

**shamanic historical consciousness:  
retu(r)ning to the *El*emental as an  
indigenous education**

by

**marie diane caroline lefebvre**

**<Grandmother Dancing Thunder>**

M.Ed., Simon Fraser University, 2010

B.Ed., Simon Fraser University, 2006

B.A. (Archaeology), Simon Fraser University 2005

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## approval

**Name:** marie diane caroline lefevre  
<Grandmother Dancing Thunder>

**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

**Title of Thesis:** *shamanic historical consciousness: retu(r)ning to the  
Ellemental as an indigenous education*

**Examining Committee:** **Chair:** Dr. Michael Ling  
Senior Lecturer

**Dr. Ann Chinnery**  
Senior Supervisor  
Associate Professor

---

**Dr. Sean Blenkinsop**  
Supervisor  
Associate Professor

---

**Dr. Rudy Reimer**  
Supervisor  
Assistant Professor

---

**Dr. Celeste Snowber**  
Internal /External Examiner  
Associate Professor

---

**Dr. Manulani Aluli-Meyer**  
External Examiner  
Professor  
Department of Education  
University of Hawai'i

---

**Date Defended/Approved:** January 19, 2017

## abstract

In Canada, as in much of the western world, history has traditionally been seen as the rational pursuit of knowledge of the past. More recently, however, historians have taken a historical consciousness (HC) approach, which emphasizes the significance of memory. Scholars of HC pursue their work in different ways—typically described as cognitive HC and critical HC. For the purposes of this thesis, I was especially interested in the intersubjective relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people—how we were relating to each other both past and present, and how the past impacts how the present is being negotiated. As a scholar of French and Mohawk ancestry, I view history, or *histoire* in French, as synonymous with story, or better yet, someone’s story to which I am related. Thus, I questioned if the two current HC approaches provided a sufficient understanding of history, if the attention was not on those whose history it was we were disseminating, particularly, when the *other* was obfuscated, obscured, or omitted altogether from the historical narrative and/or landscape. Drawing on Thomas King’s idea that if you want a different ethic, tell a different story, I propose a shamanic historical consciousness as a way of expanding upon the two former HC strands, and in a way that falls outside many academic conventions with its emphasis on creating alliances *with* and not *for* those who have passed before us. Shamanic historical consciousness moves away from a dependence solely on rationalist principles (where reason, and not experience, is viewed as the root of knowledge); it looks to wampum belts—mnemonic devices that recorded history—as a way of knowing/seeing/reading the world. Shamanic historical consciousness dwells in the spaces of obscurity, affording the world of the apparition, the shadow, the reverse of reality. It requires a decentring of the I (or ego), and introduces a proto-ethical *o/Other* relationality, as a means for (re)thinking Canadian history and Indigenous education. But most of all, my thesis asks that you allow yourself to sway in the breeze like the tall grass in the field, that you allow the winds to unclutter centuries of colonial thought, and allow the wind to whisper ancestral stories that have laid dormant for too long.

**Keywords:** indigenous education; historical consciousness; wampum belts; Emmanuel Levinas; Canadian history; ethics

## dedication

pour *Elle*

We need to haunt  
the house of history  
and listen anew  
to the ancestors' wisdom

< Maya Angelou

## Creatrix—a Thanks Giving Address

This spirit, this power of intelligence, has many names and many emblems. She appears on the plains, in the forests, in the great canyons, on the mesas, beneath the seas. To her we owe our very breath, and to her our prayers are sent blown on pollen, on corn meal, planted into the earth on feather-sticks, spit onto the water, burned and sent to her on the wind. Her variety and multiplicity testify to her complexity: she is the true creatrix, for she is thought itself, from which all else is born. She is the necessary precondition for material creation, and she, like all of her creation, is fundamentally female—potential and primary. She is also the spirit that informs right balance, right harmony, and these in turn order all relationships in conformity with her law.

< Paula Gunn Allen (1986, p. 13-14)

Grandmothers, grandfathers, ancestors, allies, little ones on their way, Creatrix, this is Grandmother Dancing Thunder, thank you:

- for journeying with me and guiding me along the path.
- for having selected me to write this story that was long in the making.
- for providing me with the words and beads to do so.
- for the visions, dreams, and the stamina to persevere.
- for the thunder beings, the great spirits in the sky, that were present at my birth and whose name I carry.
- for father sky and (m) *Other* earth, for keeping me grounded.
- for the water, that sustains me.
- for the fire that provides warmth, sustenance, and regeneration.
- for the voices of the four winds, the instructions of the Creatrix.
- for the sun, the stars, and the moon: our source of life, where we come from, and the feminine energy.
- for the four-legged, the finned, the crawlers, and the winged ones that shared their teachings, especially those from the wolf, the bat and the bear.
- for the insects, amphibians, and reptiles for keeping the cycles going, especially my spirit animal the bee.
- for the trees, the plants, the grasses, the flowers, seeds, grains, nuts, and pollen for nourishing me.
- for the sacred medicines, so that I could send my prayers up into the universe.
- for the three sisters: beans, squash and corn for feeding the generations.
- for showing me the path to the *Elle*mental through the wampum belts.
  
- for the seven generations before me and for those who will follow.
- for the Coast Salish people on whose land I have received my teachings.
- for the Elders who helped when family was far.
- for my ancestors, my parents, my children, and grandchildren, who are my guiding force.
- for *Lui*.
- for my siblings who played a part in who I have become.

for my supervisor—a kindred spirit—and my committee members from Turtle Island  
and from the Big Water.  
for all those who helped me along the way to understand the various perspectives in  
the world.  
for those who were put on my path along the way, both friend and foe, in order that I  
may learn.  
for my ceremonial community, the Sun Dance Chief, the fire keepers, and my  
ceremonial brothers and sisters.  
for my health, my ability to get the task done, especially when at times the  
challenges seemed insurmountable.

thank you  
thank you            thank you  
thank you

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## **list of acronyms**

ABCDE	Association of British Columbia's Deans of Education
ASC	altered states of consciousness
BC	British Columbia, Canada
BCED	British Columbia Ministry of Education
DW	double wampum
FCS	first contact sensibility
HC	historical consciousness
IE	Indigenous education
IRS	Indian Residential School
SD	Sun Dance
SFU	Simon Fraser University
SHC	shamanic historical consciousness
SL	Sweat Lodge
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
VTS	Vanishing Twin Syndrome
WB	wampum belt
WIPC:E	World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education

## glossary

art/i/fact	The art/i/fact is a term that I coined that stems from my relation to the artifact, where the “I” is position between the art (the skill I acquire as a result of learning/practicing from the <i>Other</i> a new way of knowing/seeing/reading the world) and the fact (recounting of a story). Hence, the artifact is the art/i/fact. I also view the art/i/fact as the <i>Other</i> , and I the medium.
anonymous existence	For Emmanuel Levinas (1947; 1978) there are dual forms of existing: the inward and anonymity. In the anonymous existing, it is without an existent.
art	A different way of knowing/seeing/reading the world.
artworkings	I borrow the term artworkings from Bracha L. Ettinger (2006), but define it as works of art, where art pertains to different ways of knowing/seeing/reading the world.
autochthonous/ (auto)chthonian	In French we refer to Indigenous people as <i>les peuples autochtones</i> . Autochthonous when defined means aboriginal/Indigenous. However, when I use it as (auto)chthonian it is a play on words, where it is Indigeneity that pertains to people, earth and geological formations because I am also including the multiple meanings of chthonian: of earth, the underworld, and richness of the soil—(m) <i>Other</i> earth.
<i>beads</i>	In relation to the dissertation are segments of thoughts, collections of words, and the way they are displayed on paper. They are also pauses where the reader is asked to remember particular points throughout the dissertation. In relation to the wampum belt, beads are (co)created, orally impregnated, and become a mnemonic device that records the written experience.
chthonian	Chthonian is defined as: of earth, the underworld, and richness of the soil—(m) <i>Other</i> earth
<i>Ellemental</i>	I coined the word <i>Ellemental</i> as a play on Emmanuel Levinas’s (1997) term <i>illeity</i> . The <i>Ellemental</i> is the <i>il y a</i> (there is), <i>le néant</i> , Being, and inter-uterine space.
first contact sensibility	A first contact sensibility arises from the <i>Ellemental</i> , where in my self-relinquishment, I am reanimating the breath of the <i>Other</i> . It is a proto-ethical relationality. It is the first truth.
Haudenosaunee	People of the longhouse. The Iroquois (i.e. Six Nations that are part of the Iroquois Confederacy, which include the Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, and Tuscarora nations).
<i>Illeity</i>	A term Emmanuel Levinas (1997) used in reference to the third, God, Him.

<i>il y a</i> and/or the <i>there is</i>	<p><i>Elle désigne, comme le pronom de la troisième personne dans la forme impersonnelle du verbe, non point un auteur mal connu de l'action, mais le caractère de cette action elle-même qui, en quelque manière, n'a pas d'auteur, qui est anonyme. Cette consummation impersonnelle, anonyme, mais inextinguible de l'être, d'elle qui murmure au fond du néant lui-même, nous la fixons par le terme d'il y a. L'il y a, dans son refus de prendre une forme personnelle, est l' &lt;&lt;être en general&gt;&gt;. (Levinas, 1946, p. 145)</i></p> <p>Like the third person pronoun in the impersonal form of a verb, it designates not the uncertainly known author of the action, but the characteristic of this action itself which somehow has no author. This impersonal, anonymous, yet inextinguishable, “consummation” of being, which murmurs in the depths of nothingness itself we shall designate by the term <i>there is</i>. The <i>there is</i>, inasmuch as it resists a personal form, is “being in general.” (Levinas, 1978, p. 57)</p>
inward existence	For Emmanuel Levinas (1947; 1978) there are dual forms of existing: the inward and anonymity. In the inward existing, it is with an existent.
Iroquois	The Iroquois, or Six Nations, are part of the Iroquois Confederacy, which include the Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, and Tuscarora nations.
<i>Kaswentha</i>	The <i>Kaswentha</i> is also known as the Two Row Wampum belt. It is an Iroquoian wampum belt that traditionally epitomizes peaceful and amicable treaty relations between the Iroquois and Dutch (Indigenous and non-Indigenous people respectively).
<i>la petite mort</i>	<i>La petite mort</i> is a French term that in its literal sense means “a little death.” The phrase is generally used in relation to having experienced an orgasm, where, in one’s ecstatic state, one gives into (a little) death, or a piece of that person dies.
(m) <i>Other</i>	Mother earth which is linked to the obscured, (distant) or ancestral <i>Other</i> —the sacred.
<i>o/Other</i>	The interconnectedness between the observable <i>other</i> (living) and the obscured, ancestral or (distant) <i>Other</i> . May also include those of the future.
proto-ethical relationality	A proto-ethical relationality stems from the <i>Ellemental</i> , and is part of a shamanic historical consciousness. It is prior to a moral responsibility or ethical indebtedness that comes from the two historical consciousness strands: the cognitive and the critical, respectively.
(re)	Words with this prefix refer to those who are aware and are again returning to the idea. Or it refers simply to those who are connecting to the idea for the first time. For instance, (re)connecting speaks to those who have a sense of connection

and are revisiting that idea for a second time, and also to those who are connecting to the idea for the first time, and do not fall under the prefix.

re/art/i/culation	Like the art/i/fact, re/art/i/culation is a term I coined, where the “I” is only becoming in response to the <i>Other</i> and how I am positioned in relation to the art. More specifically, re/art/i/culation not only <i>pieces</i> together an ethical o/ <i>Other</i> relationality, but speaks to a <i>recounting</i> arising from the feminine, and a <i>movement</i> or anarchic responding.
retu(r)ning/ retu(r)n(e)	This is both a returning and retuning/ turning and tuning, and to return and to retune, respectively. These terms are used to emphasize that in understanding SHC, both terms will require a physical adjustment.
Turtle Island	Turtle Island is a term that most Indigenous people use to refer to North America, and is linked to our Creation stories.
traum/art/i/c	The traum/art/i/c is another term I coined, that similar to the art/i/fact and re/art/i/culation, the “I” is only becoming in response to the <i>Other</i> , and how I am positioned in relation to the art. The traum/art/i/c arises from the disruption that comes from such things as the re/art/i/culation, that is the recounting, and the decentering of the I (or ego).
ur-somatic relationship	By ur-somatic relationship I am borrowing from Lenart Škof’s (2015) ideas pertaining to the wind/air and breath. For me, the ur-somatic relationship or first contact sensibility originates within the inter-uterine space—the <i>Ellemental</i> .
uterospection	Dwelling in/on what occurs in the womb, the inter-uterine space, the <i>Ellemental</i> .

## pre-face

figure 1 m.d.c. lefebvre, *Uprightness*, 1963, Burnaby, BC



### *Keeping Things Whole*

In a field  
I am the absence  
of field.  
This is  
always the case.  
Wherever I am  
I am what is missing.

When I walk  
I part the air  
and always  
the air moves in  
to fill the spaces  
where my body's been.

We all have reasons  
for moving.  
I move  
to keep things whole.

< Mark Strand (1990, p.11)

What would it mean to view the world as if “wherever I am I am what is missing”? How would we begin to view or perceive the world around us? I understand the absence of field in Strand’s (1990) poem in relation to my role in life, where two years after the birth and passing of my brother, I became a replacement child for my mother. Thus, I am the absence of my brother, for wherever I am, I am what is missing. And although I have never physically seen him, he and I are inseparable like one’s shadow. And as a result, I grew up with a worldview where death was not finite, where life and death walked hand-in-hand and could be found in the world around us. I describe my life as journeying through the borderlands and among burial scaffolds of the world, in the spaces in between. I have a particular fascination with the past, with history, and with archaeology (pre-history) that pertains to the way death is perceived. I purposefully search for traces of (distant)<sup>1</sup> *Others*, ancestors who have traversed the world before me, to an Indigenous history that I have been denied, in the faces of *others*, in the places I inhabit and in the artifacts I encounter. As a result, I began at a very young age questioning if absence of *Other* could be or is in the very things that obscure it such as people, places and artifacts. For instance, could the traces be found engrained in the encounters with *others*, could they be unearthed in geological formations and in artworkings<sup>2</sup> and are they only accessible by traversing the death frontier? Thus, this work asks us to pause for a while and allow ourselves the opportunity to sojourn in the absence of, as a way to disrupt the whole, to take into account what it is we obscure, and to welcome that which may be unthematizable. For I argue that it is only in the lingering and disruption of our notion of death, that the obscured can lead one to an uprightness towards an ethical *o/Other* relationality.

<sup>1</sup> Distant refers to (far in/an-other) time and not (far) apart from. I also perceive distant as belonging to the spaces in between; thus, I prefer to contain the word within parenthesis.

<sup>2</sup> I borrow the term artworkings from Bracha L. Ettinger (2006), but define it as works of art, where art pertains to different ways of knowing/seeing/reading the world.

## setting the scene

Want a different ethic? Tell a different story.

< Thomas King (2003, p. 164)

In the epigraph, Thomas King (2003), in *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*, advises the reader to tell a different story if we are in search of a different ethic, but how readily would this new ethic be considered when he also emphasizes that society cares more about being comfortable and the things that make us comfortable? How accepting would people be if we were to take his suggestion and approach history—the stories of the past—seeking a new ethical approach that focused on the encounter with the “obscured *Other*” or in other words, with ghosts? For the most part, when people think of ghosts it is generally in a negative light. And according to Claudia Ruitenberg (2009), they view ghosts as spirits with unfinished business, who cannot find peace and spend their time haunting the living. It is particularly the discomfort that is associated with ghosts that for some would rather not acknowledge; especially when it “...threaten[s] to disrupt the comfort of our everyday assumptions and make our moral hair stand on end” (p. 297). Likewise, when we talk about “...spirits...interconnectedness, or the sacred, we risk accusations of essentialism, escapism, or other forms of apolitical, irrational, naïve thinking that (perhaps) inadvertently reinforce the unjust status quo” (Keating, 2007, p. 2). Therefore, I will refrain from using terms such as ghosts, phantoms and specters as a way of minimizing connotations associated with those words. Instead, I will use the term *o/Other* to represent the living (lowercase *o*) with one’s relation with the obscured, (distant) or ancestral *Other* (uppercase *O*) mainly because with the latter I recognize that I am related (in)directly with the *Other* as obscurer and that I am particularly interested in creating alliances *with* (and not *for*) those who are obscured from the historical/contemporary context due to societal norms or ills. Furthermore, I attempt to emphasize how as obscurers, we are implicated in the ethical relationship I seek.



Accordingly, what approach to historical consciousness (hereafter HC)<sup>1</sup> would sanction such hauntings and interruptions as suggested in the *pre*-face, that would go beyond being, as the corollary of an ethical responsibility to those who passed before us? And what role would such an undertaking have in education? Let us begin by setting the scene for a different story. It is important to know that, as a scholar of French and Kanien'kehá:ka<sup>2</sup> (hereafter Mohawk) ancestry, I use and understand history, or *histoire* in French, as synonymous with story; thus viewing the past as stories of those who came before me and to whom I am also related. Likewise, I view and approach historical content and artifacts as *living documents*. By living documents, I am not simply referring to documents as work in progress, ones that need constant revision, editing or updates or viewed merely for their representational significance; instead, *living* pertains primarily to one's relation with the (distant) *Other*. Equally, *documents* are seen as "...media for materializing words" (Rasmussen, 2007, p. 445) and recording history that are not just in the form of pen, ink and paper. Instead, they are found etched in the landscape, inserted in the flesh, and woven in wampum<sup>3</sup> belts where "...the word was spoken into and then back out of the beaded string or belt, which functioned as a kind of literary tape recorder" (Rasmussen, 2007, p. 456-457). Still for some, the media consists simply in the exhalation and inspiration of the *Other*. For David Abram (1996), "[i]n the absence of writing, human utterance whether embodied in songs, stories, or spontaneous sounds, was inseparable from the exhaled breath" (p. 254). For Camille Seaman (2011), it was the calving polar ice, which allowed for the breathing in of its ancient atmosphere that connected her to the ancestors.

I remember from a young age persistently searching for clues or traces of my Indigenous roots in the material culture that I was handed (i.e., classroom history textbooks, novels, encyclopaedias, religious texts, etc.) because I wanted to find

<sup>1</sup> The term historical consciousness (HC) sets itself apart from the traditional way history is understood, approached and disseminated. Below I will discuss in detail the two distinct strands that are currently being utilized—the cognitive, and the critical—followed by a proposed third.

<sup>2</sup> Kanien'kehá:ka means people of the Flint.

<sup>3</sup> "*Wampum*, defined as native-made shell beads of roughly standardized size and shape, evolved early in the seventeenth century and served as an essential element in the interactions among several Native nations and various European groups" (Becker & Lainey, 2004). Much will be said about wampum later in the thesis.

something written that would be the catalyst for winning the approval and acknowledgement of my family. I watched how my grandfather's Mohawk heritage was effaced by family members, condemning his memories as crazy antics and yelling at him to stop talking about those days/ways, as they were no longer acceptable in society. I needed to know what this was about because no one would talk about it. But to my chagrin, it did not take long for me to discover that, for the most part, these forms of erasure were also embedded in the material culture and in the places I inhabited—what Levinas calls the "...political world of the impersonal 'third'—the world of government, institutions, tribunals, prisons, schools, committees, and so on" (Levinas & Kearney, 1986, p. 29-30)—and, I would add, religious institutions. Having been steeped in Eurocentric ideologies (Battiste, 2005) my eyes were trained to identify only with written text (pen, ink and paper) and not to consider other options because the "...current curriculum in Canada projects European knowledge as universal, normative, and ideal. It marginalizes or excludes Aboriginal cultures, voices, and ways of knowing" (Battiste, 2000, p. 193). Moreover, because of colonization, "...the cultural and textual traditions of many [I]ndigenous peoples become nearly invisible in many literary and historical studies of the early colonial period" (Rasmussen, 2007, p. 446), thus making it next to impossible for me to find what I was looking for.

Since commencing my post-secondary journey, I have witnessed many changes in education especially pertaining to indigenous education (IE): curriculum development and implementation, a greater cultural awareness and promotion, administrative offices, centres and departments, teacher programs, collaboration with local and global Indigenous communities, graduate level programming and so forth. I saw these developments as a potential place to (re)discover, that which had been obscured from me in the educational system, at home and in society, and as a place to (re)establish an identity, or better yet, a place to decolonize my/our identity. And although one might say we<sup>4</sup> are making great strides in regards to our relation with education since the days of Indian Residential Schools, I was noticing a "Red Power consciousness" (St. Denis, 2004) arising in the realm of IE that was based on authenticity, purity, and inequality,

<sup>4</sup> By 'we' I am referring to those, myself included, who self-identify as an Indigenous person in Canada.

similar to the Eurocentric ideologies we were working hard to disrupt. For the most part, I was witnessing the former initiatives, and those involved in their implementation, as perpetuating, what I term, pseudo-identities by obscuring the *o/Other* relationality under political platforms such as nationalism (Schick, Jaffe, & Watkinson, 2004), multiculturalism (St. Denis, 2011), and Indianism,<sup>5</sup> thus, creating boundaries and the insider/outsider effect. I experienced this when 1) being denied academic support because of my lack of social capital, 2) I could not produce an Indian status card, 3) in the way I was not represented within the three Indigenous descriptive categories: Métis, First Nations or Inuit, 4) I did not look the part, 5) I could not speak a traditional Indigenous language, 6) I lacked band affiliation, and so forth. Thus, I argue that for the most part, IE seemed to promote cultural and ethnic fundamentalist principles (Green, 2004) akin to the institutions they stem from by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Seeing fundamentalism as the “ultimate essentialism” Joyce Green (2004) specifically defines cultural and ethnic fundamentalism as a formula that “...constructs historically and nationally located identity as legitimate only when a precise set of cultural, ideological and, most worryingly, genetic markers or ‘blood quantum’ are met” (p. 23). Similarly, in *Contesting Fundamentalism* (2004), Schick, Jaffe, & Watkinson view each variation of fundamentalism as having “...as its centre a critique of the moral decay of society” (p. 12). Therefore, it is based on these two phenomena: fundamentalism and societal moral decay that the new ethic will attempt to disrupt, as a way of lingering in the notion of absence and/or becoming attentive to the need for keeping things whole as outlined in the *pre*-face.

It is said that “[d]eliberately or not, students’ identities are shaped in and by educational contexts and processes, and by the ideas about identity that are at play in those contexts and processes” (Ruitenberg, 2005, p. 1). Therefore, I knew it was not uncommon for people like me to turn to education, history, and then to Indigenous education (IE) for answers. For example, in Conrad, Létourneau, and Northrup’s (2009) article, “Canadians and Their Pasts: An Exploration in Historical Consciousness,” Rosenzweig and Thelan (1998) reported that in the United States family history was not

<sup>5</sup> A term I use to connote Indigenous purity and authenticity similar to the effects of cultural revitalization as outlined in St. Denis, 2004 and Lawrence’s, 2003 outline on Indianness.

only the preferred type of history; it was also being viewed as a way to “...establish identity, morality, immortality and agency” (p. 22). Similar results were found when exploring the historical consciousness (HC) of “ordinary” Canadians to see how they engaged with the past. According to Conrad et al. (2009), preliminary findings suggested Canadians, like their American counterparts, preferred family history to other types of history, and they viewed museums as the most trustworthy information source, followed by family and personal stories. It was because of the presence of artifacts<sup>6</sup> and primary sources, the belief that museums were neutral places run by professionals, and the use of multiple sources for compiling information that Canadians viewed museums as trustworthy institutions (Conrad et al., 2009). When interpreting these results, I got the impression that, when thinking about history, those who participated in the research were often seeking a place of neutrality that allowed for different ways of knowing, a space for (re)affirming identity, engrained with their understanding of *o/Other*, and a returning to a primordial ethicality as a way of promoting personal agency and equality. But had I interpreted more from these findings based on my own worldview of the past/history/story/death? Do we not share a common history? Was there a clear distinction as to who ordinary Canadians were? Was I not being reflected in the research or was I being obscured; especially when I too sought answers in the same establishments? As much as Conrad et al. (2009) conclude that “...many Canadians understand that the past is difficult to access and that there may be more than one explanation to account for how events unfolded” (p. 33), at no time were these sentiments explored further.

In seeking validation of my family’s history in the educational system, I came to question whether schools were responsible for how family histories were being narrated and portrayed not only in the educational system, but also at home and in society—if education was expunging the way we engaged with our past by safeguarding one common viewpoint or approach, and whether it was masking a larger political agenda by obscuring the *o/Other*. But more importantly, have education and IE run amuck in their quest for keeping things whole (i.e., quickly filling in the spaces that one obscures as a way of returning things to “normal”)? Has historical consciousness (HC), with its

<sup>6</sup> I will elaborate further on artifacts later in the dissertation.

emphasis on memory, personal narratives and testimony, and which moves away from historiography (the way historians look at the past), become the “new sexy” to approach history and history education? Wanting to know the “theory behind racist feminism,” Audre Lorde (1984) stated, “...the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house” (p. 112), as long as white women ignore difference and oppression in relation to feminist theory. Could one then use Lorde’s feminist analogy to claim that the educational system upholds racist practices when it continues to ignore, efface, and obscure *o/Other* relations and different ways of knowing? If so, we need to revisit HC approaches that are currently being endorsed to determine if they are exiling some identities while advocating others, especially since Canada has been and is forged by Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships. Moreover, the way those identities are being disseminated (in history and/or education in general) will determine the future of IE within the educational system. That way, we can determine what tools will be necessary for dismantling the master’s house, or in the least, for redesigning the house. Because of the scope of my claim and, for the purposes of my dissertation, I will situate the question specifically in a Canadian history and social studies context, interwoven with narratives of my own experiences and observations, as a way of presenting a *different* story. So, let us first look at what types of HC are currently being used in history education and social studies.

## **historical consciousness**

Historical consciousness (HC), also referred to as historical thinking and commonly associated with memory and identity, has been a concept that has been around since the early 1970s. However, twenty years prior to that, in the aftermath of the Second World War, Maurice Halbwachs (1950) coined the term “collective memory,” but at the time, it failed to elicit further discussion. For the most part, HC was used predominantly by German historians in the field of philosophy of history, rather than history proper (Laville, 2004). Jörn Rüsen, a German philosopher of history, was the first to use HC as a concept in the teaching of history. He is a strong advocate for the unification of a common European HC approach, which he equates to the adoption of the Euro as a “common cultural currency” (Laville, 2004). Rüsen (2001) once referred to HC as “...the balancing act of a man on the tightrope of time, that is strung between that

which is ‘no more’ and which is ‘not yet,’ and on which the concrete and real human life of the present is achieved” (p. 4).

Currently in Canada, there are two distinct HC strands: one whose scholars focus more on cognitive elements, where one's moral responsibility derives from knowledge and the understanding of the past, and the other, critical HC, is based on an ethical debt that is owed to the past regardless what one knows or understands (Chinnery, 2010a). Peter Seixas, Director of the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness at the University of British Columbia, approaches HC in a fashion similar to that of Rüsen (see, e.g., The Historical Thinking Project<sup>7</sup> and The History Education Network<sup>8</sup>). Although from different continents, both work within the cognitive strand. As Seixas (2004) states,

...we will use the term historical consciousness to maintain collective memory's attention to broad popular understandings of the past, bringing to the forefront, nevertheless, the problematic relationship between the distinctively modern, disciplinary practices of historiography and the memory practices of broader populations across different cultures and across different eras, including—but not limited to—our own. (p. 9-10)

Ann Chinnery's (2010a) article, “‘What Good Does All This Remembering Do, Anyway?’ On Historical Consciousness and the Responsibility of Memory,” notes that the second strand or critical approach to HC “...figures most prominently in Roger I. Simon's Testimony and Historical Memory Project at the University of Toronto” (p. 398). And although she acknowledges that the cognitive approach to HC, has had the greater pull in education, she stresses the relevance of the ethical approach and believes that “...critical historical consciousness offers different, and perhaps richer, possibilities for reconceiving history education and our relationship to the past” (p. 399). I have selected the definition of HC that Simon, Eppert, Clamen and Beres (2001) give as a way to emphasize the differences between the two strands:

By historical consciousness, we refer not to “a state of mind” (e.g. what historical knowledge one holds), but to a social praxis—a very determinate set of commitments to and actions which define practices of

<sup>7</sup> <http://historicalthinking.ca/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.thenhier.ca/en>

remembrance among members of a particular community. This praxeological historical consciousness is situated in that series of inter-linked performances through which members of a community “pass-on” and re-visit something of the substance and significance of past events. In this view, the locus of “knowing” is social rather than solidarity. “To know about a past event” is not something fulfilled by the recall and understanding of what one sees, reads or hears. Rather “knowing” requires a communicative act which re-cites and re-sites what one has learned—not only about what happened to others at/in a different space/time but also (and this is key) what one has learned of and within the disturbances and disruptions inherent in comprehending the substance and significance of these events. (p. 293-294)

When trying to distinguish the difference between HC centered on moral responsibility and our ethical debt to the past, as differentiated from the cognitive approach, I am reminded of how Levinas viewed morality and ethics quite distinctly.

Morality is what governs the world of the political ‘inter-estedness’, the social interchanges between citizens in a society. Ethics, as the extreme exposure and sensitivity of one subjectivity to another, becomes morality and hardens its skin as soon as we move into the political world of the impersonal ‘third’—the world of government, institutions, tribunals, prisons, schools, committees, and so on. But the norm that must continue to inspire and direct the moral order is the ethical norm of the interhuman. (Levinas & Kearney, 1986, p. 29-30).

Consequently, I view the cognitive HC strand, as equivalent to a European historiographic, pre-HC style for understanding and teaching history. I see it as the root from which cultural and ethnic fundamentalism may stem when its platform clearly identifies the HC of the *other* as problematic and situated outside of *our* own insofar as it reinforces the notion that European knowledge is universal, normative and ideal, while using a carnivalesque approach (teetering on the tightrope) when positioning oneself in relation to time. Equally, I understand the ethical debt as associated with the critical HC strand where the emphasis is on the interchanges between people, the passing on of valued information via a communicative act, and the learning that takes place from within the disturbances of what is revealed. And although the latter must continue to inspire the former, and its emphasis on disrupting common historical ideologies which are rooted in the approach of the former, I see the critical HC strand as a platform for addressing the societal moral decay that stems from the cognitive HC strand within the Levinasian world of the impersonal third. With both providing the bases from which the

new ethic may appear. But before we move forward, let me take a moment to unpack my claim further and to situate these HC strands within Indigenous education (IE).

### ***cognitive historical consciousness***

Since the new millennium, there has been an impetus towards incorporating Indigenous perspectives in Canadian classrooms; particularly in regard to history. By doing so, it was seen as a way of improving Aboriginal student success. Educational institutions such as British Columbia's Ministry of Education (BCED)<sup>9</sup>, The Association of BC Deans of Education (ABCDE)<sup>10</sup> and Simon Fraser University (SFU)<sup>11</sup> began the process of putting several initiatives in place. For instance, BCED, in the area of K-12, provided funding to school districts, as a way of enhancing education programs and services for Indigenous students. One such program was the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements that were created in collaboration with district school principals, and Indigenous community members where it was seen as a way of promoting and enhancing Aboriginal student achievements. Although they are not mandatory, some school districts have maintained their implementation by renewing their agreements after five years. Focusing on improving the quality of education in BC schools, the ABCDE acknowledged they had not been successful at providing adequate knowledge of Aboriginal education for all pre-service teachers as outlined in their *Task Force Report for Aboriginal Teacher Education (A Plan for 2006-2011)—a Five-Year Plan* (Aboriginal Teacher Education Task Force, 2006) for strengthening Aboriginal Teacher Education in BC. One of its recommendations was increasing Aboriginal knowledge by implementing "...comprehensive student and faculty orientation programs about Aboriginal pedagogy and Aboriginal ways of knowing" (p. 6-7). At a post-secondary level, the year 2007 saw the *First Nations University-Wide Strategic Plan* (Simon Fraser University, 2010) being introduced at SFU, where it too sought to transform the approach to academic programming. One of its goals was to support the development of Indigenous knowledge systems within the university as a way of bridging

<sup>9</sup> <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/education>

<sup>10</sup> [www.educ.sfu.ca/abcde/](http://www.educ.sfu.ca/abcde/)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.sfu.ca/education/centres-offices/indigenous-education/contact-us.html>



cultures. At the heart of these initiatives (and other similar initiatives) was an emphasis on (re)acquainting ourselves with Indigenous ways of knowing in order for success to occur,<sup>12</sup> and for the formation of alliances. I understood this push for incorporating Indigenous content as the (re)telling of a different story in the curriculum, which would not only benefit Indigenous students, but I saw it as a (re)stabilizing or "...a return[ing] to the balanced relationship that had developed through the first centuries of our shared history" (Saul, 2008, p. 24) on Turtle Island. In other words, I saw this movement as an opportunity to (re)kindle an ethical *o/Other* relationality. Thus, one could expect that, after more than a decade, great strides would have been made to achieve some of these goals and that an HC would have arisen from this (re)unification that was authentically Canadian and no longer based solely on European ideologies. Instead, we read in Carretero, Asensio, and Rodríguez-Moneo's (2012) book, *History Education and the Construction of National Identities*, how Seixas (2012), in his chapter called "Indigenous Historical Consciousness: An Oxymoron or a Dialogue?" questions the validity, legitimacy, and acceptability of an Indigenous HC. Seixas states:

Stories are part of history education, but stories are not the whole story. Adding more topics to the curriculum in an increasingly diverse society is not the solution. Nor is simply telling different stories. We need to teach students how to assess the significance of stories, how to analyze the evidence behind stories, how to relate micro-stories to larger pictures of historical development, and how to unearth stories' underlying structures and implicit ethical messages...[because]...[o]nce indigenous ways of knowing are actually part of the textbook's way of knowing then who will be able to object to histories based on Islamic cosmology, Biblical fundamentalism and Haitian voodoo? (p. 135-136)

Leaving us to ponder the state of history with the alteration on how history is currently approached, clearly demonstrates an "us/them" dichotomy where the latter is obscured or made invisible. For instance, in the aforementioned chapter, the opening paragraph completely overlooks any Indigenous relationality in the formation of Canada and fails to acknowledge the pre-existence of Indigenous *nations* prior to that of the 1867 British North American Act. As a result, we are left in a conundrum because this form of HC is far from (re)establishing or (re)building a nation whose original foundation

<sup>12</sup> There are many topics and goals set out in these documents, but I will focus on Indigenous ways of knowing, since it is the topic most relevant to the point I am bringing forward here.

consisted of three pillars: Indigenous, French and English (Saul, 2008). Thus, we need to take heed of, Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua's (2005) warning that "...the widespread practice of ignoring Indigenous presence at every stage of Canadian history fundamentally flaws our understanding of Canada and Canadian history" (p. 133). And illustrative of Lorde's previous concerns regarding feminist theory, Lawrence and Dua are concerned that Canadian antiracism may actually be "...furthering contemporary colonial agendas" (p. 123) when antiracism does not challenge or address issues regarding the ongoing colonization of Aboriginal people within the settler state. Could we take up Lawrence and Dua's warning to ask whether Seixas's cognitive (rationalist/analytical) HC approach, might, in some way, be maintaining—either directly or indirectly—colonial practices that are seen as normative and universal instead of racist or chauvinistic?<sup>13</sup> And could we not then argue that this form of racism contributes to the moral societal decay that Levinas alluded to in the world of the impersonal third? Let us pause for a moment and sit with the enormity of what is being offered/suggested/implicit because, all too often, as Strand's (1990) poem reminds us, there is a tendency to move ahead quickly in order to keep things whole. Once we have established a sort of grounding on the notion of HC, I will take a moment to elaborate on what I mean by keeping things whole. But for now, let me continue by juxtaposing an educational scenario comparable to the previous one, as a way of demonstrating how the ethical debt of critical HC approaches a similar issue.

### ***critical historical consciousness***

On June 11, 2008, then, Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized on behalf of the Government of Canada and the Canadian people for the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) system<sup>14</sup>. He recalled that the objectives of the IRS system as outlined in *The Apology* were twofold: to remove and isolate Indigenous children from their homes, families and communities and to assimilate them into the dominant culture as a way to "kill the Indian in the child" (para. 2). It is estimated that seven generations, or approximately 150,000, Indigenous children went through the IRS system. This number

<sup>13</sup> I include chauvinistic here because of its double meaning: blindly patriotic and patriarchal superiority. The latter will become more apparent as we proceed.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1100100015649>

does not take into account the intergenerational effects that stemmed from this educational policy. Along with *The Apology* and the recommendations of the *Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples* of 1996<sup>15</sup> was the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) which according to Harper, was

a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian Residential Schools system. It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relation based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us. (para. 11)

As a way of working towards those goals, Vancouver, BC hosted its second National TRC event in September 2013. In partnership with Reconciliation Canada,<sup>16</sup> on Canada's National Aboriginal Day, Vancouver Mayor, Gregor Robertson, proclaimed the Year of Reconciliation (June 21, 2013—June 20, 2014).<sup>17</sup> Seven full days were set aside for the TRC Reconciliation Week (September 16-22, 2013). Educational institutions were asked to suspend classes on September 18, to encourage students, faculty and staff to participate in many of the events that were being planned, such as the Walk for Reconciliation, as a way of paving the road to healthy relations, indicative of Harper's previous sentiment. And although the TRC commission's task is to "...promote awareness and public education of Canadians about the IRS system and its impact,"<sup>18</sup> Simon (2013) worried about the commission's responsibility "...to contribute to the rebuilding and renewing of relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians" (p. 129). More specifically, in his chapter, "Towards a Hopeful Practice of Worrying: The Problematics of Listening and the Educative Responsibility of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission," (2013) Simon declared his concern about how the stories/testimonies of the IRS survivors would be taken up in way that would allow for the reparation of our national memory and I would add, national identity. Seen as the potential for changing the national narrative, the stories of the IRS survivors could be

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/prb9924-e.htm>

<sup>16</sup> <http://reconciliationcanada.ca/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/year-of-reconciliation.aspx>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=7>

further silenced, suppressed or shelved, “[u]nless the history of residential schools was taught as one component of the larger narrative of the colonization and attempted cultural genocide of Aboriginal peoples, the force of this history would be greatly muted and too easily confined to a now surpassed era” (p. 135).

Thus, we see clearly from the quote above that the emphasis is on an ethical debt to the past by (re)cognizing how we are situated in the larger story and thereby redefining Canadian antiracism by challenging and addressing issues regarding the ongoing colonization of Aboriginal people within the settler state (Lawrence and Dua 2005). It is about non-Aboriginal people asking where they “fit in” to Aboriginal history and “...not just where Aboriginal history fits into the history of Canada” (Kennedy and Wilson, 2003, as cited in Simon, 2013, p. 136). But most importantly, it is an *attending to* that will require

reflecting on the experiences of listening to the stories told to the TRC and retelling these stories, not to co-opt them in the service of the self, but interweaving them with one’s own life stories. The potential in this pedagogy is that who I am (as someone always in the process of becoming) is bound up with how it is I will respond to the address of another whose experiences cannot be reduced to versions of my own. (Simon, 2013, p. 136)

Let us be reminded that Simon’s critical HC takes on an ethical interhuman approach where the learning is sparked by disturbances that are revealed in the communicative act. The IRS stories have the power to disrupt the national narrative and identity not only because of their content, who is implicated in the narrative, but because

[a]s an alternative to the rationalist project of epistemic containment achieved through the incitement to testify, in legal and non-legal contexts, Indigenous storytelling epistemologies allow for the intervention of different frameworks of knowing that can undermine the injunction to turn cruelty and violence, especially towards children, into a discourse to be easily re-consumed and re-fetishized within, for example, the pornographic languages of subjugation. (Emberley, 2013, p. 146)

Now one could assume that the purpose for outlining the two HC approaches is to highlight one in relation to the other as a good guy/bad guy dichotomy, but, I see the two HC strands as weaving in and outside of themselves, as an expansion if you will, where one continues to inspire the other. Each in its uniqueness, lays the groundwork

for rekindling an ethical *o/Other* relationality that is not only lacking in the past—in our relation to the way history has typically been disseminated, but also in the way it is currently being translated—in the way indigenous education “fits within” the educational system. Having situated the two HC strands in relation to the way in which Levinas viewed the moral and ethical as pertaining to society, I am reminded of wolf medicine where I see both HC strands as operating like the waxing and waning of the moon—revolving around societal (Indigenous) issues where at times they are present (waxing) in their fullness, and quickly thereafter being overshadowed (waning) or obscured with the passing of time, all the while trying to remain whole (moon). Equally, I understand the ethical indebtedness to the past as requiring an HC approach that sits outside of the political world of the impersonal third—governments, institutions, schools, etc. and of which is analogous to a wolf baying at the moon.

