*Dance with us as you can...: Art, Artist, and Witness(ing)
in Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Journey*

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral
Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Indigenous and Canadian Studies

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract

This dissertation explores, through in-depth interviews, the perspectives of artists and curators with regard to the question of the roles of art and artist – and the themes of community, responsibility, and practice – in truth, healing, and reconciliation during the early through late stages of the 2008-2015 mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), as its National Events, statement taking, and other programming began to play out across the country. The author presents the findings from these interviews alongside observations drawn from the unique positioning afforded to him through his professional work in healing and reconciliation-focused education and research roles at the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2007-2012) and the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre (2012-2016) about the ways art and artists were invoked and involved in the work of the TRC, alongside it, and/or in response to it. A chapter exploring Indigenous writing and reconciliation, with reference to the work of Basil Johnston, Jeannette Armstrong, Tomson Highway, Maria Campbell, Richard Wagamese, and many others, leads into three additional case studies. The first explores the challenges of exhibiting the legacies of Residential Schools, focusing on Jeff Thomas' seminal curatorial work on the archival photograph-based exhibition *Where Are the Children?* *Healing the Legacy of Residential Schools* and Heather Igloliorte's curatorial work on the exhibition 'We were so far away...': *The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools*, itself a response to feedback on *Where Are the Children?* Both examinations draw extensively from the author's interviews with the curators. The final two chapters are case studies of two bodies of work, R. G. Miller's 2008 *Mush Hole Remembered* and the community-

based, collaborative memorial project *Walking With Our Sisters*, respectively, that the author was privileged to engage with in critical, collaborative, and curatorial capacities. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of research findings and recommendations for additional work in this increasingly expansive area of art, curatorial, and research practice.

Acknowledgements

So many people helped give me the strength to do this work in so many ways. I will do my very best to acknowledge them all here.

First and foremost, I thank my family for their support. Miriam, you have been patient and loving throughout what has been a seemingly interminable journey. Sophie and Livia, my beautiful daughters, you, too, have shown so much patience and understanding as I stole minutes and hours of alone time to read and write and to travel extensively to meet with others and attend events. I love each of you for being you, of course, but also for this generosity.

To my parents, Graham and Louise: You have encouraged me unwaveringly (and have fed me, driven me, and often housed me) as I traveled hither and yon, from New Brunswick to Nunavut, to Ottawa and Sault Ste. Marie, and across Canada to do this work. I could not have done this without your support. To my in-laws, Jack and Suzanne: You, too, have been very supportive, always asking about the work and engaging in interesting conversation.

To my late grandparents, Lucille (née GrosLouis) and Paul Deziel and Aletha (née Jodoin) and Robert Dewar: I miss you dearly and honour your memory with this and all my work.

I am immensely grateful.

Dr. Mike DeGagné, my boss during my five years with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, is the one who convinced me to reengage with the world of academia and to pursue this PhD. I am grateful to Mike and Georges Erasmus and our AHF colleagues for creating such a safe and supportive environment. I am also grateful for the financial and

moral support the Foundation provided for my PhD work during my time there and for seeing the merits in including arts-focused research in our work and encouraging its development and dissemination. That dedication to creating a supportive environment for healing and reconciliation put the Foundation – and me by extension – out there in the world of artists and healers in deep and meaningful ways and created many opportunities for this project to grow.

I also sincerely thank Prof. Don Jackson and founding members of the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association (CSAA) Irene Barbeau and Shirley Horn, all mentors and teachers with whom I worked so closely during my four years with the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, for their kindnesses and ongoing support, as well as that shown by so many others from the Survivor, Anishinaabe, and wider Indigenous communities we worked with. I also gratefully acknowledge Dr. Richard Myers for his vision and his support of my work but, much more importantly, the work of the CSAA.

I sincerely thank the many artists, curators, scholars, and other cultural producers I was so fortunate to meet with, interview, and learn from, as they are the very heart of this project. I say to them: You inspire me and I am in awe. Your names, ideas, and, in many cases, works are featured prominently in this document. I hope I have done justice to the efforts you have made.

There are many friends-in-scholarship I would also like to thank for their support, collegiality, and, most of all, collaboration: Linda Archibald, Dr. Marlene Brant Castellano, Trina Cooper Bolam, Sara Fryer, Ayumi Goto, Flora Kallies, Dr. Tricia Logan, Dr. Glen Lowry, the late Dr. Alistair MacLeod, Dr. Ashok Mathur, Dr. Sophie McCall, Shelagh Rogers, and Dr. Gregory Younging, among many others. We made a

positive impact through the publications and/or events we developed and delivered.

Thank you to the late Dr. Wendy Robbins for helping me find my way back from the wilderness to work I was passionate about. And I will forever be grateful to the late Dr. Renate Eigenbrod and the late Dr. Jo-Ann Episkenew for teaching me that one can find family and community in communities of interest. Their friendship and guidance over the years was absolutely essential to my development. Renate and Jo-Ann, you are greatly missed by me and so many others who benefited from your commitment to serving the communities you worked with, for, and within.

Finally, I thank Dr. Allan J. Ryan for his support as my PhD supervisor during the very long journey of part-time studies and for inviting me into his classroom year after year to share my work with his students. Along with Dr. Ryan, I sincerely thank Dr. Ruth Phillips and Dr. John Milloy for agreeing so many years ago to be part of the dissertation committee and for their interest, attention, and wonderful feedback. And thank you to the internal and external readers, Dr. Brenda Vellino and Dr. Andrea Walsh, respectively, for their assistance in bringing this project to a successful conclusion.

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1 Chapter: Preface

Several years ago an Elder asked me how I came to be doing the work I was doing. At the time, I was struggling with how to proceed with research toward a dissertation focused on Aboriginal¹ literature and its role in creating or contributing to avenues for authors and audiences to explore concepts of (re)connection to Aboriginal culture and community and trying to determine what contribution that work might make to the Aboriginal community.

That Elder's question was likely meant more as small talk than as a query to elicit a deep, probing insight on my part. Nonetheless, I gave the earnest – and long-winded – answer: I told him about growing up “typically Canadian,” with an open acceptance of the various components of a long-established mixed Canadian heritage – French, Scottish, and Huron-Wendat. There were no secrets about any of these lineages, nor scorn, nor embarrassment. I am very fortunate in that fact. There was, however, no sense of real connection. These were just facts about one's forebears: Great-great-so-and-so came from such-and-such a place at such-and-such a time under various circumstances – sometimes mundane, sometimes thrilling. The “Indian” lineage was the latter and caught a young boy's attention, clichéd though that may well be.

¹ In a Canadian context, *Aboriginal* refers to *First Nations, Inuit, and Métis* (FN/I/M) individuals and/or peoples. Where possible, I use and encourage others to strive for specificity and to use the FN/I/M nomenclature over the terms *Aboriginal* and *Indigenous* to underscore separate identities and the diversities within. The term *Native* was in use for decades, too, particularly when I started my academic journey studying Native literature in the early 1990s and some still argue it can be used interchangeably with *Aboriginal*. Its use has fallen out of favour, in part because it has often been used to refer exclusively to First Nations or *Indians* without being explicit. It is therefore ambiguous and I use it only when referring to another author's use of the term; *Indian*, still a legal term, will be treated in a similar fashion as context requires its use. *Indigenous* is an equally valid term but has, during my career, been used primarily to refer to indigeneity in an international context. The last several years have seen a move by many to replace the catch-all term *Aboriginal* with *Indigenous*, especially with the prominence of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, but *Aboriginal* remains the term enshrined in the Constitution. I wrote much of this dissertation in years when *Aboriginal* was the common usage so it remains prevalent, but not exclusive, here.

There was pride expressed, at least in certain aspects of the stories I was told. For example, my maternal great-grandfather, Aldéric GrosLouis², had worked his way from the reserve, from illiterate Indian (according to the stories), to the office of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, where he served as his confidential messenger³ and confidante. He was known as Little Louis (the PM got to be Big Louis, of course) and had a certain profile as the Indian on the Hill who accompanied the Prime Minister. We have quite a collection of newspaper articles and correspondence feting the success and all around good nature of my great-grandfather.

But not much was known in my family about the community he was from – Wendake, outside of Quebec City – nor the history of the Huron-Wendat, generally or specific to our lineage, just that he and many of his family members left the community long before I came along. There was no claim of connection to anything. It was just a line.

There is no doubt that my interest as a boy was a naïve, perhaps (stereo)typically romantic, reaction to learning that I was descended from *Indians* who played a historic role in an aspect of real and popular Canadian history of which you can take your pick: the Fur Trade, war with the Iroquois, allegiance with the French against the English, the prominence of the Huron in the *Jesuit Relations*, and the martyrdom of Jean de Brebeuf (the latter said to be the basis for the character of Christophe in Joseph Boyden's 2013 novel *The Orenda*, which won the 2014 Canada Reads competition). This made me feel

² This is how my family knew him and how his name appeared in various newspapers and other sources, as well as on his gravestone; however, there are variants to both names in some documentation. For example, a reference to his baptismal certificate uses *Uldéric* and some genealogy sites refer to his surname as *Gros-Louis*, which remains a common variation today amongst Huron-Wendat-descended families who bear that surname.

³ This is how he was identified in the Canadian Hansard, January 29, 1954 (lipad.ca).

there was something else at play there, some undefined notion that being connected to this, as opposed to my French or Scottish lineages, was *special*. But there were few avenues available to explore this newfound “connection.” The adults in my life had already provided me with the information above and had no further answers to my questions. I, along with some acquaintances at school with similar backgrounds, had heard of the passing in 1985 of Bill C-31, so there was much talk of Indian Status being reclaimed in families like mine. But other than some news sources there was little information available in my small, rural town south of Ottawa in the pre-internet late 1980s. I called the Office of the Indian Registrar to inquire and frantically wrote down everything I was told. I learned for the first time about enfranchisement and gender discrimination in the Indian Act and began to piece together what it meant for me and my family, and I knew that this was not about tax exemption, which, it seemed to me, was (and still seems to be) the preoccupation for many Canadians. Rather, we discussed how Indian Status was or could be related to connection. Did it answer those questions we had about connection to culture and community? And the answer, for us, was no.

The first real “connection” watershed moment would come shortly thereafter in the form of a 1988 visit to an exhibit on the history of the Huron put on by the National Museum of Man when I was in grade 11 (the Museum had actually already changed its name to the Canadian Museum of Civilization but that “Man” moniker remains burned in my memory; this was also a year before the Museum moved into its present location in Gatineau, so this exhibit was a temporary one housed in a temporary space in the downtown business core of Ottawa off of Elgin Street). This exhibit was a classic example of *Indians under glass*, all past tense references, artifacts, and dioramas.

Throughout the tour I remember telling classmates and the guide (*en Français*, as we were there as part of a sociology course that was an elective in the French Immersion program) that, no, the Huron were not an extinct people. How could they be when I had family from Wendake, a very real, contemporary community (with an important story to tell about how a people can be displaced and end up well outside of one's traditional territory)? When we were asked later that week in class to speak about our thoughts on the visit I made some comments about the Huron (actually, the Wendat, I pointed out) being dispersed in 1649-50, as we had learned, with my ancestors ending up in Quebec City with the Jesuits with whom they had fled (saved, really). In my mind, the Jesuits were featured awfully prominently in an exhibit ostensibly about the Huron and, as a somewhat defiant teenager at a Catholic school, I made some pointed comments about that. But the problem came to a head a week later when the section on "les autochtones" continued.

In a lecture, our teacher introduced the topic of the contemporary reality of Native people – and it was bleak: drunks, unemployable, abusive, damaged. I raised my hand and argued that those were all stereotypes and certainly untrue in my family. Look at my great-grandfather, after all. The teacher stuck to her guns, though, and dismissed my story as untrue and unlikely, given her experience. I stuck to my guns, too, and was promptly shown the door (for good reason in one respect; I was not polite in challenging her and learned an early lesson about diplomacy). When my parents got a call from the school about my behaviour I defended myself by explaining what I had heard, why I was upset, and what I had said (minus the expletives). My mother promptly returned with a box of newspaper articles about my great-grandfather and his relationship with Prime Minister

St. Laurent, which I intended to bring into the classroom to prove my story was true. But first I had to discuss this issue with the school principal, who – in my memory – turned a whiter shade of white when I told him what I had heard. Not only was I allowed back into the classroom, I was given the opportunity to do a presentation on my great-grandfather's professional experiences and successes, which was well-received by all but that one teacher. And it nurtured a genuine interest in learning more about what it meant to be connected to this specific history, culture, and community.

So I turned to history books, art, and literature to explore identity and, in particular, the notion of being of mixed heritage and the reasons why one might become disconnected from family, community, and culture. My approach became less naïve over time and led to degrees specializing in Aboriginal literatures and drama and a growing interest in Aboriginal art across various media. Eventually, I came to realize that I wanted to work exclusively with Aboriginal issues and that became the focus of my professional work. But always my focus was on understanding how my desire to find a comfortable place to stand within various communities and discourses meant learning to do so with humility, respect, and love.

And then that Elder asked me about all this. When I told him something similar to the above, he nodded and said (I paraphrase from memory), “That’s good. It’s important to give back. But remember you have four grandparents and you have to honour each of them.” My grandparents were close friends who loved and respected each other; that, in itself, is something to aspire to within family and community and that became my earliest sense of notions of “reconciliation.”

As I moved professionally into the areas of Aboriginal health and healing, first with the National Aboriginal Health Organization and then with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, I realized that my greatest contribution would be to engage in efforts to improve the health and well-being of Aboriginal communities in Canada, which would contribute to a healthy Canada. I believed that would honour each of my grandparents. That work also served my interest in exploring what it means to be of mixed heritage, where that mix includes First Nations forebears. I developed a strong sense of what that means to me (for example, the idea of being mixed but not Métis – that is, of the Historic Metis Nation – and certainly not mixed up). But more and more that work led me to explore issues related to the social determinants of health and this notion of being connected to one's culture. Something had severely broken, if not severed, that connection – what was for me just a line as I have said but for thousands of others, my maternal grandmother included, was – IS – something much more profound: a deliberate effort in the form of legislation and policy to destroy one's connection to one's Indigenous family, community, culture, and identity.

This brings us to the bright and historic spotlight on Aboriginal issues, particularly the creation, via the 2007 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, of a truth and reconciliation process in the form of a commission. Regardless of the bond between my grandparents there are basic truths they did not – could not – share about each other's experiences. Where had they come from? What forces had dictated the paths their forebears took? And how would these truths be shared?

The opportunity for Canadians to reconcile the difficult aspects of our history is of tremendous importance and I knew then that this was where I was meant to take my

scholarly work. My lifelong interest in the arts as an avenue for exploration of identity and connectedness intersects meaningfully with this historic moment as Canada embarks on an effort to address truth and reconciliation in response to the legacy of Indian⁴ Residential Schools and, arguably, the larger colonial context. I see my greatest contribution as one that offers a potential way into the truth and reconciliation discourse for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians and beyond – into a reconciliation *practice*. Quite simply, art and the perspectives of artists present a possible way in, as they did – and continue to do – for me.

⁴ Indian residential schools is the “official” term used by the government of Canada, with some variants, including the inclusion of Inuit as a descriptor. Hereafter, I will use the broader, inclusive term “residential schools” to ensure all of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples are included. Residential schools refer to all government-funded, church-run “schools” where children were in residence, including industrial schools, boarding schools, student residences, hostels, billets, and even Inuit tent camps in the north. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children were all subject to the assimilatory goals of the government and the proselytizing efforts of the various church entities through schooling; however, the government of Canada has formally apologized only for the residential school experience. The “day school” experience, which affected proportionally many more Métis students, as well as some First Nations and Inuit students, has not been formally addressed. For more information on the Métis experience, which is not covered in great detail here, see Chartrand et al. 2006. Short descriptions of the unique experiences of Inuit and Métis are also featured in the *Where Are the Children?* exhibit discussed at length in Chapter 8.

2 Chapter: Introduction

Given the professional privilege I have enjoyed – and continue to enjoy – over the past decade, I have found myself on or very near the front lines of Indian Residential Schools politics, healing, and reconciliation. I committed to harnessing that privilege – a word I found myself using, and puzzling over, throughout this long project – to enable me to further contribute as I have attempted to explain in the preface. And so, with support from those employers but most importantly the many Indian Residential School Survivors I encountered over close to a decade, I took up a research project with this particular aim: to engage artists, curators, scholars, and other cultural producers in a real-time conversation about their perspectives on how the landscape was changing under this new, bright spotlight. In a very profound sense I was witness to so much. This dissertation tells a focused story, then, of what I witnessed. It is, in essence, my witness narrative of art and artist, healing, and reconciliation during the period of 2008–2016.

2.1 Witnessing

The definition of “witness” is manyfold. It means, most commonly, to “see an event, typically a crime or accident, take place” (Oxforddictionaries.com) or to be the person who does the seeing. In a legal sense, of course, it also refers to the person who is called upon to act as a witness – a “person giving sworn testimony to a court of law or the police” whether simply, as described above, or in some expert sense. This concept is closely related to the notion of testimony; that is, to deliver one’s witness account. It is important to note that I make no claim that what I write here is in any way “testimony.” Instead, I argue that I am playing a role that scholar David Gaertner described recently as

follows: “A witness in this sense becomes a living archive – a repository of history guaranteed by mutual consensus” (138). But its use as a mass noun is perhaps most useful to this project, that is, the idea of some “thing” being “evidence” or “proof.” Oxford Living Dictionaries provides an example, writing “the memorial service was *witness* to the wide circle of his interests.” I like this example because the editors (inadvertently?) chose an example that incorporates the notion of “memorial” – something I’ll explore later – and also the notion of a publicly accessible performance of sorts, which resonates with the concept of the various art and curatorial practices discussed herein. And I continue to be guided by something my co-editor on *Reconcile This!* (Ayumi Goto) wrote in our introduction to that special, art-focused edition of the journal *West Coast Line*: “When understood as a socially engaged activity, witnessing incites creative collaboration. It provokes dialogical intercessions that push up against imposed projections of reconciliation” (10). Collaboration would prove to be a key finding in this work and the concept resonated when, in 2009, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada would provide a more detailed definition of “the Aboriginal principle of witnessing” than its passing reference in Schedule N of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement:

The term witness is in reference to the Aboriginal principle of witnessing, which varies among First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Generally speaking, witnesses are called to be the keepers of history when an event of historic significance occurs. Partly because of the oral traditions of Aboriginal peoples, but also to recognize the importance of conducting business, building and maintaining relationships in person and face to face.

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

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

home. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC] “Schedule N”)

This study began in 2008 as an effort to seek to explore the role of Aboriginal – that is to say, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis – artists and art in reconciliation generally and specifically within the reconciliation component of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process, as defined, envisioned, and/or experienced by established Aboriginal artists, curators, and other cultural producers⁵ across various disciplines and media. My hypothesis was that there would be an explosion of art making and arts scholarship and that it would be a significant contribution to this landscape to engage artists and thinkers in conversations on these topics as this potential change developed.

I also realized that this study would allow me to think critically about how one should (must?) approach this type of research and perhaps to recommend new ways of thinking about Indigenous research, methodologies, and methods, given the unique elements of the landscape in which I propose to operate: a TRC process over a five-year⁶ mandate mirrored by a five-year process of engaging with and re-engaging with colleagues, collaborators, and interview respondents during that temporal frame (2008–2014).

The TRC and the larger Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) of which it is a component provide the spotlight for this discussion of reconciliation – and residential schools the lens. The concept of reconciliation, that of “restoring good will in relations that have been disrupted” (Aboriginal Healing

⁵ I will henceforth use “artist” as shorthand except where specificity is required.

⁶ This was accurate when I began the work, however, I will address the five year versus six year discrepancy in Chapter 4: Residential Schools, Healing, and Reconciliation.

Foundation, *From Truth to Reconciliation*, 3), however, existed prior to the TRC and would exist well beyond its five-year mandate. As such, concepts of artists' and art's role in reconciliation pre-TRC and outside of the residential schools focus had to also be explored.

I deemed it essential that Aboriginal artists speak to this issue – and that they be named within the study; they are, after all, the experts and as artists occupy a public space. The art produced prior to the TRC, in production during its mandate (perhaps in response to one of its calls for submissions), or envisioned beyond the TRC may be characterized as the artist *speaking to*⁷ the issue(s) and, as Aboriginal peoples in Canada have rightly come to expect a participatory role in research involving Aboriginal people and communities,⁸ research on this topic must contribute to creating space for Aboriginal artists to speak for themselves and allow them to inform the research itself. Linda Alcoff, in her article “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” nicely describes the concept of “speaking to”:

In Spivak's essay the central issue is an essentialist, authentic conception of the self and of experience. She criticizes the 'self-abnegating intellectual' pose that [Michel] Foucault and [Gilles] Deleuze adopt when they reject speaking for others on the grounds that it assumes that the oppressed can transparently represent their own true interests ... [Their] own position serves only to conceal the actual authorizing power of the retreating intellectuals, who in their very retreat help to consolidate a particular conception of existence (as transparent and self-knowing). Thus, to promote 'listening to' as opposed to speaking for essentializes the oppressed as non-ideologically constructed subjects. But Spivak is also critical of speaking for which engages in dangerous re-presentations. In the end Spivak prefers a 'speaking to' in which the intellectual neither abnegates his or her discursive role nor presumes an authenticity of the oppressed but still allows for the possibility that the oppressed will produce a 'countersentence' that can then suggest a new historical narrative. (244)

⁷ From Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's article “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

⁸ See Chapter 3: Methodology.

I also embraced Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST), both as a way to understand and justify the personal and positional nature of my subjectivity on this work but also as a rationale for why the voices of the many respondents to my queries are so necessarily central (a full discussion of IST follows shortly). Further, to understand Aboriginal perspectives on reconciliation we must respect traditional ways of knowing. Thus, the study attempted to represent knowledge that is personal, oral, experiential, holistic, and conveyed in narrative (Castellano, “Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge,” 21–36). As such, interviewing artists and presenting their thoughts and reflections is an attempt to do precisely what “Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge” outlines. These “attempts” are discussed as findings within “Chapter 7: The Interviews – Emerging Themes.”

2.2 On Identity, Imposture, and Positionality

It is no accident that this dissertation begins so self-reflexively, nor is it an accident that my inclination to look inwardly has followed me through this early career trajectory. It is my hope that this introduction will draw a clear distinction between a navel-gazing, self-confession concerned with one’s inadequacies and true introspection for the purpose of elucidating the challenges one faces as a researcher of mixed heritage. When one chooses to study and/or work with(in) Indigenous issues, one must confront issues like position and positionality, standpoint, ethics, responsibility, and related theories to do it well. One may argue that researchers of all stripes studying all manner of subject matter should be concerned with those same things; that may be true. The point here is to highlight how high the bar has been set by scholars, researchers, and communities.

I'll begin with two anecdotes (yes, more stories).

I chose to study Indigenous literatures (and later arts more broadly) as a young man because I wanted to connect with my Huron-Wendat ancestry, a connection that is made difficult by the fact that my maternal grandmother did not grow up in Wendake, the Huron-Wendat community just outside of Quebec City.⁹ Even if she had, the strong traditionalist movement that I have come to know is relatively new. Add to that the literal distance between my long-established family home in Ottawa and the long-since-separated (in the Huron dispersal of 1650) Wendat/Wyandot nations of Kansas, Oklahoma, Michigan, and Southern Ontario. And, while Bill C-31 retroactively reinstated status rights to those disenfranchised by earlier acts, it did not and could not by its very nature repair any of the real damage of severed connection. And, what of those people attempting to (re)connect, albeit with a respectful acknowledgement of vastly different experience? Where are the real rules and parameters that instruct people on how to connect or reconnect? This is precisely where individual decisions and experiences come into play, further blurring or greying lines of authenticity and appropriation.

As a child and later as a young scholar, a particular historical figure caught my attention (for very different reasons): Grey Owl. Growing up, I knew Grey Owl in the same way that I knew my Huron-Wendat great-grandfather: through photographs. In Grey Owl's case, there was the famous Karsh photo that hung in the Chateau Laurier's Karsh collection (and we had a book that featured the Karsh collection, within which that

⁹ This anecdote comes from my earliest dissertation work – that abandoned PhD in literature that I referenced earlier. I've told this anecdote many times, in the classroom and in public lectures as well as in published works that drew on this early dissertation research, such as "From Copper Woman to Grey Owl to the alterNative Warrior: Exploring Voice and the Need to Connect" in *Drew Hayden Taylor: Essays on His Works*.

portrait of Grey Owl was included). As for my great-grandfather, there were the many pictures my family had of him. And, like Grey Owl, there were also the many newspaper articles, for he had had a somewhat public profile as Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent's personal aide; he had been known as the Indian who accompanied a prime minister around the world. The photographs were, as my family often said, unmistakably Indian; he was, in fact, lovingly referred to as "the Cigar Store Indian" whenever someone attempted to describe him without the aid of those photographs. But I never saw the Cigar Store Indian in him. He was always the gentleman wearing a three-piece suit in those photos. A wholly costumed Grey Owl, on the other hand, seemed truly unmistakably Indian despite the fact that I knew he was not. He fit the stereotype.

It was this connection to the Grey Owl myth that initially drew me to Armand Garnet Ruffo's book *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* and was also my introduction to Ruffo, himself, whom I interviewed for this project in 2011. Having read many of the Grey Owl biographies, I was anxious to read an Indigenous perspective. I was pleasantly surprised by Ruffo's approach. As a child, I remember struggling with the problem that, though a fraud, Grey Owl had made the transition I could only imagine – to *go Indian*. That was my first, childish approach to connection to culture. Ruffo hints at possibilities of finding a deeper connection to a culture one may be only tenuously connected to, and that this is a worthwhile avenue for Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars alike. Most importantly, though, it is for those readers who turn to literature by Indigenous and Canadians of mixed heritage for insight into so-called Indigeneity. I wanted to explore the important role Grey Owl plays for readers looking to understand their own feelings of imposture when attempting to connect to some aspect of Indigenous

culture. Was Grey Owl the ideal Indian, or was it his ability to “go Native” that is the ideal for contemporary Indigenous and Canadians of mixed heritage? Or, is the message more akin to the repeated offer of kinship proffered by Ruffo’s Anishinaabe kin in *Grey Owl*: “Dance with us as you can” (146)? To many young people of Indigenous heritage, perhaps Grey Owl was more successful as an authentic Indian than they could ever imagine themselves to be. Of course, the question of authenticity is further complicated in that Grey Owl is part of Ruffo’s heritage; it was his Ojibway family that “adopted” Belaney. Why should he, then, or we, not look to Grey Owl as both a professional and cultural example? The obvious answer for both is because Belaney was an impostor. But it is this notion of impostor that Ruffo deconstructs. That feeling of not belonging or being an impostor is a real and valid emotion that contemporary Indigenous writers (and PhD students I would come to learn) deal with regularly, particularly with regard to the mixing of Indigenous and non-Indigenous or *Settler* (white European) cultures and the issue of mixed cultural backgrounds. What I came to realize is that I had developed comfort with the concept of “moving over” when my circle of experience and understanding no longer overlapped with those informing a particular discourse. So, rather than being an unconscious (or, more dangerously, a conscious) decision to act from a position of privilege, it is a respectful act. That does not mean it is a permanent action. If anything, it is simply a resistance to give in to the impulse to “teach rather than listen” (Alcoff 24). These are hard lessons to be learned from an even more difficult, but rewarding, obstacle course. While of extreme importance to know one’s own position and positionality, it is as necessary to know and attempt to understand others’.

Jumping forward¹⁰, my second anecdote comes from my time as director of research for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, a role I assumed in the fall of 2007, where I oversaw a variety of research and evaluation activities related to the Foundation's mandate to support community-based healing initiatives that responded to the effects of physical and sexual abuse and the intergenerational effects of Indian Residential Schools. In 2008 we embarked on a research project to gauge the impacts of the Common Experience Payment (CEP), a component of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which saw eligible former students receive \$10,000 for their first year at an approved Indian Residential School and \$3,000 for each subsequent year for the common experience of having attended the schools. The primary method of gathering information related to the goal of this project was interviews with individuals who had received – or were in the process of (re)applying for – CEP.

Although the initial analysis focused on the individual (the rationale being that each Survivor had to come to the process as an individual), we understood that community would be a central focus as well; however, any attempt to represent the

¹⁰ Here I leapfrog over several years of twists and turns that are also essential – but secondary in this telling – to the story. The short version is this: In 2000 I was transitioning into the research and writing phase of the PhD in literature and, despite having found a wonderful community of scholars and artists in the course of that work, I was not seeing my work as a tangible contribution to the broader sense of Indigenous communities. As I puzzled over this over several months, my (then future) wife and I had an opportunity to move to Iqaluit, Nunavut, in the spring of 2001 because my wife, a journalist, had been offered a job with Nunatsiaq News, the weekly newspaper of the Territory. I had a year left on my SSHRC doctoral fellowship and this allowed me to be anywhere to write. Not long after I arrived in Iqaluit, I was approached to help explore the idea of developing community theatre and, after a feasibility study and some success with Government of Nunavut and Canada Council for the Arts grants, in 2002 I became the founding executive director of the Qaggig Theatre Company, a very part-time role at first to be sure. Nonetheless, I became a part-time student to accommodate this exciting opportunity and more and more of my attention went to community arts endeavors, which I realized was the missing experience in my PhD work. When we started a family and it became clear that part-time work would not pay the bills I took a job with the Office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut and continued working on the theatre projects part-time. Eventually, I found myself at a crossroads and withdrew in good standing from the PhD program with every intention of returning to it. Instead, one government job led to another and then, after five wonderful years in Nunavut, to an opportunity to join the National Aboriginal Health Organization in Ottawa in a leadership role. By 2008, I knew I wanted to work in an interdisciplinary fashion across various arts practices.

diversity of Survivor experiences – across First Nations, Inuit, Métis, on-reserve, off-reserve, urban, rural, northern realities – meant that we could not conduct a true community-based research project, as the Survivor community is not a discrete community with uniform leadership, protocols, or experience with research. There is no one body to partner with. Also, a representative sample has to be manageable and, as such, we were working with numbers and corresponding budgets. All of these concerns should be recognizable methodological issues to people doing research with Indigenous peoples. The project had numerous ethical and methodological concerns, which I will not go into. Most importantly, for the purposes of the study we needed to approach individuals but acknowledged that we might have to be quite flexible in our approach. To that end, we went to great lengths to communicate all this information to each potential participant.

At times, though, particularly in the initial recruitment phase, “communities” did come forward to propose involvement. When that happened, we took the same approach to informing them of the project plan, with an emphasis on the ethical considerations and steps taken to ensure the safety of the participants and our responsibility(ies) to the Indigenous community. We fully expected to be asked why we were doing this research, who told us it was important, who was advising us, and what we intended to do with the results. It sometimes took many hours – sometimes several separate conversations – to ensure that we had answered all questions asked. One such occasion was an invitation to present the proposed research project to a group of Elders and Elders’ helpers¹¹ who were actively involved in providing support to Survivors and communities as the components of the Settlement Agreement played out. They wanted to know about the research and

¹¹ I do not identify the region or community by name, or any of the participants to protect their privacy.

gauge for themselves any impact it may have on their work, offer advice from their perspective(s), and determine if any one of them may be interested in participating as a respondent. The presentation was long and thorough. There were numerous questions, some quite challenging to answer, and some disagreements. All in all, though, the feedback was constructive – if at times deliberately prescriptive.

As the question and answer session was ending, an Elder – who was quite elderly, hard-of-hearing, and clearly more comfortable in his native tongue – began to speak about research in general. He made numerous references to white people from Ottawa researching Indians. This is not at all uncommon and one must be prepared to receive this perspective and accept it, which we all did – researchers, supporting members of the group, and fellow Elders. There were a few pointed questions directed at me, the “white guy from Ottawa” (I was the only male team member) and I answered them in as-straightforward-a-manner as possible without addressing the identifier applied to me. Several minutes in, one of the women in the group leaned over to the Elder and whispered a reminder that I had introduced myself as being of some First Nations heritage – and the other members of the field research team as First Nation, Inuk, and Métis. He nodded, looked at me, and said, “When you do this kind of work you are the white guy from Ottawa.”

This anecdote nicely encapsulates the complexities of doing research with Aboriginal peoples, without delineating one kind of complexity for non-Aboriginal researchers and another for Aboriginal – of whichever stripe – researchers. This Elder was not wrong: I am from Ottawa (both presently, as a resident, and born and raised, although he could not possibly have known the latter) and I have a lot of “white” in me,

as I explained above. Further, I represent not a community but an organization. Inherent in that kind of association may well be – real or perceived – agendas, political or otherwise, thus the reference to “Ottawa,” usually a stand-in for “Government of Canada.” I think he was probably referring to cultural specificity, meaning we could not truly understand his experience because we were not of his people, his community, his culture.

It was a learning moment for me and likely intended by him as such. In that moment, I was able to acknowledge how that remark would have shaken me to my core ten or fifteen years ago as I began to embark on scholarly and, later, professional pursuits that allowed me to explore my interest in and desire to connect with – perhaps serve – my own First Nations heritage and Aboriginal communities at large. Then and now I am still interested in my own place in this “kind of work” and the kind of space I occupy or create in the work I do. I have written in the past about finding a “comfortable place to stand” (“From Copper Woman,” 63). That thinking has matured, as I have, and now also reflects the more active and truly engaged role of Aboriginal researcher. It also reflects my movement from academia (as a graduate student) into Aboriginal-focused government and non-government work and back again. Now, I bring with me many practical learning moments and teachings from Elders, and I also face both my own previous stances on issues related to my place in Aboriginal issues and the work of many others. As such, the following discussion centres on the question of what insider/outsider position and positionality, standpoint, standpoint theory (particularly the Indigenous variety), and concepts of culturally appropriate, ethical practices and standards, such as “Radical

Indigenism” (Garrouette), say to the “mixed-blood” researcher/scholar. I argue that the bar has been raised for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers.

I will begin with Cherokee scholar Eva Marie Garrouette and her call for the development and implementation of “Radical Indigenism” in her 2003 book, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America*. Garrouette positions herself in an interesting way right off the bat. In her *Preface* she says,

This book examines some of the ways that American Indians speak and think about their identity. In one sense, I am just the kind of person who might write this book. I am a light-skinned, mixed-race person. I have been a legal citizen of an American Indian tribe since childhood, one who found her way back, in adulthood, to the Cherokee Nation that her father was born in, grew up in, and left. And I am a sociologist who teaches Native American Studies courses. (xi)

I have done something very similar with this chapter and the Preface that precedes it.

Like me, Garrouette acknowledges up front a different way of reading the situation:

In another sense, I am an unlikely person to write this book. It is a book that presumes to suggest to non-Indian and Indian people some ways of thinking about Indianness. As such, perhaps it would more likely have been written by someone who had spent her whole life in a tribal community instead of only part of it, by someone who spoke her tribal language as a first language, not as a language only partially and imperfectly acquired in adulthood. Perhaps it would more likely have been written by someone whose racial ancestry was not divided between European and American Indian: by someone, in short, whose more indisputable racial authenticity seemed to confer upon her a greater authority to speak on such a difficult question as race and identity. (xi)

Of course, Garrouette did decide to write the book, and while she spends its first half discussing identity, as she foregrounds above, and notions of “authenticity,” I will forgo a discussion of authenticity at this time. More important at the moment than my argument that I should be accepted as authentically mixed, rather than as authentic “Indian” or some other construction, is her call to action, which she labels “Radical Indigenism: A

Distinctively American Indian Scholarship” (101). After a lengthy discussion of the four ways of defining American Indians – law, biology, culture, and self-identification – she asks, “Is there any way for Indian people to move beyond the divisive animosity of intense conflicts over identity?” (101). There is, of course; otherwise, she would only have half a book. She writes that “there is a way to bring together the project of Indian people to live together in communities in a good way *with* the project of the academy to cultivate knowledge” (101, her emphasis). To do so, she argues, requires those of us with access to the academy to make it a safe place for indigenous knowledge, which “requires, in turn, an intellectual perspective dramatically different from any that is currently available within the academy. It requires us to develop new ideas about the very nature of scholarship and how it is done. It requires a distinctively *American Indian scholarship*” (101, her emphasis).

She defines Radical Indigenism as “illuminat[ing] differences in assumptions about knowledge that are at the root of the dominant culture’s misunderstanding and subordination of indigenous knowledge. It argues for the reassertion and rebuilding of traditional knowledge from its roots, its fundamental principles” (101). If that has not already struck readers as familiar-sounding, it soon will in the ensuing discussion of Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous standpoint theory. In the meantime, Garrouette’s next point is an essential one – and a divergence from the assertions of some international theorists who argue for the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge in the academy and the development of Indigenous methodologies as Indigenous-only enterprises. She says, “Although I pay particular consideration to the interest and role that American Indian scholars might have in contributing to the new perspective, this is not

because I presume that non-Indians or nonacademics will have no interest in it or because I think they have no place in it” (101–2). This will be accomplished, after all, “[w]ith the help of our tribal communities and those others¹² in the academy who will join with us” (104).

Garrouette clearly intends to allow for a potential collaborative effort between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. This allows space for Linda Alcoff’s discussion of the often-contentious issues of authenticity and appropriation, and the inclination some non-Aboriginal scholars (and me, as I have written in the past) may have to retreat from an issue to which one is not culturally connected. She asks, “Is my greatest contribution to move over and get out of the way? And if so, what is the best way to do this—to keep silent or to deconstruct my discourse?” (8). Alcoff, a non-Aboriginal scholar herself, writes that a “further problem with the retreat response is that it may be motivated by a desire to find a method or practice immune from criticism. If I speak only for myself it may appear that I am immune from criticism because I am not making any claims that describe others or prescribe actions for them. If I am only speaking for myself I have no responsibility for being true to your experience or needs” (22). Alcoff rejects a general retreat from speaking for others, but qualifies it, saying, “I am not advocating a return to an un-self-conscious appropriation of the other, but rather that anyone who speaks for others should only do so out of a concrete analysis of the particular power relations and discursive effects involved” (24). The parameter that is key to this discussion is the second in a list of four: “We must also interrogate the bearing of our location and context on what it is we are saying ... One deformed way in which this is too often carried out is when speakers offer up in the spirit of honesty autobiographical information about

¹² I note Garrouette’s lack of irony in her use of the term “others.”

themselves usually at the beginning of their discourse as a kind of disclaimer” (25)¹³. I have already engaged in just such an endeavour, although my positioning, vague though it was, cannot be said to be the sort of apology for being non-Indigenous that Alcoff’s definition alludes to. My claim of mixed heritage could be seen as an attempt to consciously occupy both insider and outsider positions (although we could argue which half is inside and which is out, depending on the forum). In this work, it is more likely that the mixed claim will be seen as a not-so-subtle leaning toward insider Indigenous status. The paradox here, of course, is that in most discussions of non-Indigenous art and literature, I would likely not make any such claim. Garrouette seems to invite non-Aboriginal people to accompany her, which is itself a good tactic to ward off criticism that Radical Indigenism – or any Indigenous-focused concept or theory – is immune to criticism because some people just cannot comprehend the importance of Indigenous knowledge. Garrouette seems to say, yes, it is important; come find out why. But how, I ask?

A place where one may find out the “why” posited above is American Indian Studies.¹⁴ Duane Champagne (Chippewa), like Garrouette, answers the “how” question by offering Indian-focused studies;¹⁵ but, again like Garrouette, does not claim the effort is problem free or the battles won. In his article “In Search of Theory and Method in American Indian Studies” he argues that “American Indian studies should have a

¹³ The other three are: “1. The impetus to speak must be carefully analyzed and, in many cases (certainly for academics !), fought against... 2. Speaking should always carry with it an accountability and responsibility for what one says... 3. In order to evaluate attempts to speak for others in particular instances, we need to analyze the probable or actual effects of the words on the discursive and material context” (25–6).

¹⁴ As in Canada, this interdisciplinary endeavour is sometimes known by other names, reflecting the sometimes vacillating nomenclature; however, American Indian Studies seems to be the prevalent usage.

¹⁵ While Champagne focuses on American Indian studies, I believe his arguments can be extrapolated to Indigenous studies more generally, whether in Canadian contexts or internationally. These contexts will be discussed in some detail shortly.

theoretical and methodological focus sufficient to organize an academic discipline” (353). He allows that “[a]cademic researchers are growing more sensitive about Native history, culture, and voice and are able to theorize and conduct research within their disciplines about American Indian experiences and issues” (354). But he also writes:

Nevertheless, relatively little conceptual progress has been made toward defining American Indian studies as a discipline and toward developing theory and research that presents a coherent theoretical and methodological approach to the study of indigenous peoples. Much of contemporary research and theorizing about American Indian nations is absorbed into many disciplinary fields and are considered variations on more general theories. In the worst case, American Indian communities and their issues are seen as marginal because some contemporary theories do not easily conceptualize American Indian communities, cultures, and historical experiences and are therefore regarded as outside the main focus of theoretical and empirical interest and focus. Consequently, research and theory about American Indians is fragmented and part of many disciplines ... [which] include American Indian issues and cases in their theoretical and empirical frameworks but for their own theoretical purposes and requirements.

The academy at large, he argues, must become receptive to these ideas. Garrouette cites Sam Gill’s concern – “a position likely to be endorsed by established scholars in the social sciences and other disciplines in which the pursuit of objective claims is a goal” (104) – that the problem with scholars applying themselves to their subject matter out of a sense of deep-felt connection to it, whether for personal religious, racial, ethnic, or gender reasons, “is that investigators who enter too deeply into the lives of the communities they research risk being drawn into political agendas. The objectivity diminishes and their scholarship shifts into partisan advocacy, proselytization, or social activism” (Garrouette, 104). The result is work that may be of some interest to some people but overall is too narrowly focused, refusing to “engage broader, theoretical issues of consequence to the discipline” (104) and is “dangerously blinded by dogma” (104).

