigenous students view databases, the information within, and the desire of the institution for them to make use of this resource.

If using a search platform like Google is intuitive and produces resources that may also appear in Research Databases, why would students sacrifice comfort to delve into an alternate and potentially unfamiliar platform that is subject to a wide selection of entry points in the plethora of available databases, sensitive parameters around search words, and particulars around the use of “and” in the search bar. McLaughlan concluded:

> There are opportunities for enhancing the user experience through personalization, but the benefits derived need to be more obvious to database users or, alternatively, the features may best be so integrated into functionality that they are not noticeable. (p. 619)

Essentially this would require research databases to evolve past the current user-initiated personalization features to something unseen and intuitive that students would

identify as a recognizable experience more akin to using a site like Amazon.com. The trick would be employing the best of such an experience without falling subject to detrimental features that contribute to a capitalistic format like advertisements and sponsorships. Alternately, engagement with research databases would become part of an alternate assessment approach as previously discussed, where practice becomes research and the technique of using Research Databases is recognized as knowledge.

By adapting research practices to foster a relationship between the student and technology that not only interrogates the relationship, but actively works to support practice to foster knowledge, a further mode of engagement is opened up. A discussion is currently underway around education, technology, and sustainability. In the article "Managing ICT for Sustainable Education: Research Analysis in the Context of Higher Education (2020), the adoption of information communication technologies (ICT) is promoted to foster research practices that allow students to explore their relationship to the world and the complex ecological issues facing our planet to develop, "sustainable education in the context of higher education" (Gonzalez-Zamar, 2020, p. 2).

By offering students the tools and skills to become scholarly 'scuba-divers' institutions contribute to a better future for the planet as "sustainable education from the perspective of ICT contributes to social transformation, enabling students to transform themselves and the societies in which they live" (2). The article also identifies ICTs "as a means of implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting their transversal transformative potential (2). The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, "aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all, require transformative and solution-oriented research to offer the knowledge needed to support transformations towards sustainable development" (Filho, et al., 2018, p. 132). As actionable and transformative research is fundamental to engagement with the SDGs, developing an awareness of one's relationship to their planet and society will also play a role in successful implementation.

As Gonzalez-Zamar states, "the concept of education … implies a cultural and behavioral awareness, where the new generations acquire the ways of being of previous generations. The educational process is materialized in skills and values, which produce intellectual, emotional, and social changes in the individual." (Gonzalez-Zamar, 2020, p. 3).

In the case of Canada, we may not wish to return to the ways of previous generations, and if we engage in decolonization and Indigenization, we will have examples to follow that will offer a stronger eco-friendly trajectory: “While many traditional peoples continue to practice lives of accountability and honour with the world, a great resource-consuming mass of humanity is busy ravaging those delicate threads of interdependence” (Justice, 2018, p. 39). Reconciliation, decolonization, and Indigenization offer us an opportunity to rest on the side of “accountability and honour with the world”, but we must actively engage with established practices and listen to Indigenous people. In Higher education, students would recognize and participate in strategies and ways of being that may have been lost to modern society because of technology, but by engaging in meaningful and reflective practices that engage thoughtful use of technology, students can develop the means to discover and innovate the “transformative and solution-oriented research” called for by Gonzalez-Zamar.

An environment where cognitive overload has been mitigated and students have practiced to the point of developing a technique to temper their intake while accommodating an open approach to their research that dives deep into the ocean of information, highlighting pertinent information and allowing distractions to fall away from focus may suit more students. It may not. We will never know unless we try.

The global pandemic drove higher education instructors online and created an emergency so dire that even the most resistant instructors were forced to participate. To examine a small global sample of experiences, Linda Darling-Hammond and Maria E. Hyler (2020) considered the pandemic and its eventual end to explore what it would mean for educators and students alike in the article Preparing Educators for the Time of COVID … and Beyond. The article ends with a pertinent observation: “‘We make the road by walking’, noted Paulo Freire of a similar moment of transformative change, paraphrasing the words of Spanish poet Antonio Machado” (463).

The pandemic forced the world online and altered remote instruction, and through necessity we did indeed “make the road by walking”. Students attended class from their beds, I was introduced to a plethora of pets, colleagues wore trackpants and dress-shirts and yes, sometimes Zoom crashed and I could not find the unmute button. But more than that, I am reminded that we are currently in what the earlier quote by Freire called a “moment of transformative change”, so students are poised to engage

with transformative ideas and alternate modes of delivery. Our approach should rise to the occasion and make the best use of the opportunity available to us.

Practice as Research

I have mentioned earlier that it does not matter how many library sessions I book, or how I glam, glitter, and otherwise rhinestone research practices for my students, they are too exhausted, overwhelmed, and distracted to get excited about the prospect. One scholar who I have identified as having a unique approach to research that might have the capacity to engage students is Ben Spatz (2015). This may in part be because he was a dancer and performance theorist. Spatz blended phenomenology, dance studies, and enactive cognition to develop a theory of embodied technique as knowledge. He brought the physical act of developing dance technique into the conversation around research to argue: "*If technique is knowledge, then practice can be research"* (p. 61). For myself, this statement brings to mind first year students struggling to understand what is expected of them, especially with regards to scholarly support and citation practices.

Students submit an assignment and fail as a result of improper research practices and citation, to the detriment of their GPA. This is because they are in the practice phase and in accordance with Spatz's statement, this practice and exploration of the process should qualify as research. But under the assessment system currently in place, a student's GPA can be irrevocably damaged by the time they have arrived at the successful level of knowledge or fully realized citation technique. I argue that lower-level courses should observe the act of practice, development of technique, and acquisition of knowledge as an embodied and experiential process that benefits future work and scholarship, with attention paid to the avoidance of detrimental grading practices that are difficult to overcome.

If my dance career had rested on my earliest attempts at jumps and turns, I never would have earned work as a professional. I had to fall down while developing my technique, just as I had to practice the act of citation to arrive at the appropriate level of knowledge to be successful in academia. This harkens back to the importance of journey, and sheds light on why Victoria was concerned that she could not do a double pirouette at the end of her first private lesson.

When considering the relationship between the embodied educational experiences (ex: attending lectures, participating in class, conducting research) and technology, one place to start is with the order of importance. Spatz states:

> To place embodiment before technology is then to remind ourselves that machines, no matter how powerful their effects, involve us only to the extent that they make contact with our experience through the necessary medium of embodiment. From the common chair to the most complex industrial machines, the meaning of any technology can be defined as its effect upon embodied technique. (p. 12)

Embodied technique is the interlayered experience of practice becoming knowledge through personal familiarity with the processes and confidence developed over time, resulting in arrival at a deepened and internalized state of oneness with the technique. My students spend time playing games, looking around the internet, and checking their email. This does not constitute research in the way I believe would contribute to their education. How does it serve embodied technique for scholarship? If, as Spatz states, embodiment precedes technology, the emphasis is placed on the person (or student) and technology becomes a tool. It might seem obvious, but students rely on technology with such abandon that they are unaware of the symbiotic relationship between themselves and their tech counterparts, be they cellular phones or computers, and do not interrogate the relationship without prompting.

Hustle culture is perpetuated in our neoliberal society and is present in higher education through productivity being recognized as success for students, the publish or perish experience of faculty, and the ensuing reliance of technology for advice, assistance, and support with these endeavours. Slowing the pace by relating process and practice with research as a form of recognition of a student's strengths instead of focusing on grading assignments, would reduce cognitive overload and allow students to move through research as part of a larger whole. Perhaps Victoria would have enjoyed her time as a single pirouetter fully if she had not been preoccupied with doubles, then triples, quadruples, and so on. Being driven is wonderful, but being so driven that you overload yourself in an effort to succeed limits the learning while the product becomes the focus.

Story 4. Celine

Midway through my very first (and only) national tour, our cast was invited to perform as part of a live broadcast of a Celine Dion show in Ottawa. I was thrilled. Celine Dion was already a legend, and we all wanted this show to be especially good, because it was the first broadcast our families would be able to tune in and watch us after a few months on the road.

I was backstage waiting to go on when the rain started. It was a little at first, and then it just started to pour. The other dancers started taking off their character shoes (the heels we wore to dance in), because they were worried about the stage being wet.

I was just starting to remove my shoes when Jacques Lemay, the choreographer, came flying around a corner and told me to put them back on because he was worried about screws and debris from the set he had seen on the stage.