But first, it is important to know that while Levinas deemed it necessary to have the state with its hardened morality, he also believed that we had an *anarchic* responsibility to vigilantly disrupt the “...totalizing operations of the state” (Strhan, 2012, p. 187). This form of action that Levinas (1997) termed *an-archy*,

has a meaning prior to the political (or antipolitical) meaning currently attributed to it. It would be self-contradictory to set it up as a principle (in the sense that anarchists understand it). Anarchy cannot be sovereign, like an *arche*. It can only disturb the State—but in a radical way, making possible moments of negation without any affirmation. The State then cannot set itself up as a Whole. But on the other hand, anarchy can be stated. Yet disorder has an irreducible meaning, as refusal of synthesis. (p. 197n3)

Simon Critchley (2007) further elaborates his understanding of Levinas’s idea of anarchy as such:

Anarchy should not seek to mirror the archic sovereignty that it undermines. That is, it should not seek to set itself up as the new hegemonic principle or political organization, but remain the negation of totality and not the affirmation of a new totality. Anarchy is radical disturbance of the state, a disruption of the states attempt to set itself up or erect itself into a whole. (p. 122)

My understanding of Levinas’s term “an-archy,” as it applies to an anarchic responsibility—my responding to those in the world of the impersonal third—is not about

total mayhem, chaos or disobedience, instead it is the moving away from Western philosophy where its focus has been on logos—universal development and governance based on rational principles (laws, doctrines). And although it has the potential to disrupt the totalizing operations of the state, I see anarchy as directed more toward the self, in that it is a stripping down of the I (or ego), in responding to the *other*. Hence, responding an-archically precedes such things as subjectivity, reason, consciousness, and thematization on my part, leaving me in a proximity with the *other* asymmetrically. It is precisely the unbalance, or inequality between myself and the other that is anarchy, and what Levinas (1997) deems a persecution. Hence, if we read Levinas's previous words carefully, he speaks about an ethic that is an "extreme exposure and sensitivity of one subjectivity to another" (Levinas & Kearney, 1986, p. 29-30). It is an ethical responsibility towards the *other*—an interhuman, that I maintain, far exceeds our relation with (living) humans, our understanding of time, and is engrained in an *o/Other* relationality. More importantly, the extreme exposure only occurs with a decentering of the I (or ego), similar to how Hans-Georg Gadamer (1979) outlines it here because

It is true that the prejudices which dominate us often [impair] true recognition of the historical past. But without prior self-understanding, which is prejudice in this sense, and without readiness for self-criticism—which is also grounded in our self-understanding—historical understanding would be neither possible nor meaningful. Only through others do we gain true knowledge of ourselves. (p. 107)

This anarchic responsibility is an important point, not only because it goes against keeping things whole, such as the education system (or the master's house), but because it demonstrates the need for a different form of HC that speaks directly to or expands upon an ethical indebtedness to the past, one that precedes subjectivity, reason, consciousness and thematization, and one that is not meant as a replacement to the former. Thus, once again, I use the analogy of the baying wolf as representative of the new ethic or HC approach because she<sup>19</sup> is drawn to the full moon, *fully* aware and responding to the waxing and waning of the two previous HC strands. And also because the baying heralds the societal disruption of the pack that is akin to Levinas's (1997) *anarchic* responsibility, and for some, makes their moral hair stand on end.

<sup>19</sup> I use the term she because he can be found in she, thus representing both.

Thus, I want to propose a strand of HC that I will call shamanic historical consciousness (SHC) as a tool for retu(r)ning<sup>20</sup> to 1) an ethical *o/Other* relationality, 2) one that creates (in a Levinasian vein) "...communities of others, in which each subject is unique and resists reduction to classification" (Strhan, 2012, p. 149), 3) including an autochthonous way of knowing and 4) one centered on Indigenous and non-Indigenous encounters as a means for (re)thinking Canadian history and IE. For as long as we continue to employ one or both of the current HC strands as previously outlined in regards to history, IE will remain a subcategory or sub-discipline within the whole of education. But first let us look at what distinguishes SHC from the other two HC strands.

## **shamanic historical consciousness**

Similar to my previous concerns about how certain words such as ghosts, specters and phantoms have connotations associated with them, *shamanic* falls under the same category. *Shaman*, conjures all sorts of images of witchdoctors, magicians, healers, medicine men and the like. Seen as complex figures in traditional societies, Brian Hayden (2003) claims that on the one hand, shamans have been reviled by "...missionaries, psychologists, doctors, and others as psychopaths or mentally unstable charlatans....[while]...[o]n the other hand, shamans have been eulogized by anthropologists, explorers, and new-age spiritualists as cultural repositories of art, history, medicine, and welfare" (p. 49). Therefore, it is important that I begin by outlining how I am using the term shaman(ic), because as Michael Marker (2004) states,

One of the central problems for Indigenous intellectuals is that words—in English—are presently owned by an academic culture that has some consensus on the legitimate definition of these terms and activities. Indigenous scholars must either invent new words and then struggle upstream against the prevailing current to wedge them into the academic lexicon, or expand the meaning of conventional terms to include Indigenous perspectives. This means essentially seizing a word and saying "this is what we mean when we say...." (p. 103)

<sup>20</sup> This is both a returning and retuning/ turning and tuning. This term is used to emphasize that in understanding SHC, both will require a physical adjustment.

But more precisely, because contested words such as ghosts, phantoms, and shamanic are rarely spoken in conjunction with pedagogy, methodology or education for that matter, I find it provides an anarchic beginning towards disrupting or dismantling common place ideologies, epistemologies and hegemonic discourses. This allows for a new ethic to emerge out of the (re)telling of a different story.

I came across the idea of shamanic historical consciousness (SHC) when reading Ana Mariella Bacigalupo's (2013) article, "Mapuche Struggles to Obliterate Dominant History: Mythohistory, Spiritual Agency and Shamanic Historical Consciousness in Southern Chile," and it was this article that provided the language and direction for my work. More specifically, it was the emphasis on mythohistory—the dynamic relationship between myth and history and between national and Indigenous history—the main area of focus in Bacigalupo's (2013) article—that spoke to my primary goal for the thesis. Bacigalupo outlines how this mixed genre conveys identity, has the potential to obliterate dominant history narratives and expresses a SHC that arises from ethnically mixed identities. For instance, when outlining *true* Mapuche<sup>21</sup> identity, she mentions that people of mixed heritage (i.e. gringo/White, and Mapuche) were thought to possess special powers because they held two world views. They could see the world as "insiders and outsiders" (p. 84) and according to Bengoa (1991) during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mapuche people "...intermarried freely with outsiders and had no notion of racial or ethnic purity" and Brooks (2008) further elaborates that the Mapuche "...stressed relational identities over those of blood kinship and drew on inclusive discourses of ethnicity" (as cited in Bacigalupo, 2013, p. 85). But what I found most intriguing in Bacigalupo's (2013) article was that it was the Mapuche people themselves who created the mythohistories by mythologizing "...shamans and historical outsiders, prioritizing spiritual agency over political agency and narratively reversing the usual colonial dynamics of subordination" (p. 77). I found the Mapuche's approach to history quite compelling because the Mapuche were (re)connecting to and acknowledging *o/Other* relationalities or encounters of the past which resulted in mixed identities. For example:

<sup>21</sup> An Indigenous nation from the Argentinian and Chilean region.



Mythohistories are radically other, not because they are isolated from dominant and indigenous ethnic histories, but because they subject them to a shamanic logic by which human and non-human beings act as historical agents and natives become the victors. Furthermore, mythohistories are able to reconcile many different kinds of rural and urban representations of the past—life histories, kinship histories, ethnic national histories, myths and dominant histories—in narratives that contest the logic of dominant national history. (Bacigalupo, 2013, p. 91)

Using this article as the platform for a SHC, I began questioning how one's identity might be shaped by narratives that contest the dominant national history in Canada. How might people's stories be (re)read, (re)visited and (re)cited/(re)sited? For instance, I tried to imagine what a Mapuche approach would look like in relation to my Mohawk lineage. Especially when advocating for self-determination and survival, the Mohawk people of the Kahnawá:ke reserve for example, have resorted to the same principles they rejected from foreign governments such as the law and imposition of the Indian Act as a way to determine who qualifies as a member of the community<sup>22</sup>. By following suit, they fail to recognize the historical (and contemporary) encounters between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, more specifically between that of the French and Mohawk and those born from those relations. In response to the Mohawk evictions of non-Indigenous people from the Kahnawá:ke reserve, Hamilton (2010), writing in the National Post, reported that

Ellen Gabriel, a Mohawk who heads Quebec Native Women, said the planned evictions run counter to centuries-old customs. 'It is important to clarify that the eviction notices do not follow Mohawk customs or tradition,' she wrote in an open letter on behalf of her organization, which represents Quebec aboriginal women living on and off reserves. She noted that adoptions of non-Mohawks remains a common practice in Mohawk communities, and those adopted are expected to learn the language and uphold Mohawk laws and traditions. 'In many First Nations communities across Canada, the presence of non-native people has not eroded indigenous customs or traditions,' she said. (para. 7)

On the following day, headlines on the CBC News (2010) declared, "Kahnawake Issues 2<sup>nd</sup> Eviction Notice: Non-Natives asked to leave," and Gabriel further stated that "...the evictions are nothing more than a Mohawk version of colonialism practised against

<sup>22</sup> For a more thorough understanding of the Kahnawá:ke political and social dynamics, see Alfred (1995).

natives for years” (para. 15). In a sense, one could say a myth arises from the reserve where both the dominating nations (English and French) and the Mohawk use its boundaries to determine Mohawk purity, thus creating the insider/outsider effect similar to how the fort walls segregated Canadians from Indigenous people in the myth of nation building (Donald, 2009) or how the US/Canadian border separated Coast Salish communities in the myth of modernity (Marker, 2004-2005). Another point I would like to emphasize, which I include here as an aside, but its relevance will become more evident as we move through the dissertation, is the importance of Gabriel's comment, as a Mohawk woman, in regards to the Mohawk evictions. That is, the Mohawk nation, like many other Indigenous nations, is a matriarchal society and situates itself nicely in relation to Bacigalupo's (2013) point that shamans "...inherited their powers through the mother's side of the family, often through a maternal grandmother" (p. 82), a point which counters Western patriarchal paradigms. What these examples afford, is a (re)turning to a pre-boundary relationality—a "frontierless" ethicality akin to that of the Mapuche, as a way of safeguarding the future of IE. But first let us (re)define the word shaman as a way to appreciate some of the many facets a SHC has to offer.

The common-sense definition of shaman is a person in many North American tribes who acts as intermediary between the natural and supernatural worlds,<sup>23</sup> an animist,<sup>24</sup> and a practitioner who can reach altered states of consciousness.<sup>25</sup> If we start to unpack the definition of shaman as defined above, and we begin by looking at the notion of *tribe*, I share Margaret Kovach's (2010) sentiment when she outlined the issues within Indigenous methodologies:

...I am an urban Indigenous woman living away from my ancestral territory, and I have been able to apply a tribal-centred approach to research—it is feasible...all urban Indigenous people come from a specific tribal background (or a mix, as in my case), and we need to reclaim that. (p. 38)

I take her statement as a (re)affirming of identity, a (re)connecting with the past that acknowledges the relationality or encounter with otherness and bringing forward

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/shaman?s=t>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/animistic>

<sup>25</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaman>

“herstory” as a way of breaking down cultural and ethnic fundamentalist practices that keep us divided. However, it is important to point out that although I view the words tribe or tribal and shaman or shamanic as similar in that they elicit preconceived notions, I use both terms as an anarchic reclamation of words that have been used as a form of “patriarchal colonialism” (Jaimes-Guerrero, 2003) to subjugate Indigenous people. For instance, in an Eurocentric mind-frame, Ward Churchill, (1992), outlines how using terms such as “tribe” or “tribal” depicts Native people similar to the way groups of animals were depicted (i.e. “gaggle of geese” or a “pack of wolves”), and “...as a subspecies lesser than ‘white’ or Anglicized humankind” (as cited in Jaimes-Guerrero, 2003, p. 59). More importantly, when focusing on Eurocentric definitions of tribalism, not only are myths created that distort the true meaning behind Indigenous societies, they erase or obscure “...matrilineal lines of kinship and descent for most if not all Native peoples prior to the impact of...colonialism and patriarchy on their indigenous lifeways” (Jaimes-Guerrero, 2003, p. 63).

While being mindful of Sharon Todd’s (2003) warning about the challenges of “...thinking about the unknowable Other as a beginning for ethics while attempting to avoid the dangers of falling into trite categorizations that simply uphold, rather than explore, what precisely the other has to do with ethical possibilities in education” (p. 3), I view the shaman’s role as an intermediary between the natural and supernatural worlds, as key to an *o/Other* relationality. Here *natural world* falls under the living (lowercase *o*) and one’s relation with the *supernatural world* with that of the obscured, (distant) or ancestral *Other* (uppercase *O*). For instance, in a country like Canada, where Indianness has been defined by scholars and White politicians, Lawrence (2004) asserts Indigenous people view “blood memory” as a way of cutting through the assertions made by those deemed as “Indian experts” (p. 200). The concept of blood memory for Indigenous people, not only challenges dominant assertions by staking claim to an Indigenous heritage, it “...promises a direct link to the lives of our ancestors, made manifest in the flesh of their descendants” (p. 200). Thus, making blood memory incredibly important for urban Native people—and I would argue those of mixed heritage—because of the “dis/membering” that continues to happen by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups in and outside of the educational system. In a similar vein, John Ralston Saul (2008), in *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada*, asserts that

“...what lies at the heart of our story, at the heart of Canadian mythology, whether francophone or anglophone” (p. xii) is that Canada is a Métis civilization created under three founding pillars, that Canadians are people of Aboriginal inspiration, and that “[p]art of considering ourselves today is to think about our unbroken past here and those tens of thousands of experiences of métissage and their influence on what we have become” (p. 20). Again I am drawn to the word inspiration, and though Saul may have used the word to mean inspired by, I understand it to include the *inhalation* of breath, that together we have inhaled each other’s breath, similar to how Seaman (2011) connected to the ancestors with the inspiration of the ancestral atmosphere with the calving of the polar ice. Therefore, in both of these examples you can sense the exigent need for a retu(r)ning to those who have come before us as our ethical obligation to the past in a way that goes beyond the political world of the impersonal third as previously outlined. Instead, these examples are asking us to (re)consider, (re)define, and (re)visit how we are (inter)connected: through blood memory and Aboriginal inspiration, which are, I posit, are linked and inseparable from that of the supernatural—the *Other*.

Lastly, I visualize the intermediary symbolically in the written text as representative of the virgule, the line between the *o/Other* relationality which the new ethic seeks to delete. Mainly because *virgule*, meaning slash or comma, stems from the Latin word *virgula* meaning little rod or little penis. Thus, I see it as a symbol of dominance representing colonial patriarchic polarities (us/them, insider/outsider, male/female manifestations, etc.) demonstrated within the presentational element of words and symbolic of the borders, boundaries, barricades, and blinders that have been used to segregate Indigenous from non-Indigenous people.

With regards to how animism is associated with shaman, according to Kovach (2010), Vine Deloria, Jr. (1999) comments on how “[m]any Indigenous worldviews are based upon an animistic philosophy that attests that the human entity is but one clan group within its relational family. Deloria argues that a relational worldview, from a tribal perspective, is one that assumes relationships between all life forms that exist within the natural world” (p. 34). Here, I see animism as fitting nicely within an ethical *o/Other* relationality, in that it provides us with the opportunity to (re)view the world around us as potential sites (or sights) where the traces of the (distant) *Other* reside. Moreover, this form of “seeing” becomes a new way of “reading” the world, an *art* when other options

are presented or sought, a point I alluded to earlier when mentioning how my eyes were only trained to identify strictly with the written text (pen, ink and paper) as the source of truth. As Levinas (1968) states, “[e]verything in things is exposed, even what is unknown in them” (p. 358).

With the last definition of shaman, where, as practitioners, they can access altered states of consciousness, I am reminded how, in the educational system (and in society); I am always negotiating between two worldviews, similar to how Ray Barnhardt (2002) explains it here:

Native students trying to survive in the university environment (an institution that is a virtual embodiment of modern consciousness) must acquire and accept a new form of consciousness, an orientation that not only displaces but often devalues the worldviews they bring with them. For many, this is a greater sacrifice than they are willing to make, so they withdraw and go home, branded a failure. Those who do survive in the academic environment for four or more years often find themselves caught between different worlds, neither of which can fully satisfy their acquired tastes and aspirations, and thus they enter into a struggle to reconcile their conflicting forms of consciousness. (p. 240)

The difference between SHC and that of the other historical consciousness (HC) approaches currently being employed in education is that SHC focuses on a retu(r)ning to an ethical *o/Other* relationality that stems from the mixed identities formed out of mythohistories and autochthonous ways of knowing. Shamanic historical consciousness is rooted in an anarchic responsibility towards disrupting the totalizing operations of the state, where it requires a decentring of the I (or ego), and it is not based on hegemonic discourses that advocate a universal or common consciousness. Thus, it can be said, introducing a SHC has the potential to transform students into practitioners who can reach *altered states of consciousness* (ASC). Let me elaborate. With ASC, I begin by clarifying that I am not referring to drug induced states (even though they would also decenter the I (or ego)), rather, I view it as preceding consciousness. Altered states of consciousness pertain to losing one’s identity in relation to the body, such is the case with the decentering of the I (or ego), self-surrendering, or denucleation when moving away from an internal existence—the elements of anarchy. And as such, I view ASC as an alternative way of being/viewing/understanding the world. By doing so, consciousness becomes enriched in a way that goes against this notion that one should

maintain a common consciousness. Equally, ASC falls away from having to choose one consciousness over another in a forceful manner, such as it is depicted in the quote above or how the two historical consciousness (HC) strands are currently being contrasted, thus, moving away from presenting one form of consciousness as superior or universal. In other words, SHC as an ASC means allowing one to weave between one's own state of consciousness and others' without having to settle on one, thus, advocating for a fluidity and relationality to occur between consciousnesses. In other words, it requires allowing oneself to become receptive (i.e. (re)tuning).

So how might we, as educators utilize mythohistories as an ethical approach to *o/Otherness*? What might it look like in relation to the way history is being circulated? What role might SHC play in regards to Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, education, ways of knowing, identity formation and the way we (re)view the world? Could a SHC be the copula, space or borderland necessary for Native students (and *others*) to linger in, as a way of disrupting these/those dichotomies? Keeping these questions in mind, what this dissertation will attempt to do, is to demonstrate the need for a new ethical approach by recounting a different story—*herstory*, based primarily on an *o/Other* relationality mainly because “[t]he truth about stories is that’s all we are” (King, 2003, p. 2). To do so, I contend, will require a SHC as a way of (re)introducing an autochthonous viewpoint on Canadian history within the current curriculum in a way that supersedes the way we customarily approach/read/disseminate history, and the way we encounter/see/articulate Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in Canada and beyond. I further posit, that until such time, IE will remain a subcategory or sub-discipline subsumed within the whole of education. Correspondingly, I will attempt to show that the ideas presented are not in fact new, only that we have lost the disposition to see and read the world beyond what is deemed normal or universal.

## the whole thing

Let us begin by returning to the field in Strand's (1990) poem *Keeping Things Whole*, as this will become the *axis mundi*, the *omphalos*, the *umbilicus* of this dissertation. It is the place where all directions and time converge into one, the spaces in between, the burial scaffolds of the world, it is the matrix—our connection to the archaic mother. It is here that Strand reminds me that I am the absence of field, for wherever I am, I am what is missing. What if we were to take what is presented and imagine for a moment what it would be like if I were to say, in relation to history, that I am the absence of history, I am what is missing? And then delve deeper and say that *things* are also the receptacles of what is missing? That they too have the potential to expose, even what is unknown in them, as Levinas (1968) said.

In contrast to our sojourning in the absence of, Strand (1990) further reveals that he prefers to move as a way of keeping things whole. Envisioning that when walking, his body moves the air, and that the air *moves in* to fill the gap/spaces or the absence of where his body has been. I interpret this as a conscious attempt to keep things as they are, to view the world and/or things as constants, the effacing of what might be otherwise, while at the same time having the ability to direct the forces of nature. Keep in mind that my interpretation may be far from what Strand may have intended, but I appreciate that he acknowledges that in moving there is a disruption that occurs that relates to the wind and the physical articulation of the body on the land. For when I think of wind, I do not perceive it as a moving in that fills a void but a *moving around*.

For wind is moodiness personified, altering on a whim, recklessly transgressing the boundaries between places, between beings, between inner and outer worlds. The unruly poltergeist of our collective mental climate, wind, after all, is the ancient and ever-present source of the words "spirit" and "psyche." (Abram, 2010, p. 149)

As I stand in the field, I am at the epicenter of endless possibilities. I am reminded of Eber Hampton's (1995) philosophy on the use of the six directions of the

medicine wheel as outlined in “Towards a Redefinition of Indian Education,” and turn to them as a utilitarian way of presenting an ethical *o/Other* relationality that can serve as an educational perspective for helping to dismantle or redesigning the Western education canon (the master’s house). For instance, when outlining his six directions, *heaven* (spirit) and *earth*, which pertain to the “great mystery” and “mother earth” respectively, are presented as *directions*, whereas, the cardinal points are referred to as (directional) *winds*. Thus, from my point of reference, it is important to realize that when using this approach, I am using it strictly as a directional tool, where the winds are its guiding force. For I see myself as situated between the earth and sky—the spaces in between—the time *entre chien et loup*, where the encircling winds form the cyclonic maelstrom or anarchy necessary for doing this work. What I am especially drawn to is that for Hampton (1995) the six directions are linked to complex “...meanings, feelings, relationships, and movement” (p. 16), they provide a pattern for (re)thinking our existence in the universe, and that they overlap each other, thus, eliminating the idea of borders/boundaries. And as such, I view these six directions as evoking temporal and spatial concepts that speak to a shamanic historical consciousness (SHC). For my idea of wholeness is rooted in a (super)natural sensibility (Hampton, 1995) that encompasses all of those who have walked before me, who walk be(in)side me, and those who are yet to walk in my wake.

Correspondingly, because I am in search of a new ethic that seeks to erase the line between an *o/Other* relationality, I view my stance in the field of possibilities as encompassing Abram’s (2010) philosophy of shadow. In his book entitled *Becoming Animal an Earthly Cosmology* (2010), Abram wonders if the night is “...nothing other than a garment woven from all our disparate shadows, from those separate darknesses that walk on their own during the day, yet gather themselves into a common thickness as the sun slides behind the hills” (p. 19) and “...if it is the same shadow itself that looks out through our eyes at midday” (p. 17-18). I adopt this way of seeing the world as it speaks to the way I am understanding and presenting mixed identities (those that stem from mythohistories). The emphasis in mixed identities is not to highlight the biological reproduction, but to stress the importance of the relation. The individual does not lose his/her identity but (co)emerges in a mass of endless encounters with human and non-human entities—entertaining animistic tendencies, similar to that of the shadow at night.



The shadows (co)mingling can neither be viewed as a form of blending (*métis*) or hybridizing, but more as a participatory *métissage* "wit(h)nessing" (Lichtenberg Ettinger, 2005)—a witnessing-together that moves beyond the gaze. It is an indigenous *métissage* that is reminiscent of Dwayne Donald's (2011) analysis where he views the theoretical foundations of *métissage* as problematic because of "...their overreliance on postcolonial theories of hybridity" (p. 6). For Donald (2012) Indigenous *métissage* is an ethical relationality—"...an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other" (p. 535), and one that is uniquely Canadian.

Likewise, I see Abram's (2010) philosophy of shadow as speaking to the time *entre chien et loup*—the time between sunset when the domestic dog returns home for the night and the wolf awakens. Where, on the one hand, the domesticated dog represents society, ourselves when the shadow is imbibed within the body, contained, individualist, all the while creating a sense of wholeness. Where, on the other hand, the wolf is reminiscent of the societal disruptions, ourselves when fabricating garments of the many disparate shadows, wild, communal, and our anarchic responsibility to vigilantly interrupt the state's attempt at setting itself up as a whole. The distinction between that of a yelp and a howl.

As I prepare myself to present the groundings for my dissertation and all of its intricacies, I want to reiterate the importance of place, for I have chosen to firmly plant myself in Strand's (1990) field, and allow myself to be transformed by the rising and setting of the sun (shadow), the waxing and the waning of the moon (wolf medicine), the encircling air and prevailing winds, as symbolically representing the way I position myself in the world. For me, the *sky*, the upper atmosphere of the earth, signifies the unthematizable, the obscured, (distant) or ancestral *Other*. The *earth* is my immemorial connection to the land—the primeval mother and chthonian womb. By chthonian I am drawing on its multiple definitions: of earth, the underworld, and richness of the soil. And more specifically to *autochthonous*: Indigeneity that pertains to people, earth and geological formations and also to thoughts that tend to rise from the unknown as in psychology. Together these two directions—sky and earth—become the crucible for discovering the new ethic and combined with the directional winds, I let them carry me

along in search of it. For the *east wind* reminds me from whence I came, the *south wind*—the journey. The *west wind* is all about displacement, and the *north wind*—the great hibernation and each of these winds are the guiding force or inspiration behind my dissertation.

As one can readily see, although there appears to be a structural element to my thesis, how it is read will fall outside many academic conventions and traditional approaches. For instance, when considering “the whole thing,” like anarchy which represents the idea of moving away from rationalist principles—where reason is viewed as the root of knowledge and not experience, or is centered on self-evidence—my thesis asks that you allow yourself to sway in the breeze like the tall grass in the field, allow the winds to unclutter centuries of colonial thought, and allow the wind to whisper ancestral stories that have laid dormant for too long. One might say that this request is reminiscent of Manulani Aluli Meyer’s “epistemology of spirit,” where it

encourages us all to be of service, to not get drawn into the ego nurtured in academia, and to keep diving into the wellspring of our own awe. In that way our research is bound in meaning and inspired by service to others or to our natural environment. (as cited in Jacobs, 2008, p. 18).

In other words, in reading my thesis, it will require a “letting go,” a venturing into the text without preconceived notions of content, direction, or time—elements of a SHC. Why is this important? Because similar to Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett (2005), “...one of the most fundamental principles of Aboriginal research methodology is the necessity for the researcher to locate himself or herself...the only thing we can write about with authority is ourselves” (p. 97), and by doing so “we resist colonial models of writing by talking about ourselves first, and then relating pieces of our stories and ideas to the research topic” (p. 98). What this equates to is authenticity. An authenticity, I believe, could be included in Donald Trent Jacobs’s (Four Arrows) (2008) book *The Authentic Dissertation* because as he describes it, authentic dissertations “...are, in essence, spiritual undertakings and reflections that honor the centrality of the researcher’s voice, experience, creativity, and authority” (p. 1). Furthermore, I would say that my thesis falls within his list of 28 specifications, particularly when he defines creative dissertations as addressing such things as: the shortcomings of the English language, being interdisciplinary, revealing virtues and sustainability priorities, situated in experience, and

challenging forms of oppression, to name but a few. Therefore, it is precisely these sorts of (dis)positions that will also guide my work, as you will soon discover. And as such, let me begin by outlining what each of these winds will feel/look/sound like. Keeping in mind that these directions and winds are not being presented in a linear fashion, but cyclically and moving clockwise, characteristics of anticyclones, which center around regions of high atmospheric pressure in the northern hemisphere.

## **the six directions/winds**

### ***father sky***

Sky, the source of the wind and air, represents the unthematizable, the obscured, (distant) or ancestral *Other*. For Abram (2010) states that “[t]o our oral, indigenous ancestors, the animating air was the very place of the spirits, the very medium of awareness” (p. 273) that went beyond a simple metaphor. There was both “...an ancient and elemental kinship between air and awareness, between the mind and the wind” (p. 273). Thus, it is only befitting that my story begins here. In this space, I return to my initial question of how accepting would people be if we were to approach history—the stories of the past—seeking a new ethical approach that focused on the encounter with the “obscured *Other*” or in other words, with ghosts? Expanding upon Ruitenberg’s (2009) idea of “...understanding and theorizing education, education as séance, a coming to (speaking) terms with ghosts” (p. 296), I begin by recounting a personal experience that became the catalyst for this inquiry. In this story, I am invited to escort a loved one on an ancestral journey—a summoning to death—that leads me to ponder Sean Blenkinsop’s (2004) question, “Can death education become part of an ‘education for life’?” (p. 16). More specifically, can traversing the death frontier set the groundwork for exploring one’s existing connection to the past, might it provide the makings for an ethical relationality that focuses on the way history is approached and disseminated and can it help us (re)define what IE within the educational system comprises? Having been brought to what I deem the *threshold*, I draw heavily upon Emmanuel Levinas’s “ethics as first philosophy...[as] presented in the face-to-face relation” (Hand, 2009a, p. 75) because I believed it offered the possibility of (re)locating that which I sought. What I come away with is that for Levinas there are different ways of existing that play a role in

the way the face-to-face encounter is understood that, in regards to my experience with death, left me questioning its philosophy.

### **(m)Other earth**

What does it mean when I say the *earth* is my ancestral connection to the land—the primeval (m)Other and chthonian womb? By stating the earth is (m)Other, (re)acquaints and (re)turns us to a pre-boundary relationality—a frontierless ethicality that positions earth as life-giving, while severing the conventional ties that position her in a negative light as Abram (2010) outlines here:

Whatever is genuinely good in this world must have its ultimate source in what is above and ethereal, while whatever is dense, dark, and downward must be avoided at all costs. As though the damp soil underfoot was solely a medium of death and decay and not, as well, the very source and fundament of new life. As though what is deeper down below is best not pondered at all, lest we fall under the infernal influence. (Abram, 2010, p. 303)

Thus, the chthonian womb pertains to all the (mythical) beings dwelling under the earth that are born from an (auto)chthonous—aboriginal or indigenous place (earth). Under *earth* I return to questioning if traces of the (distant) Other could be found engrained in the encounters with others, could they be unearthed in geological formations and in artworkings and are they only accessible by traversing the death frontier? In other words, can traces of those who passed before me only be accessed with our notion of death? Here my story continues to a time when I was involved with rearticulating human skeletal remains, in preparation for repatriation and my being part of a forensic team that searched for human remains and where I was called to bear witness. It was from these experiences that I came into communion with histories of the silent Other via the molecular passages of my hands and the communicating of those histories through the mouth. And as a result, I argued that my hands and mouth became the reservoirs where the histories of the Other resided. However, during that period, I also wondered what the consequences would be if in the recounting of those histories, I misappropriated that which I had been gifted. Thus, under the element of *earth* I dig up the dirt, both literally and metaphorically, as a way of resuming the task of discovering an ethical o/Other relationality. Only to discover that the way people traverse the land, and

partake in her bounty, (co)relates to the way they approach the stories of the (distant) *Other*.

### ***east wind***

When I face east the wind reminds me of whence I came—where my people originate—guardians of the eastern gate, keepers of the great ancestral peace. It is here that I continue my quest seeking traces of the (distant) *Other*. Like many Canadians who looked to artifacts in museums, I became attracted to wampum belts (WB)—the material culture of my people—around the new millennium, where in the dream-state I was presented with a story of their creation. During that time of my life, I was going through a period of personal transformation, which included enrolling in a post-secondary institution, while constantly being haunted by my dream. It was then I made a conscious decision to parallel my academic journey with understanding the teachings behind the wampum. The WBs, as mnemonic devices, aided with the search for identity, history—stories of the past—and they are leading me towards a new ethic by allowing me to (re)connect, (re)acquaint and (re)tune myself with different ways of knowing/seeing/reading the world—an *art* that for the most part has been denied/ devalued/ disdained by family, church, state and the *other* (the living).

More importantly, by focusing on the teaching of the WBs, particularly that of the *Kaswentha*<sup>26</sup> or The Two Row Wampum (as it is commonly referred to), I come to discover, that like Levinas's (1978) dual existences, the WBs were/are created to serve both the political and spiritual realms, and was/is dependent on how the wampum were/are approached (i.e. read, or viewed). And as such, there is both an appearance and apparition of the wampum that occurs, where the former is presented in a way as to obfuscate the latter. In other words, the “things” in the world of appearances, have attached to them apparitions, or shadows that follow them relentlessly, and that for the most part, apparitions/shadows are overlooked. However, under the *east wind* it is about shifting our gaze toward the latter—the spiritual element of the wampum—

<sup>26</sup> I am aware that there are spelling variations in relation to this wampum belt, such as, Gaswenta, Gustwenta, and Kahswentah, but I have chosen this spelling out of preference and not correctness.

because when speaking in regards to a spiritual ecology of IE, for example, Cajete (1994) defines spirituality as evolving from the exploration, the coming to know, and experiencing "...the nature of the living energy moving in each of us, through us, and around us" (p. 42), which I posit, arise from the feminine or what I term the *Ellemental*. And as such, having worked with the WB for close to two decades, what is revealed, can be viewed as nothing shy of a (historical) rebirth.

### ***south wind***

In the element of the *south wind*, I continue exploring where I left off: focusing on the spiritual or apparition of the wampum, while seeking a new ethic via different stories. And as such, I begin my journey by recounting two events that occurred to me in relation to my daughters, which together become the catalyst for revisiting the narrative associated with the *Kaswentha*. What occurs, is that I embark on an expedition that not only takes me abroad, but has me also venturing back in time. Having discovered my role in relation to the wampum was in their rearticulation, I test out my theory by presenting my ideas at the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education which took place on the island of O'ahu, Hawai'i. It is there that like Lenart Škof (2015) points out, "[t]he other [was] inspired into me or into my mysterious interior in a way that [was] not only symbolised by breathing but [was] also a consequence of exposure to wind" (p. 137). Škof further states that

The wind/air is a mesocosmic medium in two senses: as that which fills the in-between space, from which gestures and language emerge, and as that which brings gestures and language into the order of the ethical: the pneumatic principle of reciprocity, the relationship between the interiority and the exteriority. (p. 137)

Thus, by going and sharing my ideas regarding the spiritual side of the wampum—the *Ellemental*—I viewed it as a reciprocal exchange, and an impregnation that gave birth to the gestures and language I needed in order to prepare myself for the (new) ethic. In other words, it was those whom I encountered that provided me with *beads* necessary for not only (re)beading the *Kaswentha* and my doctoral wampum belt, but more importantly, beads that would assist with the weaving together segments of thoughts, collections of words, and help with the presentation of ideas pertaining to the *Ellemental*, when writing my thesis. Like the quotes suggest, it was the wind/air circulating within,

through and around us, entering and exiting, which created a reciprocal bond akin to what transpires within the inter-uterine space. And it is precisely from this experience that I ventured back in time, to the Iroquois and Māori Creation stories in order to (re)set the *Kaswentha* narrative, which is based on twins, blood and the River of Immortality—shamanic *Ellements*.

### ***west wind***

The *west wind*, with its fierce current, is a wind of displacement. Not being from the west, I always viewed myself as a visitor to these parts, thus, displacement in this sense pertains to one's association to a traditional land where the bones of one's ancestors are buried. However, on a more cosmic level, displacement is a transposition between worlds (i.e. between earthly and spirit worlds), which in turn becomes a decolonizing methodology. In regards to the *Ellemental*, or inter-uterine space, what occurs to the placenta is a form of *dis-placenta*-ment if you will. And as such, in the element of the *west wind*, my story continues with narratives around the targeting of woman's bodies, not only as example of a female (spiritual) genocidal continuum, but also as a calculated means to land procurement because according to Anderson (2000)

[i]n both western and Indigenous frameworks, Native women have historically been equated with the land. The Euro-constructed image of Native women, therefore, mirrors western attitudes towards the earth. Sadly, this relationship has typically developed within the context of control, conquest, possession and exploitation. The Euro-Canadian image of Native women has been constructed within this context and has evolved along with the evolving relationship of European people to this continent. (p. 100)

Therefore, by outlining such things as: *The Sterilization Acts*, placental incineration, fetal voyeurism, and Plato's allegory of the cave, I posit, they played a role in maintaining the aforementioned. Equally, they set in motion the displacement of the proto-ethical *o/Other* relationship that stems from the inter-uterine space, or what I term a first contact sensibility (FCS)—an ethic I postulate supersedes the moral responsibility and ethical indebtedness one has towards the past; characteristics of the two historical consciousness strands.

## ***north wind***

When the *north wind* starts to blow, bear reminds us it is time for the great hibernation. During this period, the bear enters (m)Other earth's chthonian womb (den) and prepares for the long winter that is ahead of her by "turning in." To some, this earthly enclosure is the Dream Lodge, where bear medicine provides the teachings regarding (re)connecting with the ancestors through visions, dreams or personal quests. Thus, in the element of the *north wind*, it moves us away from a contemplative reflection and/or introspection, to what I term a *uteroin*spection. I draw upon bear medicine because she epitomizes the inter-uterine space—the *El*emental, and her teachings are akin to what I deemed a first contact sensibility (FCS). This is not only symbolized within her earthen womb, but that in her lethargic, self-relinquishment, she gives birth to twin (or triplet) cubs, thus preparing us for a delivery. By delving into a *uterosp*ection speaks to the origin (the first truth), and in its (re)acknowledgement it has the possibility of rekindling a proto-ethical o/Other relationality, and redefining IE. In order to do so though, I argue, can only be done through trauma, where trauma comprises a decentering of the I (or ego).

And as such, I begin by juxtaposing a childhood event with Levinas's experience in the German stalag—the WWII prisoner-of-war-camps where I focus on the effects of captivity, to explore how a woundedness, or traumatic life-event, from an Indigenous perspective, can become mobilized, brought into its full stage of development, and serve as "...a constant reminder of an important teaching" (Cajete, 1994, p. 228). Similarly, I introduce a French (Western) point of view on trauma, introducing *la petite mort*—a term that literally means a small death—which is experienced within the highest forms of ecstasy, but where in each extreme, there is a form of self-relinquishment, and the capacity for transcendence. However, what I propose is needed has to do with the way we "see" things. It requires "perfecting the art," where art pertains to how we know/see/read the world. For it is in the *north wind* that the reader comes to realize that the four winds lead me back to Strand's (1990) field, only to discover that the field is an allegory of Being, with my emergence in and from (m)Other earth's chthonian womb.



## father sky

In (re)quickening a shamanic historical consciousness (SHC) as a means for the emergence of an ethical *o/Other* relationality to manifest, I situate myself in Strand's (1990) field because it represents the *axis mundi*, the *omphalos*, the *umbilicus* of this dissertation. For it is in the field where the sky and earth "...are inextricably linked within one indivisible field, integrated along the tangled life-lines of its inhabitants" (Ingold, 2006, p. 18), of which I am a part, and where both provide the necessary receptacle for (re)envisioning an ethic that stems from the recounting of a new story. It is also within this world-container where the "[b]reathing in and out, one alternately takes in the medium and surrenders to it. Inspiration is wind becoming breath, expiration is breath becoming wind. The alternation of coming and going, in respiration, is essential to life" (Ingold, 2007, p. S31), and is vital for both the relation and the relationship. Equally, because my quest seeks to erase the boundaries between the things we obscure, my positionality in field attempts to dispel the borderline that is generally perceived between the sky and earth. For some, the sky is understood as a space with no surface, light, ethereal, and the place where angels abide and associate it with goodness, grandeur, or God, whereas everything down below is dirty, dark, dank, or dead (Ingold, 2006)—the domain of the devil—a sort of Manichaeian duality. Therefore, as an *in*-habitor of this space, I look to Ingold's (2000) animic ontology as relation to sky and earth because "[l]ife in the animic ontology is not an emanation but a generation of being, in a world that is not preordained but incipient, forever on the edge of the actual" (p. 113). It is also here that "...we have become estranged from our direct experience (and hence from our primordial contact with the entities and elements that surround us)" as Abram (1996, p. 60) so eloquently reminds us.