There is a resultant loss of academic detachment, a failing of the academy in that in its response to so-called activist scholars it actually compromises its intellectual standards.

This is precisely, albeit a more softened version, of what Frances Widdowson and Albert Howard argue in *Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry*, a much derided 2008 text. They blame postmodernism, writing, “In addition to justifying the retention of obsolete and oppressive cultural practices ... [i]ts promotion of ‘difference’ has led to the acceptance that aboriginal peoples have a completely different understanding of the world than non-aboriginals, an understanding that cannot be evaluated by scientific methods” (67). The result, they contend,

has been the proliferation of a highly dubious body of research on aboriginal ‘methodologies’ and ‘epistemologies.’ The lack of content in these perspectives is ignored in all discussions of ‘native studies’ because of the assertion that respect for native ‘world views’ is the key to aboriginal liberation. So even if these claims are invalid, political sympathies for the plight of the native population makes Canadians eager to support them.” They then follow with a section titled “‘Native Studies’ and the Creation of Pretentious Arrogance.” (67)

Not surprisingly, given the above statement, Widdowson and Howard dismiss the sort of calls made by Champagne and others. Interestingly, though, while they reject the body of work on Indigenous methodologies they do not acknowledge the large body of work concerning standpoint theory, which has seen a recent explosion of literature on Indigenous standpoint and Indigenous standpoint theory, despite presenting their own arguments as grounded in a particular, informed standpoint. As self-proclaimed Marxists, they should at least acknowledge its origins, growing out of “the standpoint of the proletariat” (Harding, 40) in Marxist writings and the fact that, as Julia T. Wood writes, “standpoint theory draws especially on the Marxist claim that the work we do—the

activities in which we engage—shape our identities and consciousness and, by extension, our knowledge” (61).

As Sandra Harding says in the notes to her article “A Socially Relevant Philosophy of Science? Resources from Standpoint Theory’s Controversiality” some authors overtly claim a standpoint approach while others “de facto [use] it without theorizing what they are doing” (40). Harding doesn’t say whether those others use it well or poorly, which is a good question for Widdowson and Howard. They claim they have experienced the dysfunction of Aboriginal communities – not as Aboriginal people, of course – and the destructive forces of the so-called Aboriginal Industry and offer solutions based on this experience. I am not surprised they do not defend their work from a *standpoint* standpoint, given Wood’s assertion that “[s]tandpoint theory asks what we know if we start from a subordinated group’s experiences” (62), which they cannot do by virtue of the very nature of their premise – that what the subordinated group believes is absurd and therefore invalid. Their argument seems to be not that the bar has been raised but that it has been lowered to pander to certain Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal self-interest. In this sense, we may well ask if their claim to be interested in exposing the evils of the Aboriginal Industry for the good of native communities is but an “altruistic posture” (21), a criticism levelled at those who choose to work within the Aboriginal Industry, as I do. The point of including their perspectives is not to offer a critique or review of their book, per se, but to highlight my own standpoint, which, as Wood writes, should be achieved and “earned through critical reflection of power relations and through engaging in the struggle required to construct an oppositional stance” (61). Widdowson and Howard form part of my own critical reading landscape; as such, their views are

essential to the formulation of my own standpoint insofar as I must examine all proposed ways of knowing and seeing the world critically.

2.3 The Case for Indigenous Standpoint Theory

So how does standpoint theory contribute to the argument I make that artists, curators, and other cultural producers must be asked what they see as their role within healing, truth, and reconciliation? It is generally accepted that standpoint theory found its stride in the 1970s and 1980s as “a feminist epistemology, philosophy of science, sociology of knowledge, and methodology” (Harding, 25). Harding cites the “controversy” of standpoint theory as one of its assets and perhaps its most significant contribution; it has generated much discussion and debate. She writes about “the vigor and overt emotional investment in many criticisms of standpoint theory” (25), saying,

The approach seems to function as a lightning rod to conduct into the public arena discussion of the strengths and limitations of conventional philosophies and histories ... Standpoint theory thus engages with anxieties of our era that one can see articulated in the “culture wars,” including their science skirmishes, and in reactions to feminism, to pro-democratic race and ethnic-based projects, and to anti-imperial and anticolonial projects. (26–7)

She argues that “contrary to the objections to its controversiality, the persisting ability of its central theses to stir up reflection and debate is in itself an important resource” (27). One of these central theses is the concept of “studying up,” “focusing its explanations on dominant social institutions and their ideologies, rather than ... ‘study[ing] down’ by trying to explain the lives of marginalized groups” (27). Harding notes that this “project of ‘studying up’ distinguished standpoint from merely ethnographic research” (30) or “rather, from ethnographic work that ‘studied down,’ for some standpoint projects could

be understood as producing critical ethnographies of institutions (including research disciplines)” (41).

Heather Adams and Layli Phillips highlight two valuable components of standpoint theory: “sensitivity to social position” and “emphasis on the voice of the population members” (275). As with other scholars, they note that “standpoint theory holds that all knowledge and understanding are socially located, with people residing in various social positions having differential access to information and experiences that shape their understandings” (275). They see differences in social location

as producing different epigenetic landscapes, each one facilitating and hindering access to different information and experiences. The individual actively negotiates within the landscape, but movement from one valley, across a hill, to another valley necessitates greater effort expenditure (hindrance) than continuation along the valley course (facilitation). (275)

Further, “like most feminist methods of inquiry, standpoint theory maintains that the experiential reports of members of marginalized groups be accounted for and understood rather than dismissed” (275). This is not to be confused, Harding points out, with perspectivalism. She notes the “four features [that] mark standpoint theory’s innovativeness” (31):

First, as noted, its goal is to “study up.” Its concern is not to articulate women’s or some other marginalized group’s perspective about the group’s lives, though this frequently is an important step in its process. Rather, it ambitiously intends to map the practices of power, the ways the dominant institutions and their conceptual frameworks create and maintain oppressive social relations. Secondly, it does this by locating, in a material and political disadvantage or form of oppression, a distinctive insight about how a hierarchical social structure works ... Third, it takes more than recording what women or members of some other oppressed group in fact say or believe to identify these distinctive standpoint insights ... Finally, standpoint theory is more about the creation of groups’ consciousness than about shifts in the consciousnesses of individuals. An oppressed group has to come to understand that each member is oppressed

because she or he is a member of that group ... not because he or she individually deserves to be oppressed. (31–2)

Another important strength of standpoint theory is in its practitioners' recognition of "multiplicity of standpoints." Wood explains, for example, that "one could have a lesbian standpoint, a feminist standpoint, and Black standpoint, and in particular circumstances one standpoint assumes greater prominence than others" (63). She notes that the "recognition of multiple standpoints that an individual may occupy has been critical in defending standpoints against charges of essentialism. Recognising multiple standpoints allows theorists to assert they do not group all women together and ignore differences among them" (63–4). Daiva K. Stasiulis, in her article "Feminist Intersectional Theorizing" – itself a possible response to Wood's concern that "we have not developed useful means of studying, theorizing, and even describing the dynamism of the interlocking standpoints" (63), despite preceding Wood's article by several years – goes further, writing, "One shared problem among intersectional frameworks that prioritize race or culture is the tendency towards essentialism" (379). She argues that "[a]ntiessentializing feminist efforts to theorize the political consequences of national, religious, and ethnocultural diversity require the development of more appropriate conceptual tools" (379). She identifies "'[r]elationality', 'positionality', and relational positionality'" (379) as "concepts developed by antiracist and postcolonial feminists to deal analytically with the fluidity of individual and group identities at the crossroads of different systems of power and domination" (379).

"Indigenous Standpoint Theory," Dennis Foley writes, "has followed on from Feminist literature" ("Indigenous Standpoint Theory: An Acceptable Academic Research Process," 30) and may be said to address many of the same issues noted above, but with a

focus on Indigenous perspectives. It “is a process and ontology, an epistemological approach to learning within research applications that enables the Indigenous person to maintain/regain or learn their own epistemological standpoint that has been lost due to colonisation and the adoption of ethnocentric Western forms of approaches to knowledge” (29). He credits Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s work in *Decolonizing Methodologies* as providing a foundation for the development of Indigenous standpoint theory. Smith writes, “Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and indigenous practices. The mix reflects the training of indigenous researchers in the academy, and the parameters and common sense understandings of research which govern how indigenous communities and researchers define their activities” (143). Foley says that “Indigenous standpoint in the Australia situation is a process in Indigenous research by the Indigenous for the Indigenous that has ontology, a pedagogical application and an epistemological understanding. It is more than just theory or another standpoint; it is a process, a process to facilitate the maintenance of Indigenous knowledge” (“Indigenous Standpoint Theory: An Acceptable Academic Research Process,” 30). The focus, we see, returns once again to Indigenous knowledge.

In *Disciplining the Savages: Savaging the Disciplines*, Torres Strait Islander scholar Martin Nakata tackles the sometimes-confusing intersections of academia and the Indigenous experience and suggests Indigenous Standpoint Theory is a way to move past these difficulties. In an earlier article, Nakata seems to concur with Smith’s and Foley’s thinking, and challenges his Indigenous colleagues: “For any thinking, self-respecting Indigenous scholar or student, opposition and contestation are serious duties” (2).

Many scholars have taken up that call, too many, in fact, to list or discuss all; however, I will make brief mention of two recent Canadian examples by prominent Indigenous scholars as they, too, make up my recent reading landscape. Mohawk philosopher Taiaiake Alfred, in *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, argues that Canada is a construction of insiders and outsiders, setting up the binary as settlers/Indians, with this colonial condition maintained by the institutions that make up Canada. He does not pull any punches, either, in his indictment of those Indigenous leaders in Canada who willingly play into that assimilating paradigm. He calls this “aboriginalism” (4) wherein individuals choose to prostrate themselves before the colonial power while pretending to be Indians and he calls out people who talk the talk but do not practice what they preach. Ojibway philosopher Dale Turner, on the other hand, argues for the integration of indigenous scholarship with the mainstream but maintenance of a strong Indigenous voice and, referencing the term Gerald Vizenor coined, writes that “I contend that a community of indigenous intellectuals – word warriors [a la Vizenor] – ought to assert and defend the integrity of indigenous rights and nationhood and protect indigenous ways of knowing within the existing legal and political practices of the dominant culture” (74) and says that “the wisdom of the elders must inform and help shape strategies word warriors use to engage European intellectual discourses” (74) while “engag[ing] European ideas both as a philosophical exercise and as a political activity. It is not enough to simply engage European thought on its own terms; indigenous intellectuals need to critically engage European ideas, methodologies and theories to show how they have marginalized, distorted, and ignored indigenous voices” (114). He calls for Indigenous intellectuals to come together to “take up,

deconstruct, and continue to resist colonialism and its effects ... protect and defend indigeneity ... [and] engage the legal and political discourses of the state in an effective manner” (96).

Nakata continues his argument with the following practical considerations of his own: “It would be misleading to over-generalise about Indigenous scholars. They are as varied a population as any other, and as varied as their experiences. In my experience and in my observations, Indigenous scholars' responses cover the gamut of intellectual responses from conservative and accepting to routinely oppositional and radical” (2). He goes on to say that his “interest is in the shape and form of this method of engagement. One Indigenous response is intellectual separatism: the full and separate development of Indigenous knowledge and control over its production” (2). But he sees another role for Indigenous scholarship and draws an important distinction:

Whilst I understand this push and the reasoning behind it, and understand it has a justified role to play, I think that there is also another role for an Indigenous scholarship ... Indigenous scholars concerned with changing and improving the conditions of Indigenous people by pursuing education to gain a better understanding of the issues deserve to feel more secure about their position in relation to the knowledges in the academy. We all need to develop strategies that will assist us to read these knowledges, as others read them, but in full cognisance of their relation to us, our history and our current position. We need to do this within an intellectual framework and we need to do this in a way that will speak to those knowledges, that will speak within the discourse, but will extend the discourse to include what has been hitherto submerged, our understanding of them and how they give expression to relations of power. (2–3)

Further, he makes an argument that might well be a response to detractors:

One task then is how to inform the Indigenous scholar of the way that knowledges work to discount, diminish, represent or misrepresent, and then to defend from the position of knowledge about knowledge. Not just to force reflection onto the practices of those who produce knowledges about us but for us to more fully understand our position in relation to knowledge and its production. It is also about how to inform the scholar

about positive aspects of knowledge production that can then be redeployed to serve their own interests.

Within the academy, one of the key aspects of an Indigenous scholarship needs to be the extension of dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics. Dialogue can and should be opened up beyond the contestation of content, and of truth, which invariably forces academics either to take up an anti position or meekly succumb to the accepted position. Dialogue has to occur also at the level of theory and methodology, which helps us all to question our practice. It may then become, on the one hand, less oppositional and, on the other hand, less acquiescent and so more constructive in shaping practice in process. (3)

The key element here is in his willingness to explain what he means and why he means it.

As he says, “One of my reasons for seeking to establish an Indigenous standpoint is to depersonalise the arena, to lay grounds for open and mature discussion of ideas, to eliminate the patronisation, defensiveness and hostility that is sometimes resorted to, to level the playing field” (3). Here, Nakata does not attack; he explains:

I mention this here because I am sure I stand before anthropologists who have worked in the Torres Strait, who have extended friendship, information and assistance at one time or another to me or to other Islanders. Any inferred criticisms are not directed at people, or work that they have done, but at taken-for-granted practices which emerge in the processes through which we form knowledges about ourselves.” (3)

Like feminist standpoint theorists before him, though, Foley is careful to explain precisely how this is meant to work, starting with Indigenous standpoint theory’s similarities to Western modes of thinking: “In Western discourse, theory requires a philosophical stance that informs the methodology, which in turn provides a context for the process that grounds its own logic and criteria” (“Indigenous Standpoint Theory: An Acceptable Academic Research Process,” 29). He further writes that, “[s]omewhat similar to Western discourse, Indigenous Standpoint Theory also has a philosophical basis. It is in the philosophy of the writer’s ancestors, which informs the methodology in a science that is possibly tens of thousands of years old (29). He cites the important work

of Lester Irabinna-Rigney in coining the “Indigenist Approach,” which follows “three fundamental and interrelated principles that formulate a research strategy rather than a research method: 1. Resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist research, 2. Political integrity in Indigenist research, and 3. Privileging Indigenous voices in Indigenist research” (31). This last point is the foundation upon which I build my argument that this dissertation should privilege the voices of those informants I interviewed. Thus, rather than relegate the interviews to an appendix, the interviews inform each chapter to varying degrees, as appropriate (I acknowledge that it would be unwieldy to argue that the dissertation should consist of the interview transcripts alone, thus I take this mediated approach). Further, Foley argues that it is the “epistemological stance of Indigenous Australian standpoint, the philosophy of the Physical, the Human, and the Sacred world” (31) – or Indigenous knowledge – together with Irabinna Rigney’s Indigenist strategy approach that allows one to arrive at the Indigenous Standpoint Theory model he presents.

Foley says his model “is flexible and applicable for numerous Indigenous if not all-Indigenous nations. It must be emancipatory and not a blanket clone of existing discourses” (33). But it is very prescriptive, with these four criteria forming the basis for Indigenous Standpoint Theory, and my choice to employ it as I have and will further describe:

- The practitioner must be Indigenous. Academic supervision in the first instance should be from suitably qualified Indigenous academics. As they are limited in most disciplines and already overworked, non-indigenous supervision must be from suitably qualified staff that is well versed in the social sciences.
- The practitioner must also be well versed in social theory, critical sociology, post-structuralism and post-modernism to name a few. Not so that the indigenous researcher may reproduce them, but rather to be

acutely aware of the limitations of these discourses to ensure that Indigenous research is not tormented or classified in the physical and metaphysical distortions of these western approaches.

- The Indigenous research must be for the benefit of the researchers' community or the wider Indigenous community and/or Indigenous research community. The Indigenous epistemological approaches in an Indigenous standpoint enable knowledge to be recorded for the community, not the Academy. The participants are the owners of the knowledge, *not* the researcher.
- Whenever possible the traditional language should be the first form of recording. English interpretation is the second genre of recoding. (33–4)

2.4 My Case for Employing Indigenous Methods

In Canada, we can look to the principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) developed by First Nations Information Governance Committee and the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey as a similarly prescriptive approach to First Nations-approved research; however, these are principles meant to guide research, rather than an outright methodological framework. They seek to “enable self-determination over all research concerning First Nations. It offers a way for First Nations to make decisions regarding what research will be done, for what purpose information or data will be used, where the information will be physically stored and who will have access” (First Nations Centre, 1). The introduction to the guide prepared by the now defunct First Nations Centre at the National Aboriginal Health Organization describes itself and OCAP as follows:

This guide ... provides some useful models in the form of policies, protocols, or strategies that reflect OCAP and have been adopted by First Nations to regulate all research activities that affect their people and communities. It also outlines key issues and concepts of OCAP, as well as existing barriers and challenges towards its implementation. OCAP offers a First Nations approach to research, data and information management. It is a way to say “yes” to beneficial research and “no” to research that may result in harm. It is a way to improve research relevance.

In a section titled “What Lies Ahead for OCAP?” the authors position OCAP definitively and unambiguously:

Researchers and governments today are increasingly recognizing that if they want to do research involving First Nations, they have to respect OCAP. OCAP is here to stay. The term OCAP is now heard not only in First Nations meetings but also in classrooms, at conferences and within federal, provincial and territorial government offices. Expectations of First Nations are changing quickly and university researchers are updating their ways of doing business. A growing number of academic research centers are beginning to recognize and acknowledge OCAP.

In fact, Canada’s Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics acknowledges the importance of OCAP. In its *Draft 2nd Edition of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*, the authors write: “Many First Nations communities across Canada have adopted an ethics code identified by the principles of ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP), which asserts ownership, control, access and possession of research processes affecting them” (Pre.ethics.gc.ca). The *Statement* more subtly, though, alludes to the difficulty in embracing OCAP across the board and applying it pan-Aboriginally. Following a lengthy paragraph describing the importance of OCAP to First Nations, the *Statement* says the following specific to Inuit: “Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, which represents four Inuit regions, has published a guide for negotiating research relationships with Inuit communities” (99). It does not reproduce it or parse out any details. And for Métis, the *Statement* hedges even more:

Métis communities, women’s groups and urban organizations aspire to assume a larger role in research affecting their members, but development of these research protocols is at an earlier stage. Without a land base or official recognition of service entitlements, these sectors of the Aboriginal community generally are limited to project-based funding for research and similarly limited opportunities to develop policy on research. (Pre.ethics.gc.ca)

Having served as the director of the Métis Centre at the National Aboriginal Health Organization I can say from personal experience the difficulty in articulating the needs of the various Métis communities acknowledged to varying degrees by various bodies. During my time there, I directed three community-based research projects that sought to test the assumptions made by researchers that OCAP was appropriate for Métis. One project, shortly after I departed for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, was tapped by the Interagency Panel as a case study for just the sort of opportunity to develop policy and, ultimately, Métis-specific guidelines for research.

It is appropriate at this point that this discussion has led us to Métis issues; although, to be fair to Widdowson and Howard, they, too, end their book with reference to Métis, writing:

Because they have been historically excluded from the financial benefits of Aboriginal Industry programs, one of the most promising possibilities for the emergence of a principled leadership is with the Métis. Métis people in Canada, because they have always had more contact with the mainstream, are less tribal in their outlook than more culturally isolated aboriginals. It is a Métis scholar, Ron Bourgeault, who has made the most significant contribution to date to understanding the interaction between aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state. Bourgeault is one of the very few aboriginal people writing today who questions the merits of the “nationalistic” aspirations of the native leadership ... But since he is critical of “aboriginal orthodoxy,” his views are largely ignored and reach only a small audience in comparison to people like Harold Cardinal, Taiaiake Alfred, Vine Deloria Jr., Ward Churchill, Matthew Coon Come, and Phil Fontaine. (256)

The main problem with this argument is, as with many other references to Métis, the authors do not offer a cogent definition of what it means to be Métis. Its most prominent use, by the Métis National Council, the body that purports to represent registered members of the historic Métis Nation, and one of five national Aboriginal organizations along with the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Congress of

Aboriginal Peoples (purporting to represent urban, off-reserve, and non-status Aboriginal people), and the Native Women's Association of Canada with whom the Government of Canada has a duty to consult, is inherently "nationalistic." Widdowson and Howard offer a naïve and narrow understanding of Métis identity, history, culture, and interests, saying, "The potential for a real, as opposed to comprador, leadership, however, is only undermined by current initiatives to expand 'aboriginal identity.' In order to stifle Métis political development and draw them into atavistic preoccupations with ancestral rights, lawyers are arguing that this group too should have their historical grievances rectified" (257).

I wrote earlier about the impact my scholarly reading has had and I will now mention another recent book that made me think, in particular, about my identity. John Ralston Saul's *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada* argues that Canada is "a Métis nation, heavily influenced and shaped by aboriginal ideas: egalitarianism, a proper balance between individual and group, and a penchant for negotiation over violence" (Johnralstonsaul.com). Not surprisingly, that assertion has received plenty of attention. Noah Richler, in his review, says "Saul's yearning for Canada as a 'Métis nation' stretches credulity. It is hard, for instance, to reconcile Canada's history of residential schools and its ongoing climate of aboriginal poverty, racism, and diminished opportunity with the assertion that, a century and a half ago, marrying a native was 'marrying up.'" Richler astutely connects Saul's work with Joseph Boyden, although he doesn't make the connection I will here – that Boyden, who identifies – and is readily

identified by others, particularly his publisher – as Métis¹⁶ and whose words of praise for *A Fair Country* are featured prominently on the page featuring the book on Saul’s website, is perhaps the most prominent author to be associated with that identifier, Métis, in 2008 when he won the Giller Prize for *Through Black Spruce*. That book is not about Canada’s Métis but Boyden’s self-identification received plenty of play. Boyden’s quote on that page lends further credence to Saul’s assertion, given the prominence Boyden’s Métis identity received. It says, in part,

The jacket drawing of John Ralston Saul's *A Fair Country* is both simple and wonderfully complex. To anyone who recognizes the Anishnabek world view of Turtle Island, the illustration is a perfect summation of Saul's thesis. Canada is, indeed, a Métis nation. Saul's carefully constructed and illuminating argument offers us a new way of viewing ourselves, an argument with roots that stretch back centuries before Confederation. Our ties to the aboriginal, Saul argues, are far stronger than our ties to the European. Clearly, this makes some more than a touch uncomfortable, even angry, which will certainly lead to good debate. And isn't that the point of a great book? (Johnralstonsaul.com)

I wonder if Widdowson and Howard sought a similarly layered endorsement. Their book made people angry, too, but not as many people seem inclined to call it a great book. I’m not sure Boyden would defend those last two sentences were we to apply them to *Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry*. What’s more troubling, though, is Boyden’s reiteration of Saul’s notion of “Métis nation.” Both are loaded words, and using them as Saul does – with Métis essentially a synonym for mixed-race or bi-cultural identity – is problematic.

As a person of mixed heritage raised in an urban, multi-cultural setting, without a tangible connection to the cultural heritage of my First Nations forebears, and as someone

¹⁶ This section was written long before the late 2016/early 2017 controversy over Joseph Boyden’s identity erupted over social media and played out in the national press. It is interesting to look back at how readily he and others used Métis as an identifier.

who has focused much of his academic and professional work on Métis and so-called mixed-blood issues, I take any opportunity offered to highlight the particular challenges faced by these often over-looked and misunderstood segments of the Aboriginal population: Métis, mixed, and urban.

I know many individuals working with Aboriginal issues who, like myself, have been asked, “So, are you Native/Aboriginal/Indigenous?” First off, one need not be Indigenous to work with Indigenous people and communities. Even Widdowson and Howard point that out (x). Sometimes it helps, certainly. Other times, it is irrelevant. Sometimes, perhaps, it is more difficult for the individual. I have been told, and can share anecdotally, stories of people who struggled in a given situation. Cree does not equal Mohawk,¹⁷ after all, as I learned from the Elder I quoted at the beginning of this paper. Sometimes Cree does not equal Cree, I have been told. And the flip side of this is the fact that often Aboriginal workers are expected to be the de facto – or worse, the official – Aboriginal *expert* on staff. Even if one is supremely confident in one’s own identity as James Bay Cree, Labrador Inuk, Red River Métis, or other, perhaps hybrid, identity, one may well find oneself as an outsider in another Cree, Inuit, or Métis community.

So, the question “Are you Indigenous?” is not as clear cut as it seems to some – perhaps many – who ask that question. Should they ask “Are you First Nations, Inuk, or Métis?” That might be a more enlightened question today in the 21st century but it is still a difficult question for many – assuming one even wishes to answer what may well be a personal question posed by a complete stranger or passing acquaintance. While I sometimes find myself impressed with the level of enlightenment post-Royal

¹⁷ Neither of these identifiers are meant to refer specifically to that Elder or to me as neither of us are Mohawk.

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, acknowledging that Indigenous/Aboriginal refers to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis falls far short of having a truly sophisticated understanding of the diversity across and within. Add to that notions of mixed identities, whether within First Nations, or Inuit, or Métis, or across two or more of those three. Throw in some non-Aboriginal heritage and what do you have? Well, according to many people, including Saul, that would be Métis. It is not, though – at least, not necessarily.

When I tell people the kind of work I do, I am often asked “So, are you Indigenous/Aboriginal?” I usually give a very deliberate answer, if I feel the inquisitor is genuinely interested. I say that I am a person of mixed heritage. I happen to think that is one of many “typically” Canadian identities. We are all from somewhere or, more often, quite a few somewheres. Sometimes, a binary yes or no is required to get out of the inquisition. But I feel it is more appropriate for me, personally, to give the thoughtful, deliberate answer, especially if it elicits a genuine follow up. Often, though, I get a confused “So, are you or aren’t you?” but more often I get an “Oh, you’re Métis.” Now, I could default to the binary “no” at this point but I figure if someone has invested the oxygen in making that statement they should get the same follow up I would give to someone who asked a genuine “So what does that mean?”

That follow up consists of a brief tour of mixed heritage nomenclature and suggested reading, usually beginning with the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Volume 4, section 5.1: *The Other Aboriginal Peoples* and section 5.3: *The Other Métis*. While I recommend the entire *Report*, I highlight these sections to underscore an important point about community and inclusion. If Métis “means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other

Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation” (Métis National Council) and this Métis population forms “a small and too often overlooked part of the larger Aboriginal minority” (Canada) then persons of other mixed heritage constitute a minority within a minority within a minority (Collectionscanada.gc.ca).

It is that under-explored identity I wish to highlight here. Am I capable of an *Indigenous way of knowing*, as some of the authors I have highlighted here have argued for, simply because I have some fraction of Indigenous heritage? Can these ways of knowing be learned, as authors above have argued, and if so can it be better learned by someone with a connection to Indigeneity, however tenuous? Am I simply attempting it or, worse, approximating it, as Alfred accuses aboriginalists of doing? Would I even qualify as one of Alfred’s aboriginalists or am I simply white?

Like Garrouette, I am mixed, although I am not a registered member of any nation or purportedly representative organization. I do not claim the Huron-Wendat community of Wendake as my own and do not expect them to claim me (although I’d be honoured if they thought of me as a positive member of the diaspora and/or a relation who tries to do good work). And despite the many arguments by the proponents of Indigenous standpoint theory, one must still be able to define “indigenous” and define/defend oneself as Indigenous to employ it. As yet, there are no identity police should one choose, for whatever reason, to move from mixed to First Nation in my case, or to Métis. But it would seem that move is necessary to ascribe to Indigenous standpoint theory, and calls that its practitioners be Indigenous. Otherwise, one plays the role of “ally” who “acknowledges the limits of her or his knowledge, but doesn’t cower beneath those limits or use them as a crutch” (45) as Sam McKegney writes in *Magic Weapons*.

McKegney is a most recent example in a long line of non-Aboriginal literary scholars, with Helen Hoy's *How Should I Read These? Native Women Writers in Canada* as a seminal work, who occupy themselves with the question of location and identity as insider or outsider. As Deena Rymhs writes,

Within and outside of literature, indigenous communities are repositioning themselves under sovereign political identities and conceptions of governance. This repositioning has radical implications politically as well as academically. In the latter instance, critics are proposing new ways of approaching Aboriginal writing with readings that track the influence of indigenous intellectual traditions on indigenous writers and the place of the cultural knowledge in their writing. These new methodologies prompt a renewal and self-reflexiveness in literary criticism that are not always well received by its practitioners. (108)

But for all the strides within literary criticism, there are still pitfalls and avoidances, as Labrador Métis scholar Kristina Fagan points out:

While it is easy to understand general concepts of colonialism, it is much more difficult and time consuming to learn about the specific traditions, languages, histories, and political priorities of particular First Nations. Moreover, while it is easy for non-Natives to decry Native dispossession, it may be less easy to support Native people's specific claims to self-determination, claims that have material consequences. (15)

This presents one of those “turn away” moments McKegney identifies. In tackling Residential School writings by Aboriginal authors, McKegney asks two key questions – *why* and *how*. The *how* follows from the previous discussion of methodologies: “[H]ow do we develop and articulate a mode of critical inquiry that is capable of understanding the complexity of residential schooling’s historical effects but does not lapse into determinism and thereby fail to recognize the ongoing agency of Aboriginal writers and the potential for positive change? (32) He also asks, “How can the survival narrative be approached most knowledgeably, sensitively, and effectively by the techniques of modern

literary criticism?” (35) and “what are the responsibilities of the critic of Indigenous survival narratives in relation to authors, texts, and communities?” (33).

McKegney addresses his outsider status immediately, saying

In reaction to the violence done to Aboriginal texts by decades of literary criticism dominated by non-Native academics wielding analytical strategies developed outside Native communities and largely beyond the surrounding shores of the continent, much recent criticism of Aboriginal texts has been intensely self-reflexive about the (often privileged) position of the critic, whether non-Native or otherwise. Declaration of ties to particular Native communities or, even more importantly, confession of a lack of community ties and non-Native status have become near obligatory elements of contemporary criticism...and rightly so, given the general desire of such criticism to intervene in a destabilize unequal power relations and the basic truth that non-Native members of the academy enjoy positions of privilege, authority, and power. (36)

He then highlights what he calls the most popular forms of “strategies for ethical disengagement” by non-Native scholars, akin to Alcoff’s “move over”: “Retreat into Silence”; “Focus Inward: Intense self-reflexivity”; “Deal in the Purviews of Non-Native Critics”; and “Present Only Tentative, Qualified, and Provisional Critical Statements” (39–40). He then presents “*Alternative Strategies for Ethical Engagement*,” because he has obviously not chosen silence. What follows is surprisingly similar to the calls by Indigenous standpoint theory proponents but even more so to those Indigenous methodology proponents, like Garroette, who keep a space open for their (worthy) non-Indigenous colleagues. McKegney calls for “all scholars of Native literatures [to] facilitate the development of young Native scholars through involvement in graduate courses, symposia, conferences, edited collections, and journal special issues, thereby contributing to conditions of possibility for the inevitable and necessary predominance of natives in the critical field” (41). His “role as a non-Native ally is to participate through analysis, contextualization, and elucidation in the political, social, and creative objectives

of the texts with which [he] engage[s]. This means privileging Native voice, in terms of authorial and critical perspectives, while respecting the integrity of native voice by engaging with, analyzing, and perchance critiquing those perspectives” (45). And, lastly, his “allied critical stance to survival narratives holds as the furthest horizon of its utility the objectives of economically, socially, and culturally flourishing Indigenous communities and, ultimately, of political self-determination” (45–6).

His “ally” position, while now common, is well articulated and useful, not just for definitively non-Aboriginal scholars like himself but also for one such as me, who may feel ambiguously located or have that ambiguity ascribed to oneself for whatever reason. Ultimately, the definitively non-Aboriginal identity is the simplest box to check, however, that action for someone like me is disengagement, as McKegney argues. While the question of who is and who is not definitively Indigenous in Radical Indigenism, Indigenous research, and Indigenous standpoint theory is a definite grey area, insofar as the authors featured here have not addressed that question, it makes sense to take Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Dale Turner’s advice and learn it all and then mix things up. Smith says, “Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and indigenous practices. The mix reflects the training of indigenous researchers in the academy” (142-43). And Turner’s call to Indigenous intellectuals “to critically engage European ideas, methodologies and theories to show how they have marginalized, distorted, and ignored indigenous voices” (114) while ensuring that “the wisdom of the elders must inform and help shape [the] strategies word warriors use” may be the best medicine for that grey complexion. Finally, I am mindful of Paulette Regan’s words on decolonizing practice, as well: “Decolonization is not “integration” or the token inclusion

of Indigenous ceremony. Rather, it involves a paradigm shift from a culture of denial to the making of space for Indigenous political philosophies and knowledge systems as they resurge, thereby shifting cultural perceptions and power relations in real ways” (189).

2.5 The Research Project

I planned to present a critical engagement with artwork produced by artists participating in this dialogue – and other relevant artwork – alongside the perspectives of artists gathered through twenty select in-depth artist interviews, and specifically several interviews with artists and curators who were/are involved in collection and/or exhibition-like activities, past and present, which address the subject of reconciliation or related subjects. “Dialogue” is the key concept here; mine is but one voice discussing both concepts of reconciliation and if/how specific works of art engage with those concepts.

As Allan J. Ryan notes in his influential 1999 work, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*, the select group of artists he references in his introduction “constitute[s] a loose alliance of socially active, politically aware, and professionally trained individuals ... who have ... exhibited with one another, written about one another, lectured on one another, curated exhibitions for one another, and to varying degrees influenced one another” (xi). This was certainly the case with the recent art and commemoration initiatives that developed out of the IRSSA Commemoration fund and these have been explored in a similar fashion, with analysis of how networks and/or communities of artists engage and interact with each other within the particular policy framework presented by the IRSSA and TRC – or in resistance to it. As such, it

followed that contemporary artists could and should discuss the work of those artists they knew – alive or deceased, which many respondents did.

In order for me to discuss art that engages in reconciliation, I first decided that artists had to inform the process. They must ascribe meaning to “truth-telling,” “reconciliation,” “commemoration,” healing, and historical contexts. This is in keeping with both accepted Indigenous research methodologies, ethical guidelines for doing research with Aboriginal people in Canada, and the *Survivor-driven* approach of both the IRSSA and TRC.

While there are examples of Aboriginal artist perspectives on some of these topics, in 2008, when I began this work, no study existed in this particular context because the IRSSA, TRC, and Commemoration fund were unique and historic firsts, with the IRSSA being approved September 19, 2007; the TRC formally launched June 1, 2008 (and reconstituted one year later after the resignations of the original Chair and two commissioners, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 4); and the Commemoration fund, which was awaiting policy and implementation decisions by the TRC Chair and commissioners at the time of the study’s beginning, which eventually rolled out between 2009 and 2010.

The convergence of truth-telling, reconciliation efforts, and commemoration also presented a unique opportunity to test and build critically upon the notion that Aboriginal individuals have a responsibility to their Aboriginal community(ies) or the Aboriginal community. I highlight Jace Weaver’s theory of “communitism” (a combination of *community* and *activism*) as a way into this aspect of the study because his is a theory to which I have long ascribed and engaged in past scholarly work; it also reflects my

positioning both scholastically and professionally in that I have chosen to dedicate my efforts to Aboriginal issues and work that serves Aboriginal communities.

Communitism is a theory proclaiming the artist's "proactive commitment to native Community" (xiii). There are many related theories about the importance of community to Aboriginal artists and their obligations to their community. For example, Jeannette Armstrong has written and spoken at length about *En'owkin*: "[T]his idea of community, as understood by my ancestors, encompassed a holistic view of interconnectedness that demands our responsibility to everything we are connected to" (ecoliteracy.org). Interestingly, En'owkin is the name given to the Indigenous cultural, educational, and creative arts institution Armstrong has long been affiliated with in Penticton, BC, which defines the concept as an "Okanagan conceptual metaphor which describes a process of clarification, conflict resolution and group commitment. We focus on coming to the best solutions possible, through respectful dialogue [sic] literally through consensus" (Enowkin Centre). And France Trépanier and Chris Creighton-Kelly, in their 2001 report to the Canada Council for the Arts, *Understanding Aboriginal Arts in Canada Today: A Knowledge and Literature Review*, wrote that

[f]or some Aboriginal artists, implicating their community is an essential part of their work. Even the most professional of these artists will insist that they are not just making art, but involving their community in that process. In this way, art that is made in collaboration with a community can be part of a healing process that actually strengthens that community. This aspect of Aboriginal art making is often misunderstood and ignored by funding agencies and other mainstream organizations. (61)

As reconciliation is, arguably, about the larger Canadian community or communities within Canada, Weaver's (162) and Armstrong's (ecoliteracy.org) notions of an Aboriginal person's obligation to serve his/her community's needs does not account

for this healing or breach-repairing paradigm, per se, unless one acknowledges that a healthy community – that is, the artist’s community – requires healthy contexts and relations. Thus, reconciliation is an effort that may be essential to communitism and to another of Armstrong’s concepts, *people without hearts*,¹⁸ a concept that means “people who have lost the capacity to experience the deep generational bond to other humans and to their surroundings. It refers to collective disharmony and alienation from land. It refers to those whose emotion is narrowly focused on their individual sense of well-being without regard to the well-being of others in the collective” (newint.org). While it seems as if she is speaking of the disharmony within Aboriginal communities that has resulted from the disruptions of residential schools, she is, in fact, relating an anecdote involving her father’s use of the term to characterize the neighbouring non-Aboriginal Penticton community of her childhood. She uses the Okanagan term deliberately to envelope her neighbours in her worldview and may, in this sense, be said to be characterizing “the collective” as the broader Canadian community. As both an artist and scholar, she should be asked, in our present context, if that applies; this study proposed to do just that with numerous informants.

The study builds on the sizable body of literature in Canada on Aboriginal art and artists in dealing with issues of identity, truth-telling, resistance, and reclamation or re-enculturation, but places itself within a reconciliation context – one that acknowledges Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal Canadian relations pre-IRSSA and post-IRSSA. The last few decades have seen a considerable amount of scholarship, both theoretical and practical, focused on concepts of reconciliation between aggrieved parties within nation states, most notably the vast but still recent body of literature spawned by the South African

¹⁸ Armstrong translates this from the original Okanagan, which is not reproduced in print.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission experience. Within, there is a large body of literature internationally concerning the role of art and artists in so-called truth and reconciliation processes, which often come in the form of formal commissions, as is the case with Canada and its TRC. There is a similarly expansive body of literature concerning the role of art and artists in commemoration, another core component of the IRSSA and one that is to be administered by the TRC. And there is a considerable body of literature – and a growing body of literature within Canada and Aboriginal North America – concerning the role of art in healing, whether “art in therapy” or “art as therapy” or other concept(s) of the therapeutic nature of art. The notion of art as witness has considerable importance here and presents a fascinating opportunity to explore art as witness through a reconciliation lens, which this dissertation attempts to do in the form of my own witness narrative. These are the bodies of literature that I explored in the development of the interview guide itself and are, as such, presented here in Chapter 5. After embarking upon the interviews I returned to these bodies of literature and read further, oftentimes guided by feedback elicited from the interviews. That re- and/or further engagement plays out throughout the latter chapters as appropriate. I will also note that there has been an explosion of literature on the Canadian and TRC-specific contexts since 2008, ever expanding as my work rolled out. I was – and continue to be – directly involved in some of that work, as this dissertation shows. Given how much is out there, it should go without saying that my focus is just that – focused, so as to not be a futile attempt to capture every action or conversation. As such, I present those events and conversations that crossed my path as one story of engagement with healing and

reconciliation and the arts. And, further, there is limited engagement with work that was produced post-2014, when my writing began in earnest.

There were a few challenges I faced that were fortuitous in that they allowed the study to transcend a mere *space-creating* effort. Yes, that element is essential but most importantly the study addresses these challenges and speaks critically to the issues around them.

The distinctions noted above acknowledge that concept(s) of reconciliation may well have been at play prior to the IRSSA and, perhaps, prior to widespread acknowledgment of the history of residential schools and its legacy in either the Aboriginal community or that of mainstream Canada. Indeed, I noted that residential schools may not even be an element of some reconciliatory efforts, as many artists engage the larger colonial context and history and, of course pre-contact history.

I also acknowledge that concept(s) of “reconciliation” may or may not be influenced and/or impacted by the changed landscape that is the introduction of a formal Truth and Reconciliation Commission, one that is necessarily specific to residential schools and is, arguably, exclusive insofar as the settlement agreement adheres to an approved list of schools and, therefore, an approved “membership” in the experience.

This changed or changing landscape has influenced the reconciliation conversation. I, therefore, inquired as to whether one’s artistic engagement with reconciliation pre-IRSSA might be markedly different than post-IRSSA engagement, which might elicit new themes, or whether the IRSSA itself might be subject to artistic interpretation, particularly given the exclusive, legal nature of the *Agreement* and the emotional and social impacts of its components.

Further, how does one address the concept of “community” when the intent is to interview a diverse and potentially disparate group of individuals who self-identify as *Aboriginal* and *artist*? Which is the community – Aboriginal or artist? There are problems with the first because of the diversity across and within First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. There are problems with the latter because a notion of *artist community*, while prevalent in the arts and related scholarship, is not addressed in generally-accepted research guidelines.¹⁹ Further, the concept of an artist’s responsibility to the community – to “give back” – refers specifically to that individual’s Aboriginal community.

The study presented an opportunity to explore notions of community from Aboriginal artist perspectives and the intersections and/or barriers between one’s identity as First Nation, Inuk, Métis, or other and one’s identity as artist. This exploration also presented an opportunity to comment on the applicability and/or shortcomings of existing, accepted ethical guidelines.