The music started and I steadied myself to fly onto the stage. The opening of this number was my special part, with gorgeous turns and kicks. I loved the section and lived for this part of the show.

I started out onto the stage. So far, so good. I winded my way to the front, and as I took my first actual step of the routine, sliding my right foot long along the floor in front of my body, I was in heaven. Thousands of people had braved the rain, and I could see the camera was sitting firmly on me. The next step involved transferring my weight onto the foot that was sliding and as I started to transfer my weight, I realized I was in trouble. My foot wasn't stopping. I was going down.

In a final effort to vainly save myself so I could get the kick in, I pulled my back leg closer, but that was the final shoe that felt floor. My feet came out from under me (I was looking at them in the air) and I fell with a splash, butt first, in the water. I kept smiling like a little trooper. "I'm a pro", I told myself. "Get up. Get up!"

So, I tried to get up. Nope. I fell again. This time in a sort of split. Smiling away. Now the other dancers were giving me space (thanks friends), so the camera could really zoom in while I struggled to slip, slide, and splash my way off to the side.

It was horrible. I stood at the side, soaking wet, bruised, cut, hair like a long-forgotten doll that had been set too close to the radiator, make-up sliding down my face, and smiling this huge fake smile, because that's what you do. You just keep smiling. Even if it makes you look deranged.

The show finished and I ran to the nearest pay phone to call my Mom. She answered like nothing had happened at all:

Mom: Hi honey. How was the show?

Me: Mom, I fell. A lot. It was awful. I'm so humiliated.

Mom: What? You fell? I didn't even notice. Huh. Well, that part wasn't on TV.

I hung up feeling much better. My debacle had not aired. I had left high school early for this, and I wanted my friends to see me succeeding out in the world! All was well. Then I got on the elevator with the production team:

Director: What the hell was that? You spent more time on your butt than your feet!

Me: Oh, you noticed? Uh, it was really slippery…

Director: I mean, the cameras wouldn't stay off you. I kept yelling, switch the shot! And they just kept going back to you. That last (finger quotes) "episode" where you sloshed off the stage was a complete disaster.

Me: …

In my head: My mother is a LIAR!

This was, without a doubt, the most humiliating thing that had ever happened to me. Everyone I knew saw it. Every dancer I had ever worked with, taught, competed against, and every kid I went to school with, those who loved me and those who did not, they all saw it. I cried for years about it. It gave me a strange stage fright that made me terrified that the unexpected would happen. Before the fall, I could survive the whole set falling over, but this changed me.

People teased me about it for years. My brother would play the video frame-by-frame yelling, “You can see in her eyes when she realizes she’s gonna fall, right… there!” I was deeply ashamed and sad.

Then, after years of working on the stage, I went back to teaching. My students would have unexpected tumbles, costume malfunctions, and small disasters here and there. I always said, “At least you didn’t fall on live TV in front of Celine Dion!” They would laugh, and we would move on. It became a story I told to build my students up, to ensure them that I was still there despite a deep ultimate humiliation. They loved me, and it seemed impossible to them that I would ever fail so brutally. And slowly, we all realized that my failure was a huge part of who I had become.

This experience made me an empathetic dance adjudicator, because I knew how embarrassed a kid felt when they fell down. I would find them and tell them the story afterwards. It allowed me to connect to my students in higher education, because they would be impressed that I had been on television, then realize that I am human when I shared the disaster. It allowed them to see me as fallible.

That failure, that monumental humiliation has been one of the greatest gifts I have received in my time as a professional dancer. And if you talk to professional dancers for any length of time, they all have a similar story. We all fall down. It’s how we get up, that matters. This is why failure is so important. Learning to get up is vital. And the lessons we learn from the experience (rubberize all heeled dancing shoes, wear waterproof mascara, don’t worry if you splash your way through the whole show) are what help us grow.

Failure as Process

Earlier in this work, I described Sara Davidson singing for her father to learn songs, her father, Robert, observing his uncle, and Hunt’s experience moving through her first potlatch. Each of these experiences held moments where the learner moved through the process as a new experience and there was no judgement, only an embrace of the experience as part of a journey. In juxtaposition, my story about falling featured a considerable amount of shame and embarrassment. It seems prudent to embrace the entirety of the experience as part of a journey to mitigate negative sensations. Our learning should embrace curiosity and discovery. How can a student try something new

if they fear failure? ***How can my students and I honour the power of the mind? What role can failure have in Higher education? What does assessment look like in this environment?*** Especially when the failure students fear relates explicitly to our assessment practices.

Journey as the Destination

Assessment practices leave something to be desired despite the amount of attention we pay to grades and grading. The process goes slowly, and if you are unable to find the kind of learning flow that I discovered for students to explore my Hitchey-coo-ball-change step, you are up against a difficult task. Much the way as a child I yearned to run outside and freely explore the world instead of being cooped up in a classroom, I now yearn to throw papers I am to be grading into a raging fire and watch the colonial structures of academia blacken, curl, and disperse as ash, floating up into a night sky.

I always offer my students actionable advice like, “Read the syllabus” or “come to office hours” and in doing so, I am trying to help them navigate the terrain of academia, with all its jagged edges and sudden drops. Assessment is subjective, depending on the instructor. When students miss vital pieces of information contained in the syllabus, they may be flagged as lazy or a bother when they contact their instructor for information that has already been distributed. Or they receive terrible grades on an argumentative essay because the instructor focuses on attacking a flawed Bibliography because citation is a place to identify clear-cut mistakes and successes.

I have seen students succeed in courses by simply listening carefully to what the professor says and then feeding what they hear back through their assignments. Avoiding complex topics and submitting safe assignments that are centred in hegemonic views and theories is another way to secure success, as the content remains in a safe or reliable sphere. And no student should underestimate the power of simply dropping by the professor’s office to make eye contact, nod a little, smile and laugh at their jokes, and head on your way. GPAs have been altered for the better more than once using the practice of networking.

What aspect of learning does any of the above honour? How is a student’s mind being challenged, broadened, or transformed? When failure is not an option because walking the narrow path laid out by others is the only safe way to succeed there is

something deeply flawed in the system. Consider Robert Davidson carving the second side of a half-carved mask. Experience was part of the learning journey, which makes space for the learning to be welcomed, encouraged, and celebrated. Learning emerges in this space and occurs because of the process, which honours both present and future abilities, while engaging with a long tradition of work. What if we viewed assignments in this way and made space for this approach to assessment?

Indigenization offers multiple streams to locate our assessment practices in a relational, community-minded framework, but it moves so explicitly against a Eurocentric and colonial assessment framework and industrialized norms of our educational structure, that it would take a monumental overhaul of society to complete the task. Mitchell et al., speak to how WLU is engaging with Indigenous ways of learning by including community members in discussions, offering food to attendees, fostering a welcoming place for discussion, and hosting speakers like Dr. Kathy Obloson, who spoke “about Indigenous research methodologies, or as she says, “search methodologies”” (2018, p. 356).

The framing of a methodology as reaching out into the world aligns with the Haida principle of curiosity as part of where learning occurs, but also engages the mind to reach out and explore. Searching to power the mind sounds more expansive than researching, which could be seen as filling the mind with information. WLU is actively encouraging an event that examines scholarly pursuits, housed in an academic environment, through a curious context. I see that as reframing research to substantiate the Indigenized approach to scholarship and make space to consider information and knowledge, moving from a Eurocentric stance to engaging with the world around us through a lens of curiosity and unison.

Institutions are faced with an opportunity to embrace the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action and their own statements supporting Indigenizing higher education. In doing so, and in moving towards modes of delivery and pedagogical approaches that focus on curiosity and exploration, subsequent assessment opportunities shift to an inclusive and equitable space. Through “search methodologies” moments of exploration, contemplation, and being in the world present opportunities for learning. Assessment is less prescriptive and limiting. Research could be assessed for what it reveals about a topic or process because the search is the focus. This does not

negate discoveries that impact the world, but it adds the opportunity for failed attempts, creativity, and asking what is possible without damaging a student's GPA.

This draws me back to my big fall. If that dance performance had been graded through a linear academic grading structure with measurable outcomes, I would have received an F. I was not able to meet the outcome, which was to perform predetermined steps in front of a large crowd. Further, under these parameters, if the implicit goal was a final exam to determine which dancers could be excused, and which dancers could stay, I would have been excused from the cohort. If the performance was assessed through an Indigenized lens that was focused on curiosity, an opportunity is presented to consider the experience, look for the issues, consider the experience of others, make another attempt, and reflect on the whole to create a plan for future execution. Which avenue best serves our students, communities, and future? The avenue that cuts the student down, or the one where the student is nurtured and self-reflective?