Although I purposely accentuate the sky and earth as each representing two of my six directions/winds, it is solely for the purpose of addressing each individually and to assist with the presentation of ideas. Thus, by setting my gaze skyward, I begin by (re)posing my initial question that asked: how accepting would people be if we were to

approach history—the stories of the past—seeking a new ethical approach that focused on the encounter with the “obscured *Other*” or in other words, with ghosts? But before we consider this question, let me clarify that I am aware that I might appear to be contradicting myself by situating ghosts (angel-like apparitions) within the element of *sky*, thus, further concretizing the idea of a boundary between sky and earth. However, the purpose for situating ghosts, or better yet, the obscured *Other* within *sky* is to emphasize that, within this vastness, I might discover how in our estrangedness from entities and elements, we have lost not only our primordial contact but have also become obscurers in the process. Therefore, it is within this great expanse that I may come in communion with the unthematizable, the obscured, (distant) or ancestral *Other*. But more importantly, as Abram (1996) reminds us,

...the invisible atmosphere that animates the visible world—the subtle presence that circulates both within us and between all things—retains within itself the spirit or breath of the dead person until the time when that breath will enter and animate another visible body—a bird, or a deer, or a field of wild grain. (p.15)

So what happens when the breath of those who have passed before us, lingers in places and spaces, until such time when they are inspired, and are taken up again? What ethical relationality might emerge from this intermingling? And what effects might this have on the way history is understood, and how it is rearticulated? Especially when, as Abram (1996) says,

In the oral, animistic world of pre-Christian and peasant Europe, all things—animals, forests, rivers, and caves—had the power of expressive speech, and the primary medium of this collective discourse was the air. In the absence of writing, human utterance, whether embodied in songs, stories, or spontaneous sounds, was inseparable from the exhaled breath....Only as the written text began to speak would the voices of the forest, and of the river, begin to fade. And only then would language loosen its ancient association with the invisible breath, the spirit sever itself from the wind, the psyche dissociate itself from the environing air. (p. 253-254)

As such, in my aspiration to provide an *other* way of encountering the world, I do so via the written and the wampum, two media that are impregnated with the invisible breath and traces of the unthematizable, the obscured, (distant) or ancestral *Other*. So, in my quest for a new ethic, I invite us to repose ourselves upon the earth in Strand’s (1990)

field and look to the sky as a way to (re)connect with the ancestral breath, story and song—a befitting place for the new story to give rise.

## **the molar**

Not too long ago, I had to have an emergency dental extraction to remove one of my lower molars because of the excruciating pain I was experiencing. It had been such a long time since I had a tooth removed, I was not quite sure what to expect and at first, what was described as a regular procedure, lasted longer than both the dentist and I anticipated. It was as if subconsciously I was not prepared to relinquish my tooth so readily. My tooth had served me well for half a century and losing it felt like I was losing a part of myself. I imagined that, for most, it was viewed as just a tooth and I was making more out of it than was necessary. However, after the tooth was finally extracted and I was staring at the last x-ray that would confirm all was removed, it was there that I noticed that although the tooth was gone, a faint image of where the tooth once was, was still evident. Like an amputee convinced of his/her phantom limb, I had to try and convince myself that the tooth no longer existed, even though there was a history engrained in relation with the neighbouring teeth, and a tangible connection with the side of my tongue and mouth. With the extraction of my lower molar, I also had to prepare myself for the loss of the upper molar; without contact, it would slowly descend in search of its mate and eventually the gravitational pull would dislodge the upper molar—a sort of dental suicide if you will. I thought of the molar that was already on its journey of descent and wondered if, like me and my relation with my long-lost brother, as described in the *pre*-face, represented what was missing—the tooth that was extracted and my brother with his passing—respectively, and if in life we were naturally drawn to death or inseparable to the past. In other words, I questioned if the remaining molar and myself represented what was missing, and were we always connected or drawn to what once was?

Correspondingly, while I was going through the ordeal of having my tooth extracted, I thought of *Lui*,<sup>27</sup> and how it was the same tooth that began the last chapter of his life, the tooth that pronounced the cancer. I thought about his passing and wondered if like the descending tooth, I was the absence of *Lui*. For two weeks before his passing, I was summoned to death, asked to escort my loved one on his ancestral journey across what I deem the *threshold*. In my questioning, I was reminded of Linda Hogan's (2008) poem entitled *Call*, and wondered if, in the summoning, death knew our language, if our ancient association with the invisible breath was being made manifest within the encircling air. I present the poem, as a way to sojourn in the moment, to open ourselves to greater possibilities, and to consider something that might be *Otherwise*.

#### Call

I don't know what you call it  
when the lion sounds wounded and calls  
the smaller animals  
with their healthy coats and paws,  
and they go as if death knows their language  
and can change it to another.  
The wolf, too, knows the words of the elk and moose  
and how to call them forward  
and with the coyote the lovely vole arises  
with soft fur from the underground.  
This, this is how some hear their god  
and wander off toward it or him  
and then are taken in  
while the god walks on mighty and full,  
passing others, generous at last. (p. 96)

What if the traces of history were the same? If the landscape, the artifacts, and people retained hints of what once was—the stories of the past or the (distant) *Other*? And if it is the *other*, that is, those around us that obscure them? Although I could no longer see my tooth on the x-ray, save for a faint apparition, the tooth was still there in relation to the tooth that remained—it had a history in relation to my being. The same thing could be said about my brother. Although he could no longer be seen, there remains a relation and a history between him and I because of my role as the replacement child. So what is about death that compels us forward? “Can death education become part of an “education for life” (p. 16), as Sean Blenkinsop (2004) has

<sup>27</sup> *Lui* refers to someone near and dear to my heart that I chose to refer to as *Him*, out of respect for his memory and his situatedness.

asked? In order to begin considering these questions, I return to my story, and to Emmanuel Levinas's (1969) ideas behind ethics being "the extreme exposure and sensitivity of one subjectivity to another" (Levinas & Kearney, 1986, p. 29-30) in order to determine whether my experience with *Lui* could reveal a Levinasian ethicality. But first I need to get a clearer understanding of what this extreme exposure and sensitivity entails in relation to ethics, and as such, I turn my attention to Levinas's (1969) views on the face-to-face encounter—an ethics as first philosophy—to later determine if in the (re)visitation it might provide the groundings for an ethical o/Other relationality. But first, let us take a deeper look at the face-to-face encounter.

## **face-to-face**

During my last doctoral course, we, the students, were required to become in the "discipline of" something that spoke to our doctoral thesis or area of interest. I understood this task to mean honing a skill where the boundaries between the person and the skill were no longer distinguishable. An example of this would be learning a musical instrument and reaching a point where one's musical instrument becomes an extension of oneself, rather than two separate entities. In my case, I was seeking to create alliances *with* (and not *for*) those who had passed before me, and who were generally obscured from the historical/contemporary context. I was looking to craft an ethical o/Other relationality where the line between the living (lowercase o) and the obscured, (distant) or ancestral *Other* (uppercase O) would be erased with the recounting of a different story. Furthermore, I was interested in how, as obscurers, we were implicated in the ethical relationship I sought.

Because my assignment was not an easy one, I sought to train myself to see and read things differently, to open myself up to a different form of receptivity, to view each encounter, be it with an *other* (living person), geological formation, or artifact, as a potential site or harbinger where the traces of the (distant) *Other* lay, and to focus more on what might be obscured within those encounters. Especially because during that same period, I was also preparing myself for the passing of *Lui*, and I knew that any moment, I would receive the *call*, the summoning that would lead me to death. In a way,

one could say I was already in the discipline of, journeying through the borderlands and among burial scaffolds of the world, in the spaces in between.

When considering what was before me, I drew upon Emmanuel Levinas's (1969) ethics as first philosophy—the face-to-face—as a means of trying to make sense of the journey I was embarking on because for Levinas, the face-to-face is rooted in “...our ethical responsibility to the other” (Levinas & Kearney, 1986, p. 30). It was/is a responsibility like no other in that the face that comes to me, signifies as a trace “...of the utterly bygone, utterly passed absent” (Levinas, 1968, p. 355), and where “...this trace is not a sign like no other” (p. 356). For “[e]verything is arranged in an order, in a world, where each thing reveals another or is revealed in function of another” (Levinas, 1968, p. 356). In other words, I looked to Levinas's philosophy because it offered a possibility of (re)locating that which I sought. It valued the face and the encounter with the other, outside of myself, that is, it spoke to a decentering of the I (or ego), the extreme exposure between one subjectivity and another (Levinas & Kearney, 1986). And lastly, because it spoke to an order where things are revealed in and of themselves or in relation to another, akin to that of my brother, the molar, and *Lui*.

Situating my story within a Levinasian ethic also allows for the potential of a shamanic historical consciousness (SHC). It permits me to take up where I left off, that is, remembering that, for Levinas morality and ethicality are quite distinct. On the one hand, morality from his view is seen as stemming from the socio-political order of the impersonal third (Levinas & Kearney, 1986) and requires using an anarchic disposition to aid in disrupting the totalizing operations of the state (Strhan, 2012)—the idea of keeping things whole, part of the moral societal decay, which I presented was at the core of the cognitive strand of historical consciousness (HC). On the other hand, ethics, which is at the center of critical HC, is rooted in an interhuman approach. This ethicality, continues to inspire the former, and is formed by the interchanges between people, it is the passing on of valued information via a communicative act, and the learning that takes place from within the disturbances of what is revealed. This disturbance is a means of disrupting common historical ideologies. By positioning both of these HC strands as the bases of my thesis, they become catalysts for establishing a SHC that expands the contribution of Levinasian inspired ethics to the field of HC. More specifically, in the element of *sky*, I want to touch upon Levinas's idea of the face in the

face-to-face relation (Levinas, 1969), the decentering of the I (or ego) or the interruption of the *conatus essendi* (Robbins, 2001), and speak of death (Levinas, 1987a) in relation to the trace of the *Other* (Levinas, 1968), while weaving them in and out of my journey with *Lui*.

*Lui* had been ill for some time, battling cancer of the mandible. We were certain, because he underwent reconstructive surgery to remove the malignant growth, he would be granted a new lease on life especially because the odds of surviving such a procedure (the removal of an invasive tumour and the facial disfigurement) were odds that most would not chance or accept. But he chose the risk, he tried desperately to extend his life for the sake of his children. Throughout it all, one could say, he held a brave face in more ways than one, particularly, when the cancer invaded other regions of his body. During that time, I knew it would not be long before I would receive the call, the summoning, and on the morning I ventured off to class and found a dead bird on my path, I knew the time had arrived. It was as if the language of death abided in the wind, and the message was even more than the bird could contain. And at that moment, I remember feeling an overwhelming sense of inspiration, as if the whole world opened itself onto me, because I knew I would soon accompany *Lui* on his ancestral journey. Poetic words from Rabindranath Tagore's (2005) book entitled *Gitanjali* entered my thoughts, and I could hear the *LXXXVI* song as if it emanated from the lifeless bird. For the words seemed to speak of my calling:

DEATH, THY servant is at my door. He has crossed the unknown sea  
and brought thy call to my home. The night is dark and my heart is  
fearful-yet. I will take up the lamp, open my gates and bow to him my  
welcome. It is thy messenger who stands at my door. I will worship him  
with folded hands, and with tears. I will worship him placing at his feet the  
treasure of my heart. He will be back with his errand done, leaving a dark  
shadow on my morning; and in my desolate home only my forlorn self will  
remain as my last offering to thee. (p. 65)

I approached Tagore's (2005) song as indicative of the duty that lay ahead of me: on death being viewed as leaving a (dark) shadow on the morn—a trace left in the light of day, and a self-relinquishment as my response to the *Other*—a trace left where I once abided. The former returned me to questioning if perhaps there was more to Abram's (2010) pondering: if the night is "...nothing other than a garment woven from all our disparate shadows, from those separate darknesses that walk on their own during the

day, yet gather themselves into a common thickness as the sun slides behind the hills” (p. 19) and “...if it is the same shadow itself that looks out through our eyes at midday” (p. 17-18). And with the latter, in my self-relinquishment as response to the *Other*, I wondered if, in the summoning, I would be reanimated with the breath of *Lui*. Was I then, in the self-surrendering, providing or becoming the human-container or womb for the *Other* to reside—sustaining both the shadow and the breath—gestating? With those thoughts in mind, I journeyed east towards *Lui*, harbouring the feeling that upon my return, I would no longer be the same person.

While the gods walked on mightily and full as Hogan (2008) described, I strode on heavily and empty, and I yearned for an alternative scenario: one where *Lui* would be well, and I would be at ease with myself. Two simple desires that were prime examples of wanting to keep things whole and the focusing inward on the self, ontology, and egoism at its finest. I knew that in order to understand Levinas’s philosophy and attempt to “become in the discipline of,” my anarchic responsibility had to commence with shattering these two personal needs. Responding to the *Other*, and letting go of the self, spoke to my understanding of the idea of the face-to-face, more specifically, the face and interrupting the *conatus essendi* respectively. But how could each lead us to the trace of the *Other*, especially in regards to death? How might these play out in regards to my journey with *Lui*? And lastly, how could I, who had struggled to release one tooth, relinquish the self, surrender my ego, and attend to a task of such magnitude, especially when so many depended on me to be there for him when they could not? But before I attempt to answer these questions, let me commence by acknowledging, that for me, having chosen to focus on select areas of Levinas’s face-to-face encounter, I am not presenting his philosophy in its entirety. My simplification and/or interpretation, may appear incomplete, but this is not out of disrespect or ignorance; it is due both to the specific focus of this dissertation, against the backdrop of the depths of Levinas’s thoughts and the enormity of his *œuvre*. Likewise, I purposely selected these areas of focus because they appeared to resonate with my search for (re)locating an ethical *o/Other* relationality. And as such, I present but a hint of Levinas’s face-to-face philosophy (via my own understanding), while weaving in and out of my story with *Lui*.



## slipping from the light into darkness

As I sat vigilant at the crossroads of the world, I knew that it would not be long before *Lui* would slip away. The ambiance of the room was sombre and my boys, who were also present, sat grief-stricken, as if paralyzed, and I felt like I was approaching what I deemed the threshold. I had been here before; I was no stranger to death, but this time I waited patiently with folded hands and with tears like those in the quote from Tagore (2005) above. I found myself communing with the universe, making my intentions clear that I was fully present and attentively “being in the discipline of.” I was there to bear witness to the filling in. I wanted to see if, in being responsible to and for the *Other*, I might somehow be the one who would fill in the gap when the breath slipped away. By doing so, was I attempting to keep things whole in a way that was obscuring for my boys, who were also sitting on the threshold? Subconsciously, as a mother, I felt I needed to protect them, particularly when at their young age, they were experiencing an event, many would rather pass up (myself included). As I watched and waited, I was suddenly distracted by a woman who was assisting us. She had wanted to tell me something and asked if I would step outside the room for a moment. And at that very instant, when my gaze shifted from *Lui's visage* to the direction of the door, even before I could locate the door with my eyes, my son cried out to me that *Lui* had stopped breathing. I was totally devastated because I had missed “seeing” the moment unfolding, and with my vigilance disrupted, I felt violated and forsaken. It was the moment that would haunt me the most and preoccupied my time. I remember returning home and asking those closest to me, why I had been denied, and none could produce an answer that spoke to what lay within me. Something had occurred apart from the denial, something that I was unable to identify. The closest I could come to expressing this unknown was by referring to it as an exposure, a vastness, something that has left me wide open. There was, and still is, a yearning, a desire to return to the moment, and oddly enough, I looked for answers by defaulting to the obvious, that is, speaking to those around me in a way they would comprehend and never linking death to a sort of mystery. It began to frustrate me because it not only trivialized the immensity, at times it voided it all together. So, might this be how we have lost our primordial contact with the entities and elements, by effacing that which is unknown or unthematizable? Might it

also be a history too distant to worry or care about? Or perhaps a relation with the discomfort one would rather avoid?

In *Existence and Existents*, (1978), and in the original text *De l'existence a l'existant* (1947), Levinas outlines how there is a duality in existence: an inwardness and an anonymity. The inward existence is caught up in itself, its ego, the *conatus essendi*. This form of existence drags behind it a weight or shadow that follows it relentlessly as Levinas puts it because “[i]t does not purely and simply exist” (p. 28). The inward existence is a subject with an affinity to the light, where whatever lies outside is graspable and comprehended when illuminated. The light also makes possible the containment of the exterior from the inward, akin to how the cogito and sense are structured (i.e. Descartes’ philosophy, I think therefore I am), that is, “[t]he very idea of totality or of a whole is only intelligible where there is a being that can embrace it. There is a totality because it relates to an inwardness in the light” (p. 48-49).

Existence as anonymity, however, is an existence that “...is not synonymous with the relationship with a world; it is antecedent to the world” (Levinas, 1978, p. 21). Equally, relationship in this sense is more of an analogy, “...[f]or the Being which we become aware of when the world disappears is not a person or a thing, or the sum total of persons or things; it is the fact that one is, the fact that [*il y a*] *there is*” (p. 21). The *il y a*, the there is, pertains to the impersonal, the formless, which the night provides with its total exclusion of the light. In the darkness of night, the absence invades like a presence, and according to Levinas (1978),

What we call the I is itself submerged by the night, invaded, depersonalized, stifled by it. The disappearance of all things and of the I leaves what cannot disappear, the sheer fact of being in which *one* participates, whether one wants to or not, without having taken the initiative, anonymously. Being remains, like a field of forces, like a heavy atmosphere belonging to no one, universal, returning in the midst of the negation which put it aside, and in all the powers to which that negation may be multiplied. (p. 58)

Levinas (1978) further describes the *il y a*, with its field of force, and its heavy atmosphere as an “indeterminate menace” (p. 59)—a horror—because one is left exposed. However, he clarifies that

...the insecurity does not come from the things of the day world which the night conceals; it is due just to the fact that nothing approaches, nothing comes, nothing threatens; this silence, this tranquility, this void of sensations constitutes a mute, absolutely indeterminate menace....The things of the day world then do not in the night become the source of the "horror of darkness" because our look cannot catch them in their "unforeseeable plots"; on the contrary, they get their fantastic character from this horror. Darkness does not only modify their contours for vision; it reduces them to undetermined, anonymous being, which sweats in them. (p. 59)

But the questions remain: how does one enter in and out of the anonymous existence, especially when it cannot be affirmed, why is the inward existence the ideal, and what more, if anything, can be said about the *il y a*, the there is? In attempting to answer these questions, Levinas (1978) reiterates that within the inward existence, the existent is existing, whereas, in the anonymous the existing is without the existent. When laying out his thesis, Levinas went through great lengths in order to outline how insomnia, pleasure, nausea, wakefulness, indolence, suffering, and pain were ways one could move away from the mastery of existing, and escape from the self. But the way most relevant to my thesis is death. What is unique about death, according to Levinas (1978), is that it is something unknowable, ungraspable, it is of the future, and not yet time. Because it cannot be said that someone has experienced it, like returning from death, death remains inexplicable, and signifies that it cannot take place in the light of the inward existence where one can grasp it. The most one could maintain is that death is a relation with a mystery, and it is an inevitable event, which cannot be assumed unless it becomes part of the present. For when it comes, "...we are no longer *able to be able* [*nous ne 'pouvons plus pouvoir*]. It is exactly thus that the subject loses its very mastery as a subject" (p. 74). Until such time, there is an interval between the two instances: the present where the existent is in the proximity of death and the moment when death comes, where the existent is no longer—a whole abyss—a "...margin [that is] at once both insignificant and infinite" (Levinas, 1987a, p. 79). That is to say, an abyss between the present and death, and the ego and the alterity (otherness) of the mystery of death. An abyss I relate to my journeying through the borderlands and among burial scaffolds of the world, in the spaces in between, and correspondingly one that I questioned epitomized the idea, that while sitting alongside *Lui*, was the chasm suspended between the two existences as Levinas had described.

At this point, one could assume that in my inability to master death, death would slip in the realm of the anonymous existence, the *il y a*, and that it would explain why Levinas described the *il y a* as a horrific menace, an unknown. *Au contraire*, Levinas (1978) clarifies that the “[h]orror is nowise an anxiety about death” (p. 61). And Mary-Jane Rubenstein further reminds us of two important things. Firstly, she references Levinas (1978) stating that by “...divesting the self from itself, the *il y a* reveals the ‘impossibility of death,’ the ‘unbreakable commitment’ to existence, the ‘eternal responsibility of being’” (as cited in Rubenstein, 2008, p. 73), thereby situating death outside of the *il y a*. Secondly, the divesting of the self also sets the stage as an “ethical forerunner” for the “astonishing idea of infinity” that would dominate Levinas’s later works, and would be the guiding force behind his face-to-face philosophy (a point I will further unfold in a subsequent section).

In a chapter called “Openness” (2008), Rubenstein takes the time to outline the dual movement of the existent to-and-from the *il y a*, in two subsections: “Opening Out: From Existent to Existence,” and “Closing Down: From Existence to Existent.”. In the latter section, she highlights how the title of Levinas’s book *Existence and Existents*, (1978) lost its meaning with the English translation, and that its original title, *De l’existence à l’existant* (1947), not only emphasized the returned journey of the existent from existence (the returning from the *il y a*), but it also accentuated the singularity of the existent, a point that stresses the individual’s relationship to existence and others as being a personal endeavour, an accomplishment. Moreover, according to Levinas (1978), “In the understood universe I am alone, that is, closed up in an existence that is definitively *one*” (p. 85). There are considerable implications because

[a]fter uncovering the faceless, “mute, absolutely indeterminate menace” that unsettles every self-constituted self, Levinas proceeds to work not through the *il y a* but rather *against it*, ultimately reconstituting the deconstituted self....Far from giving itself over to its primordial dispersion in the *il y a*, then, the existent must gather itself together by taking up a position—an ontic solidification that Levinas names *l’hypostase*....In the self-positing moment of *hypostasis*, the existent becomes itself by gathering itself together against the *il y a* that tends to dispossess it. (Rubenstein, 2008, p. 73)

Accordingly, in the state of hypostasis the existent is being reconstituted, and in moving away from the *il y a*, an apparition of the substantive is viewed as being in the first stage

of liberation. Unfortunately, this “liberation from itself appears as an infinite task” (Levinas, 1978, p. 84) because the determinate subject must always be on watch for “ghostly resurgences of the indeterminate menace” (Rubenstein, 2008, p. 74). Correspondingly, it is precisely this phantom that Levinas (1978) deemed a heavy weight or shadow that follows the existent relentlessly. In other words, “Levinas presents an image of the hypostatic self as ‘chained’ to itself, in bondage to itself, dragging its own existence behind like a late afternoon shadow” (Rubenstein, 2008, p. 74). And as much as the maintenance of this freedom is unremitting, it is necessary because “[b]efore the subject can be opened to the needs of the other...he must make himself master of the astonishing horror of being” (Rubenstein, 2008, p. 74). Hence, become an existent.

The last point is crucial because, according to Levinas, mastering the astonishing horror of being, then prepares one for the second stage of liberation, which is linked with the idea of infinity, the ungraspability of the future, and comes about via the face-to-face relation, that is, one’s ethical responsibility for the *other*. On the one hand, the face-to-face relation—the alterity of the other—presents itself similarly to death, in that “...something absolutely unknowable appears. Absolutely unknowable means foreign to all light, rendering every assumption of possibility impossible, but where we ourselves are seized” (Levinas, 1987a, p. 71). And on the other hand, the face-to-face is a “radical breakup” that “shatters the definitiveness of the ego” (Levinas, 1978, p. 85) comparable to that of the *il y a*. But before we precede any further, it is first important to mention that the *face* for Levinas must not be understood

...in a biological, ethnic or even social sense. [It] emerges as the emblem of everything that fundamentally resists categorization, containment or comprehension....The idea of infinity which the face encapsulates is for Levinas the key means by which thought is brought into relation with what goes beyond its capacity....[and]...this founding face also signifies the existence already of a fundamental pluralism. Others exist before me. (Hand, 2009b, p.42-43)

Things that resist categorization, containment or comprehension, such as the alterity of the other, the idea of infinity, death, and God are triggered only in relation with the other because the other brings that which goes beyond my capacity, that which I cannot grasp. But most of all, the face, of which Levinas described as *trauma* due to “...my denucleation by and for the otherness of my neighbour and vice versa”

(Rubenstein, 2008, p. 67)—not only exemplifies the priority of the ethical relation with the other, but signals my “...way to the Otherness of God/Infinity” (p. 67)—the pluralism of the *Other* (uppercase O). Let me reiterate by saying that I understand the face-to-face as rooted in an ethical relationality because it is through the other that I can have an idea of infinity, as where the trace of God can be found (Levinas, 1968). Similarly, “[t]he reason infinity ruptures such a recollection for Levinas is that it cannot be contained properly in the soul’s vision or memory; rather, it must come from *outside* the thinking self” (Rubenstein, 2008, p. 67).

Although Levinas shied away from mentioning/including the word God in his earlier writings, in his latter works he did not. For the purpose of this dissertation however, the discussion on God will be bracketed out, except to emphasize two crucial factors that are linked to the notion of God. Firstly, when Levinas accentuates the difference between other or Other (*autre* or *Autrui*), the latter in French already implies an element of God in its definition. Secondly, Levinas (1968), in addressing the implication of God in *Autrui*, introduces us to this third person as being “*beyond being*, which is not definable by the oneself, by ipseity [self-hood]” (p. 356), and “...in the enigma of a trace...[has]...called illeity” (Levinas, 1997, p. 12). For Levinas (1997), “[i]lleity lies outside the ‘thou’ and the thematization of objects. A neologism formed with *il* (he) or *ille*, it indicates a way of concerning me without entering into conjunction with me” (p. 12). More explicitly Levinas (1968) states,

Through a trace the irreversible past takes on the profile of a “He.” The beyond from which a face comes is in the third person. The pronoun He expresses exactly its inexpressible irreversibility, already escaping every relation as well as every dissimulation, and in this sense absolutely unencompassable or absolute, a transcendence in an absolute past. (p. 356)

Therefore, “[t]o go toward Him is not to follow this trace which is not a sign; it is to go toward the others who stand in the trace of illeity” (p. 359). In short, when one is in the second stage of liberation—that is, being decentered by the face of the other—one comes into communion with not only the idea of infinity, but illeity (the third person)—Him—God (written/understood in the masculine form).

Returning to my experience with *Lui*, I have purposely chosen to refer to my loved one by the term *Lui*, as it too means Him but in the singular, mainly to acknowledge not a third person but that of the one in front of me, the one that, according to Levinas, was necessary not only for the ethical relation, but for providing all that I was unable to contain, grasp or obtain. Equally, because of what happened to me in the moment when *Lui* was slipping away from the light, a couple things stood out that made me question Levinas's idea of the face-to-face and the ethical relation. Initially, it was not until my eyes left *Lui*'s visage or face and focused on "nothing", did I slip into darkness (the unknown). To better understand this, I return to Levinas's (1978) view on insomnia, where in the vigilance or watch/wakefulness there is no longer objects or a subject (*moi*), there is only the night (darkness). A presence arises in the void left by the absence—the reawakening of the *il y a*. What ultimately occurs then, it is no longer I who watches, "...in insomnia it is the night itself that watches. It watches" (p. 66).

Furthermore, approaching the assignment that was set before me, I realize that I was arriving as an existent in an inward existence, that is, closed up in an existence that was definitively one, as Levinas mentions in a previous quote. However, in the moment of shifting my gaze, the arrival of the future and death meeting up with the present, and the margins of the abyss collapsing brought on a sensation similar to giving birth—the exposure, the vastness, the being left wide open—a *trauma*. This is a topic Seán Hand (2009) identified in Levinas's earlier works when he mentions "This complete and uncalculating proximity, where I am in the total service to the other without even the thought of service arising, has earlier been linked by Levinas to the state of maternity" (p. 55).

And as much as I am understanding the situation of the face-to-face as representing my face in relation to alterity: the face that approaches me, the future, death—the second stage of liberation—I want to linger with my thoughts for a moment and consider the idea that perhaps the ethical relation that arises from the face-to-face or *inter*-subjectivity arises *a priori* within our "own" existence, or better yet, the anonymous. And that out of Levinas's exigency to move the existent away from the *il y a* has overlooked a vital aspect. Thus, I want to push the boundaries even further and posit that the inward existence of the existent not only obscures its self from the alterity of the one that approaches, but that it also obfuscates its connection to the anonymity of

its self because it has become reliant on the light, if you will. What I am implying here, is that “[v]ision is a forgetting of the [*il y a*] there is...” (Levinas, 1969, p. 191) because in light the spatial void vanishes between the I and the illuminated object, and with it comes the notion that things are graspable, that is, “[v]ision opens upon a perspective, upon a horizon, and describes a traversable distance, invites the hand to movement and to contact, and ensures them” (Levinas, 1969, p. 191). This form of sensibility, where “[b]y the hand the object is comprehended, touched, taken, borne and *referred* to other objects, clothed with a signification, *by reference to other objects*” (p. 191) reflects the way I was attempting to maintain (holding in hand) the situation, and become witness to something unknowable. It was not until I was unable to see with my eyes that the mystery of death “appeared.” And although the room was dimly lit, and I could still clearly define the objects of my gaze, it was there/then that the darkness did not refer to blackness or a certain hue, but a sense of obscurity— anonymity.

So what more can be extrapolated from my journey with *Lui*, and what might that mean in relation to my initial quest(ion) regarding how accepting people would be if we were to approach history—the stories of the past—seeking a new ethical approach that focused on the encounter with the “obscured *Other*” or in other words, with ghosts? How might one begin to entertain the possibility that perhaps there is more to the anonymous existence than meets the eye? Particularly when Rubenstein (2008) also questions the following:

[I]f Levinas is going to locate the possibility of ethics in the rupture of this intentional subject—in passivity, powerlessness, cognitive failure, etc.—why would he first reconstitute the subject over against the *il y a*, which already performs such a rupture? Why does he hinge the opening of the ethical future upon the presentist frame of a hypostatic monadology? Why must an *other* other interrupt the ego’s mastery; why could this mastery not be unsettled through the *primordial*, presubjective indeterminacy of the the *il y a* that interrupts it at the outset? (p. 76)

If one could only “see” that according to Levinas (1987a), “The paradox ceases when one understands that the ‘I’ is not initially an existent but a mode of existing itself, that properly speaking it does not exist” (p. 53), and by purely and simply existing, we not only remove the boundaries/borders that hinder our own existence, we have the possibility of unshackling ourselves from the idea that our shadow is nothing more than a heavy weight. Likewise, we have the possibility of disrupting the totalizing operations of



the state simply with the shifting of one's gaze. In (en)visioning this form of existing I (re)turn to Ingold's (2000) life in the animic ontology to see what an animate existence might *present*, seeing that it too, pertains to a "...world that is not preordained but incipient, forever on the edge of the actual" (p. 113).

## **an animate existence—the birth of darkness and death**

Taking into consideration what has been presented, Levinas (1987a) asks a vital question that is relevant to my situation. He asks: "How can a being enter into a relation with the other without allowing its very self to be crushed by the other?" (p. 77). I, who had journeyed with *Lui*, believed that being crushed was part of being ethically responsible for the *other*. I could not imagine self-relinquishment as anything else but a form of personal sacrifice, and I believe it happened in the moment of slippage. Although I was well-versed in what Levinas's first philosophy commanded, my approach was well rooted in an inward existence. I was there to make sense of death, to bear witness, and to attentively take note. More importantly, I was there to see, just as I was seeking answers. However, in the moment when the vigil was disrupted, when my eyes were no longer fixated on what was, I have come to believe that both *Lui* and I slipped into the darkness of the anonymous existence. For in the darkness, there is a disappearance of the I and of all things.

There is a nocturnal space, but it is no longer empty space, the transparency which both separates us from things and gives us access to them, by which they are given. Darkness fills it like a content; it is full, but full of the nothingness of everything [*le néant*]....There is no determined being, anything can count for anything else. In this ambiguity the menace of pure and simple presence, of the *there is* [*il y a*], takes form. Before this obscure invasion it is impossible to take shelter in oneself, to withdraw into one's shell. One is exposed. The whole is open upon us. Instead of serving as our means of access to being, nocturnal space delivers us over to being. (Levinas, 1978, p. 58-59)

One might ask, how it is possible that for *Lui*, who was in the proximity of death, and I, who was on the threshold, be delivered over to Being in a field of forces, like a heavy atmosphere belonging to no one, connect to the everything of nothingness, the *il y a*? It was because, as Levinas explains in the quote above, in the *il y a*, we were no longer masters of anything. However, little did I know, when I embarked on this journey, "being

in the discipline of,” that discipline would comprise both the instruction given and the physical punishment. I had asked myself, in the self-surrendering, if I would be providing or becoming the human-container or womb for the *Other* to reside—sustaining both the shadow and the breath—gestating. Or, if I would be the one who would fill in the gap, when the breath slipped away. It is in this quote that Levinas (1997) addresses it best:

The void that hollows out is immediately filled with the mute and anonymous rustling of the *there is [il y a]*, as the place left vacant by one who died is filled with the murmur of the attendants. Being’s essence dominates not-being itself. (p. 3)

This essence of Being that be-*longs* to the *il y a*, for me, is as close as I can get at expressing the ethical *o/Other* relationality, where the living (lowercase *o*) are in relation to the obscured, (distant) or ancestral *Other* (uppercase *O*). Earlier we discovered that in the anonymous existence death was not possible because of one’s commitment to existing (life). And yet, the above quote, describes how the void of expiration (death) is immediately filled with the *il y a* (the essence of Being), and by those in attendance. In other words, it is an existing connection between slipping in and out, or better yet, an animate existence. Here I am drawing upon “animate” as referring to life, and spirit, and *animātus*,<sup>28</sup> Latin for filled with breath or air, and quickened (of the womb) and where animism is not simply defined or presented as the life, spirit of soul emanating from an inert object as commonly understood, as Ingold (2006) elucidated. Instead, animacy refers to a way of being *in* the world, and it is “...the dynamic, transformative potential of the entire field of relations within which beings of all kinds, more or less person-like or thing-like, continually and reciprocally bring one another into existence” (p. 10). Correspondingly, it is a befitting expression not only in relation to my journey with *Lui*, but also because it is situated in the element of *sky*, where both return and retune us to where inspiration is wind becoming breath and expiration is breath becoming wind (Ingold, 2007)—the invisible atmosphere that animates the visible world—the subtle presence that circulates both within us and between all things—retains within itself the spirit or breath of the dead person (Abram, 1996)—the latent impregnation of life. Interestingly enough, Levinas (1978) further described the *il y a* as an event prior to the participation in existence, not only as an incomparable event, but an

<sup>28</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/animate?s=t>

event of birth. With that, I am left contemplating if perhaps the question is no longer, “Can death education become part of an ‘education for life?’” (Blenkinsop, 2004, p. 16), but rather a declaration that death education *is* an education for life.

Lastly, in envisaging my journey with *Lui*, the Levinasian notion of existence, light and darkness, shadows, respiration, death and (re)birth within the element of *sky*, I am reminded of bat medicine because this little creature of the night offers us many of the same qualities and ideas presented. Bat, a nocturnal mammal, whose teachings are used in some Indigenous cultures, epitomizes rebirth. Spending its life hanging upside-down, it exits the primeval (m)*Other*, the worldly den or chthonian womb akin to that of humans entering the world. Thus, many Indigenous ceremonies used for healing or personal quests are based on feminine principles of transformation as a way of letting go of the self or the death of one’s identity. Equally, because the bat emerges from the cave into darkness, I view its characteristics as contrary to Plato’s (2000) allegory of the cave, which Levinas (1969, 1997) drew upon in regards to the light of the inward existence. In the *Republic* (2000), Plato viewed ascending from the cave, as coming into the light of reason and truth in the intellectual, and he also viewed this clarity as man’s dominion over self and state, which he clearly outlined here:

Last of all he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is....He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years, and is guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold? (p. 178)

Instead of depending on its sight and light like those fixated within an inward existence, the bat enters the night by relying on its ears in order to determine where an object is. By way of echolocation, the bat emits a high-pitched sound that reflects or bounces off the object and the bat hearing the echo or the trace of the sound can distinguish where the objects are, leaving them ungraspable and the spatial void of the *il y a* untraversed. What bat medicine offers then, is another way of being in the world that is reminiscent of the anonymous existence. In addition, it can also set the groundwork for (re)envisioning our approach to history—the stories of the past—by retu(r)ning us to: a different way of knowing/seeing/reading (and perhaps hearing) the world, and our

relationship with (m) *Other* earth, as a means for (re)discovering the primordial entities and elements of the *il y a* that have been obscured by self and state. With bat medicine to guide us, let us part the grass then, and with our ear to the ground, let us listen to the resounding's of the *earth*, as a means of discovering if the traces of the (distant) *Other* could be unearthed in geological formations.

### ***the inward***<sup>29</sup>

*Challenging how history is disseminated and understood within the educational system, I question how readily people would accept a new ethical approach that was based on the recounting of a different story. More specifically, I question if that story focused on the encounter with the “obscured Other” or in other words, with ghosts. The purpose for such questions, was to confront the issue as to how people positioned themselves in relation to history, that is, stories of the past. As an Indigenous educator, I was noticing that for the most part, there was a sort of severance or distancing occurring in relation to history, especially when it pertained to Indigenous relations. Ironically, when contemplating Canadian history, one is never exempt from the fact that our history is a shared history. Therefore, by asking my questions, I was out to discover a new ethic that would be based on intersubjective relations: how we were relating to each other, and to those in the past, and if the latter impacted how the former was being negotiated. Having coined the term “o/Other,” it is being used to exemplify both relations. Lowercase “o” refers to the living, and the uppercase “O” refers to our relation with the obscured, (distant) or ancestral Other.*

*What I have set out to do, is to also challenge the way in which history is viewed and read. I do this by providing “different stories” which are based on my own lived experience and personal narratives, and intertwined with scholarly works. Equally important, is that my ideas are presented in a way that requires the reader to, at times, sojourn with the ideas being presented, to bathe in the imagery, and to read at a slower pace due to all the intricacies that are embedded within the (con)text. Coming from a French and Mohawk heritage, it was important that my voice was heard—subtle*

<sup>29</sup> As a way of guidance, I have decided to include a reiteration of my words, which I have titled *the inward* after each of my directions/winds. The inward is to assist the existent.

*nuances that would suggest a Franglais upbringing, and perspective. Consequently, there are times when words, phrases, and/or ideas take on a form of double entendre, that is, double meanings. And I would like to think, that like Geneva Gay (2002) it is a “different” approach because*

*[i]t is highly contextual, and much time is devoted to setting a social stage prior to the performance of an academic task. This is accomplished by the speakers' (or writers') providing a lot of background information; being passionately and personally involved with the content of the discourse; using much indirectness (such as innuendo, symbolism, and metaphor) to convey ideas; weaving many different threads or issues into a single story; and embedding talk with feelings of intensity, advocacy, evaluation and aesthetic. (p. 112)*

*Lastly, the hope is, that in reading my thesis one will be able to take away something that relates to the readers' own worldview and that it becomes a model (educational tool) for disrupting commonplace ideologies.*

## (m)Other earth

figure 2 m.d.c. lefevre, *Transformer Rock*, 2013, Burnaby, BC



...and even the calm solidity of a boulder we lean against  
can influence the weight of our spoken words.

<David Abram (2010, p. 265)

As an *in*-habitor of the nascent world within an animic ontology, I begin by retu(r)ning to the lines in Strand's (1990) poem that emphasized, "[i]n a field, I am the absence of field....[and]...wherever I am, I am what is missing" (p. 11), as a way of taking account of the self. Having been presented with Levinas's (1978) dual existences: the inward and the anonymous, and the *il y a*, I want to explore further how these ideas might play out in regards to my ancestral connection to the land—the primeval (m)Other and chthonian womb. I am interested in how each can (re)acquaint and (re)turn us to a pre-boundary relationality—a frontierless ethicality that positions earth as life-giving, while severing the conventional ties that position her in a negative light as outlined in the element of *sky*.