The study also presented a significant opportunity for me to both explore the concept of responsibility – to “give back” – and literally give back to the community through the work. These two opportunities, both focused on notions of community and responsibility, combined with the timeliness of the reconciliation discourse within the TRC context, presented a historic opportunity to explore artist perspectives on a range of issues, with the present context as a unique way in. With these foundations, the study allowed me, as researcher, to position myself within the ethics and “communitism” discourses, both to allow me to analyze them critically and also to “give back” to the “community.” The latter informs the methodology explicitly. Further, as a person of

¹⁹ See Chapter 3: Methodology for a more in-depth discussion of ethics and guidelines, particularly the Tri-Council Policy Statement.

Aboriginal heritage, I represent one hypothetical audience for art by Aboriginal artist(s), art intended to speak to the Aboriginal community.

Although a significant portion of the theory and literature I draw from arises from Native American scholars and some international contexts, particularly from Australia and Aotearoa (New Zealand), and this is by necessity part of the foundational discussion, the focus of this study is Canadian art and artists in Canadian contexts. It was not possible to cover all angles in this study as the subject areas it touches upon are each expansive and intersect in myriad ways with other expansive areas. Thus I have made some assumptions and developed working premises. To that end, I worked to build the necessary foundation(s) for the development of the tools I employed within the individual interviews I undertook and those foundations have then been explored critically based on my analysis of the data collected. While I made some room for unexpected developments, I did constrain my engagement with some topics to those that most benefited the study. There is always room for further research – at a later date – and I will be engaged in this area for years to come.

Following this introductory chapter, this dissertation is broken into nine additional sections of varying lengths. “Chapter 3: Methodology” lays out my approach to this study and its focus on my interaction with various artists – and the ensuing interviews – and bodies of work I encountered, either in my scholarly pursuits, professional life, and/or through the relationships I developed and engaged in for this work. “Chapter 4: Residential Schools, Healing, and Reconciliation” has four subsections covering a brief overview of Residential Schools history using a long quote from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 2012 publication, *They Came for the Children*, to tell the

broad strokes of the history of Indian Residential Schools and the need for healing and reconciliation²⁰; describes the development of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, to provide the context for the following sections, which largely explore the perspectives of artists as the latter part of this history unfolds; and introduces the concept of the role of art and artist within. “Chapter 5: Literature Review” covers four thematic areas I surveyed early in the research phase of the project, to prepare for and develop the tools used in the interviews I would go on to conduct. Those interviews are the primary focus in the following lengthy section, “Chapter 6: The Interviews – Emerging Themes,” that presents nineteen subsections, organized thematically (but which, in reality and by necessity, overlap and loop back on one another). “Chapter 7: Case Study 1: Aboriginal Writers and Reconciliation” is the first of four “case studies” I focused on after conducting the interviews and the related field component of my research. This section is, in many ways, an homage to my own earlier artistic and scholarly pursuits in creative writing and literary studies. In it, I briefly trace the history of Residential Schools in literature to highlight the silences that once existed – and perhaps still do – and consider the ethical practices employed by some contemporary writers and scholars. “Chapter 8: Case Study 2: Exhibiting the Legacies – *Where Are The Children?* and *'We were so far away...'*” examines two seminal historical exhibitions of photographic and, to a lesser degree, textual material that I have had the opportunity to engage with professionally in a variety of different capacities. The curators of these respective exhibitions, Jeff Thomas and Heather Igloliorte, have their own stories of their experiences featured prominently

²⁰ As this study is not meant to be an exhaustive study of that history per se this section is deliberately short; a subsequent chapter covers similar ground using, in that case, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s 2008 words of apology.

through in-depth interviews and published sources. “Chapter 9: Case Study 3: *Mush Hole Remembered*” tells the unique (in that it happened to/with me) and complicated story of my encounter with this aforementioned solo exhibition of works by R. G. Miller, curated by Neal B. Keating, and my conversations with them about that encounter and subsequent collaboration. Finally, “Chapter 10: Case Study 4: *Walking with Our Sisters* at Shingwauk” is my account as host of this memorial exhibition at Algoma University, in the building once known as Shingwauk Hall, the former Indian Residential School of that name. A final concluding chapter wraps up my witness narrative.

3 Chapter: Methodology

The methodology for this study was informed by extensive reading in the areas of Indigenous Research, Ethics, and Methodologies.

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a Maori scholar, and Vine Deloria Jr., a Native American scholar, have argued, Indigenous peoples have experienced hundreds of years of questionable research practices and motives. They both argue, essentially, that researchers – Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal – must do research in a good way, which means incorporating culturally appropriate protocols and ethics.

There is, as one might well expect, an emphasis on Indigenous Knowledge (IK). Louise Grenier describes IK as referring to “the unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around the specific conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular geographic area ... The development of IK systems, covering all aspects of life, including management of the natural environment, has been a matter of survival to the peoples who generated these systems” (1). She goes on to say that Indigenous Knowledge is always changing: “IK systems are also dynamic: new knowledge is continuously added. Such systems do innovate from within and will also internalize, use, and adapt external knowledge to suit the local condition” (1). Most importantly for this study, she says “indigenous forms of communication and organization are vital to local-level decision-making processes and the preservation, development, and spread of IK” (1).

Castellano, in “Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge,” describes three overlapping sources of Aboriginal knowledge: traditions, empirical knowledge, and revelations (23). She defines empirical knowledge as coming from sustained careful

observation of one's environment. This knowledge may be based on the observations of many people over great lengths of time. She separates spiritual knowledge (dreams, visions, intuitions, etc.) as "revealed" (24) rather than empirical, but allows that some see it as empirical. She describes the common characteristics of IK: personal, oral, experiential, holistic, and conveyed in narrative or metaphorical knowledge (25–31).

Smith, a leader in the indigenous research movement, presents a very useful concept for this study: "community of interest" (127). A community of interest does not necessarily inhabit the same geographic space in which local community research takes place. Smith identifies Maori women as one example of a community of interest. The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* defines the urban Aboriginal population, essentially, as a community of interest²¹ and suggests they should have their own governing structure (Collectionscanada.gc.ca). And, perhaps most importantly Canada's *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* explicitly states, in *Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples of Canada*, that community

describes a collectivity with shared identity or interests, that has the capacity to act or express itself as a collective. In this Policy, a community may include members from multiple cultural groups. A community may be territorial, organizational or a community of interest... "Communities of interest" may be formed by individuals or organizations who come together for a common purpose or undertaking, such as a commitment to conserving a First Nations language. Communities of interest are informal communities whose boundaries and leadership may be fluid and less well-defined. They may exist temporarily or over the long term, within or outside of territorial or organizational communities. (Pre.ethics.gc.ca)

²¹ See Volume 4 Perspectives and Realities: Chapter 7 - Urban Perspectives.

For my study, this would apply to the artist community; not unlike other Aboriginal communities the artist community should be treated with respect in any future research projects and relationships.

I spent considerable time and effort locating myself within the research and this is in keeping with the cultural and ethical expectations raised by proponents of indigenous research. This goes beyond seeking an exit for what Smith characterizes as one of the key challenges facing the indigenous researcher – that being indigenous and a researcher is potentially contradictory to the community, given that research “is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (1).

I found the following comment on positionality from Leroy Little Bear quite instructive, regarding indigenous methods relying on learning by doing because experiential learning is valued most highly:

When jagged worldviews collide, objectivity is an illusion. The only things I know for sure are the things I experience, see, feel, and so on. The rest of it is presumption and persuasion. I presume that you know what I know, what I see, what I feel. Because of this subjectivity, people discuss and persuade. This is why people talk so much attempting to explain to each other what they know. That is why we engage in conversation, so I can share my experiences with you and make you understand what I am feeling. When you respond, you are doing the same thing with me. (85)

Cora Weber-Pillwax stresses that in establishing a discourse on “Indigenous Research Methodology” the first issue is establishing who the researcher will be: “The question of who should participate in the development of an indigenous research methodology is critical since every scholar who has any connection with indigenous research topics or indigenous people will feel directly impacted” (31). She argues that indigenous researchers will want to use indigenous research methods because it is their communities being researched. As Schuyler Webster and Herbert Nabigon argue, the key is

community control: “By engaging native communities at every level of the research endeavour – from the definition of the research problem, the conceptualization of the model, the conduct of the field work, to the integration and application of the results, scholars (native and non-native alike), can contribute to a deeper understanding of the native experience” (167). Also, as Charles R. Menzies points out, what is critical is that *“research with First Nations requires a set of protocols that clearly identify the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of research partner and researcher.* Many First Nations communities have now instituted research protocols that researchers must abide by when researching in a First Nation community” (21, emphasis in original). That, however, presented a problem for my study. How, do we identify the appropriate protocols when working with a diverse community? Whose methodologies prevail? It followed that many of the recommendations would have to be adapted – hybridized – to reflect the realities of this context, an argument supported by Smith (142-43).

It is here that the struggle researchers have had with research and the urban Aboriginal community comes in handy. As Susan Lobo writes,

The physical environment, while the back drop and the grounding for much of the community activity, is not ‘the community,’ which instead finds its focus in relationship dynamics and the more abstract realm of shared knowledge that informs and shapes actions. An urban Indian community is not situated in an immutable, bounded territory as a reservation is, but rather exists within a fluidly defined region with niches of resources and boundaries that respond to needs and activities, perhaps reflecting a reality closer to that of Native homelands prior to the impositions of reservation borders. (75–76).

A Friendship Centre, or other such “Indian organization” (76) is a good example of a site in an urban centre where a diverse cross-section of cultures comes together to form a

community, where “[they] come to powerfully present Indian ‘space’ or ‘a place that is Indian’ and are intimately tied to identity” (76).

My approach is an adaptation of the following advice from Marie Battiste and James (Sa’ke’j) Youngblood Henderson:

To learn about indigenous perspectives requires a different method of research. For instance, indigenous thinkers in Canada know that to acquire an indigenous perspective on knowledge requires extended conversations with the elders of each language group. To sustain indigenous knowledge, one must be willing to take on responsibilities associated with that knowing, especially putting the knowledge into daily practice. (41)

For my study, I substituted “extended conversation” with “elders” of each “language group” for dialogue with respected, well-established artists representing various media.

With regard to ethics and generally accepted guidelines, again the Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics’ *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* is most useful, particularly as it situates itself as follows:

Aboriginal peoples have rights and interests that deserve recognition and respect by the research community. The articulation of ethics guidelines for research involving Aboriginal peoples is situated in a broader movement transforming the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society. Research has a critical role to play in creating the knowledge base for mutually respectful relationships and full participation in Canadian life, with all its responsibilities and benefits” (Pre.ethics.gc.ca).

It should be noted that there is a less-than-subtle invocation for reconciliation within this statement.

Dorothy Speak, curator and Inuit art specialist, suggests that respect must hold within the art world as well, writing that indigenous people “are insisting more and more that they be recognized and consulted as experts on their own culture” (18). This sentiment certainly seems in keeping with the above statement, but not everyone agrees.

Robyn Gillam details the controversy over the Glenbow Museum's exhibition "The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First People," (132) which exhibited many objects that were sacred in nature, some borrowed from other institutions. There was a general outcry for more ethical practices, led by the inclusion of Aboriginal voices and perspectives in the development of exhibitions.

Janet Catherine Berlo notes that some voices have called for collaborative curatorship, although others have derided that concept. Some critics of *Isumavut: The Artistic Expression of Nine Cape Dorset Women*, Berlo notes, with its obviously high level of collaboration between curators and artists and the use of artist quotations, thought the group effort, and in particular the artists' input, compromised the scholarship of curatorial practices. Berlo, in response, said there was no evidence that the artists selected the works; rather, they were contacted to discuss their works with the conversations informing the process of decision-making by the curators (26-36). And Marybelle Mitchell, editor of the *Inuit Art Quarterly*, called the "deliberate effort to let the artists present their work, a highly effective approach" (3).

What was clear was that there are areas in which ethical standards are ambiguous or ill-equipped to inform one's approach. It is also true that not everyone accepts all approaches. The skirmishes noted above within the curatorial world are a microcosm of that tension. This study, as it seeks to place itself within an indigenous research paradigm with a focus on art and artist perspectives will be certain to attract some of that tension; in fact, its design seeks to explore that tension.

3.1 Working Premises

Aboriginal artists, like all artists, create art for many different reasons. One could objectively interpret art produced by Aboriginal artists in any way one wishes. Art is public after all. But that would not be in keeping with Indigenous research and methodologies and would contribute to the colonizing potential of mainstream academic research. I hold that, for this particular study, an objective analysis of art by artists of Aboriginal descent and interpretation of its role within *reconciliation* would be unethical. As a person of First Nations heritage, and one who ascribes to the theory of communitism discussed earlier, I am obligated to respect and honour Aboriginal perspectives. Further, as Aboriginal peoples in Canada have rightly come to expect a participatory role in research involving Aboriginal people and communities, research on this topic must create space for Aboriginal artists to speak for themselves and allow them to inform the research itself.

I have operated on the hypothesis that a discussion with artists concerning the art they produce and whether or not it contributes to reconciliation within Aboriginal communities and/or between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples will naturally include the broader themes of healing and commemoration, particularly in the context of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). Recall, of course, that the TRC exists within the IRSSA, which grew out of a larger healing movement. Commemoration is a component of the IRSSA to be administered by the TRC.

3.2 Research Methods

I determined to use a dialogic process to explore the role of art and artist in reconciliation. The notion of dialogue is explored in some detail above but may also be seen as an adaptation of Mikhail Bakhtin's "dialogism," an "idea that discourse reverberates with its own history" (Gillespie 765). In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin contributes to literary theory by arguing that dialogic literature is always in communication with other works and its authors with other authors. Each work and each author are informed by and, in turn, inform other works and other authors. Although Bakhtin does not explicitly connect this theory to Indigenous thought, there are some useful parallels, particularly the non-linear, non-unidirectional nature of dialogism. It was relatively straightforward to adapt Bakhtin's dialogism in that his focus is not to show that past works and their authors influence future works and authors but that present and future work will also inform past work; essentially, everything is connected and in conversation with each other (279-294). Charles Taylor's theory of the politics of recognition (i.e. to explore the way the works and the exhibition serve to establish the dialogical relationship, which C. Taylor argues is necessary to the recognition of individual and group identities) also proved useful (36-52)²².

This adapted dialogic process took the form of a qualitative research methodology. Further, this methodology builds upon liberation theory, or participatory action research, as these present frameworks lean toward inclusivity of voice, worldview,

²² Here I note Glen Coulthard's critique of Taylor, particularly his identification of a key problem: The politics of recognition's proposed remedy for colonial injustice has to do with the subjective realm of colonial power. Here it is important to note that most recognition-based proposals - whether we're talking about the recommendations of Charles Taylor or the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples - rests on the assumption that the flourishing of indigenous peoples as distinct and self-determining agents is dependent on their being granted recognition and institutional accommodation by and within the settler-state apparatus. As sociologist Richard Day has put it, under these models, recognition is conceived of as a "gift" bestowed from a superior identity to an inferior one" (Newsocialist.org).

and culture (Freire, 8-11, 54). Participatory action research is part of a larger tradition that seeks to address inequities by asking questions about power and positioning issues.

Another problem, however, arose. How would I enter the dialogue? I have stated my reasons for being interested in the subject matter I proposed to engage and detailed my dedication to serving the needs of Aboriginal communities, particularly the efforts toward reconciliation – to honouring my four grandparents. To avoid having to work with an unwieldy, exhaustive list of artists from which I would likely struggle to choose whom to invite to participate in the study and why, as well as my own biases (toward media and individual artists), I proposed instead to proceed on the following assumptions: I will not presuppose that all Aboriginal artists are thinking about reconciliation but that some may be thinking about it and thinking about doing something about it; I did, in fact, have a short list of artists who I knew through personal relationship and/or correspondence who were pondering how they might approach the concept of art and reconciliation. I also supposed that some artists would be receptive to being approached to consider art and reconciliation, even if it was not a subject they had come to themselves. As such, I proceeded with a phased approach to address some of the issues. The first step, as discussed earlier, was to establish an interview guide based upon some key, expected themes, having read extensively on those themes and having compiled a literature review to guide my thinking as I embarked upon the interviews.

In the next phase, I proposed to conduct 20 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a variety of emerging and established artists (men, women, and two-spirited artists representing a variety of media). The conceit was a “dialogue” consisting of me, the researcher, asking the respondents some select baseline questions on the concepts of

reconciliation, truth, and healing and then asking if they would consider leading and/or participating in the development of a reconciliation-themed “exhibit.” If no, why? If yes, what would they consider? Did they position the effort within the commemoration context of the TRC or outside of it? What other artists would they consider engaging? And why? And should those individuals be a part of this dialogue? There was also a focus on artists and curators who had been or are currently engaged in organized art exhibition or collection initiatives related to one or more of the themes identified. The working hypothesis for this component is that any such initiative, particularly if it falls under the Commemoration fund of the IRSSA or is part of a TRC activity, would at the very least have the word “reconciliation” attached to it. This allowed me to engage Aboriginal artists in the design and, to a large extent, the direction of my examination of the expected key themes I identified going in.

To begin, I started with artists I knew well enough to invite to participate without requiring an introduction. The reason I invited those individuals whom I know are already thinking about art and reconciliation is to prevent the appearance of ulterior motives; my contribution to this approach was a detailed account of my research interests, as described herein; I was able to proceed with this focus because the need to introduce myself and build a relationship with the respondent had already been established; thus, the need for a respectful approach was, therefore, also established. I expected each participant at this early stage to identify the topic of reconciliation (or resistance to it) as a worthy avenue for artistic exploration and a subject whereupon artists should converge and collaborate and I expected that they would provide examples of individuals whose work and/or views should be considered, as well as past approaches

worth exploring and potential approaches worth considering. So, while this approach allowed me to test some of the assumptions I made, the agency is given to the respondents. They were not *test subjects* nor were they burdened with the request to advise a research project they may have no interest in. They were free to take the discussion in any direction with the added bonus that the discussion might lead to individual or collective action on the topic. The point was to create the space for discussion knowing there were common interests and to be open about my motives.

I fully expected that the discussion would identify individual and collective efforts (past, present, and/or potential). If another individual or collective was identified, I asked the respondent if they would be comfortable making an introduction to the person or persons identified. I would not approach anyone without this step. This was a show of respect; it meant that any subsequent prospective respondent would first be approached by someone they knew and trusted and that person would first make an introduction and introduce the topic of my study. I would only further engage that individual or collective if this introduction went well. I am happy to report that this process yielded numerous opportunities to engage artists involved in a wide variety of media and with wide ranging views on the topic of art and reconciliation. Only one potential respondent ultimately declined after careful deliberation, thanking me for my respectful approach. Other respondents took considerable time to consider my invitation to participate with one respondent requiring two face-to-face meetings to first establish a relationship before agreeing. Ultimately that interview never actually took place. Instead, after two wonderful social visits, she thanked me by email for my efforts and emailed me some of her thoughts on issues related to my research. The rest, however, were resoundingly

responsive and numerous interviews followed with only a small handful falling by the wayside due to logistics (travel and timing in particular).

All interviews had a stated purpose and were meant to remain flexible enough to allow participants to tell their own stories in their own words. The stated purpose was, of course, to elicit their perceptions of their role as Aboriginal artist and/or Aboriginal person, or the role generally of art and artist, in reconciliation. This required discussion of concepts and theories of reconciliation and facts about the IRSSA components and TRC mandate and relevant context and themes, such as healing and commemoration.

I proposed to conduct all interviews in-person and to audio-record individual interviews; full transcription would come afterward. Limited descriptive notes augment the audio record as necessary but were not intended as a primary source of data collection. The bottom line was that I was there to engage in dialogue, not note taking.

Data analysis was a continual part of the research process, with time dedicated at each data collection episode for reflection upon the interview. This allowed common themes, ideas, issues, questions, or problems, to be identified early. Finally, as this is a dialogic process for the purpose of acting ethically and giving back to the community, at the conclusion of the study the data collected in these phases was shared with the interview respondents in the hopes that it may serve their interests in actually undertaking an initiative (a reconciliation-themed exhibition) such as the one I asked them to imagine. Further, this dialogue was predicated upon the likelihood that a potential case study – an actual art and reconciliation initiative – would be revealed and so could be included in this study. To that end, three such examples are included in subsequent chapters.

Ultimately, the analysis of the interviews was meant to inform the final phase of the study, the critical interpretation of specific works of art and critical engagement with the themes that emerged (expected or new). This was to ensure that artist perspectives drove the process toward critical analysis. Thus, it will be those artists and works identified, with appropriate extrapolation, which make up the final phase of the study – the *findings* from the interviews. These findings are presented in Chapter 6. The critical interpretation of the works identified has also been presented as a dialogue, with artists quoted at length, interspersed with my voice. Finally, analysis of interviews has been used to critique Weaver’s notion of “communitism” to explore its usefulness in this new Truth and Reconciliation paradigm.

3.3 Theoretical Approach

Many of the theoretical frameworks employed are described above (and, in the case of Indigenous Standpoint Theory, in the Introduction). I highlight postcolonial theory here because it does come into play, although, in keeping with much of the theoretical and conceptual elements already discussed, postcolonial theory, like IST, is interwoven into the others and plays a secondary role. For example, Norman Denzin asks if an Aboriginal approach is just another standpoint methodology (x). That question was covered to a large degree in the Introduction chapter. As such, I will not discuss it at length but will instead contextualize both theories through the words of Linda Tuhiwai Smith, whose own *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, mixes indigenous methodologies with postcolonial and standpoint theories.

First off, rejecting the term post-colonial, Smith writes, “Naming the world as ‘post-colonial’ is, from indigenous perspectives, to name colonization as ‘finished business’” (98). According to many indigenous perspectives the term post-colonial can only mean one thing: “the colonizers have left. There is rather compelling evidence that this has not in fact occurred” (98). She also places one’s methodological decisions within standpoint language: “Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and indigenous practices. The mix reflects the training of indigenous researchers in the academy, and the parameters and common sense understandings of research which govern how indigenous communities and researchers define their activities” (143). As William Edward Oates writes, “A methodology gives a researcher a particular ‘stance’ in the research act, a particular view of both the researcher and the researched” (1).

4 Chapter: Residential Schools, Healing, and Reconciliation

Residential schools²³ refer to all government-funded, church-run “schools” where children were in residence, including industrial schools, boarding schools, student residences, hostels, billets, and even Inuit tent camps in the North. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children were all subject to the assimilatory goals of the government and the proselytizing efforts of the various church entities through schooling; however, the Government of Canada has only formally apologized for the Residential School Experience. The “Day School” experience, which affected many more Metis students, proportionally, as well as First Nations and Inuit students, has not been formally addressed.²⁴

4.1 Residential Schools History in Brief

There are numerous essential sources for both introductory and in-depth discussion and analysis of the history and legacies of residential schools, including John Milloy’s *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986*, which grew out of research conducted for perhaps the most important and integral watershed publication – which, in turn, led directly to key watershed moments in truth and healing – the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* in 1996. Later, numerous publications and other educational and public awareness initiatives from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), established in 1998, the Legacy of Hope

²³ “Indian Residential Schools” is the official term used by the government of Canada, with some variants including the addition of Inuit as a descriptor. Hereafter, I will use the broader, inclusive term “Residential Schools” to ensure that all of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples are included, except where necessary to refer to the policy and system. The term will not be capitalized when referring to one or more schools informally.

²⁴ For more information on the Métis experience, which is not covered in great detail here, I recommend *Métis History and Experience and Residential Schools in Canada* (Chartrand et al.). A short description of the unique experiences of Inuit and Métis are also featured in *Where Are the Children?* (Legacyofhope.ca).

Foundation (LHF), 2001, and organizations including the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), as well as other scholarly efforts, would further solidify the contextual and historical foundations (see also, J. R. Miller's *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools*, Agnes Grant's *No End of Grief: Indian Residential Schools in Canada*, Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri Young's *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience in Canada*). The AFN would also play a central role in advocacy around the need for apology and redress (discussed in the following section).

Most recently, Canada's Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released two publications in 2012: its *Interim Report* and *They Came for the Children*, the latter summarizing the historical facts as follows:

For over a century, generations of Aboriginal children were separated from their parents and raised in over-crowded, underfunded, and often unhealthy [government funded, church run] residential schools across Canada. They were commonly denied the right to speak their language and told their cultural beliefs were sinful. Some students did not see their parents for years. Others—the victims of scandalously high death rates—never made it back home. Even by the standards of the day, discipline often was excessive. Lack of supervision left students prey to sexual predators. To put it simply: the needs of tens of thousands of Aboriginal children were neglected routinely. Far too many children were abused far too often ... Residential schools disrupted families and communities. They prevented elders from teaching children long-valued cultural and spiritual traditions and practices. They helped kill languages. These were not side effects of a well-intentioned system: the purpose of the residential school system was to separate children from the influences of their parents and their community, so as to destroy their culture. The impact was devastating. Countless students emerged from the schools as lost souls, their lives soon to be cut short by drugs, alcohol, and violence. The last of the federally supported schools and residences, of which there were at least 150, closed in the 1990s.^[25] (1)

²⁵ In fact, the last federally-run Indian residential school, the Gordon Residential School, was closed in Saskatchewan in 1996.

The above describes a significant swath, historically and contemporarily, of the landscape occupied by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis and the many more complex, complicated, and intersecting communities therein.

4.2 The Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation Landscape

While residential schools found more and more prominence in literature and scholarship from the 1980s onward (discussed in Chapter 8), concepts of healing and reconciliation began to develop and evolve. Healing, in particular, became well defined in grassroots efforts and on through to national, government, and non-governmental initiatives (most notably in the name, mandate, and publications of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation). Needless to say, the various healing movements, as others have described them (Legacy of Hope, *Healing*), overlap and are inextricably woven through and within the experience and legacy of residential schools. In fact, one may also argue that these healing movements are some of the few positive legacies of residential schools, among the many painful and destructive legacies, which were first meaningfully illuminated at grassroots levels during the late 1970s and early 1980s when former students, or Survivors, came together for the first well-attended reunions or gatherings.

However, the issue came to then unprecedented national prominence in 1996 with the release of the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP Report)*. The commission was organized in large part as a response to the 1990 armed standoff at the Oka reserve in Quebec that came to be known as the Oka crisis but it raised much broader questions about the past and present realities of Canada's Aboriginal peoples. The authors of *RCAP* write: "This Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was born in

a time of ferment when the future of the Canadian federation was being debated passionately. It came to fruition in the troubled months following the demise of the Meech Lake Accord and the confrontation, in the summer of 1990, between Mohawks and the power of the Canadian state at Kanesatake (Oka), Quebec” (Volume 1, 11).

We must remember how surprising it was for both the commissioners and their researchers, as well as for the government and public that received the report, that Survivor accounts of their experiences dominated all aspects of the inquiry into the realities of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The negative impacts of the Residential School experience for Survivors and their descendants loomed large throughout the *RCAP Report*. In fact, RCAP received in excess of 60,000 formal complaints of abuse suffered while attending one or more schools (Fournier and Crey 49). The many shocking details led to the 1998 federal policy document entitled *Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan* (Indian and Northern Affairs).

RCAP paved the way for the creation, in March 1998, of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), a national, Aboriginal-managed, not-for-profit corporation funded by a grant of \$350 million. The AHF was given an eleven-year mandate to encourage and support community-based, Aboriginal-directed healing initiatives that would address the legacy of physical and sexual abuse suffered in the residential school system and its intergenerational impacts (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, “FAQs”). In 2005, the Government of Canada committed an additional \$40 million to the AHF for a further two-year period through March 31, 2007, enabling the AHF to extend 88 projects for 36 months. This funding augmented the initial \$350 million but did not extend the timing of the AHF mandate and no new projects were funded. These additional funds were

intended to carry the AHF and its funded projects through to the eventual implementation of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement.

During these years, advocates across the country began to demand that those responsible for Residential School legislation, policies, mission and administration tell truths as well. At roughly the same time, various health, healing and social movements began to grow within and across Aboriginal communities, as Emma LaRocque explores in *When the Other Is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850–1990*. Communities also began to demand and receive apologies from churches that had run particular schools. The first to apologize was the United Church of Canada in 1986. Other apologies and statements followed: the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate (Roman Catholic) in 1991, the Anglican Church in 1993, and the Presbyterian Church in 1994. See the work by Younging et al. entitled “Timeline.”

In the wake of the 1989 Mount Cashel Orphanage scandal, which, though not an IRS, brought to light the issue of institutional child sexual abuse, Aboriginal claimants began to pursue criminal prosecution and civil litigation (Stanton 58). However, “Prosecutions only deal with aspects of IRS harms that can be captured within the ambit of criminal law: sexual or physical abuse. Criminal law is not able to address the range of other harms that IRS survivors endured, including loss of culture, spirituality, family, language and community ties. Also, the criminal law cannot compensate IRS survivors in any substantial way for these larger losses the suffered” (62). For financial compensation, Survivors would have to turn to civil law. The first civil litigation claims against the churches and the federal government were launched in the early 1990s and by 2003 there were about 12,000 civil cases filed (63). Highlighting these developments, in 1991, Phil

Fontaine, then Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, publicly shared his story of the abuse he had suffered in the residential schools he had attended. As Sam McKegney notes, “Fontaine’s early efforts to intervene in this chronology of violence, like that of many courageous survivors, took the form of ‘disclosure.’ To disclose is to open up to view what has been hidden, to give voice to what has been silenced” (5). Fontaine told his first-person truth and encouraged others to do the same, which they began to do in greater numbers over the following decades.

Alongside these many individual claims were a growing number of class action lawsuits that alleged physical, mental and sexual abuse but also sought to recover for the loss of language, culture and spirituality (Stanton 70). The process, though, was deemed by observers to be a hardship on Survivors where “activities can revictimize and exploit vulnerable survivors” (72). As well, the federal government looked at the staggering projected costs of defending against these suits and determined that a new mechanism was required. Thus, in 2001, the federal government formed the new Indian Residential Schools Resolutions Canada (IRSRC) unit to “centralize resources that are focused on resolving Indian residential school claims, addressing the legacy associated with the schools and encouraging healing and reconciliation” (Indian Residential Schools Resolutions Canada, “Departmental”). IRSRC was also tasked with creating an alternative dispute resolution process and, in 2002, unveiled the National Resolution Framework, the centrepiece of which was the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Process which “aimed to administer, validate and resolve sexual and physical abuse claims in a safe and sensitive manner as an alternative to litigation” (Indian Residential Schools Resolutions Canada, “Alternative”). According to Kim Stanton, the ADR

provoked many criticisms, with the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Bar Association critiquing the process as “slow, bureaucratic, traumatizing and costly” and saying that it failed to address cultural and intergenerational harms (75). In order to better address the full experience of Residential School Survivors, both organizations recommended that the government create a truth and reconciliation process in addition to overhauling the ADR process to address the harms it caused.

In March of 2004 a conference was held at the University of Calgary Law School to examine the ADR Process where it was universally panned as being deeply flawed (Remembering the Children). In November of that year, the Assembly of First Nations published the “Report on Canada’s Dispute Resolution Plan to Compensate for Abuses in Indian Residential Schools,” which sets out the requirements for a “holistic, just and fair settlement.” The report recommends five components:

- a lump sum payment for all survivors of \$10,000 and \$3,000 per year for every year attended; and early payment for the elderly;
- a truth commission;
- a healing fund;
- a commemoration fund;
- a more comprehensive and fair and just process for the settlement of individual serious physical, sexual and psychological abuse claims.

Then, on 30 May 2005, the Honourable Frank Iacobucci was appointed by the government to lead discussions toward a lasting resolution of the legacy of Indian Residential Schools (Aboriginal Healing Foundation “Timeline” 160). This wave of

activity led to negotiations that culminated on 30 November 2005 with an agreement-in-principle for the multi-billion dollar Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) that saw the incorporation of all of the AFN Report recommendations noted above.

The Agreement was ultimately finalized on 19 September 2007. Two components of the IRSSA in particular received significant (and often negative) mainstream attention: compensation and the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). There are two compensation elements: 1) the Common Experience Payment (CEP), a process through which all former students who can prove their residency at a school on the government-approved list could apply for compensation based on a formula of \$10,000 for the first year of attendance and \$3,000 for each additional year; and 2) the Independent Assessment Process for specific abuse claims. The media attention in 2007 was decidedly negative, focusing on speculation that Survivors would not or could not handle an influx of money responsibly, which would lead to drug and alcohol abuse, violence, and financial predation. The AHF conducted two studies that explore these issues: *Lump Sum Compensation Payments Research Project: The Circle Rechecks Itself* (Stout and Harp) and *The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement's Common Experience Payment and Healing: A Qualitative Study Exploring Impacts on Recipients* (Reimer et al.).

The TRC was meant to be an official, independent body with a five-year mandate to provide former students and anyone else affected by the Indian Residential School System with an opportunity to share, through statement-taking, their individual

experiences in a safe and culturally appropriate manner.²⁶ The TRC finally got under way²⁷ in September 2007, and the commissioners began their work on 1 June 2008. Ironically, the first commissioners resigned within a year citing their inability to work with each other. Thus, 2009 saw three new commissioners appointed – Chair Murray Sinclair, Commissioner Marie Wilson, and Commissioner Wilton Littlechild – and it was this formulation that ultimately began to deliver on the TRC’s ambitious mandate, known as “Schedule “N”: Mandate for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.”

Despite these developments, the legacy of Residential Schools only received true national prominence on June 11, 2008, when Prime Minister Stephen Harper delivered an official apology in the House of Commons:

For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities. In the 1870’s, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, "to kill the Indian in the child". Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country ... The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities. Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities. First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools. Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home ... The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long. The burden is properly ours as a Government,

²⁶ I say “was meant to be” because, at the time of writing, the TRC had completed its mandate on December 15, 2015.

²⁷ An interim executive director appointed in September 2007 to set up the TRC Secretariat in advance of the process that would name Harry LaForme as Commission Chair and Claudette Dumont-Smith and Jane Brewin Morley as the two Commissioners.

and as a country. There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential Schools system to ever prevail again. You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey. The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly.

The full amount of needed funding, however, was not guaranteed. Survivor advocates and supporters, including Health Canada, responded to the absence of additional funding for healing in the federal budget of 2010, but recommendations to that end were ignored by the Government of Canada.

4.3 The TRC Mandate

The preamble to “Schedule N” states,

There is an emerging and compelling desire to put the events of the past behind us so that we can work towards a stronger and healthier future. The truth telling and reconciliation process as part of an overall holistic and comprehensive response to the Indian Residential School legacy is a sincere indication and acknowledgement of the injustices and harms experienced by Aboriginal people and the need for continued healing. This is a profound commitment to establishing new relationships embedded in mutual recognition and respect that will forge a brighter future. The truth of our common experiences will help set our spirits free and pave the way to reconciliation. (TRC “Schedule N”)

Further, the principles are stated as

accessible; victim-centered; confidentiality (if required by the former student); do no harm; health and safety of participants; representative; public/transparent; accountable; open and honourable process; comprehensive; inclusive, educational, holistic, just and fair; respectful; voluntary; flexible; and forward looking in terms of rebuilding and renewing Aboriginal relationships and the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. (TRC “Schedule N”)

As well, the seven goals are laid out: acknowledgement of the IRS experiences, impacts and consequences; provision of a holistic, culturally appropriate and safe setting for former students, their families and communities; truth and reconciliation events at

national and community levels; promotion of awareness and public education about the IRS and its impacts; creation of a historical record of the IRS system and its legacy; production of a report, including recommendations to the government; and support of commemoration of Survivors. With regard to the report, a footnote also notes that “The Commission may make recommendations for such further measures as it considers necessary for the fulfillment of the Truth and Reconciliation Mandate and goals” (TRC “Schedule N”).

There were two timeframes for the TRC (Stanton 87): 1) a two-year period within which the TRC was to complete all national events and produce its report and recommendations and 2) an overlapping five year timeframe for the completion of community events, statement taking, closing ceremonies and the establishment of a research centre. It is within that second timeframe that the TRC also engaged in the solicitation of artworks.

4.4 Art and Truth and Reconciliation

The TRC also made an open call for artist submissions, initially placing the call firmly on the testimony side of its mandate:

One of the main roles of the Commission is the gathering of statements and experiences of those impacted by the Residential School System. This is often done through written, audio, video and recorded statements. Artistic expressions are another way to make a statement about the residential school experience. All statements will be archived at the National Research Centre on the Residential School System. This Centre will act as the country’s largest and most complete record of the Residential School System and the experiences of survivors. (TRC, *Call*)

A more refined and detailed description followed, saying the TRC:

believes that artists have a profound contribution to make in expressing both truth and reconciliation. The TRC invites all artists to submit works that relate to experiences at Indian Residential Schools or that relate to the legacy and impact of those experiences on former students, parents, future generations, communities, and on relationships within families and between communities. In addition, the TRC invites artists to submit works relating to apology, truth, cultural oppression, cultural genocide, resistance, resilience, spirituality, remembrance, reconciliation, rejuvenation and restoration of Aboriginal culture and pride. Why is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada gathering artistic works? The TRC believes that collecting artistic works is an important and meaningful way to express the truth, impact and legacy of the Residential School experience and to assist with reconciliation. (*Open Call*)

Many Survivors and others impacted by the legacy have submitted artworks to the TRC. It goes without saying, of course, that Aboriginal artists have been exploring the above themes for decades, that a call by a TRC in 2009 was not *the* catalyst for Residential Schools-related art. It may prove to be *a* catalyst, however. The AHF's funding certainly was a catalyst for poet and playwright Armand Garnet Ruffo, who responded to an early call put out by the AHF to begin work on the screenplay that would eventually become *A Windigo Tale*. He, too, notes the silence in relation to Residential Schools and the trauma experienced there: "[In the 1960s, '70s and '80s] nobody talked about it ... We played right by the residential school. When I'd ask my mother what's that building she'd say, don't worry about that and then eventually it was torn down" (Ruffo Interview). And with regard to themes of truth and reconciliation he says:

[W]hen I'm writing I don't say "This is a play, or this is a book about reconciliation." It doesn't work that way. The story itself has its own kind of integrity and its own impetus and I just go along with it. But because I'm thinking about those issues, they find their way into the story.

But *A Windigo Tale* was very much about healing:

[W]hat struck me is that [Armstrong and Highway] were dealing with [Residential Schools] in an oblique way, not hitting it dead on. But really

talking about the impact of it more, and that's what I was interested in, as well, loss of culture . . . and language. So that became a big issue and of course residential schools did come up, because that's why most of us have lost it, either directly or indirectly . . . So I wanted to talk about those issues as well, like we were all doing [at the Enowkin Centre in Penticton, B.C. in the 1980s and early 1990s] . . . [Y]ou've been interviewing writers and painters and other artists and I bet they all talk about their work in terms of healing. I don't know any Native artist who doesn't. I mean we might say yes, it's really about the story, and yes it's about the color, it's about the visual impact of what I'm doing, but in a sense, by just creating voice, it's healing.

And the healing connection goes even deeper, with artists realizing the importance of creating a space for Indigenous voices to speak to these experiences, which builds on a tradition of addressing suppression of identity through arts and literatures. As Ruffo said:

When I got the money from the [AHF] I knew that their mandate was healing, education, and so I started writing the screenplay and I wouldn't say that I tailored it to them because the story was already there, but I knew it was a good fit. . . . Was it opportunistic? No. That's what I wanted to do after coming from the Enowkin Centre. I left knowing I wanted to expose, show, tell a story that talked about this intergenerational impact.

In the closing decades of the twentieth century, many artists wrote back to the empire (Ashcroft et al.). In fact, there was a proliferation of heralded Aboriginal literature that one could argue fits the postcolonial mould and, as such, much heralded scholarship developed alongside it as well. There were also critiques of reading Aboriginal literatures as postcolonial, as LaRocque notes in her exploration of Native resistance discourse, writing that "Native Canadians hardly enjoy 'postcoloniality' since their colonial experience is imbricated with the past and present" (23). And Thomas King has written, "[T]he term itself assumes that the starting point for that discussion is the advent of Europeans in North America" ("Godzilla" 11) and that postcolonial theory cuts Indigenous North Americans off from their history and cultures, passed down through

generations in spite of colonization. Another important point that LaRocque makes, which is extremely relevant to this context, is this cautionary note about an “aesthetic of healing”:

As constructive as [it may sound], we must be careful not to squeeze the life out of native literature by making it serve, yet again, another utilitarian function. Poets, playwrights, and novelists, among others, must also write for the love of words. Healing is fast becoming the new cultural marker by which we define or judge Aboriginal literature. (LaRocque, 168)

Some may see this as contradictory to many artists’ and critics’ assertions that, as Jo-Ann Episkenew writes, “Contemporary Indigenous writers manipulate the English language and its literary traditions to narrate Indigenous experiences under colonialism in an effort to heal themselves and their audiences from the colonial trauma” (12). Though this may seem contradictory, it is not; rather it speaks to the complexity of the role of art in healing. Simply ask First Nations, Inuit, and Métis writers. I realize that suggestion is anathema to many critics who, perhaps primarily in decades past, decry such a need or critical focus. But times have changed. I do, however, share LaRocque’s concern. I also argue there is far more to say about *healing* than about *reconciliation*.

5 Chapter: Literature Review

“True reconciliation is to remember and change.” (245)

John Paul Lederach, *Beyond Violence: Building Sustainable Peace*

The bodies of literature explored below are expansive and served as foundations for the proposed study. To limit the likelihood of wandering too far off into these areas, I grouped the literature into four main sections to try to show where and how these sections overlap and provide foundations for the principle elements of the study: identifying the role(s) of art and artist in reconciliation efforts in various contexts; a critical analysis of existing theories of artist responsibilities to speak to and for community and be activist and beneficial in some sense; and a critical examination of the appropriate methodology/ies and method(s) one should consider in this sort of scholarly work.

5.1 Truth and Reconciliation

We can, of course, begin with a simple dictionary definition, as the word “reconciliation” is sufficiently common place. *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary* defines the term as follows:

1. The act of reconciling, or the state of being reconciled; reconcilment; restoration to harmony; renewal of friendship. 2. Reduction to congruence or consistency; removal of inconsistency; harmony.”