It makes me wonder how it would look if students used experiences as self-reflexive fodder to search experiences for points of learning, moments of success, and potential alternatives. How would assessment strategies maintain their purpose if the journey became the destination? What happens to the competitive nature of funding if more students are successful because their self-exploration honours learning?

Story 5. Gwen

I got my first professional tour as a dancer when I was 18 and continued working as a professional dancer for many years in Toronto, Ontario. I had incredible teachers, but the one learning experience that glimmers amongst my memories is my time with Broadway legend Gwen Verdon. I only spent a month with Gwen, but it changed my life forever.

I met Gwen while I was working for a production house called Livent, which was a massive production house in Toronto. It was run by Garth Drabinsky who was later jailed for fraud (Coyle, 2013). When he was at his peak, he was the producer of choice for Andrew Lloyd Webber's Canadian productions.

Marty Bell was the head of casting at the time and came to my college to pitch an opportunity to us. One or two lucky students would have the opportunity to work on an original musical in its pre-Broadway workshop format. During his talk, one thing he said that stuck with me was this: he told us that the performing arts were unusual in that person-to-person transfer of information was the most important part of the process. He said that was how the arts evolved, and that the relationship mattered. I agreed with him wholeheartedly, but my college-self took the words of all professionals as truth. As I have aged, I have learned how rare truth is. I always respected that Marty felt legacy should play a role in the evolution of the arts.

I was interviewed, auditioned, and selected. I arrived at York University for my first day. The moment I walked in the door, a harried Production Assistant (PA) grabbed me, shoved an envelope in my hands and said, "Can you take this to Gwen? She needs it right away. She's in dorm room X." I stammered back, "Gwen… Verdon?" The PA stared at me a moment like I was easily the biggest mistake the production had yet made and said, "Yeah. There's only one Gwen on this show, and that's Gwen Verdon. So GO!" I ran across campus, growing more and more terrified as I went. I kept thinking about how I wanted to appear: I would be nonchalant, gently knock on the door and say, "Here is your envelope Ms. Verdon." No, that was too formal. "Important documents for you, Gwen!" No, too familiar. Before I had the chance to settle on the words, I was standing at her door knocking. I thought my legs might give out.

The door opened a crack, and the most beautiful blue eyes I've ever seen peeked out at me. I heard her voice, muffled behind the door, "Yes?" I held up the envelope and smiled in spite of myself, a huge, loving, starstruck smile and mumbled that I had an envelope for her from production. She threw the door open and hollered, "Well come on in then!" It was at that moment that I realized why she had shielded herself with the door. She was wearing a t-shirt and a pair of underwear, and that was it.

I stepped through the door, unsure of what was the custom when greeting theatre royalty. Maybe I should bow or curtsey or something. But Gwen smiled, pulled out a chair and told me to have a seat. She made me a cup of tea, chatted with me about my trip to York that morning, asked about my dance experience, and I felt as though I had been welcomed by an old friend. This was a person I could trust.

Figure 17. Cast and Crew of A Dancin' Man Surround Gwen Verdon

Photographer: Unknown (Gwen Verdon - In purple scarf, Hannah Celinski - kneeling in front)

Image Description: Cast and crew members of A Dancin' Man surround Gwen Verdon.

That summer, Gwen Verdon became someone I would idolize for life. She was a star, a legend, and she immediately welcomed me into her sphere, her light, and her way of being. When rehearsals started, I realized that she had that effect on everyone. Everyone loved her deeply, admired her greatly, and we worked harder than we thought

possible because she demanded it. It was Gwen who told me to move everyday so I would still have my knees when I was old and grey. I remain committed to physical fitness in part because of her words. Another time, she volunteered to talk with just the few lowly interns for an entire lunch. During that precious time, she told us about her first time on stage, how she loved to train her body, and the importance of holding onto our true selves if we caught a big break.

To highlight the importance of humility, she told us a story about when she starred in Chicago on Broadway. The producer wanted to send a limo to pick her up for the show each night. She declined. She went on to describe in detail that the limo would rob her of her nightly ritual. She took the bus to the theatre every night. There was a seat reserved for her at the front. She would chat with the driver and other passengers and enjoy the company of people before stepping out under the lights to eventually bask in the thunderous applause generated by people who may well have shared the bus trip. It kept her grounded. I was in awe.

My students would eventually hear all the stories Gwen told me. Thanks to her, they also learned the subtle grace of finger movements, and spent hours on the Fosse walk. Their fingers ached from stretching to achieve a true jazz hand, passed from Bob Fosse to his loving wife, then to me, and finally to them. From the smallest of gestures to the power of big kicks and jumps, Gwen had an impact on it all.

But nothing will compare to the afternoon she turned to me unexpectedly in the green room, put her hand on my knee and said, “Bob (Fosse) would have loved you.” It meant so much to me, because it felt as though I was brought into the inner circle, accepted amongst those I admired, and allowed to contribute by working to be the absolute best of myself. She made me feel seen and valued from the moment our eyes met.

Bob Fosse’s legacy continues to resonate with the dance community. A remount of his Broadway show Dancin’ opened on March 19th, 2023, in New York. This will produce a whole new generation of Fosse dancers. Bob and Gwen have both passed away and I have retired from teaching dance, but the dancers who continue to engage with Bob’s work carry the sedimentation that Gwen worked to build up before her death. Just as Marty Bell said, all those years ago when he came to my college, person-to-

person transfer of information is the most important part of the process. To bridge my experiences from that of an aspiring professional to that of a seasoned member of the professional realm, I needed Marty's invitation, Gwen's acceptance, and my own place in the room. I became different. I attacked the warm-up with the urgency of an older dancer, remained in the flow of the warm-up, rehearsal, and classes with the patience of a dedicated realist, and looked for humble options in my contracts to recapture Gwen's spirit.

For example, I did a commercial for a pharmaceutical company in the summer of 2015. We were shooting in the sun and a woman was asked to hold an umbrella over me to keep the sun out of my eyes while we waited between shots. I asked her if I could hold it myself so she could go do something else, and she told me that she wanted the Director to see that she did what she was asked to do, no matter how small, but she thanked me genuinely.

Later that day, at lunch, I went to sit with her and the people she knew. She was the only person that I recognized beyond the guy who was playing my husband. We all got chatting and someone asked me when I had joined the crew. I responded happily, "Oh, just today!" My umbrella friend put her hand on my arm and said to the confused faces, "She's the talent." They all stared silently, and I thought that perhaps I had said something foolish, then one of the lighting guys said, "I have been in this business for more than 20 years, and this is the first time a member of the talent has ever sat with me. You're something else, lady." They fist bumped me, whispered extra directions in my ear, asked other people to adjust my light, and made certain that I was treated as well as possible. Everyone had an enjoyable day of comradery and hard work, but that was Gwen's influence. She continued to alter the experience of others and bring a humble attitude to the arts long after she had passed on.

Voices We Carry

Students look for guidance because they are unsure sometimes. They want to know the right answer. But if we give them the answer, they lack to capacity to think critically about the world around them. What is more important, doing well on quizzes or being able to think for yourself? In that context, ***what role do our histories and our stories play in learning?*** Gwen taught me the power of storytelling because I was interested in what she had to say, and I loved to tell people about her. She gave me

things to think about and stories to tell others that allowed them to think further. What is it to be humble? How do we stay grounded when the world is going entirely our way? If someone just told me the answer, I would not have listened. Gwen told us stories, like the one about being on the bus, and that was how she instructed us. She let us see through her eyes, and we loved her and wanted to be like her, so we worked to figure out what her stories were all about.

Gwen also brought history to life. In school, I found history to be boring. I was famous for sleeping through the first year History of Theatre class at what was then Sheridan College. Listening to somebody tell me about history did not bring it to life for me. Gwen told us stories about the people who created history. Through those stories, I learned a huge amount about the history of theatre. I notice that often, history and stories are connected, but the one telling the story, or the history, is vital. Those voices stay with us. Voices like Gwen's.

The voices we carry with us alter us and help us to make future choices that reflect the values and ideas of those who influence us. I continued to incorporate the lessons Gwen had taught me and to try to live the values she had imparted to me because I valued her opinion, was inspired by her ways of being, and trusted her as an experienced leader. I could hear her voice and see her peering out at me from behind that door when I was engaging with new people in the industry, and later when students came to office hours with frightened eyes and shaking hands. She told me her values and showed me how to behave.