Tim Ingold (2010), in an article entitled, “Footprints Through the Weather-World: Walking, Breathing, Knowing,” identifies two modalities of movement: wayfaring and transport, and I wonder if parallels can be drawn between this duality and that of Levinas’s existences. The distinction between Ingold’s two modalities pertains to the surface of the earth and surfacing the earth. The wayfarer is a person who “...is following a path in life, negotiates or improvises a passage as [s]he goes *along*” (p. S126). She is a person who views the world as a continuous journey, and seeks a way through, as there is always somewhere further to go. Even though she may pause to rest, and even return to the same place, she knows these are all part of the ongoing movement, and that “...[a]long the way, events take place, observations are made, and life unfolds” (p. S126). However, transport, “...carries the passenger *across* a pre-prepared, planar surface...[and where]...[t]he movement is a lateral displacement rather than a lineal progression, and connects a point of embarkment with a terminus” (p. S126). In other words, this passenger is more concerned about getting from A to B, as fast as possible, without any displacement of the self. She is not invested in what takes place along the way, and circumvents its entry into memory or forming any conscious awareness. Equally, this person experiences life as strategic moves, where nothing happens in between. Although the person in transit may assume she can be in two places at once, time passes and life continues because of the vastness of land that is not surfaced (Ingold, 2010). Ingold and Lee Vergunst (2008) describe it best here:

Every road is a strip of hard-surfacing, laid down in preparation for the boots that march or the vehicles that roll over it, and is more or less unmarked by their passage. But while the road provides the infrastructural support for transporting persons and their effects from point to point, quotidian life proceeds for the most part along winding paths that infiltrate the ground on either side. Inhabitants are wayfarers and not passengers; for them the road is an obstacle rather than a conduit—just another potentially dangerous feature of the terrain to be negotiated. (as cited in Ingold, 2010, p. S127)

Thus, it is in the laying down of paths in our everydayness where “knowledge is grown,” that is, in our walking from place-to-place, we come to know what we do, instead of accumulating information from various fixed locations (Ingold, 2010). But we must remember,

A living, breathing body is at once a body-on-the-ground and a body-in-the-air. Earth and sky, then, are not components of an external environment with which the progressively “knowledged-up” (socialized or enculturated) body interacts. They are rather regions of the body’s very existence, without which no knowing or remembering would be possible at all. (Ingold, 2010, p. S122)

It is with this reminder, the idea that existence is connected *a priori* to the earth and air, or “Eairth” as Abram (2010) refers to it, where even the “i,” which is situated at the center, is “...wholly immersed in that fluid element” (p. 101) that I would argue is analogous to Levinas’s existences: the wayfarer to the anonymous, and the transporter to the inward. With the former it is as if the wayfarer is in a perpetual state of being within the world, whereas, with the latter, the transporter is far more content to pave the way by instilling barriers between its self and the elements. Here again, I ask, if this too, might be how we have lost our primordial contact with the entities and elements and have become obscurers in the process? And if this form of disconnect might affect the way the land is storied and history articulated?

Under *earth*, I revisit the question of whether traces of the (distant) *Other* could be found engrained in the encounters with *others*, could they be unearthed in geological formations and in artworkings and are they only accessible by traversing the death frontier, that is, with our concept of death? Having commenced my story with my encounter with *Lui*, alongside Levinas’s first philosophy—the face-to-face, I posit that the inward existence of the existent was responsible for obscuring not only its self from the anonymous, or better yet, the *il y a*, but in doing so, it had lost the desire to seek it in the face of the *other* due to a certain reliance on the light. Therefore, when we consider whether traces of the (distant) *Other* could be found “engrained” in the encounters with *others*, I suggest the traces are but “seeds” waiting to be sown. By this, I revert back to the obscurity—wherever I am, I am what is missing, that the traces are analogous to seeds (*en-grain*), that once planted, will grow into (plant) life that will sustain (or nourish) the anonymous—the *il y a*—maternity. Thus returning me to the idea that nourishment of the anonymous derives from the primeval (m)*Other* and chthonian womb. Therefore, when contemplating whether the traces of the (distant) *Other* could be unearthed in geological formations, and if they are only accessible by traversing the death frontier, I need to take heed of what Ingold (2007) suggests when he states,



For it is in the nature of living beings, themselves that, by way of their own processes or respiration, of breathing in and out, they bind the medium with substances in forging their own growth and movement through the world. And in this growth and movement they contribute to its ever-evolving weave. The land, we could say, is continually growing over, which is why archaeologists have to dig to recover the traces of the past lives. And what holds it all together are the tangled and tangible life-lines of its inhabitants. (Ingold, 2007, p. 33)

Thus, in my aspiration to rekindle an ethical *o/Other* relationality where the line between the living (lowercase *o*) and the obscured, (distant) or ancestral *Other* (uppercase *O*) would be erased with the recounting of a different story, I return to my archaeological roots, as a way of recovering the traces of the past lives, as Ingold (2007) mentioned in the quote above. By doing so, I suggest, it might provide the groundwork necessary for unearthing the way history is being disseminated, and the way it is currently being translated. And that by digging in the dirt, both literally and metaphorically, our duty to the *o/Other* can begin to be realized. As such, let us look to (*m*)*Other* earth and her chthonian womb, as a way of weaving together the tangled and tangible life-lines of its inhabitants into earthly garments akin to those woven from all our disparate shadows of the night

### **digging in the dirt<sup>30</sup>**

When the prisoners were forced to dig up the mass graves, the dead entered them through their pores and were carried through their bloodstreams into their brains and hearts. And through their blood into another generation. Their arms were into death up to the elbows, but not only into death—into music, into a memory of the way a husband or son leaned over his dinner, a wife's expression as she watched her child in the bath; into beliefs, mathematical formulas, dreams. As they felt another man's and another's blood-soaked hair through fingers, the diggers begged forgiveness. And those lost lives made molecular passages into their hands.

<Anne Michaels (1996, p. 52)

<sup>30</sup> This section is adapted from an article previously published under a similar title in *Philosophy and Education* 7: 150-156 and has been used here with the kind permission of Professor N. Nalivayko, Editor-in-Chief.

In the epigraph above, Michaels (1996) states "...the diggers begged forgiveness. And those lost lives made molecular passages into their hands" (p. 52). Although, she is making reference to survivors of the Shoah, there is an unequivocal resounding in her words that speaks to those of us who have experienced the "transmission." By transmission, I refer to the dual responsibility and action one has for the other: the transmission of histories via the molecular passages of one's hands and the transmitting or recounting of those events to the next generations. As a person who has experienced rearticulating human skeletal remains, in preparation for repatriation and who was part of a forensic team that searched for human remains, much of my archaeological training involved digging in the dirt and bearing witness to the silent *Other*. It was in those moments of association that the transmission occurred and the clarity of one's ethical responsibility to the *Other* presented itself. Thus, one could argue, one's hands and mouth become the reservoirs where the histories of the *Other* reside (lefebvre, 2014).

In a similar vein, Chinnery (2010b) in her article entitled "Encountering the Philosopher as Teacher: The Pedagogical Postures of Emmanuel Levinas," highlights three pedagogical postures that stem from Levinas's ethical teachings: teaching as bearing witness, teaching as response and teacher as *maître à penser*. She defines the former as the process of interpreting an event that one has either experienced firsthand or via the testimony of someone else. Likewise, a "pedagogical witnessing" was a "...practice of taking the teachings of the past and bringing them to life for a new generation" (p. 1705). It is important to point out that Levinas's (1997) ethical teachings come with a binding allegiance that says "Here I am" to the *other*, and in my role as translator, spokesperson and/or witness, I too I felt I had an ethical responsibility first and foremost, to those who were generally unseen, unheard or unknown, in that the rearticulation of human skeletal remains, comprised of not only the reassembling, but also (re)articulating the story of the silent *Other*. Thus, when taking in the story via the molecular passages of my hands, and transmitting or recounting them to the next generations via the mouth, for me, the "taking in" and "letting go" are related to breathing—inhalation and exhalation—human sustenance. And it is in the process of respiring, "...one is to learn and *attempt* to exceed the limits of one's knowledge. In one's approach as apprentice, one submits oneself to learn the limits of oneself and in

doing so bares oneself to a wounding, a trauma inflicted by the other's story" (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 179). In other words, one is "moved" by the story of the *other*. But how might this movement be felt, when we reconsider Ingold's (2010) two modalities of movement: the wayfarer and transporter? Are the stories of the past penetrating as paths etched in the earth by the wayfarer, or are they like rain dancing across paved surfaces of the transporter?

Because the skeletal remains were those of the Coast Salish people, I questioned how this responsibility or bearing witness could be incorporated into the curriculum, particularly in the Canadian history classroom. Especially when, in bringing an awareness of the plight of Indigenous people and the genocidal practices that have been afflicted on them both historically and presently through such processes as the Indian Residential School assimilative policy, the witnessing is met with hostility, non-acceptance, and forms of silencing. As an initial solution, I looked to Jacotot's words that Jacques Rancière (1991) addressed in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* because there was a sort of resemblance to my previous idea of the histories being embedded in the hands and mouth of those who bear witness. I read them as perhaps offering guidance to discovering an ethical *o/Other* relationality:

"Knowing is nothing, *doing* is everything." But this doing is fundamentally an act of communication. And, for that, "*speaking* is the best proof of the capacity to do whatever it is." In the act of speaking, man doesn't transmit his knowledge, he makes poetry; he translates and invites others to do the same. He communicates as an *artisan*: as a person who handles words as tools. Man communicates with man through the works of his hands just as through the words of his speech: "When man acts on matter, the body's adventures become the story of the mind's adventures." (p. 65)

However, upon reflection, my approach in relation to *hand*-ling the skeletal remains was very different from my understanding of "doing" and "acting" on matter, as mentioned above. Equally, when recounting the stories to the next generation, my greatest concern was misappropriating the stories with which I was gifted, which was also dissimilar to manipulating words into tools. It was obvious to me that our approaches were very different and I sensed that I was dealing with a transporter/inward mentality, where the hands and mouth were all about the grasping, and owning—a superficial (on the surface) approach with no regard to the silent or (distant) *Other*. More precisely, the

quote failed to consider what Simon and Eppert (1997) have emphasized with the following:

To learn the limits of what one can and needs to say as a witness and to try to respond to what lies beyond what one already knows: the task is to acknowledge and remember the person, while not always speaking *about* her or his testimony but *to* her or his testimony. One must accomplish this while being open to how one's own structures of knowing cause one to stumble and fall short of what needs to be spoken. (p. 179-180)

As such, I felt I had an anarchic responsibility to delve deeper, as a way of exploring my ideas on (an)*Other* level. That is, I was more interested in unearthing how our primordial contact with the entities and elements could lead us back to an ethical *o/Other* relationality, akin to that of a wayfarer/anonymous existence. However, what might that entail?

## **exploring on (an)*Other* level—the art/i/fact**

As a way of incorporating different stories into the classroom—different in that they challenge the national narrative and have the potential to disrupt the totalizing operations of the state—I felt it might be easier to refer to them as artifacts, similar to how primary and secondary sources are generally used when referring to historical sources. Artifacts, for me, are analogous to Rancière's (2011) mute stones where mute stones

...don't have voices like princes, generals or orators. But they only speak all the better as a result. They bear on their bodies the testimony of their history. And this testimony is more reliable than any speech offered by human mouth. It is truth of things as opposed to the chatter and lies of orators. (p. 14).

But what does this mean in relation to my idea regarding the hands and mouths being reservoirs where the histories of the other reside, and the recounting of stories to the next generation if the quote is basically saying that what people have to say is unreliable and falsehoods? What I am proposing is that there needs to be time to sojourn—a *retu(r)ning*—within the encounter with the artifacts, and not to view them just as that: something from the past of which I am *re-moved*. Instead, it requires a moving towards a wayfarer/anonymous existence approach, that is, traveling down winding paths that

lead to the *il y a*—the (re)connecting to the everything of nothingness (*le néant*), the animate existence, Being. Because too often, when we approach the artifact or the stories of the past, there is an assumption or belief that one is removed from them because they are viewed as two different situations (i.e. reference points A and B, with nothing in between), or two different events, of which I am no longer a part. Likewise, when it comes to artifacts, people often forget that every solid thing was once birthed by the earth, and that they “...retain some trace of its old ancestry in the wombish earth” (Abram, 2010, p. 28), and I would also include ourselves and our histories. What I mean by humans and their histories retaining traces of wombish earth experiences, is that in our dependency on technology—solid things that the earth provides—we have developed a fear of “...the very wilderness that nourishes and sustains us” (Abram, 2010, p. 69) because it is easier to believe we are in control of (m)Other earth than

[t]o recognize this nourishment, to awaken to the steady gift of this wild sustenance, entails that we offer ourselves in return. It entails that we accept the difficult mystery of our own carnal mortality, allowing that we are bodily creatures that must die in order for others to flourish. But it is this that we cannot bear. We are too frightened of shadows. We cannot abide our vulnerability, our utter dependence upon a world that can eat us. Vast in its analytic and inventive power, modern humanity is crippled by a fear of its own animality, and of the animate earth that sustains us. (Abram, 2010, p. 69)

As an example of sojourning, let me take a moment to sit with Abram’s (2010) opening lines of the quote because I am not simply understanding nourishment as something consumed, but also as provisions (technology, material goods, etc.) that bring us comfort. Thus, might this personal give-and-take be at the root of the anonymous existence, does it boil down to consumerism, and the reason why, for the most part, the inward existence is preferred?

Perhaps technology or our ability to grasp objects of the world provides an outlet for assuming control—a form of coping mechanism—when dealing with the stories of the past, or in other words, the elements of death, the shadows, and the *il y a*. Or has the need to distance one’s self from the past become a way of removing one’s self from the guilt or responsibility that might be associated with those stories? Gadamer (2011) gives us something further to contemplate when he addresses the circumstance. He says, “[t]he true historical object is not an object at all, but the unity of the one and the other, a

relationship that constitutes both the reality of history and the reality of historical understanding” (p. 299). I understand this to mean that there is a superficial application of history (what we deem reality), and a deeper or hidden element of history that is generally overlooked, or not ventured into, similar to how I presented Levinas’s (1978) dual existences (inward, and anonymous). However, the divisional aspect to this paradox remains and is encouraged both on an archaeological and historical level. For example, in a chapter titled, “The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture” (1994), Ian Hodder treats the written text as an artifact and approaches the written using the same interpretive procedure, while clearly outlining the problems that arise when we consider different contexts.

In both texts and artifacts the problem is one of situating material culture within varying contexts while at the same time entering into a dialectic relationship between those contexts and the context of the analyst. This hermeneutical exercise, in which the lived experience surrounding the material culture is translated into a different context of interpretation, is common for both texts and other forms of material culture. (p. 394)

Furthermore, Seixas (2012) explicates a similar concern by highlighting the importance of severing the ties with our relational past. He states,

An epistemology grounded on tradition that valorizes continuity over change, which seeks primarily to preserve old accounts rather than to critique them publicly and write new ones, seems, at least, *prima facie*, to be profoundly at odds with this notion of historical consciousness. (Seixas, 2012, p. 134)

If anything, these quotes made me ponder why it was important for me to retrace my archaeological roots. It made me contemplate, if in the mere translation of the artifact, if I was misappropriating words, and taking them out of context, if I had long forgotten to ask forgiveness as the opening epigraph eloquently outlined, and if I needed to retu(r)n(e) myself to the histories that lay embedded in my hands and mouth in order to answer Seixas’s (2012) question, “Is there more complexity beneath the surface?” (p. 134)—especially, when Gadamer (2011) warns of the danger that constantly arises when “...‘appropriating’ the other person in one’s own understanding and thereby failing to recognize his or her otherness” (p. 376).

When reconsidering my role in relation to the artifact, or the stories of the past, I was reminded of Rancière's approach to reading a book (or artifact if we are to follow Hodder's example) which Bingham, Biesta and Rancière (2010) provide, to see if they come close to offering possible answers to my questions and concerns, particularly those that pertain to (mis)interpretation and (mis)appropriation. They state:

The book provides a story that calls for the readers who will render their own translation. It calls for those who read it to become emancipated storytellers in their own right. Faced with a book whose effect cannot be anticipated because its method cannot be generalized, one is left to one's own experience of the book's words. One is taught, but only in story. (p. 152)

If, in the former statement, the reader approaches the book or artifact and renders his/her own translation and by doing so, becomes an emancipated storyteller because he/she was left to his/her own devices to interpret its story, I wonder whether, when bearing witness, one is also considered an emancipated storyteller. If so, does Levinas's ethical responsibility to the *Other* change when the focus now shifts to the self before the *other*? Does it pave the way to a superficial inward existence, where the importance lies solely on what benefits the individual/self/ego? And where does that leave us in relation to how Canada's history is being translated and understood?

Consequently, I concluded that if I take the word artifact, and I position myself between the art (the skill I acquire as a result of learning/practicing from the *Other* a new way of knowing/seeing/reading the world) and the fact (recounting of a story) the artifact becomes the art/i/fact. I thus posit the art/i/fact as the *Other*, and I the medium, and here I am drawing similarities between how I was positioned in relation to bearing witness, where I was between the receiving and recounting of silent histories or what Rancière (2011) refers to as silent or mute speech. The medium pertains not only to being the intervening substance or channel for communicating, but it also encompasses such things as my journeying through the borderlands and among burial scaffolds of the world, in the spaces in between, the inhalation and exhalation, and it situates me between those who have passed before me and those who will follow in my wake. However, once I came to realize my relation to the *Other* in terms of the artifact, I needed to dig even deeper to determine if the process of intellectual self-emancipation

was an individualistic endeavor that in itself depleted the entire ethical relation to the art/fact or if it was all inclusive, particularly when considering community.

Similar to how one should approach the reading of a book, Rancière (2007) further emphasizes what that method might look like when including community by stating:

Artists, like researchers, build the stage where the manifestation and the effect of their competences become dubious as they frame the story of a new adventure in a new idiom. The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. It calls for spectators who are active interpreters, who render their own translation, who appropriate the story for themselves, and who ultimately make their own story out of it. An emancipated community is in fact a community of storytellers and translators. (p. 8).

I understand how for Rancière the self and/or the community may become emancipated by the translating of words or stories when appropriating them for themselves, however it is also important to realize that when I speak in relation to those who were forced to attend Indian Residential School, for example, or those who in society are generally invisible, silenced, or misunderstood, I do not seek emancipation of the self when recounting what it is that I have learned from the *Other*. I see my role solely as translator or messenger of the one who precedes me and yet for Rancière, I have become emancipated in the role itself. Yet, if my transmission of the *Other's* story results in the next generation misappropriating or misunderstanding further the history of the one that precedes me, then I fail in my duty to the *Other*. As Levinas says:

Someone who expresses himself in his nakedness—the face—is in fact one to the extent that he calls upon me, to the extent that he places himself under my responsibility: I must already answer for him, be responsible for him. Every gesture of the Other was a sign addressed to me....The Other individuates me in my responsibility for him. The death of the Other affects me in my very identity as a responsible I...made up of unspeakable responsibility. This is how I am affected by the death of the Other, this is my relation to his death. It is, in my relation, my deference toward someone who no longer responds, already a guilt of the survivor. (as cited in Derrida, 1999, p. 7)

I can already say that the *Other* is different for Levinas than it is for me, mainly because for Levinas the *Other* is associated with Infinity/God/Him. But I draw upon this quote to demonstrate the extent of one's indebtedness to the one who approaches. I am



indebted to the one in front of me because it is through him/her that I can get the idea of infinity/God/Him. Therefore, it is an unspeakable indebtedness, which focuses on the singular other (the person in front of me), and it is from there that the stories arise. As for my understanding of Rancière's approach, both on an individual and a communal level, is all about the communication, the focus is on the self and where one is claiming the story as one's own. In the process, there is a re-move-all of the relational ties to said stories with the staging of a scene as a result of one's interpretation of the story. I also draw parallels between the idea of staging a scene and surfacing the earth, that is, transporter qualities that stem from an inward existence. Inward, in that it is all about the self, being able to grasp, and ownership. And it is a pedagogical style that reinforces a common narrative, and an eradication of our primordial contact with the entities and elements that stem from an ethical *o/Other* relationality.

As a result, the way I have attempted to bring forward the history of Indigenous people in Canada via the *art/i/fact*—with the recounting of different stories—has been met with a barrage of contentious acts such as silencing, effacing, stultifying, discrediting, defaming and so forth. This was the case regardless of whether those stories were in fact part of a shared history with the non-Indigenous, settler population. This is why, when trying to transmit the stories from artifacts that are viewed as silent, one needs to be very careful how those stories are passed on to the next generations because one can never determine how they will be received or translated. Instead, "...we will have to learn to listen differently, take the measure of our ignorance, and reassess the terms on which we are prepared to hear stories that might trouble the social arrangements on which we presume a collective future" (Simon, 2004, p. 197). Correspondingly, for some, the Rancièrian notion that "...fellow researchers and students of the work be able to 'appropriate the story for themselves' and 'make their own story out of it'" (as cited in Bingham, 2010, p. 663), potentially further concretizes everyday educational practices that could be seen as a form of genocide. For instance, according to Lynne Davis (2004), stories, for Indigenous people, "...cement together generations of collective memory, embodying the historical, spiritual, social, and spatial. They are tribal libraries and archives, linking past and future in present. Stories are containers of Indigenous knowledge and thought, just as Indigenous languages are their fibre" (p. 3). As a result, appropriation of others' stories falls under the same categories

as the taking away of Indigenous children, Indigenous languages, and Indigenous (individual) intellectual property (Davis, 2004). Lastly, as translator, spokesperson and/or witness who “makes poetry” from the silent histories, I must gingerly release the words in my obligation to the *Other*, not as a license to appropriate that which I have been gifted. As an alternative, we need to (re)examine the emphasis on the “oral” and move toward an “aural” practice that focuses more on the listening of stories in a way that is reminiscent of bat medicine. Until such time as when the national memory and Indigenous histories become part of the Canadian landscape, digging in the dirt will serve not only to unearth the artifact but as a way of bringing the stories forward. Perhaps one need only return to the artifacts and let them speak for themselves, for they are as Rancière (2011) highlighted the “truth of things as opposed to the chatter and lies of orators” (p. 14).

On a personal note, having returned to my archaeological roots, I still felt like something was awry and that I was just scraping “the surface,” especially when it came to my own history within a Canadian context. At times, I felt like my story preceded this notion of “Canada,” particularly one within the multicultural paradigm. And as a result, it created an urge to explore further, to discern how the story of my people was/is being disseminated within the larger picture. I wanted to know if it could lead to a clearer understanding of an ethical *o/Other* relationality. And even more so, was it arising from the (auto)chthonian womb, that is, (m)*Other* earth? But in order to discover the answers to my questions, I needed to set my sight in an easterly direction, to (re)acquaint myself with the (re)reading of the wampum belts (WBs), mnemonic devices that record(ed) our histories. By doing so, it would address the final element of *earth*; if traces of the (distant) *Other* could be found in artworkings, and are they only accessible by traversing the death frontier? In other words, by returning to the WBs, could the traces of the (distant) *Other* be revealed in of themselves, and were they only possible in relation to my notion of death? Therefore, “[i]nstead of thinking of the inhabited world as composed of mutually exclusive hemispheres of sky and earth, separated by the ground, we need to attend...to the fluxes of wind and weather” (Ingold, 2007, p. S19). With that, let us take to the *east wind* and journey to whence I came.

## ***the inward***

*Under (m)Other earth my focus was to return to my early academic undertakings because it was while studying archaeology—pre-history—that I began to look at our role in relation to those whom had passed before us. I was particularly interested on how the narratives with the aforementioned were being rearticulated (pieced together and recounted). Using my own experiences as my guide, I noticed that as archaeologists we were actively disrupting (m)Other earth, and the Other, not only with our hands but also with our mouths, and I wondered if in doing so we were misinterpreting or misappropriating the stories of the silent Other. Particularly, when juxtaposing my concerns with Canadian history books that for the most part, have been written in a way that perpetuates a Western point of view. Consequently, I took my concerns further and questioned if things were any different when using primary and secondary sources in the classroom—artifacts—things from the past.*

*When it came to the way stories were being understood, translated and disseminated, it was as if there were two perspectives at play. For Rancière (2007), it was about students becoming spectators who would become active interpreters, who would render their own translations, who would appropriate the stories for themselves, and “ultimately make their own story out of it” (p. 8)—what he deemed self-emancipation. And for Simon (2013) it was about “...reflecting on the experiences of listening to the stories told...and retelling these stories, not to co-opt them in the service of the self, but interweaving them with one’s own life stories” (p. 136)—realizing that one could not reduce the experiences of the other to versions of their own. Each, however, played a vital role on how the relation with the o/Other was maintained. As an Indigenous educator, I noticed that for the most part, the majority of my students emulated the former perspective, especially when teaching First Nation’s content to non-Indigenous pre- and in-service teachers. Let me elaborate by way of an example.*

*With the recent mandates put in place in BC’s educational system—to infuse the curriculum with Indigenous content—I was witnessing a general sense of fear coming from my students, in that they were frantically trying to get a grip on what it would require of them, when bringing these elements forward within their own classrooms. However, what I was witnessing and experiencing seemed to speak to a Rancièrian perspective, in*

*that they were approaching the new perspectives using a sort of teacher-knows-best attitude, and applying the same sort of learning tactics as they would to any of their other subjects. Thus, demonstrating that they were overlooking how Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews were dissimilar. A major factor that contributed to this was that they were not prepared to invest time in exploring things on a deeper level, mainly because of the short time-frames they assigned to this particular topic/task, and especially when the content elicited discomfort. For instance, when asked to become reflective/reflexive/receptive, they generally understood this to mean: what do things “look” like—interpret—while remaining detached. Thereby, resulting in them creating superficial responses, which were centered on their own interpretations, and stages that were set that did not reflect the larger issues. Correspondingly, because of what I viewed as their lack of devotion, students expected to be provided with four easy steps that would aid in them mastering the task of imbuing their curriculum with Indigenous content. When they did not receive the per-usual pedagogical instructions—what they were accustomed to receiving—their marks generally suffered and in the end it was easier to blame me, than taking responsibility for their own actions and decisions. In other words, it was easier to question my teaching ability as an Indigenous educator, than it was for them to apply themselves fully and commit to the new content/worldview. As a result, I am left wondering what impact, a Rancièrian form of pedagogy will have on Indigenous people/students, on Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, and on Indigenous education, if the Ministry of Education’s mandate regarding infusing the curriculum with Indigenous content, reflects this pedagogical approach.*

*Let me be clear though, there were a few students in my classes that excelled because they did their “homework.” What I mean by this, is they went the extra mile to understand their role within our shared history, to learn from the discomfort, and to confront the issues as allies. In other words, they were emulating more of Simon’s perspective.*

## east wind—the ancestral home

And forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet  
and the winds long to play with your hair

<Khalil Gibran (1992, p.47)

Every time I read the words in the epigraph, I am transported to childhood days, the tall grass undulating across the landscape with every gust of wind. I loved how they swayed because I saw them as (m)Other earth's hair, a place of (dis)entanglement where I could be both lost and found. Growing up on Montréal's eastside my playgrounds were vacant fields where the wild blue chicory grew, where the red-tailed hawk feasted on field mice, and collecting insects was the norm. It was there that my relation with the earth began, where I saw (m)Other earth in all her splendor—my greatest teacher and protector. These are the thoughts I cling to with the mere thought of heading east. However, they were far away on my last visit because I arrived to blistering winds and snow. My childhood sanctuary buried deep beneath mounds of snow and in the recesses of my mind. I had decided to return because it had been several years since my last visit, and in a way, my experience with *Lui* reminded me of the “temporality,” that is, the ever changing dynamics of the world. Once again, one could say I was on a mission. I went in search of the stories, and the traces of the past because I yearned to (re)connect with the ancestors. I am not sure if this yearning was connected to my desire to return to an anonymous existence, or the *il y a*, or if it stemmed from all the unanswered questions pertaining to identity and relating. However, I was certain this time I would return feeling replenished, nourished because I would hear the stories arising from the mouths of those who had borne witness, who had direct links, and who knew the stories. However, upon my return from the lands of my people, my three-week sabbatical in the Montréal region had left me the worse for wear. I headed east with the passion of a child longing for the embrace of a loved one, but instead I returned home as vacant as gazing upon a landscape raped of all its timber. Although I was gifted a photograph, no one could tell me with certainty who all the

people were in the photo. The more I tried to jog their memory, the more it was like desperately trying to prevent a flame on a candle from being extinguished by the melting wax. Why was that? Was it because they had lost the ability to remember because of society's dependency on technology—solid things from the earth's womb? Was it because remembering, like those of us who come from oral traditions, and whose identity/survival depend(ed) on those stories, found it too burdensome, or perhaps, part of history best left alone? Did this silence reflect their role as witness, translator and/or spokesperson honouring the stories of the silent *Other*? Or had they just given up caring about things that were not part of the immediate? My people are known as the guardians of the eastern gate, and keepers of the great ancestral peace, and I sometimes wonder if that is a contradiction in itself. Better yet, I question what is being guarded and to what lengths one will go to in order to protect it under the guise of peace (whatever 'it' might be). Here I am reminded of family stories that are best forgotten in order to maintain peace within the family. But might my analogy reflect a more political agenda that speaks to maintaining one's identity as a nation within the settler state? If so, I question what else has been obscured in the process of keeping things whole.

Having mentioned that, according to Conrad et al. (2009), most Canadians who prefer family history to other types of history viewed museum pieces as more trustworthy than personal/family stories. They (myself included), generally (re)turned to such things as artifacts and primary sources when contemplating identity, morality, and immortality. However, although Conrad et al. (2009) argued that it was because these people believed museums were neutral places run by professionals, my returning to the artifact was to expand further the art/i/fact, to see if returning to the material culture of my people could reveal the truth of things, similar to Rancière's (2011) mute stones which "...bear on their bodies the testimony of their history" (p. 14), and speak all the better as a result. In other words, it was about retu(r)ning to the wampum belts (WBs), mnemonic devices used for recording history. More specifically, I was interested in the teachings of the *Kaswentha* or Two Row Wampum, as it is commonly referred to, for three reasons. First, this WB was created over 400 years ago to symbolically represent the peaceful and amicable treaty relations between the Iroquois and Dutch (i.e. Indigenous and non-Indigenous people) and its story continues to set the stage when noteworthy encounters are held locally, nationally, and internationally. Second, I am concerned about the

ethical relationality one has towards the (distant) *Other* when the WB is appreciated more for its aesthetic or representational value than for the voices/stories/traces it contains. And third, I am interested in the meaning behind the *Kaswentha* to see if its meaning has been misconstrued as a means to a political end; especially when the Iroquois nations are matriarchal and it was historically the women who beaded the wampum, and whose weavings reflected their original narratives. Let me therefore begin by (re)reading the wampum, outlining what WBs are, what purposes they serve, and how I became interested in them.

## **(re)reading the wampum**

Before talking about the wampum belts (WBs), it is important to begin by outlining what wampum is. Wampum are white and purple shell beads made from the columella of the whelk (*Busycon canaliculatum*, or *Busycon carica*) and the quohog (*Mercenaria mercenaria*) respectively (Snyder, 1999). Originally the beads were painstakingly handcrafted by women (Clarke, 1931), who were capable of producing forty wampum beads a day (Wampumpeag Project, 1996), but later when they were manufactured, the role was taken over by the men because, according to U. Vincent Wilcox (1976), the practice fit "...more closely in the technological pattern of male occupation in Indian society" (p. 10). For the most part, those who have heard of wampum generally know it as a form of currency, because it was a prized trade item that was in great demand by many of the eastern Indigenous nations situated furthest from the eastern seaboard. At first glance, one might not understand the value associated with these beads, however, Gary S. Snyder (1999), argues that "[t]he need to maintain sufficient supplies of wampum fueled the fur trade" (p. 376), thus shifting the idea that the fur trade centered solely on the demands of non-Indigenous people. Wampum was a desired commodity because it was used for adorning and embellishment, was connected to burial rituals, Iroquoian cosmology and ceremony, mythology and tradition. But more importantly, according to Birgit Brander Rasmussen (2007)

At the time of contact, the Iroquois conceptualized wampum as a medium of communication that materialized and embodied words. As such, it was capable of carrying the words of the speaker to an interlocutor, just as Europeans understood ink and paper as capable of carrying words from

one location to another. With wampum, the word was spoken into and then back out of the beaded string or belt, which functioned as a kind of literary tape recorder. (p. 456-457)

Tekahionwake, better known as E. Pauline Johnson (1895), a Mohawk poet, writer and performer, had a similar sentiment in her dedication in a book entitled *The White Wampum*. She states,

As wampums to the Redman, so to the Poet are his songs; chiselled alike from that which is the purest of his possessions, woven alike with meaning into belt and book, fraught alike with the corresponding message of peace, the breathing of tradition, the value of more than coin, and the seal of fellowship with all men. So do I offer this belt of verse-wampum to those two who have taught me most of its spirit—my Mother, whose encouragement has been my mainstay in its weaving; my Father, whose feet have long since wandered to the Happy Hunting Grounds.

Let us stop for a moment and take in what has been presented. For in the former quote, the wampum was viewed as having the capacity of retaining the spoken words. Also, the quote clearly highlights that there were other ways of recording and recounting history besides the written texts (pen, ink and paper). That is, wampum speaks to a different or (an) *Other* way of knowing/seeing/reading the world: an art as previously mentioned. In the latter quote, wampum, like words, was inspired with breath, compared to poetic songs, and fashioned into belts like books, each an invaluable possession, linked to tradition, comprising the meaning of peace, and a relationality to humanity. Perhaps wampum were also reservoirs where the histories of the *Other* reside, a point I will return to when talking about the rearticulation of the WBs: the *hand*-ling or reassembling and the recounting of stories. But what of its spirit?

When wampum is strung together to create WBs, the belts are generally referred to as mnemonic devices for remembering and recording history. Aesthetically, when envisioning a WB, one should not simply imagine a leather strap for holding up one's pants because they were woven into various lengths and widths, including the measurements of a belt one would wear. The WBs were woven/created and read through one's hands, similar to how one would handle a book. As such, many WBs were used for recording treaties, historical events, requesting war allegiances, political agreements, etc. It is also important to keep in mind that, there were several important human roles associated with WBs: creators, keepers, and readers. To be considered or



selected as a reader of the wampum, for example, required a lifetime of devotion. It is not like today where we remember someone's phone number (if we even do that) or remember facts for a test and two weeks later begin the process of forgetting. Reading the wampum required you to remember the entire event, who was present, where it took place, what was said and who said it, the overall ambiance of the gathering, the size of the meeting, and then be able to remember in relation to the pictographs, size, number of wampum used, and the overall colour sequences of the WB. These stories had to be retained for the duration of your life because it was a remembering as if your life depended on it. Consequently, it resulted in an intense form of remembering that was passed on from generation to generation.

To further emphasize their importance, it was not only the Indigenous people making WBs, the government also created them as a way of communicating with various nations because they recognized the significance Indigenous people attached to them. For example, in conversation with Pickering (1791), Red Jacket stated that,

In the late eighteenth century the British at Fort Niagara kept a supply of wampum for council purposes and employed belts to the exclusion of letters for communicating with Indian council fires. (as cited in Fenton, 1998, p. 231)

However, around the start of the twentieth century, the reciprocal exchange of WBs ceased, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police confiscated the sacred WBs of the Iroquois as part of the impositions put on Indigenous people with the *Indian Act*. It was only after a sixty-year period that governmental institutions and its representatives began repatriating WBs to various nations, and returned to presenting WBs as a sign of amicability. Such was the case when the Governor General, David Johnston, offered Chief Atleo a framed wampum belt on behalf of the Assembly of First Nations on January 24, 2012.

Returning to my previous question: What of the WBs spirit? this is a different story because it pertains to elements of the WBs that have never been mentioned in any of the sources I read over the course of my academic journey. And although I was aware that in the literature it mentioned various things the wampum was used for; no further details were provided in a way that spoke to my experience. Nonetheless, after working with WBs for approximately fifteen years, I can say that I have an understanding

of their spirit, and even more so since participating in sacred ceremonies with them. It was not until I started acknowledging what was happening in various circles that things started presenting themselves to me, including all of the information I would require in order to complete my thesis. For instance, just recently, I was presented with a booklet, *Wampumpeag Spiritual Sciences of the Wampum Belts* (1996) that was put together by the Wampumpeag Project. The booklet speaks of two kinds of WBs, the political and the spiritual. The political, on the one hand, are the ones that I have alluded to above, and, according to the Wampumpeag Project (1996), “[t]hese belts were strung under the influence of European philosophies, political affiliations and new religious beliefs in the total absence of the universal spiritual knowledge...” (p. 2). The spiritual, on the other hand, were more complex in that they were “...strung according to and containing scientific knowledge given to mankind by the Kitche Manitou through the Star people....[and] are only used in spiritual ceremonies” (p. 2). This booklet, along with the new information that I have acquired, are the first, to my knowledge, to concede to another side of the WBs that moves beyond the affairs of the political. This leaves me to ponder whether perhaps over time, and the push towards increasing indigenous education, the WB is slowly showing signs to the need for a resurgence. By resurgence, I mean including different ways of knowing/seeing/reading or being in the world that a WB philosophy might provide. However, I am still left unsatisfied as to what occurred along the way that resulted in the familial retention being affected, as was my experience returning home. Was there something more that exceeded the forgetting, perhaps a desire, a denial of our ancestry, or the colonial erasure of “...Aboriginal cultures, voices, and ways of knowing,” (Battiste, 2000, p. 193) that stemmed from such things as the Indian Residential School assimilation policy? Could it be the WBs were linked to a (pre)history that was rooted in an Indigenous “wit(h)nessing” (Lichtenberg Ettinger, 2005) or Indigenous métissage (Donald, 2012), that did not deny difference, but spoke to a different ethic or way of being in the world that transcended “...an ecological understanding of human relationality” (p. 535)? And if so, what was/is my role in relation to the wampum and why have they followed me like a shadow for so long? As a way of investigating this, let me return to the WBs themselves.

## **a wampum reconnaissance—a re/art/i/culation**

Since the commencement of my academic journey, I have always had an interest in WBs. In my quest for discovering my (hidden or obscured) history, I felt archaeology—with its emphasis on pre-history—was the path I needed to follow. My interest in these Iroquoian<sup>31</sup> mnemonic devices began one morning after being presented with a dream of their creation. I spent most of my undergraduate courses expanding my knowledge of them but always from an archaeological perspective. Eventually, I created my own contemporary<sup>32</sup> WB entitled *money talks* (Iefebvre, 2007; see WB 1), and used it as a pedagogical tool when enrolled in the teacher certification program after attaining my undergraduate degree. However, unbeknownst to me, the messages attached to my WB, and WBs in general, were challenged, and I was accused of spreading propaganda. With my teaching certification on the line, my teaching career possibly compromised, it required that I fight for a part of Canadian history that was not part of the common narrative. Reflecting on those events while writing this, I still shake my head in disbelief of the historical ignorance. But I was able to get a better understanding of what took place while doing my Master's degree, that is, by continuing the story of my WB. What I discovered was that, as Michael K. Foster (1985) says, WBs carry with them a heavy burden for the messenger because it is the wampum that is carrying the message and not the messenger. In other words, every time I teach history with the same WB, its story continues, based on what effects it has on the people's memories. Reiterating, it is believed that the more times the messenger has to recite the wampum's content the "power" of the wampum increases, rather than the messenger's memory (Foster, 1985). Teaching through the WBs has become my philosophy, and even though my WBs are contemporary versions, it is the stories embedded within them and the shared history that make them powerful.

<sup>31</sup> It was not only the Iroquois nations creating WBs but could be found throughout many of the Eastern Indigenous nations.

<sup>32</sup> By referring to my WBs as contemporary, I acknowledge that they were not created using the traditional shell beads as outlined, instead I incorporated elements that were readily available to me at the time, similar to how the earlier versions may have been created. That is, utilizing porcupine quills, bone, moose bell hairs, sinew, wooden beads etc.

When I started my Doctoral study, I had been working with WBs for about ten years. As a way to further my interests, I decided with each course that I took, I would write my final essay and create a contemporary WB to accompany my work, thus adding six more to my collection. I viewed this process as *writing White and reading Red*, a form of reclamation of my French and Mohawk heritage, akin to that of the Mapuche mythohistories, where I was drawing on both the dominant narrative and the Indigenous perspective, from a shared history. It was during that period that I came to realize my approach to the WBs was changing. When I was strictly seeing the WBs from an archaeological stance, I was approaching them in a way that I refer to as a wampum reconnaissance. It was all about the topography, who the players were, which nations were involved, how the land played a role in the distribution and demand for wampum. In other words, it was the logistics: the trade, currency and manufacturing I was interested in. It was also about the specifics: the purposes/stories behind the WBs and their meanings and the roles associated with them, such as: the keepers, readers, and creators of the belts, the sort of objective information one might access in a contemporary, cosmopolitan, history textbook, or how I have presented them thus far. However, when presenting the aforementioned WB, plus (*not*) *expected* (see WB 2)—another WB that arose during that initial period—there was also a huge emphasis on the visual representations. Based on the comments I received over the years when presenting these pieces, most people, when viewing them, focused on their aesthetic qualities. That is, they appreciated their colours, creation, or workmanship, without investing time to ponder what lay beyond the gaze or to question how they might be implicated within those histories.