More contextually, with regard to truth and reconciliation commissions, Brian Rice and Anna Snyder have defined truth commissions, generally, as follows: “There are five general aims of a TRC: 1) to discover, clarify, and formally acknowledge past abuses; 2) to respond to specific needs of victims; 3) to contribute to justice and accountability; 4) to

outline institutional responsibility and recommend reforms; and 5) to promote reconciliation and reduce conflict over the past.” (Dictionary.com)

The mandate of Canada’s Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission, known as “Schedule N,” defines reconciliation in the following manner: “Reconciliation is an ongoing individual and collective process, and will require commitment from all those affected including First Nations, Inuit and Métis former Indian Residential School (IRS) students, their families, communities, religious entities, former school employees, government and the people of Canada. Reconciliation may occur between any of the above groups” (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, *From Truth*, 413). Of course, reconciliation between peoples, in the context of wrongs done in a colonial past (and present), is much more complicated. It is not possible to capture all that complexity but the following are some key areas of focus.

Jennifer Llewellyn, in her article “Bridging the Gap between Truth and Reconciliation: Restorative Justice and the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” (183–201) nicely encapsulates the task ahead of the TRC:

[It is] well positioned to paint a comprehensive picture of the residential school system and its legacy. This will provide the necessary context to give meaning and legitimacy to the common experience payments and independent assessment process parts of the settlement. From this picture of the past, the commission will be able to recommend the way through to a future marked by new, reconciled relationships within Aboriginal communities and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.” (185)

She also highlights the key challenge: “As the TRC begins its journey, it must figure out how to navigate the complex and difficult road of ‘truth’ and map a course toward reconciliation. In doing so, it will face the substantial challenge that others who have travelled this path before have encountered: bridging the gap between truth and

reconciliation” (186). She highlights the South African Truth and Reconciliation as the most telling example:

The South African slogan [“Truth. The road to reconciliation.”] does serve as an important and necessary temper on unrealistic expectations. It cautions that truth and reconciliation are not one and the same. Distinguishing the two also makes clear that while truth may be necessary for reconciliation, it alone is not sufficient. There is a road toward reconciliation, and truth is a fundamental part of the journey, but there are other steps to be taken along the way. The lesson of this slogan for the South African commission was clear. They could not promise nor be expected to produce reconciliation. Indeed, no one process or institution could achieve this goal. This same conviction underpins the description of reconciliation in the Indian Residential Schools TRC’s mandate as an ongoing process. (187)

Llewellyn makes an essential point here; there is no road map to reconciliation – and certainly not one that can be copied from other commissions. As such, I will not include literature from this vast field. The point is that there will be truth-telling along with other steps. The question in this study will be, is art truth-telling and/or some other step? Artists will also have to speak to theories more generally about reconciliation, particularly dissenting opinions from within the Aboriginal community. A short discussion of some of these theories and opinions follows. Again, the intent is to show how and where the literature included overlaps with the other thematic groupings.

Trudy Govier, non-Indigenous scholar, points out that Canada turns away from residential schools and other events of our colonial history because the stories “are unpleasant and incompatible with the favoured picture we have of ourselves, and they imply a need for restitution and redress, threatening our rather comfortable way of life” (78). Her point, though, is that Canadians must acknowledge that “through patterns of colonization, land use, racism, disregard for treaties, and the residential school system, we are linked significantly to the institutions that are responsible ... we share

responsibility for these things” and we “are beneficiaries of the injustices” (78-79). John Paul Lederach offers a strategy for moral action, to “restory” as a creative act: “Embracing the paradox of relationship in the present, the capacity to restory imagines both the past and the future and provides space for the narrative voice to create” (*Moral Imagination* 149). And Dora Apel writes, “Art illuminates traumatic experience through the sideways glance, allowing the viewer to apprehend what can only be shown indirectly, allusively and in sometime surprising ways” (3).

Despite these types of conciliatory words, Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel argue that the reconciliation discourse is, in fact, flawed at its very roots: “Far from reflecting any true history or honest reconciliation with the past or present agreements and treaties that form an authentic basis for Indigenous-state relations in the Canadian context, ‘aboriginalism’^[28] is a legal, political and cultural discourse designed to serve an agenda of silent surrender to an inherently unjust relation at the root of the colonial state itself” (598). Alfred further calls reconciliation an “emasculating concept” (*Wasáse*, 152), saying that “[r]econciliation as a concept or process is not as compelling, factually or logically speaking, as resurgence because, being so embedded in the supposedly progressive discourses on Onkwehonwe-Settler [Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal] relations ... it is almost unassailable from within established legal and political discourses, thus presenting a huge obstacle to justice and real peacemaking” (152). Without “massive restitution ... for past harms and continuing injustices committed against our peoples,” (152) he writes, “reconciliation would permanently enshrine colonial injustices and is itself a further injustice” (152). He argues we must place the discourse within the broader

²⁸ The authors reject the term “aboriginal” outright in favour of “Indigenous”, arguing that “this identity is purely a state construction that is instrumental to the state’s own attempt to gradually subsume Indigenous existences into its own constitutional system and body politic.”

colonial context of Canada's history and present, otherwise Indigenous-Settler relations will continue to be built on a foundation of "false decolonization," (112) which continues to be immoral. Alfred attacks the notion of Indigenous peoples being "victims of history" (130), arguing that the discourse has been too conciliatory on the Indigenous side, with Indigenous people seeking only to "*recover* from the past" (130, emphasis in original) and settling for White notions of reconciliation. This is not resistance or "survivance," Gerald Vizenor's concept of survival and resistance. Instead it is acquiescence to "a *resolution* that is acceptable to and non-disruptive for the state and society that we have come to embrace and identify with" (130).

John Paul Lederach writes about conflict, resolution, and transformation at social and societal levels in situations of persistent and ongoing violence in *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. His titular concept of moral imagination is "the capacity to imagine and generate constructive responses and initiatives that, while rooted in the day-to-day challenges of violent settings, transcend and ultimately break the grips of those destructive patterns and cycles" (*Moral Imagination* 29). His use of the word "moral" is key here. "Moral" refers to integrity, allowing for the use of imagination, where dogmatic, ideological positioning cannot: "*moral* ... appeals to something great ... beckon[ing] us to rise toward something beyond those things that are immediately apparent and visible. The quality of this phrase I most wish to embrace reverberates in this potential to find a way to transcend, to move beyond what exists while still living in it" (*Moral Imagination* 27–28, emphasis in original).

Lederach also offers a strategy for moral action:

This is the challenge of restorying: It continuously requires a creative act. To restory is not to repeat the past, attempt to recreate it exactly as it was,

nor act as if it did not exist. It does not ignore the generational future nor does it position itself to control it. Embracing the paradox of relationship in the present, the capacity to restory imagines both the past and the future and provides space for the narrative voice to create.” (*Moral Imagination* 149)

Ledarach writes: “The real challenge of authenticity and the moral imagination is how to transcend what has been and is now, while still living in it. For the moral imagination to make the journey across this terrain it will need to address complexity and support change over time” (*Moral Imagination* 59). It is into this moral space that Lederach writes about that Alfred may be arguing for Indigenous peoples to “us[e] words, symbols and direct non-violent action as the offensive weapons of our fight...[and] seek to contend, to inform our agitating direct actions with ideas, and to use the effects of this contention to defeat colonialism by convincing people of the need to abandon the cycle of subjugation and conflict and join us in a relationship of respect and sharing” (*Moral Imagination* 77). That may be the change Lederach calls for and that Alfred places in a Canadian context, something Lederach’s work does not (cannot yet) do.

Alfred’s call for “words” and “symbols” may well be art, as both Martha Minnow’s and Jill Bennet’s acclaimed books allow. In the chapter “Facing History” in *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, Minnow highlights those elements that truth commissions cannot offer, including vengeance and closure through prosecution, due to the voluntary nature of the processes, writing: “Disappointments with truth commissions are likely to erupt over the reliability and completeness of the reported facts, over interpretations, and over the apparent trade of truth for punishment” (129). Outside of the necessary reports that relay such information, though, there are other avenues and Minnow moves in the direction of the memorials that often accompany or are integral to

the formal reporting of commissions, noting that commemoration initiatives are actually quite common. She also notes that within these initiatives, “[m]ore literal and concrete forms of commemoration and monuments use sculptures and paintings, museums, plays, and poems,” (138) later remarking that art may indeed be a most useful tool, going beyond mere commemoration: “Art of the unthinkable should disturb as well as commemorate” (142).²⁹ In Canada, Roger Simon notes there are many examples of art being supported and space created for arts inclusion, which gives rise to a growing reputation for Canada as a place where traumatic cultural memories can be safely explored through critical, creative approaches (197). Bennett’s 2005 *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* picks up this line of thought by placing it within a concept of “trauma art” (1) and deconstructs the concept, along with notions of political art and the political in art. These, too, are concepts worth testing in the present Canadian context of truth and reconciliation.

Dian Lynn Million, in her 2004 PhD dissertation “Telling Secrets: Sex, Power and Narrative in the Rearticulation of Canadian Residential School Histories,” goes in yet another direction, rightly placing the reconciliation dialogue within a healing paradigm:

Healing from trauma and historical trauma is now an international discourse on social “collateral damage” among those who have suffered the fate of History as the subjugated, linked to demands for justice from the perpetrators of their distress. Across a spectrum, at the level of the International, community and individual, *healing* is the reaffirmation of boundary; of holism from fragmentation.

Canada has attempted to handle the material/physical outcome of its colonialism in Native communities through institutionalization, and now increasingly through therapeutic interventions that are often self-administered bureaucracies. (73, emphasis in original)

²⁹ A section of the Literature Review focusing on commemoration follows.

And she contextualizes the reconciliation dialogue within a healing paradigm within a larger colonial context: “The residential school survivor’s abuse discourse continuously struggles to articulate a something else larger. It is the struggle to make Canada hear: that Canada recognize not only their past acts but their present ones; acts whose resonance and material outcome are a continuation of their colonization, ‘not a psychological problem to be defused in a therapist’s room’” [30] (74).

That said, the healing paradigm and the healing movement within, which may include or lead into reconciliation, are intimately connected to trauma and the extensive body of literature that focuses on it. For example, Marlene Brant Castellano writes about historic trauma in the context of the multiple assaults suffered by Aboriginal people: “Memories of family networks and whole communities reach back through generations, repeating themes of loss and powerlessness, relocation, epidemics and residential school” (*Final Report*, 160).

5.2 Art and Healing

Picking up from Jill Bennett’s *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, and the suggestion that the TRC process allows for a unique opportunity to test her theories in this context, there is a much larger but obviously related field that Aboriginal artists may be engaged in – or may be resisting: art therapy and its use in healing and reconciliation in Canada. The following is a brief overview of literature concerning this field. The intent is to identify avenues for interrogating whether or not artists are connected to or see themselves as connected to notions of therapy or the therapeutic through their art-making.

³⁰ Million quotes from Emma LaRocque (“Preface or Here Are Our Voices – Who Will Hear”).

Art therapy and the expressive arts exist within the healing landscape in Canada and the recent literature that focuses on or acknowledges its use by and for Aboriginal peoples in Canada often notes a natural relationship between the practice of art therapy and Aboriginal culture, particularly traditional healing and shamanism. As Stephen K. Levine says, “Shamen are the prototype of the artist as therapist” (11).

In a chapter titled “From Shamanism to Art Therapy,” Shaun McNiff describes the shaman as an archetype and includes a useful discussion of the similarities between art therapy and shamanism: “The parallels between shamanism and the field of art therapy seem to lie in the commitment of both to work with psychological conflict and struggle through creative action and enactment.” (186). In *Poiesis: The Language of Psychology and the Speech of the Soul*, Levine delves into Western and Indigenous philosophical traditions in the search for a theoretical basis to explain why and how creative processes contribute to healing, writing,

In turning to the arts for healing, we are re-discovering an ancient tradition. In early societies and in indigenous cultures, all healing takes place through ceremonial means. Music, dance, song, story-telling, mask-making, the creation of visual imagery and the ritual re-enactment of myth are all components of a communal process in which suffering is given form. (10)

He goes on to note that professionals now do what shamen once tended to in traditional healing: “Today, the various roles of the shaman are divided among different professional groups—physicians, psychotherapists, artists, and priests. With regard to the creative transformation of emotional conflict, this role fragmentation has diffused the shaman’s source of power, which lay in the integration of body, mind, spirit, and art” (188).

There is also resistance in art. Apel argues that art can present narratives from a survivor’s perspective—a witness in a testimony sense— and provide an avenue for

others to witness the atrocities, admittedly second-hand, through the mediated lens of an artwork (5). Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* writes that “for indigenous people, the critique of history is not unfamiliar, although it has now been claimed by postmodern theories” (33). She explains that the “idea of contested stories and multiple discourses about the past, by different communities, is closely linked to the politics of everyday contemporary indigenous life ... These contested accounts are stored within genealogies, within the landscape, within weavings and carvings” (33). Charlotte Townsend-Gault acknowledges that western notions of “art” may be, for some Aboriginal peoples, “a colonizer’s term, a restriction and distortion of the cultural expressions of the past which fails to do justice to the visual culture of the present” but asks if “the conflict between aboriginal and Euro-American aesthetics [has] been both productive and extending”(113). To that end, she writes that since at least the mid-1980s it is evident that the aim of many works by Aboriginal artists is “to remember, to condemn, to overturn, to instruct, to translate across cultural boundaries, and yet to withhold translation, to make beautiful things, according to various ideas of beauty and, sometimes, riotously and discomfitingly, to entertain” (113).

In late 2009, I was privileged to work with Linda Archibald to develop a research project for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation that explored how community-based healing initiatives (projects) funded by the Foundation incorporated art and/or creative practices; this work spawned numerous publications with several other collaborators, from whom I draw here for this section. We had this assumption - “Indigenous approaches include arts and culture in a holistic model of healing that encompasses the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual world” – in mind when we asked, “What

happens when art, music, dance, storytelling, and other creative arts become a part of community-based Aboriginal healing programs” (Archibald & Dewar, 1)?

Both the literature and our respondents overwhelmingly indicated that Indigenous societies have acknowledged the healing power of art, dance, music, dramatic re-enactment, and storytelling for millennia—and they continue to do so today because “Indigenous approaches include arts and culture in a holistic model of healing that encompasses the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual world” (Archibald et al, 7). As one respondent said, “For Aboriginal people, arts and crafts have always been an intrinsic part of our communal culture. We used art in every part of our daily lives; from making clothing to decorating ceremonial objects” (V. G. Waboose, qtd in Archibald et al, 8).

While our focus was on what communities were choosing in a contemporary context, part of that context and, as such, a focus within their approaches, was the notion of historic trauma. “Historic trauma” is the term used to describe the impact of serious and painful losses on a people over time and across generations. It is a collective form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) embedded in the history of what Aboriginal people in North America have experienced and endured (Archibald et al, 1). According to Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux and Magdalena Smolewski, historic trauma can be defined as follows: “Following the work of Judith Herman (1997), *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence, from domestic abuse to political terror*, a new model is being introduced for trauma transmission and healing, citing the presence of complex or endemic post-traumatic stress disorder in Aboriginal culture, which originated as a direct result of historic trauma transmission (HTT). A variety of disciplines, including history,

anthropology, psychology, psychiatry, sociology and political science, are called upon to illuminate the model of historic trauma transmission and provide different perspectives and information on how historic trauma can be understood as a valid source of continuing dis-ease and reactivity to historical and social forces in Aboriginal communities” (iii).

Many respondents drew parallels between the traditional knowledge held by individuals and communities and that being expressed by contemporary practitioners of various healing modalities. Respondents acknowledged that art can be a tool for creatively transforming pain and trauma into something new, and in the process, contributing to feelings of personal mastery, self-esteem, and resiliency; that art making provides an indirect means of addressing experiences that are too painful to approach directly (Archibald & Dewar, 68). Mohawk artist and activist Ellen Gabriel spoke about art as “a non-threatening form of expression that can spark discussion, curiosity...and can convey a message which can introduce an issue without necessarily overwhelming the audience” (qtd in Archibald & Dewar, 9).

Our major findings were as follows. When given the opportunity to design their own initiatives, Aboriginal communities overwhelmingly chose to include the arts, and those approaches can be characterized as follows: 1) Acknowledging the innate healing power of creativity (creative arts-as-healing); 2) use of the arts in the therapeutic process (creative arts-in-therapy); and understanding that a holistic approach to healing includes creative arts, culture, and spirituality within its very definition (holistic healing includes creative arts).

5.3 Commemoration

The field of commemoration literature is very broad and includes many topics that are themselves expansive, such as memory and forgetting, public memory, and collective memory. The following is a brief overview of literature that covers some of these notions but attempts to stay connected to the Canadian and residential schools contexts. The point is to set a foundation upon which to build a strategy for engaging artists in a discussion of their role – if any – in commemoration activities and initiatives. As with art therapy, some artists may be involved formally or informally and others may not, or be resistant to the notion. A key question will be what role, if any, does reconciliation play in commemorative art and vice versa?

Because the commemoration fund exists within a settlement agreement, is it then bound to what John Torpey calls “reparations politics^[31]” (3), which encompass all those things we do to address historical wrongs and misdeeds, such as apologies, monetary compensation, revising historical narratives, and commemoration? If so, is this the ground upon which resistance might be built? As Trudy Govier writes, “Collective acknowledgement is especially important because strategies such as the construction of museums and memorials and the amending of educational policy are more available to collectives than to individuals” (79). This, however, then feeds into what Brian Osborne has postulated, that “national mythologies and symbols are manipulated to encourage identification with the state and reinforce its continuity and ubiquity. Through various devices, otherwise detached individuals are implored to recognize one another as being members of a larger group sharing a common historical metanarrative ... on the

³¹ Torpey defines *reparations* narrowly to mean “a response to past injustices” and *reparations politics* as “a broader field encompassing ‘transitional justice,’ ‘apologies, and efforts at ‘reconciliation’ as well” (3).

foundations of a ‘should have been’ past, rather than an actual history” (*Landscapes*, 41–42).

There is certainly already ground for resistance. Residential schools, it can be said, represent a mass atrocity that the Canadian state committed in concert with Christian denominations (Chrisjohn and Young, Haig-Brown, Milloy) against fellow citizens (although this can certainly be problematized across the decades, given the very large body of literature contesting the rights and citizenship of Aboriginal peoples). Memories of the schools cannot be collective memories of Aboriginal people alone. All Canadians must share the burden of recollection of residential school history.

Interpretations of commemoration vary greatly between community and individual, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Cultural and spiritual or religious beliefs about grieving, for instance, inform how people choose to commemorate. Similarly, worldview shapes how people remember and how that remembering impacts their physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental wellbeing. In *Lakota Grieving* Stephen Huffstetter writes about a rudimentary exchange between Lakota and non-Aboriginal grieving practices:

A Lakota worldview questions why western culture tries to dichotomize civil and religious practice anyway. Both are a part of life ... An elderly Lakota woman recounted the first time she went to a ‘white’ funeral. After the rosary, the altar society served cake and coffee. Just as she was settling into conversation, people started leaving and sons and daughters of the woman being waked started gathering their belongings to leave. “I could not believe they were going to leave their mother alone by herself in the church all night!” Didn’t they know how lonely she would feel and how much she needed them around to help her through this hard time of death?” Her relationship with the spirit of her dead friend was still very real and tangible for her. (28)

Aboriginal communities have sacred ceremonies, customs, and spiritual connections to their dead. Commemorative practices for honouring the dead and the missing and for commemorating the death of children are entered into Aboriginal collective memory in specific and sacred ways. National commemoration of residential schools cannot presume to replace community customs; it must seek to expand the collective memory of those who will be remembered. Huffstetter describes an oral culture of memorialization at Lakota wakes:

The real work of the wake went on with the gathering, the sharing of the meal, renewing family ties and remembering. People use the time to talk and tell stories about the one who had died, as a way of beginning to memorialize them. (29)

If residential schools are placed within a broader Canadian context – a colonial history – the history may be rationalized as a shared Canadian history, whether former student, perpetrator, bystander, or descendant of one or more of those identities. But each of those experiences spawns its own memories or forgettings, as John Gillis has written: “National memory is shared by people who have never seen or heard of one another, yet who regard themselves as having a common history. They are bound together as much by forgetting as by remembering” (3). This is particularly true if the forgetting is in response to trauma; to that end, Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn links identity and memory, writing:

Identity and memory are not stable and objective things, but representations or constructions of reality. The members of a particular nation, for example, share a specific history, but do they necessarily have the same identity? The way humans see themselves as a member of a particular group depends also on their own interpretation of history, their own ideas about the future, and their political, moral and other ideals. Identity and memory have to do with particular interests, such as class, gender, or power relations. (2)

As well, “[t]he concepts of memory and identity are related to each other” (2) and identity is “inconceivable without history and without the remembrance and commemoration of history, however much such remembrance may distort historical events and facts” (2). Gillis writes, “Memory and identity are two of the most frequently used terms in contemporary public and private discourse” (3). Regardless,

[t]he parallel lives of these two terms alert us to the fact that the notions of identity depends on the idea of memory and vice versa. The core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely, a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity. (3)

He also says that “[a]t this particular historical moment, it is all the more apparent that both identity and memory are political and social constructs, and should be treated as such” (5). Richard Handler, in “Is ‘Identity’ a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept,” does just that, arguing that “cultures are not individuated entities existing as natural objects with neat temporal and spacial boundaries” (29) and “[g]roups are not bounded objects in the natural world” (30). “‘Who we are,’” he writes, “is a communicative process, that includes many voices and varying degrees of understanding and, importantly, misunderstanding” (30). He is quite critical, suggesting that “to deconstruct notions of cultural identity at precisely the moment when the disempowered turn to them may aid in the reactionary social forces who seek to reassert the validity of homogeneous ‘mainstream’ collective identities against proponents of ‘multicultural’ diversity” (38). However, “to support without criticism identity claims is to aid in the reproduction of an ideology that is both hegemonic and, I believe, oppressive” (38). To combat this, “our critiques of identity [must] focus on those mainstream claims that too often go

unchallenged ... rather than writing exclusively about the ‘invention’ of minority identities, traditions, and cultures” (30).

Gillis, like Wolschke-Bulmahn, says that “memories and identities are not fixed things, but representations or constructions of reality” (3) and “we are constantly revising our memories to suit our current identities” (3). He, too, argues that memory and identity operate within a social framework, noting that “‘memory work’ is, like any other kind of physical or mental labour, embedded in complex class, gender and power relations that determine what is remembered (or forgotten), by whom, and for what end” (3).

While Gillis focuses, in part, on “collective amnesia” (7), writing that “[n]ew memories require concerted forgettings,” (7) Maurice Halbwachs places collective memory in a social context in *On Collective Memory*: “[I]ndividuals call recollections to mind by relying on the frameworks of social memory” (182), which means that social groups influence individual identity and memory. While “the various groups that compose society are capable at every moment of reconstructing their past ... they most frequently distort that past in reconstructing it” (182). He also says that “a remembrance is in very large measure a reconstruction of the past achieved with data borrowed from the present, a reconstruction prepared, furthermore, by reconstructions of earlier periods wherein past images had already been altered” (69).

Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam question the usefulness of the term “collective memory” writing that so-called experts (“memorilogists”) have simply taken an old, familiar term, “myth,” and reinvented it (40). For historians, collective memory is only useful metaphorically, that is, it stands in for myth. They reject Halbwach’s argument that “there is really no room for history as a science, that is, as a methodological effort aimed

at reconstructing actual past events by means of conventional methods of verification ... and finally, proposing theoretical models which would explain them” (40). Claiming that Halbwach’s “notion of history writing ... is rather an intentional formation of the past without any obligation to ‘historical truth’” (40). Gedi and Elam write that for Halbwachs, history “thus becomes a tool for the ideological and moralistic needs of society. ‘[C]ollective memory,’” they write,

has become the predominant notion which replaces real (factual) history ... and real (personal) memory ... Indeed, ‘collective memory’ has become the all-pervading concept which in effect stands for all sorts of human cognitive products generally ... What is lost ... is the dialectical tension between the old simple personal memory as a questionable source of evidence, and history as a corroborated version of past events. Instead we now have history as “collective” memory,” that is, as a fabricated narrative (once called “myth”) either in the service of social-ideological needs, or even expressing the creative whim of a particular historian. Not all of those who have adopted “collective memory” and use it profusely necessarily embrace the theory behind the term.” (40–41)

Like Halbwach, Pierre Nora places collective memory in a social context but argues that collective memory has changed due to changes in social structures:

The conquest and eradication of memory by history ... then, confronts us with the brutal realization of the difference between real memory – social and unviolated, exemplified in but also retained as the secret of so-called primitive or archaic societies – and history, which is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past. On the one hand, we find an integrated, dictatorial memory – unself-conscious, commanding, all-powerful, spontaneously actualizing, a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition, linking the history of its ancestors to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins, and myth – and on the other hand, our memory, nothing more in fact than sifted and sorted historical traces. (8)

What was once a more holistic environment of memory is now an artificial archival form of memory. Where memory “is life, borne by living societies ... in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive

deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation,” (8) history is “the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer” (8). Essentially, we have moved away from living with and experiencing memory to letting static sites of memory, like museums and monuments, do all the work. Gedi and Elam, though, call Nora’s view “radical” (49), writing that he “substitute[es] the monument for living memory, thereby turning it into the actual location of ‘collective memory.’ The end result is that because history and memory stand in opposition to one another, he has to declare *lieux de memoire* as ‘another history.’ We thus no longer deal with events but with sites” (49).

Kirk Savage, in “The Politics of Memory: Black Emancipation and the Civil War Monument,” writes that “all shared memory requires mediating devices to sustain itself.” (146). The mediating devices are archives and monuments. When combined with rituals of remembering, these define collective memory and identity, since “the public monument represents a kind of collective recognition – in short, legitimacy – deposited there” (135–6). Brian Osborne also considers monuments, focusing on Canadian identity, calling the Cartier monuments an example of how a monument can become a “dynamic site of meaning” (*Constructing*, 431). But that does not mean there are not challenges, as he writes in another article, that monuments have been seen as “spatial and temporal landmarks; they were loaded with memory; they performed a didactic function; they were signs of national progress; they were heroic figures (men, of course!) who represented the anonymous masses; symbols of rights and liberties” (*Landscapes*, 50).

This is not a new concept. Gillis, in his introduction to the collection he edited in 1994, itself a seminal piece, presents a wide-ranging overview of the history of

commemoration in the west, identifying “the pre-national ... the national (from the American and French revolutions to the 1960s), and the present, post-national phase” (5). Gillis notes that in the pre-national phase only the elites of society institutionalized memory, which was separate from the popular memory that existed within the living memory of regular people. The national phase, however, saw a wider institutionalization by agents of the state. While he calls these more democratic, efforts were almost always commemorations of notable men of historical significance. The post-national phase, though, represents a “tendency toward the personalization of memory” (14), away from the collective and toward a “plurality of pasts” (18). He also references the contested terrain of collective memory and identity and notes that “class, region, gender, religion, [and] race” (18) contest a sense of common identity due to the subjective nature of any representation within a public commemorative monument. Osborne, too, highlights this, noting that “each group [has] its own lists of heroes and villains” (“Landscapes,” 54). Thus, “rather than being sites of consensus building, public space and its population of carefully selected monuments and statuary become contested terrains” (“Landscapes,” 54).

Gillis also writes that the “relationship between memory and identity is historical; and the record of that relationship can be traced through various forms of commemoration” (5). He notes that commemorative activity is “by definition social and political, for it involves the coordination of individual and group memories, whose results may appear consensual when they are in fact the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and, in some instances, annihilation” (5). There are conscious and unconscious decisions to include and exclude. And Daniel Levy explores the relationship between

revisionism and collective memory. Citing examples from Germany and Israel, he notes that the “histories of nations are increasingly problematized and have become a realm of commemorative combat” (65) or competing memories. He acknowledges that, “in contrast to the state-supportive role of historians during the formative phase of nationalism, collective memory is increasingly a contested terrain on which groups self-consciously struggle to shape and re-shape their national past to suit their present political views of the future” (64). So he asks, “Whose past is it? What image of the past nation prevails in the public sphere?” (65) and concludes that the “contested nature of the nation and the multiplication of other identity options are thus reflected in the proliferation of struggles over collective memory” (65).

Alan Gordon defines public memory as “conceptions of history enshrined in historic sites and public monuments in the streets, parks, and squares of a city” (xv) in *Making Public Pasts: The Contested Terrain of Montréal’s Public Memories, 1891-1930*. He argues overtly that public memory, like collective memory, is contested terrain, however, he does not confine collective memory to the above, noting that it is also made up of more nebulous things such as customs and cultural practices. The choices of who and how to commemorate through monuments “reveal much about the sense of history of the men and women who select them, and in this respect, commemoration is closely related to power: it reveals an ongoing contest for hegemony. The subjects people choose to commemorate illustrate and teach idealized social conventions ... Public memory, then, works to turn history into a shared experience in the interest of broadly and loosely defined political goals” (xv). This notion of “teaching” is of critical importance, says Roger Simon, “particularly if we take public memory as a sphere for developing a

historical consciousness – not as an individual awareness and attitude but as a commitment to and participation in a critical practice of remembrance and learning” (197). He argues public memory would then “become a time of interminable and exacting learning not where one is just informed through remembrance but where one learns to remember anew” (198). Similarly, Osborne ends his article by asking, “Is there a need for a new paradigm of heritage commemoration? ... The classical allegorical forms of didactic statuary and monuments no longer resonate with the modern world. Rather than being declarative sites of conceptual closure, perhaps they should be ambiguous sites of pondering and reflection” (“Landscapes,” 72).

As with the truth-telling component of the TRC, commemoration initiatives potentially face the similar challenge of reaching those who may have difficulty hearing or listening to the stories of others. Just as there is diversity across First Nations, Inuit, and Métis experiences with residential schools, so too will there be diversity across the non-Aboriginal public that will listen to these stories. A goal, as Simon says, should be the transformation of those willing to listen, view, and ponder (197-8).

5.4 Worldview and Identity: Ways of Knowing and Ways of Being

This section, it should be noted, weaves throughout the above sections and most importantly in the Methodology chapter.

For this study, it will be essential to determine if and to what extent Canadian Aboriginal artists subscribe to notions of Indigenous worldview(s) encompassing or comprised of concepts of wholeness, (inter)connectedness, and responsibility, as well as concepts of identity loss and reclamation. Do they act, wittingly or unwittingly, to

position themselves within culturally-relevant worldviews? Has loss, particularly those losses that can be attributed to residential schools and other forces of acculturation, meant that contemporary artists have had to find their own way of being Aboriginal in a world that bears little resemblance to that of their ancestors? How do artists envision identity and, importantly, authenticity – as a spectrum (traditional to assimilated, perhaps?), fluid or fixed?

There are many scholarly works dealing with Indigenous worldview but Brian Yazzie Burkhart's four principles³² of being within American Indian philosophy are most useful for identifying what constitutes an Indigenous worldview and how this worldview contributes to Weaver's notion of communitism and why the study is proposed as being artist perspective-driven. These are: "relatedness" (16); an acknowledgment of the "limits of questioning" (17); how action shapes meaning; and acknowledging the presence of a "moral universe" (17). These principles, often called natural law, are the ethical relationships and responsibilities of creation itself. This is akin to what Vine Deloria, Jr. and Daniel R. Wildcat have written on the subject of Indigenous worldviews, that the broader "Indian idea of relationship, in a universe that is very personal and particular, suggests that all relationships have a moral content" (23).

Burkhart says, essentially, that everything is related (16). Questioning is a way of being and behaving, addressing the way we ask questions, the way we act towards our relations, and how these actions bring us to truth. Rather than beginning with truth, it is the method of questioning and the questions themselves that allow truth to emerge.

Further, there is no truth without meaning and value and how we behave shapes meaning

³² Burkhart makes the point, though, that "[i]n calling these ideas principles, I do not mean to give them special status. In American Indian thought, they are simply ways of being" (16).

and the world we live in. Finally, there is no difference between what is true and what is right: “[A]ll investigation is moral” (17) and the guiding question is “what is the right road for humans to walk in relation to all that is around them?” (17). “If we are WE,” Burkhart writes, then there is little emphasis on individual experiences other than how these inform an understanding of the people overall: “The hand may not have the same experiences as the foot, but this hardly matters if we understand them not as feet and hands but as this body. If it is through the body, or people, that understanding arises, then no one part need shape this understanding. All the experiences of all the parts should be brought into the process of understanding” (26).

As John W. Berry, who was a research consultant on the *Aboriginal Culture Identity Project* established by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, writes, “When individuals experience intercultural contact, the issue of who they are comes to the fore. Prior to major contact, this question is hardly an issue; people routinely and naturally think of themselves as part of their cultural community, and usually value this attachment in positive terms” (2). Berry defines a positive Aboriginal cultural identity as being comprised of “a number of interrelated features, including the perception of oneself as Aboriginal, considering this to be important, having positive feelings about being Aboriginal, wanting to remain an Aboriginal person, and expressing these in one’s daily behaviour” (6). He argues that “intercultural contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada (both historically and at the present time), has initiated a process of acculturation (at both the cultural and psychological levels), during which Aboriginal peoples have experienced cultural disruption, leading to reduced well-being and to identity confusion and loss” (6) and “the key to reestablishing a sense of well-

being and a secure cultural identity resides in restructuring the relationships between these two communities” (2). The study cites large numbers of participants expressing “the importance of a return to traditional values and culture including language, Elders, spirituality, arts and community” (19).

Finally, Jace Weaver’s theory of communitism exists within a “Native” (his term) worldview and is necessarily tied to notions of Native identity and authenticity. While it calls for community and activism, he, too, problematizes the concepts:

Communitism means more than merely “community.” It involves a particular way of attempting to live in community as Natives. This is not to say that there is only one type of community... Nor does it mean that they always agree about what communitism entails. The visions of community of [various writers] are as different from one another as are the times in which they write and the communities in which they lived (or live). Even so, there is a consistent commitment to Native community and to persons within that community. They seek creative ways in which to survive and persist as Natives in the midst of an alien culture that continues to dominate Native existence. (162)

He allows, possibly, that community may be more broadly defined – perhaps to include non-Natives when he acknowledges the “wider community” and “interrelatedness” (163) of all things.

6 Chapter: The Interviews – Emerging Themes

This section explores the themes that arose from the lengthy interviews I conducted with the twenty different artists, curators and/or other cultural producers.³³ See Appendix A for the interview guide. As with other parts of this dissertation, the respondents are treated as primary sources. Where appropriate, I include other sources as well, for example, where a respondent has also published his or her thoughts on related topics or where he or she – or I, in turn – was involved in activity related to the line of questioning or the opportunity to conduct the interview itself (as the reader will see in the chapter on *Walking With Our Sisters* that follows, one of four case studies presented as stand-alone chapters following this chapter).

It is also important to note that in many cases, respondents' replies could be categorized in multiple ways, covering not just, let's say, the concept of *reconciliation* but also the importance of relationship, collaboration, responsibility, and/or truth and healing, the other main lines of questioning. As such, the sections below are a best effort to organize these twenty lengthy conversations into appropriate sections; but the reader

³³ A note on respondent bios: In some cases respondents provided me with biographical information or directed me to existing bios available online or in text. If so, I include elements of those sources here (and cite it as such). In other cases, I have assembled bios from various sources; however, in all cases I limit the information to that which I knew going into the interview with the individual (having consulted biographies as part of the preparation process for the interviews; I return in most cases to those biographies here) and any new details I learned during the process. The purpose is to provide the reader with a sense of who each individual is – but most importantly who they were to me at the time of the interview – rather than being an exhaustive biography. They are deliberately presented here as part of the dissertation text (as footnotes) rather than as an appendix to underscore the importance of each respondent to the study. Respondents are my primary sources of answers to the question of the role of art and artist in truth, healing, and reconciliation, after all, and part of my central premise was placing their voices at the centre of the study and, to the extent possible, in conversation with my voice and with each other. Where possible I draw from respondent-written bios, so personal websites are particularly important. I am particularly indebted to the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective, of which I am a member, for their work collecting bios of their members, many of whom are featured here. Following that, I acknowledge that many of the institutionally-affiliated respondents here have excellent bios on their respective faculty pages. I strongly encourage readers, however, to Google each respondent to see updated bios because they have all gone on to do incredible work.

will undoubtedly note that there is considerable overlap, reference back to previous headings, and foreshadowing of topics to come. I use lengthy quotes in places, especially with Elders such as Alex Janvier, Maria Campbell, and Shirley Bear, in keeping with the Indigenous research methods I outlined earlier. As I argue, I intend to privilege their voices; yes, I did the work in preparing the line of questioning and conducting the interviews but they did me the honour of participating in a lengthy and involved process. I asked a lot of them and, as such, honour their commitment to the project by presenting, to the extent possible, their voices as *the* sources of expert, learned opinion.

All of the respondents had a strong comfort level answering questions about truth and reconciliation and the role art plays in telling truths and in the practice of reconciliation, with one notable exception. I first met Métis artist, curator and educator David Garneau³⁴ at an Aboriginal Curatorial Collective event in the fall of 2009 (and discuss this event in the forthcoming chapter on the *Mush Hole Remembered*) but only really got a chance to speak with him in depth in November 2011 when I interviewed him for this project in his office at the University of Regina. That original 2009 overlap is an important contextual piece, which will become all the clearer when that story is told shortly. Suffice it to say at this point that when we spoke in 2011, he and I (along with many others) had recently shared a very challenging – and very public – example of the

³⁴ David Garneau writes, “I love everything about the visual arts and these enthusiasms are reflected in my various practices. I paint (bold in original) and draw and have made several videos and performance art pieces. I am a critical arts writer, editor, and curator. I teach painting, drawing and criticism in the Visual Arts Department at the University of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. “I am interested in visuality and representation, but in the studio work, writing and curation, I tend to focus on ideas about nature and culture, masculinity, and ethnicity-especially Metis heritage” (*Online Portfolio*). And his bio in *Reconcile This!*, of which I am a co-editor, reads, in part, “David Garneau is Associate Professor of Visual Arts at the University of Regina ... His paintings are collected by Canadian Museum of Civilization; Parliament of Canada; Indian and Inuit Art Centre; Glenbow Museum; MacKenzie Art Gallery; Mendel Art Gallery; Saskatchewan Arts Board; Alberta Foundation for the Arts; NONAM, Zurich; and in many other public and private collections ... He has curated several large group exhibitions: *The End of the World (as we know it)*; *Picture Windows: New Abstraction*; *Transcendent Squares*; *Contested Histories*; *Making it Like a Man!*, *Graphic Visions*, [and] *TEXTiles*.” (Dewar and Goto, 181)

challenges artists, curators, and audiences face when dealing with trauma – both lived and mediated through art. I discuss his initial misgiving below. To summarize the other interviews broadly, though, the respondents repeated a common theme and the following was the assessment by my colleagues and me from the TRC-funded research project that resulted in the report *Practicing Reconciliation – a collaborative study of Aboriginal art, resistance and cultural politics: A report commissioned by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools*:

The act of reconciliation is itself deeply complicated, and that success should not be measured by *achieving* a putative reconciliation but by movement toward these lofty goals. Indeed it could be proposed that full reconciliation is both mercurial and impossible, and that the efforts of theorists, artists, Survivors, and the various publics engaged in this difficult process are best focused on working collaboratively for better understanding of our histories, our traumas and ourselves. (Dewar et al. 7)

Métis writer and Elder Maria Campbell³⁵ gives us a good starting point though when she says, “And to me ignorance is not evil or bad. Ignorance is when people don’t know. And people in most cases if they’re ignorant, they’re open to change” (Campbell Interview). I

³⁵ “Maria Campbell is a writer, playwright, and teacher. She started her career in 1973 when she published her first book, *Halfbreed*. That book has become a literary classic and continues to be one of the most widely taught texts in Canadian literature. Professor Campbell has also written four children's books. Her most recent book, *Stories of The Road Allowance People*, translates oral stories into print and is being re-published. Maria Campbell's first professional play, *Flight*, was the first all-Aboriginal theatre production in Canada. *Flight* brought modern dance, storytelling, and drama together with traditional Aboriginal practices. Professor Campbell went on to write and direct other plays, some of which toured Canada and abroad. In 1984, she co-founded a film and video production company with her brother and daughter. With this company, Campbell produced and directed seven documentaries and produced with CTV Canada's first weekly Aboriginal television series entitled "My Partners, My People." Professor Campbell has received numerous awards, including the National Aboriginal Achievement Award, the Gabriel Dumont Order of Merit, the Chalmers Award for best new play, and a national Dora Mavoré Award for playwriting. She has been inducted into the Saskatchewan Theatre Hall of Fame and was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2008. Maria Campbell has recently retired from the University of Saskatchewan where she taught native studies, creative writing and drama. She is currently the Elder in Residence at the Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge and Research, Athabasca University. She holds four honorary doctorate degrees and has served as writer and playwright in residence at numerous universities, public libraries, and theatres. She has worked as a volunteer with women and children in crisis for over forty years and is co-founder of a halfway house for women in Edmonton as well as an emergency crisis centre for women and children. Until recently, Maria Campbell's home was a safe house for youth. She is a mom, grandma and great-grandma” (*Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation*).

was particularly interested in whether or not this hopefulness, as embodied in the statement above, overrode cynicism or anger. And while there is plenty of the latter, hopefulness, at least on the personal, individual level, was a prevalent theme.