Students in higher education would benefit from voices to carry that foster choices for the betterment of all. The voices previously honoured in academia (often European men with colonial and Eurocentric voices and values) are being reconsidered, and the voices we will choose to introduce to curriculum across education is in a moment of flux, upheaval, questioning, and potential.

As a new canon begins to take shape (William Shakespeare, C.S. Lewis, and Daniel Dafoe being replaced by authors like Thompson Highway, Eden Robinson, and Esi Edugyan), the voices of Indigenous people and people of colour become the voices in our heads and the heads of our students. For too long the dominant voices have been white, colonial, and Eurocentric. These voices claimed agency, storytelling, and

narrative, leaving little space for anything else. By narrowing the voices carried forward to those that (even subversively) reiterated Christian religious beliefs and values, white privilege, and the colonial hierarchy, students carried a synthesized conglomeration of a truth that was framed entirely through this lens. This reiterates, reinforces, and calcifies racism, heteronormativity, and the patriarchy.

Contributing for Change

I am in favour of a new canon, as varying experiences and voices add texture and nuance to the experience of our students. I also support disrupting the education system through the amplification of voices that represent a broad spectrum of experiences, but our country can begin this work at home. In Canada we are responsible for implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, which include the section, Education for Reconciliation. Call to Action #62 (TRC CA 62) reads:

> 62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:
>
> > • Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
> >
> > • Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
> >
> > • Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
> >
> > • Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education. (Ministry of education…)

I would like to first consider the second bullet point, as I work closely with that aspect of TRC CA 62:

> > • Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.

The University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) has a variety of opportunities for instructors to engage with workshops and events to work on decolonizing and indigenizing their

classes, including, The Educators Journey Towards Reconciliation, Weaving Knowledge Systems, and a Territorial Acknowledgement Workshop, but that is different from integrating Indigenous ways of learning. I do note that in the same way a class might be framed by a misguided instructor as Indigenized because the instructor uses storytelling, attending a workshop to check off a service requirement becomes a demonstrative action that harkens earlier discussion of “good intentions”. An instructor acknowledges that decolonization and Indigenization are priorities, so they attend a session, and that is as far as it goes. That does not go far enough to honour Indigenous histories and stories because it is an action that does not necessarily lead to an established undercurrent of prioritizing decolonization and Indigenization as part of the instructor’s lifelong experience.

Teaching dance has taught me that consistent action taken over a prolonged period of time can alter behaviour, so perhaps these small actions contribute change of the much larger whole. But the workshops are not mandatory, so an instructor can avoid attending and ignore it completely if it is not a priority. This is troublesome because of the number of instructors I have heard state that it is impossible to Indigenize their *insert here* (classroom, syllabus, outcomes, assessment, lectures, PowerPoints, etc). The TRC CA 62 states that funding be made available to ensure that these elements are introduced and incorporated across the educational landscape. If instructors do not take advantage of the workshops or see decolonization or Indigenization as imperative, there is a risk to the entire student population, but the Indigenous student population especially.

To properly prepare for UFV’s current Strategic Enrollment Plan (SEM plan), instructors would benefit from taking advantage of opportunities to explore Indigenous stories, authors, and histories, as UFV’s SEM plan focuses on increasing the Indigenous student population. The initiative appears as the number one priority in a number of sections, such as the following:

Stage 1 - Recruitment and Preparation

1. Increase the number of Indigenous students by making UFV their destination of choice:

a) Build relationships with Indigenous communities in order to collaboratively advance the goals of Indigenous peoples.

b) Dedicate seats in programs identified by Indigenous communities as important to their goals.

c) Collaborate with Indigenous communities (UFV, 2022, p. 12).

The Section focused on Student Experience lists the following:

Stage 2 – Student Experience

1. Provide a welcoming and supportive environment for all Indigenous peoples.

a) Ensure curriculum includes Decolonization, Indigenization, UNDRIP, and TRC Calls to Action.

b) Align institutional learning outcomes to Indigenous principles.

c) Ensure every course outline identifies how Decolonization, Indigenization, UNDRIP and TRC Calls to Action are infused into the course.

Framing the enrollment plan through a lens of recruitment and preparation suggests to me that we may act from a colonial perspective and attempt to anticipate what kind of action the institution should take to prepare the space for Indigenous students to visit, instead of looking at feedback from students who can offer their experiences and perspectives on how this might work.

To add to my concern, I had been booked as a speaker for a cohort of Indigenous students just as we revisited this plan. When I met with the students, we discussed their work experience and future goals. One student explained that she had been drawn into the program because it spoke of working with Indigenous ways of being and knowing, but she felt frustrated as her knowledge existed outside the framework of the current system. Her experience speaks to the difficulty we face across our institutions and frameworks.

Employers want employees who are certified, often by universities. Universities use assessment practices that are built to measure success in gathering colonial

information, presented, and assessed through a colonial or Eurocentric lens. How can we certify Indigenous knowledge when the content is not always measurable through colonial assessment practices? If students are not assessed, how can they be certified? If they are unable to be certified, how will they gain employment? How can an institution like UFV honour Indigenous stories and histories by offering credentials to knowledge keepers? Are credentials appropriate?

If the goal is to support Indigenous students so they feel welcome, it would be wise to have the contradictions of the situation be outwardly facing. How can UFV provide a “welcoming and supportive environment” when classes do not include elements that allow Indigenous students (like the one I spoke to) to be successful? The classes will not include such elements unless the instructors engage in the professional development activities to ensure decolonization and Indigenization. It would also be helpful to feature programs working to address the issue, like Hawaii’s Indigenous Master of Public Health Degree, created to ensure that “Public health is … aligned with many Traditional Knowledge practices” (Taualii, M., 2020, p. 167). It offers a potential framing for future programs and gives students options for credentials, if that is what they desire.

Currently, I am teaching a course that guides students through the process of planning for their future careers. The course includes an assignment asking students to reflect on their relationship with the world using The Indigenous Wholistic Framework created by Michelle Pidgeon and based on the four Rs: Respect, Reciprocity, Responsibility, and Relevance (2016, pp. 80-81).

You can see the PDF my students use to mark-up for class, below.

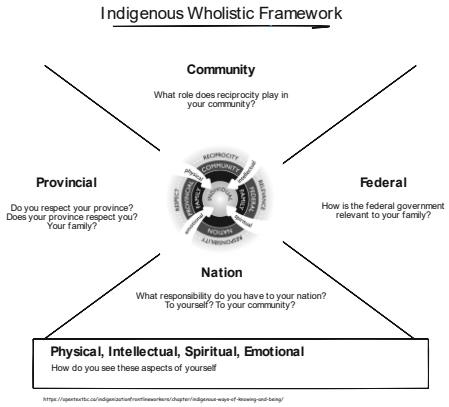

Figure 18. Indigenous Wholistic Framework Assignment

Image: Arts 299, Winter 2023. Source: https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfrontlineworkers/chapter/indigenous-ways-of-knowing-and-being/. Indigenous wholistic framework © M. Pidgeon is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license.

Image Description: Michelle Pidgeon's Wholistic Framework is at the centre of a worksheet for students to consider how they and their family relate to their community, federal government, their nation, and province.

The exercise allows Indigenous students, settler students, and international students to examine their relationships, responsibilities, and engagement with the world around them through physical, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional lenses. It also fosters discussion that allows differences in experience, viewpoint, and beliefs to reveal themselves organically amongst the group. Further, the exercise generates important conversations around self, community, Indigenous perspectives and experiences, and decolonization to open students to the importance of preparing for decolonized and Indigenized workplaces. It also sets their minds for change if this is not already occurring in the workplaces they currently represent. My thinking is that as students move through the updated curriculum and begin to arrive in the workforce, any employers who are slow to begin the process of decolonization will be hiring workers who are ready to move ahead.

Decolonization will not happen quickly, nor will Indigenization. Mitchel et al. articulate that, "being 'decolonized' as a non-Indigenous Settler is not possible; rather,

doing decolonization work is a never-ending process of critically questioning one's actions, through process, beliefs, and behaviours" (2018, p. 355). I pointed to this earlier when I talked about how my dance training was a never-ending pursuit. The world's greatest dancers continue to train daily and work towards an ever-expanding horizon, so it makes sense that all of us can commit to this deeply important pursuit. For some, the task seems so overwhelming or frightening that it is difficult to contemplate. It is with this in mind that I realize my own journey towards Indigenizing pedagogy and decolonizing myself will never be complete.