So as a way of addressing this form of disconnect, my focus shifted from creating WBs from a reconnaissance stance towards that of a *reconnaissance*—a French understanding of the term, where *reconnaissance* pertains to an acknowledgement or recognition of something/someone special or different, it includes a trace of the past or a form of *déjà vu*. And as a result, with the creation of my next two WBs, I was purposely attempting to bring forth a form of remembering that would highlight the traces of a shared history, as a way to elicit a form of *déjà vu*. It was an acknowledgment and/or recognition that forced one to reflect on one's role in relation to the shared history. For example, the first WB entitled *Canadian gothic myth* (see WB 3) was done in recognition

of my involvement with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada on Indian Residential Schools. The second entitled *An Ethical Response/ability to An other* (see WB 4) was created in response to my presentation at the American Educational Research Association conference, where both the WB and conference's association shared the same acronym—AERA. Not only was I weaving my own narrative within the WBs but they implicated the observer as well. With the former, the WB questioned the role of those representing the government, the schools, the religious institutions, and that of the settler population. Likewise, with the latter, it addressed a question that was brought up during my conference presentation, when I was asked why society in general knows about the wedding dress (the focus of the other presentation) and not the WBs. Before I could comment, the other presenter quickly responded by asking, “Why should I learn about WBs?” To which I explained how we were all linked to the WBs and connected within their histories, how they were and are recording the formation of Turtle Island, and I emphasized that it was the links or traces of the past that I was trying to highlight, the elements that moved beyond the gaze. At that point, I was reminded of Rasmussen (2007) when she too identified how people were woven into the WBs: “In this encounter, wampum is a textual medium that weaves together peoples in political covenants of reciprocity, as parts of a shared design of reciprocity and peaceful coexistence” (p. 463). Consequently, the creation of this particular WB, which was made of beads created from one of the conference posters, wove not only our encounter, but the hundreds of presentations that brought people together at the conference annually.

At that point, in my journey, the WBs appeared to be emerging out of social relations, and I began to question my role within the encounter. Especially, when talking about how she was presenting her views on WBs, Rasmussen (2007) claimed she was offering “...a model of a reciprocal, cross-cultural, and literary study of the colonial encounter in order to move from monologues of conquest to dialogues of encounter” (p. 449). I wondered if monologues of conquests had really made room for dialogues of encounter, especially when juxtaposing my educational experiences with my contemporary WBs. So again, the focus changed and I found myself shifting away from a *reconnaissance* towards a *connaissance* approach. Relying again on my French roots, my understanding of *connaissance* referred to the social relations between people, the knowing of a person for a long time, it was based on a more personal

relationality and/or an acquaintance or association, and it could involve a discovery of something/someone, or expose something that was hidden. But, *connaissance* also refers to a knowing or knowledge. This was perfect because it seemed like I was burrowing, and getting to the root of things. But what was my role in relation to the stories/histories that were embedded in the belts? What might the belts expose and could this exposure lead me to discovering the traces of the (distant) *Other*?

During that period I produced three more contemporary WBs entitled: *Goddesses Mnemosyne and Lesmosyne* (see WB 5), *art/i/fact* (see WB 6), and *face-to-face* (see WB 7). With these three pieces, the narrative reflected personal experiences: the testifying and bearing witness to an event I spent a lifetime keeping secret, my working with human skeletal remains, and my experience with *Lui*. Hence, I was challenging the notion of remembering, the so-called healing properties of testimony, digging in the dirt, and experimenting with *ghosting the canvas*. I was torn between “mnemosyne” and “lesmosyne”—remembering and forgetting—and I was drawn to the desire of drinking from the River Lethe, the river of Forgetfulness, which once offered “...the peace-giving waters of death” (Kerényi, 1977, p. 125). Not in a way that would be interpreted as ending it all, but where I would feel like the Goddess Mnemosyne—the one who remembers—who, according to Karl Kerényi (1977)

...has the benefit of Lethe, who makes everything disappear that belongs to the dark side of human existence. It is only both the elements—giving illumination and letting disappear, Mnemosyne and her counterpole, Lesmosyne—that make up the entire being of the Goddess, whose name comes solely from the positive side of her field of power” (p. 129-130).

I came to understand the Goddesses as representing Levinas’s (1978) inward and anonymous existences, where, in the remembering it was all about the illuminated, whereas in the forgetting it was the letting disappear. Moreover, the “entire being” and positive side of her field of power was the *il y a*, the animate existence, Being. When creating these WBs, I experimented with what I referred to as ghosting the canvas. I was curious to see, if in association with the WBs, by leaving traces of myself both rhetorically and physically, that is, orally impregnating the WBs and imprinting the tableau with my body, it would expose or lead to traces of the (distant) *Other*. Because for Levinas (1987b), “Art does not know a particular type of reality; it contrasts with knowledge [*connaissance*]. It is the very event of obscuring, a descent of the night, an

invasion of shadow” (p. 3). And perhaps in some weird and wonderful way, my presence was reflecting what was missing akin to Strand's (1980) poem, and similar to Levinas's (1987b) further description:

In the vision of the represented object a painting has a density of its own: it is itself an object of the gaze. The consciousness of the representation lies in knowing that the object is not there. The perceived elements are not the object but are like “old garments,” spots of color, chunks of marble or bronze. These elements do not serve as symbols, and in the absence of the object they do not force its presence, but by their presence insist on its absence. (p. 7)

In light of the transformation that was taking place between me and the WBs, I was getting a better sense of what it meant to embody the wampum with one's word, weaving oneself into the stories, and coming into communion with those who passed before me: an apparition, a weaving in and out of the belts akin to Levinas's description above, where knowing/seeing/reading (the world) takes on a new meaning. And perhaps it was all part of the exposing of what was hidden—an element of *connaissance*—as previously mentioned/questioned.

However, the more I continued incorporating WBs on my academic journey, something else revealed itself that sharpened my focus. Not in a way that dwelt on visual refinement, but as something that spoke to an exposure, a vastness, or a sensation that left me wide open, similar to how I felt being at the threshold with the slipping of *Lui*. It involved moving away from a *connaissance* to the *naissance*, where *naissance* means the expulsion of a maternal organism, the origin or commencement, a social condition that results in a birthing, an announcement of the day, of the world, and by blood, and it also referred to an appearance and/or apparition. It was as if, in creating contemporary WBs in relation to the written text, I had given birth to an organism that not only arose from the hands-on experience: the physical manipulation and the recounting of the stories via the mouth, but also from the social relations. The WBs were linked to a (co)creating that moved the notion of “creating” or art, as outlined in the art/i/fact to a midwifing, a requickening, a bringing to life that was linked to the (auto)chthonian womb. By (auto)chthonian womb, I am referring to the primeval (m) *Other* earth because, according to Kim Anderson (2000), for Indigenous women, “[r]eclaiming a relation to land is as important as recreating Indigenous social and human relations, because the land is

something through which we define ourselves, and it is essential in our creation” (p. 180). And also because, in recognizing the element of art, Levinas (1987b) states that it is to bear witness “...to an accord with some destiny extrinsic to the course of things, which situates it outside the world, like the forever bygone past of ruins, like the elusive strangeness of the exotic” (p. 2). Art is part of a reality that “...does not refer to itself but to its reflection, its shadow...an allegory of being” (p. 6). Thus, the creating or art produces a resembling that does not compare an image to the original, but resembles the “...movement that engenders the image. Reality would not be only what it is, what it is disclosed to be in truth, but would be also its double, its shadow, its image” (Levinas, 1987b, p. 6). This is important because not only does the earthen womb embody the notion of giving birth to, but in Levinas defining art as an allegory of being—which I interpret as his dual existences: the inward and anonymous—a *bearing* witness that always includes the reflection or shadow—there is an idea of naissance as both an appearance and an apparition.

In working with the WBs, the engendering movement was an appearance and apparition that was linked to all the women who had sat weaving their stories embedded within the WBs. It pertained to my reconnecting to the matrix (womb), and (re)weaving the matrilineal lines of kinship that had preceded me. This latent birth that brought forth the feminine was a form of spiritual enlightenment that I understood as the “spirit of the wampum” that Johnson (Tekahionwake) (1895) alluded to, the element of spirit that originates from our Creation stories, and which the spiritual WBs (Wampumeag Project, 1996) hint at. When talking about “womanspirit,” Myra Laramie viewed it as the “first truth”:

When Creator called for the universal energies to come together in that sound, that vibration, what came forward were the universal energies to create Mother Earth. Womanspirit is more than Mother Earth. It is those universal energies that come together. The manifestation of the physical form of her behaviour is woman. We emulate everything she teaches the universe must be. So it isn't just Mother Earth. It is how we are connected. (as cited in Anderson, 2000, p. 71)

And as such, the idea of giving life to, “...is a time when women are intermediaries between spirit life and life on earth” (Anderson, 2000, p. 73), a place that for me, pertains



to my journeying through the borderlands, among the burial scaffolds of the world, in spaces in between.

Consequently, it finally became clear that my role with the WBs pertained to the (re)articulation of their stories. Similar to how I was positioned in relation to the artifact—being between the receiving and recounting of silent histories—my duty to the WBs was in their re/art/i/culation, where again the I is only becoming in response to the *Other* and positioned in relation to the art—the presence/absence that ghosts the canvas. More specifically, re/art/i/culation not only *pieces* together an ethical o/*Other* relationality, but speaks to a *recounting* arising from the feminine. Moreover, I viewed this discovery as an Indigenous philosophical (re)birthing or (re)naissance, based on an intimate (co)sharing, and a feminine reclamation that encompassed both a “reclaiming” of narratives and a “crying out” to the world, in a way that shatters the “thunderous silence” that abounds around issues of the feminine in academia (Mann, 2000). For instance, I see it speaking to the positive vision of Native womanhood, that Anderson (2000) highlights in her book, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* in that it forces us to acknowledge that many of our traditions “...have been twisted to meet western patriarchal hegemony” (p. 36). It also asks us to consider the questions that Emma LaRoque (1996) articulated with the following:

...as women we must be circumspect in our recall of tradition. We must ask ourselves whether and to what extent tradition is liberating us as women. We must ask ourselves wherein lie our sources of empowerment. We know enough about human history that we cannot assume that all Aboriginal traditions universally respected and honoured women. (And is “respect” and “honour” all that we can ask for?) It should not be assumed, even in those original societies that were structured along matriarchal lines, that matriarchies necessarily prevented men from oppressing women. (as cited in Anderson, 2000, p. 36)

Therefore, re/art/i/culation, is also a *movement*—an anarchic responding—that vigilantly disrupts “...the state’s attempt to set itself up or erect into a whole...” (Critchley, 2007, p. 122) as previously mentioned.

The process of working alongside WBs has been a long journey of discovery. What has been presented to me occurred over a long period of time, after presenting them alongside my written work, in various circles, in many places around the world, and

with numerous people—one could say, in true wampum spirit. Wampum belts (WBs) not only contain(ed) the political affairs of the state, they were/are mnemonic devices that contain(ed) the essence of the feminine that pertained not only to the earth, but to the universe, thus, positioning them within the sacred—a side of the wampum that is purposely omitted in its rearticulation. Seeing that they were compared to that of a book and the written, it gives us the opportunity to look at the way we approach the Canadian history textbook, primary/secondary sources, and our approaches when disseminating our shared history, and to question what else we might be obscuring and why. The WB that I am currently creating alongside my thesis, speaks to all the elements that have presented themselves on my voyage with them, it contains the spirit of the feminine, and the sacred geometry that is associated with ceremony, and it links me to both (m) *Other* earth and the (auto)chthonian womb. But more specifically, it weaves together the WBs that were created with those in attendance when I first presented my ideas regarding the feminine link to the wampum at the World Indigenous People’s Conference on Education (WIPC:E) in Hawai’i. I am fascinated with WBs because they reflect an *o/Other* relationality, where a new ethic abides. Therefore, when considering the re/art/i/culation of the wampum (or historical narrative)—I see it as retu(r)ning to the origin, the commencement or the first truth that Laramee mentioned. But I am also left to ponder how this re/art/i/culation might play out in regards to specific WB narratives that have taken a long time to establish themselves within the dominant historical discourse, and what those stories offer or lack in regards to (inter)relations with the feminine or spiritual element. Thus, by way of example, let me introduce the *Kaswentha*, or Two Row Wampum and outline how its meaning is currently being disseminated.

## ***Kaswentha* or Two Row Wampum**

I have chosen the *Kaswentha* (see WB 9) or Two Row Wampum belt because it has become a global symbol of sovereignty, particularly for Indigenous nations situated within colonized states, it represents mutual respect, peaceful and amicable treaty relations between said nations, and has become popularized since it celebrated its 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2013. Visually, the belt is white with two purple lines running parallel to each other. It is created using thirteen beaded wampum rows, alternating between three white rows, and two purple, respectively. This particular belt, at times referred to as the

Two Row Tawagonshi Treaty belt, was created in 1613 to represent negotiation agreements between the Mohawk and Dutch, more specifically with a Dutch trader named Jacob Eelckens at Tawagonshi. (Parmenter, 2013). According to the Haudenosaunee<sup>33</sup> (Iroquois) oral traditions, the *Kaswentha* presupposes those early alliances, so much so, that Jon Parmenter (2013) claims there has been a resurgence of this Iroquoian philosophy arising since 1989, where

Haudenosaunee leaders, activists, and scholars have consistently and explicitly asserted the historical veracity of *kaswentha* and the Two Row Belt as foundational to their understanding of early colonial-era cross-cultural negotiations governed by mutual respect, reciprocity, and renewal. (p. 85)

How this message translates in relation to the *Kaswentha* is as follows:

You say that you are our Father and I am your son. We say, We will not be like Father and Son, but like Brothers. This wampum belt confirms our words. These two rows will symbolize two paths or two vessels, traveling down the same river together. One, a birch bark canoe, will be for the Indian People, their laws, their customs and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our boat. Neither of us will make compulsory laws or interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other's vessel. The agreement has been kept by the Iroquois to this date.<sup>34</sup>

Reiterating, the *Kaswentha* symbolizes two parties agreeing to remain “independent together” (Parmenter, 2013, p. 85)—a narrative that has remained unchanged for over 400 years and that has seen a resurgence over the past 25 years. And as much as I comprehend the logic behind the phrase independent together, as it is exemplified above, I cannot help but position the *Kaswentha* under the political WBs as described by the Wampum Project (1996) because it uses the language of the dominant discourse, it situates the narrative within a brotherhood, and it epitomizes a Eurocentric mindset. Equally, when I think of the notion of independently together, I am reminded of how multiculturalism in Canada is described as a mosaic, where each culture

<sup>33</sup> Haudenosaunee refers to “people of the longhouse,” which pertains to all the nations within the Iroquois Confederacy.

<sup>34</sup> Meaning behind the Two Row Wampum <http://tiohtiake.blogspot.com/2009/10/two-row-wampum.html>

supposedly lives independent, but together form the mosaic or the Canadian cultural landscape. This becomes problematic because one of the many issues that Verna St. Denis (2011) highlights in her article “Silencing Aboriginal Curricular Content and Perspectives Through Multiculturalism: ‘There Are Other Children Here’” is that “[m]ulticulturalism is dependent on colonial structures because it assumes the legitimacy of the current colonial Canadian government” (p. 311). The same government, where according to Ljunggren (2009), Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated at the 2009 G20 meetings that Canada has “no history of colonialism” (as cited in St. Denis, 2011). Therefore, when it comes to (re)considering the teachings behind the wampum, we need to take heed of narratives such as these, and to be aware that

When we begin to reclaim our ways, we must question how these traditions are framed, and whether they are empowering to us. The gendered nature of our tradition can be extremely damaging if interpreted from a western patriarchal framework. (Anderson, 2000, p. 37)

In (re)considering the *Kaswentha* using a re/art/i/culational approach, I posit that although, on the surface, the element of the feminine may appear effaced or obscured—that is, with the spiritual elemental side of the WBs being absent—we need to retu(r)n(e) to what could be *Otherwise*. In other words, it means remembering that the wampum is always connected with both the appearance and the apparition—the naissance of the wampum. The appearance of the wampum would satisfy the way the *Kaswentha* has been depicted to date, whereas the apparition (or spirit) of the wampum remains obscured. But before I return to the *Kaswentha* specifically, I must reveal further my understanding of the apparition of the wampum because I believe it is in this obscurity where one can be lead to an uprightness towards an ethical *o/Other* relationality. Thus, as a way of re/art/i/culation, let me disclose further what the apparition of the wampum involves.

## **the apparition of the wampum**

Earlier, when outlining how I have incorporated wampum belts (WBs) alongside my doctoral work, my approach turned from a wampum reconnaissance to that of a naissance. Naissance pertained to such things as retu(r)ning to the beginning or origin,

the feminine, and the giving birth to. I viewed this revelation as a latent birth that brought forth the feminine element that I interpreted as a form of spiritual enlightenment, or better yet, the spirit of the wampum. I also highlighted how the spirit of the wampum was related to the earth and the universe, and how when giving life to, naissance was both an appearance and an apparition, and where women were intermediaries between spirit life and life on earth. However, I will use *apparition* of the wampum rather than *spirit* of the wampum, even though the words are synonymous, as a way of being consistent, and as a way of linking it back to the appearance and apparition understood in relation to Levinas's (1978) dual existences: the inward and the anonymous respectively. Also, my desire to delineate further the apparition of the wampum is to introduce two more points that Levinas makes in regards to the anonymous existence: the elemental, and the disappearance, as a way of providing a grounding for what is yet to come.

When I think of the appearance of the wampum, I relate it to Levinas's (1978) inward existence where everything is exposed and depicted on a superficial level, as I discussed above. Similarly, when considering the apparition of the wampum, I relate it to Levinas's (1978) anonymous existence where it pertains to an absence of the world—the *il y a*—or the “elemental” (p. 51), which is my first point of departure. To better understand the wampum in relation to the two existences, the former would fall under what is possessable: what I see and identify, comprehend, and what I can claim for my own, and the latter would consist of what is non-possessable, non-containable, “nobody's” (Levinas, 1969, p. 131), such as the wind, earth, sea, sky, and air—the elemental. The elemental for Levinas (1969) is a formless medium in which I am always steeped, thereby making it unapproachable because “...thought does not fix the element as an object...[and the] sky, the earth, the sea, the wind—suffice to themselves” (p. 132). More specifically,

The element I inhabit is at the frontier of a night. What the side of the element that is turned toward me conceals is not a “something” susceptible of being revealed, but an ever-new depth of absence, an existence without existent, the impersonal par excellence. This way of existing without revealing itself, outside of being and the world, must be called mythical. (Levinas, 1969, p. 142)

It is precisely this ever-new depth of absence that pertains to an existence without an existent, and an existing without a revealing, that is crucial. Because for

Levinas (1969), “[t]he element presents us as it were the reverse of reality, without origin in a being...” (p. 132). Hence, commenting what is needed is a retu(r)ning to what could be *Otherwise*, regarding the erasure or obscurity of the feminine in relation to the wampum, I posit the feminine *is* of the elemental. The feminine is also the “mythical” that underlines shamanic historical consciousness (SHC), in a way that is reminiscent of how the Mapuche people combined mythohistory—the dynamic relationship between myth and history and between national and Indigenous history that is used for conveying identity, challenging and potentially obliterating national histories and narratives, and reconciling representations of the past. Claiming the feminine element emphasizes that “[t]here is no longer *this* or *that*, there is not ‘something.’ But this universal absence is in its turn a presence, an absolutely unavoidable presence” (Levinas, 1978, p. 58). Furthermore, the *Othemess* of the feminine for Levinas, as Donna Brody (2001) explains is not a term simply understood as “...the negative analogue of the ‘masculine’ where the feminine would be conceived as the correlative, complementary, or contrary sex” (p. 56). Therefore, as a way to move away from the possibility of understanding the feminine only in relation to the word and/or understanding of “masculine,” I coin the feminine the *Ellemental*. It is a play on Levinas’s (1968) idea behind *illeity*, a word he termed to address the third person beyond being (Him/God), and which cannot be defined by the self, as previously outlined under *slipping from the light into darkness*. The *Ellemental*, for me, is the everything of nothingness, *le néant*, the *il y a*. But instead of it arising in the form of a trace in the face of the *other*, it is a medium in which one is steeped or bathed, analogous to a fetus in the womb, for “I am always within the element,” (p. 131) as Levinas (1969) eloquently reminds us.

As a way of reinforcing my stance regarding the *Ellemental*, I am reminded of the questions Rubenstein (2008) posed, which I left unanswered earlier under *slipping from the light into darkness*, where she asks why Levinas decided the existent needed to be reconstituted and ruptured a second time, particularly when the *il y a*, in its primordial, presubjective indeterminacy, provides that. With those earlier questions in mind, I want to also highlight that Rubenstein (2008), when talking about Levinas’s views pertaining to the “bad” infinity (the *il y a*) and the “good” infinity (the face-to-face) also identified that Levinas’s work “...becomes increasingly sexed and increasingly mapped onto the psychoanalytic drama of male becoming” (p. 75)—a moving from the material/maternal

towards that of paternity. And she further points out that, "...the 'there is' turns out to be not so much an *il y a* as an *elle y a*" (p. 75). Likewise, Brody (2001) not only recognizes in *Existence and Existents* that "[t]he feminine face is proximal to the monstrous and ungraspable squeaking and rumbling of the indeterminate *il y a*" (p. 64), but that the feminine is associated to something beyond the *il y a*. Thus, drawing upon two quotes from Levinas's (1969) *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, she notes that "[h]e writes that she [the feminine] weighs heavier even than the "weight of the formless real...[and that]...the feminine is 'behind' the night of insomnia or the *il y a*" (p. 64). In conjunction with the points made by both Rubenstein (2008) and Brody (2001), Randolph C. Wheeler (2008) further states that "[a]lthough the infinite and the elemental seem similar, the concepts apply to different realms of Levinas's doctrine: the infinite is ethical whereas the boundless is elemental and implies enclosure in the *apeiron*" (p. 91). Wheeler (2008), in a section entitled the "Apeiron," interprets, how for Levinas, the *apeiron* is attached to the notion of "finition," (p. 91)—the ending in the element—and is part of an "...enclosure, containment, and contentment" (p. 91), unlike infinity that characterizes the gap between the self and the Other (or in Levinas's case, between man and God). However, I argue that the *Ellemental* precedes the encounter with the *other*, the face-to-face, and the ethicality of Levinas's infinite. The *Ellemental* is *a priori*, the first truth as Laramée described it, arising from a proto-ethic.

Furthermore, and this is my second point of departure, Levinas (1987a) stated,

What matters to me in this notion of the feminine is not merely the unknowable, but a mode of being that consists in slipping away from the light. The feminine in existence is an event different from that of spatial transcendence or of expression that go toward light. It is a flight before light. Hiding is the way of existing of the feminine, and this fact of hiding is precisely modesty. (p. 87)

Together with my first point, this quote reconfirms the importance and sacredness of the feminine. The idea of the feminine as falling within the unknowable, and slipping from the light, speaks not only in regards to the *Ellemental*, but to that of the anonymous existence and the *il y a*. For example, when I interpret the idea of having to hide as a way of existing, it represents the difference between the feminine as pertaining to women, and feminine as pertaining to the *Ellemental*. Women existing in the inward, (un)knowingly keep hidden their deeper connection to the *Ellemental*—modestly. I

contend that women (un)knowingly do so because, for some women, they are no longer attuned to the *power of creation* regardless whether they have given birth or not; it is a legacy that is passed on through womanhood. When I say power of creation, it is not implying heteronormativity, or heterosexuality on consummating a child, instead it must be clear that the *Ellemental* pertains to both men and women—to the medium in which we have all been bathed or steeped in. It is all part of slipping into the shadows or into its “mystery,” as Levinas (1969) claimed. What this affords, and here I have to agree with Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger (1997), who, in conversation with Levinas stated,

...you restore to woman that which was taken away from her; a certain *symbolic* principle of creation, an ethical space. The idea of disappearance might make an allusion to the idea of creating a space on the outside like in the inside. (p. 28)

This she said after Levinas confirmed that the deepest of the feminine is “...the ultimate measure of the ethical relationship” (p. 27-28). Thus, it is in the idea of disappearance, where for me, the proto-ethical relational space is created or where I suggest can be (re)located. But first it is important that when considering the idea of disappearance, it should not be understood as becoming lost or a permanent expiration, but more like a transpiring, akin to the waning of the moon—in her universal absence is in its turn an absolutely unavoidable presence. And it is precisely the restoration of an outer ethical space that is allegorically created from an inner space that needs to be explored further. The purpose for such an undertaking is because when history is narrated in a particular way, as it has been for hundreds of years, it makes it both harder and necessary for those of us whose duty is in their *re/art/i/culation* to present that which is hidden. In Michael Marker’s (1999) words,

...when stories about the past are not acknowledged, or when they have been somehow suppressed, they can grow to become more powerful as unseen but animating forces in the present. In other words, the invisibility of formative and revealing historical narratives becomes the prevailing impediment to understanding the complex and deep meaning of aboriginal education. Stories of the past can grow in a certain kind of power when they are politically and culturally rejected as irrelevant to the present. (para. 9)

And, I contend, such is the case with the *Ellemental*. Therefore, seeing my role as *re/art/i/culating* that which can be *o/Otherwise*, I look to the *south wind* to guide me. For



the south wind is reminiscent of my journeying. It pertains to all the endless encounters I have had, and which have provided me with *beads*, in this context, stories regarding the feminine element or from here on out, the *Ellemental*. As an aside, beads for me represent things collected on the way, which will be used when the time presents itself. For example, beads collected in regards to the WBs, are (co)created, orally impregnated, and become woven into mnemonic devices that record our lived experiences, while (re)connecting us to the ancestors. Beads in relation to my dissertation are segments of thoughts, collections of words, and the written (presentational element). They are also the pauses in the thesis where the reader is asked to remember a particular point or term such as artifact, matriarchal societies, inhalation, and chauvinism. They are then revisited or recollected and woven into the dissertation as it unfolds. Together, I view beads as necessary for (re)beading the WBs: the *Kaswentha*, my doctoral WB, and for writing my thesis because they not only include the voices and ideas of those from my many encounters, but they also form a stronghold for bringing the new narrative forward. Therefore, with my teeth to the wind, let me begin the next adventure by (re)weaving tales of twins, blood, and the River of Immortality—shamanic *Ellements* of the feminine.

### ***the inward***

*The importance of the retu(r)ning to the wampum belts (WBs), was mainly because I viewed them as my people's history books. As valuable as traditional history textbooks have been in education, the WBs for me, represented a clearer, and perhaps truer rendition of those early encounters. Mainly because the role of the WBs, for the most part, was the part of the narrative that was generally obscured, missing, or omitted all together within the classroom history textbook. Therefore, I felt it was only befitting that I dedicate sections of my thesis to "different" elements of history, seeing my thesis centers around historical narratives. Ironically though, I found myself struggling with my constant need to identify these elements as "different" because by doing so, it suggested that what was being represented, was situated below some preconceived universal standard. I am thus left wondering how Thomas King (2003) viewed the term, especially when stating, "Want a different ethic? Tell a different story" (p. 164)*

*Another important aspect about the WBs that might assist the reader, is that when writing and/or beading, I too am on a path of discovery. Similar to how the reader is anxious to know what lies around the bend, each idea that is presented is interwoven within the next, in a way akin to beading the wampum. It is not until the end, when all the beads are in place, that the belt is finally revealed. In other words, “Traditional tribal narratives possess a circular structure incorporating event within event, piling meaning upon meaning, until the accretion finally results in a story” (p. 79), as Paula Gunn Allen (1986) identifies. This is important, because as I previously mentioned, it requires that the reader take note or remember, that time is spent sojourning in the content, context, and imagery, and at times looking over one’s shoulder or retracing one’s steps.*

*When describing Levinas’s work, Critchley (2015) suggests that a “...useful way of thinking about Levinas is not in terms of arguments or verifying propositions but in relation to a certain accumulation of terms, a rhetorical intensification through forms of repetition, invocation, and multiplication” (p. 68). I am hoping that for those, who are well versed in Levinas’s work, will come to see that I too have tried to mimic his work at times: by posing many questions, repeating phrases, linking the thesis to a higher power, and introducing new terms. However, there are times where I draw upon his ideas but challenge them, especially when they are rooted in a patriarchal language. This was especially true when I coined the term *Ellemental*. It was not because I was against his ideas about *illeity*, instead, it was more about taking a few steps backward, *retu(r)ning* towards his earlier ideas, and reclaiming a space for the feminine. Because it was in reading Levinas that I came to see her greater role, and why it was important for me to situate the feminine in a place that was higher than Levinas’s ideas regarding *illeity*, infinity, and God. Hence, the *Ellemental*, on the one hand, is the first truth that arises from the proto-ethical. The most important thing to take away from the *Ellemental* (i.e. feminine), at this point, is our relation with it, especially in light of the inward or an anonymous existence. And although I relate it to such things as the womb and the *il y a*, it is more about how we have all been bathed in it—a point I am trying hard to maintain throughout. On the other hand, what the *Ellemental* is not, is an essentialist view that is promoting heteronormativity or female fecundity because both these ideas are attached to that of an inward existence and the *Ellemental* is of the anonymous. As was previously mentioned, it no longer pertains to “this” or “that.”*

WB 1

m.d.c. lefebvre, *money talks*, 2005, Burnaby, BC (16"x48")



*Note.* lefebvre, m.d.c. (2007); used with permission.

WB 2

m.d.c. lefebvre, *(not) expected*, 2010, Burnaby, BC (5.6"x28")



WB 3

m.d.c. lefebvre, *Canadian gothic myth*, 2011, Burnaby, BC (8"x31")



WB 4

m.d.c. lefevre, *An Ethical Response/ability to An other*, 2012,  
Burnaby, BC (9"x72")



WB 5

m.d.c. lefevre, *Goddesses Mnemosyne and Lesmosyne*, 2012, Burnaby, BC (48"x48")



WB 6

m.d.c. lefevre, *art/i/fact*, 2012, Burnaby, BC (18"x84")





WB 7

m.d.c. lefebvre, *face-to-face*, 2013, Burnaby, BC (24"X36")



WB 8

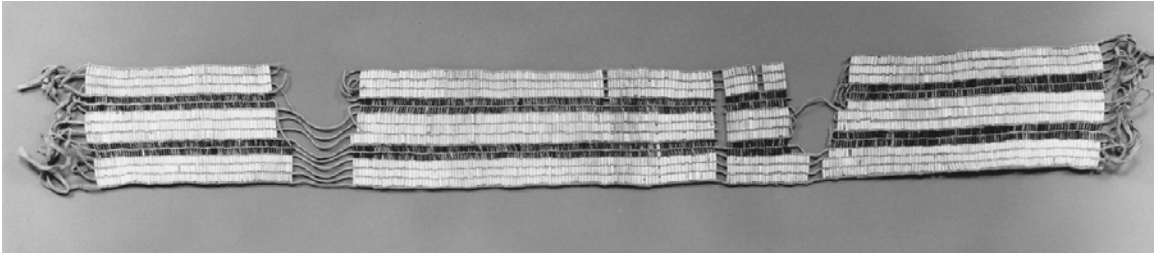
N.f. Schuitemaker, *three directions*, 2013, Burnaby, BC (8.6" x 36.6")



*Note.* Used with permission.

WB 9

Six Nations Public Library, *Kaswhenta*, 1613, Ohsweken, ON.



*Note.* Used with permission

## south wind—the journeying

The arguments of different indigenous peoples based on spiritual relationships to the universe, to the landscape and to stones, rocks, insects and other things, seen and unseen, have been difficult arguments for Western systems of knowledge to deal with or accept.

< Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999. p. 74)

I'm just not the historian you had in mind.

< Thomas King (2013, p. xi)

When my approach to the wampum belts (WBs) changed, so did their narratives. When I reached the point where I saw them as part of a *naissance*, where they were connected to an appearance and an apparition, and the *Ellemental*, I started sharing my findings locally, nationally and globally, to see how they would be received. Thus, under the element of the *south wind*, it is all about the journeying—reminiscing over previous encounters and events, both at home and abroad, and how it led me to a *re/art/i/culation* of the WBs that was more of a “channelling” than a “retelling,” particularly in relation to the *Kaswentha* or Two Row Wampum. I begin the journey by sharing two events that occurred to me in relation to my daughters that together were the catalysts for revisiting the narrative that has been attached to the *Kaswentha*. Combined with the feedback I received along the way from numerous people, and from various places around the world, it appeared there were many similar quests taking place, especially ones rooted in the feminine. These pursuits ranged from personal reclamations, to ways of healing our plundered world. And as such, the *south wind* is a guiding or healing wind that arises from (inter)relational histories of trauma. Lastly, under the *south wind*, I propose a (re)beading of the wampum, or better yet, a *re/art/i/culation* of the *Kaswentha*, as emphasized above. A *re/art/i/culation* that seeks to disrupt patriarchal colonialism, while retu(r)ning us to the primeval (m) *Other* earth. My plan is to focus on three main points: twins, blood, and the River of Immortality—shamanic *Ellements*—which I realize will make it harder for Western systems of knowledge to deal with or accept, as Linda

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) pointed out in the epigraph above because they explore further what it means to be steeped in the *Ellemental*. But first, let me begin by re/art/i/culating what occurred alongside my daughters.

## tales of two (grand)daughters

Not too long ago, my youngest daughter, who was graduating from the University of British Columbia, asked if I would create for her a contemporary wampum belt (WB) that she could wear as part of her ceremonial regalia. Together we decided on using the ideas behind the *Kaswentha*, as we found it befitting, since she shares both a Mohawk and Dutch heritage—the two nations that the *Kaswentha* originally represented. Because this piece was to speak of her accomplishments, we decided to shy away from the notion of being “independent together” as previously outlined under *Kaswentha or Two Row Wampum*, because we believed her achievements did not happen in a vacuum, but occurred along an arduous path of reciprocity. With its creation, we began with the basic philosophy behind the parallel lines traveling alongside each other, but soon came to question if it was even possible to assume if early relations of amicability could be based on a fraternity that traveled parallel to each other down, what is sometimes referred to as, the river of life. Reconsidering the *Kaswentha*’s narrative, I purposely named the WB *three directions* (see WB 8) to reflect the inter-relationships that occur(red) between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and our connection to the (distant) *Other*. In other words, it was focusing on the *inter*-weavings—the inclusion of the shadows—rather than non-intersectional lines of separation.

During that same period, my eldest daughter was expecting twins, which resulted in my spending some time with her just before the birth of the babies. Almost every day, prior to the day of delivery, revolved around doctor’s appointments in the neonatal wing of the hospital dedicated to multiple births. It was there that I discovered what was referred to as the Vanishing Twin Syndrome (VTS) and that it had happened to me years ago. It is a phenomenon that occurs, typically around the ninth week of gestation, when one of the multiple fetuses disappears from the uterus. What results is either a miscarriage of the fetal tissue, or the fetus is reabsorbed by the mother, the placenta or the other fetus. However, sometimes the fetal tissue will not completely reabsorb,

instead it becomes compressed and flattened by the remaining fetus as it continues to grow, thereby resulting in what is termed *fetus papyraceus* due to its parchment-like appearance. Vanishing Twin Syndrome has been diagnosed more frequently since the use of ultrasonography in the early stages of pregnancy, and although W. Stoeckel first suspected such a phenomenon in 1945, precise estimates to its frequency are still hard to determine, but is more common than once believed. However, in my case, it took eighteen years, the birthing of my grandchildren, and that particular neo-natal wing to finally discover that I had experienced this “syndrome.” The only difference was at that time, I was unaware that I was actually carrying twins, and that none of the doctors had identified what had happened to me was referred to as the VTS. This left me to view the loss as an event that was larger than me, or any of us for that matter, and I could not help but wonder if—like my earlier question with *Lui*—in the relinquishment I had also reanimated the breath of the little one.

After my daughter gave birth to my granddaughters, it was fascinating to know they were fraternal twins—each with her own placenta and amniotic sac—imperative requirements for the VTS if the remaining twin is to survive. And with everything that had presented itself, I found myself relating the experiences to the *Kaswentha*. For instance, I questioned why twin girls would have attached to their uniqueness the word fraternal. Likewise, I thought about the rendition of the *Kaswentha* that spoke of a brotherhood, and started contemplating if perhaps its meaning had been misinterpreted because when defined, this WB emphasized two vessels floating on the river of life. What if, instead of brothers in their boats, the *Kaswentha* represented twins in the womb? And what if the *Kaswentha* was a Creation story? Revisiting my earlier thoughts, while (re)creating the *Kaswentha* for my youngest daughter, I question whether it is possible to navigate waters independent together, for one is always affected by the other’s wake, as was demonstrated with the VTS. Thus, by way of a re/art/i/culational approach, I want to challenge the way the *Kaswentha* has been depicted, because, by doing so, we can piece together or restore the proto-ethical space that Lichtenberg Ettinger (1997) alluded to, and recount a different story based on the *Ellemental*. It is a movement that is retu(r)ning us to the origin, or the commencement of an uprightness toward an ethical *o/Other* relationality. But before I do that, let me explore a bit further the importance of twins, blood, and the River of Immortality,

particularly when combined with the experiences with my (grand) daughters, they might be key for "...creating a space on the outside like in the inside" (p. 28)—wampum narratives that reflect inner womblike proto-ethical (*o/Other*) inter-relations.

## **twins, blood, and the River of Immortality**

In the Iroquoian Creation story, Sky Woman, after falling to earth, gave birth to a daughter named Lynx. In time, an Earth spirit became infatuated with Lynx, the Sky child, and eventually impregnated her. Lynx, became pregnant with Sky and Earth entities, and died giving birth to twin boys: Sapling and Flint, who were then raised by their grandmother. What is important to know is that according to Barbara Alice Mann (2000),

Sky Woman and the Lynx were important symbols of bonding, their mother-daughter relationship exemplifying the primary female form of social connection among the Iroquois. In the original tellings, the Twins merely repeated and reinforced the concept of reciprocal pairs, presented this time in the male version, enunciating the primary male bond in Iroquoian society, brotherhood. (p. 89)

Mann (2000) highlights each pairing as an important factor as to how Iroquoian tradition views the world. Particularly since colonization, interpretations by western historians, and missionaries both past and present, the Creation story and its characters, have been modified to reflect Eurocentric religious doctrines and worldviews. Mann (2000) points out that "[s]exism, monotheism, and conflict, all central concepts of Christian Europe, are confidently used by western scholars to organize Iroquoian traditions, regardless of how much violence they might be doing to authentic meaning in the process" (p. 61). For instance, in relation to the Creation story, more emphasis was/is given to the twin brothers, by attaching a good and evil dichotomy (i.e. good God versus evil Satan) to them, and presenting the twins as in conflict with each other (Mann, 1997a) similar to Cain and Abel, the brothers in the Bible. Equally, one could argue that the narrative associated with the *Kaswentha* as depicted above, has traces of this dichotomous mentality and religious undertone, with its focus being primarily based on a brotherhood and the need for maintaining one's distance. Over time, however, what also occurs is that the pairing of the feminine is denigrated: Sky Woman becomes an evil

sorceress, and Lynx is "...reduced to a nameless womb; her whole story consisted of dying in child birth" (Mann, 2000, p. 26). Thereby making the *gantowisas* (or Iroquois women) invisible and the first casualties of invasion with the historical versions of the Iroquois belief systems as told by western scholars (Mann, 2000). Consequently, both pairings—the twins and the female elders before them were responsible for creating the abundances of life (Mann, 2000).

In *Iroquoian Woman: The Gantowisas* (2000), Mann stresses the importance of twins in Iroquoian tradition by positioning them within a cosmic equilibrium, a guiding principle that is central in many social interventions. Equilibrium "...was the animating purpose behind 'gendering,' or the interactions between male and female energies..." (Mann, 2000, p. 60)—tenets of Iroquois spirituality. But before one can fully grasp these cosmological implications, one needs to be aware that the Twinship principle, although modeled by the coupling between Sapling and Flint, is rooted in "...an interlocking system of extended analogies" (p. 90) in all aspects of (after) life. I present Mann's (2000) definition as follows:

For the Iroquois, Twinship is the abiding principle that organizes nature. Everything that exists, does so by halves. A thing is only complete when it is paired with its naturally reciprocating half. In emulation of this principle, the entire Iroquoian world is made up of complementary pairs, each the mirrored half of its "cousin," or absolute complement. Reality consists of parallel agents of power functioning synchronously so as to maintain a balanced cosmos. Thus, Flint completes Sapling, just as Sapling reciprocates Flint, in the never-ending round of their sacral activities. There is no battle here, but only a ceremonial dance, as each circles the council fire, perpetually re/treading the other's path, which is also his own path. (p. 90)

By way of an example, Mann (2000) outlines how, when envisioning the sky, it consists of two halves. There is the East/West axis, which is referred to as "the Direction of the Sky," and the North/South axis, which is called "the Split Sky" because it intersects the direction of Brother Sun's daily route. These cardinal directions are known as the Four Winds, and are more than "...intellectual constructs useful in describing special directions...[they are also]...active agents of reality" (Mann, 2000, p. 91), similar to the way my thesis is being presented. Focusing on the Direction of the Sky, the day consists of two bundles: midnight to midday (light), and midday to midnight (darkness)—allowing equal visitation of Brother Sun, thus sharing equal amounts of light and



darkness. Equally important is that "...the light-dark halves of East and West are directly connected with Sapling and Flint in Iroquoian analogies" (Mann, 2000, p.92).