6.1 Personal Truths

As might be expected, most of the respondents first spoke of personal truths, primarily in the form of their connection to Residential Schools as an issue, despite the fact that I did not explicitly ask each respondent about this connection; I left those personal details to the respondent's discretion. An example of this dynamic can be seen in Heather Igloliorte's³⁶ response to the first question about her understanding of truth in relation to Residential Schools; Igloliorte is the curator of "'We were so far away...' The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools":

Well it's something that is very close to my heart because I know a lot of people that were deeply affected by the residential school experience in

³⁶ "Heather Igloliorte (Inuit, Nunatsiavut Territory of Labrador) is an Assistant Professor of Aboriginal art history at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. Heather's teaching and research interests center on Inuit and other Native North American visual and material culture, circumpolar art studies, performance and media art, the global exhibition of Indigenous arts and culture, and issues of colonization, sovereignty, resistance and resilience. Some of her recent publications related to this work include chapters and catalogue essays in *Manifestations: New Native Art Criticism* (2012); *Changing Hands: Art Without Reservation 3* (2012); *Curating Difficult Knowledge* (2011); *Native American Art At Dartmouth: Highlights from the Hood Museum of Art* (2011); *Inuit Modern* (2010); *Response, Responsibility, and Renewal: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Journey* (2009); and *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada* (forthcoming, 2014). She is also an active independent curator. One of her current projects is the reinstallation of the permanent collection of Inuit art at the Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec. Other recent curatorial projects include *aboDIGITAL: The Art of Jordan Bennett* (2012), *Decolonize Me* (Ottawa Art Gallery, 2011 - 2015), and *"we were so far away": The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools* (Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2009 - ongoing). Igloliorte served as an Executive Member of the Board of Directors for the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective (2005 - 2011) and as the President of Gallery 101 (Ottawa, 2009 - 2011); she currently serves on the Board of Directors for North America's largest Indigenous art historical association, the Native North American Art Studies Association, and was recently appointed to the Board of Directors of the Otsego Institute for Native American Art History at the Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown, New York. She also serves on the Indigenous Advisory Council of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (opening 2014) and regularly contributes to other Aboriginal arts and cultural organizations. Igloliorte completed her phd in Cultural Mediations at Carleton University's Institute for Comparative Studies in Literature, Art and Culture (ICSLAC); her dissertation contributes the first art history of the Nunatsiavummiut, focusing on over 400 years of post-contact production, *Nunatsiavummi Sananguagusigisimajangit / Nunatsiavut Art History: Continuity, Resilience, and Transformation in Inuit Art* (2013)" (Concordia University).

Labrador and it did have its own particular circumstances. Under the Moravian missionaries there were church-run schools in the communities and so then when kids got to what was probably around Grade 8 in the '50s and '60s, then they had to go down to the residential school in Northwest River. This is a truth that has had a hard time coming into the light and I think we're going to see the same thing now in Newfoundland, now that the Qalipu First Nation was just formed, I think they will also be trying to catch up on this as well. I think on the east coast, because of the manner in which Newfoundland joined confederation, and everything that happened then with all Native people being excluded from the Indian Act and from any kind of federal jurisdiction, a lot of these things are just catching up now. Aboriginal people in Newfoundland and Labrador really didn't get a fair shake when it all came down. (Igloliorte Interview)

Here we see Igloliorte position herself as an Inuk from Labrador. Important to her was that I understand how broad the issue is in her home territory. From there she provides some historical specifics:

I think prolonged colonization [was an issue], absolutely. I think the colonization of the north started in Labrador. The Moravians came in 1771 and immediately began setting up permanent settlements along the Labrador coast, by building churches and trading posts together at several stations – the first was in Nain, but then later in Okak, Hopedale and several other places. The Inuit were fairly quickly converted to Christianity, settled into communities, and so all the things we see much later on in the central Arctic happened in Labrador very early on and I think in some ways that was what prevented the Labrador Inuit from getting a lot of the things they had further up north - Inuit in Labrador were seen as “Moravian Inuit” and not really as Inuit peoples. I think that's one of the factors that led to them not being treated as separate from the settler population in Labrador.

With that historical context set, Igloliorte, as others do as well, makes the personal link between herself and Residential Schools: “[My father] never used the words residential school, obviously, [because it was not the lexicon of the Moravians] but we knew that he had grown up away from his family. He had been sent down the coast and my dad had a really unique set of circumstances.” Essential to her position as one who speaks of Residential Schools personally and professionally, she provides the following qualifier:

“He’s given me permission to talk about this because of my [professional and artistic] association with residential schools and he’s written about his experiences as well”. From there, she again provides specific details to flesh out both the broad experience of attending a residential facility in Labrador and her father’s specific set of circumstances:

He actually had kind of a unique experience in that after he had been sent away to the school for a year or two years, his older sister, who was much older, got married and moved into the community where the school was, so then it became like a day school for him and he got to go home at the end of the day. So I think the circumstances were very different for him. As is common to a lot of people who are second and third generation Survivors or people who have been feeling the effects of colonization for a prolonged period of time, there were some things happening in his family life that he wanted to get away from. I think that certainly my experience as an interviewer [for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s statement-taking], you hear that a lot. That people were like, you know, “I had to go to residential school and it had its own set of problems, and challenges, but I was also leaving a home environment that was not necessarily safe or that wasn’t ideal because of the things that had happened to my parents and to their parents and to their parents.”

Igloliorte, here, is the perfect example of the intergenerational Survivor who has had to come to terms with the experience as it relates to her father as she works through, both personally and professionally, her connection to the issue as it plays out publicly with regard to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and the Prime Minister’s apology. And while she had the personal connection to the issue as described above, she also had the professional experience of working with Inuit Survivors from all four Inuit regions as curator of “*We were so far away...*”. Thus, Igloliorte had to put aside the specifics of her own experience as one who hails from Labrador to tell an inclusive story of differing Inuit experiences. The unifying theme was, of course, that which is captured in the exhibit’s title: the distances Inuit were forced to travel in most cases to attend schools.

Igloliorte is not alone as one who has both the professional and personal connection to Residential Schools. Anishinaabe artist and curator Jaimie Isaac³⁷ was the curator for the TRC's first National Event in Winnipeg in 2010. Unlike Igloliorte, she says of her learning experience that "I really didn't start learning about it until ... my adult life, and just really started talking about it and realizing that history around the time of Stephen Harper's apology. And I think that was because ... my mother, and my uncles, and my grandparents are all Survivors of the residential school history and that really wasn't talked about in our family." For Isaac, this meant taking a distinctly different path to understanding the issue as it relates first to her family and later to her work:

I know that my mom had been through a hard, harder life, and she had some anxiety and some issues when I was a kid that we, we just didn't understand and so ... really understanding the Indian residential school legacy and how that affected [my mother and other family members] was the catalyst to sort of understand the breakdown in our family and understand the physical and emotional impacts that our family had gone through. (Isaac Interview)

For Isaac, despite the silences, other efforts to get at the truth were more successful:

We were introduced to the culture in our family more than the history of colonialism. And I think that was because my family was going through the process of reclamation of some ceremonies and their culture. So we

³⁷ "Jaimie Isaac is a writer, curator, artist and art administrator. She is from Winnipeg, Manitoba and is a member of Sagkeeng First Nation. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Art History and an Arts and Cultural Management Certificate from the University of Winnipeg. In 2010, Jaimie enjoyed a time at OCADU attending the MFA program in criticism and curatorial studies. In 2011, she accepted an offer at UBC Okanagan for the Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies to finish her masters. In the last few years Jaimie has also undertaken two mentorships for curating and writing with two senior curators and writers. Jaimie has been involved locally and nationally with boards, collectives, juries and artist run centers. Jaimie volunteers for the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective and the Aboriginal Manitoba Music board of directors. Previously working as the Aboriginal Programs and Outreach Manager at ACI Manitoba for over three years, Jaimie established several initiatives. She has published writing within newspaper columns, critical essays in art catalogues and online publications. Jaimie is a founding member of The Ephemerals, a female artist/curatorial collective in Winnipeg. [Awards, instrumental in curatorial and arts research,] have supported her work. In 2010, Jaimie worked as the visual arts coordinator for the inaugural Truth and Reconciliation Commission's national event in Winnipeg, where she planned and programmed arts that contributed to the Indian Residential School Legacy. Currently, Jaimie is working towards several projects within the contemporary Indigenous art and culture field through critical and visual dialogue" (*official denial*).

were going to healing ceremonies and shaking tent ceremonies and, you know, sweat lodges before we understood about that past. I mean, before we were taught about that, we were taught to really respect and celebrate our culture. I think for my mom she really wanted to give us what she wasn't really given when she was a child. Her family wasn't traditional, at all, growing up. Her parents were but she wasn't, and [it was a] very colonial kind of upbringing while she was in the residential schools, ashamed to speak her language so we didn't learn the language.

In her case, practicing culture told personal truths about being Anishinaabe in place of open truth-telling about Residential Schools, which would come, as Isaac explains, when the issue became very public. Then, she and her sisters were able to speak more openly with and about the experiences of her mother and grandmother in particular.

But not all artist and curators with professional experience working with Residential Schools have that direct, familial connection. Instead, some, like Jim Logan³⁸ learned about Residential Schools in the course of their work and came to feel compelled to share what they have learned:

When I first heard about this Truth and Reconciliation organization being formed for residential schools I really thought it was a good thing. I said oh good, it's well overdue and definitely necessary. Before it ever came I never thought too much about the, you know, reconciliation. I remember talking about the truth and my art's all to do about truth, presenting a story, presenting other stories, ... particularly [with regard to] residential schools, I present the truth. It's also very important for me to be as accurate as I could with what I was portraying, and getting the consent of those that, you know... if it'd be okay if I painted their story, or painted the story that they've told me. That was part of my work. I used to work up

38 On his website, Logan describes himself as follows: "I started my art career painting social statement pieces from my experiences as a lay minister in Kwanlun Dunn Village on the outskirts of Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. The most important work from this period was the series I titled, "A Requiem for Our Children" which described existence within the Residential School system in Canada. Other noted pieces were the 'National Pastimes' series in the exhibition, INDIGENA which commented on Canadian apathy toward the hardship and poverty of the Native community in Canada. Currently I have been revisiting many of the themes I have explored in the past and have added computer art to the many mediums I practice. Most recently I have been interested in art history and comparing it to Aboriginal art history. I am often testing the European ego concerning art, particular[ly] prized pieces of art that are termed masterpieces or trend setting pieces as I did with The Classical Aboriginal Series. I am working further with this theme as I have found the juxtapositioning, superimposing, or the re-painting of such works offer the audience an interesting perspective on art causing many to rethink and perhaps revalue art in general" (Jim-Logan.net).

north as a lay missionary... With the Pentecostal Church, and we used to visit Kwanlin Dun village quite often, actually two or three times a week, primarily just doing general service sort of work, providing mitts and chocolates and clothing sometimes and then we'd always offer a prayer, and people were very open to that, and just visit, you know. Sit and have tea and talk. And through these conversations I found out there's a lot of stories that started coming back, you know, that back in school this was happening, back in school, this... [they] kept going back to school, back to school and I realized that a lot of these peoples' emotional problems stemmed from being separated from their families at a very young age, some quite violently separated and taken away, and not understanding, and not knowing the language, you know, all this... So I thought 'oh my God,' I was just really, really quite taken by it, by those stories that kept on repeating, not only just one house, the next house, and the house over there, no matter where we went. These people, these people were opening up to us as in prayer and, and asking for forgiveness for things and asking and confessing things that, well, it kind of opened my eyes to the whole residential school boarding system that it wasn't as orderly and Catholic or Protestant as, you know, clean, as one thought it might be. (Logan Interview)

David Garneau, co-curator (with Michelle Lavallee) of the 2015 exhibition

"Moving Forward, Never Forgetting," says, "I didn't grow up knowing about residential schools. We lived on the west edge of downtown [Edmonton], just off on 124th Street, and I went to inner-city schools. I identified with inner city people. Métisness and Native consciousness were not a big part of growing up. Many of my neighbourhood friends were Aboriginal, though I didn't think about race until I was about eleven or twelve" (Garneau Interview). When I interviewed Garneau in November 2011, he initially said of the concepts of truth and reconciliation that "I haven't been deeply involved but I've been paying attention, reading, puzzling over things." He would later write in the 2015 book *The Land We Are: Artists and Writers Unsettle the Politics of Reconciliation* that he was truly conflicted and gave a nod to our 2011 conversation as one of the catalysts for moving him forward:

Prior to [the 2013 Reconsidering Reconciliation residency at Thompson Rivers University], I was not optimistic about the social engineering called Truth and Reconciliation. When first asked to work in this area more than five years ago by Jonathan Dewar, I rejected the idea. Even before seeing the testimony process firsthand, I felt that the principles of the formal TRC project continue the colonial enterprise. Individual payouts for personal testimony – rather than nation-to-nation settlements – are designed to bypass Treaty relationships, to divide and conquer. While the aggressive assimilation spearheaded by Indian Residential Schools targeted children, it was designed to ruin communities, past, present, future. The money, and the public raking up of this pain, has caused a great deal of (mostly unreported) devastation to individuals, families, and communities. I remain convinced that the official Truth and Reconciliation is primarily a non-Indigenous project designed to reconcile settlers with their dark history in order that they might live in this territory more comfortably and exploit these lands more thoroughly. (74)

In our interview, he provided the context he had to work with before Residential Schools and the idea of a settlement were front page news:

I remember when South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation was going on, there was one leader, a flower painter, who was a great speaker. When asked why he made such beautiful and political innocuous works in this time of crisis, he said that he did not draw to make work about the inequities and horrors but about the good things in life; after all, they were fighting for a change, to move away from those horrors and toward what, well, toward the sort of things he was painting. Bob Boyer also said, "The people I hang out with, non-artists, they like beautiful things, that's why I want to make my things beautiful." He did make very agitated things at certain times, and then he did very personal work. It was all coded though, sometimes very hard to read, the titles usually helped. But there's some people who want to make their way through the world, and be healthy people. How long can you be angry? How long can you be damaged and make that? You know, imagine being in a room like this and making unhappy art all the time. I mean that's gotta be part of it. Part of it too is that, [if an artist is] making a living off his work, he's got to make some things that people can live with. (Garneau Interview)

Garneau did indeed pay attention and puzzle over things from his perspective as an outsider. By that I mean he began his work by articulating his position as one outside of the direct Survivor or intergenerational Survivor paradigm; in order to work his way in – if appropriate – he would have some serious work to do. And work he did. Since 2012, he

has been a leader in thinking through issues related to showing or sharing artwork that touches on the history and, importantly, the pain of the Residential School experience. For Garneau, this intellectual engagement with Residential Schools and art became his personal connection; he would contribute both theoretical ideas, such as the 2012 article “Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation,” and put those ideas to the test, as he does in his work on *Moving Forward, Never Forgetting*. Garneau increasingly found that he could not live with the concept of reconciliation as defined by the TRC. By the summer of 2012, he had more clearly defined the landscape he found himself operating within. He writes:

[t]he colonial attitude, including its academic branch, is characterized by a drive to see, to traverse, to know, to exploit, to translate (to make equivalent), to own, and to exploit. It is based on the belief that everything should be accessible, is ultimately comprehensible, and a potential commodity or resource, or at least something that can be recorded or otherwise saved. Primary sites of resistance, then, are not the occasional open battles between the minoritized, oppressed, or colonized and the dominant culture, but the perpetual, active refusal of complete engagement: to speak with one’s own in one’s own way; to refuse translation and full explanations; to create trade goods that imitate core culture without violating it; to not be a Native informant. (“Imaginary,” 32)

Garneau thus challenges the very word “reconciliation” by calling for “irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality,” which he sees as:

a synonym [of conciliation] with a difference. *Re*-conciliation refers to the repair of a previously existing harmonious relationship. This word choice imposes the fiction that equanimity is the status quo between Aboriginal peoples and Canada. [However], initial conciliation was tragically disrupted and will be painfully restored through the current process. In this context, the social imaginary that the word describes is limited to post-contact narratives. This construction anaesthetizes knowledge of the existence of pre-contact Aboriginal sovereignty. It narrates halcyon moments of co-operation before things went wrong as the seamless source of harmonious origin. And it sees the residential school era, for example, as an unfortunate deviation rather than just one aspect of the perpetual

colonial struggle to contain and control Aboriginal people, territories, and resources. (35, emphasis in original)

As Garneau says, “Exhibitions of Aboriginal art shown within a dominant culture space are always in-formed by the worldviews of those who manage the resources and the site/sights” (37). In order for an exhibition to engage in truth and reconciliation, if they are held within these institutions, they

are also likely to be designed within the colonial narrative: reconciliation rather than conciliation; the theory that public display of private (Native) pain leads to individual and national healing; text over speech; etc. If art galleries and other display spaces are to be potential sites of conciliation, they should not meet the dominant culture viewer halfway in their space in their way; the non-Aboriginal viewer who seeks conciliation ought to enter Aboriginal sovereign display territories as guests. (37)

This notion of creating a sovereign space is also interesting when looking at the position of a non-Aboriginal artist or curator engaging in this work. Take for example Leah Decter,³⁹ who has been collaborating with Jaimie Isaac for several years now on the *(official denial) trade value in progress* (Figure 1) project, an interactive art object that takes on the Prime Minister’s 2009 declaration that Canada has no history of colonialism.⁴⁰

³⁹ “Based in Winnipeg, Canada, Leah Decter is an inter-media artist working in installation, video and other digital media, textiles, performance, and dialogic/engaged practices. Decter has exhibited widely in Canada including at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Grunt Gallery, Aceart, Trinity Square Video, Platform Center for Digital and Photographic Arts, and the Dunlop Art Gallery, and internationally in the US, UK, Australia and Europe. Video screenings of her work include the Images Festival in Toronto, the International Film Festival Rotterdam, and Malta Contemporary Art in Marsa, Malta. Her work has been supported through numerous awards and is held in the collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery, as well as private collections in Canada, US and UK. Decter’s engaged practices have included large-scale collaborative public art and intervention projects across Canada. She holds an MFA in New Media from Berlin based Transart Institute and is currently undertaking a PhD in Cultural Studies at Queen’s University. Decter’s work is rooted in the spaces where material conditions and lived experience intersect with social and political issues. Her ongoing investigations focus on relationships between place, identity and dis/location, drawing on both the personal and historical. Her current work enacts interventions into reductive national narratives towards paradigms of decolonization. She approaches this work from a critical settler perspective” (“(official denial)”).

⁴⁰ See Decter’s website for images of the work’s evolution from 2010-2016: http://www.leahdecter.com/official_denial/documentation.html.

Figure 1: (official denial) trade value in progress, 2010 (reproduced from leahdecter.com with permission).

Figure 2: (official denial) trade value in progress, installation and sewing action at Algoma University, October 2012. (Photo credit Jonathan Dewar)

Figure 3: *(official denial) trade value in progress*, installation and sewing action at Algoma University, October 2012. (Photo credit Jonathan Dewar)

Decter very clearly positions herself as an outsider working her way into Indigenous-centred discourses and practices – again, if appropriate:

I have chosen to take responsibility as a citizen who has benefited from my ancestors' making home in this place, and as an artist working in relation to issues of place in relation to material existence. As such, for me personally, not to engage actively, critically and publicly with these issues would constitute perpetuating dominant and destructive practices of denial. At this time for me it's not viable to simply not be part of the problem without being part of engaging in solutions. I'm not invested in making the judgment that other settler artists should take these actions and issues up as part of their art practice or that they have more responsibility than non-artists to engage. I will say that settler/non-Indigenous *citizens* really need to be actively moving in this direction as a practice of decolonization in order to understand their position within our colonial legacies and the ways they even inadvertently perpetuate unjust relationships. (Decter Interview)

6.2 Identity

Decter positions herself as not just an outsider but deliberately and unabashedly as a citizen of the state who is non-Indigenous and thus a “settler.” Despite this, she still makes a personal connection:

As a visual artist, much of my work has revolved around questions relating to place, identity and dis/location. I had been making work that drew on my maternal Grandfather’s experiences of loss and displacement preceding his arrival in Canada. In looking at the movement of people in the global/historical context of my Grandfather’s story I became interested in inter-narratives of displacement that have constructed what this country is today. Through this research it became pressing for me to interrogate my position as a descendant of immigrants – a settler – within the persistent and inequitable legacies of settler colonialism. Through this process my work moved into dissecting dominant national mythologies, and unearthing colonial underpinnings that have been rendered virtually and wilfully invisible in the contemporary Canadian life of most non-Aboriginal people. (Decter Interview)

And this connection is all the more tangible in the very public airing of Residential School truths, particularly the Prime Minister’s 2008 apology; Decter notes,

As a settler and one of those Canadians on whose behalf the Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools was issued in 2008, I felt it important to engage critically with this action and the initiatives tied to it. Subsequent artwork, including ‘(*official apology*) 913 words: trade value unknown,’ reflect that interest. While I was developing this work, Prime Minister Harper made the statement ‘we also have no history of Colonialism’ while answering a question relating to the economy at the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh in 2009. Given the work and research I was doing at the time, I again felt an imperative to respond to this in some way. My resulting work, ‘(*official denial*) trade value in progress’, which was originally curated by Jaimie Isaac, who has an ongoing role co-activating the project with me, is a dialogic project that asks Canadians to respond to Harper’s statement. One of my original intents for the project was to provoke non-Aboriginal Canadians to consider holding themselves and their government accountable. My interest was for the project to highlight, enact and problematize the ways that reconciliation and decolonization are or are not being carried out at present. Through its initial presentation at the TRC [National] Event in Winnipeg in 2010, Jaimie [Isaac]’s continued involvement and the

constituents of its process, the project has grown to have impact in a number of additional ways.

Decter's reference to her collaboration with Isaac is key here. In taking on an "untruth" in Stephen Harper's assertion about Canada and its lack of a colonial history, and thus no colonial context in the present, Decter, by virtue of the relationship developed with Isaac, is exposed to Isaac's story – her identity – of coming to truth around her own family's particular experience with colonialism – Residential Schools.

Adrian Stimson,⁴¹ too, picks up on this notion of identity in one's art practice saying, "I definitely think right away a lot of my work, of course, dealt with my identity. When I went to ACAD I thought I was going to be a photographer so a lot of my photographs, well not all of them, revolved around my experiences, which also include a lot of native imagery, but then when I got there [and got] into painting, I started to, of course, paint things that I knew, and that was the bison and the history of the bison and then images of my great-grandfather Heavyshield and stuff like that" (Stimson

⁴¹ From *AdrianStimson.com*: "Adrian Stimson is a member of the Siksika (Blackfoot) Nation in southern Alberta. He is an interdisciplinary artist, curator and educator with a BFA with distinction from the Alberta College of Art & Design and MFA from the University of Saskatchewan. As an interdisciplinary artist, Adrian's work includes paintings, installations, collodion wet plate photography, sculpture and performance. Recent exhibits and performances include, Witnesses at the Belkin Gallery, UBC, Vancouver, Reconsidering Reconciliation, TRU, Kamloops, The Shaman Exterminator, On the Trail of the Woodcraft Indians with the Buffalo Boy Scouts of America, Paved Arts, Saskatoon, Making Treaty 7, Calgary, "Suffer little children...", ARNICA, Kamloops, Buffalo Boy's Coal jubilee, House of the Wayward Spirits-ANDPVA, Toronto, White Shame Re-Worked, Grunt Gallery, Vancouver, Holding Our Breath (Canadian Forces Artist Program-Afghanistan tour), Grunt Gallery, Vancouver and Neutral Ground, Regina, Beyond Redemption at the Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, Photo Quai, Musee du quai branly and Unmasking at the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris, France, "The Life and Times of Buffalo Boy", The Works, Edmonton, Pink Panther, Open Space, Ft. Simpson, Kentucky Fried Chicken Dance, Two Story Café, Prince Albert, Brave Seduction, Gallery 101, Ottawa and "Buffalo Boy's You can roller skate in a Buffalo herd", Harbourfront, Toronto. He is a regular participant at Burning Man and was featured in the 2007 summer issue of Canadian Art: Buffalo Boy at Burning Man and Spring issue of FUSE magazine: Buffalo Boy Then and Now 2009. Adrian was awarded the Blackfoot Visual Arts Award in 2009, the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal in 2003 and the Alberta Centennial Medal in 2005 for his human rights and diversity activism in various communities. He is represented by the Darrell Bell Gallery in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where he currently resides."

Interview). But this presented challenges to Stimson as an emerging artist – as a student; namely, Stimson began to have his efforts to explore identity questioned:

So I started to create works like that and that's when I started to start hitting up against a wall, because in the critiques, you know the instructors would be able to talk about the painting style, but they had a lot of difficulty with the content. So what I found I had to do was to do a lot of education with my instructors and my fellow students, about Indigenous world view, about Blackfoot history, and sometimes it would be met with opposition or, like, "You should just be an artist. Why do you have to include all this stuff about identity and stuff about it," and I said, well, that's stupid. Look at every art movement in the world, it's a political issue within every single one, so why would it be so different in myself, a Blackfoot person making art, that my identity wouldn't be a part of it. That was that sort of educative process. Not all the time would it be confrontational, there were a few times when it was and I just got really pissed off and I would really get into arguments (laughs), esthetic arguments, it's interesting because in many ways I think it expanded the conversation about art-making and yes, you could be a purist in terms of ideas in painting but you still have an identity and that identity still comes out in whatever style you choose because that style has a history and every time that argument would come up, I'd find it would always be kind of a redundant discussion because they couldn't see their own history in terms of their own construction, and that made me often wonder if there is a racist sort of bent here and people are just not admitting it. They just want to sort of cloak it in these art history contexts.

This questioning, though, ultimately led to growth both as a person and as an artist:

I guess again for me it is all part of my path, it is all part of my own personal process of coming to know, which is, you know, Blackfoot words, or concepts of coming to know, that we're always on the road to knowing, we'll never know all, because it's all a great mystery, so I think that for me, it is a journey. It is a journey to coming to know. And I'm kind of glad that I don't know, I think I have moments I think I know, but again I think that's a trick of the mind, a trick of being, being human is thinking that we've come to know or come to truths and all that stuff, but I always find that as I come to know, I always want to know more because it creates more questions. I think that's what the art-making process does for me, is it's a continuous process of questioning. Questioning myself, questioning the materials, questioning the theory, questioning how I view it, wondering how others view it, all that sort of stuff, and I think together that is a collective process that helps me to better understand my situation, my historical context, my current context. It's a space of wonderment, or wondering. I think if I ever stop wondering, then I'm in trouble.

Perhaps most importantly, though, we have the firsthand experience of Survivors themselves. I was very fortunate to have had the opportunity to interview Alex Janvier⁴² and he very frankly spoke of his experience in Residential Schools:

I was disconnected from my family, you know 1942-3, the fall of '42, I was just thrown in the back of a truck with a bunch of other kids and my parents told me that they were sending me to a school. I had no idea what that was. But I had an idea that my older siblings had been there. Mind you, to me, it didn't look like they fared too well. But that's about the extent of my knowledge of the school. I knew it was ran by kind nuns and kind priests, that's what I was told information-wise before I got in there and when I got in it was just the opposite experience. They were hard as nails and they were just as tough. They had a system that degenerated me immediately from my language, my culture, my beliefs, and anything that I was as a child. It was impossible. I found it impossible to exist and then I couldn't speak it, I couldn't speak my truth. They spoke French or English and none of my language. They didn't have the ability to understand my language. What really took place was one of the older girls used to speak for me, we'd get her to connect in English. There was always a lady admonishing me to start to follow their rules and then it would be just great. So I started following the rules and nothing great ever happened, except if you did one wrong thing you really got the whip. And the whip was really the most fearful thing that came into my life. Everybody got it and we were all disconnecting from our language and our culture and from

⁴² "Born of Dene Suline and Saulteaux descent in 1935, Alex Janvier was raised in the nurturing care of his family until the age of eight. At this age, the young Janvier was uprooted from his home and sent to the Blue Quills Indian Residential School near St. Paul, Alberta. Although Janvier speaks of having a creative instinct from as far back as he can remember, it was at the residential school that he was given the tools to create his first paintings. Unlike many aboriginal artists of his time, Janvier received formal art training from the Alberta College of Art in Calgary and graduated with honours in 1960. Immediately after graduation, Janvier took up an opportunity to instruct art at the University of Alberta. While Alex recognizes the artists Wassily Kandinsky (Russian) and Paul Klee (Swiss) as influences, his style is unique. Many of his masterpieces involve an eloquent blend of both abstract and representational images with bright, often symbolic colours. As a First Nations person emerging from a history of oppression and many struggles for cultural empowerment, Janvier paints both the challenges and celebrations that he has encountered in his lifetime. Alex proudly credits the beadwork and birch bark basketry of his mother and other relatives as influencing his art. As a member of the commonly referred to "Indian Group of Seven", Janvier is one of the significant pioneering aboriginal artists in Canada, and as such has influenced many generations of aboriginal artists. By virtue of his art, Janvier was selected to represent Canada in a Canadian/Chinese Cultural Exchange in 1985. Although he has completed several murals nationally, Janvier speaks of the 450 meter squared masterpiece entitled "Morning Star" at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, as a major highlight in his career. In January 2004, one of Janvier's works was displayed in Paris, France at the Canadian Forum on Cultural Enterprise. In recognition of his success, Alex Janvier recently received three prestigious Lifetime Achievement Awards from the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, The Tribal Chiefs Institute, and Cold Lake First Nations. Janvier's passion and natural talents for creative expression remains strong to this day." (Janvier)

who we are and all of the sudden you're just loaded down with religious prayers and going to chapels and listening to preachings and you see these nuns all over the place and they keep telling us they're dedicated to God and they do it for the love of God and they keep slapping and pulling our ears and pinching our nose and I couldn't see the connection, what they were saying and the way we were treated. And then the regulations for how to live in those institutions were so strict. You didn't even have a chance to breathe. The classrooms were just a place to change us over completely, right around. So I was lost in the ranks and what I did was I just followed others who were just as lost as I was. Our procedures and life had come to an end. And a new process started to take place by force. The whole place was uniform in a way that you could get a whipping or a slap anytime. Get blamed for something you'd get whacked just as if you were guilty. There was a lot of that. Some of the kids became a favourite to the administrators and they knew how to be in favour. Tattletale and squeal on someone else and even if it was a lie, their word was against mine, just like the laws are here today. It's always how you face the law today, was a preparation for that today. What we didn't realize then was that we were going to lose our language, our culture, our land, our access to the use of the land. It became so mixed up that the laws now are on a borderline of law. Canadians have their law and there's a law against the natives. You know people I see, they talk a lot about justice and rightfulness and being citizens, being this, being that, and here on the other side, none of those things really exist. I've been on a borderline for a long, long time and then when I realized that I began to paint and began to change my view because I've travelled to Europe and the Far East and I see other people, you know, they've been victimized sometime, somewhere along their history and they're survivors and I said, "Oh, other peoples who have survived the crush of another body of minds." (Janvier Interview)

And heartbreakingly Janvier reflects on telling these personal truths as a child:

I used to confide in my mother, strangely enough on all these matters, really, and she would listen to me, and listen, and listen. She would take the air out of me, you know? What I thought or what I complained or cried about, she used to just smoothly and softly speak to me to the point where I would calm down. That's what would happen in the summer, that's when I would calm down and then I'd be brought back to the same place.

6.3 Painting the Survivor Experience

Here, Janvier also spoke at length of the process by which he came to begin painting about his experiences with residential School. Not surprisingly, given the tenor of the conversation, a return to traditional practices played an important role:

I probably could have been able to do it earlier, but I had no cause to re-feel all that. What really happened though was that one of my best friends sent me back to the residential school, I didn't want to have anything to do with it. But the strange thing about it, the highway is about half a mile from that school, I would go to Edmonton and back and when the bus would go by there, my gut would get all stirred up. I would automatically feel sick to my stomach, then it would affect me while I was in Edmonton on my business, it would interfere with that because these things kept trying to come out to the surface, until one day one of my friends sent me back and it was tough to go there, holy. I actually went there and there was another group, they had a pipe ceremony and I joined the pipe ceremony because I was invited to sit in with them. It was all in Cree which I understand enough of to follow. While I was sitting there it was just like something lifted right out of me and a new energy came into my system. I could feel the lift and the receiving of something. When the pipe came to me, it dawned on me, that is what we missed, the culture. So when I smoke I offer to the best of my ability to the Great Spirit for having failed to recognize whatever it is that I was missing out on. I remember while smoking the tears were running down, effortlessly. I remember for the first time that stuff that you pack down here start to come out, lift, gut feeling they call it, start to come out. I remember as soon as we finished I went outside and went to the corner of the building where I used to sit and cry, we were all the kids that used to do that, would cry. We didn't know what we were crying about it, but that's what it was. (Janvier Interview)

And despite painting all his life, Janvier only somewhat reluctantly came to paint his

Survivor experience and grew stronger in doing so:

I've been painting all my life and I've been positively trying to move out of it. Every once in a while, I hit a few things but then it scares people ... Louis Riel, he said for 100 years my people will sleep and the artists will bring their spirit back out of it. I think that was a prophetic statement. And I'm not painting because he said that, I'm painting because I'm an artist and I have the opportunity to face up to these challenges. Unfortunately, my facing to the challenges can be challenged by people who don't want to. There's more against native notions than for.

As he says, “I’ve done a lot with a paintbrush and I back it up with words sometimes”.

6.4 Art, Truth, and Activism

Maria Campbell again provides a succinct and pointed place to start. She says, “I am familiar with concepts of truth and reconciliation from the place of a community activist because I work with community and I work with families in community, so I see them on the front lines, so to speak. And I’m an artist on the front lines” (Campbell Interview).

She adds:

It’s always been my work, because of my own background. In order for myself to heal and to find some semblance of sanity in my life, I went to work with other people who were going through what I had gone through. So most of my work for the last 40 some years has been with women and children in crisis, so I work a lot with youth and with families. And that’s even in my teaching; when I was teaching at university it was geared to that. And my work as a writer and as a playwright, you know, it’s all about healing family, because I feel if families are not healed and helped, then we don’t have anything; we don’t have any kind of future, no matter how many apologies, no matter what, we have nothing if we can’t.

Nlaka’pamux playwright and actor Kevin Loring,⁴³ turning to his art practice, speaks along a similar line, saying, “I think that in my experience for the most part, Native, especially in my field, theatre artists, we’re activists. We are ... especially in my earlier years I was, I thought of myself as an art warrior. I am trying to do things through my art that are impacting, that I intend to impact upon society or injustices as I see them. Maybe that’s a bit self-righteous but I think that many artists who are Native are in that activist

⁴³ “Kevin Loring is a member of the Nlaka’pamux (Thompson) First Nation in Lytton, British Columbia. As an actor, he has performed in numerous plays across Canada, including Marie Clements’s *Burning Vision* and *Copper Thunderbird*, and in the NAC’s 40th anniversary production of George Ryga’s *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*. He also starred in the 2007 feature film, *Pathfinder*, and co-produced and co-hosted the documentary *Canyon War: The Untold Story about the 1858 Fraser Canyon War*. He was the recipient of the 2005 City of Vancouver Mayor’s Arts Award for Emerging Theatre Artist, Artist in Residence at The Playhouse Theatre Company in 2006, and iPlaywright in Residence at the National Arts Centre, Ottawa, in 2010. His first play, *Where the Blood Mixes*, won the Jessie Richardson Award for Outstanding Original Script; the Sydney J. Risk Prize for Outstanding Original Script by an Emerging Playwright; and the 2009 Governor General’s Literary Award for Drama” (*BravoFact.com*).

sort of vein, whether they would say so or not. I think a lot of their art just does that” (Loring Interview). Métis artist Jaime Black⁴⁴ notes that, for her – personally and within her practice – one cannot separate out notions of activism from other elements that one may embrace or have put on them by others: “I find that all of these things cross over into each other. Like, I just had an interview the other day and somebody asked me if I was primarily an activist, primarily an educator, or primarily an artist? It was like no, all of those things...Right? All of those things all lend to each other and are dependent upon each other, in myself, to exist” (Black Interview). Further, Black, whose *The REDress Project* highlights the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women by aiming to collect 600 red dresses from communities and then displaying those dresses in public spaces to highlight the missing nature of the women and girls⁴⁵, says this work led her to make discoveries about herself: “Suddenly this [REDress] project is bringing me to a place where I’m learning about what I was never taught, and parts of myself I never really understood. And so I guess in that way it’s very much identity-building for myself, you know?”

⁴⁴ “Jaime Black is an emerging, metis (author’s use in original) multidisciplinary artist based in Winnipeg. She studied English Literature at the University of Manitoba and has an Education degree from The Ontario Institute of Studies in Education. She has taught in Opaskwayak Cree Nation in the Pas, Manitoba, has worked developing art curriculum for the Urban Shaman: Contemporary Aboriginal Art, and has long been involved in the Aboriginal writers and artists communities in Winnipeg. She is currently a mentee with Mentoring Artists for Womens Art (MAWA). In her artwork, she attempts to create a dialogue around social and political events and issues, through provocation or creating space for reflection. She is particularly interested in feminism and Aboriginal social justice, and the possibilities for articulating linkages between and around these movements” (*The REDress Project*). She is best known for The REDress Project, which commemorates murdered and missing Indigenous women across Canada: The REDress Project is an “installation art project based on an aesthetic response to this critical national issue. The project seeks to collect 600 red dresses by community donation that will later be installed in public spaces throughout Winnipeg and across Canada as a visual reminder of the staggering number of women who are no longer with us. Through the installation [she] hope[s] to draw attention to the gendered and racialized nature of violent crimes against Aboriginal women and to evoke a presence through the marking of absence” (*The REDress Project*).

⁴⁵ There are many images available online from various installations, including the 2011 Kamloops installations I reference, which can be found at: <http://www.redressproject.org/>.

Armand Garnett Ruffo⁴⁶ picks up this line as well, adding in the importance of healing to notions of identity and activism:

Personally, I think because our voice had been taken away for so long that that's what we're all doing. I'm sure, you know, you've been interviewing writers and painters and other artists. I bet you they all talk about their work in terms of healing. I don't know any Native artist who doesn't. I mean we might say yes, it's really about the story, and yes it's about the color, it's about the visual impact of what I'm doing, but in a sense, by just creating voice, it's healing. Because you cannot, as Ovide Mercredi had said when he was head of AFN, you cannot suppress a people for so long and not have them hold onto their identity and want to promote it, and struggle and fight for it. And I think when you do that, it's already in a sense healing, because what you're doing is saying ... I'm giving validity to my identity. My identity has validity. (Ruffo Interview)

But not all artists understand and express the special responsibility they feel to community in the same way. David Garneau flat out rejects the term:

I'm not an activist; that would assume I had some kind of certainty. I think that maybe that's because of the teaching side, one person at a time, one painting at a time, with an overall goal that you're going to Indigenize the space. You're going to have more stuff out there, either that you made or other people made, you're going to curate or whatever, that shows a different version of the world in the space. That's why I like talking about the space, the studio - talking about the space of Saskatchewan, that's where I start, Alberta, Manitoba as well, but right now I live here. So it's this space. I look at this city; it has only five streets that have Aboriginal content. You go to almost any other place, they got more. That tells me something about colonial attitude here. So if I was an activist I'd have streets changed. But I'm not that kind of person; I'm not a political person

⁴⁶ "Armand Garnet Ruffo is a creative writer and [newly appointed] Queen's [University] National Scholar in Indigenous Literatures and Languages. A member of the Sagamok Ojibway and Chapleau Cree Fox Lake First Nation, Armand is a respected scholar whose work has been instrumental in establishing Aboriginal Literary Studies in Canada. His creative work has been recognized by a wide array of honours and awards: his volume of poetry *At Geronimo's Grave* won the Archibald Lampman Award for Poetry in 2001 and selections from it won the Canadian Author's Poetry Prize. His film *A Windigo Tale* garnered multiple prizes in 2010 including Best Picture at the 35th Annual American Indian Film Festival in San Francisco and the Best Feature film at the Dreamspeaker Film Festival in Edmonton. Armand is the editor of the anthology *(Ad)dressing Our Words: Aboriginal Perspectives on Aboriginal Literatures* (2001), recognized as a foundational text essential to the contemporary theorization of Indigenous Literatures. His most recent projects extend this work: he has joined the editorial team of *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature* (with Terry Goldie and Daniel David Moses, and published by the prestigious Oxford University Press) and has compiled *An Introduction to Native Criticism* (co-edited with Heather Macfarlane) which is forthcoming with Broadview Press. Armand is cross-appointed to the Department of Languages, Literatures and Culture and to the Department of Drama" (*Queensu.ca*).

... I might literally replace signs without due process. That's how artists work—direct symbolic action to stimulate discussion ... If I was an activist I would make some kind of demands through proper channels. I see my role as more a thinker, more of an inspired person who makes these things and hopefully they have a resonance. And the same works for teaching ... I don't see myself as an activist, but I certainly support and give intellectual fuel for activism. (Garneau Interview)

When Alex Janvier was asked if he considered himself an activist or an activator, he said, “None of those two descriptions. We [the Aboriginal Group of Seven and other contemporaries] were just acting as people who wanted to move forward as artists and wanted to be recognized as artists, not as curio-makers. I didn't want to be qualified as a curio-maker, I was doing serious work and the others were doing serious work in their own style” (Janvier Interview). Nonetheless, Janvier did mention that painting residential school-themed or -inspired works was important to him personally: “I had to heal too. I'm a sick person from all that [and if others] could see that [work], then they could chime into it on their own terms.” Janvier's 2001 canvas, *Blood Tears*, has been featured prominently in the last few years, on the cover⁴⁷ of the 2008 Aboriginal Healing Foundation's volume, *From Truth to Reconciliation: Transforming the Legacy of Residential Schools*, in the major 2013 exhibition, *Witnesses: Art and Canada's Indian Residential Schools*,⁴⁸ and in the 2016/17 *Alex Janvier: Modern Indigenous Master* retrospective at the National Gallery of Canada.