For myself, I continue to evolve and struggle, make mistakes, to revise and update my pedagogical approach because I continue to learn as I go. I am far from any kind of success, and I recognize that this is part of the journey, but it is necessary to keep going with the work of decolonization and Indigenization. I see a variety of possibilities that may result from this line of action:

a) My students benefit from assessment practices that engage in a wholisitic approach to learning (Pidgeon, 2016, p.81)

b) Learning by journey fosters opportunities for success that do not result in a lack of ability to recover the certification. (Students with low GPAs have trouble recovering.)

c) Incorporation of Indigenous ways of learning, being, and knowing furthers reconciliation by engaging graduates to bring forward what they learn.

A mandate has been set to include voices that enrich our students as future citizens whose decisions will impact the world, and Indigenous knowledge equips students with balanced exposure to multiple perspectives. Our students are fortunate to benefit from the inclusion of multiple perspectives, and it is important for Canada to protect this initiative because not every student is so lucky. Educational reading requirements are being restricted in areas that are increasingly close to home.

For example, the College Board of the United States of America recently announced that it was revising its Advanced Placement (AP) course in African American Studies (Hartocolis & Fawcett, 2023). Part of the revision is to remove "Black authors and scholars associated with critical race theory, the queer experience, and Black

feminism." This means authors like bell hooks and Ta-Nehisi Coates will be removed from the curriculum.

Ta-Nehisi Coates' book *Between the World and Me* (2015) gave me perspective into the life of a Black man, a father, and a friend in a profound manner, and he also opened a pathway for me to begin to critically interrogate the relationship between race and the police. Coates discusses the death of Trayvon Martin, "a slight teenager, hands full of candy and soft drinks" and his friend Prince Jones who was killed by a police officer after being, "followed by a bad cop for three jurisdictions" (p. 105). To cut out voices like Coates' is to maneuver multiple perspectives and tilt the balance away from people of colour, as the general student body will not interrogate the words of Coates in juxtaposition to cases like George Floyd and most recently the murder of Tyre Nichols simply because the College Board has turned student eyes away from the text. If honouring stories and voices was centred, how am I to interpret the removal of authors like bell hooks?

In addition, if texts are removed from the curriculum, then what is identified to remain must also be reviewed, as the implicit messaging can be heavily flawed. For example, when I was young, I was taught that Shakespeare was Canada's poet. My school went to Stratford Festival to see plays, my family often went, and our entire community saw attending theatre in Stratford, Ontario as a glorious occasion to dress up, speak in your most formal tones, and engage in enlightened discussions about the plays afterwards over tea and cookies. My mother adored Shakespeare, and I developed an early appreciation for the pageantry of theatre and the intricacies of Shakespeare's works. I believed that Shakespeare was a force of nature who told stories that captured the essence of every person's experience, that he was the voice of the world.

It was not until I was in my late thirties that I was exposed to Indigenous Theatre, stories, and histories which made me ask questions. (So many questions!) I wanted to know why some of the stories seemed familiar, why Indigenous stories were not framed alongside parallel Christian stories, and why was an entire theatre company that focused on Shakespeare plopped in the middle of Ontario, Canada? If Shakespeare was from England, why was he Canada's poet?

I had never doubted the truth as I had been taught it, never interrogated the obvious oddities, or paused to consider there may be more to the issue. But then I read *Rez Sisters*, *Monkey Beach, Baby Blues, Son of a Trickster, and Shell Shaker*, and the questions flowed on. If I had never encountered an opportunity to question my knowledge, I would have sat with the same misinformation forever. This is what could be lost if we do not work to satisfy the Calls to Action. We should observe what is unfolding in the United States of America carefully, as Coates' book came out in 2015 and now, in 2023, nothing seems to have changed. Canada has the opportunity to do better.

I learned the power of storytelling from Gwen, and I hope my students continue to learn that same lesson from a wide variety of insightful and relevant authors and storytellers. This is not a call for banning non-Indigenous stories, it is a reminder that in honouring Indigenous stories and histories, voices that have been historically (and recently) marginalized must be equally available and established within our curriculum. In honouring Indigenous histories and stories, we are clarifying that implicit messaging by colonially minded authors, and stories that centre Christianity, do not satisfy expectations for our educational system at all levels. Making space for a variety of voices is equitable, satisfies a broad spectrum of audience demand, and ensures students are exposed to a breadth of stories, voices, and values.

Story 6. Martha

This story explores connection to the past, spirituality, and perseverance. In 1998, I visited New York City to dance at Martha Graham's original studio before they tore it down. I was in heaven during class, as there were company dancers, current students, and international visitors from around the world in the studio that day. I immediately found a willing partner to cross the floor with, she smiled, waved, and gestured to the spot next to her so we could fly across the room together for 30 thrilling minutes. At the end of the class, the instructor suggested I take a few moments to spend with the floor. I was a little confused, but laid down where she pointed, and as she left me alone in the room she said, "Martha, Baryshnikov, Nureyev… they all danced on these boards." Alone, as I reached into space, I realized she was asking me to feel them there, to be aware that this space was mine as much as it had been theirs, and that this exceptional level of greatness denied none who looked to commune with it. I was not an overly spiritual person at the time, and always struggled with how to react in such moments, but I was so tired that I allowed myself to lie in that space and to do just as my host had proposed.

Figure 19. Hannah Celinski at the Entrance of Martha Graham's School of Dance

Photographer: Lizzie Kurtz

Image Description: Hannah Celinski stands next to a sign that reads, Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance.

An invitation into Sacred Space

When I was finished, one of the dancers minding the desk offered to take me on a tour. The dancers knew that the building would soon be leveled, and they were desperate to share what they had learned about the venue with as many people as possible before the demolition began. She showed me the studios, the garden, and a tree. The tree had been planted by Martha many years before. At some point in the past, a fence had been erected. Instead of the fence determining where the tree would grow and how, the tree absorbed it. The tree grew with the fence and engulfed it as time went on. My guide told me that Martha loved this tree because of how resilient and innovative it was.

Figure 20. Hannah Celinski and Lizzie Kurtz with Martha Graham's Tree

Photographer: Unknown

Image Description: Hannah Celinski and Lizzie Kurtz sit at the base of a tree that has grown through a wire fence.

I've kept that thought with me, and it has inspired adaptation and a continuous search for what is possible when a barrier appears. A decision was made to establish borders. The tree was subject to a division, imposed upon it, to force it to stay on its side of the fence. Instead of following the border or allowing an exterior entity to determine its future, the tree reminded the fence, and those who see it, that the land belongs to the tree and not to the fence or whatever entity erected the fence. The tree grew into the fence and made it part of the tree.

I had three epiphanies from my time at the studio. First, my connection to protocol deepens when I have access to a nuanced and generative legacy. The floor spoke to me, through quiet whispers I could feel and gentle waves of energy that washed through me. This floor had been graced by so many monumental talents in the past, then me in the present, and it anticipated future dancers to come, though the future for that floor would be short and it seemed to be aware of it. Much the way the dancer at the desk was eager to share her knowledge, the floor was alive with energy and willing to engage fully with me.

Second, time and my relationship to it are deeply entrenched in dance, teaching, and learning. Time ceases to be measurable when I dance. My body moves with its own understanding of time, and I talk more about this later in this section. In addition, my teaching and learning both connect to time through both the past and the future, in that my teachers, and their teachers before them, are present when I am teaching. My learners are experiencing the same. This passing of knowledge and experience is only deepened through relationship, protocol, and a realization of the internal energies at work when we teach and learn.

Third, through the experience of being on the studio floor, followed by my respect for the tree's evolution, I was made aware of the way the tree resisted an attempt by its neoliberal surroundings to confine it by limiting its future trajectory. The tree existed outside of that framework. It grew as it knew it could. It grew as it knew it should. It grew in the way it might have hundreds of years ago, before cement came to the streets, and buildings were erected to be one day felled. The tree saw past the present and continued its journey as though existing outside of time. I am unable to say it was the tree's proximity to the energy of the studio and the love, depth of community, and creativity that was erupting nearby. But it does make me wonder about that.