Furthermore, Mann (2008), referring to the East/West complementary binaries as "The Halved Cosmos," highlights how—for many of the woodland cultures (Iroquois specifically)—these primary halves represent(ed) "Blood and Breath" (p. 102). Breath is associated with such things as the Air, the Sky, the mind, ethical and intellectual issues, hunting, white wampum, and men, whereas Blood pertained to Water, the Earth, the marrow of the bone, moral and passionate issues, agriculture, black (dark purple) wampum, and women. It is precisely the latter half that I want to build upon because Mann (2013), speaking at *The Women of the World Symposium* at the University of Toledo in 2013, made an important point about blood. She said, when men bleed they have the propensity to die, whereas when women bleed they live, a point I believe needs further investigation, as it might be connected to the idea of the Vanishing Twin Syndrome, and the disappearance of the feminine—elements that sit beyond the Twinship principle. So let us segue into narratives about blood for a moment, and return to these ideas when more stories have been presented.

In her book *Te Awa Atua Menstruation in the Pre-Colonial Māori World* (2013), which is based on her Master's thesis, Ngāhuia Murphy was on a personal mission to reclaim what she refers to as the "divine feminine," as a way of bringing forth the spirit of the feminine. More specifically, she states,

Native spiritualities that strive to reclaim the divine feminine within a historical context of systematic repression are a very specific site of resistance. I locate the reclamation of women's blood knowledge here. Collecting Māori women's womb-blood stories works toward re-threading the feminine strands in the spiritual fabric of the world. (p. 43)

And as such, I was drawn to Murphy's (2014, 2013) work because it spoke to many of the ideas that were presenting themselves to me in relation to the wampum, the more I became vocal. As she presented her work based on Māori feminine womb-blood narratives at WIPC:E in O'ahu, Hawai'i in 2014, I felt like for the first time I was connecting to something that was literally "out of this world." Not only was the conference's theme centered on male and female energies, it was as if, this gathering of Indigenous women (and men) from all over the world, was in the making long before any

of us was aware. In much of what Murphy talked about, I could not help but draw parallels between that of Māori and Iroquois feminine traditions that Mann (2000) spoke about. For instance, Murphy (2013; 2014) begins by situating the obliteration of the menstrual story with the colonial invasion, where the Māori worldviews and belief systems are transformed into Christianized versions, and interpreted using a Manichean dualist approach to the world, comparable to the way Mann (2000) described it here on Turtle Island. Equally similar, is that according to Murphy (2013), “[t]he symbology, ritual practices, and attitudes toward menstruation in pre-colonial times are conceptualised within cosmological narratives which provide the lens through which to decipher often obscure *tikanga*<sup>35</sup> practices and concepts” (p. 32). Correspondingly, she begins by returning to “...stories about *atua wāhine*<sup>36</sup> to understand menstrual narratives, restrictions, and ritual practices” (p. 32). And akin to Mann’s (2000) work around Sky Woman and the Iroquois Creation story, Murphy (2013) introduces us to a version of the Māori Creation story because it too is rooted in a cosmological understanding, of which I unfold in a condensed version based on my limited knowledge of said story, while focusing more on the points of interest that pertain to the thesis. Drawing heavily on Murphy’s (2013, 2014) rendition, including many of her citations, and the oral versions I have been privileged to hear, I recite my version as follows.

The story rises out of darkness (Te Pō), where between Papatūānuku (earth mother) and Ranginui (sky father) a new kind of river was born—a deep red river (Murphy, 2014). It was also within that dark space that existed between their tight embrace that all of their children were born. Tāne, one of their offsprings, was the first to discover a “...new world beyond the shadows of Te Pō” (Murphy, 2014, p. 7). By plunging into the river’s current, he was the first to discover the world of light and by doing so, created a rift between Papatūānuku and Ranginui, thus separating the earth and sky. Tāne in union with Hineahuone—the first human and daughter of Papatūānuku (earth mother)—had a daughter named Hinetītama. What was unique about Hinetītama was that she was born of earth and sky entities, thus straddling both worlds, she was able to transform the notion of duality, and was able to sit between the worlds of day and

<sup>35</sup> Tikanga means “procedure, custom, practice, habit” (Murphy, 2013, p. 146).

<sup>36</sup> Atua means, “god/goddess, deity, supernatural being, [and] menstrual blood” and wāhine refers to woman (Murphy, 2013, p. 143)

night, and light and darkness (Murphy, 2013). As the custodian of the light side she was known as the Maiden of the Dawn and the giver of life, and as the Great Lady of the Night—Hinenuitepō<sup>37</sup>—she had dominion over death and she was responsible for guiding the spirits on their journey to Rarohenga (the underworld). Correspondingly, because she had the ability to shapeshift, she became known as the one who had control of the spaces in-between (Murphy, 2013).

One important example of this control, occurred when “Hinenuitepō stamped her authority within the consciousness of humanity by crushing and killing Māui when he ventured ‘between her thighs’ in pursuit of immortality” (Murphy, 2013, p. 33). However, in order to get a better sense of the importance of this act, I feel it is best that I present this element of the story, as it was recited to Murphy (2013) by her Aunty Rose, as a way to honour the breath and retelling of the sacred feminine narrative. It begins like this:

*Woman is seen as the Sacred House of Humanity and the canoe that conveys one generation to the next. Before the ‘River of Time’ when only Atua existed, both male and female, one of the female Atua whose name is Hine-nui-te-po-te-ao, was responsible for giving woman ‘Te Awa Atua’, the Divine River, menstruation. Māui, a demi-god, observed that Hina-te-iwa-iwa the moon god could make her world wax and wane every month, so he decided to return to the womb of the god Hine-nui-te-po-te-ao to receive immortality.*

*Māui went to Hine-nui-te-po-te-ao, and climbed up her thighs. The Tiwaiwaka (fantail) flitted right up to Māui, and asked him what he was up to. Māui told the Tiwaiwaka that he wanted to go back into the womb where he was sure he could receive immortality. The Tiwaiwaka warned Māui about cutting across the natural laws, but Māui continued on his journey. The Tiwaiwaka woke the sleeping Hine-nui-te-po-te-ao up. Hine-nui-te-po-te-ao asked Māui what he was doing heading up to her groin and Māui told her about wanting to be like the Moon. Hine-nui-te-po-te-ao said she could grant Māui his wish but he was not to return to the womb; she then crushed him and made him the first menstruation to come into the world. As long as women menstruates, Māui will live on. (p. 58)*

According to Aroha Yates Smith (1995), what this act—the killing of Māui—represents is that the Sacred House of Humanity (*te whare tangata*) also became known as the House of Destruction (*te whare o aituā*), “...thus conceptualising the power of

<sup>37</sup> Sometimes written as Hinenuitepōao or Hine-nui-te-po-te-ao.

women with life and death, creation and destruction” (as cited in Murphy, 2013, p. 34). In other words, menstrual blood, also known as the Red River, the Divine River, and the River of Immortality, not only symbolizes fertility—our assurance of immortality, “...as we live on in our descendants” (Murphy, 2014, p. 35); it also signals a failed attempt of an ancestor being born. And thus, I conclude that it is the *Ellemental* that is navigating the outcome, which then leads me to reconsider what exactly is happening with/to the vanishing twin.

What is even more significant about the retelling of the Māori Creation story lies within the first sentence: “*Woman is seen as the Sacred House of Humanity and the canoe that conveys one generation to the next*” (Murphy, 2013, p. 58). It brings us back to the *Kaswentha*, where we need to reconsider the idea that the parallel lines represented a brotherhood and two ships afloat on the river of life. The bond between the Sacred House of Humanity and the canoe that together “convey” is key, for the word convey means to transport, carry or bear something from one place to another, such as, between the spirit world and earthly world, and it refers to the medium or channel between two places, akin to representing the spaces-in-between. It also means to communicate, or to make known, similar to the idea behind the re/art/i/culation of the wampum. And in its archaic form, the word convey is defined as to secretly take away, which I view as the *Otherside* of the Divine River, the House of Destruction, death, and where the Vanishing Twin Syndrome occurs, along with the expulsion of the monthly menstruations. More importantly, it is women who are doing the conveying. In other words, they are the intermediaries between the spirit and earth worlds, they are the house of humanity, and who are responsible for our immortality—the Keepers of the *Ellemental*. Therefore, as a weaver of the wampum, let me pause and recollect all that has been presented, as a way of (re)beading the *Kaswentha*. By doing so, it will allow for a re/art/i/culation: a piecing together, a recounting, and a movement to occur. And as such, I present my interpretation of the *Kaswentha* as follows.

## **(re)beading the wampum—restoring the *Ellemental***

When working with wampum belts (WBs), either in theory or practice, I was always interested in what was not being mentioned or included within their narratives,

particularly because for the most part, the way they have been depicted has always been through a western lens. If, and when they are mentioned in contemporary history textbooks or academic papers, for example, they are generally presented as a primitive system used for symbolizing particular events, and in a way that their significance is as meaningful as receiving a lanyard with a logo from an event one attended, and soon discards. Or else, they are presented as creative beadwork and artistry of a past or dying culture. I, however, saw them as representing something more profound, not only as mnemonic devices that recorded history, and depicted the formation of Canada as a nation, but more as cultural artifacts that held the traces of a people from time immemorial, akin to that of religious doctrines (i.e. the Bible, the Koran, the Talmud, etc.). Having focused on the *Kaswentha* or Two Row Wampum, I could not agree more when I read what Kathryn V. Muller (2007) stated when she too was questioning the narrative associated with the *Kaswentha*. Muller asserts that

...the belt today claimed as the Two Row Wampum by the Six Nations of Grand River could have originally possessed a different story entirely and that the contemporary reading of the belt possibly built upon the Covenant Chain alliance to suit a new political reality....The life history of this particular Two Row Wampum instead demonstrates the ability of oral tradition to adapt to a new object, ultimately changing its political function to reflect contemporary ambitions and relationships. (p. 152).

And even though Muller and I might be worlds apart in regards to what we believe the original narrative might be or symbolizes, it still reinforces the notion that alternative viewpoints regarding the *Kaswentha* have been few or lacking altogether. By alternative I am referring to those that not only disrupt the common narrative and understanding akin to those of the Mapuche people's mythohistories, but those that "...presents us as it were the reverse of reality, without origin in a being..." (Levinas, 1969, p. 132), such as the *Ellemental*. This was why I purposely juxtaposed personal accounts alongside the Creation stories as a way to demonstrate what can be extrapolated from these narratives as a way of locating traces of the *Ellemental* in a fashion similar to how Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1992) sought the Wild Women in numerous versions of the same traditional tale, using an approach she termed "fairy-tail forensics and paleomythology" (p. 16). When asked, what comprises the Wild Woman, Pinkola Estés (1992) states

From the viewpoint of archetypal psychology as well as in ancient traditions, she is the female soul. Yet she is more; she is the source of the feminine. She is all that is of instinct, of the worlds both seen and hidden—she is the basis....She is ideas, feelings, urges, and memory. She has been lost and half forgotten for a long, long time. She is the source, the light, the night, the dark, and the daybreak....She is the one who thunders after injustice....She is from the future and from the beginning of time. She lives in the past and is summoned by us. She is the present and keeps a chair at our table, stands behind us in a line, and drives ahead of us on the road. She is the future and walks backward in time to find us now. (p. 12-13)

Therefore, could it be that it is not I who is seeking the *Ellemental*, but “it,” who is seeking us: Murphy (2013) with her womb-blood narratives, Pinkola Estés (1992) with her traditional tales, and I with the wampum? With that question in mind, I begin re/art/i/culating the *Kaswentha* as follows.

Based on the Twinship principle, as previously outlined under *twins, blood, and the River of Immortality*, it is safe to say that the two dark parallel lines of the *Kaswentha* represent a pairing. Currently as it is being depicted, the two lines represent Indigenous and non-Indigenous people living independently but together. However, I would argue that the pairing is complementing each other, such as the original relationship between the sky and earth and Sapling and Flint, and that the lines reflect twins in the womb—a symbiotic relationship. Likewise, the two lines are said to represent canoes that are carrying said people, down the river of life, where no one interferes with the sailing (affairs) of the other. Borrowing from the Māori Creation story, where the canoe is linked to the Sacred House of Humanity (the woman), I posit that the canoes are depicting uterine vessels in which contain both the future generations and our ancestral ties. And sailing on the river of life as it is currently portrayed, speaks to a larger unfolding where the water is the amniotic fluid which surrounds the embryos/fetuses (bathing in the *Ellemental*). Thus, returning to the conversation between Lichtenberg Ettinger (1997) and Levinas when she identified, “...creating a space on the outside like in the inside” (p. 28), I believe this was/is what the *Kaswentha* was/is actually doing. Another example of this idea of creating a space on the outside like the inside, can be found when Levinas (1969) spoke about the “home,” and how in its dwelling, “...creates new relations with the elements” (p. 156). He outlines the home as

...set back from the anonymity of the earth, the air, the light, the forest, the road, the sea, the river. It has a “street front,” but also a secrecy. With the dwelling the separated being breaks with natural existence, steeped in a medium where its enjoyment, without security, on edge, was being inverted into care. Circulating between visibility and invisibility, one is always bound for the interior of which one’s home, one’s corner, one’s tent, or one’s cave is the vestibule. The primordial function of the home does not consist in orienting being by the architecture of the building and in discovering a site, but in breaking the plenum of the element, in opening in it the utopia in which the “I” recollects itself in dwelling at home in itself. (p. 156)

Correspondingly, Levinas (1969) further states that the home, in relation to the feminine,

...is possessed because it already and henceforth is hospitable for its proprietor. This refers us to its essential interiority, and to the inhabitant that inhabits it before every inhabitant, the welcoming one par excellence, welcome in itself—the feminine being. (p. 157)

Even though Kathryn Bevis (2007), points out that “...to give credence to his [Levinas’s] account of habitation and the feminine is to philosophise Woman as little more than a container or vessel of male subjectivity,” (p. 322), and that by doing so “Woman remains merely a *function*....and not conceived as a subject herself” (p. 322), I use this example in agreement with what is being implied. For instance, one could argue that women who give birth can be viewed as containers or vessels responsible for all subjectivity, that they are providing a function. However, when it comes to responding on her own subjectivity, it will depend if we are speaking in regards to women or the *Ellemental*. For instance, if we return to the two previous quotes regarding the home, I interpret the home as representing women or the maternal body as a metaphor of the *Ellemental*. And it is the *Ellemental* that is of importance here because, in this context, I want to push the boundaries even further and state that the *Ellemental*, that is also viewed as the *il y a*, the *néant*, and Being, is the inter-uterine space. And although Bevis (2007) identifies that for some women, such as, Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Stella Sandford, view “Woman,” in Levinas’s philosophy, as not “truly” Other (p. 322-323), I would have to both agree and disagree. She is truly Other when in relation to the *Ellemental*, but becomes effaced with the face-to-face relation—the second stage of liberation—with the emphasis on *Him*. Therefore, what I am implying is that the proto-ethical *o/Other* relationality stems from the *Ellemental*—our initial inter-uterine experience—and that women, wampum belts, and the home, as

examples, are (re)Creations—allegories to “Being,” where Being in this form pertains to the anonymous existence. For Bevis (2007) reminds us that, “[t]he first dwelling that the subject must inhabit, the maternal body, is itself actually the *embodiment* of the ethical relationship, a literal interruption or invasion of the Other into the Same underneath the bodily boundary of the skin” (p. 325).

As for wampum belts, they are mnemonic devices that are linked to the sacred space, and speak of proto-ethical *o/Other* relationalities. By acknowledging the *Ellemental*: a power or source responsible for humanity, it restores the first truth, the mystery that is depicted in our Creation stories. And although Lichtenberg Ettinger (2002) credits Levinas (1993; 1997) for tracing “...a radical path of thinking the ethical in terms of the feminine...a space of sexual difference that unfolds directly in/from the feminine” (p. 234), I posit that the path has been impressed on (m)Other earth since time immemorial, paved over with patriarchal colonialism, and revered by the *Keepers*. Patriarchal colonialism, is a “double burden” of racism and sexism that has been dealt to Native women. It is a historical legacy that supposes “Eurocentric notions of...inferiority of other non-white or non-Western ‘races,’ and of all women in general, versus the presumed superiority of the Anglicized, Euroamerican male” (Jaimes-Guerrero, 2003, p. 65). This is why I need to be cautious when claiming the role of the Keepers, because many who assume they honour the sacred narrative are actually perpetuating a narrative that speaks to the world of appearances—the political—and it is time to restore the *Ellemental*. Take for instance, Dale Turner (2006), who, like so many male scholars before him, while referring to the *Kaswentha*, is oblivious to the feminine element with his reiteration of the political narrative. Although he stresses the importance of incorporating and recognizing the significance of the three central white rows as representing peace, respect and friendship, I assert that this central space represents the spaces in between—the pathway between the spirit and earthly worlds—the domicile in which one bathes in the *Ellemental*. I believe this is a similar point to what Levinas (1969) was referring to when he said, “[t]o bathe in the element is to be in an inside-out world, and here the reverse is not equivalent to the obverse” (p. 132) because to bathe in the *Ellemental* is traumatic. Thus, when we contemplate narratives arising from the *Ellemental*, they are histories of trauma—traumas that are not only arising from the *il y a* with the decentering of the I (or ego), or denucleation that occurs (Rubenstein, 2008),



but also from the trauma associated with our entry in and out of the world from the spirit world or anonymous existence. But more importantly, overarching the physical trauma are traumas that stem from male domination, which work hard at obliterating relations with our mothers; (m)Other earth included (Gottlieb, 1994). Ironically, as humans, we have all been steeped in the *Ellemental* when we traversed from the spirit world into the earthly world, via the feminine channel (the River of Immortality), and every time we are in a position where we can no longer master existing—the escaping from the self—as Levinas outlined in his bodily states of insomnia, pleasure, nausea, wakefulness, indolence, suffering and pain (and I would add abuse, fear, meditation, traditional tattooing, body modifications, fasting, etc.). We are constantly navigating between existences, even though we go to great lengths, knowingly or unknowingly, to obscure that which does not fall under the inward existence—the supposed norm. As such, it is time to attend to what is being implied with the (re)beading of the *Kaswentha*, and to restore the *Ellemental*. By doing so, it will set the stage for a shamanic historical consciousness to arise when considering history. It will redefine the way indigenous education is being promoted and understood, and it will speak to a proto-ethical *o/Other* relationality emulating a “first contact” sensibility. By way of example, the *west wind* is dedicated to honouring the *Ellemental*, where I share what has transpired in regards to writing a thesis in honour of one’s doppelgänger. Therefore, the fierce *west wind*, where the sun sets and darkness arises, is all about trauma, shadows and the spaces in between.

### ***the inward***

*In the element of the south wind—the journeying, the voyage at times is turbulent, especially when coming to terms with the Ellemental. This is due to the fact that the reader has to attend to details, tarry in the reading, and be introduced to another way of knowing/seeing/reading the world. Likewise, because the Ellemental pertains to the il y a, the néant, there is no language to describe it, thus making it difficult to define or explain. What the Ellemental is doing though, is putting everything one knows to be true on its head, it is offering “the reverse of reality, without origin in a being...” (Levinas, 1969, p. 132), it is the commencement of the disruption—*anarchy*. And all I can offer at this time, is that one perseveres, and follows it through to the end.*

## west wind—the displacement

To know my history, I had to put away my books and return to the land.

< Haunani-Kay Trask (1993, p. 154)

Comprehending indigenous ways of seeing the past requires travelling these intellectual trails up an indigenous mountain and leaving behind some of the expectations about what constitutes “history” from a Western mindset.

< Michael Marker (2011, p. 98-99)

Throughout this academic and personal journey, I have been searching for the obscured, (distant) or ancestral *Other*, as a way of understanding (my) history, as a way of (re)locating an ethical relationality, and as a way of (re)defining indigenous education. I did so by seeking its whereabouts in the hallways of academia, in the traces found engrained in the encounters with *others*, unearthed in geological formations, and in artworkings, however, it was not until I stepped *outside* that all the aspects of my dissertation began to connect. By stepping outside, it meant walking away from what was generally deemed a source of knowledge (books, academia), it meant stepping outside of oneself (denucleation), and retu(r)ning to the land ((m)*Other* earth), perhaps in the same way that Haunani-Kay Trask (1993) mentioned in the epigraph above. And as such, the *west wind* is all about displacement.

Correspondingly, when it came to the process of writing my dissertation, I never felt like I “owned” what was transpiring because I always felt like the ideas were being channelled through me from the ancestors—those that passed before me. Equally, when considering the notion of ownership, I view my thesis more as flowing from me, akin to womb-blood narratives—the moving away from the idea of graspability/ownership to that of a first contact sensibility/proto-ethicality, a view that I will soon expose. My teachings have always been about acknowledging the seven generations that preceded me and the seven generations to come, so in a sense, we are never writing for our own.

Instead, I was taught that I was laying the groundwork for future generations, so it had to be something they could build upon. And as one can well imagine, the process of writing becomes a huge undertaking that requires respect, humility, and honour for having been selected, but at the same time, realizing the vital role I play in its delivery—a very different way of approaching and writing about the past.

Michael Marker (2011) is correct in pointing out that there is a task associated in trying to comprehend the way in which Indigenous people view and approach history. An upward challenge like no other because it requires "...travelling these intellectual trails up an indigenous mountain..." (p. 98-99), as the epigraph describes, and if we are using British Columbia's mountains as our example, we have an arduous journey ahead of us, mainly because it also includes Indigenous people who have been engrossed in Western thought with years of academic training and colonization. This became evident for me when I needed to integrate two other aspects to my writing process: reconsidering the notion of time, while exploring the *Ellemental*. But what exactly did this mean?

The more I shared my journey and experiences with Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and students, at various conferences around the world, with Elders, family members, and my ceremonial community, it became clear that I needed to take time throughout the writing process to honour the work, to acknowledge that I was being gifted, and that I was bringing something to life. At the same time, because the dissertation would always be something that would proceed and exceed me, I felt it required some sort of personal sacrifice or trauma because I was reminded of Gregory Cajete (1994), where in his book *Look to the Mountain an Ecology of Indigenous Education*, one of the stages of interrelationship and axiom that pertains to creating an ecology of education, emphasizes that for some Indigenous educators, sacrifice, hardship and/or a deep wounding, prepares them for reaching "...their maximum level of learning development" (p. 228). A wounding or memory of a traumatic event and the associated learning provides a constant source for (personal) renewal if one learns to understand the meaning of those events. Thus, I came to understand that I needed to go into ceremony, and by doing so, it meant that I first needed to let go of the idea that I had to work within a timeframe or deadline. My first impulse though was to fight against what was being asked of me, and to try and work around semester-based schedules so

nothing would be disrupted or displaced, but the more I procrastinated, and resisted, the more I struggled with the writing process, the visions and/or dreams stopped, and/or I would suffer physical setbacks, like breaking my leg and later my feet, and then dealing with frozen shoulders. But how do you begin to explain that the “letting go” of our western mindset is necessary, not only for the learning, but for the process and understanding that comes with/from the sacrifice? How do people come to value the importance behind such a decision to put everything aside and to follow one’s intuition, especially when they are so accustomed to relying on guarantees, facts, and certain outcomes? How do they come to accept or trust that everything will happen when the time is right, especially, when the entire educational system runs like a time clock? And lastly, how does this way assist with or demonstrate different ways of knowing/seeing/reading the world in a way that puts into question that which is viewed as the norm? Therefore, let me share what transpired when I ventured in the traumatic world of the *Ellemental* via ceremony, as a way of showcasing a shamanic historical consciousness.

## “Being” in ceremony

In the Wampumpeag Project (1996) the authors outline how it was White Buffalo Calf Woman who taught the people about the seven spiritual ceremonies in which to use the sacred Pipe. The seven spiritual ceremonies are:

...the Sweat Lodge for purification; the Vision Quest for meditation and fasting; the Star Lodge to connect with the people of the universe; the Sun Dance to give thanks to Father the sun; the *False Face* to recognize the spirit in ourselves and in other people; the Adoption Ceremony to adopt more children, more parents, more brothers and sisters; the Shake Tent or Spirit House for honesty, unlimited knowledge and the only justice system.... (p. 4)

Along with these ceremonies they also question why the wampum belts (WBs) were only being used for “...political and one dimensional visual and materialistic interpretations” (p. 4), and why they were not being used in ceremonies like they were originally intended. I bring up this point to share that part of my going into ceremony was to also honour the contemporary WB that I have created to accompany my dissertation that I entitled *the Ellemental* (see *WB 10*), and the work it represents, because, for me, the

beaded and written are inseparable. As such, I needed to cleanse it prior to making it wearable or viewable to the public, so I started the journey by bringing it into the Sweat Lodge (SL) as a way of purification and as a way of preparing it for both the Sun Dance (SD) and Star Lodge. Hence, a lot of work needed to be done on multiple levels. Reiterating, because I viewed the words of my dissertation, and my WB as bringing something to life, I needed to honour them in a good and humble way, therefore, I pledged to dance at the SD, which meant I would be doing so for four years. Generally, when I mention to people that I am preparing myself for the SD, they are not quite sure what that means or entails, especially when you say it is part of ceremony. For the most part, people assume it is a celebration or a party of some sort. Not realizing that on the one hand “[t]he purpose of a ceremony is to integrate: to fuse the individual with his or her fellows, the community of people with that of the other kingdoms, and this larger communal group with the worlds beyond this one” (Allen, 1986, p. 62). In other words, ceremony is larger than what it appears to be on the surface, and those of us who participate recognize that as a sort of displacement, because it not only challenges the way place is understood, that is, viewing it on a more cosmic level, but there is also an internalized displacement. For instance, Judy Iseke (2013) states that “[i]nside ceremony, one is no longer a colonial subject, or even a resistor to colonization. One becomes spirit and one with Creator, and one’s understandings of life are shifted. This undoing of the colonial by the act of ceremony is a decolonizing act” (p. 48).

On the other hand, sacred ceremonies are a form of cleansing and purification that were given to the men by the women, as a way of emulating internal cleansing and purification that occurs with women’s menses. Some represent birth metaphors, which are used for healing and/or transformation. Take for example the SL, which, according to Anderson (2000) is created to represent the womb. She outlines it as follows:

During the ceremony, a fire is lit outside the lodge, and the grandfathers and grandmothers (rocks) are placed in the fire. Couchie interprets these as the genes of the ancestors. The fire/heat represents male energy and enters the womb/lodge, which represents female energy through the rocks. After this symbolic act of procreation, the people inside the sweat lodge go through a period of growth. Like new life, their growth takes place in a hot, dark, wet, and female place. When they crawl out, it is as though they are being born. The line of cedar that trails out of the sweat lodge is like an umbilical cord; it is the lifeline. The firekeeper watches from outside in the same way a midwife attends a birth. It is her or his job

to make sure that everything is safe, to care for the life line, and to allow the birth process to happen. (p. 164)

I purposely decided to quote someone else's version of the SL because everyone has their own variations or stories attached to the ceremony, depending on who is hosting and where it is being held. I also chose this version because it is a narrative that works well with what I am about to share.

In preparation for the SD, it is encouraged that the dancers "practice" fasting because it is a main component of the SD, and by doing so one could get an idea of what they will be up against. So, in the spring I set out on my first fast that consisted of being outside in my own fasting lodge for four days and four nights, no food or water, and no contact. However, it is my second fast that I performed in mid-fall that I will focus on instead, even though the bases were the same. Fasting is sometimes referred to as a Vision Quest because depriving the body from its daily routine, allows one to enter into the spirit world, akin to how when one is no longer able to be able, as Levinas (1978) described it, and allows us to slip into the anonymous existence, the *il y a*, the *néant* or what I termed the *Ellemental*. The Firekeeper had decided that I would fast in the SL, alongside another woman who was much younger than me, but we would be divided by a hanging partition. When the time came that our fast commenced, I began to view the lodge as a womb and that the two of us were "maternal" twins in our own separate space. As the first day and night passed, it became too much for the other woman to endure, and so sometime during the second day, she ended her fast and I was left in the space alone. From that moment on, I decided to totally close myself off from the outside and spend my time in total darkness, and it was then that I came to view the departure of the other woman, similar to how the Vanishing Twin might have departed from the womb. Ironically, I was not pleased that I had to share my space with another, especially when going on such a quest, and I wondered if I had subconsciously played a role in her expulsion. I was not only a mother who had experienced the loss of a twin, but metaphorically here I was a twin losing a sibling. As the days went on, I watched how remnants of the other, slowly disappeared: either by the Firekeeper who removed the woman's nest (personal belongings)<sup>38</sup> or by me with the dismantling of the

<sup>38</sup> This was only possible when I would leave the lodge to relieve myself.

partition<sup>39</sup>. What became important for me during this process was the idea behind the trace of the other. I remembered that for Levinas (1968) a trace was what could be found in the face-to-face relation: the idea of infinity, reference to the third person, illeity, “He” (or God), for a trace signified beyond being. But I also remembered how Luce Irigaray (1986) asked, “But what of her call to the divine?” (p. 239). And as I let the darkness consume me, I thought of the traces of those who had sat in the lodge before me, who were birthed from the lodge-womb, and whose breath lingered in the space, of which sustained me. If anything, what I was experiencing presupposed my understanding of Levinas’s face-to-face philosophy because it was the everything of nothingness (*le néant*) that engulfed me, and I did not have to rely on the appearance of a face in order to get a hint, trace, or idea of something unthematizable, for I was bathing in the sacredness of the *Ellemental*.

After my fast was over, I received word from my daughter that there was a news article that came out that day that was talking about the Vanishing Twin Syndrome (VTS). In light of what I was discovering in my Vision Quest regarding those who had passed before me, I found the article as another element, or teaching that arose from the experience (if “experience” is a term we can use for such an undertaking) —things that present themselves if one is receptive and attuned to receiving them, if you will. The article started by asking the question, “How can a man who was never born father a son?” (Vergano, 2015, para. 1); a question I found could alter the way history was being viewed and/or interpreted. Reiterating what occurs with the evanescence, where the vanishing twin can at times be reabsorbed by either the remaining twin, mother, or placenta leaves traces of its DNA imprinted in various areas of the host body, thus, providing the host with multiple DNA sequences. What is starting to come to light is that the offspring of the surviving twin are sometimes biologically the children of the “ghost” twin. In other words, we assume that the twin vanishes but in fact lives on as a trace in its host, and later on in the surviving twin’s children. This was the case with Lydia Fairchild, who, in 2003, was told she was not the mother of her two children even though she was well aware of how many children she had given birth to and who the father was. Because this was part of a child support case, she risked having her children removed

<sup>39</sup> This was only possible when I would light a candle in order to access my medicine bundle.

from her care, and was accused of wrongdoing. After a lengthy ordeal, it was determined that Fairchild was a human chimera, and that the DNA of her children belonged to that of their aunt, who was never born, a fact that surfaced only after intensive DNA testing occurred after the birth of her third child. What is interesting is that Fairchild was accused of foul play, and that the court ordered a “male expert” be in attendance to confirm the birth of Fairchild’s third child, and to extract blood samples to confirm that the third child also shared the DNA of the aunt (Murphy, 2015). I suspect Fairchild would have had a harder time had the intensive DNA testing proved differently. It is alarming though, that Fairchild’s word, bodily scars/trauma, and birthing experience held little to no weight, compared to that of the DNA results and male witnessing. Regardless, what these examples provide are reaffirmation of the power and sacredness of the narratives associated with the *Ellemental*. And that they are examples of a proto-ethical *o/Other* relationality that arises from a first contact sensibility—similar to how I was connecting to those who had passed before me in the lodge.

In the few examples that are available regarding the VTS, I am curious to know why it is assumed that the ghost twin is always the same sex as the surviving twin. What if in the case of the male twin, whose children have the DNA of the ghost twin, if that ghost twin was actually female. And in the case of Fairchild, what if her twin had been male? Might “to father” and “to mother” become equivocations? Here I am reminded of how, for Viveiros de Castro (2004), equivocations, in relation to other-than-human-beings, such as animals, plants, and the landscape, are not simply based on misunderstandings about “...different views of a single world (which could be the equivalent to cultural relativism)” (as cited in de la Cadena, 2010, p. 351), but instead refer to different worlds being seen/experienced. In other words, it is no longer about trying to fit or understand different ways of being in a single world, but to begin to acknowledge completely different worlds occurring simultaneously. So how might this impact identity-formation, blood-quantum paradigms, and ethnic-purity, especially in regards to who belongs? Equally interesting, when returning to the *pre-face*, where I shared that I had been a replacement child for my mother, with the passing/absence of my brother, and borrowing from Strand’s (1990) poem, stated that wherever I am, I am what is missing, is actually more profound now than when I initially wrote it. Rereading the *pre-face*, with all that has presented itself, I would go as far as saying that my



brother, my shadow, is actually my doppelgänger, that is, a counterpart of me—one of two parts that compliment each other—especially, since he occupied the womb before me. If anything, my Vision Quest demonstrated to me that there are various dimensions present at all times, that like the Twinship principle, death and life circulate in an endless inter-change situated in different elements of time and space. It also confirmed for me that like Rubenstein (2008), there was no reason for Levinas to seek the unthematizable in the face-to-face relation because what I assume he sought, or viewed as the trace, arises from the *Ellemental* with first contact. It has also shown me that the inter-uterine spaces are reservoirs where the histories of the *o/Other* reside—the link between the living and the obscured, (distant), or ancestral Other. This is similar to how, when handling archaeological remains, so too were my hands and mouth (and possibly other organs, due to the VTS). So how does this impact history? Legendary stories are written for the world of appearances; how do they speak to those of us who know/see/read the world quite differently? When we think back to the Mapuche people who combined both myth and history, as a way of rewriting/obliterating the common narrative, what exactly was Bacigalupo's (2013) idea of myth and what was that of history? Could one argue that the Mapuche people were not rewriting history in order to obliterate common narratives, but were actually writing histories that reflected their world, and that perhaps Bacigalupo was writing in a way that reflected her own worldview? Could one further argue that that is why she viewed mythohistories as oblitative and not something that could provide a richer and more robust understanding of history/humanity/the world/the universe? I am left to wonder if Bacigalupo's approach might be exemplary as to why there is a great divide that persists not only at the basis of the historical narrative, but also at a relational level. Thus, if we (re)trace my steps to my previous postulation, where I am claiming that the inter-uterine spaces are reservoirs where the histories of the *o/Other* reside, I suspect it too will be viewed as being potentially oblitative because it speaks to what I have been seeking: a different story and ethic. Also, because it not only acknowledges the role of the inter-uterine space as a connection between the living and the obscured, (distant), or ancestral *Other*, but it also stresses that the inter-uterine space is the marinade that contains their traces, and why in bathing in the *Ellemental* we become both the obscurer, and what is missing. But before I can expand on this thought, I need to go back in time to see how it was possible for this narrative to become displaced. And as such, it will

require that I focus on stories pertaining to feminine spaces. This is where we start facing the trauma.

## the curse

I am the whenua, and the whenua is me.

< Jessica Hutchings (2002)<sup>40</sup>

So far, I have touched upon how with the onset of colonization, Indigenous people—women in particular—have been subjected to violence and trauma with the obliteration of women’s role in our Creation stories, her role in Indigenous communities, and her role in relation to the universe. How this came to be was through organized religions that lead to the creation of Indian Residential Schools, and the patriarchal colonialism that was/is steeped in racisms, and sexism, but I want to take a moment to also include the medical profession. The reason for doing so will soon become apparent.

In the epigraph above, whenua is a Māori word that is defined as both the placenta and land. Therefore, I am the placenta/land, and the placenta/land is me. This is important because in many Indigenous languages/cultures where the birthing process involves rituals associated to the land, the language reflects this in its meaning. However, placenta, derived from the Latin/Greek languages, is defined simply as a flat cake. I am not sure if this is in relation to the idea that it is a source of nourishment for the fetus (or in regards to placentophagy—the eating of), but I would rather (re)define it as meaning place(nta), as *the* place—space in a body or surface. Retu(r)ning to Ngāhuia Murphy’s (2014) womb-blood narratives, she mentions that

[o]ur tīpuna whaea [female ancestors/relatives] had simple, intimate ceremonies where they returned waiwhero [red water/menstrual blood] back to Papatūānuku [earth mother] each month in honour of our origins. These rituals were similar to ‘whenua ki te whenua’ ceremonies that returned the baby’s placenta back to Papatūānuku, and they also held the same significance. The ceremonies reaffirmed our ahi kā [occupation

<sup>40</sup> (as cited in Murphy, 2013, p. 45)

rights, Māori land tenure system] in our tribal lands and celebrated our whakapapa [genealogy, descent lines] back to Hineahuone, the first human, and Papatūānuku. (p. 33)

Here we see how menstrual blood and the placenta had specific ceremonies attached to various moon cycles, similar to how they were performed here on Turtle Island.

Although I speak of these ceremonies as something of the past, in both areas (and other's around the world), there has been a renascent interest, especially when it comes to the Grandmother Moon Lodge and the Coming of Age Ceremonies—ceremonies tied to the sacred blood—even though they come with tremendous backlash. As an aside, I also want to mention that ceremonies are not strictly for Indigenous people. Although there may be some that are, the ones that I have been privy to attend focus on the idea of reuniting the Rainbow people, that is, the people from nations around the world. The teachings behind this approach is to re-establish amicable relations. I see it more as retu(r)ning to a first contact sensibility, a point I will further unfold in a subsequent section.

Historically, womb-blood narratives were painted as menstrual pollution. Murphy (2013) shares how "...discourses of pollution seek to progress a colonialist patriarchal agenda that cuts across the politics of tino rangatiratanga [self-determination, sovereignty, right to exercise authority, ownership]" (p. 14), while silencing the knowledge and wisdom of Māori women. In other words, because these ceremonies were powerful, the way to rid society of them was to discredit/devalue/degrade what they represented. The biggest culprits were organized religions. For instance,

Judeo-Christian culture saw menstruation not as a manifestation of female power, but as a manifestation of female sin, contamination and inferiority. Missionaries did not understand menstruation as a sacred gift; rather, they taught women to see it from western eyes, as a "curse."  
(Anderson, 2000, p. 75)

Much has also been written about how, in Indian Residential Schools, young girls from one generation to the next were taught to despise and to be ashamed of their natural bodily cycles due to the degradation afflicted on them. Accordingly, Paula Gunn Allen (1986) highlights how "[t]he shame-based interpretation of menstruation plays into the spiritual dislocation of Native women with the arrival of Christianity. With the coming of the Europeans, the male creator displaced the primacy of the female creator" (as cited in

Anderson, 2000, p. 76-77), a point that was mentioned before in regards to our Creation stories, and which I would posit is reflected in Levinas's face-to-face relation: the moving away from maternity to paternity, and where in the face of the other, traces or the idea of God/Him can be found. What is deplorable is that this approach is still being promoted in many of the television commercials and advertisements of today, the message regarding menstruation or female bodily functions are to view them as dirty, contaminating, as ailments that are responsible for such things as pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS), menopause, and hysteria. When the messages are not doing that, they are promoting products that you need to purchase in order to function normally, and without them, you are made to feel ashamed for not staying clean, for not wanting to participate in daily routines unaffectedly, and to view leakage as a cardinal sin. These feminine hygiene products then find their way into local landfill sites, where the blood is unceremoniously returned to the earth. However, as a way to counter these narratives, Murphy (2013) outlines how refusing the dominant narrative can become a decolonizing methodology—and one she uses in her Master's thesis. She states:

Deconstructing discourses of menstruation pollution with the broader aspiration of tino rangatiratanga [self-determination, sovereignty, right to exercise authority, ownership] and decolonisation situates my work within kaupapa [topic, subject, theme] Māori and mana wahine [power and authority of Māori women] methodologies (Bishop, 1999, 2005; Lee, 2005; Smith, 1999, 2005). Both are healing methodologies that Cynthia Dillard (2008, p. 286) describes as an "activist praxis" grounded in cosmology and cultural practices that bring healing to ourselves and others. (p. 43)

Thus, we are getting a clearer sense of how ceremony played a vital role in the way Indigenous nations functioned. And when many, if not all of them, were outlawed, a huge shift began to happen not only in regards to Indigenous people, but to Indigenous women (and later to other women), especially in regards to their bodies. Sadly, enough, we are seeing repercussions of this patriarchal colonialist approach even amongst Indigenous ceremonial communities. With the revivification of traditional ceremonies menstruating women are still viewed as taboo, exiled or isolated from participating because they are viewed as too powerful. Instead, what needs to occur is a resurgence of these teachings because when women congregate together in ceremony, many women will bleed at the same time. Therefore, we need to set areas in place where ceremonies pertaining to the sacred blood could take place simultaneously with those of

the other, in a way that would be complementing each other (i.e. like the Twinship principle), so that like Murphy, we can build a repertoire of multiple decolonizing research methodologies. That is, methodologies that spring from centuries of women's bodies having been colonized, owned, objectified, mutilated, degraded, sexualized, penetrated, environmentalized, etc. But before we can do that—integrate womb-blood narratives, speak freer on the ideas behind the inter-uterine space, and the *Ellemental*—we have to have a sense of what it is that we are up against. That way, we can get an idea as to how we are implicated, our role in the displacement of certain narratives, and how we can move towards (re)establishing ethical *o/Other* relationalities. Therefore, let me segue into some more examples as to what has occurred (and is occurring) to women, especially in relation to their bodies.