Of the former, I can say that this was my first real indication how even a senior artist at the vanguard of breaking the silences around residential schools (a focus of the following chapter on writers and reconciliation) was still developing a comfort with what

⁴⁷ For the original, report-style cover, see <http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/from-truth-to-reconciliation-transforming-the-legacy-of-residential-schools.pdf>. For the reissued three volume boxed set version, see http://speakingmytruth.ca/?page_id=17.

⁴⁸ See page 31 in the catalogue online at www.belkin.ubc.ca/file_download/38/Witnesses_Catalogue_WEB.pdf.

to share and how. When I contacted Janvier by email in early 2008 (via his website) to ask if he'd consider having one of his works featured in the forthcoming Foundation publication his wife Jacqueline replied promptly, asking if I had any particular works in mind. I replied suggesting a few that I knew of and she asked me if I was familiar with *Blood Tears*. I was not but was absolutely taken with it when I opened the attachment she had provided. I quickly replied that I thought this was the perfect piece and forwarded her the contract for their consideration. She replied with another email with an image attached and said, almost as an aside, that Alex thought I might find this image interesting, too. It was a photograph of *Blood Tears* leaning, image-forward, against a wall⁴⁹.

Janvier's *Blood Tears* invites others to join him in his journey by including on the back of the canvas his own terms of loss:

- Language of Denesu'line targeted, forbidden to speak was to be strapped, and severely punished!
- Loss of culture, custom
- Loss of parenthood, parents and extended families
- Loss of grandparents
- Loss of Elder's knowledge
- Loss of traditional belief, told that it was evil
- Told the Indian ways was the work of the devil . . .
- Many, many dies of broken bodies, of twisted conflicting mental difference
- Most dies with "Broken spirit"
- Some lived to tell about it
- The rest are permanently, "Live in fear"
- The rest will take their silence to their graves as many have to this day
-

Since the 2008 publication of *From Truth to Reconciliation*, the two major shows to include *Blood Tears – Witnesses* and *Alex Janvier: Modern Indigenous Master* – have both displayed both sides of the canvas. The curators of *Witnesses* hung the painting from

⁴⁹ See page xi in *From Truth and Reconciliation* at <http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/from-truth-to-reconciliation-transforming-the-legacy-of-residential-schools.pdf>.

the ceiling with wires, in the centre of the large gallery space so that viewers could walk 360 degrees around the object in its totality. It was no longer two dimensional, with a story literally behind the painting. Curator Greg Hill at the National Gallery of Canada made a similar choice. In this instance, *Blood Tears* was imbedded in a partial wall that allows viewers to, again, walk around the painting and take it in from multiple angles.

Jim Logan, who earlier spoke of learning the truth and painting others' stories, felt these losses, too, but second-hand, saying:

I think it strikes on a very human level, a lot of compassion, I mean just outright compassion, and sympathy, and, you know, a bit of... a lot of anger. I started to have anger, I started to build anger toward the church and what had happened and the history when I started to put two and two together, started connecting the dots. Over a year and a half, two years I was working down there. This is a real serious issue and people don't know about it. And you know, people aren't talking about it... To me it just, it was just like, how come, how come there's not a truth and reconciliation... thing happening? You know, back in the early 1980s, when I, when I was doing that, there was no place for these people to go... I'd be up all night just thinking about, you know, the things that I saw that night and praying about them and ask myself, how can this be happening, how can this be happening up here ... So I started just sketching these things out because I had to work them out of my mind somehow. I had no other way to do it, so I spent my nights, just, you know, sketching these things out, sketching these out... It was my way of dealing with it because otherwise, you know, I'd be dreaming of it all night and it wouldn't be nightmares, just like, you know... pathos... my spirit just wouldn't rest. And I just felt like I had to do something and the only thing I could do was draw. (Logan Interview)

Leah Decter provides an excellent definition of the role of art and artist in truth telling with regard to her own work:

Art and the artist can play innumerable roles with regard to 'truth' in relation to themes of reconciliation. What is important to me in my work, however, is not a claim of conveying 'truth.' Rather I see a capacity for art to create spaces of engagement, reflection, contemplation and a particular kind of confrontation that can allow for the possibility of transformative experiences that may not otherwise occur. What the 'official denial...' project seems to be doing as it engages with a range of Canadians is

holding a mirror to desire and denial in relation to the colonial past and present in Canada. (Decter Interview)

And, with regard to so-called “official” responses, Decter says,

I don’t consider my work to be an official response. I think its position as unofficial allows it to operate responsively, fluidly, in resistance and in multiple arenas. There may indeed be roles for art and artists to respond in official or quasi-official capacities depending on what the framework of that might be.

Decter’s definition is also in keeping with that provided by Siksika artist Adrian Stimson:

Truth is a hard one because in a lot of my work I look at this idea of construction of narratives, how history is constructed, and of course we know history is told through the bias of time and people and place and interest and all that sort of stuff. So, truth, I don’t know if it’s an unattainable ideal, but definitely there are stories and the stories are based on experience and experiences, I guess if they’re told as they happened, or as they were perceived, it’s a truth, so I don’t see it as *the* truth, but *a* truth. (Stimson Interview)

To him, everything is constructed:

I look at everything as a construction and I don’t know if that’s just the place I am now as an artist. It’s like I tell my students, you know, everything I tell you is a lie and everything I tell you is the truth. You get to decide for yourself how you see it... And I have bias, like we all have bias. So, I think there are things that resonate with everybody in various cultures and things like that, and feelings and such, but I always wonder how filtered is it? Like, I think no one can ever get to a pure true sense of what truth is because we have so many biases and so many world views. What one world view might see as a truth another may see as a lie...

Thus, for Stimson it comes down to navigating that through his work to develop

some sort of sensibility about it and present it in some sort of way that says, “Well, this is the experience, this is how I see it. You may see a truth in it or you may not.” I think it’s trying to allow the viewer to come up with their own sense or idea of what that truth is. But I think you know, like anything, I try not to get caught up in the moral codes of right and wrong and that stuff because again that’s pretty shifty. But I think we all know it’s good not to kill somebody or it’s good not to do all those sorts of things, but different codes of conduct, culturally speaking, that could be contested, but at the same time, there are codes of well-being. I think if we

try to follow those codes as much as we can, yes, that's builds a particular truth for ourselves and for those around us.

Heather Igloliorte also nicely sums up a prevalent perspective of the role of art in truth telling: "I think there's two sides to truth and that is the testimony side, you know, things being told, and then the bearing witness, someone having to witness and hear it, you know" (Igloliorte Interview). Kevin Loring agrees, saying, "Witnessing is key."

However,

the truth, the word truth is such a tough one, right, because truth is subjective, it's like - what is truth? What is true to somebody is a lie to somebody else. Or a falsehood, right? For instance, there's a moment in the play [Where the Blood Mixes] that's like a pivotal moment, where Mooch is in the bar and he's breaking down, breaking down, breaking down, breaking down, and finally he gets to the point where he says that the priest beat me, starved me, fucked me. Right? And it's like, that's actually a distillation of a whole series of history. It's a distillation of many, many different events, but it's not necessarily the actual history of what happened at St. George's, it might have not been the priest, right? It might have been somebody who was like a caregiver to the kids but he wasn't an ordained priest, right? So, there's a truth to what he says in the play cause it's a piece of art, but it's not a fact, how it all broke down, right? But also, like the truth of what June speaks of, I mean, these are all characters, right, so they're constructs, they're all pieces of me, essentially, taken from my history with my people and my family. And so, like June says, has a speech on the bridge where she talks about how she quit drinking. Or her beginning to quit drinking, and that's coming from a truth. It's a truth that I created like it's her story in this, in this character, but it's a truth that I see played out in the community where people have an epiphany moment...and where they hit the bottom and then they just can't do it anymore, and they wake up. And that's a truth, you know? And so, I mean truth in art, you're trying to provoke, like get the audience to be responsive to the story you're telling, and so you have to reach a place that is truthful. (Loring Interview)

Like Stimson, Loring and Igloliorte highlight potential biases, worldviews, or experiences, like the intergenerational experience of which Igloliorte is a part:

I think that art does a number of very important things that can grab the attention of the world. When we're talking about telling 'the truth,' obviously, that is an indigenous truth to a broader Canadian public – the

people who lived through it, know it – this can mean intergenerational Survivors as well, who have experiences of their own related to the legacy of residential schools. So, they need to tell people who do not know: their children, their communities and then the broader Canadian public. (Igloliorte Interview)

And how does one reach the people who need to hear? According to Igloliorte, art is that avenue, particularly with regard to cross-cultural learning. That person's truth becomes undeniable:

The great thing about art, and I say it all the time, but art is the most powerful communication tool that we have. Art can instantly communicate a feeling, an emotion, an expression, a circumstance. It can evoke something in a viewer who might not know anything about the artist or the person, or the history, but it still has the power to transfer knowledge instantaneously on levels that are beyond so many other ways of understanding. When we're talking about cross-cultural experiences and knowledge, about things that people did not learn in their history or education while growing up, looking at art work about residential schools can play a huge role in telling the truth because in many ways it's undeniable. When you see that someone has poured something into the work, that they have given so much of themselves into a film, or a song, or visual art, I think that it is in many ways undeniable, whereas the way that we're telling the history of residential schools right now, it's very easy to deny, or to diminish, or to downplay. When you see art expressed that way I think it's very relatable.

But she also makes the important point that the audience ultimately makes its own call:

“Yeah, I do feel like we are always already political, as you said, but that doesn't always have to be the purpose of the work, you know, the purpose is not always to educate others and sometimes that happens incidental to the work itself. I think most times it's an expression of what somebody feels they need to get out. Obviously, you can't put a single interpretation on a work, the viewer brings as much interpretation to the work as the creator of the work does.”

6.5 Who Does this Work?

In the response above Igloliorte captures not just the role of art as an avenue for reaching a viewer, particularly if they are ignorant of the subject matter being engaged through the work(s). She also alludes to the stories behind the work(s). And how do we get to those stories? One way is the way in which the works are contextualized and this is where the role of the curator is so important. As Igloliorte says, “This is why I am an independent curator and not (laughs) working for the government ...this is why I would probably never take on a position like this because ethically I don’t think that I could [kowtow] to the church [or government] for the sake of diplomacy” (Igloliorte Interview).

Ultimately, David Garneau, Heather Igloliorte, Lee-Ann Martin, Armand Garnet Ruffo, and Jeff Thomas all honed in on the same idea, that if the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or its successors collect art that related to the Aboriginal experience with Residential Schools, it is essential that the right positions, staffed by the right individuals are in place to ensure the provision of the Indigenous curatorial expertise required – and that the institutions’ or organization’s leadership is committed to hearing the advice and acting, however challenging, costly or difficult though it might be. This first and foremost means the creation of safe, welcoming, and culturally-appropriate spaces not just for Survivors and the wider community who will ultimately access this material but also for staff, who, ideally, are Aboriginal curators and acquisition and storage experts. These issues are discussed in greater detail below. Each, in their own way, said achieving these goals is not a long shot; it can happen. When asked what helped make the changes she and others were clamouring for, Igloliorte said:

Oh, I think activism. Yeah, you can still encounter people who work in museums or who are scholars who are deeply offended by the idea that

they might have to consult someone else – you know, that they are not the only authority and that their expertise is not enough alone to create an exhibition. I think it was aboriginal activism that brought about the big institutional changes. And there are certainly numerous amazing allies who are non-aboriginal. I'm not trying to paint everyone with one brush, but I think it's much easier to maintain the status quo than it is to bring about major change. If you look at the history, it's through points of activism, you know, through ruptures that the major changes in policy and procedure, both formal and informal, have been brought about. (Igloliorte Interview)

There's already a blueprint, as Igloliorte points out:

Are you familiar with *Turning the Page: The Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples*? That came about in reaction to the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics. If you recall, there was an exhibition [The Spirit Sings] held at the Glenbow of Canadian Aboriginal artifacts from all over the world that Aboriginal people protested (mainly) for excluding their voices and appearing to locate Aboriginal people in the past – up until that point, Native people didn't have much of a say in how their cultures were represented in museum exhibits. The protest caused Canadian museums (to their credit) to rethink their approach to exhibiting Indigenous cultures, and so they collaborated with Aboriginal scholars and professionals to write *Turning the Page*, a series of recommendations and best practices going forward for museums. The biggest problem was that it was merely recommendations and not policy per se, so even though the Canadian Museums Association adopted the report it wasn't required or mandated. Still, most museums now follow their guidelines, and consultation and collaboration with communities is the norm today.

But what exactly does this look like? David Garneau told me about his first experience learning these lessons:

Cowboys and Indians (and Métis) [Figure 4] was my first Métis show and it taught me a lot. I brought it to Winnipeg in 2004. I didn't show it at Urban Shaman because the space wasn't big enough. I showed it at AKA Gallery. Almost no Aboriginal people showed up. I asked Cathy Mattes, a Métis curator, what went wrong? And she said "you didn't do any protocol, you didn't talk to anybody, you didn't let anyone know you were coming, you just put up the paintings like it was just a show." I said, well, "It is just a show." She said "it's not just a show, this is cultural work." This totally woke me up. I really didn't have a sense of how my work could be engaging the community and she showed me how. She took the show to Brandon and showed me how it should be done—how it could be more than paintings on the wall but part of a cultural experience. She

made an event out of it meetings with elders and Aboriginal youth, with Métis music and dancers, too. She paired me up with a young artist, Riel Benn, a First Nations artist, and all kinds of people showed up. I got a totally different sort of feedback. It was more about the content than about celebrating the artist. People asked me to see their land and listen to their stories. I did follow up on a few. I ended up going to places I never would have gone otherwise. And then, as that show toured, in almost every case I paired up with a younger First Nations or Metis artist, and it changed everything. And a lot of galleries said we don't want to do that. [so, I said] "Oh, I'm sorry, I can't show here then." And a few days later, they would call back to tell me that they found a way to make it work. (Garneau Interview)

Figure 4: *Cross (Ad)dressing* (2002) by David Garneau, from *Cowboys and Indians (and Métis)*.

Figure 5: *Not to Confuse Politeness with Agreement* (2014) by David Garneau.

Figure 6: *Aboriginal Advisory Council Meeting* (2012) by David Garneau.

Figure 7: *Aboriginal Curatorial Collective Meeting* (2012) by David Garneau.

6.6 Relations/Relationships

Lee-Ann Martin,⁵⁰ on the other hand, was an institutionally-affiliated curator when I spoke with her in 2011, working as the Curator of Contemporary Canadian Aboriginal Art at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec. Martin, too, had personal truths to share. In her case, the story was not about Residential Schools but about the child welfare system. Nonetheless, she had similar stories of shame about identity, resulting from her mother's reticence to discuss that aspect of their heritage – which shielded the children from stories of abuse. However, she told a story about Alex Janvier, a very personal story, not about his art but about Janvier as a person. She took Janvier to meet her mother and the following unfolded:

I'd told Alex a little bit about my mom's background and how, you know, she was not proud of her ancestry and all of that. And that's, it was such a common story, right? And he certainly understood that. And we sat down one night after dinner and he really, as only Alex can, he just began talking about you know, and I remember him saying to her you're not too old to be an Indian. He had this conversation, he talked to her, and she was just so stubborn, stubborn, stubborn, stubborn about it. But it was through his talking, and I think also his - he is a counsellor with AA. I mean he has that, you know, approach and personality, and it really drew her out and made her think about things and recognize, I don't want to say the errors

⁵⁰ "Lee-Ann Martin is the [former] Curator of Contemporary Canadian Aboriginal Art at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Quebec and is the former Head Curator of the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina. She has curated, written and lectured extensively on contemporary Aboriginal art both nationally and internationally over the past twenty-five years. Her writing has been published by Oxford University Press, University of Washington Press, Banff Centre Press, and National Museum of the American Indian, among others. Martin's recent curatorial projects include *Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years* for Plug In ICA in Winnipeg (2011) and the nationally touring exhibition, *Bob Boyer: His Life's Work*, for the MacKenzie Art Gallery (2008 – touring through 2012)" (ACC). Past work includes: "Head Curator at the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan (1998–2000) and Adjunct Curator, First Nations Art (2000–2004). There, she co-curated two national touring exhibitions: EXPOSED: The Aesthetics of Aboriginal Art, with Morgan Wood (1999); and The Powwow: An Art History, with Bob Boyer (2000). Martin participated in the curatorial collective that organized *The Post-Colonial Landscape* project (1990–1994) at the Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. She curated the travelling exhibition, Alex Janvier: His First Thirty Years, 1960–1990 (1993) for the Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay. Martin was interim Curator of Contemporary Indian Art at the Canadian Museum of Civilization (1992–1994) where she co-curated, with Gerald McMaster, the internationally travelling exhibition INDIGENA: Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples on 500 Years (1992)" (Canadian Museum of History).

of the way, but perhaps some of the poor choices she had made and so on - for the best reasons, really ... And it's interesting because since that time, it was '93, I mean I've seen, you know, a huge change in her. And she will every so often talk about things she never would, she never would talk about growing up. ... Her life always began when she was eighteen, and left, and went to the city, and got her jobs, and got married and had us and so on. So, for me it was an amazing moment where Alex - you know, in this context as a residential school Survivor - really helped another person who hadn't experienced that but had experienced the disconnect. (Martin Interview)

I noted that my exploration of this topic was focused on how people *use* the *art* to make these kinds of discoveries and here was an example of someone using the artist, literally.

We laughed about this but it also spurred a conversation about just how important relationship is in the Aboriginal art world. Yes, it is true that Janvier has made several Residential School-themed works and others that thematically touch on topics like healing but what Martin was teaching me here was that, in knowing Janvier first as a curator and later as a friend, this artist with his own particular story to tell – as he does above – was able to enact change in another individual – through relationship rather than art. This teaching is like the notion of the story behind the work, the degree to which the artist's biography is necessary for understanding a body of work, but it reaches far beyond that. Martin is making the point that curators and artists are in relationship and those relationships can be – but are not always – profound and transformative in and of themselves.

6.7 Responsibility

With regard to Janvier, it speaks to his larger sense of responsibility to those people with whom he has a relationship but also his sense of responsibility to help others heal. It is an example of Jace Weaver's concept of communitism, or taking action to address the needs

of community. But this communitism is not reserved solely for the works that artists create. It can also be part of who they are and how they live their lives. Their activism, even on so personal a level, is not reserved solely for those who look to engage through the art. Maria Campbell underscores this notion in her own words, saying,

We have responsibility for each other's children, but our responsibility is to talk from a strong place and not be afraid just because you're sitting across from me and your opinion is different and the person on that side is different. I have to speak my truth to protect those children. ... We discuss it with each other, we'll reach a consensus because we're not doing it out of ego or anything else, we're doing it for the benefit of our children. The most important thing in this life is our babies. Not my ego or yours or anyone else's. (Campbell Interview)

However, Janvier is also an excellent example of an artist who imbeds truths in his art, something David Garneau came to know first hand when he toured an exhibition of Janvier's work with Janvier himself:

And, so, he's taking us on a tour, and talking about this, that, and when he went to school, and all that stuff. [And Blood Tears is] the last painting he's talking about, big painting. And he tells us about all the stuff that's written on the back, because he wanted people to know what was there. Then he said, oh I want to go back again. So, he takes us back again, and he explained that all these abstract paintings, they're all maps! I thought what? He says here's my kohkum's house and here's this, where we fish and that. And there's all this hidden stuff - what if he dies tomorrow? Gone, it's gone. 'Cause you go through the literature and there's hardly any writing about any of these guys' art. Talk about critical texts, I don't want criticism, I want the story first. You know, I want people to do a reading of the paintings, tell us what's in there, because once they're gone, you know, somebody will give it a try but they won't know for sure. So, I think when he wrote on the back of the painting, it's a testament, it's evidence, and that's why that's a very important painting. (Garneau Interview)

This sets up a very interesting dynamic with regard to art as truth, as opposed to art solely as an aesthetic object that is to be experienced objectively. Garneau, in fact, puts this teaching to the test in *Moving Forward, Never Forgetting*. For this exhibition, Garneau

and Lavallee retained three “story keepers,” who worked with the artists to learn stories about the artists and the artworks (all at the artists’ discretion). These story keepers acted as guides or sources of additional information for visitors, as there was always one story keeper available in the gallery space at all times. As well as conveying these stories to patrons, the story keepers also collected stories from visitors. Thus, each visit potentially informed the entire show.

Armand Garnet Ruffo answers the question(s) of artist responsibility very clearly: “I like to think of Jeannette Armstrong’s seminal essay, “The Disempowerment of First North American Native Peoples and Empowerment Through Writing,” in this context, where she talks about the responsibility of Native writers and challenges us to expose the lies and tell the truth to everyone, including our own people, about what really happened. So, yes, I believe we do have a responsibility” Ruffo Interview). He adds, of other artists he knows, that “I can only speak for myself. I certainly wouldn’t presume that every Aboriginal artist feels the same way. But I certainly know a lot of Aboriginal artists who do feel that this is part and parcel of who they are, and of their work”. Jeff Thomas⁵¹

⁵¹ From Jeff Thomas’ scoutingforindians.com website: “I am an urban-Iroquois, born in the city of Buffalo, New York in 1956. My parents and grandparents were born at the Six Nations reserve, near Brantford, Ontario and left the reserve to find work in the city. You won’t find a definition for ‘urban Iroquois’ in any dictionary or anthropological publication—it is this absence that informs my work as a photo-based artist, researcher, independent curator, cultural analyst and public speaker. My study of Indian-ness seeks to create an image bank of my urban-Iroquois experience, as well as re-contextualize historical images of First Nations people for a contemporary audience. Ultimately, I want to dismantle long entrenched stereotypes and inappropriate caricatures of First Nations people” (“Biography”). Thomas curated *Where Are the Children? Healing the Legacy of Residential Schools*. Now living in Ottawa, he is a curator, photographer and cultural analyst whose work is in major collections in Canada, the United States and Europe: including the National Gallery’s Museum of Contemporary Photography, the Smithsonian’s Museum of the American Indian, and the Musée de l’Elysée in Lausanne. Jeff’s recent solo shows include *Jeff Thomas: A Study of Indian-ness*, *Scouting for Indians in New York City*, *Geronimo was Here in Buffalo*, and *Resistance is [Not] Futile*. He has also been in many group shows, including *Images of the American Indian* at the Birchfield-Penney Art Center and *Crossing Borders: Beadwork in Iroquois Life* at the Museum of Civilization. In 1998, he was awarded the Canada Council’s prestigious Duke and Duchess of York Award in Photography. His specialty is the exploration of historical cultural resources to bring voices, stories and perspectives into the present. In his curatorial projects, such as *Emergence From the*

echoes this sentiment, saying, “The art is not art for art’s sake or just to be a career or whatever, it’s not about you, it’s about the larger issues” (Thomas Interview). Similarly, Leah Martin spoke of how she came to do the work that she does, highlighting the anger that drove her to consider these issues: “I’m speaking for myself, that’s why I got into it, because I felt that sense of responsibility to our communities. You know, I felt, well, as usual I went into it with anger and rage, because we weren’t, our artists weren’t being included and so on. And it was a sense of responsibility to them. Also, I had worked for years with some people in my community who were basket makers and carvers and stuff and, you know, goddammit I was so angry because, you know they can articulate their aesthetics, they had a whole grammar around it, but was that ever respected or acknowledged at that point? And this was, I’m talking thirty years ago, it was a long time ago. And, so, I was just, I was really enraged” (Martin Interview).

When asked if his responsibility was to his community, community more broadly, that is to say, the First Nations community, or even broader - the First Nations, Inuit, Métis community in Canada – N'laka'pamux Nation member Chris Bose⁵² answered,

I would say all three. Because you’re representing your community, then you’re representing your people ... whether you like it or not, because people paint us with a brush. When you’re Indian, “Oh, do you know this Indian?” Like, I still get that. So yeah, in a sense, that’s how I interpret it, that’s how I take it on. It’s just something that’s happened to me over the

Shadow: First Peoples Photographic Perspective at the Canadian Museum of Civilization and *Aboriginal Portraits* at the National Archives of Canada, Jeff has mined the archival vaults of non-Native visual and written records to recover lost elements of Aboriginal history. Jeff’s personal photographic practice is concerned with showing the perspective of an urban Iroquoian person” (ACC).

⁵² “Chris Bose is a writer, multi-disciplinary artist, musician, and filmmaker, who has read and performed at universities, theatres, and coffeehouses at all points from Victoria to Montreal, as well as the BC Festival of the Arts, as a literary delegate to the Talking Stick Aboriginal Arts Festival in Vancouver and the Word on the Street Festival in Toronto. Chris continues to make art on a daily basis, and is also a workshop facilitator of community arts events, digital storytelling, art workshops with people of all ages and backgrounds, curatorial work for First Nations art shows and projects, research and writing for periodicals across Canada, project management and coordination, mixed-media productions, film, audio, and video recording and editing, and more. He is of the N'laka'pamux Nation in BC, and currently spends his time in Kamloops, BC” (Kegedonce Press).

years because I've been doing this for so long, I've been doing this my whole life – writing and music and art. (Bose Interview)

And with regard to serving the much wider non-Aboriginal community as well, Bose says,

That's mainly why I do the art that I do. Especially around the Apology [Figures 8 and 9] and I do a lot of art about reconciliation because I'm trying to communicate through my art the Contemporary Urban Aboriginal Experience, which is unfortunately, we hold the worst records. Really, we would be Last Nations, not First Nations. If you look at it in a socio-economic way. So, that's why I do this art. It's to challenge people's conceptions about First Nations people and the Apology and what the TRC is about because people just don't have a clue, really. They really, really don't. So, if you create something that blows their minds, then it'll assault them, insult them and then hopefully engage them.

Figure 8: *St. George Apology*, by Chris Bose during his time at the *Work(s) in Progress* artist residency, Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, October 2012.

Figure 9: *Res School Apology 2*, by Chris Bose during his time at the *Work(s) in Progress* artist residency, Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, October 2012.

This notion of various, often overlapping communities was a common theme. Martin went on to describe how that worked for her: “But I think all of the people who I know and respect in the Aboriginal curatorial community [who] share that responsibility and respect for the community ... but I wouldn’t want to very narrowly define the community ... it’s these concentric rings. Certainly, I’m doing it in honour of, you know, those men and women when I was young who were teaching me how to go and collect sweetgrass and make those baskets. And, I’m doing it as much for my grandchildren as well as the contemporary artists with whom I work. It’s just, it’s different communities” (Martin Interview). Similarly, Jamie Black says of responsibility:

I suppose I do ... you mentioned all those categories ... Of being a woman, of being Metis, of being Aboriginal, all these things. And I think it’s also, it’s those things but it’s also, I’m a human being living in Canada right now and this is what’s happening and what has happened in our country. And I think we’re all permeated by the effects of that, of

colonization on Canada. You know, you walk around every day and you see evidence of this, right? Of this struggle that's still going on. And I feel like I have a really keen sense of that feeling of struggle that exists here in Canada and here in Winnipeg and everyday when I walk down the street. So, it seems really obvious to me to go in this direction, I guess. (Black Interview)

And who told her she had a responsibility? Black says there was no seminal moment when an elder, or a grandparent, or a senior artist, or a mentor, put their hand on her shoulder and said, you have a special responsibility. Likewise, Heather Igloliorte, turning to her scholarly work that focuses on art and artists, says the responsibility to community comes from a variety of different sources or angles:

My PhD is on the Labradorimiut and I did six weeks of research there recently and certainly I feel a personal obligation to each and every person that I spoke to, and not just the people I interviewed, but to the communities that they are from as well. Telling their art histories in a respectful way that honours their stories – I have it built in to my ethical protocols such as you have in yours here, but I don't just work on Labrador material. So, I absolutely feel responsibility to my community, whether or not I was working on that project, I would always feel responsibility to that community because I think that communities claim people. To a certain degree I've had part of my funding from my community to go to school, from the Nunatsiavut Territory and other sources, so in that sense I always have a responsibility to show up when they need me, to do projects that relate to them and so on and that will be a lifelong commitment. I also feel that I have a commitment to the Ottawa community. I try to be sure that they are brought into exhibitions, when something happens in the community that they are invited to be part of it, that they see themselves reflected in the work. Also, because I don't only work on Inuit material, of course I feel an obligation to the general Canadian aboriginal population. Absolutely. And if you're not acting accordingly, I think you will be called out on your behavior, I think we see that and expect it of ourselves and others. (Igloliorte Interview)

Perhaps, fortunately for both Igloliorte and myself, someone as respected as Maria Campbell has said that scholarship is an important avenue for serving community. When I asked, "Can I give back with a study?" Campbell said,

Of course, you can. Anything that opens people's minds, that allows our people to be critical thinkers. You see we think there's only certain things that we can do but if you write something, if you're a writer, if you're a poet, if you write something that will help us to think, because we've been taught not to think. We've been told that we don't talk, we don't ask questions, we turn the other cheek. That's a western way. We'd never have survived on this land if that's how we behaved, so if we can teach our people to be critical thinkers, to be able to ask those questions, to have curious minds, then you're giving back. To get us to look at history and the way that life is in a different way. If we can get our people to look beyond their pain and see that this was practised on other people in other countries before they came here, that's healing. Because when I found out that this had been done to the Scots and the Irish and lots of other people, gypsies and it was being done to Palestine, you don't think that didn't make me look at my self-pity and my victimization in a different way? It freed me. Because then I was able to understand that well, I can do this. I don't have to carry this around, this is not my baggage. I can do something about it and I can help you as a non-native person that hey, we've got lots in common and that's not what we want for our kids, and how do we, you and I go about making that change. (Campbell interview)

For Jeff Thomas, the big question of responsibility has a very particular answer – and this relates back to the notion of the importance of relations and relationships. He says,

I think a lot of artists do [feel they have a sense of responsibility]. I'm not saying that every artist of Aboriginal descent has to take that on. This is how it's played out for me and I'd like to think that I can be a role model for people to say that this is an element of what we do, this is how Jeff Thomas went about doing it, and that some of us can continue to work on that level. Even as far as activism is with my son [Bear, a member of A Tribe Called Red], who's now really building a career as a video artist. I feel that in one way or another that I was able to break the cycle within my own family of absent male role models. I had to leave his life for a number of years early in his life, but the idea is that I'd come back and that I'd be able to provide him with what he needed, and it did work out that way, but that was a part of the, along with all these other issues, was a part of my role as father as well. You can talk about activism and you can talk about being out there and this and that, but if you can't take care of your own family on some level, then what's the point of all that? This is how this all kind of comes together. (Thomas interview)

Sherry Farrell Racette⁵³ highlights yet another important component of the notion of having responsibility to the community – education. She says,

That's how I got into it, that's how I really got into it through my responsibility, I guess, to teach, and this is as a Native Studies scholar. And I suppose the truth can be philosophically contested, what is the truth? But I mean we know that there are historical truths. There are things that happened, period. Things happen. There are different perspectives on what happened, and you can get a more complete view by kind of moving around that circle and hearing everybody's stories. What I found that I had to do... I didn't just focus on the negativity. I also looked for stories and images that would talk about the resilience of the children, and also had stories from my own experience - growing up and having friends and, you know, partners and stuff - of those people who created windows of humanity, spaces of humanity within the residential school. (Farrell Racette interview)

Non-Aboriginal artist Jayce Salloum⁵⁴ adds yet another perspective, similar to Decter's detailed explanation earlier, that non-Aboriginal people, too, have a responsibility:

⁵³ Sherry Farrell Racette is cross-appointed to the Departments of Native Studies and Women and Gender Studies at the University of Manitoba. She writes, "I am an interdisciplinary scholar with an active arts practice. My broad research interests are Métis and First Nations women's history, particularly indigenous art histories that recontextualize museum collections and reclaim women's voices and lives. I have been moving towards contemporary art history in my recent writing and have an emerging curatorial practice. My arts practice includes painting and multi-media works combining textiles, beadwork and embroidery with images and text. In addition, I illustrate children's books and have worked with such noted authors as Maria Campbell, Freda Ahenakew and Ruby Slipperjack. My most recent children's book, *Dancing in My Bones* by Wilfred Burton and Anne Patton for the Gabriel Dumont Institute, won three 2009 Saskatchewan Book Awards. *Dancing* was the second book in a series begun with *Fiddle Dancer* (2007), the final book in the series is *Call of the Fiddle*. A new edition of *Stories of the Road Allowance People*, by Maria Campbell will be coming out this fall" (U of Manitoba).

⁵⁴ Jayce Salloum is a Governor General's Award-winning community-based photo and multimedia artist living and working in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. He writes, "I have been producing art, collecting things, making things happen, and mixing it up for as long as I can remember. It was always part art and part social facilitation, or maybe that makes it all "art"; anyways, it was usually counter whatever the "culture" happened to be at the time and involved people from various parts of the "community" in liaison and/or at odds with each other. Lately, the work has involved production and facilitation in Lebanon, Berlin, New York, the former Yugoslavia, Kamloops, Cumberland House, Vancouver, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Afghanistan, and Australia. My practice exists within and between the personal, quotidian, local, and the transnational. In one sense it has always been about mediation—the gap between the experience and the accounting/telling/receiving of it—engaging in an intimate subjectivity and discursive challenge while critically asserting itself in the perception of social manifestations and political realities. Jayce has worked in installation, photography, drawing, performance, text, and video since 1979, as well as curating exhibitions, conducting workshops, and coordinating a vast array of cultural projects. He has exhibited pervasively at the widest range of local and international venues possible, from the smallest unnamed storefronts and community centres in his Downtown Eastside neighbourhood to institutions such as the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the

Yes, it is our obligation, us as occupiers or people that moved here as settlers. And we've all come under different circumstances. I think there's a, like there is differences in the settler nation, immigrant nation. You know people came for different reasons and different purposes and came in different ways, right? And imposed themselves on the land in different ways and on the people but, in any case, we all have responsibility, as citizens, however you want to define citizens ... That we all have a responsibility of broaching, of making the connection, us as artists, you know, as artists and it goes to the core of citizenship, us as artists, as cultural workers, as producers ... we don't have to make our art about this type or form of collaboration or coming together, but if we remain ignorant then our art will remain ignorant in all of these ways. (Salloum interview)

6.8 Participating in Reconciliation

As with the concept of truth, respondents were very comfortable engaging with notions of reconciliation in spite of the suspicion that many voiced about prospect of *achieving reconciliation* and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission itself (keep in mind these interviews took place between 2010 and 2014 so many respondents were sceptical after seeing the first slate of TRC commissioners resign in 2009). That scepticism is evident in Tobique First Nation (Maliseet) artist, activist and Elder Shirley Bear's⁵⁵ comments about receiving the Order of Canada:

Musée du Louvre, Paris. Recently his work has been featured in *The Archive (Whitechapel/MIT, 2006)*, *Projecting Migration: Transcultural Documentary Practice* (Wallflower, 2007), and *Practical Dreamers: Conversations with Movie Artists* (Coach House, 2008)" (Budney and Salloum).

⁵⁵ "Shirley Bear is a multimedia artist, writer, and traditional First Nation herbalist and Elder. Born on the Tobique First Nation, she is an original member of the Wabnaki language group of New Brunswick. Shirley studied art in New Brunswick, New Hampshire, Boston, and Vancouver. As an artist, poet, and activist she has played a crucial role in First Nation women's creative and cultural communities. In 1989, she curated *Changers: A Spiritual Renaissance*, a national show of work by Aboriginal women artists that toured all major galleries across Canada. She has worked extensively as a lecturer, performer, activist, and curator including serving as Cultural Advisor to the British Columbia Institute of Technology, First Nations Education Advisor at Emily Carr Institute of Art & Design, and Resident Elder for First Nations House of Learning at University of British Columbia. Shirley has exhibited internationally, and her work has been purchased for collections across Canada, including the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the National Arts Centre, the New Brunswick Art Bank, First Nations House of Learning at UBC, and the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. Shirley was the 2002 recipient of the New Brunswick Arts Board's Excellence in the Arts Award. Her writing has been included in several anthologies including *Kelusultiek* (Mount St. Vincent University, 1994) and *The Colour of Resistance* (Sister Vision Press, 1993), as well as the catalogues for the exhibits

They said, how do you feel? This, this is a beautiful honour. You've got the pin, you're honoured by Canada, right? Well, I didn't sing O Canada. Never sung O Canada in years. We have better songs than that to sing, you know? And I said, well, it's not over, you know? This isn't over. And although I feel happy that I got this, I didn't want to accept it, but here I am, you know, and I accepted with a sense of reluctance as to what it means to Canada, not what it means to my community. Because my community questions it, who are you, you're acting the Princess again. But I don't care. I'll act the princess if I know that somewhere down the road there's gonna be some sense of equality. (Bear interview)

Here, Bear expresses a common theme: Aboriginal people sometimes reluctantly participate in official Canadian pomp of this sort as there is suspicion from both the grass roots through to the political level; they do not want to be trotted out as token *Indians* on display or tacitly support the Crown. However, as we see here, there are reasons to engage. As with Maria Campbell in the previous section, there's hope for change expressed by another senior artist in Bear.

A generation apart, Heather Igloliorte in 2011 voiced a concern over engaging in the TRC's different requests for artist participation:

Speaking as an artist, no I didn't feel that I needed to [respond to the TRC call] and I think that probably a lot of artists feel the same way. There was a little bit of hesitation around creating art for the TRC, without the TRC having given us anything first. We haven't read the reports, we don't know how they're coming down, and to give art to a project is almost to support that project without knowing that you're going to get that kind of support in return. I think that that is kind of a sticky situation for artists. That was certainly where the hesitancy arose for me. Because it feels like you're giving art to the government. They're no longer the TRC, they are the TRC of Canada and I think people are suspicious and a little hesitant to give freely of their work for an organization that has not proven that it is going to be 100 per cent trustworthy. Not yet, you know, it might turn out to be great, but where it stands, we just don't know yet, and that is a

Kospenay (1991) and *Changers: A Spiritual Renaissance* (1989). She has been profiled for film and television, by CBC, the National Film Board, and independent producers in such films as *Minquon*, *Minquon: Wosqotmn Elsonwagon/Shirley Bear: Reclaiming the Balance of Power* (1990) and *Kwa'Nu'Te* (1991) by Cathy Martin, *Keepers of the Fire* (1994) by Christine Welsh, and *The Sacred Feminine* (1995). She has published a book of poetry, *Virgin Bones* (McGilligan Books, 2006).” Bear provided this biography to me and my co-editors of *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity* in 2009” (Bear, “Ramblings and Resistances”).

compromising position to put artists in, without knowing where exactly their work will end up. (Igloliorte Interview)

Bear picks this up as well saying, “A lot of the times people who sit on those commissions are kind of privileged” (Bear Interview). That and the prospect of someone opening up and telling their story to such an official (“officious”) body is daunting:

It’s hard to get to that spot where you’ve dealt with your demons and you’ve made peace with your demons. And to, to objectively look at what somebody gives you and, and accept it for truth. You know, you’ve reconciled already, but there’s that whole other level we’re asking people to submit their, their gut, and, and to have, there’s still somebody looking at it, there’s still somebody deciding on it. And, and who decides on that? Who, who among us has that sensibility to decide that, yeah, okay, he or she said lock it up and put it away, because I’ve confessed, now, I’ve confessed and, and maybe there’s some sense of absolution for them. And, and, and that’s, that’s where you leave it, you leave with ...somebody who absolves you, sort of. But that’s, that’s exactly what it is. And, and is that okay? I don’t know.

Lee-Ann Martin, from her perspective as a curator, tends to agree. She says, cautiously, “I can see if this were an exhibition of, you know, what we’re talking about, artwork, very poignant artwork, by residential school Survivors, something like that ... it would fetishize it” (Martin Interview). And how to avoid fetishizing the work? Martin says Aboriginal curators have to be in charge:

We have so many issues artists need to explore, and present, and be in that public debate, that aren’t given the opportunities. And I feel like Aboriginal curators - the whole reason that we wanted to have more Aboriginal curators was to develop that really supportive infrastructure, within our museums and galleries, around promoting Aboriginal art and artists. And it’s been working, except there are still very few of us who have, you know, any sort of full-time permanent positions in our galleries.” And the same question could be asked of the TRC. Does it have in place the right people with the right expertise?

Adrian Stimson, though, presents another perspective; he argues that artists have always had a role – perhaps a responsibility – to act when there is an opportunity – or call – to do so:

Artists are a conduit for the community in many different ways of the experience that has happened in the community. Traditionally artists can be looked at even as tricksters, some sort of moral compass somewhere and so often they are sought to help with visioning and visioning ideas within the community...I think traditionally, yeah, in the Blackfoot culture we have Napi who is our trickster, we had clowns, we had many sort of contrary characters and if you were to parallel that with contemporary, it would be performance artists and actors and all that sort of stuff. So, I think there's always been a role, there's always been a conduit for the community so definitely if I was to take a look at the idea of continuum, that is a continuum throughout history, that, you know, that no matter how it manifested through time, that now we just call ourselves artists. So, I think definitely artists have that role, or are charged with that role, within the community to be seers, to mirror back what's going on, in whatever context and way so that the community can actually look at that and agree or disagree or be confused, or in some weird way have that information transferred to them for them to resolve. It's like the elders never actually tell us, when you go seek advice, they never really tell you what to do, they just give you a whole bunch of anecdotes and tell you to go away and see what you do (laughs), you know you make your mistakes or do it anyway, so I think an artist in the same way is kind of an elder in that for whatever reason they've been gifted with that ability to mirror back the community or mirror back the world so that people can look at it and sort of wonder about it. (Stimson Interview)

But to what end are artists/activists engaged? Jeannette Armstrong⁵⁶ says, "I believe that the role of reconciliation in a broader sense must provide ways and means to assist in the remedy of what has been destroyed." And she elaborates, describing how all her work revolves around this notion:

⁵⁶ Jeannette Armstrong is a Syilx Okanagan author, educator, activist, and artist, as well as "a fluent speaker of nsyilxcen and a traditional knowledge keeper of the Okanagan Nation ... [who] currently holds the Canada Research Chair in Okanagan Indigenous Knowledge and Philosophy at UBC Okanagan" (ALECC). She has also served as the director of the En'owkin Center, "a cultural and educational organization operated by the Okanagan Nation ... [and i]n 1989 she helped to found the En'owkin School of International Writing, which is the first credit-giving creative writing program in Canada to be managed and operated expressly by and for Native people" (ipl.org). She is perhaps best known as the author of the award-winning novel *Slash*.