When I think of the tree now, I am reminded to be creative and innovative. When a fence or barrier is erected in my work, I am to absorb it. Our current predicament with COVID-19 has brought back memories of my time at Martha's studio time and again. A global barrier was erected quite suddenly. As instructors like me look to connect with students, I am reminded to show them the images of the tree, share the story with them, and encourage them to move forward in a good way. I lean on the gifts I received at Martha's studio and the surreal tree that thrived out back that allowed me to feel the past, present, and future simultaneously.

Spirituality and Protocol, and Bending Time

Internally, I experienced reverberations of the personal journey that had brought me to a place of realizations about protocol, time, and growth. I also felt a deep appreciation for the moment I was experiencing and the power of momentum propelling me forward. In addition, I was reminded of the power of the class I had taken and how Martha's hand was now present on my technique as a brighter, more defined presence. I had previously trained with dancers a little removed from her personal guidance, but that day would prove to resonate with my students for years to come because I was changed by opening myself up while lying on the floor.

I wanted to share this experience with my classes. How would I articulate this experience to my students? ***How can I honour spirituality and protocol in higher education?*** Would they understand? Would they be interested in hearing me talk about being close to dancers from the past through the floor? Perhaps some students would be interested. What if some were and some were not? ***How do I incorporate multiple ways of being and knowing?*** If some respond and others do not, how do I invite those who do not into the conversation?

Protocol was part of dance for me, but only in so far as I was told to make it so. I was told that I should do certain things at certain times, follow the flow of the class, and be considerate of other dancers. I did what I was told and taught my students to do the same. But the experience at Martha's studio brought the gravity of the protocols of Modern dance alive for me. Yes, things happened a certain way and in a predetermined order, but the honour bestowed on the space, and the reverence with which the protocols were performed showed me a new way of experiencing the protocols and I related it to the spiritual connection the room offered to those who stepped inside. I had

no experience with sacred space beyond churches and graveyards. I thought church was boring and uninviting and graveyards were special so the magnitude of the potential of marking protocol had never dawned on me.

The other unique aspect of this experience related to time. I had already developed a personal appreciation for the flexibility of time. I believe that time can be bent. I experience it when I dance. There are moments that hang in the air, outside of the clock. I can adjust my pinkie finger, add a slight accent with my hair, my knee, my eyes, and it also allows me to complete a seemingly impossible amount of movement in a short amount of time. But not all dancers can do it. Some push the steps and phrasing through, and others are unable to fully complete any one movement during the faster sections, but the dancers all around me at Martha's studio breathed as one. We exhaled in giant swooshes that often make dancers uncomfortable. But not here. This was part of the protocol, part of the purpose, and the result was an extended bending of time that went on and on.

I could see how my spiritual awareness when I was dancing was disconnected when I was not dancing. I saw them as separate when they were not. Time could be bent outside of dancing, I just had to be able to think about myself as the common thread, and not movement. It was a state that allowed me to exist in the room, in the floor, in those around me. It was minute and it was massive. If I saw time outside of a linear structure, then ***how might I incorporate Indigenous ways of observing time in higher education? If time to think became part of the institution as a whole, how would this benefit faculty and students?*** It took a long time before I met anyone else who understood this experience.

Women Who Bend Time

In 2010, I produced the MetroCan Champions Gala to celebrate the completion of the Olympic Village. Olympic silver medalist in ski jumping, Veronica Brenner, was one of the speakers. During the show, I found her in the green room relaxing, and we struck up a conversation. We got talking about performing, and I mentioned how sometimes when I danced, I could feel every cell in my body. I could decide to adjust my fingertips as I moved through intricate steps, as though I nowhere and everywhere all at once. She leaned in and got excited as she said, "Do you ever feel like everything slows, to the point where you can look around and consider the moment, as it is happening? I

used to go into a jump and feel as though I was having a conversation with my trainer on the ground as the jump unfolded. I had time to see him, adjust, check for confirmation, and adjust further." I had never heard anyone describe it so perfectly. She was beyond excited and said she had tried to have this conversation with other athletes, but never found anyone who had similar experiences with time.

I have thought about this conversation many times over the years. I have had students who could do it, too. One student in particular, Kaili Bright, was doing it when she was around 10 years old. It was so clear to me what she was doing, and as she has aged, that gift has allowed her to become an absolute standout in her field. I am including a link to her Instagram account. The footage captures her performing the specifics of bending time. She is in no hurry, manages to get to the end of each movement at the exact moment she should start the next, fitting impossible nuance and texture into the movement as the routine unfolds, you can find it on her Instagram handle (hellokaili). I taught Kaili when she was a little girl, and I could see her potential shining straight through her even when she was young. She is a brilliant dancer, and I feel so fortunate to have danced with her. And now, she is the leader, teacher, mentor, and inspiration I told her mother she would become, all those years ago.

One other aspect of Kaili's approach to dance may have come from her Hawaiian heritage. She studied hula before she explored other styles of dance. For the purposes of this project, it is worth noting that Hawaiian and Indigenous dance were both banned by colonizers. Hawaiian dance was deemed to be "a heathen practice", but continued in secret in Hawaii, much the same way that Indigenous people kept dancing in secret as a form of resistance (Misaki, 2021 p. 46). I know a little about hula, because my mother-in-law has lived in Hawaii for 30 years and dances hula weekly with her Kumu (teacher) and hãlau (school).

Figure 21. Marlene Celinski's Kūpuna Hula Hālau

Photographer: Unknown (Marlene Celinski-Middle Row, 4th from the right.)

Image Description: The Kūpuna Hula Hālau surrounds their Kumu, Keala Ching

My mother-in-law may not be one to bend time while she is dancing, but her personal engagement with Hawaiian culture has instead contributed to her spiritual engagement with the earth, its non-human inhabitants, and her fellow humans. One of the people who has had a massive impact on her personal journey is her Kumu, Keala Ching (pictured above, front row, third from the right.), a respected and beloved member of the Kona community.

The last hula show I attended was in November 2022. It featured a dance that made some of the Kūpunas (elders) nervous (my mother-in-law included). Realizing this, Kumu made a sudden decision and encouraged a young girl of about 8 or 9 to come up and lead the group. She was clearly delighted to be invited up and did a beautiful job. Kumu then asked the audience to offer her expressions of thanks for her engagement and willingness to participate. He explained the community should show support for her willingness to participate and reward her for her generosity. People ran from all over the venue (locals, tourists, family, and friends) to offer her a few dollars. She was standing there with this wad of cash at the end, beaming up at him.

I remember thinking that she would always volunteer from then on. The danger for me was that she would connect service to financial gain, but the way she looked up

at him suggested to me as an observer that all she would remember was that Kumu had seen her, trusted her to lead, and arranged for her service to be recognized. She was honoured not for a job she did, but for her service to the community.

The heart of the moment and connection enjoyed by those in attendance was multi-pronged. The young girl was asked to take on something intimidating and public, but as a way of supporting the elders. She engaged despite any nerves she may have had. The leader of the event celebrated her to the community and the community responded by celebrating her further. There was love and happiness flowing through the crowd, and everyone was giving and supporting in one way or another. The focus of the dance is to celebrate the ways of being in Hawaii that fund such community engagement and belonging. This is taking place through dance, but the dancing is not the focus. And because the dancing is spreading a message of love and community, the dancing itself becomes beautiful and spiritual. From that place, time can be bent easily, as the moment, the purpose, and the experience exist outside of the parameters of physically measured time.

A Second Invitation into Sacred Space

Kumu is also an exquisite dancer. His fluidity and expression radiate for miles. He is so beloved that a mural is being painted at the Kona airport to honour his work in the community. He will be the first thing you see upon arrival, welcoming you to Kona.

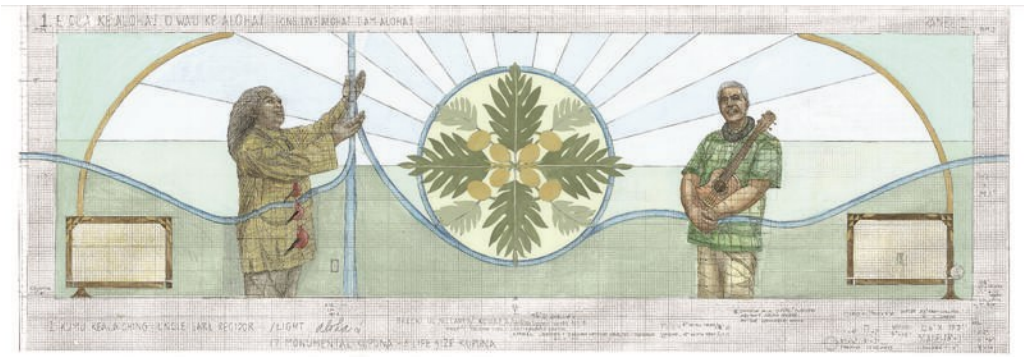

Figure 22. Mural Plan for Kona Airport Arrivals

https://www.calleyoneill.com/KonaAirportMural.html

Image Description: Plans and details for mural at the Kona, Hawaii airport. Mural features Kumu Keala Ching with his arms raised in greeting, and Earl Regidor holding a ukulele.