## **not for the feeble-minded**

In patriarchal thought we never start in connection with others. We are not seen as beginning, as we in fact do, as babies at our mother's breast, after having come out of her body. Or if the beginning is there, that image of connection is not carried into the heart of the theoretical representation of adult ethical life. Men have tried to obliterate the memory of their own relation to their mothers.

< Roger S. Gottlieb (1994, para. 21)

Within her something takes place, between earth and sky, in which she participates as in a continual gestation, a mystery yet to be deciphered. Heavy with her destiny. When the lover relegates her to infancy, animality, or maternity, he leaves unsolved, in part, this mystery of a relation to the cosmos.

< Luce Irigaray (1986, p. 239)

As I think about how to approach the topics I feel need to be brought forward, I am automatically up against a huge barrier, mainly because the magnitude of these issues represent but a small piece of a larger component, that is, "...the larger narrative of the colonization and attempted cultural genocide of Aboriginal peoples..." (Simon, 2013, p. 135). And although Simon is right to point this out, I would go as far as to remove the words "attempted" and "cultural," and unashamedly calling it genocide flat-out because we are still feeling its repercussions. I do so confidently, not only because it

is part of my history, but because it stems from listening to the countless stories/testimonies people have shared in sacred circles, my work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and having made indigenous education my area of focus. Equally problematic is the enormity of each topic. As such, they may come across as being presented haphazardly or incomplete due to their complexities, but let me apologize in advance, it is not my intent. Rather, I bring them forward heavily, as a reminder not to forget, and for those who have never heard of them, an invitation for further investigation. Thus, I will touch upon eugenics—the coerced sterilization of Indigenous women (and men), placental incineration, fetal voyeurism, and “Plato’s Hystera” (Irigaray, 1974), which are part-and-parcel of a (female) genocidal continuum.

### ***sterilization***

In a paper written for the National Aboriginal Health Organization, Yvonne Boyer (2006), sets the scene by stating

Aboriginal womanhood has been described as once being a sacred identity that was maintained through a knowledge system of balance and harmony. Women were politically, socially, and economically powerful and held status in their communities and nations related to this power. Aboriginal women were closely linked to the land, and because land acquisition became the goal of the colonizers, Aboriginal women became the target. (p. 14)

What better way to do so, but via the womb. Keeping in mind that this also applies to (m)Other earth’s chthonian womb because the colonizers were/are also after what she produces as well. Therefore, what was/is done to women reflects what is done to the land, and *vice versa*. One of the ways to take ownership of land is by eliminating a people, or by deeming them incapable of tending to their affairs. The latter was established by identifying people as 1) mentally deficient (due to their inability to do well on IQ tests), 2) feeble-minded, 3) unfit to raise children (i.e. a bad mother), 4) non-conforming to pre-determined societal norms or roles, or, 5) abnormal (Stote, 2012). Once diagnosed with any of these (or others not listed), it allowed the state, under the *Sterilization Act* to sterilize a person, not only as a way to rid society of the undesirable, it also set in motion the land (mis)appropriation process. This was especially true for

people who were wards of the state (i.e. Aboriginal people, those with disabilities, criminals, etc.), and because Aboriginal mothers were criminalized "...children were often taken from their homes and placed in state care, first in residential schools and then in state-run institutions or foster care" (Stote, 2012, p. 119). As a result, you were no longer capable of looking after your children, your land, and/or yourself, and as Karen Stote (2012) states, "[t]he subjugation of Aboriginal women, specifically through their separation from the land, the control of their bodies and those of their children, and the imposition of Western institutions, has been central for the colonizing process to be successful" (p. 79).

Legislation mandating compulsory sterilization occurred in Alberta between 1928 and 1972, and in British Columbia between 1933 and 1986, however, this did not stop other provinces from performing eugenics. According to Zia Akhtar (2010) the passing of the *Sterilization Acts* in both provinces allowed "...any inmate of native residential school to be sterilized upon the recommendation of the school principal. As a consequence, there were approximately 3,500 Indian women who became victims of this law" (p. 116) in Alberta alone, that is, young women between the ages of 13-18. Principals assumed this right because they became legal guardians of Indigenous children who attended Indian Residential Schools. As a point of interest, it is safe to say that the majority of principals, if not all, were male and many were men of the cloth. It is also important to know that there were both surgical and non-surgical sterilizations. The latter pertained to giving young Indigenous girls and women forms of birth control pills, and with some institutions it was recommended as a cost-cutting measure to insert copper inter-uterine devices instead (Stote, 2012). It is also important to include that Indigenous women, minorities, people with disabilities, the poor, etc. suffered the consequences of oppression much longer than the white middle-class women, because the former were viewed as a primary cause of all societal problems. As a result, many women of privilege advocated for such things as the *Sterilization Acts* because, as women, they did not want to be associated with the wretched, so they viewed eugenic policies as benefitting society. It was also a way for them to exert their roles in society and demand equality alongside the dominant men (Stote, 2012). This gave rise to feminist movements that really only catered to white, middle-class, Christian women, and thus added to the notion that their rise to power would only occur the further they

could distance themselves from their roles as mothers and their domestic duties. By demonstrating their authority over reproduction (i.e., birth control), they inadvertently became part of effacing women's narratives (and the *Ellemental*) from history, themselves included.

The purpose for bringing this example forward is to demonstrate how the state, church and schools were all involved in effecting a plan that consisted in decreasing the Indigenous population, succeeding in securing land, but most importantly, obliterating the importance of the woman's role as Creatrix, mother, leader, and her link to the land, and doing so by human invasion and mutilation—a seize and attack approach. We may think that like the Indian Residential School (IRS) legacy, the *Sterilization Acts* are stories of the past, a datum on the timeline of history, or a tie to our relational past that is in need of severing, so we can get down to the business of critiquing them publicly and writing new ones, as Seixas (2012) suggested we do with his approach to historical consciousness, but they are more than that. They are very much part of a continuum, stories that arise from the blood of our veins, passed on from one generation to the next, and whose history is rooted in time immemorial. These “dark chapters” of Canada's shared history are part of who we all are. Equally interesting, having been raised during the peak of both these statutes—the *Sterilization Acts* and IRS policies—my French heritage was also experiencing fertility control of a different kind. Instead of eugenic approaches, French women were being told it was their duty as wives to produce as many children as possible. In fact, the government had incentives for families who had more than three children. It was promoted as a way of safeguarding the French culture, and, at its core, religious institutions extolled its benefits. So, on the one hand, part of me was being eradicated, while the other part was, reproducing. It is unfair to juxtapose these events as though they fall on the same spectrum; however, my point is to emphasize how we are not removed, nor can we sever ourselves from events that have shaped us. As women, we know too well the impacts of severance, as we are reminded by the scars on our bodies. Severance scars that stem from birthing, weaning, motherhood, departure, our displacement in society, the land, and the universe—rooted in patriarchal thought, as the epigraphs to this section indicate.

What the example of the *Sterilization Acts* does not do, however, is talk about the many atrocities associated with these policies, such as, sexual abuse, abortion,



murdering of infants, the selling off of children through adoption, inoculations and medical experimentation, domestic and drug abuse, missing and murdered women, etc. But one atrocity that I want to mention is placental incineration because I view it as representing one of many symbolic acts of subjugation—blatant reminders of conquest.

### ***incineration***

Medically referred to as a biohazardous waste product, the placenta in “normal” deliveries is generally overlooked by obstetricians, and discarded by incineration. And those with abnormalities are dissected, analyzed and then destroyed in the same fashion (Baergen, Thaker, & Heller, 2013). For the Māori, whenua represented both the placenta and land, and customarily, the birthing of the placenta was offered back to the land, as well as menstrual blood, as a symbol of their continuity (Murphy, 2013), and this offering is a practice that is being revived. What we are beginning to see as well is that, in some medical institutions, provisions have been made for those who request keeping their placenta for various reasons, although this is quite new, is not available in all centres, and not offered to everyone equally (Baergen, Thaker, & Heller, 2013). The point of bringing forward placental incineration is because it is a procedure that has been practiced for countless years, and for many of us, myself included, was (made) invisible. It was a narrative of (my) womanhood that “went underground,” if you will, along with our connection to (our) mothers, (m)Other earth included. I was overwhelmed by this revelation when Murphy (2013) shared the following:

In 1977 I was born at Rotorua Hospital and my whenua, like many others at the time, was swiftly confiscated and incinerated by hospital staff, thus breaking an intergenerational matrilineal blood rite. (p. 39).

I thought of my six pregnancies, the ash of incinerated biomedical waste, and landfills. I envisioned (m)Other earth’s chthonian womb impregnated with traces of innumerable DNA sequences, and the entanglement of its *in*-habitants. And I question how this became okay. I have often considered searching out my birth record for the imprints of my feet, a step in the birth registration that was common at the time because I always felt it was something that was taken from me. However, when I think of what else was systematically removed and discarded with my many hospital visits, I suspect my footprints have since turned to ash, and have been dancing across the landscape in

search of me. In other words, I am left feeling like I was removed from the birthing process, both with my own and those of my children. But what is even more distressing, is that, as a mother to be, we are molded into the charade of being an active participant in all the stages of development.

### **voyeurism**

If we look at ultrasonography of the uterus—inter-voyeuristic imaging that exposes the fetus—in a different light, one comes to realize that this common practice falls under the same category as bodily invasion, intrusion, and the obliteration of the woman. Alice Adams (1993) in her article “Out of the Womb: The Future of the Uterine Metaphor” mentions how “[t]he issue of ‘natural’ versus ‘technological’ childbirth contributed to controversies about motherhood in feminism, adding another dimension to the questions of whether or under what conditions women would mother” (p. 270). Rising from the natural childbirth movement of the 50s and 60s, where women were moving away from giving birth in hospitals and denying medical interventions, opened up the question as to “...who would control the mother’s body and what tools would facilitate that control” (p. 270), especially when considering something different. By the mid-80s with the increase of reproductive technology, women became concerned with its exploitative potential, and many argued that “...male physicians will inevitably use the technology to control women’s bodies...” (p. 271). For example, it is not until the birth of her daughter, that Adams (1993) came to discover that the book *A Child is Born: The Drama of Life Before Birth in Unprecedented Photographs; A Practical Guide for the Expectant Mother*, (1967) by Nilsson, Ingelman-Sundberg, and Wirsén, that she so cherished during the course of her pregnancy, actually had erased the mother and her body with its fetal photographs. Adams (1993) states,

[t]he mystery of origins written into the photographic chronology resolves itself in the blinding revelation that there is no origin. Isolated from all exterior sustenance, the free-floating fetus appears to generate its own light from a source beneath its translucent skin. It grows page by page from an undifferentiated blob of cells to a beautifully formed human being, generating itself from the void in which it floats. (p. 286).

Harbouring the same sort of sentiment as Adams (1993) when she states how, “[i]t still disturbs me to realize that my conception of myself as a mother was mediated at its

deepest level by obstetric technology” (p. 270), I would argue has also made us unaware of our own powerlessness. We are taught that childbirth is not an experience but a procedure that will be over in no time. Instead of being taught to be tuned in to our bodily rhythms, we are inundated with numbing agents because the mother-to-be is not needed in the childbirth, especially when (male) obstetricians have all the medical tools at their disposal.

Similar to the bombastic advertisements promoting feminine hygiene products, so too are medical procedures to alleviate any trace elements of the birthing process. I saw this with the births of my own children. Over the span of 15 years many new and innovated drugs and treatments were being encouraged at all stages of the pregnancy: the Lemaze method of childbirth, the use of forceps, episiotomies—the cutting of the perineum to prevent tearing, the use of enemas for increasing sterility, epidural administration in the lower back as a way to block pain signals, a pre-labour cesarean, and amniocentesis—the removal of amniotic fluid from the womb to test for possible chromosomal abnormalities, to name just a few. Looking back on the tactics used, each was offered not in an informative way, but by instilling fear, and in a way that the doctor always knew more than you, as is evident by the title of the photographic book. That is, a male perspective on what is “really happening” in the womb, and the notion that a bunch of images, or practical guide, is what every expectant woman needs. If anything, it has obliterated the female/fetus<sup>41</sup>, ur-somatic relationship. By ur-somatic relationship I am borrowing from Škof’s (2015) ideas pertaining to the wind/air and breath, where in his book *Breath of Proximity: Intersubjectivity, Ethics and Peace*, highlights passages from Levinas’s works that speak to what he terms a “genealogy of breath” (p. 138). Although I interpret this breath as linked to Levinas’s face-to-face philosophy because of its link with infinity/God—breath as an “*in-spiration of spirituality*,” (p. 138)—I like how it identifies the sacredness of breath, the ethical (co)breathing and circulation of air that not only “fills the in-between space,” but is also “the pneumatic principal of reciprocity” (p. 137-138). Having previously stated that there was no need for Levinas to venture away from the *Ellemental (il y a)*, I posit the genealogy of breath as present in the

<sup>41</sup> I have chosen to call it the female/fetus relation instead of mother/fetus mainly because in this stage, both are in the stage of becoming (mother and baby to be).

*Ellemental*. It is a ur-somatic relationship or what I termed a first contact sensibility, where in my self-relinquishment I am reanimating the breath of the *Other*. For in the self-surrendering, I am providing or becoming the human-container or womb for the *Other* to reside—sustaining both the shadow and the breath—gestating. For example, all those who came before me: the obscured, (distant) or ancestral *Other*, my brother, *Lui*, the human skeletal remains, the missing twin, those in the sweat lodge-womb, my children, and so forth. Thus, returning to Adams (1993) I have to agree with her that

[t]he inert, drifting, disembodied fetus in *A Child Is Born* is a figure for an old myth of man's self-generation and transcendence. My dreams reanimated and reformed that figure in the service of another myth. In this myth, I and my daughter in her turn are part of a historical process that began with an original mother who is recoverable only in the evolving continuity of the maternal/fetal relationship. It is a myth in which women are both the space of reproduction and the historically integrated beings produced there. The mother in this myth is an agent who produces herself and then proliferates, generating individuals and the community. Such a mother initiated human time, and her daughters have had a hand in formulating and reformulating every aspect of its processes ever since. (p. 286)

But before the rewriting of the myth, it is important that we linger in man's myth regarding self-generation and transcendence before proceeding with that of the woman's.

### ***hystera***

Last on my (female) genocidal continuum list is "Plato's Hystera" (1974), Luce Irigaray's rewriting of Plato's allegory of the cave. I have chosen this piece not simply to present Irigaray's points pertaining to the cave/womb metaphor, but to begin by emphasizing Irigaray's philosophy. What Irigaray attempts to do is challenge Western culture, which she views as centered on male subjectivity, by what she terms mimesis. Mimesis stems from this notion that female subjectivity, as it is presently understood and/or defined, exists only in relation to malecentrism, and that according to Sarah K. Donovan (2015) "...a separate subject position for women does not exist" (para. 1). Therefore,

[m]imesis is a process of resubmitting women to stereotypical views of women in order to call the views themselves into question. Key to

mimesis is that the stereotypical views are not repeated faithfully. One example is that if women are viewed as illogical, women should speak logically about this view. According to Irigaray, the juxtaposition of illogical and logical undermines the claim that women are illogical. (para. 11)

Simon Critchley (2015) views Irigaray's approach as a form of occupation—a takeover. Because part of the mimesis involves approaching the words and turning them in upon themselves along with their meanings. For instance, when responding to Levinas views regarding the caress, Critchley states that

[e]very word she uses is a word Levinas employs, but she twists those words, subjecting them to torsion rather than distortion. Mimesis was an extremely productive strategy, one that should be used by philosophers more: it's repetition with a difference. (p. 110-111).

Thus, it is a tactic, where the original text remains intact, but scrutinized in a way that the words are wrung out. Wrung out in the sense that she twists the words, not in a way as to eradicate what is said, but as a way of squeezing out traces of what is obscured, and presenting its double, its shadow, its *doppelgänger*, as you will discover in the following.

When successfully employed mimesis repeats a negative view—without reducing women to that view—and makes fun of it such that the view itself must be discarded. Irigaray's wager in utilizing mimesis with regard to female subjectivity is as follows. Male dominance has defined Western culture for centuries. If a new form of subjectivity comes into being out of a death of the modern, transcendental subject, and we have never really investigated or mimetically engaged with the deformed, female form of subjectivity that accompanied and sustained the male form, then what would prevent the logic of master/subject/male and slave/other/female from repeating itself? (Donovan, 2015, para. 12)

It is precisely this question that works in relation to a shamanic historical consciousness because it encourages/invites the two historical consciousness strands to proceed as usual, and by doing so, it becomes the fodder for creating a more robust narrative, one where the *Elemental* supersedes its superficial application, similar to how the Mapuche's mythohistories were not isolated from either the dominant or Indigenous histories, even though they were viewed as radically other. Instead the Mapuche people "...subject them to a shamanic logic by which human and non-human beings act as historical agents and natives become the victors" (Bacigalupo, 2013, p. 91), as previously stated under *shamanic historical consciousness*. In other words, by using

Irigaray's philosophical approach, allows for the *Ellemental* to rise from the ashes if you will. Correspondingly, by showcasing what is viewed as the norm, then, as the quote states, allows for the new female subjectivity to take form. In Irigaray's case, she uses mimesis in relation to classical, philosophical works. For instance, Athanasiou and Tzelepis (2010) state that Irigaray

...reads ancient Greek grammatology to excavate, along its fissures, interstices, caesuras, lapses, resonances, and fault lines, what has remained repressed within its discourse of truth and identity, within the unifying force and violence of the logos, but also within its internal dynamics....Every text is inescapably double: while the one is open to the hermeneutics of reading and its technologies of transparent presence, truth, representation, and meaning, the second can be partly encountered through the tracing of fissures in the first. It is that second dimension—the always deferred quality of the text—that Irigaray seeks to capture. (p. 2)

So, using what can be referred to as an archaeological approach, I find myself captivated by Irigaray's philosophy because it seeks to unearth aspects of the written that go beyond the world of appearances, that is, exploring at a deeper level in order to expose that which is hidden, obscured or omitted. Perhaps we can draw parallels between Irigaray's work and Pinkola Estés' (1992) fairy-tale forensics and paleomythology, when she looked for traces of the wild woman or when I looked for the feminine element or *Ellemental* woven in the wampum belts. By acknowledging two dimensions, I interpret that as reflecting the world of appearances and apparitions.

With Irigaray's philosophy in mind, alongside her mimetic approach I return to "Plato's Hystera" (1974), Irigaray's rereading/rewriting of Plato's cave allegory because as Adams (1993) states, it is a classic Greek philosophy that "...endorses the mother's erasure from the scene of reproduction" (p. 278). Interestingly enough, in *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974), Irigaray begins by inviting the reader to reread Plato's *Republic*, especially the allegory of the cave. However, she asks that we read it as a "...metaphor of the inner space, of the den, the womb or *hystera*, sometimes of the earth" (p. 243), even though she later states it will be impossible to do so because "...in the Platonic philosophy that gives rise to the allegory of the cave, the womb has no inherent form" (Adams, 1993, p. 278). To demonstrate, I draw upon Adams's (1993) synopsis of Irigaray's work in its entirety.

In Plato's allegory, the womb is like the cave which is a prison; the fetus figures as the prisoner chained within. And the man who unchains the prisoner from his figurative bonds and leads him into the light is the same philosopher/obstetrician who makes the womb a metaphor for the cave. When the prisoner has been lead out of the cave, his education "begins." However, the uterine metaphor that describes the prisoner/fetus's prior existence is a feature of his education under the philosopher's direction, so that the real origin, the mother, is forgotten. Her space and time vanish into the representation. (p. 279)

Combining all that has been presented thus far in regards to the sabotaging of the womb by male intervention, I cannot help but feel like I am caught up in a circus act, where the (male) philosopher/obstetrician is the ring master (or master of the diaphragm), and is cleverly orchestrating the planned delivery or *grand spectacle*. He begins by projecting images on inter-uterine walls as a way of casting shadows, or as Irigaray (1974) states, "[t]he *womb*, unformed, 'amorphous' origin of all morphology, is transmuted by/for analogy into a circus and a projection screen, a theater of/for fantasies" (p. 265). Subsequently, the ring master reproduces fetal photographic images as a way of enticing gullible expectant mothers into buying into their voyeuristic fetishes with the revelation of their baby's sex. And as the grand finale, the ring master guides the public's attention towards the blinding light of reason. As Adams (1993) identified, "...the history of the fetus written into the uterine metaphor begins with the mother's retrospective erasure" (p. 279), particularly when the womb is presented as a metaphor for the cave and not *vice versa*.

Although it is hard to isolate Irigaray's argument in this piece of work, "...her commentary on the problematic relationship between the womb and the Platonic cave suggest how self-erasure has come to be the natural, essential function of the (metaphoric) mother" (p. 278), a point that solidifies well with what we, as women, are made to believe is part of the birthing process. Which also helps to explain, why for men (and women) the "...image of connection is not carried into the heart of the theoretical representation of adult ethical life" (para. 21), as Roger S. Gottlieb (1994) so eloquently points out in the opening epigraph. For me, what is missing is the larger narrative that speaks to a first contact sensibility proto-ethical relationality, a narrative that links us back to the origin—the first truth—the beyond being.

But what might this proto-ethical relationship look like? Tina Chanter (1995) described Luce Irigaray's entire work as having been "...profoundly influenced by Levinas' conception of ethics" (p. 214), and I would like to think that I too have been riveted to Levinas's ideas regarding our ethical responsibility to the Other, which stems from the face-to-face encounter. Although I acknowledge the profundity associated with his views, I believe that his time in captivity during the Shoah elicited ideas that he originally linked to the feminine/maternal, but over time were refined to reflect his worldview, paternity, and spiritual beliefs. It was mainly those initial thoughts that surfaced that intrigued me, and opened me up to (re)thinking what it meant to exist, that is, *being* in the world. If asked, I would have to say that the proto-ethical supersedes the moral and ethical values associated with the first and second historical consciousness strands and derives from the ur-somatic relationship or first contact sensibility that originates within the inter-uterine space—the *Ellemental*. However, in considering Irigaray's approach to archival text, I do not want to just present the proto-ethical in such a superficial way, instead, I want to take the time to further explore the intricacies that lie in the interstices between the words. Because if Athanasiou and Tzelepis (2010) are right to assume that "Irigaray's ethics of the feminine other not only signals new ways to rethink self, relatedness, experience, subjectivity, and the body, but also creates a space for a fresh discussion of the politics of identity and the politics of difference" (p. 1) then, I would like to think that by retu(r)ning to the *Ellemental*, it may open us a to a different way of knowing/seeing/reading (and perhaps hearing) the world, akin to the teachings of bat medicine, as previously outlined in relation to Plato's cave. For if we remember, this little creature of the night, epitomizes rebirth, and it is precisely a renewed existence that is sought. Therefore, let us turn to the *north wind*, for it is the cold blistering wind that brings us back "inside"—a "turning in," a time of introspection, or better yet, a "*uterospection*."

### ***the inward***

*Under the west wind—the displacement—I began by sharing aspects of various Indigenous ceremonies. The reason for doing so, is not to outline the ceremony in detail, nor to dwell on my vision quest per se, but to emphasize how ceremonies emulate the Ellemental—(re)Creations. If time is spent focusing on the former, that is, describing*



*in detail everything that I experienced, it risks becoming a benchmark or example of what others can expect, thus, interfering with the experiences of others. It is best for me to keep things as simple as possible, mainly because what becomes troublesome is when we start by identifying things as experiences, or attempt to define/explain the unthematizable. We have to keep in mind that when we are dealing with the Ellemental it is about the il y a, the néant—the everything of nothingness—Being, and as such, there are no experiences, nor things to explain or define. Hence, when considering the sacred ceremonies, it is best to remember that they were given to the men by the women, that they emulate women's bodily functions/cycles, and that they are part of our Creation stories, etc., thus focusing on the larger element. Correspondingly, by choosing to incorporate Indigenous ceremonies in light of the ideas behind the "displacement," it was to move away from just theorizing/conceptualizing, and applying myself, as was my decision to honour the thesis and the wampum by pledging to dance at the Sun Dance. Too often, in education especially, we write from the examples of others, never fully embracing what one endorses, thus, becoming a sort of arm-chair critic. And as such, because the west wind is a menacing wild wind, which forcibly imposes displacement, it impels us to take inventory of our own undertakings. And in order to retu(r)n(e) to the Ellemental, it means coming face-to-face with one's own gullibility; to stand naked.*

*Similarly, my decision to incorporate the various topics under not for the feebleminded—besides attempting to bring forth a different story—was so that they would be used as examples as to how the feminine has been erased, or what I view as a feminine genocidal continuum. The first three topics: sterilization, incineration, and voyeurism, were also used to demonstrate the role of the institution, and how it has, and still is impacting (Indigenous) women. Even though many would say that the education system and the medical profession are two separate entities, it was important for me to highlight how they were/are very much connected. And although one might say that those institutional policies and practices are that of the past, there are still many who are suffering from decisions that were made against their person (i.e. Indian Residential School survivors, people with disabilities, the convicted, wards of the state, etc.). Equally, if we take a closer look, we will discover that we have not ventured too far away*

*from the medical world when considering education: school inoculations, dental/personal hygiene, counselling, psychological evaluations, health, IEP's for special needs, etc.).*

WB 10

m.d.c. lefebvre, *the Ellemental*, 2015, Burnaby, BC (8.6" x 36.6")



## north wind—the great hibernation

figure 3 m.d.c. lefevre, *Haliburton Highlands*, 1990, Burnaby, BC



Writing captures nothing, at least if it captures anything, it is the illusion of reality and permanence and credibility by excluding the chaos, the incredible, the ineffable, the vast untameable, unnameable swirl. I want to emphasize how poetry and stories do nothing more than allude to a world in a ludic game of hide and seek. If you look closely enough, you will see me in my words, mostly just behind the poems. My presence is represented in my absence, and my absence generates a sense of my presence.

< Carl Leggo (2009, p. 191-192)

Although it has been a long time since I have been living in the cold of winter, with mountains of snow, and long winter nights, I have an affinity with the snow unlike most people. It is a kinship deeper than my connection to the maple trees, when in spring, regardless of where I am in the world, I can hear the sap running. It began when I was eight years old, when, in early March of 1971, Montréal was hit with a blizzard that

dumped a record snowfall within a twenty-four-hour period. Referred to as the “Storm of the Century,” it was quite the phenomenon, especially for all of us who got to play in the snow. I have vivid memories of snow tunnels having to be carved out in order to get around, children jumping from apartment balconies into mounds of snow that looked like cumulus clouds, the overnight disappearance of cars parked along the streets, and being buried alive. I remember that morning as if it happened yesterday. I watched how a family member had dug a grave in the snow. Not having another grave to compare it to, even at my young age it was not hard to see that it was quite large, well-executed, due to its box-like appearance, and quite roomy when I was asked to lie down inside. I did not struggle, but went willingly, even when a huge piece of ply-wood was placed over the hole and I could hear the weight of the snow being shovelled over top. I remember how it instantaneously blocked out the light and the noise, and how the quietness took on a sense of thickness. There was nothing I could do but wait because no one could hear or see me. But what I do remember of my time in captivity is that the snow came alive. The walls were luminescent, and when I closed my eyes, the snow breathed and whispered in such a way that I felt at peace. As if I was entombed with the breath and voices of the ancestors. When the snow was finally removed and the plank slid somewhat to the side, my first breath of air felt similar to the first breath I took when I entered the world. And when I opened my eyes all I could see was the starry night sky. Numerous stars twinkling against the dark of night, the air was crisp and alluring, and it was not until I saw my relative and realized what had been done to me that I reacted against that person. I have kept my interment secret until recently, when I spoke of it for the first time in the Sweat Lodge (SL). My relative has since passed, and none of my remaining family members know what transpired on that day, so many years ago. I protected its narrative because of the sacredness attached to the experience. I did not have words for it, nor did I want to explain it. What occurred in the ice-chamber has stayed with me, and has always provided me with a sense of security and serenity—a type of sensibility that is replicated even when I sleep with the covers over my head.

I began my thesis with a question and answer: “Want a different ethic? Tell a different story” (p. 164), a quote by Thomas King (2003). And because I was in search of the former, I provided what I viewed as different stories, not in the sense that their difference lies in the fact that they were my history, or narratives of my lived experience,

but different in the way they focused on different ways of relating. I am aware that for some, reading my story about being buried alive might cause discomfort because of what the act entails, but I ask, what element of this experience does one focus on? Is it trying to come to terms with the actions of those involved in order to make sense of what one reads? I am again reminded of Roger Simon (2013), who referring to the testimonies of the Indian Residential School (IRS) survivors, said it required

[r]eflecting on the experiences of listening to the stories told to the TRC and retelling these stories, not to co-opt them in the service of the self, but interweaving them with one's own life stories. The potential in this pedagogy is that who I am (as someone always in the process of becoming) is bound up with how it is I will respond to the address of another whose experiences cannot be reduced to versions of my own. (p. 136)

I repeat this quote because it is powerful and speaks to how we are implicated in the stories of others. I suspect my stories will not be part of a retelling, such as those of the IRS survivors, but may be used to demonstrate how one reacts and relates to the text. The key is that, as educators, history is something that cannot be co-opted, that is, appropriated as one's own or reduced to an understanding that makes us comfortable with it. Instead, it is to acknowledge the limits of oneself, and to realize that unless you know what it means to be buried alive, one will never know the extent of that experience, and to also realize that no words will provide a clear enough understanding of its enormity. Correspondingly, even if one knows what it means, no two experiences will be the same. Therefore, all we can do is acknowledge our role in relation to the stories, that is, "...interweaving them with one's own life story" (Simon, 2013, p. 136), as a way to determine how we are implicated in the narrative of others, especially in relation to those who have passed before us.

When it comes to looking at my experiences from an Indigenous perspective, Cajete (1994) states that

...true learning and gaining significant knowledge does not come without sacrifice and at times a deep wound...[and]...the ritual incorporation of life's hardships into such ceremonies as the Sun Dance transforms the reality of woundedness into a context for learning and reflection. In this way, the wound or traumatic life-event is mobilized to serve as a constant reminder of an important teaching. (p. 228)

Thus, having brought my traumatic event into the SL has allowed for a learning and reflection to occur not only for myself, but for all who were/are attuned to receiving its teachings, similar to the way I am presenting it here. On a personal level, when I think of my wintery tomb, like the SL, it sustained me in a way that was reminiscent of the womb. The distant voices, muffled but comforting, as if hearing them through a uterine wall. I interpret the sounds akin to Levinas's (1978) murmuring silence of the *il y a*. However, Levinas, viewed this space as a menacing horror. But what I find interesting is, when writing about his time in captivity, Levinas (2009) says the prisoners, unlike the bourgeois—those who are fixated on the inward existence—were engaged in a game that infinitely exceeded the world of appearances. They were no longer confined to the limited horizons of their small villages. Instead they found themselves concerned with the entire world. Levinas (2009) states, "*Il prenait son repas fixant les océans et le vent des steppes russes berçait son sommeil* [They took their meals fixated on the oceans, and the winds of the Russian steppes rocked them to sleep]" (p. 202). In other words, their salvation took place elsewhere, on a more cosmic level. They also came to realize the difference between having and being, and they learned "...how little space and how few things were necessary in order to live" (Critchley, 2015, p. 61). More importantly, they learned freedom. Levinas (2009) ends the section by stating:

*Souffrances, désespoirs, deuils—certes. Mais par-dessus tout cela, un rythme nouveau de la vie. Nous avons mis le pied sur une autre planète, respirant une atmosphère d'un mélange inconnu et manipulant une matière qui ne pesait plus* [Suffering, despair, and mourning were certain. However, above all that there was a new rhythm of life. We had put a foot on another planet, breathing in an atmosphere with an unknown mixture and manipulating a matter that was no longer heavy]. (p. 203)

Interesting enough, Critchley (2015) encapsulates Levinas's sentiments by affirming that "[t]he experience of captivity allowed an escape from the prison of terrestrial existence" (p. 62). He concludes by pointing out how the trauma was necessary in order to experience liberty. Critchley states:

The idea is that the experience of captivity shows the flipside of being riveted to oneself. In the most meagre and mancipated existence, there is still the possibility of freedom, or the imagining of emancipation. That is, freedom is not the absence of extreme constraint, but it is precisely the acceptance of the fact of imprisonment and the poverty that comes with it.

Without constraint, without captivity, freedom rapidly becomes the meaningless exercise of arbitrariness. (p. 62)

Let me reiterate by linking this quote to my own example, not that my example can be juxtaposed alongside the atrocities of the Shoah, but as Simon (2013) has suggested, we need to interweave the narrative within our own life story, or as Athanasiou and Tzelepis (2010) stated regarding Luce Irigaray's mimesis approach, we need to look for that which is repressed within the fissures of the original text. As such, we are discovering two important things from Levinas's time in captivity: the idea that there is a possibility of other worlds or ways of existing (beyond the inward and anonymous), and while they stem from the world of appearances, they manifest elsewhere. Levinas (2009) states, "*Son vrai destin, son vrai salut se faisaient ailleurs* [His real destiny, his real redemption, was being made elsewhere]" (p. 202). What Levinas shares in regards to his imprisonment demonstrates that he and the prisoners rose above what they were experiencing on a daily basis, and where they allowed themselves to go, they discovered "...*qu'on n'en mourait pas* [that we would not die]" (p. 202). It was an element of themselves that could not be taken from them, regardless of the (physical) outcome because when Levinas says "son vrai salut," it has multiple meanings in French. For instance, it could mean his real hello (proper address) or goodbye (farewell, *adieu*), his real safety (on a national level) or refuge, and from a religious perspective, his real sin or damnation—were happening elsewhere. Critchley (2015) is right to state that "[t]he paradox here is that the absence of freedom is the condition for freedom" (p. 61) because I am understanding this notion of absence as actually providing what is missing, such was the case with the *Ellemental*. What I mean by this is "absence" must be understood as non-appearance, rather than not there. Thus, absence of freedom or the *Ellemental*, pertain to the notion that it did not *appear* that the prisoners had freedom or that there were traces of the *Ellemental*. And in the case of the latter, the *Ellemental* arose from a side of the wampum belts that had become obscured, lost or omitted altogether, but it was not to say that the *Ellemental* had vanished. *Au contraire*, its presence is represented in its absence, and its absence generates a sense of its presence, as Leggo (2009) so eloquently expresses in the epigraph above.



But what of this escape from the prison of terrestrial existence? In Levinas' time in captivity, one could easily agree that the situation allowed for escape, but what about my snow-bound example? Was I too young, was my time in captivity too short, or was it enough to set me on a journey through the borderlands and among burial scaffolds of the world, in the spaces in between? Was it a teaching that left me marked for life, did it set me apart from the rest, and did it instill in me an unquenchable desire for higher truths? Was this the reason behind Levinas's first philosophy, the face-to-face, with its link to Infinity/God, or was it merely the *pre*-face-to-face ponderings that would lead to an encounter of ethical responsibility? I would like to postulate that perhaps his initial ideas represented something else, such as a longing for the spirit world one traveled from when leaving the mother's womb. And that the other planet or cosmic level that Levinas alluded to was the *Ellemental* space, of which he could only speculate, and did so in regards to Him (God). In addition, I would like to think that the atmospheric breath with its unknown mixture and the weightlessness of matter, spoke to a first contact sensibility arising from the inter-uterine space—a (co)mingling, a (co)becoming, which in turn spoke to various worlds happening simultaneously. It gives us something to consider seeing Critchley (2015) pointed it out that the escape from captivity also unriveted the prisoners from the self. In order to consider these questions, I would like to introduce you to what I term the traum/art/i/c.

## **the traum/art/i/c**

Like the art/i/fact and re/art/i/culation, traum/art/i/c is formed using the same principles: the I only comes into being in relation to the *Other*, and stems from my position in relation to art, where art is understood as a new way of knowing/seeing/reading the world. For example, the art/i/fact pertained to how I was in relation to bearing witness, that is, how I was between the receiving and recounting of the histories of the silent *Other* when working alongside human skeletal remains. Equally, the re/art/i/culation focused on the (re)telling, and in my case, it arose from wampum belts. The re/art/i/culation takes into consideration three facets: the *piecing* together of an ethical *o/Other* relationality, a *recounting* arising from the feminine, and a *movement* or anarchic responding. Consequently, the disruption that comes from the re/art/i/culation, spills into the traum/art/i/c. Thus, the traum/art/i/c, which also

encompasses how the I is positioned, does so in relation with trauma. If we look at the experiences that were presented above, trauma, such as a woundedness or traumatic life-event, becomes mobilized—brought into its full stage of development—and serves “...as a constant reminder of an important teaching” (Cajete, 1994, p. 228). Therefore, if we look at the trauma that has been (or is being) afflicted on the bodies of (Indigenous) women due to patriarchal dominance, and we allow ourselves to escape the terrestrial confines (the world of appearances), like the World War II prisoners in Levinas’s (2009) observations, we can learn to rise above a superficial understanding of being in the world. But before I elaborate further what this entails, more needs to be said about trauma. Therefore, let me turn to Roger S. Gottlieb (1994), where he not only identifies the root of the problem, but also identifies the need for feminist ethics. He states:

It is not hard to see that feminism presents a vision of ethical life rooted in a recognition of the fundamental trauma of male domination....[T]his ethic is a desperate cry *for* the recognition of women; and *against* a masculine world which wields impersonal categories in one hand while it ravages women with the other....Feminist ethics is thus a post-traumatic ethics, an imperative exclamation against the hypocrisy and violence of masculinity. If you do not see *who* you are, and you do not learn to understand your own emotions and your emotional relations to others, this ethic warns a patriarchal culture, you will continue to violate women and the men you dominate as well. (para. 20)

I chose this quote because it returns us to the trauma that comes from male domination (patriarchal culture) as a way of linking it back to how its consequences have been or are linked to the womb or the internal feminine body, but more importantly because of the recognition for a female ethic. Although Gottlieb (1994) views a feminine ethics as arising from a post-traumatic experience, I am trying to move away from the idea of labeling that which I view as unthematizable (i.e. trauma) because trauma for me, pertains to any experience that decenters the I (or ego), and thus, everyone’s view or level of trauma will be different. Similarly, when I think of post-traumatic, or post-colonial, it implies that something has been left behind and for those of us who are still experiencing both, comes across as making light of the experience, or more bluntly, it is a reminder that everyone has moved on and that one should get over it. Consequently, when trying to define the unthematizable, words, especially in English, often become nothing short of a travesty. That is why it is sometimes better to use analogies, metaphors, poetry, personal narratives, and/or artworkings, or to talk about what they

are not. When it comes to the word trauma, I am presenting it in a way that goes against how it is generally viewed. Instead of doing everything in one's power to leave it behind (post-), it is more about setting it up (pre-) in order to arrive at a deeper understanding or learning. It might be as simple as a teacher stepping outside his/her comfort zone in order to create resources that will speak to a more authentic experience. For instance, when it comes to incorporating Indigenous content within the curriculum, it means taking it upon oneself and going to the source of one's inquiry, rather than relying on the school's overworked and underpaid Aboriginal Education Support Worker, to provide what is missing. In other words, it means going beyond simple ways of acquiring knowledge—one of the six points Jacobs (Four Arrows) (2013) outlines when educators are seeking to “address the complexities of historical trauma and unresolved grief among Native students and their communities” (p. 46) in *Teaching Truly: A Curriculum to Indigenize Mainstream Education*.