My concern has mostly been about the broader effects to our Indigenous Nations (as opposed to the heinous effects on individuals which other experts are engaged in) in regard to the decline and extinctions of original languages and cultures as a result of the subtractive (to indigenous culture) and submersion (in colonial culture) education process that the schools were about. The loss of language is a loss of a way to see and experience the world from within an Indigenous perspective unique to each specific place each language and culture is indigenous to. The concept has been the subject at the centre of all of my arts, my writing, my activism in arts and culture as well as indigenous rights, and my work in culture and language revitalization, for living indigenous language renewal, for authentic indigenous arts practice recovery, for the revival in education pedagogy, of indigenous philosophy (I don't like to use the word "knowledge" since it has other connotations) and science perspectives. (Personal correspondence)

6.9 Reconciliation as a Personal Truth

For Loring, reconciliation is tied to truth inherently: "I think that reconciliation, the act of reconciling is a storytelling endeavor, like we're telling our stories. In some way, we're, hoping, we're praying that somebody's going to hear that story and acknowledge the truth that's inherent in it, right? Personal truth, tragedy, trauma, the thing that we've had to live throughout, right?" (Loring Interview). And this is underscored in Adrian Stimson's account of how reconciliation came into his life:

Yeah, I was already doing it and, yeah, because I think residential school was such a part of my experience that it was just something that naturally I did, or somehow spoke to in however it manifested itself in the art that I made because there was always that connection to that history somewhere. And then of course with more information and as the TRC all started to develop, of course I started to recognize that my work had that interest and perhaps strengthened ideas around it, in particular performance art and such, and video and installation. Actually, this is another weird story, in the late '80s, even before my political career, they were renovating Old Sun Residential School and they would take out all the windows and stuff and take it and throw it in the dump, throw beds and all that sort of stuff, and I was just a little bit of a junk collector as a kid, like I was young kid and I'd go trekking and I'd be like, dragging these beds home to my parents' place, or dragging these windows home to my parents' place and just putting them in the garage and my mom and dad would say, "What

are you doing bringing all this junk home?” And I’d say, “I don’t know, maybe I might use it someday.” ... But maybe there was something else going on where all these things became parts of installations that I did in my later life, like Sick and Tired, ... So, in some way, that history, maybe there was something more at work there. Who knows? But yeah, I probably started quite young with it in a naive way, knowing at some point in the future that it would mean something for me. I didn’t consciously probably know that, but as time went on it just all of the sudden made sense. I had all this material culture and it fit along with my philosophies of energy and how objects hold onto energy and how to exorcize that energy and turn it into a new energy. (Stimson Interview)

Some people, like Tahltan artist Peter Morin,⁵⁷ have been thinking about reconciliation for a great deal of time and even find it being a part of their professional work, whether art-based or something else:

Currently I work with Aboriginal children of foster care. And the focus of my work with these children has been cultural reconnection, biological family reconnection, community reconnection. And in my own work, in that work and then in my artistic practice, my artistic/curatorial practice, I’ve been thinking about reconciliation for a very long time. Reconciliation partly I think is a process where everyone stands equally. You know, it’s like making this circle ceremony, or circle talk, talking circle, where we all sit equally. And there was this story that this Elder told me, Loveman Noll, about how we all stand side by side, and I thought that’s what, you know, for me, that’s the basis of reconciliation. We’re walking together, and equally, and there’s trust, you know? Truth is very interesting, truth is very interesting and truth is very difficult. Recently, there was an Elder named Audrey Lundquist, she’s Gitksan, and she talked about truth-telling in our communities as a traditional, as a

⁵⁷ Peter Morin is Assistant Professor of Visual and Aboriginal Art at Brandon University. For the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective, Peter wrote, “My name is Peter Morin. I am a member of the Crow Clan of the Tahltan Nation. My grandmother is Dinah Creyke and my grandfather is John Creyke. ... As a curator, artist and advocate for Indigenous expression, I have been working on developing a practice that articulates the nuances within indigenous epistemological structure. Within the larger Canadian context, I am driven to create spaces, within these western structures, that allow for deep connection to the complex nature of indigenous creative expression. In my work as an advocate for indigenous creative expression, I endeavour to work with as many traditional arts practices as possible, because I believe that understanding the philosophies connected to these creative technologies helps us in developing rich places of transformation. I have worked with elders and youth to develop skills directly connected to these art histories. Over the past years, I have also had the opportunity to work across cultural boundaries and borders. I have worked as a social justice advocate, teacher, facilitator, cultural teacher, language teacher, and artist. I have worked with Redwire Native Youth Media Society, Grunt Gallery, Daylu Dena Council, SD 62, SWOVA, Boys and Girls Club, and Surrounded by Cedar, Western Front, and Open Space. After all these years, I know that the work of change starts at home with the lessons the grandparents kept for us. As a starting place for every project, I always return to the teachings of our elders” (ACC).

traditionally based value and a traditionally based practice. Truth-telling. And I thought, that's really powerful, and as an active practice, as an active way to create a space, an Indigenous space, you have this value of actually telling the truth. (Morin Interview)

6.10 Art as a Tool for Reconciliation

Another BC-based artist, Chris Bose, has also been puzzling over how to work with the idea of reconciliation, saying,

I think what the TRC [is doing is] an admirable thing, from the outside, which is weird because it's about my people, or our people and for a long time in my own family, there was no truth about what happened. No one talked about what really happened unless they got really intoxicated and then they'd tearfully say something, and it would just spiral on to just...ugh. So, I think that might have begun the process of reconciliation in some ways in some family members, but they're scarred, man, like forever. But it's necessary to begin healing. Like, I've seen some people get to a point where they are functional which is good, great, the best you can hope for in some cases. (Bose Interview)

However, the landscape changed for Bose with the Prime Minister's Apology and he was among the very first artists to respond to it through his art practice:

Apology wasn't really on the radar because no one knew the truth and if you don't know the truth, how the hell can you start to reconcile and move towards an apology? What I really hoped for was that in my lifetime people would acknowledge what the hell happened with the residential school system and begin the reconciliation process and it's painful man, like reading some of that stuff in those books, I was just like, "Uh." (Referring to the personal stories). I've seen it in my family and so the apology, I never thought I'd see it in my lifetime. I never thought I'd see Indians on TV in my lifetime. I never thought we'd have APTN in my lifetime; these are huge leaps and bounds. So, it gives me hope that things can change. But I think we just have to dig a little deeper and be a bit more honest and it's hard because you get post-colonial guilt from white people, they're like, shocked, and it's like, I don't want you to feel bad, I just want you to understand what we went through. The intent is not to make people feel bad, it's just to expand what the hell they know, because they don't know ANYTHING, man.

To accomplish this, Bose wants to achieve understanding – but he isn't shy about shocking people to that point:

Most of the time they're going to be shocked. Shock and disbelief is what's going to happen. Understanding is what I want, more like, "Wow, that really happened?" I don't want sympathy, I don't want people to feel bad or guilty, I want them to understand and then to go away feeling or thinking about it and to share it and not to just bottle it up. Because that's the only way real reconciliation can happen. You can create art or create a book, or create something that will really blow people's minds, but if they feel guilty, with guilt, they often want to push it away, "Oooh get it off, it's not mine..." It is. That'd be a great start...It depends on what we can put in the water <laughs>. Five per cent would be great. Five percent will lead to 10, 10 will lead to 20.

6.11 Art and Commemoration

Teaching, as Roger Simon points out in the literature review, is essential. As with the truth-telling component of the TRC, commemoration initiatives face the challenge of reaching those who may find it difficult to hear or listen to the stories of others. Just as there is diversity across First Nations, Inuit, and Métis experiences with residential schools, so too will there be diversity across the non-Aboriginal public that will listen to these stories. In this light, Simon (2004) proposes that we should see commemoration initiatives as part of a transformational process involving those who are willing to listen, view, and ponder.

This is precisely what Métis artist Christi Belcourt⁵⁸ asks of viewers of the stained-glass window *Giniigaaniimenaaning (Looking Ahead)* she was commissioned to design

⁵⁸ "Christi Belcourt is a Metis visual artist with a deep respect for the traditions and knowledge of her people. The majority of her work explores and celebrates the beauty of the natural world. Author of *Medicines To Help Us* (Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2007), *Beadwork* (Ningwakwe Learning Press, 2010) Christi's work is found within the permanent collections of the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario, Gabriel Dumont Institute, the Indian and Inuit Art Collection, Parliament Hill, the Thunder Bay Art Gallery and Canadian Museum of Civilization, First People's Hall. Christi is a past recipient of awards from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, the Chalmers Family Fund and the Métis Nation of Ontario. In 2014 she was named Aboriginal Arts Laureate by the Ontario

for the Centre Block on Parliament Hill in 2011 (figure 10). She describes the experience she hopes viewers of *Giniigaaniimenaaning* will have:

The story begins in the bottom left corner of the glass, with your eye moving upwards in the left panel to the top window, and flowing down the right window to the bottom right corner. The glass design tells a story. It is a story of Aboriginal people, with our ceremonies, languages, and cultural knowledge intact; through the darkness of the residential school era; to an awakening sounded by a drum; an apology that spoke to the heart; hope for reconciliation; transformation and healing through dance, ceremony, language; and resilience into the present day. The title of the piece is “Giniigaaniimenaaning,” [which] translated into English means, “Looking Ahead.” The title is in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibway) and includes, within the deeper meaning of the word, the idea that everyone is included and we are all looking ahead for the ones “unborn.” (“Artist Description”)

Arts Council and shortlisted for the Premier’s Award. She is currently the lead coordinator for Walking With Our Sisters.” (“Bio”) Most recently her work *Giniigaaniimenaaning (Looking Ahead)* “was selected and installed as stained glass for permanent exhibit above the main entrance for Members of Parliament, in Centre Block, Parliament Hill (Ottawa)” (ACC).

Figure 10: *Ginügaaniimenaaning (Looking Ahead)*, by Christi Belcourt (reproduced with permission from christibelcourt.com).

Belcourt invites viewers of *Giniigaaniimenaaning* on a journey from a pre-contact history where traditions are intact, through the 150 years of Indian residential schools, culminating with Survivors breaking their silence. At its peak, the window includes a banner referencing 2008, the year of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's official apology. The right panel depicts dancing and drumming, healing activities, a mother holding a baby, and the words "I love you" in Cree, Anishinaabemowin, Inuktitut, and Mi'kmaw. And then the circle is complete, with a return to the earth, to the lodge, and to traditional ways.

The unique journey of every Survivor is often very powerful, which Belcourt explains is why it is important for listeners and viewers to hear and understand the stories behind such pieces. That each Survivor has a specific message to convey is evident in the words of a Survivor Belcourt went to for advice before beginning her piece. Again, hope is central to the message, even if it is painfully qualified here:

So, I offered tobacco and I said, "What do you think about this, should I do it? And if I do it, what should be in there?" And that's when she told me, "Yes, do it." She said, "Make it about hope." . . . She said, "I don't have hope because I've been affected so badly . . . but I want to have hope for the future generations. I want them to have hope." She said, "I can't, but I want them to have it." (Belcourt interview)

This dynamic is at play in another work Belcourt initiated, *Walking With Our Sisters*. See Chapter 10: Case Study 4: *Walking with Our Sisters* at Shingwauk.

6.12 Commemoration and Responsibility

Maria Campbell, who serves as an Elder on the Walking with Our Sisters Project discusses her experience with commemoration:

We had a commemoration ceremony in Batoche two years ago . . . called it a commemoration ceremony and it was a battle between the Canadians

and the Metis and they brought these people together and they sang songs and they did all kinds of nice things and the commissioners came, I don't know who all else was there but all of those people from opposing sides were there, for this commemoration ceremony. Well, for me, they went away and there's a plaque, but the people still have no land. Nobody ever talked about what did the people die for? What was this war about?
(Campbell Interview)

For Campbell, who has spoken eloquently of the importance of responsibility, there needs to be something substantial attached to commemorative efforts, particularly since the issues are so much larger than just the historic event being commemorated; there are consequences to our decisions and actions:

I also feel that if I can help those people have a sense of what happened to us and help them to understand that even if we didn't experience it personally, it was experienced by our family and our history. That those genetic memories are there for us, they are in the blood and it's opened and it opens all sorts of things, it's generational. It's my responsibility to give back and I give back by trying to educate other people, try to help other people understand so that they'll be kinder to children instead of building more jails and throwing more people in there and throwing away the key. I try to make people understand that through my art - because that's all I have to give. That without the children, we have nothing, we have nothing. We have no future ... that's where I'm at and that's what I believe we should be doing as artists. If we're going to use cultural things, if we're going to use our place in the community, as the place we work from, then we have to give back. We have a responsibility. And that responsibility also means that there's a responsibility in the way that we use that art that comes from there.

Heather Igloliorte presents another argument. First, she questions commemoration generally and specifically with regard to the TRC's call for proposals under the Commemoration Fund:

Commemoration implies kind of a permanence, especially in the western consideration of the term, you know, it's going to be a monument to an issue or it's going to be some kind of a lasting legacy to remember, you know, a memorialization. That kind of permanence, as you pointed out, is not necessarily the indigenous way of remembering... Commemoration is very different in the indigenous world ... and might exist in very different forms. So, I assume what they're looking for is commemoration projects

that memorialize [or] ‘remember.’ I think there certainly is a danger in that. (Igloliorte Interview)

She then returns to the common theme, discussed above and elsewhere in this section, of the importance of who is doing the work:

It’s hard to say without having specific examples of what those projects might be or what kinds of things they’re entertaining, but, I would say for starters, I would hope that the jury for these commemoration works would be a jury of aboriginal peers – people in the arts world. I would hope that there’s a jury independent of the organization, absolutely. When the Canada Council, or the Ontario Arts Council, or any provincial arts board has projects of this nature, certainly with this amount of money to give out, they always hold juries of peers ... in the understanding that it is those people who understand the field the best that will be best qualified to judge each other.

Ultimately, she echoes Maria Campbell’s emphatic assertion that the artist or curator has a responsibility by identifying accountability as an essential practice:

The first thing you have to be is accountable. You know, you have to be accountable to the communities that apply for this role, communities that may have applied for this commemoration but expect things from this commemoration project and expect to see themselves reflected in what is there, so I think that anyone who is in charge of this would have to be very forthright about their decisions, would have to have a very clear idea in their minds and in their hearts about what it was that needed to be expressed and what reasons there were for including certain projects and not including other ones because accountability has been one of the biggest issues, I think, that [what] Aboriginal people have had with Canada has been a real lack of accountability, a lack of transparency, an imbalance of power relationship, which I think needs to shift back towards the aboriginal person as being the authority on this issue, as being the people who get to decide how the story is going to be told and disseminated across the country. So, I think that would be the key issue in taking on a role like this. The old adage: Nothing About Us Without Us. You know; that the voice of the Survivor should be foregrounded in everything that is done, while still being inclusive and understandable to the Canadian public. From the perspective of Aboriginal people, with the goal of creating understanding in all people.

And Igloliorte has a concrete example of this responsibility/accountability. She identifies the challenges faced when non-Aboriginal people take on the issue of residential schools

or other Aboriginal lived experiences. She says, “I feel like it’s not enough to simply find an issue on your own as a non-native person. Maybe do a bit of reading and then make some art about the issue without thinking about and without making your own subject positioning to the history clear.” Here she is referring to the controversy over two non-Aboriginal artists showing Residential Schools-themed art in a commercial gallery in Ottawa; she is critical of their approach but offers suggestions for how to engage if one is determined to do so:

It behooves the artist to seek out aboriginal people – even the very people in the photographs, or people from the schools or areas where the photo was taken - and learn something. Also, to find out how those people feel about someone making art about their experiences. Because of the approach they took by looking at archives only, for me there is a serious issue of “othering” Survivors, creating distance between the artist, their audience, and the subject matter: Aboriginal people, residential schools. To say that this is not their history is to deny that this country is founded on a long history of colonization and imperialism, and that there is a grave imbalance of wealth, health, freedom, opportunity - and every other way you can quantify power – that has benefitted the Non-Native population at the expense of the Native population. I think they had good intentions but executed them poorly ... Great art can be made by non-Native people about our shared past, but they need to be present in the work as well. I want to know where they locate themselves in relation to this history.

Thus, a sense of responsibility and accountability extends to the non-Aboriginal doer as well and Igloliorte essentially invites that possibility, saying:

I think there could be a really powerful opportunity there that maybe we’re ignoring a little bit because we might not be ready for it, or we don’t want to get into the kinds of conversations that arose around the artists we were just discussing. There may be some hesitancy there, and I can understand that. But I think that the Aboriginal community would welcome art about the history and legacy of residential schools from other Canadians if it was done respectfully, in the right spirit and execution as we’ve discussed. Certainly, there are a lot of non-Native activists and scholars that write against the history of colonization and specifically residential schools that are respected, appreciated and celebrated by the Indigenous community, so it is perhaps surprising that we don’t see more from artists as we do from writers.

6.13 Healing

The notion of healing is woven throughout the interviews with respondents. For example,

Maria Campbell again gives us a description of the role of healing in her life and work:

Because of my own background in order for myself to heal and to find some semblance of sanity in my life, I went to work with other people who were going through what I had gone through. So most of my work for the last 40-some years has been with women and children in crisis so I work a lot with youth and with families. And that's even in my teaching, when I was teaching at university, because I taught there for the last 15 years, it was geared to that and my work as a writer and as a playwright, you know, it's all about healing family because I feel if families are not healed and helped, then we don't have anything, we don't have any kind of future, no matter how many apologies, no matter what, we have nothing if we can't. (Campbell Interview)

Alex Janvier hit the same note with regard to keeping his sanity, saying,

But what I did was during the 10 years [of Residential Schools] I began to paint. I found my solace in painting. It was the only time I felt that I was me. That two hours or three hours and I was lost in there in that process. Most of the kids who were doing art, they were better than I was, by nun standard, anyway, the way the nuns accepted the artwork. They were not trained art connoisseurs or anything like that, they were just, a rose is a rose is a rose. And they would hit the table, you know. I saw life was being crushed that way and I don't know why at that point I decided well, "I'm going to try to hopefully change this around." So, I found I could paint, I could do art, so that became my vehicle of survival without going crazy, you know. (Janvier Interview)

However, as Adrian Stimson says, the object does not do the healing work: "I've always believed that the art object itself cannot heal. And I see this as very individual, like, for me, when I look at creating art, the process of creating art, is a process of healing for myself, the object itself, the result, is not a healer, but it could be a trigger, a trigger for somebody else to consider their own situation, their own context" (Stimson Interview).

And Jayce Salloum concurs:

I would never talk about that as being an intention. ... it's a very difficult area, because then that becomes more, another sort of form of paternalizing, for me, of sort of figuring as this as being a form of healing. Because if it's a result then that would be great. Because I've had results happen to my work, where they weren't the intention but maybe they were a hope and a wish. But if you go in there hoping that this is going to happen, well it can't be your main *raison d'être*, because then I think it becomes more propagandistic. Then it doesn't allow you to explore areas, you know, it's going to narrow your focus. So, if I go in there more open-ended, okay what can I find? You know, let's have a good conversation here, see where it goes. I mean for me it's maybe more healing for me than anything. I can only talk about myself, right? But for, but I think it's pretentious and would be, you know, condescending for me coming from the outside to presuppose that this is going to have any healing qualities. (Salloum Interview)

Jeff Thomas raises another point. Here, he questions when art that is truly engaged in so-called healing – that is, art in therapy, art as therapy – should be hung on gallery walls:

I say, "Screw the critics." People come here from the community that want to feel that they have something to say, I mean you're putting it out there, a forum for them to say something, and then you're going to judge it and say whether it's appropriate or not? I don't think you can do that. It's a different set of circumstances. It's the same thing as when I was dealing with *Where Are the Children?* I remember when Gail [Valaskakis] and people from the Foundation came out to Gatineau to look at my first selections, and I looked at their faces and I thought I was going to die. Because they were like, "This isn't what we expected." So, I had to work on a premise that I had to give them something new to think about, in terms of their expectations weren't going to be met, visually, and I think it's the same thing here, what you're dealing with, is that it has to be thought of in different terms. It can't be framed in the traditional art kind of sense. Even using the word, *art*. I understand about art therapy and that, and is that the same thing as what we think of generally as art? Something that's put on a gallery wall? It could be. But that's a different type of exhibition as well. So, there's a lot of complications with it, a lot of things to think about and that um, and using the word art is in itself problematic. (Thomas Interview)

And Leah Decter reels in the conversation about art and healing, returning to an earlier theme that she and other so-called settlers should be focused on: "Art has a considerable potential to effect healing. As a settler artist working in relation to colonial questions,

however, I would not ascribe a claim or intension of healing to my work. I agree with [scholar] Paulette Regan and others who suggest that the track record of non-Aboriginal initiatives of ‘fixing’ what they see as ‘Aboriginal problems’ is riddled with destructive initiatives such as the ‘sixties scoop’ and indeed, Residential Schools. My interest as a settler is to frame and impact what Regan refers to as ‘the settler problem’” (Decter Interview).

6.14 Maria Campbell Tells the Story of *Halfbreed*

For others, the act of art making is much more immediate and literally life saving, as Maria Campbell notes: “I wrote *Halfbreed* to survive. If I didn’t write it, I was going to end up dead. There was no other place for me. I would have ended up back on drugs, I would have been dead and my kids would have been taken. And that was it, it was just black and white. I think that in the course of writing it, I started to open, because I was working with Elders at the time too, but in looking at my own life and being able to move myself out of it and being able to put it down, I was able to start to see to understand and see and to realize that I had the ability to change things for myself without making the change outside that the change had to happen here first. I don’t think I would have been able to see that if I hadn’t written” (Campbell Interview). She goes on to further detail just what that experience was like:

I didn’t even sit down to write a book. I sat down because I had to have someone to talk to. And I was so closed and so angry and I was tough and I seem like a gentle person, I was one of those people that would have stuck a knife in your throat as fast as I would have done anything else. I never believed that anybody could write a book. I didn’t even think like that. I had to have somebody to talk to. I knew if I didn’t talk that I was going to die. You know you feel your life slipping away, and I have four children. And I couldn’t let that happen, but I didn’t know what else to do.

And I'd met this old Quaker lady because I was already working on the street with women and kids in crisis and she, somehow, she was very old and she was very wise and she was an American woman who came from a very rich family who ended up doing street work of her own and we were having coffee one day. And she told me, 'you know, you have to talk to somebody one of these days,' and I just looked at her. She said, 'if you can't talk, write yourself a letter, or pretend that the letter is to someone you love and trust.' And the night that I decided I had to go to work because I had no job, literally I was blacklisted a communist, I couldn't get work anywhere and \$32 a week is what you got paid for waitressing and there was no way I could support four kids with that so I decided I'd go back to the street because at least there I was working and I was making good money and I hadn't done that in a long time. I went to a cocktail lounge specifically to go to work, I always carried a paper and pencil with me, because I'm one of those people who makes to-do lists, and I took that out because I was quite, it takes a lot of guts to, especially when you come through it once already and you know better what can happen and I knew what was going to happen because I wouldn't be able to live with myself so I'd start using drugs again and I'd kill myself because I'd lose my kids. So, I remembered this lady telling me, write a letter to somebody or to yourself, so that was what I did. I ended up sitting from about 8:30 in the evening till closing time, I totally forgot about everything and wrote this letter. I didn't even have bus money to go home, and write this letter, started this letter. And something was OK when I finished it. I went home and I was alright. The next day I wrote some more, and pretty soon I had two or three cleaning jobs, I cleaned a theatre, I cleaned the pool hall and then I cleaned houses, I was able to get enough money together to work it and I just kept writing and writing. Once I started, I couldn't stop.

And then I was going to just burn it, I guess, I don't even know what I was going to do with it, it was all laying...like on a table like this, I didn't have an office, and it was all in longhand. I had a friend who was a Marxist, because I was a Marxist at the time, or a pretend Marxist anyway, he came back from England, he was studying there and he stopped at my house on the way back to Vancouver, and he and his wife, I gave them my bedroom, and he got up during the night, because I was sitting at the kitchen table working, because at this time I'm an addict, if I start doing something I get hooked, there I am sitting after everyone went to bed and he had a handful of this paper and he saw me writing and he said, 'what's all this about?' So, I told him what I'd been doing and so he said, 'can I read it?' And I said, "sure." He was someone that I really trusted and so he read it, not all of it, because they were there for two days, he asked me, he said, "You know, I think you have a book," he said, "Can I take it with me and I'll show it to a publisher." So, he went back to Vancouver with this box full of paper, and there was no rhyme nor reason to it, I just kept

putting it in this pile and to make a long story short, his wife's uncle worked for a publisher in Vancouver and that publisher was a friend of Jack McLellan's. About three months later I get a phone call from Jack McLellan and I didn't have a clue who he was, I didn't know anything about publishing. He told me that he was at Heathrow airport, and I didn't have a clue where Heathrow was, and he said, "I just finished reading your manuscript." What's that? I didn't say that, but I didn't know what manuscript really meant, and he said, "I think you have a book. It needs some work and I'd like to publish it." So, I said OK and he said are you prepared to do some serious editing. I didn't have a clue what editing was and I said yes. And that became the beginning of my relationship with Jack McLellan and putting together...two thousand and some pages I ended up with.

6.15 Trauma

There are limits, though, to what artists and their work can accomplish with regard to healing. For example, Kevin Loring raises the issue of student-on-student abuse:

A lot of the shame comes from the, the um, student to student abuse... So not just the, you know, like the caregiver to student abuse, right? Or just the trauma of being taken away from your home and all of the parameters around the institution, right? But the stuff that really destroys the community too is the student to student abuse that, you know, happened at school and happened continuously over years and then they grew up to be adults and they have to live in the same community together and there's all that unspoken tension that is buried, and, and resentment and hatred, right? That poisons the community. Like, from the ground up, right? Not to mention of course all the, you know, the inter-family abuse and everything, that, still the legacy continues today. (Loring Interview)

And this can lead to the development of so-called trauma art. Adrian Stimson addresses these complexities when he says,

I think, like all art, it has a place. You can't discount it. There's all sorts of art in the world. Throughout history there's some pretty traumatic stuff. Like, look at Goya and his depictions of the Civil War, and such and how horrific some of those images are. So, I definitely see it as having a space. Not all art is beautiful, again, I guess it's in the eye of the beholder. I find some sorts of horrific art to be amazingly beautiful, in its own way, and yet the subject matter can be really repelling. I'm thinking of particular artists I know who use, like, animal carcasses and all that sort of stuff, it's repellent, it's visceral, it has all these sorts of elements of ...you don't

even want to call it art because it's so ... awful ... Well, I don't know, I always get into these great big sort of discussions like that and I think, for me, it's this idea of inclusiveness, certainly there is art that repels me and I don't really care about. It does have an emotional impact with me and I think that's true of everyone. We all have our likes and dislikes, and styles too. I think the art world is a bit of a mine field in that area because you'll have certain people call themselves artists and you take a look at their work and you roll your eyes and go...in terms of aesthetics or in terms of skill, or in terms of stuff, but then of course we've seen so many styles of art over time that we're in a place now where almost anything goes and if you want to call yourself an artist, you can call yourself an artist. But I guess, do you have the respect of your peers? And that's an interesting thing too, because I think there's an importance in that. We are a community. We do critique each other. Sometimes harshly. (Stimson Interview)

Stimson then honed in on a particular experience with a sense of ongoing trauma, an experience I shared and write about in the forthcoming case study chapter on the work of R. G. (Gary) Miller and his exhibition *Mush Hole Remembered*. Stimson says of that experience that for some artists – and Miller in particular – the trauma experienced that leads to the trauma explored in art can present new opportunities for the artist to be (re)traumatized – and others with him:

That's, for me, troubling and sad because I think it's the same thing that seems to keep happening to this particular artist and there doesn't seem to be a resolution there. If anything, it seems to be exasperating every time it goes out into the world. I wonder about that. For me, that [presentation of R. G. Miller's work at the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective symposium in 2010 by his curator/collaborator Neal Keating] was an interesting session. I listened with interest, quite frankly. I thought it was an interesting presentation. I didn't actually realize until certain people started walking out and coming back and you could see that there was tension building, for the most part I thought, "Oh, this is an interesting perspective." I'm not sure about it, because I'm inquisitive. Again, I want to ask those questions, I want to question myself, I want to further my own knowledge and I do have respect for the individual artist in terms of their process, and I wonder about that process. I may not agree with it, but I'll be compassionate and I'll be understanding to a certain degree. It can still not be my aesthetic, but I can still find something within it that I appreciate. So, I think I had those same questions, like, I could understand why the artist wasn't there, given his vulnerability with the work and his

experience. I could totally understand that, but it's always one of those questions I have as an artist, you need to present your own work. It's very important, for many reasons. You're the only one who is so intimate with it. I think the way it came across, even though there were all those caveats of the presenter speaking on behalf of the artist, it was still someone talking about someone else's work. Yeah, and it just didn't come across, like given the context of the room, the experience of the people in the room, it just really came across as kind of callous, in a way, I think, after talking to people. I was sitting with a couple of my peers and we were having the same reaction, in the sense of, what's going on here, why is everybody so freaked out? But then all of the sudden realizing why certain people were freaked out and then of course having compassion for them, and yet at the same time having compassion for him because he was just getting beat up on in a psychological way and I'm not sure if it would manifest, but a couple of people seemed pretty riled up. For me, because I've lived in communities of conflict, I've seen conflict, I know what conflict is. I, for the most part, want to avoid conflict, but yet understand that you also have to engage with conflict in order to try and resolve what it is. So, for me, it was just watching this whole thing unfold, not being intimately attached to it, more of a viewer, and then watching what ensued afterwards and the healing sort of process.

Stimson then highlighted his own experience with this sort of blowback, when he had a piece initially selected by curator Jaimie Isaac for the first Truth and Reconciliation Commission National Event in Winnipeg in 2010. His piece, "Sick and Tired," (Figure 11) was ultimately rejected – not by Isaac but by the committee she reported to – because it was too powerful and therefore potentially a trauma trigger for some:

He [Isaac's contact with the committee overseeing her work] said to her that he would deal with me and so I think I remember getting an email from him with the statement, I think I still have it in my computer, I'll bring it out if I have to, saying those kinds of things, and he basically gave the reasons why, that it was too powerful, that it would cause trauma and stuff like that. And then I said, you know, I appreciate all that, but you know, you need to consider your process, that you can't ask a curator to put something together and then turn around and pull the rug out from under her feet and make her vulnerable to the artist because as curator and artist we create relationships ... saying it's too powerful doesn't make sense to me because isn't art supposed to do that? Isn't it supposed to be a trigger? And then I think I said that you've negated my experience. I am a residential school Survivor. You've negated that. So, I said it's very problematic. What you've done is really problematic and that you need to

consider, you need to think about these things before you embark on these things.

Figure 11: *Sick and Tired* (2004) by Adrian Stimson.

Here, Stimson highlights the issue of both relationship, discussed above, and the question of “who does this work,” also discussed above. The question remains, though: When is work too much, too likely to trigger the audience in a negative way and should such work be shown in a mediated fashion or not at all? To a degree, I discuss this in the chapter on *Mush Hole Remembered*, outlining how I, as host curator, dealt with issues of trauma depicted in art displayed in a space dedicated to serving the needs of Survivors – just the audience that the unnamed gentleman above was purportedly protecting in the decision to overrule his curator’s decision to include Stimson’s “Sick and Tired.”

Stimson attempts to answer this question, to a degree, by musing about its impact on him,

the artist, but also draws a clear line in the sand regarding best practices/process(es) when dealing with Residential Schools-themed art:

But people can be aware of things, it's actually what they do with that is a different question. So, in that case, obviously, they didn't consider what that actually meant until they actually did it. So yeah, it was interesting. It did cause me, for a period of time, to have a little bit of a hate on for the TRC, just thinking, what the hell are they doing? But at the same time, I'm hopefully a critical thinker and I do have compassion and I do understand that we're human beings doing the best we can and sometimes we screw up and that's OK. It didn't cause me any irreparable harm, really when I think about it (laughs). I look back at it and think has it damaged me? No, I'm still making art...so I think it is important that there is a lot of consideration for that and if you're going to do that...and I guess that's the tough thing ... that's the thing that the TRC or whoever tries to create these kinds of exhibitions [needs to consider], is right away know that if you're putting out a call, you've got to accept everything. And what does that mean? And how do you contextualize everything if something comes in and it's so outrageous, you know, how are you going to deal with that?

Stimson identifies as a residential school Survivor but technically he is considered a Day School student for, while he did attend school at various residential schools, he was there with his father and mother who worked at the schools and, as such, went home at the end of the school day/week. Stimson says, "I, too, am a Survivor and sometimes I forget that. I start to think that, again, that idea that I'm a second-class Survivor, I'm not really a Survivor, I didn't go through the same things as everybody else. Yeah, I've been in the system and I know it intimately and I know what happened to me." As such, Stimson did not qualify for compensation under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. That said, he's also a Survivor of abuse: "Yes, I was physically abused, I was sexually abused, from a number of different perspectives, from administration, from senior boys, from people who were involved on the periphery but they themselves went [there], so both native and non-native, so there's an interesting history there. I haven't really gone into the actual specifics of any of it yet, but I will,

because you know, just given my own understanding of my father's experience, and sort of seeing patterns in his life, now living out in my life." When asked if he'd tell his story of abuse within a settlement agreement framework – should the Day School lawsuits be successful and yield a similar outcome – Stimson agreed but identified his art practice as the more important place for that work:

Exactly, which at that time I will have to make a decision, but certainly in my artistic practise I'm trying to figure out, well, maybe more in my writing, I think I will actually start writing about it because I think this is why I'm really for being part of this [current] project [exploring my father's experience as a Survivor and as someone who worked at Residential Schools], or in creating all this, is that I'm getting the opportunity to research and help myself understand my father's experience, what it's done to him, the psychological effects, all that sort of stuff, how again in certain ways it's being played out in me, but maybe a bit different because you know I have the advantage of years of...well, not counselling, but I've had some really good friends who have been able to kind of help me resolve in my own ways, and certainly my art practise has. I have to say, if it wasn't for my art practise I'd be a lot more angry, or maybe in a totally different place ... The story will come out and I don't know exactly how it's going to come out, but I do know it will. I'm not afraid of those experiences and talking about those experiences.

Jamie Black is no stranger to the issue of audience members being triggered by the work. Like Jeff Thomas earlier ("Screw the critics!"), Black feels the need to present the work even with these concerns and focuses on the possible flip side of the (re)trauma experience – resilience:

I think that's a problem for activists, definitely, and it is a problem with myself, working on this project. So, I guess how I would answer that question would be that, yes, I'm very much affected by the trauma people have gone through. But I'm also very much affected by the resilience of the people that I'm meeting, the community spirit that trauma seems to engender in people. So, at the same time as I am experiencing this pain I am also experiencing how to live in resistance to that, you know? To live and to be, to have joy in community and like learn about spirituality and I get, I just, all these things are affecting me. So, it's not just the negative that's affecting me ... Very much. Yeah, it's really quite amazing because one of the things that inspired this project is a performance art piece - that

maybe you heard me talk about - that happened in Bogota. And there were about, yeah, three hundred women came together to make that performance and they'd all been through serious trauma but that led them to this place where they were coming together and their voices were being heard, which may not have otherwise happened. So, it allows for a show of strength in people. (Black Interview)

Jayce Salloum, who works collaboratively with First Nations youth on a variety of projects, similarly acknowledges the trauma and resilience dichotomy and says that the youth he works with have “to heal in a way that breaks them open, so their traumas can be acknowledged” (Salloum Interview). And he acknowledges that, moving forward, these projects may well involve the subject of the Prime Minister’s 2008 apology (the text of which is presented in greater detail in chapter 8).

6.16 The Apology

My interviews began after the Prime Minister delivered his apology in the House of Commons on June 11, 2008, so each respondent had an experience with it, although not all spoke at length about the experience. Adrian Stimson hits on both the (fleeting) feeling of hope and a feeling of true scepticism, a theme discussed earlier, which was a common theme; respondents didn’t want to accept or deny the apology on anyone else’s behalf. Rather, it was deeply personal:

Well, I think like anything, you have the initial experience, you have the initial act that took place. However you felt in the moment is how you felt, I guess. I watched it ... together [with a friend] and we both shed a few tears ... [We] both of us kept saying to each other, “It’s more about this energy we’re feeling. We’re feeling this collective energy right now of a bit of a release,” and yet within a couple of hours of that, both her and I were highly sceptical ... And so yeah, also at the same time we were highly sceptical of this whole thing, given both our practises, so we were very sceptical about it and the government who was giving it and it was like, “Oh, brother...” you know, what is this all about? And, also, a little cautious of our own leaders as to what... because again, we talked about

the orchestration of it and all that stuff, so I had those doubts right from the very beginning, but at the same time not to dismiss people's reaction, you know. (Stimson Interview)

Similarly, Peter Morin felt a hopefulness – but not from the words of the Prime Minister's apology: "I watched the apology from the Prime Minister and I was there at the Friendship Centre and there were seventy people. It was live streamed, and I heard him say 'I'm sorry.' It didn't really feel like he said, 'we are so very sorry' or 'we are sorry' and it didn't feel like anything, but then when Stéphane Dion said 'For this I am so very, very sorry...' When I heard Stéphane Dion, what happened was that I felt a lightness. Which I'd never felt before. And a possibility and a potential" (Morin Interview). But there was certainly a question mark about what that potential could be. Armand Garnet Ruffo noted that "It's positive, but it has to be followed up, like I said, with tangible efforts, you know? Something has to change" (Ruffo Interview). And in order for that change to happen, artists have a role to play:

I mean I see incremental steps being made. We have the Healing Foundation... it's being cut off as well. So, we have the Truth and Reconciliation [Commission], that will eventually come to an end. The only thing that hasn't come to an end is Indian Affairs, it's hanging in there forever. ...Change. But I think those are, when the Prime Minister apologized it was wonderful. Everybody felt good for, you know, a little while. But where are the tangibles, where is the next step. This is what I'm saying, this is why artists can't rest, you know? We have to constantly agitate, we have to constantly make our presence known. And just to commemorate? If it stays with commemoration, then commemoration seems to me to negate activism. Because it says ok, are we complacent now, you know, we're going to simply say this happened and that's it? But we have to keep looking forward and saying, what about seven generations from now? What's going to happen to them? We still don't have language schools, we still don't have basic services in communities. Those are important things.

That said, on the day itself, it was extremely important to people, as Chris Bose recounts, saying, "I call that day, The Day the Earth Stood Still, in this country because literally it

stood still. Everyone stopped that day” (Bose Interview). And, while I noted above that Bose was among the first people to respond to the apology in his art practice, it wasn’t immediate:

Actually, you know, I didn’t even think about a response, I was just mainly blown away by the fact that it was happening, I couldn’t believe it. And it’s the Harper government, c’mon. It’s so right wing. So, when it finally happened, leading up to it, there was a buzz in our community. Where are you going to be when it happens? Where are you going to watch it, what are you going to do? I watched it like 2 blocks from here at ... a hotel, they had a huge banquet area that had been rented for the urban aboriginal population and there was like hundreds of natives down there and elders and Survivors and everyone. Many people that lived downtown were there, it happened at the North Shore Friendship Centre, it happened at Chief Louis Centre and every rez and every hall across Canada, people were watching it.

But upon a second viewing, Bose became critical:

I [originally] went into it with anticipation as it was sort of like a personal vindication, like, ‘oh my God, it’s finally being acknowledged.’ Like everything I’ve been through in my life, all the stories I’ve had to tell, or listen to, are being acknowledged. So, that was really powerful and it was a really powerful thing. When I watched it again, that’s when the artist’s eye kicked in because I heard something different, the filter kicked in and I was like, ‘wait a minute, I’m hearing something way different, I’m listening to a different broadcast right now.’ So, that’s why I attacked the apology... Yeah, it was painful, because it was like, it could have been an automated robot, no soul, no sincerity, just rolling off his tongue in the most banal fashion, like he stepped on a bug and that’s what he was apologizing for... The same words were pretty much verbatim on the Australian apology, right? It’s just the sincerity of the government. But I was still happy it happened.

His scepticism, or ire, was not solely directed at the government, though. He knew the world was watching and this affected his impression of the apology and his experience viewing it:

But what really turned me off of it was the media reaction right after it happened. There was people breaking down and crying, there were counsellors there, it was a real intense moment for people. For me, I was a little more disconnected from it at that point in my life. You know I think

I've dealt with it enough and I didn't want to wallow anymore so I think in the road of healing there gets to be a point where you're like, "Fuck, OK, I'm good. I've spilled my guts as much as I can. Let's just get on with it now." That's where I think I am now. Just acceptance and moving on. I've got kids; I've got a busy life. So, what happened after the friggin' interview was the media glut just assaulted everyone in the first rows of the conference room. There was Global and mics and cameras and lights and these people are just like unravelled and a mess. That's really bad, tacky. I got pissed off and I left. Just what it had become was sound bytes and a media frenzy and no sincerity. So, what had started off so hopeful had just messed up. I walked around, I had a sandwich. I just felt empty and cold inside. Well, it happened. At least it happened, that was my hope, but I still felt, "ugh". It percolated and I finally decided to approach it, I found it online and I downloaded it and I chopped it up into Apology redux. Then I started doing it in new media, like digital art, Photoshop montage, using his words verbatim, but chopping them up too a little bit. Repetition, repetition.