I have attended several shows over the years and have been invited to attend hula classes with Kumu. I had taken hula at a Hawaiian resort during a convention and was disappointed when all we did was wave our arms and make little houses and birds with our fingers. It made me think of line-dancing on the cruise ship, so I was not expecting much from the Kūpuna class. Instead, my attendance resulted in a deep respect for the protocols of hula and Kumu's classes. Much the same way that the protocols for ballet classes vary according to the instructor, Hula classes also subscribe to varying foci, methodologies, and protocols (Misaki, 2021 p. 46). Kumu subscribes to a reverent approach that is grounded in storytelling and chanting. In addition, the setting is incredible.

One class took place outside at the Captain Cook monument. Captain Cook arrived in Hawaii in 1778 and was killed in 1779 at Kealakekua Bay (the location of the monument). His arrival signaled the beginning of colonization of the Hawaiian Islands. The monument that was erected in his honour was described in an 1874 edition of the Honolulu Gazette as, "twenty-seven feet in height … stand[ing] on an artificially leveled platform of lava" (Captain Cook's Monument, 1875). The article also mentioned that the "expense of the erection [of the monument] is partly born by subscribers in England." The monument was meant to recognize Cook as a great explorer but instead stands now as a marker of colonization.

The Big Island of Hawaii is covered in lava rock, and the monument's location is no exception. I found it of note that the funding for this memorial to a colonizer was subsidized by Europeans. It stands as an example of settler presence, in stark contrast to the beauty of the surrounding area and the richness of the coral mere feet from the monument. I have been in that water and seen beautiful fish, (puffers, clown fish, Moorish idols, yellow tangs, and a school of dolphins). But even more telling was the alteration of the terrain around the site to accommodate the monument's placement. The article calls it "artificially leveled … lava". That took effort and work, but it also took stubbornness or brute force. Perhaps both. The desire to alter the terrain and mention it

as a feature of the monument's placement, all speaks to violence done to the land and the people in the name of colonization.

At the start of Kumu's class, we were gathered on a large patch of grass where we could clearly see the monument. We sang songs to the Hawaiian ancestors and danced and chanted. Kumu slowly detailed what each movement expressed, explained what story we were telling, and who we were speaking to. My stepdaughter, her boyfriend, and I were also invited to tell the story. Kumu taught us the movement and the words and then trusted us to engage with appropriate gravity. It was a humbling experience. We were white settlers from Canada, with direct lineage to Europe, invited to address Hawaiian ancestors, at a monument erected by other settlers to honour the man who instigated the colonization of our hosts.

The invitation was a monumental gift. We were viewed as part of the practice and included in the voices reaching back into the past. The spirits present to hear our voices and sense how the energy and air was altered by our movement included the ancestors to whom we sang, but also included Captain Cook. I return to Sarah Hunt's article "Ontologies of Indigeneity: The Politics of Embodying a Concept" (2014), where she explains the experience of attending and dancing at her first potlatch: "There was a productive confusion in this way of learning, one which would not have been possible had I been told in a linear way how to dance at a potlatch" (p. 30).

It was similar to my experience at Martha Graham's studio. There was the same gathering ambiance and feeling of one another as a committed whole that permeated our attempts to keep up. And when we stumbled, we were brought along by the group and drawn into "productive confusion" that supported our personal and embodied exploration of the steps and their relationship to the words and the setting. It also brings to mind Robert Davidson's carving of the second half of the mask. In the hula class, we were the new initiates, invited to explore the protocol through the safety of the support of an experienced community. The support allowed us access to a deeper, richer, opportunity to be in the moment in its entirety instead of being distracted by concerns over inconsequential errors.

In experiencing hula as her movement foundation, Kaili started with storytelling and how story connects to movement, expression, and embodiment. She was also

supported in her learning and part of a community that honoured protocols and spirituality. Her first exposure to the relationship between the teacher and student was within the community who view the potential for such relationships as thus:

> The relations between kumu hula and their students, and relations among students, manifest spaces where transmission of diverse intangible knowledge occurs, such as dance movements, cultural and political values, history, rituals, local vegetation, language, and identities. Their shared experience ranges from celebrating a student's birthday to gathering plant materials for their costumes in the valley. Thus, hula is a site where "immediacy of the indigenous body" is lived and experienced, not only through the dance movements but also in living moments of life together. (Misaki, 2021, p.56)

The description above is interesting as it brings dance, students, and instructors into alignment with the Haida principles of learning and how they reflect my experiences, beginning with strong relationships that extend beyond dancing, while bolstering the overall essence of the movement. Authentic experiences that reach into the world and how we relate to it and one another, make space for curiosity and exploration of the world through dance. In addition, observation reaches past my previous considerations for its potential and into the ether where "intangible knowledge occurs."

Experience is shared amongst the community, and although recognition and encouragement of strengths is not explicitly stated, one can assume from the quality of the interactions in the description that it is an implicit outcome. Finally, dance and the "immediacy of the indigenous body" honours histories and stories, spirituality and protocol as an evolving experience reaching through time but grounded in the present. And all of this is made possible through the power of the minds that resisted at a time where assimilation was difficult to avoid. It is powerful and incredible.

Kaili trained amongst all of this powerful energy with people who bent time while they happened to be dancing. They were not dancers who bent time through dancing. It is interesting to ponder the possible connections that result. Perhaps when a student studies a pursuit that expands their definition and experience of time, their perception of time allows for flexibility I have yet to even consider. But my view on time has been fortified and bolstered through exploration of Indigenous perspectives that view time as non-linear. I had trouble with that before the book *Shell Shaker,* by LeAnne Howe (2001), altered my perspective.

Seeing Time as Non-Linear

I understood that Indigenous people have a deep and meaningful relationship with the earth, but when I read Howe's book in a graduate course, the description of life and death included the relationship between these elements of being human and the land. When the character, Shakbatina, passes away, her body is laid out and prepared for death, but also to "announce to the animal world that a woman of the people was coming" (2001, p. 106). I understood the full meaning of this statement when her daughter later states:

> Did you know my mother's flesh was food? Her blood was drink? Alive, we use the animals. The animal is consumed. In death, the people are consumed by the animals. … we are life everlasting! *Filanchi okla*, we will pick your bones after you are gone. (p. 132)

This all takes place in a green meadow where the deer are comfortable and enjoy the best grass. Deer killed for food in this place are honoured, thanked, and every part of the deer is used or consumed by the people. When their people die, the meadow is where they are buried, to provide nutrients and love to the soil as thanks for the sustenance the meadow provides. In that way, the best grass grows in this meadow, so the deer continue to visit, the people continue to be fed, and the cycle perpetuates.

I could not conceive of non-linear time, truly, until I read this passage. The moment I saw the past, present, and future, unified and intertwined through the relationships of the life that is nurtured, sustained, and eventually rejuvenated, was the moment I realized how the past, present, and future could be happening simultaneously. It is freeing to consider this fluidity around time and allows me to accept my own experiences as reverberating backwards and forwards. I had previously taught to learn from the past and that my actions had repercussions for the future, but there was no way to articulate it to me in a way that brought an awareness of the possibilities until I read that passage, and as a result, I consider time in a different light. I see the importance of reflection and consideration. The benefit to pausing to contemplate information that has recently come to you allows you to feel backwards and forwards to sense how the new information sits within you. The potential for bending time to make space to think.

Higher education is not currently set up for such freedom to sit and think. Blocks of time are arranged to maximise room use. Some institutions, primarily older ones, run

on a schedule that "…is related historically to agricultural cycles: students would study for two terms and then work in the fields during the summer" (Johnson, 2010). As with the demise of elbow-patched, brandy drinking philosophers, students having the opportunity to save up, go to school for a year, and then take summer jobs to pay for the following year, have all but disappeared. Students are working part-time or full-time, some with multiple jobs, the entire time they are in school. And many newer institutions run on the trimester schedule where the year is divided into three semesters. This allows students to potentially complete their studies faster, but if they are in school full-time and working, where is their time to think, contemplate, or consider the material before them?