Similar to how trauma is understood from an Indigenous perspective, where trauma, a deep wounding, or some form of personal sacrifice is necessary for a deep learning or true knowledge to emerge, in French we have what is called *la petite mort*. In its literal sense, it means “a little death.” This phrase is generally used in relation to having experienced an orgasm, where, in one's ecstatic state, one gives into (a little) death, or a piece of that person dies. In this capacity, pleasure and pain are viewed as forms of transcendence. Returning to Levinas (2003), when he talked about pleasure, he said, “Pleasure is a process; it is the process of departing from being [*processus de sortie de l'être*]” (p. 62). And as such, a small death can be experienced in relation to any form of trauma, where trauma, once again, is understood as a decentering of the I (or ego), such as, shock, excitement, sadness, anxiety, etc. Roland Barthes (1975) spoke of *la petite mort* in relation to great literary works, in that, when reading, one should be brought to the threshold. The point of bringing this forward is to demonstrate that our bodies are filled with paradox, as Celeste Snowber acknowledges: “They are sacred spaces where we experience both the depth of ecstasy and the depth of pain” (Richmond & Snowber, 2011, p. 32). However, similar to the convolutions that are housed in our bodies, understanding *la petite mort* from a non-French perspective becomes quite limiting, not only in the way in which it is defined in another language, but also with the idea that one could get a sense of its innate complexities just by reading

and/or understanding its meaning. For instance, in Barthes' (1975) *The Pleasure of a Text*, Richard Howard notes:

The French have a vocabulary of eroticism, an amorous discourse which smells neither of the laboratory nor of the sewer, which just—attentively, scrupulously—puts the facts. In English we have either the coarse or the clinical, and by tradition our words for our pleasures, even for the intimate parts of our bodies where we take those pleasures, come awkwardly when they come at all. So that if we wish to speak of the kind of pleasure we take—the supreme pleasure, say, associated with sexuality at its most abrupt and ruthless pitch—we lack the terms acknowledged and allowed in polite French utterance; we lack *jouissance* and *jouir*, as Barthes uses them here. The nomenclature of active pleasure fails us—that is the “matter” Sterne had in mind when he said they order this matter so much better in France. (p. v)

Accordingly, I view pain and pleasure as two extremities that complement each other, where a little death is experienced in the ecstatic moment, and an ecstatic moment is experienced with a little death (trauma). To put it more directly, and here I am talking from a woman's perspective, our trauma is thus felt within the crotch<sup>42</sup>. And while I interpret *la petite mort* as such, many of its intrinsic qualities remain hidden, obscured, and/or omitted with my inability, or perhaps unwillingness, to articulate the idea further, as was the case with my confinement. Therefore, if we are to take anything away from *la petite mort*, is that its sensual quality is a form of sensibility where one becomes not only hostage, but also (willingly) wounded by being in proximity to the other—setting up the traumatic experience in a form of compromise. Although Levinas never mentioned *la petite mort per se*, I would like to point out that there are traces of the ideas behind *la petite mort* embedded within his text, especially when outlining what an ethical responsibility to the Other entails, and its association to the female maternal body. In the following example, like the experiencing of an orgasmic moment, where one succumbs to a little death, in substitution for the other, Levinas compares that to the female/fetus relation—a point I will further unfold when elucidating a first contact sensibility. Levinas (1998) states:

The one-for-the-other in proximity has the form of sensibility or vulnerability, pure passivity or susceptibility, passive to the point of

<sup>42</sup> The idea of the crotch needs to also be understood in regards to such things as the River of Immortality, the House of Humanity/Destruction, our Creation stories, the *Ellemental*, etc.

becoming an inspiration, that is, alterity in the same, the trope of the body animated by the soul, psyche in the form of a hand that gives the bread taken from its own mouth. Here the psyche is the maternal body. (p. 67)

*La petite mort*, along with the way trauma is mobilized when bringing it into ceremony, are examples of the traum/art/i/c in which a more robust learning is possible, and wherein the source (trauma), is the tool (art)<sup>43</sup>. That is, they are tools to help one know/see/read the world differently. The traum/art/i/c exemplifies the difference between remaining fixated solely on the trauma and/or the element of hardship, or to intensify those experiences by allowing ourselves to transcend the confines of a terrestrial existence, that is, moving beyond a superficial application. A simpler example that comes to mind, is walking long distances, while toting a heavy load. In the act of transporting one's personal items, the task is arduous to say the least. This is especially true on mountainous terrains, in challenging weather, how far one has to travel, and how the items are being transported (i.e. dragged, pulled, packed, pushed, etc.). Those of us who are accustomed to this way of getting around realize that the experience becomes even more burdensome if effort is exerted on the task itself—the hardship or the effects on the body. Instead, we teach ourselves (and our children) how to transcend those experiences, and experience the world differently (or experience a different world). This could mean giving into the pain, and/or adjusting our gaze from being narrow, and ground-focused, to that which is broad and open-skied. Thus, if we take this traum/art/i/c example and apply it to history—the national narratives—we can begin to ask ourselves how those stories are being narrated, documented? Are they reflecting a nose-to-the-ground or endless-sky approach, particularly when highlighting what is deemed factual? Returning to the two historical consciousness strands, can we say their applications are enough? Do they speak to different worldviews, or better yet, different worlds? And do they affect the way we understand empirical data, with its emphasis on the observable? Thus, I posit that when contemplating these questions, how we “see” greatly impacts our relations with the world, a point that will be further addressed in the following sections.

<sup>43</sup> Keeping in mind that these are tools that reflect my worldview, and that each of us has our own.

Correspondingly, when considering the traum/art/i/c, it requires practice, as well as patience. It is not a practice that stems out of repetitiveness, but more out of a receptiveness and a willingness. In other words, it is perfecting the art by retu(r)ning to different ways of knowing/seeing/reading the world. The traum/art/i/c is not something that can be identified, applied, and a certain outcome guaranteed. Instead, it falls under the same idea as letting go and following one's intuition, more importantly, it is a moving away from timely constraints and deadlines—shackles of an inward existence. For instance, when we go on a Vision Quest and decide to fast, as I previously mentioned, everyone steps up to the challenge in a certain way. Some prepare weeks in advance minimizing what and how much they eat, whereas others, will gorge themselves right up to the last moment. Accomplishment is not based on having completed preconceived aspects of the task; rather, much can be learned at every stage of the process because in seeking a vision for example, you only receive what you are willing to accept. It is an approach that is very different from how we are taught in the educational system, where accomplishment is viewed on successfully performing certain tasks, and each task is awarded a certain value. And if you repeat the task enough times you are deemed an expert. But what does that say of the task and that of the expert? If anything, I view the task as becoming trivial, and the expert as becoming uninspiring, even while donning an air of brilliance. By trivial and uninspiring I mean they lose their animation, because they remain lodged in the world of appearances, that is, seeing the world unidimensionally. In a way, the traum/art/i/c is an invitation to explore elements of ourselves that we never thought could be the source of a deeper learning or understanding because many of our answers lie within us. And as such, the traum/art/i/c asks us to look within, not in a way that is akin to an inward existence, or a cognitive perspective, or even an introspection, but in a form of *uterospection*. By *utero*, I am talking about (re)acquainting ourselves with the origin, our first contact sensibility, when we were bathing in the *Ellemental*. And who better to guide us, than bear, for bear medicine represents the great hibernation, a time of “turning in.” So let us pause, and take in the teachings of bear.

## a *uterospection*—a first contact sensibility

*What's the greatest lesson a woman should learn? That since day one, she's already had everything she needs within herself. It's the world that convinced her she did not.*

< Rupi Kaur (2016)<sup>44</sup>

When the *north wind* starts to blow, and the days become shorter, bear reminds us it is time for the great hibernation. During this period, the bear enters the earth's chthonian womb (den) and prepares for the long winter that is ahead of her by turning in. For some Indigenous groups, (m) *Other* earth's chthonian womb is known as the Dream Lodge where one (re)connects with the ancestors through visions, dreams or personal quests. It is in this space, where, in the quieting of the mind, the silence offers up answers to life's questions. More importantly, bear energy is female energy that is connected to the first truth. During hibernation, she deprives herself of nourishment (fasts), and relying solely on her stored reserves, she self-relinquishes. In her lethargic state, she gives birth to (bears) twin (or triplet) cubs who will be born both toothless and blind. What bear medicine provides me with is a clarity in regards to the inter-uterine space—the *Ellemental*. She bequeaths me with a teaching akin to what I deemed a first contact sensibility (FCS), and she prepares me for its delivery. And as such, I want to commence by returning to my earlier thoughts regarding the ur-somatic relationship because 1) it emphasizes the sacredness of breath; 2) it speaks to a (co)breathing that fills the in-between spaces; and 3) it is a genealogy of breath that is reciprocated, and together they set the groundwork for a FCS. Why is this important? Because it speaks to the origin (the first truth); in its (re)acknowledgement it has the possibility of rekindling a proto-ethical o/*Other* relationality, and it redefines Indigenous education.

But before I commence, I want to begin by thanking Levinas for highlighting the role of maternity in relation to transcendence, and in trying to elucidate what a woman endures—responsibility for the other *par excellence*—in pregnancy. However, I need to demonstrate how, in relation to the *Ellemental*, his view on maternity speaks to a world of appearances. Consequently, what I find problematic with Levinas's first philosophy—

<sup>44</sup> Post on Instagram (March 7, 2016).

the face-to-face—is the appropriation or hijacking of maternity when speaking of sensibility, even though he does refer to it as a modification of maternity (Levinas, 1997). It is a narrative that discards and excludes the *Ellemental*, the feminine element, instead it turns it into a fraternity, and paternity, as a means of transcendence and way of connecting to God (Him). If anything, maternity as analogy, in this case, reminds me of how the fetal photographic images obliterated the mother and an association with an origin, or when contemplating Plato's allegory of the cave, "...the uterine metaphor that describes the prisoner/fetus's prior existence is a feature of his education under the philosopher's direction, so that the real origin, the mother, is forgotten" (Adams, 1993, p. 279), as was previously mentioned. Therefore, when we think of maternity simply as an analogy, as nothing more than an example for the ultimate sacrifice, and that maternity can be experienced, fully understood, or sensed by all (men included), it trivializes its sacredness. So, I want to revisit the notion of appearance and apparition, where, in relating it back to the wampum, I referred to naissance. Under naissance, wampum had two sides: appearance which spoke to the political side, and apparition which revealed its spiritual side. In a similar fashion, I want to focus on the latter in relation to maternity, that is, the apparition or spirit of maternity, in order to introduce a first contact sensibility (FCS)

As a way to set the stage, I turn to Levinas (1969) where he states that "[e]njoyment is the very production of a being that is *born*, that breaks the tranquil eternity of its seminal or uterine existence to enclose itself in a person, who in living from the world lives at home with itself" (p. 147). Although I understand Levinas's idea regarding enjoyment as arising from the elements, and that the elements provide me with what I need to survive in the world, air to breathe, water and plants for nourishment, and so forth, it is in referring to the inter-uterine space as "seminal" that, for me, remains questionable. Does he view the inter-uterine space as a repository (storehouse, receptacle, sepulcher, storage, etc.), for that which can be contained (i.e., semen), which in turn can be interpreted as some form or territorial "marking," and/or theoretical invasion, or does he see it as an influential site for future development? The reason for the concern is that how we define or envision the place from where we all originate impacts how we relate with the world. In other words, how *antepartum* is viewed is played out *postpartum*. Therefore, mimicking Levinas's quote, what I am proposing is



that the *Ellemental* (inter-uterine) space is the container of breath, which is reciprocated between the female/fetus relationship. In the moment of birth, a being replicates its inter-uterine breathing experience by enclosing itself in a person and forming a relation with the elemental world (i.e. creating a space on the outside like the inside). Correspondingly, at birth a severing occurs, which results in the female/fetus relationship becoming a mother/child and (m) *Other* earth/person relation respectively. And even though many would say that, in birth, a mother gives life, due to a child forming its first breath within the world, I posit that respiration in the inter-uterine space or womb is the first breath: the earthly breath of the female (co)mingling with that of the sacred breath of the spirit world that comes via the fetus. And what occurs at birth with the severing, is a gradual forgetting of the sacred breath, which in turn moves us further away from a proto-ethical o/*Other* relationality, and compromises the bond between each another. Therefore, when speaking in regards to a FCS, it pertains first and foremost to breath, which I view as superseding a tactile sensation, thereby making it an ethereal ur-somatic happening. In other words, it is not a phenomenon, that is, an observable occurrence, but rather a noumenon, an occurrence in of itself.

In the *Ellemental* (*antepartum*) space, duality is transformed, in that it houses a symbiotic relationship. Both the female/fetus are (co)mingling, and (co)breathing the sacred breath. However, in the birthing process a severing occurs that results in a mother/child relation. By severing, the fetus is introduced to the world, donning a skin in "...a semblance of existing" (Levinas, 2004, p. 85). Borrowing from Levinas's (2004) chapter *Reality and Its Shadow*, where he compares art to an allegory of being, states "...[r]eality does not refer to itself but to its reflection, its shadow. Consequently, allegory represents that which in the object itself doubles it. The image one could say, is the allegory of being" (p. 82). Therefore, in this case the child, like the image, are viewed without shadow because in both cases, "[b]eauty is being that dissimulates its caricature, covers over or absorbs its shadow" (p. 85). The shadow for Levinas is "...that obscure ungraspable essence, that phantomlike essence that cannot be identified with the essence revealed in truth..." (p. 84). In regards to the *Ellemental*, I view the shadow as pertaining to the part that is attached to the spirit world. The mother then, like the artist in Levinas's (2004) example, gives "...a life without life. A derisory life that is not master of itself, a caricature of life. A presence that does not cover itself, that overflows on all

sides, that does not hold in its hands the strings of the marionette it is” (p. 86). Regrettably, in becoming mother, she too severs her tie once again with the sacred breath, and resumes living in herself. Hence, in the moment of severance begins the forgetting of the sacred breath, the evanescence of the spirit realm, and the gradual demise of the proto-ethical *o/Other* relationship that arose from the *Ellemental*. Reiterating, it is a movement that is at first a relationship, and then results in a relation. And how that relation is maintained determines how one relates to the world.

Earlier I mentioned how the breath in the *Ellemental* contained the breath from both the earthly and spirit worlds, and as such, the (co)breathing that occurs between the female/fetus relationship is sacred because we are once again in the interval between two instances: the present where the existent is in the proximity of death and the moment when death comes, where the existent is no longer—a whole abyss—a “...margin [that is] at once both insignificant and infinite” (Levinas, 1987a, p. 79), as was previously described when sitting at the threshold with *Lui*. The reason why the connection to death is so strong, besides being at the inception of the spirit world, is because childbirth for example, is viewed as life-threatening for both the female and fetus. Betty Laverdure (1993) states that women have out of body experiences, they go to the spirit world, and communicate with the spirits each time they give birth, and this she says affirms a woman’s spiritual essence (as cited in Anderson, 2000). Furthermore, Anderson (2000) elaborates that

The “near-death” experience of birthing a child can be equivalent to other forms for spiritual enlightenment. It is a time when women are involved in bringing life from the spirit world to the earthly world, and it may be a time when she herself is at risk of re-entering the spirit world. As both birth and death are passages between the spirit and the material world, childbirth is a time when women are intermediaries between spirit life and life on earth. (p. 73)

If anything, this last quote demonstrates aspects of womanhood that I believe Levinas could never fathom, when using maternity as an analogy, especially when relating them to the *Ellemental*. What is important for me is in the last line, where both birth and death are the passages between the spirit and material worlds. It makes me revisit the idea that in my self-relinquishment as a response to the *Other*, in my summoning to either death or birth, I am reanimated with the (sacred) breath. That in my self-surrendering, I

am providing or becoming the human-container or womb for the *Other* to reside—sustaining both the shadow and the breath—gestating. For in both experiences, there is an exposure, a vastness, a wide-openness, a *trauma*.

Unlike Levinas's face-to-face philosophy which is linked to infinity, childbirth is divinity—the ritualistic part of maternity that only women can experience, and why they are viewed as shamans in many traditional cultures (Anderson, 2000; Bacigalupo, 2010, 2013; Mann, 2000). Barbara Tedlock (2005) states that “[w]ithin the dark fluids of menstruation and birthing blood resides the vital essence of the most feminine form of spiritual energy. Concentrated and deeply mysterious, this force touches every woman and links her to the formidable shamanic tradition” (p. 173), thus, making us what I term, legendary guardians of the *Ellemental*. Furthermore, Tedlock (2005) also posits that “[l]abor and birth are considered forms of shamanizing, because during these times the ancestral and natural worlds penetrate the human domain” (p. 222). On a similar note, it is also said, that babies and the elderly have an affinity because they are closest to the spirit world, or borrowing from Levinas's (2009) previous line, they have one foot on another planet. It is also why we radiate towards them and hold them dear. However, in both cases, the older they get, we come to see them as feeble, and unknowing and treat them as such, instead of seeing beyond their physique. This is especially true in the educational system, where children, are sometimes seen as a *tabula rasa*. Technically, one could say, that since birth, their slates have been wiped clean (i.e., whitewashed). Thus, when I think about women's legacy, I cannot help but associate womanhood with a genealogy of breath, where I understand genealogy to mean ancestry, family and history. If anything, the matrilineal lines of kinship are deeply rooted in the *Ellemental* and branch out to our female descendants. Irigaray (2002) describes this beautifully with the following quote.

Born of a woman, her mother, with the capacity to engender and to love like her, the little girl possesses from the beginning, within herself, the secret of human being and of the relation between human beings. The little girl is born with familiarity to self, to the natural world, to the other. She intuitively knows the origin of life. (p. 85)

However, and with great regret, it is most likely that the little girl will be taught the same historical narratives that will distance her further from the *Ellemental*, the older she gets, and in ways that have been presented throughout this thesis. Sadly enough, she too will

take for granted views that are built around a world of appearances, and from a patriarchal culture in order to fit in, which in turn will leave her lacking internal fulfillment. When I say this, I am not saying fulfillment only occurs with childbirth. *Au contraire*, I am referring to being able to sustain our legacy as women, unconditionally. Similarly, when considering men in regards to the *Ellemental*, I am reminded of Gottlieb's (1994) warning regarding the need to return to a feminine ethic. For men too are not exempt from the ability to reconnect to the proto-ethical *o/Other* relationality because, like women, it is engrained within them with their having sojourned in the internal space. However, what will need to be refined, is our ability to see how we have come to obscure even that which is at the root of our existence. And as such, let us look to see what it entails to shift our gaze, to consider different ways of knowing/seeing/reading the world, or in other words, perfecting the *art*.

### **to see—perfecting the *art***

As a reminder, art in my thesis has been presented differently than it is customarily understood. The term is used to address the skill one needs to perfect in order to know/see/read the world differently. Art was also highlighted in the following three terms: *art/i/fact*, *re/art/i/culation*, and *traum/art/i/c* as a way to emphasize how I was relating to the artifact (wampum belts), how I was rearticulating their narratives, and the (traumatic) approach that was necessary in order for a higher learning to occur. Art also incorporated Levinas's (1987b) definition where, "Art does not know a particular type of reality; it contrasts with knowledge. It is the very event of obscuring, a descent of the night, an invasion of shadow" (p. 3), as was outlined under *a wampum reconnaissance—a re/art/i/culation*. For Levinas (1987b), a painting is an object of the gaze, with the understanding that the object is not there, and that the perceived elements, he viewed, were akin to old garments that merely solidified the absence of the object. Thus, when considering the term art, its emphasis is more about the gaze in relation to the art, which becomes the art itself.

Putting these ideas aside for a moment, I turn to Lynne McTaggart's (2011) book *The Bond* because she identifies how, in the developed world, people—herself included—have lost the ability to perceive the connection between things, which she

refers to as the bond. Thus, to get a clearer understanding of what she means, McTaggart (2011) defines the bond as such:

Between the smallest particles of our being, between our body and our environment, between ourselves and all of the people with whom we are in contact, between every member of every societal cluster, there is a *Bond*—a connection so integral and profound that there is no longer a clear demarcation between the end of one thing and the beginning of another. The world essentially operates, not through the activity of individual things, but in the connection between them—in a sense, *in the space between things*. (p. xxv)

From this perspective, she then discovers that this “new vision starts with the understanding—shocking in the breadth of its implication—that, nothing in the world is separate. In fact in the most basic sense there is no such things as a thing” (p. xxvi). And although she recognized that what she was discovering and saying was shocking, it is precisely this experience that serves as an example of a traum/art/i/c experience, in that there is a disruption in regards to McTaggart’s worldview, and yet it does not deter her from continuing with her exploration. Matter of fact, it leads her to further discover that there is a huge disparity between the way societies see things. In Western societies people tend to have an atomized view or tunnel vision, and an objective perspective; whereas, for other groups of people, they see the “glue” between things, which in turn results in a “larger and more all-embracing look” (McTaggart, 2011, p. 143). As an example, she quotes Donald Fixico (2003), a Seminole and Muscogee Creek, who states that, “Seeing involves mentally experiencing the relationship between the tangible and nontangible things in the world and in the universe....It blends the visible with the invisible, the present and the past, the dreamer and his surroundings” (as cited in McTaggart, 2011, p. 145-146). What resulted was McTaggart came to realize that people do not see the world in the same way, and that they do not even see the same things, mainly because it is “...our individual cultures [that] teach us how to look and what to see” (p. 143). She concludes by stating:

What this adds up to is that our philosophy of the world and how we see ourselves in relation to it govern what we actually see. In the West we are so busy picking apart what we see, looking for the individual thing rather than the Bond, that oftentimes we miss the vital connection right in front of us. (p. 147)

However, McTaggart (2011) does emphasize that although the West has lost its sense of the bond, the “loss is not irrevocable” (p. 141). And it is precisely this point that becomes the premise of her book. In her desire to bring attention to the bond, she states it will require ending the story of who we are and how we are supposed to live, and living by a very different set of rules, in contrast to what is currently happening. She states:

I hope to help you to recapture your birthright, which has been sabotaged not only by modern society but, more fundamentally, by modern science. I wish to wake you up to who you really are, to do nothing less than to return you to your authentic self. (p. xviii)

And, “once we begin to see the whole we can see past our own assumptions and beyond differences to our common humanity—and to the space that binds us all together” (p. 158).

I appreciate McTaggart’s ideas behind the bond because I see it speaking to rekindling a proto-ethical o/*Other* relationship that was severed with our entering into the world. The bond, for me, could be the work necessary for creating relations on the outside like in the inside—a *postpartum* acknowledgement and advancement of the *Ellemental*. I like how she describes retu(r)ning to the bond as a recapturing of our birthright and a returning to our authentic self, and seeing past our own assumptions. However, unlike the bond, the *Ellemental*—and Levinas’s face-to-face philosophy for that matter—our common humanity involves recognizing (our) differences because when considering the worlds of appearance and the apparition, the former begins with the gaze, that is, with what we see. By acknowledging difference, the other exceeds all that I contain, including the notion that how and what we see is different. With the latter, the sacred breath arises from the (co)mingling and (co)breathing of the female/fetus relationship, which is representative of the earthly and spiritual worlds, respectively.

Reiterating, the whole cannot be without the two—a point I believe is evident within the fissures of what McTaggart (2011) states, even though at first glance, the words appear to reflect the opposite. Take for example the following:

In this definition of relationship the sense of “I” and “you” grows to something much larger: the moment of the Bond when difference doesn’t matter. Offering yourself as a vehicle of service to the pure experience of

connection can occur with anyone, simply through the fact that, as two human beings, you are both taking in breath. (p. 164)

Although I am understanding completely her need to highlight the bond as the moment where difference does not matter, and it is the pure experience when breath is being shared because it is reminiscent of the néant, the *il y a*, Being, the *Ellemental*, however, there is still difference in regards to the relationship, between the “I” and “you,” and the other shore that is necessary for the space in between. Perhaps a better way of expressing this point is to return to the Twinship principle or what is also known as double-wampum because as Mann points out, “Double-wampum is a dual delivery system deliberately replicating a spiritual principle” (as cited in Jacobs, 2008, p. 41)—a perspective I feel would situate itself quite nicely within McTaggart’s idea of the bond.

### ***the double wampum***

Having presented the philosophy behind the double-wampum (DW) in her Master’s thesis, Mann highlights how it was first viewed as disjointed because it was seen as two separate theses. Caught off guard by her preceptor’s comments, she found herself at first unable to articulate why she had presented her work as such, mainly because at the time, the reasons were still “invisible” to her. She viewed her inability to see, “as most deeply laid cultural approaches are to their practitioners” (as cited in Jacobs, 2008, p. 41)—a point that I too have experienced, the longer I work alongside the wampum, as was presented under *a wampum reconnaissance—a re/art/i/culation*.

The reason the DW is associated with the spiritual realm is because according to Mann the cosmos exists by halves (Mother Earth/Brother Sky), thus making it “impossible to have one of anything before we first have two of something” (as cited in Jacobs, 2008, p. 41). It is through this cosmic understanding that human interactions are reproduced—“a sacred replication of the cosmic principle of balance” (Mann, 1997b, p. 24). For instance, when representing this perspective in civic affairs, DW messages were constructed, which Mann outlines with the following:

Wampum belts had messages knotted into both sides. Since there were two messages—from each of the clan halves if women, or from each of the national halves if men—there had to be two speakers, one from each half reading her or his side of the belt. Moreover, each messenger

addressed the clan or national half *opposite* her or his own, in a crisscross (X) fashion. Thus, there were four required and equal parties to each address, two in the delivering the message and two in receiving it. This only looks like a base number of four to the uninitiated. In fact, each half formed a whole unit, one of earth (∞) and one of sky (/). Meanwhile, forcing each half to address the half opposite ensured the full and equal participation of everyone at the meeting (X). (as cited in Jacobs, 2008, p. 41)

Equally important to know is the DW discourse is “not a conversation; it is ceremony replicating the sacred mutuality principle, a balancing act pulling together the four ‘halves’ of the natural whole” (Mann, 1997b, p. 26)

Like McTaggart, Mann also states that this form of seeing the world is problematic to the Western culture, mainly because Euro-Americans cannot see two of anything without viewing them in a Manichean manner—the good and bad dichotomy where one is always in conflict with the other or is trying to do away with the other—similar to how this duality was interpreted in regards to the twins in our Creation stories. Referring to this Western form of seeing as “one-thinking,” Mann was accused of doing the same when speaking against the Western viewpoint, and advocating for a DW approach. However, she responded by pointing out that by accusing her of such behaviour demonstrates exactly how the one-thinking Euro-way of thinking operates. It is not a matter of one approach being better than the other, or that one is wrong or right, instead Mann’s asks that we consider that

In a world where the Indigenous voice has all but been stomped upon, and where Indigenous People have entered into higher education to make contributions to new knowledge only to face suppression, I think that offering a critique of one so as to allow for the voice of the other is anything but ‘one-thinking.’ (as cited in Jacobs, 2008, p. 44)

After discussing what transpired, when, with the use of the DW in her Master’s thesis, she also made mention about how a DW approach went against the formatting styles of writing a dissertation. For instance, Mann points out that “a scholarly dissertation is considered successful if it moves from introduction to conclusion in a straight line; tangential material is not acceptable” and as such, DW formatting would be viewed as “anathema to the scholarly article” (as cited in Jacobs, 2008, p. 45). But due to her experience, it roused in her a determination to dedicate time to the subject, that by the time she got to writing her dissertation, she had become “fairly militant on the subject of



formats and was able to articulate what [she] was doing” (as cited in Jacobs, 2008, p. 41). And although she wrote her dissertation in 1997, and there have since been other scholars who wrote about the wampum (Doxtater, 2001; Muller, 2009; Rasmussen, 2003; Weaver, 2010), I too am facing similar challenges with its expression. I can only say it still reflects opposing views that remain the same even though there has been a thrust since the new millennia to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the curriculum. This is especially true, when returning to an earlier point that I made regarding including the other two historical consciousness (HC) strands—the cognitive and critical—as being necessary components when considering the “wholeness” of history. Because similar to Mann’s explication of the DW, I view what the two HCs provide, as speaking to the political world of appearances, and a shamanic historical consciousness as affording the world of the apparition, the shadow, the reverse of reality, its doppelgänger. Combined, I believe they allow for a more robust, or better yet, a whole-istic form of learning because they address the imbalance the former created with its obfuscation of the *Ellemental*. Thus, when we apply the DW approach in regards to this obfuscation, it not only affects the facticity of history and its narratives, but it also creates an ecological and cosmological imbalance as well. As an example, as to how the DW approach is incorporated on all aspects of living, E. Pauline Johnson, Mohawk poet, writer and performer, whom I mentioned before, took the name Tekahionwake, which in translation meant double wampum (Mann, 1997b), to reflect her mixed heritage, and that together created who she was as a whole. More importantly, her writing also depicted dual elements of who she was, in a style that left her Indigenous heritage “hidden,” while at the same time taking center stage, if read understanding the DW principles. Thus, when I state DW is a different way of knowing/seeing/reading the world, it is only different for those who are fixated in a one-thinking mentality, as Mann described. But for those of us whose worldview allows us to walk in different worlds, the difference, for me, lies more in one’s inability to see beyond a superficial application of the world, that is, what is beyond the gaze.

And as such, I return to bear medicine because, she—like bat, does not depend so much on her eyes to see, as much as she does with her nose to guide her—teaches me, there are different ways of being in the world. This is particularly the case when making my way in the world of appearances. And like bat, where both spend a great

deal of time coming in and out of (m) *Other* earth's internal space—her chthonian womb—bear reminds me of what it means to hibernate, to (re)turn to the world of the apparition, to take time for a *uterospection*, and to bathe in the *Ellemental*, as a way of creating a space on the outside like the inside. Which is the balance needed in order to rekindle a proto-ethical *o/Other* relationality—my idea of keeping things whole. However, when the north wind begins to calm and carries with it a hint of warmth, it causes the snow to melt, and for things to reappear, which in turn, returns us to the field.

## the field

I began my thesis with Strand's (1990) poem *Keeping Things Whole*, where in the first stanza, my journey began. Strand (1990) says:

In a field  
I am the absence  
of field.  
This is  
always the case.  
Wherever I am  
I am what is missing. (p. 11)

I have situated myself in Strand's field because it represents the *axis mundi*, the *omphalos*, the *umbilicus* of this dissertation. The field for me has always played an important role in my life, therefore, I felt it was where I could attach myself. It was not only a life-line that would assist with the personal quest I was embarking on, but I saw it as a sort of landmark, or earthly marker I could always return to. In the field, I stand between father sky and (m) *Other* earth, and I am surrounded by the four prevailing winds. Škof (2015) reminds me that in taking in the surrounding air, “[t]he other is inspired into me or into my mysterious interior in a way that is not only symbolised by breathing but is also a consequence of exposure to winds” (p.137). Equally, my “[b]reath(ing) provides a medium in which my ethical relationship with the other can exist” (Škof, 2015, p. 147). Thus, in the field I am (re)creating a(n) (*Ellemental*) space on the outside like the inside, and where the field is viewed as a threshold between both.

When I am on the *outside*, I am situated in Strand's (1990) field, where I am the absence of field, and wherever I am, I am what is missing. Unlike Strand who needed to keep moving in order to prevent himself from obstructing the complete view of the field, shamanic historical consciousness is all about dwelling in the spaces of obscurity. I am understanding Strand's ideas regarding my reflecting what is missing as linked to the world of appearances, and where I am the object of the gaze. And as such, the outside pertains to the I (or ego), the existent, our everydayness or what Levinas (1978) referred to as an inward existence, in that we are self-contained. When I think of this image, my field is where my journey with the reader begins, it is the place where I revisit my memories, and it is also the landscape that houses the sweat lodge (SL) (and other ceremonial lodges). The SL plays a vital role when (re)creating a space on the outside like the inside because, if we remember, the lodge represented (m) *Other* earth's chthonian womb, of which is attached, the umbilicus.

However, we discovered throughout the thesis that the object of the gaze is the *Other* side of reality. Which brings us back to the *inside* (of the SL) or *Ellemental* space, the néant, the *il y*, the world of the apparition, or what Levinas (1978) term the anonymous existence. In the inside, existing is without the existent. But what does this mean in light of my thesis? In sharing my personal narratives there is a sense that the reader is accompanying me, and that we are walking alongside each other, and I am sharing intimate moments without reservation. It could be said that I am attempting to model a symbiotic instance, but, like the poem suggests, I too am what is missing. Having chosen to spend most of my time in ceremony while writing my thesis, much of it came to me from the shadowland. For the most part, I have been sitting in council with bear, reconnecting with the ancestors, and seeking guidance throughout the process. What can be said is that I have presented you a life with no life, a narrative that attempts to speak of the unspeakable, the offering of the everything of nothingness.

Thus, with the entering and exiting of the SL (or other ceremonial lodges), the field, for me, has been the link between both existences—an allegory of Being or the *Ellemental*. Correspondingly, when using a double wampum approach, both the inside and outside, as it pertains to the field, is the whole (the field of forces). The field as a whole is the reciprocal exchange of breath, the balance. As I think about the wholeness of field, with its emphasis on breath, our exposure to winds, and breath providing the

medium for the ethical relationship, I cannot help but acknowledge that my thesis transpired around the winds. They were not something that I intentionally set out to use as a template, or future pedagogical tool, instead I used them to guide me. The directional winds were at times warm and soothing, oftentimes abrasive, but always sustaining. I liked how they were changing and circulating throughout, and blurring the boundaries.

As I reread my thesis, I find myself respiring the wind, the air and breath within and throughout the pages. I find that the breath is always, it is behind the words, in the spaces in-between; left for me to take up. And like they were depicted before, winds are moodiness personified (Abram, 2010). For Mann (1997), the four winds are “the natural metaphor of the cosmic structure of balance...[and a]...double-wampum discourse is four-winded discourse” (p. 26). And as such, my thesis arose from my relation with the wampum, became an inspiration from the *Other*, with my breathing and exposure to winds—a proto-ethical *o/Other* relationality.

### ***the inward***

*Having come, what appears to be, full circle—due to the fact that we have returned to the field—I want to go back to the beginning to my original question that asked, how accepting would people be if we were to approach history—the stories of the past—seeking a new ethical approach that focused on the encounter with the “obscured Other” or in other words, with ghosts? This question sprung from Ruitenbergs’s (2009) article “Education as Séance: Specters, Spirits, and the Expansion of Memory,” where I was intrigued by her notion that education as séance, was a coming to (speaking) terms with ghosts. My initial interest was based on my own premise that we were related (in)directly with the Other as obscurers, and that I was interested in creating alliances with (and not for) those who were/are obscured from the historical/contemporary context due to societal norms or ills. Having coined the term *o/Other* to represent this bond, where the lowercase *o* represents the living, and the uppercase *O*, the obscured, (distant) or ancestral Other, I further attempted to emphasize how as obscurers, we were/are implicated in the ethical relationship I sought. Returning to her article after having presented a thesis that was based on Thomas King’s (2003) suggestion that if one wanted a new ethic, one should do so using a different narrative, I came to realize*

*that her ideas regarding coming to (speaking) terms with ghosts was more of a pedagogical approach to revisiting topics that were generally viewed as best forgotten, that is, ghosts (revenant) pertained more to topics rather than people of the past. For example, ghosts of the past were such things as: colonialism, Christianity, women's oppression, murdered and abused Indigenous people, Marxism, eugenics, phrenology, homophobia, language, Indian Residential Schooling, etc. And as much as I would agree that these topics should find their way in the curriculum, as well as those pertaining to the Elemental (i.e. feminine, and womb-blood narratives, the traum/art/i/c, SHC, etc.), our reasoning and presentational approach to doing so is quite different.*

*For Ruitenberg (2009), the ghosts of the past are what we inherit, however, people of privilege "...have often managed to banish ghosts and to ignore the spirits," whereas the marginalized are "...more commonly haunted" (p. 300) by them. Either way, what she recommends is that we become hospitable, and invite the ghosts in. Drawing upon Jacques Derrida, she outlines that inheritance is not something given, but is that of a task. And the task requires not only an acknowledgement of the what is inherited, but that one should interrogate it and be interrogated by it. How this task is attended to, is "...through serious reading and rereading" (p. 302), and via a recognition of the traces of the ghost topic within one's own words and ideas. What is troublesome with the term inheritance, is that it can seem to distance or remove the inheritor from the ghost topic. For instance, when pointing out to students in class that much (if not all) of the land people own in Canada, was/is the traditional land of Indigenous people that was taken from them, their response generally speaks to how hard a distant relative of theirs worked at transforming the land into their own, thereby, disregarding the colonial act altogether, or viewing it as an issue that pertained to the relative and not them. A point that I believe addresses the idea that the privileged can quite easily banish certain topics. Which then leads me to question who exactly is coming to terms with the "specters of inheritance"? What amount of reading will the inheritor find that will outline what has been done to Indigenous people under the guise of nation building, for example, that will bring them to a point of self-reflection and identification? Correspondingly, who then is being hospitable? If we look at the same example as mentioned above, how welcoming is the thought of a privileged person who has been granted the land of Indigenous people, to open their home to the ghosts of the past, of*

*whose land have been taken from them? And if we put that in the context of education, how is the teacher interrogated by the ghost topic, and to what extent? Equally problematic with her proposal, is the idea that these major issues, that have been viewed as ghosts, are also compared to that of irritants, such as a hair on a lens or the apparition of a ghost that troubles one's vision. By identifying them as such, what does that say in regards to the one who is annoyed, angered or who becomes impatient when having to consider the ghost topics. What might the same ghost topics mean to those who have been deeply wounded by those topics? Does this not speak to inequity? Does it not keep the privileged privileged? And lastly, the idea that ghost issues can be compared to that of a ouija board, where the teacher can become the medium to channel the ghost, and the ouija board, the curriculum, can at times give the appearance that a game is being played, and those in attendance can determine if they believe in it or not or can quit at any moment. But let us not lose sight of the overall importance of the article, in that it underscores the importance of bringing forward discussions that are disturbing. And it is precisely this point that addresses my idea regarding setting up the traum/art/ic. Would I advocate for the traum/art/ic in a similar fashion? Have I done so with my bringing forward different stories? I would have to say no.*

*The difference lies more so in regards to the presentational aspect, as was the purpose for identifying aspects of Ruitenbergs (2009) article. Generally, when articles are written for the educational field, the author provides a discussion that leaves its reader in a position as to how to apply what it is they are presenting in the classroom. For instance, some will provide concrete steps/directions, others will include lesson plans, benchmarks, and perceived outcomes, that is, they will provide the reader with a sort of "how-to" guide. This is evident in the works that focus more on the cognitive historical consciousness (HC) approach. In my view, what these types of articles do though, is homogenize thinking, and I would argue restricts the development of one's full potential. What I mean by this is when things are clearly outlined and easily applicable, not as much thought goes into their use, the lessons are built around rote learning, and the content is more superficial. Situated under a more critical HC approach, where the reader is encouraged to "re-visit" historical content that is "passed on" from (previous) members of the community, Ruitenbergs (2009) article advocates more for what one will learn of and within the disturbances and disruptions inherent in comprehending the*

*substance and significance of those historical events. The reader in this case is encouraged to take up the challenge, to be disturbed by the content (or ghosts in Ruitenberg's case), thereby, adding another dimension to that of the former HC approach. In other words, it becomes more of a social praxis—actions that define practices of remembrance with members of particular communities. The problem with this though pertains to the relation (or lack of) one has with the members of said communities, as outlined above. However, as I mentioned before, I view both of the two former HC strands as speaking to the political world of appearances, where the latter must continue to inspire the former because of its interhuman element and its emphasis on disrupting common historical ideologies.*

*As for shamanic historical consciousness (SHC), I view it as dwelling in the spaces of obscurity, that is, affording the world of the apparition, the shadow, the reverse of reality, other worlds, its doppelgänger and so forth. It pertains to the art of knowing/seeing/reading the world differently, and it situates itself in the element of what is missing. Together, with the two former HC strands, I believe they allow for a more robust, or better yet, a whole-istic form of learning because they address the imbalance the two former HCs create with the obfuscation of the Ellemental. What sets a SHC apart from the others, is that it is an epistemological approach that is simply set on the table of the educational system, and it is incumbent on the reader as to what, if anything, they want to take up. Sun Dance Chief, Standing White Buffalo (2016) shares how each of us is gifted with a particular role in life. My role was to write this thesis, and to share it with (our) people. All I can do, according to Standing White Buffalo, is to present it, and to allow others to approach it in whatever fashion they choose. What and how they chose to address its content is dependent on the reader, and becomes part of the(ir) learning (personal communication, September 19, 2016). And as such, the thesis was written in a way that its content and context would/should/could elicit dialogue, it was presented in a way that incorporated the principles behind the double wampum, in that it spoke to those who dwell in the world of appearances, and that of the apparition, and it shied away from providing the “how-to” of things. However, if the thesis leaves the reader questioning such things as: Is the author attempting to bring the Ellemental, the traum/art/ic, and/or SHC into public education, and/or is she advocating for the incorporation of Indigenous ceremonies, rethinking sex education, and/or the*

*implementation of WBs, etc.? then all I can say is my job is done. My thesis has a life of its own, thus providing what indigenous education entails, that is, indigenous without the "I".*



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