By boxing students into square rooms, with constructed and linear times, resolution expectations, and laddered systems to continue students along the trajectory, the colonial framework holds students and instructors to a schedule that clashes against Indigenous ways of considering time. Riyad Shahjahan has argued that time is a colonial structure imposed on students in higher education, and that "As they navigate and occupy colonial time, our bodies become 'things' to be serviced toward the ends of production and efficiency" (2015, p. 494). Shahjahan further argues that to return to an embodied learning pedagogical approach, taking time that "entails slowing down and 'being lazy'" (p. 494). This means that Higher education is at a point where those who consider its merits and functions are calling for behaviour that is perceived as laziness to counteract the current fixation with 'hustle culture', which sees non-stop productivity and contribution to a self-inflicted capitalistic personhood as successful, powerful, and desirable.

This is where time, linearity, structure, and productivity collide and form a monstrous cement wall that thwarts our attempts at decolonization. Consider the implications of being seen as slow within current academic structures. When one is slow, they are seen as unable to keep up with the pace of the course and considered to be cognitively deficient or not intelligent (p. 490). But this simply feeds into a Eurocentric view of time as linear and education as existing along a paced trajectory to achieve academic goals. If academic goals or outcomes are framed within a linear path meant to move students along as one, how can students experience the material for themselves and fully engage with the material?

By encouraging an embodied exploration of one's thoughts on the matter, and including time and space to do so, students have access to alternate paths to knowing that realign the experience of learning with the body and mind, dislocating it from the constraints of time and productivity within a particular semester. Shahjahan suggests allowing space for "being lazy' to interrupt colonial framing of outcomes as achievable in particular ways and at particular times, as:

> "…a 'less is more' approach would challenge the notion of 'learning outcomes' that presume linear notions of time. The latter would be a contradictory approach to the non-linear notion of time approach because 'un-learning' is more important. A non- linear notion of time denotes non-duality—the movement of time that is empty of the need for a result". (p. 497)

This is not to say that there is no intention for the student and no pathways prescribed, but for decolonization to occur, rethinking of fundamental aspects of our own perception of education is required. We have to recognize and name the cement wall to avoid speaking the messaging of decolonization while ignoring the obvious irony of the rigid systems that house the messenger.

At a recent meeting we were discussing Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs). When my group was chatting, I brought everyone's attention to the tension between the wording and our actions. We struggled with how to articulate our concerns. When it was time to report out, the first person to speak was an Indigenous scholar who said, "My group thinks we should burn the whole thing to the ground and start over". I cheered. There was a time when I would have cheered with vigor. But now my cheering has matured a little. I know we are unable to dismiss certain aspects of the ILOs because of the colonial container that houses the institution.

Through the tension I experience when considering the colonial framing of our institutions of higher education, I am drawn back to remaining curious. If the Haida principles highlight curiosity, then perhaps through curiosity I can look for what is possible within the aspects that are currently too rigid to change. If I look for cracks in the foundation of the container, I can spot places where the system is weak and seeking change. In these cracks and spaces, I can force a wedge, speak to alternative assessment practices, push for inclusive language and accessible pedagogical

approaches that feature Indigenous ways of being and knowing and amplify voices like that of my colleague who was asking for real change.

This way of approaching both the colonial structure and a colonial framing of time as a commodity and measure of production in higher education, is one focused on the long game. Focus on one crack, push for reflective practice as part of our pedagogical focus to enable students to take time to sit and ponder and consider their own thoughts. Even if it is five minutes to start, the embodied experience has begun. By playing the long game and working in the cracks, the cement wall can be dismantled by those who built it, taking the burden off those who have been confined by its walls. This is a new way of bending time.

Révérence

“Bow or curtsey” (abt.org).

Giving Thanks

At the end of a ballet class, the students and instructor perform a series of bows and curtseys. By offering respectful thanks and an acknowledgement of the part played by the students, the instructor, and the accompanist, the class is closed with everyone gathering in a form of community. The instructor is part of the moment, and everyone looks to one another with earnest appreciation of the effort put into the class. It is a moment of unison and appreciation.

Onward

> *We gather our minds to thank all the enlightened teachers who have come to inspire and help the people throughout the ages. When we forget the Original Teachings and how to live in harmony, they remind us of the way we were instructed to live as people. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to these caring Teachers.*
>
> *Now our minds are as one. (Alfred,2005, p. 16)*

I offer these two ways of drawing something to a close as a way of marking where the journey of this thesis has taken me as the author/subject, and the reader as recipient of this work, and as a way to signal that within each setting (dance, and Indigenous teachings) the notion of 'reverence' for learning, living, being, and doing in community, with and for others, is an important and cherished value. These two 'protocols’ also signal a way of moving 'onward' from where this thesis leaves off. I want to offer a brief review of where this work has taken me, where it has brought me to, and where it compels me to go from here.

This work has guided me to consider my teaching experience as vital to my present position, and foundational to my future as a curriculum designer. I now appreciate how my teaching practice has benefitted immensely from my time as a dance instructor, because it allowed for consideration of the practical aspects of instruction while inadvertently exposing the importance of relationships, reciprocity, and belief in the learner. These experiences have not culminated in a polished teacher, but instead, in an instructor who remains curious about education, students, and all aspects of instruction.

Earlier, I framed dance as a never-ending pursuit. This pre-formed lens has amplified my desire to evolve and resulted in stamina for change and innovation. As Mitchel et al. articulate that, "'being "decolonized' as a non-Indigenous Settler is not possible; rather, doing decolonization work is a never-ending process of critically questioning one's actions, through process, beliefs, and behaviours." (2018, p. 355) I see my previous experiences as funding the daily pursuit of decolonization and Indigenization as part of my life-long learning. Through this work I have had opportunity to question myself, observe my previous experiences through new eyes, and identify touchpoints that brought me to the place I am passing through today, on my way to further growth.

It has also become apparent that without various invitations to participate in communities that embraced my presence as a learner, I would never have known the joy of being part of a unified whole, known what it is to be present, or lifted from my early understandings of time and space. I now see that these opportunities always included histories, but it was the Haida principles that allowed me to attempt this work. And I am deeply appreciative of the glimpse into the power of the mind, especially since I sense the incredible potential of my students, and I desire for them to emerge from the shadow of the past few years to flourish.

In the present, I see the realization that for decolonized and Indigenized pedagogy to be fully realized, strong relationships that support trust, reciprocity, and an exciting future for every student at the institution will further national efforts. In addition, the institution will benefit from offering students authentic experiences that are bolstered through relationships based on creation of a safe space that promotes curiosity. I am unable to control the university as a whole, but I can commit to these principles for my own classes and focus on consistently revisiting my own teaching practice to ensure that I am continuing to consider the potential for my classes and students to engage in authentic experiences that feed their own individual journeys and life-long learning.

I am also in the process of choreographing a piece that is set to an original composition that was created for this project by Canadian composer, Dave Genn. The piece will engage many of the dancers mentioned in my thesis, and I am looking to represent the growth I have experienced in pursuing this project but expressed through movement. The piece will also capture the nature of relationships, and the process of

life-long learning, through movement. The music can be heard by viewing the appendix file.

Canada is working to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and my own institution is expressing explicit dedication to decolonization. This is positive. This has potential. My own contribution to realizing this potential will directly result from a specific gift I have received through this project, and that is patience. Even if I have a clear vision of what things might look like, the world will not change completely, tomorrow. So, I have to draw inspiration from the little hummingbird and take one drop at a time to help quench the fire. That will also allow time for Indigenous people to make decisions about what the future looks like, to examine the terrain, and confer. My job is to decolonize one drop at a time.

In all this, I have enjoyed the journey to this point, and I look forward to continuing onward.

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Appendix A.

Walking in the Steps of Many

Creator/Choreographer:

Hannah Celinski

Description:

Short film capturing nuances of shared knowledge between instructor, student, and colleagues through movement.

Filename:

etd22719-hannah meghan-celinski-Hannah’s Thesis Dance.mp4

Composer/Pianist:

Dave Genn

Description:

Music composed for this project.

Filename:

etd22719-hannah meghan-celinski-THE GLASS CASE.mp3