For Bose, this repetition was not just a salve for himself but also a way to present his critical thoughts on the nature of the apology to his audience. Like Ruffo, he wanted to see tangible results and his art practice could deliver this message. He says,

I think I can do some more with it. I think what I might do now is contextualize it with, you know, back it up, maybe I'll do some work approaching it with a quote from the Apology, then real statistics that are going on now. Like, how has it really changed? How things have really affected us, what's really happening? Was it just lip service? I can feel something in the next year or so that I'll do that will be probably more from a critical approach about the meat and potatoes of it, like, has it really done anything? So, it's not done...It was just burning inside me, man. I wasn't trying to be among the first, but I was like, "whoa," it pissed me off so I had to create art to bring it to people's attention. That's the good hope of art, is that it brings things to people's attention.

Bose is, of course, ultimately not alone in responding to the PM's apology. Leah Decter talked about her response, "*(official apology)* 913 words: trade value unknown"

(Figure 12).

Figure 12: *(official apology) 913 words: trade value unknown*, by Leah Decter (reproduced from leahdecter.com with permission).

Decter states on her website that “‘(official apology) 913 words: trade value unknown’ and its companion piece ‘(official denial) trade value in progress’ identify two speeches delivered by Prime Minister Stephen Harper as having complex and critically important impacts on efforts of decolonization and directions in equitably addressing colonial legacies” (Leahdecter.com). She goes on to describe the work as follows:

Referencing the Canadian Government’s ‘Statement of Apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools’ delivered in June 2008, ‘(official apology) 913 words: trade value unknown’ alludes to the equivocal nature of value through the use of the points of the Hudson Bay point blanket. The points were originally designed as a system of measurement to identify relative value of blankets for trading purposes – a six-point blanket being of higher quality than a four-point blanket for instance. They still serve this function in the retail market with the eight-point blanket being of highest quality. In this work the points are scanned and digitally excised from the blanket, then built into a single extended horizontal

digital image made up of hundreds of points. Reconfigured as such, any precise predetermined value that the points were designed to denote is obscured, and the reality of ambiguous, fluid, individualized perceptions of value is implied.

And this work is not the end of the discussion for Decter. As she said to me, the notion of official apology – and its opposite, the unofficial apology – need further examination:

My interest in apology is in part stated above in relation to the work ‘(*official apology*) 913 words: trade value unknown.’ That work relates to questions of value in relation to official apologies. Clearly the government’s Statement of Apology and subsequent actions are contested, having been characterized variously as crucial, impactful and also problematic. Rather than *assign* a value to the apology in this work, my interest is to allude to the equivocal nature of value in relation to the concept of apologies – official and unofficial, and in relation to elements of colonial constructions and perceptions. One of my interests in current and upcoming work is to focus on practices of *unofficial* acts of apology and reconciliation. In this work, I am interested in unofficial gestures as agents that can disrupt and question colonial modes of relating on multiple levels. (Decter Interview)

For Maria Campbell, it was important to point out the contradictions. She highlights that we have “a government apologizing to us and then they’re going to build more jails? And we have a minister of Indian Affairs this last week that said, ‘yeah residential schools were a bad thing, but they weren’t cultural genocide.’ And this was the government that apologized to us?” (Campbell Interview). Her scepticism extended not just to government and the leaders of the other parties who responded to the apology but also to Aboriginal leadership:

We need to think about how many of us were a part of that decision that led to that happening... Was Joe Indian asked? Or Joanne Indian, or Metis or whatever. But some were. What you’ve got to remember and this is why I say critical thinking is important, so OK you can say AFN was there, Metis National Council was there, and I would say, how many people voted in the Metis National Council, maybe 1,500 people in my territory on a good election turned out to vote. What happened to the 30,000 of us who didn’t, or aren’t even allowed to have membership because we don’t abide by party lines. How many people voted in AFN?

You can hardly say that they knew what was happening at a community level, most of them hardly ever come home.

6.17 The “Call”

Given the nature of my line of questioning, it was inevitable that government(s) would be discussed in some manner (given the nature of the Apology), as we see above, and that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (an independent body that is, nonetheless, often conflated with government) would be invoked; this was, after all, by design. We have already seen some scepticism expressed, both of government action(s) and the work of the TRC. Here, Heather Igloliorte articulates one particular dynamic – the TRC’s call for artists to submit their work (this is also discussed at length in Chapters 4 and 7). She again expresses misgivings about that particular approach to engage those who would seek an audience with the TRC:

This is what I think: a lot of artists who are already in the contemporary artists’ milieu, and are showing and practicing, they would probably be very savvy to what’s happening here, whereas artists who work in more customary or traditional forms might not be as familiar with this kind of terminology and wording and what the TRC is going to do with their work. So, somebody like [the painter R. G.] Gary Miller, who has certainly been struggling with his experiences in an amazing body of work and has really poured his emotions into his artwork, I would think he might see something like this and be excited that this was a great opportunity to get his vision out there for everyone to see [and this is discussed in Chapter 9). Which would be good. But the TRC really doesn’t say how they’re going to use or promote the work, you know, they say ‘we will be in contact with many art galleries and museums and filmmakers who may wish to use your art in films and programming, you can feature your work in any of these venues or provide them to third parties, who the TRC believe will use them appropriately for education purposes, with proper credit to the artist.’ I mean that, to me, sends up a number of warning bells. Like, I’m going to give you my work and then you’re going to approach galleries and you believe they will use it in appropriate ways? I just think this is not being done in what I would consider to be an indigenous framework for working with artists. (Igloliorte Interview)

This last line harkens back to David Garneau's earlier comments about the need for "irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality" but Igloliorte places this within the specific scope of the TRC and a failing of their call, saying:

I think that for myself I would probably find another venue if I felt like I had to get this message out there, I think I would probably go through another organization, or conversely, perhaps a better idea would be to work with curators who would liaise with artists and thereby be responsible. You know, I think as a curator we have a certain responsibility to the artist to take care of their work. Curator literally means to take care, and to take care of the work and liaise with the government organization who, although I find this to be a very admirable goal, might not understand art, if they're government administrators, if they are policy-makers then maybe this is not something that is in their forte. I would really like to know - I wish there was a name on this [the call for artist submissions]. You know, who is the person who is receiving the art as it comes in, who is the person who works with the art? I feel that if they're going to do this huge arts project then they should really have some kind of an arts specialist receiving all the works. We don't know that they do or do not, actually, because they haven't listed anyone here as a contact person.

6.18 Methods/Methodologies

And Igloliorte reminds us of two things here: that, as others have said earlier in this chapter, curators – and Indigenous ones at that – are a highly specialized group of professionals who should guide this work at all times and further, that the artists, too, should be treated as professionals: "I feel that they should have hired someone who is already familiar with what is out there in Canada by way of artists and they should do a call for artists specifically for works that speak directly to issues in the report. Pay them for their work; pay them for their inclusion in the publications. I think that fairly compensating people for the inclusion of their artwork is a huge step towards working together in good faith" (Igloliorte Interview). Igloliorte's thinking is echoed by Jeff

Thomas: “Yeah. It almost sounds like we’re having this call for an art show and everybody thinks they’re an artist so they start submitting work and they have no curatorial premise, it just all goes up on the walls, right? No, you have to have somebody that can actually put it all into context. And it doesn’t have to be like a really well known photographer who’s doing a work, but it’s how do you put it all into context for the public. That’s what sounds to me like is not happening. It’s just a free-for-all” (Thomas Interview). Peter Morin concurs, saying, “I wonder when I go to the website and I look at the artistic submissions guidelines, all that stuff, and I don’t know who is on the other side of it, I don’t know their history, I don’t know where they’re from, they’re just magically on the other side of the computer screen, I also want to, you know, say that my story and the work that I’ve done is important to me. And I don’t want to just place it somewhere where I don’t know what ... that is” (Morin Interview).

For Thomas, questions abound: “Let’s say we’re looking at a Holocaust exhibition. Who knows what kind of range of stuff you would get for a call for something like that. There has to be like a mandate for collecting this work. That has to be clear. You have to know what you’re working towards. On the first level of looking at testimony coming from people and including artwork in that it’s hard to imagine what you would get. What you would get would be different from what you would get from a call for professional artists to produce work, right, so there’s different levels on all of those” (Thomas Interview). One such level or issue worth examining is, as Igloliorte notes, the issue of silences and whether the collection mandate, as Thomas puts it above, has the potential to (further) silence a Survivor. Here she again returns to the example of R. G. Miller:

The damage that that could cause to be rejected in your expression of residential school? I hadn't even thought about that. Yeah, that could be a huge issue for artists. I mean, when you take the Gary Miller example, like he has had a considerable amount of rejection because of the extreme nature, the very graphic nature of his artwork, which is incredibly compelling, but also quite shocking and certainly the kind of thing I would be surprised if it was accepted for a commemoration project because as you noted, commemoration projects paid for by the Government of Canada probably have to follow a certain number of protocols about being accessible to the public, to children and to be sort of widely disseminated across the country. What is appropriate to the commemoration jury, let's assume there is one, to whoever is doing the deciding may not necessarily translate very well on the other side. Now the question of what that might do to someone there, if they are Survivors or intergenerational Survivors and their work is rejected, yeah that is a big issue. I hadn't even thought about it before. (Igloliorte Interview)

Now, having the opportunity to consider the matter, Igloliorte admits that she is familiar with just such examples where artists are silenced: "Yes, it does happen. People get paid but the work never comes out in the public. Yeah, I'd have a big problem with that too." But there are nuances for a curator – if that is, in fact, who is put in charge of collecting the work under a given mandate:

I mean I guess it depends on what the issue is. I'm always open to hearing what somebody's perspective is on an issue, as long as they're open to having that perspective countered and having a dialogue about it. I'm not interested in closed channels, but I can also understand concerns about, for example, graphic content about children – again going back to the Gary Miller example – because certainly he has created some very graphic images of little children but that is a part of what the history of residential schools is, so it's a question of how to show the truth. I would certainly be open to looking at different ways to disseminate it, but I don't think I would be willing to shut something down entirely. I understand that there are different audiences that are appropriate to various [subject] matter, but I think if a jury decides and puts recommendations forth that, in all but the most extreme circumstances, that should be respected.

Again, like Thomas, Igloliorte uses the term mandate to describe the starting point for any such considerations: "There would need to be a very clear mandate, set of rules and agreements made with all the parties who understood what was happening before it

began, because it really is too important a history and too difficult a knowledge to have things happen after the agreements had already been made.” The stakes are high, Igloliorte notes, returning to the Jaimie Isaac experience with the TRC National Event in Winnipeg, where her work as curator was overruled by a committee that included government and churches: “It won’t be a full reconciliation if the aboriginal people feel like they have been conceding and making concessions to the perpetrators.” The fix, as Igloliorte notes, is in getting the formula right: “I think the ultimate authority should lie in aboriginal people with experience in museums, experience in intercultural exchange, people who were professional artists with many years of experience in expressing things cross-culturally, I really would not be comfortable with the ultimate authority lying in the government. I would rather they made recommendations to me than me make recommendations to them.”

When asked, as others were, whether it would make a difference if there was an ethically trained archivist or Aboriginal curator on the other end, Morin said, like others, that it

would make a total difference because I would know. You know what I mean? Like, it’s like, you, you sit in a circle and you say my name is so and so, this is my mom, this is my dad, this is, this is where I am from, this is what I believe in. It matters. It matters. This is the work that I’ve done. This is my connection to the land. And that’s really, that’s the other component there ... the Truth and Reconciliation [Commission] is acknowledging the land, is acknowledging our relationships to the land, is acknowledging that there’s unique knowledge and history which has occurred because people have [strived] to develop relationships to the land and organize structures which support the continuation of that knowledge. (Morin Interview)

Jaimie Isaac had a concrete suggestion, one that should precede even the question of mandate; again, it is the people behind the work of considering a collection, of framing a

call for submissions, that is essential. As Igloliorte says above, it is essential to get the make up of any such process or body that oversees a process right from the start:

I think I would probably start by getting a group of people together that should have been there right at the get-go to make the call for submissions and decide what was going to actually happen to the works that came in. ... And start there because one person can't make those decisions. I just don't think that's ethical. ... So, I would start by having a body of people that would weigh in on some of those issues and come from different disciplines and lend their expertise ... and then, be that person to mediate it and to gather the information and then come up with a plan to work on archiving, cataloguing, and conserving and think about ways of displaying and giving different contexts to different work, and really honouring and voicing those artifacts in a respectful way. (Isaac Interview)

Jeff Thomas draws an important distinction here between work being solicited broadly – not just from the “professional” artist community – that fits a particular theme and commissioned work. Of the former, Thomas says, “I mean in that instance you’re honouring the Survivor. Whatever they produce from that experience, I wouldn’t call it art, in a sense. I wouldn’t place a restriction on it and say that it’s art. Because that’s the thing – what is art?” (Thomas Interview). Further, “If you put it out there and this is what they’re submitting, then there’s value to it. I don’t care whether you consider it art or not. If it says something that’s important and addresses what this is attempting to address, then it’s important. It doesn’t matter whether it meets the standard of whatever a good photograph is or a good poem or something like that, it’s whether or not it’s meeting the criteria of expressing something that had not been expressed before.”

Respondents were also asked how they might act if put in the position Isaac describes above – if they were the curator or advisor on such a body. David Garneau used R. G. Miller’s work as an example when he answered, saying that if he were the curator that

I [would] want to know whether it's a permanent installation or a temporary installation. Then I want to know why that institution wants that work in there, because you've already predetermined that you want that work. Curators work differently, you have a space, you want me to do something, then I figure out what I should do with that space. So, this is a set-up relationship, so I want to know the desire of the organizers for that work. They know it's controversial; why would you want that in there? And then I'd determine, certainly if they can take the lumps that would come following that, then I'd write the essay of the sort we've been describing that understands that there's what happened to the man, how he processed it - and narrating this process is really important - and then what it is as a legacy past that. Those are three totally different stories. (Garneau Interview)

Sherry Farrell Racette takes this further but first draws a distinction between her ability to respond to such a call as an artist versus a curator: "As a curator and as a caretaker of the work, I would feel quite confident in being able to be respectful, and deal with a variety of kinds of work. And think of good ways to show them, and ways to protect them, and work with the artists who created them. You know, I would feel very comfortable doing that. As an artist I'd feel like I was appropriating someone's story" (Farrell Racette Interview). Like Garneau, Racette can imagine doing the work (if the situation was right). She highlights several key considerations, though:

I think I would, I would take that. Because I just think because of my experience that I might be able to negotiate that. Maybe? You'd have to see what they wanted, see if you could do it or even want to do it. But I would say the first thing that you'd need to do would be to have some dialogue with the artists that created the work. The trouble with curating is that it's evaluative, often, what's good work, what's not good work. Or coming up with a, usually a theme or a topic or some kind of a focus, so you'd first have to have a really good look at what they had, just to see what you've got. And you'd have to think of ways to honor the range of work. So how to best show the range of work, because it might be someone with absolutely no artistic background creating work that's part of their, really, is part of a statement. ...It was the way they were able to tell their story. And then you might end up with someone like Robert Houle perhaps who is an internationally known artist but also a residential school - I hate the word Survivor, but you know - veteran. So, the range would be really profound. So how you would negotiate that, in a way that

values all of those, could be interesting. Challenging but interesting. Because I think that you could do it, but you'd also have to make sure that people, like who's your audience? You'd have to think of who's your audience. And you would probably have several audiences.

Thinking through these issues, Racette asked an important question:

Are they just having stuff mailed in? They [the TRC] should probably, in an ideal world, have interviews with people when they submit their work. You know what I mean? So, that you've got some documentation of what that person was feeling, what they wanted, what their wishes were. Because then, to go and track down that person, and some of them are elderly and you'll never be able to have that conversation with them? Like, just saying, if the work were shown publicly, would you, not would you be comfortable but, what is it that you want the work to say? Can it be shown? Have you thought about what you would be wanting to say to other people? Cause I think that that kind of a context of the intent of the artist in terms of opening it to a larger audience could really guide you as a curator.

And she returns to Isaac's idea of having a group of people to advise: "Ideally, I think you'd have an advisory committee made up of artists who had contributed work. And you might even rotate it through.... if you can't talk to the artist, which would be the best thing." But if the artists could be asked, Racette is very clear about her approach, moving then into a discussion of what to do with regard to a situation where the artist cannot be contacted after submitting the work; for Racette, there are advantages and disadvantages in the opportunity to showing the work:

[I'd say] I've been approached, this is what, and they've asked me to pull work from the collection. I'm thinking that your work is very powerful, how would you feel about it being there? I mean, that would be the best way. Whether or not you can actually do that all the time is another thing. So, it's like you'd need to institutionalize a next best. If I can't talk to the artist, if I had an advisory group that I could say, we've had a request, here are the advantages and the disadvantages. So, the advantages are: big public. Disadvantages: it's a problematic space. And probably I would take the advisory committee down to the space, and that is also sending a message to the museum that would be borrowing, and that would be any museum. It would be like, oh okay, let's go look, what did you have in mind for us? And so, then there's like four faces behind you, it's not just

dealing with you. It's like coming in with elders and, so that they see the real people behind the artworks. So, that you could say, well how would you guys feel about this and this is how people would walk in, and this is where they'd experience the work, and we can do this, or we can do that. And then just, if the institution's uncomfortable with it then it's like no, then we don't dance. Cause I really think you'd have to be pretty fierce about it. I think you really would. Cause it could so easily go wrong. I would rather err on the side of caution.

Curator Lee-Ann Martin agrees with the above suggestions. When asked who she feels should be in charge she states, unequivocally, "Us. Aboriginal curators. I think Aboriginal curators with collections development experience, of which there are a growing number. It's still [a] very small [community] but yeah absolutely ... There are quite a few, [so] perhaps a steering committee ... [a] collection development steering committee. Because there are a million things [to consider]" (Martin Interview).

To cap off her thoughts on the topic, Igloliorte describes a specific method of decolonization, that of multi-vocality. She calls for the use of "[m]ulti-vocality, numerous voices involved in the process. That is a decolonizing methodology: to de-centre one curator's voice as the main authority and to make it more of a collaborative process, wherein there might be several exhibitions happening and you would both invite artists and have them submit pieces. I think you would kind of have to touch on a lot of different themes and not to try and push too much into one area. If I was doing it, I think I would approach it that way" (Igloliorte Interview). And David Garneau, in turn, returns to his earlier thoughts and writings on the concept of "irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality," ultimately making the point that responsibility, discussed at length above, is a methodology unto itself. He points to his own circumstances as being a part of the responsibility paradigm; because he has the means and the position to act, he must act, and it must be based on the teachings he's received:

There is such a thing as Aboriginal curators; but is there such a thing as a distinctly Aboriginal curation? If there is, what are its characteristics? My experience with Cathy Mattes, for example, offers some suggestions. Cathy Mattes is one of the forerunners. It's not just Indigenous stuff in a non-Indigenous space. How do you Indigenize the space? And, so, is it just Indigenous art in a Aboriginal body? What is it? No, it's relationships to the community, it's even thinking about the next generation, all this stuff. So, it was a real honor to learn from her, and I credit her all the time because it was a big deal. And I've been other places now, Australia, New Zealand, they have a sense of that. But it's divided too, a lot of time First Nations people and Aboriginal people just want to insert their stuff just like any other artwork. I don't see it that way. I see, well I'm lucky, I have a position as a professor where I have a secure income and can do things that do not have to have a return on my investment. I get paid for doing this, so I can - I don't want to say I can afford to be ethical - I can afford to experiment with other things that isn't going to make money - sometimes it will and often times it will not. But if a community doesn't have money for me to go there, well I can still go there. (Garneau Interview)

6.19 Education

Respondents also clearly identified that governments have jobs to do, with education an overwhelming priority. As Kevin Loring says, a change in curriculum is essential. He goes so far to draw a comparison with Germany and its approach to teaching the Holocaust, where no punches are pulled; it is unequivocal:

I think that absolutely curriculum needs to be changed and, and it has to be a part of, it has to be a part of our known history. Right? It has to [be] like the Germans, right, like I mean totally different but hell, I mean it was the industrialized slaughter of people, and they just [went], whew, okay, this is what we did. Here's Auschwitz. You want to come see Auschwitz? This is what we did, right? Like that kind of, that level of - we did this. Right? Acknowledgement. That's a huge step and that being a part of the education of our youth, absolutely...Among many other things but it has to be...the nature of what happened and how it still affects us has to be understood. (Loring Interview)

And Heather Igloliorte, who earlier described art as an essential tool for reaching Canadians, similarly highlights education and public awareness initiatives, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8, where I examine the work Igloliorte and Jeff

Thomas have done with their respective Residential Schools-themed exhibitions. Here, though, Igloliorte links education and reconciliation; first, though, she poses a difficult question about art's reach:

That's the thing, you know, can we really talk about reconciliation in this country if there are still Canadians who have never spoken to an actual Survivor? You know, can art really express the same as hearing someone's story? I know that the things that we read in the literature is nothing compared to having someone describe in their own words the things that happened to them and I don't think that I really understood, because my father never talked about his experience in the schools. ... like literally, my dad has stories from every moment in his life, but tells nothing about when he was young. I don't know a thing about my grandfather, I know very little about my grandmother, except what my uncles and aunts have told me, he just doesn't talk about that period in his life. And he's not a depressed man, he's actually a very well-adjusted and happy and often joking kind of person and I think that's one of the ways he copes with it is to not talk about it at all. I think that speaks to how powerful the telling of stories and giving testimony is to the entire experience. The more that I think about what I've learned and how I've come to know the things that I know, the more I feel there needs to be more public testimony or public witnessing. Canadians need to bear witness to this history. (Igloliorte Interview)

This explains, to a large degree, the emphasis Igloliorte places on using the words of Survivors in her exhibition *'We were so far away...' The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools*. However, like others, Igloliorte is sceptical but hopeful, due to her own experience as a curator and more recently, as an educator:

But I don't think the government is that invested in making sure that all Canadians come to understand it. And I don't think that Canadians really care that much on their own, you know, they're happy to uphold their misconceptions about what aboriginal people are like in Canada. There's always hope for change in the future, though. My students have been very receptive to learning about this history, so maybe more education and public awareness is the key.

7 Chapter: Case Study 1 – Aboriginal Writers and Reconciliation

If a reader looks for and subsequently *finds* reconciliation in a work of Canadian First Nations, Inuit, or Métis literature, he or she may say one is, by definition, contemplating a fiction.⁵⁹ Commentary by Indigenous writers, however, takes up notions of reconciliation in more concrete ways and in some cases, creates a fascinating – and perhaps temporally fixed – tension. This tension – the idea that opinions are changing rapidly within a landscape that has itself changed rapidly over the course of several years, 2005-2015 in particular – emerges from two sources: questions about the degree to which we should (or must) examine the stories and lives behind texts by Indigenous authors, and the fear that the terms of reconciliation are potentially complicit with the mandate of the colonial nation-state.

In order to address these tensions, one must focus significantly – but not exclusively – on the history and living legacy of Indian Residential Schools and the terms that have come to define that legacy in recent years, such as *reconciliation*, *healing*, and *truth*. However, that is not enough. The history and legacy, particularly the intergenerational effects of residential schools and the ignorance that still abounds, must be placed within the larger context of Canada’s colonial history and the pre-contact history of First Nations and Inuit peoples, as much of the Canadian Indigenous literature and resultant scholarship discussed in this volume makes clear. This notion of context is essential. There is too much pain and trauma, resilience, resurgence, and revitalization, and beautiful, thoughtful art-making in the efforts to tell truths about the Aboriginal

⁵⁹ A version of this chapter was published by Oxford University Press as “From Profound Silences to Ethical Practices: Aboriginal Writing and Reconciliation” (Dewar 2015).

experience and, perhaps, to heal and reconcile, to get this wrong. As such, the study of Aboriginal writing and reconciliation requires careful thought and deliberate action.

The profound silences with regard to residential schools are still very recent and, some might say, still evident. This silence was and is deeply personal, but also communal, felt across and within families and Aboriginal communities and within the body politic for decades. Beyond mere ignorance, which is an essential component of the Residential Schools story, deliberate silences existed on all sides of this issue. Those silences are reflected in the writings of many Aboriginal writers, past and present. The bottom line is that there was a time in the very recent past, despite the attention paid to Aboriginal literatures, when virtually no one was naming residential schools as context or, more boldly, as character. More recently, however, we can argue that there have been watershed moments from which these themes have emerged, both within the literature and the scholarship that goes with it. We can safely say that concepts of health and healing are explored by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis authors, poets, playwrights, and scholars and have been for decades – perhaps even from time immemorial.

These issues arose in my recent conversation with one of our inarguably securely canonized writers, Maria Campbell. On describing her artistic work as being front-line, grassroots healing work, Campbell says,

It's always been my work because of my own background. In order for myself to heal and to find some semblance of sanity in my life, I went to work with other people who were going through what I had gone through ... it was all about healing family because I feel if families are not healed and helped, then we don't have anything, we don't have any kind of future, no matter how many apologies, no matter what, we have nothing if we can't. (Campbell, Personal interview)

And when asked if she would ever separate this interest in being on the front lines from artistic sensibility, Campbell says it's all grassroots:

My concern and my sole purpose as an artist is to heal my community. And to help myself ... I get my power from the community, so I give it back. There's reciprocity. Reciprocity is a big teaching in our community, that what you take, you have to give back. And there are responsibilities to taking people's power to heal yourself, whether it's their stories or their friendship, or just making a place in the community ... you can't just go and take that power. You'll get sick ... I can talk about myself as an artist because over the years I've come to terms [with the fact] that the artist is a community worker ... That's my definition of an artist. I get power from the people and I give it back to them. And how it affects them and what happens is not up to me. I go in there with truth and with kindness, and whatever is supposed to happen will happen.

Yet the concept of reconciliation, despite an explosion of references to such in recent years⁶⁰, is another story.

7.1 Basil Johnston and the Shift in Residential School Writing

The latter decades of the twentieth century saw more and more Indigenous authors, poets, and playwrights see publication and experience varying degrees of success. These authors saw their work taken up by various audiences, particularly within academia. Still, into the 1970s and 80s, residential schools remained in the proverbial shadows, even as artists were lauded for their frank depictions of so-called "native life" and their works were described as seminal and influential, words often associated with Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* (1973) and Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* (1985). Tomson Highway's plays *The Rez Sisters* (1988) and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* (1989) also received national prominence. We now know with absolute certainty that the context above, and

⁶⁰ A simple Google search of popular and scholarly writing with "reconciliation" in the title and/or as a keyword since 2005 yields hundreds of returns.

related realities such as Day Schools,⁶¹ the Sixties Scoop,⁶² and off-reserve or urban realities, lurk in the background of these works.

In 1988, Basil Johnston's *Indian School Days* was not the first autobiography,⁶³ memoir, or example of life writing that tackled residential schools to some degree (see *Recollections of an Assiniboine Chief* by Dan Kennedy [Ochankugahe], for example); however, we can say that with this book a relatively well-known First Nations (Anishinaabe) writer shone a light on this experience. *Indian School Days* tells the story – remembrances – of Johnston's removal at ten years old, along with his four-year-old sister, and delivery to Spanish Indian Residential School. Johnston ultimately spent two stints there and at the Garnier School, 1939-44 and 1947-50, respectively (1-4). Using the framing technique of first recounting an encounter in 1973 with former classmates, Johnston mixes humour and a spirit of rebellion into the darker context above. This holds for the first several chapters, in fact, but it wanes in the latter few – a portent of the fact that there was much more behind the stories he relates. This text, both then and certainly now, can be seen as deliberately withholding some part of the story, *his* story, even as it details many of the facts, figures, and scandalous details we now accept as open, indisputable truths of the residential schools. Only recently, in the 2007 foreword to McKegney's *Magic Weapons*, did we begin to hear Johnston's account of what still lurked in those shadows:

⁶¹ Day schools were just that – schools that students attended without being “in residence.” These may have been schools located within a reserve community or a residential school, which for some students did not include residing at the schools; those students may have been billeted in White homes or the students may have returned home each night. Nonetheless, the experiences of students have been described as similar if not identical in terms of the assimilationist and proselytizing aims.

⁶² The Sixties Scoop refers to the alarming number of Indigenous children removed from their homes by various Children's Aid or social services bodies during this decade and beyond.

⁶³ See recent works by Deanna Reder and Sophie McCall for in-depth critical discussion of the long history of autobiography and as-told-to narratives, as well as McKegney's *Magic Weapons*.

[*Indian School Days*] was intended to amuse readers, to recount and to relive some of the few cheerful moments in an otherwise dismal existence, a memorial to the disposition of my people, the Anishinaubae, to find or to create levity even in the darkest moments. And this is how I would like my book to be seen. Had I known what I now know, perhaps I might have written an entirely different text. (Johnston, viii)

When *Indian School Days* was originally published in 1988, there were no references to sexual abuse. It was only later that Johnston began to discuss the subject:

I girded myself to tell the story I had never told before [to the lawyer representing hundreds of complainants from the Spanish Residential School in a class action lawsuit], without breaking down. But I broke down. I wept ... For years I had laboured under the conviction that I was the only one to be debauched in Spanish Residential School ... During the negotiating meetings, not only did I learn that I was not the only one who had been befouled and desecrated, but that we had all been damaged in some way. Even those who had not been ravished suffered wounds, scars, and blemishes to heart, mind, and spirit that would never fully heal. (ix–x)

A few months after Johnston's *Indian School Days*, Highway's play *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* (1989) was released. *Dry Lips* followed Highway's highly successful *The Rez Sisters* and while that first hard-hitting play focused on the lives of seven women, *Dry Lips* is concerned with the flip-side, the lives of seven men. The principal characters each struggle with the addictions that allow them self-destructive release from the unnamed forces of White society that have damaged and destroyed culture and community for so many. Simon Starblanket dies a meaningless, preventable death as he attempts to avenge a rape at the hands of Dickie Bird Halked, who suffers from Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and is denied by his father, Big Joey, the Rez Stud; Spooky Lacroix swapped the bottle for the bible; it is his cross that literally becomes the weapon of rape and the cause for vengeance. While *Dry Lips* filled in some of the gaps that Johnston chose not explore – in this case the subjects of physical and sexual violence, as Randy Lundy points out in his 2001 article "Erasing the Invisible:

Gender Violence and Representations of Whiteness in *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*” -- there was both praise and “plenty of angry criticism from women, particularly Indigenous women,” about the misogyny in *Dry Lips* (102). Many critics, Lundy notes, took issue with the invisibility of a sense of White responsibility, essentially arguing that the play portrays First Nations women and men as victims of their own dysfunction (102). Many made this argument with passionate claims that the colonial context of this fictitious reserve community is not adequately, if at all, explained or expounded upon.

There is no overt reference to residential schools in *Dry Lips*. Yet reading or viewing *Dry Lips* today is a very different experience, given the revelations that have been made since the play debuted. It is impossible not to see, except for those truly ignorant of Aboriginal realities in Canada, that the experiences of forced separation from family and community, segregation of boys and girls, separation from siblings, and institutionalized living in loveless, proselytizing settings with strict, foreign, doctrinal gender norms, is a direct cause of the dysfunction and misogyny we see in *Dry Lips*. Simply put, a 1989 reading of *Dry Lips* was unlikely to have focused on contextualizing it within a Residential Schools paradigm. This is because of the silences and ignorance of that time. In fact, we may argue that Highway himself did not tackle these issues directly until his 1998 novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*.

In an early review of the novel that I wrote in 2001, I note that the book “frankly depicts the abuse of Native students at the hands of the Catholic priests who run the residential schools, but falls short of overt condemnation. This startling material is tempered, in a remarkably skilful manipulation of prose, by an almost complete lack of

editorial intrusion by the sympathetic narrator” (Dewar, Review). *Kiss of the Fur Queen* begins with Abraham Okimasis’ victory in “The World Championship Dog Derby,” a major dog-sled race. Part of his prize is a kiss from the “Fur Queen,” a young White woman who is the winner of a local beauty pageant. This touch of White culture indelibly marks the lives of Abraham’s sons, Champion and Ooneemeetoo – later changed to Jeremiah and Gabriel -- who grow into acclaimed artists attempting to work within White, European traditions while retaining the influence of Cree culture. The novel follows the boys from the idyllic innocence of their Cree childhood through a forced relocation to an abusive residential school, which has a lasting effect on their adult lives as young artists attempting to discover how far their natural talents can take them. All the while a trickster Fur Queen watches and influences their lives. While Highway’s treatment of physical, sexual, and spiritual abuse is devastating, the novel moves into the complicated territory of an honest treatment of the impact – dare I say benefits? – of Western education. The brothers ultimately must learn to live in two worlds in order to continue to study their chosen art forms, even as they bring in as much Cree influence as possible. In this sense, Champion and Ooneemeetoo’s experiences predate and foreshadow the incongruities in Richard Wagamese’s 2007 commentary, which will be discussed in the following section.

Another example of the theme of syncretization of influence, in this case Haisla and Western, followed shortly after Highway’s novel. In Haisla-Heiltsuk author Eden Robinson’s complex novel *Monkey Beach* (2000), residential schools are a deliberate spectre in the remote Haisla community that is featured in the novel. The legacies of residential schools are ever present, but they are deliberately set in the background rather

than forming a central element of the plot. The novel lacks an outright attack on the legislation and policies that gave rise to assimilation and Christianization; instead, characters struggle. Lisamarie Hill's brother, an Olympic hopeful swimmer, has gone missing under mysterious circumstances at sea, and this loss combines with both her struggles with drugs and alcohol and her supernatural powers to drive her out to sea where she, too, is lost, washed ashore upon Monkey Beach where she awaits her brother's return or the revelation of the circumstances of his disappearance. Their pain and the violence that begets violence is perhaps the best example of the negative impacts of the residential school legacy. Yet, Lisamarie remains gifted in the eyes of her culture and this proves to be her salve – if not her salvation.

Over the last two and a half decades, critics and scholars have focused more intensively on the colonial context of Indigenous writings. Jerry Wasserman, in 2005, went a step further. He argued that “staging plays about the residential schools and their traumatic aftermath involved tricky negotiations of race and gender issues, personal anguish, and cultural politics” (24). Keeping in mind the criticism Highway faced with *Dry Lips*, one might argue that Wasserman's comments speak only to reception within the Aboriginal community. Adding a diversity of audiences and audience experiences and, centrally, ignorance creates a cascade of complicating factors. Recently, Nlaka'pamux First Nation playwright Kevin Loring's *Where the Blood Mixes* (2009) has taken on these challenges. Residential schools are not a spectre in the background; rather, protagonist Floyd and his drinking buddy Mooch – and Mooch's partner, June – overtly name their experience of abuse as a driving force of their pain. But the legacy of residential schools, of which most Canadians are ignorant, are also at play in Floyd's

struggle with the proposed visit of his daughter Christine, raised in foster care because Floyd was too damaged by his experience and the death of Christine's mother to be a father. Audiences must ask themselves how they relate to these characters, particularly if the subject matter is new to them. Many Canadian viewers may only truly understand the empathetic bartender, who listens to all of Floyd's stories but keeps pouring drinks.

It is clear looking back now how much I wanted Highway to go on the attack, to pillory Catholicism for all its evil deeds. Stepping back, I recall wondering how I was meant to read that tempered approach and the fact that the horrible details of abuse remained an unexplored context in Highway's earlier works. Perhaps the more relevant question is *why* that context is unexplored. With Johnston's revisiting of his experiences in McKegney's *Magic Weapons* in mind, we must ask ourselves to what degree – if at all – the evolution of these truths should be open to literary analysis. Whose interests are we serving?

7.2 Richard Wagamese's Incongruities

When invited in the summer of 2008 to contribute to what would become *Response, Responsibility, and Renewal*, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's second volume in its *Truth and Reconciliation Series*, author and journalist Richard Wagamese offered "Returning to Harmony," in which he combines elements of two previous newspaper columns from 2007. The *Settlement Agreement* received considerable and sustained press in late 2007 and early 2008, and Wagamese, a regular contributor to Postmedia Network Inc., Canada's largest publisher by circulation of paid English-language daily newspapers, was one of a handful of notable Aboriginal writers to publish written

commentary on the *Settlement Agreement* and its contexts, particularly the yet-to-be-constituted Truth and Reconciliation Commission. On 7 May 2008, the *Ottawa Citizen* ran a piece under the title “The Value of Residential Schools.” In it, Wagamese wrote,

Residential schools are Canada’s shame. For roughly 100 years, their aim was to break the back of family, community, history and spirituality. Their aim was to end Canada’s “Indian Problem,” to invoke the might of the right of the white to eradicate a people’s sense of themselves and their rightful place in the history of the country. Some call it genocide. Others call it a holocaust. More refined thinkers label it mere assimilation. Whatever the label, the grievous hurt that was inflicted on Canadian consciousness festers even now, long after the last of the schools was closed.

Yet he also goes on to argue that

There are other stories that need to be told as well. Stories like my mother’s ... When you enter my mother’s house, there’s one thing more than anything that strikes you. It’s incredibly neat. She cleans fastidiously. Every surface in her home gleams and everything is organized and arranged to make the most of the living area. There is a cross on the wall, a Bible by her bed and a picture of Jesus in the living room ... She credits the residential school experience with teaching her domestic skills ... My mother has never spoken to me of abuse or any catastrophic experience at the school. She only speaks of learning valuable things that she went on to use in her everyday life, things that made her life more efficient, effective and empowered ... Why is this important? Well, because the Truth and Reconciliation commission needs to hear those kinds of stories too. As a journalist since 1979, I’ve heard people credit residential schools with the foundation for learning that allowed them to pursue successful academic careers. Others tell of being introduced to skills that became lifelong careers, and still others, like my mother, talk of being introduced to a faith that guided the rest of their lives ... [L]et the commission hear from those for whom the residential school experience might have been a godsend, or at the least, a steppingstone to a more empowered future. Because those stories happened too ... [Admitting that] the residential school experience was not exclusively a horror show is to tell Canada that we have grown as nations of people, that we recognize that truth means a whole vision and not just a selective memory.

It was striking to hear a well-known Aboriginal author, whose literary works, such as the 1994 novel *Keeper’n Me*, so thoughtfully explore loss and the need to return

and reclaim family, community, and identity, make the argument that so many (usually right-leaning) non-Aboriginal commentators were making – that we needed to focus on the good as well as the bad. But it was especially jarring when Wagamese, a mere three months later, published “Embracing Forgiveness” in the *Calgary Herald*. This piece opened with the incongruously framed “I am a victim of residential schools” and described residential schools as a “spectre” amongst his family living the “last vestiges of the old Ojibway life.” Though he differentiates between being a victim and being a “Survivor,” he says the “incredible hurt, isolation and sorrow that sprang from [his parents’] residential [sic] experiences erupted in drink and violence and ultimately, neglect. I was taken,” he writes, “into child care the year I was three. I would not see my native family again for 21 years. When I came back, I was as wounded as they; unable to speak my language, ashamed of my native identity, ignorant of my culture and traditions. The institution of child care was as much a kidnapping as the schools they attended.”

It was precisely this incongruity that led me and my fellow editors to invite Wagamese to contribute to *Response, Responsibility, and Renewal*. Quite frankly, we were curious to see how such an accomplished writer would reconcile these seemingly contradictory viewpoints: that his mother’s experience was positive on the one hand but, on the other, contributed to her role in the violence and neglect that led to his seizure by the child welfare system. In the end, Wagamese’s solution was profoundly simple; he responded to us as editors. We asked him to connect the dots and he did. And doing so led to a much more descriptive but brutal telling of the same stories. Of his mother’s experience, Wagamese now wrote,

All the members of my family attended residential school. They returned to the land bearing psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical

burdens that haunted them. Even my mother, despite staunch declarations that she had learned good things there (finding Jesus, learning to keep a house, the gospel), carried wounds she could not voice ... For a time, the proximity to family and the land acted as a balm. Then, slowly and irrevocably, the spectre that followed them back from the schools began to assert its presence and shunt for space around our communal fire. When the vitriolic stew of unspoken words, feelings, and memories of their great dislocation, hurt, and isolation began to bubble and churn within them, they discovered that alcohol could numb them from it. And we ceased to be a family. (129–30)

That meant, when he again made the call for the TRC to hear all the stories, it was a much more pointed declaration, this time focusing on both the bad and the good in the following way:

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission makes its tour of the country and hears the stories of people who endured the pain of residential schools, I hope it hears more stories like mine—of people who fought against the resentment, hatred, and anger and found a sense of peace. Both the Commission and Canada need to hear stories of healing instead of a relentless retelling and re-experiencing of pain. They need to hear that, despite everything, every horror, it is possible to move forward and to learn how to leave hurt behind. Our neighbours in this country need to hear stories about our capacity for forgiveness, for self-examination, for compassion, and for our yearning for peace because they speak to our resiliency as a people. That is how reconciliation happens. (133)

Wagamese's nuanced approach to residential school history is evident in his 2012 novel *Indian Horse*, which tells a fictionalized version of many of the details he provides in his TRC commentary. Saul Indian Horse is an intergenerational Survivor of residential school; his mother is lost to him in drink and despair long before he, too, is scooped up by the authorities to attend St. Jerome's Residential School. Saul endures all the abuses we've come to know as part of too many students' experiences. He experiences the kindness of one idealistic young priest, who introduces Saul to hockey and takes him under his wing. However, this doesn't save Saul from his experiences of abuse; his ascent through the junior hockey system is rife with racism and self-destructive behaviour, and

the priest, it turns out, subjected the young Saul to emotional manipulation and sexual abuse while encouraging the boy's hockey career. Ultimately, Saul, like Wagamese, proves to be resilient and is able to embrace healing, but it is a long and arduous journey before he reaches a point of self-acceptance.

7.3 The Apology

On 11 June 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper delivered an official apology in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister's apology led to an outpouring of responses by Aboriginal artists and commentators. Since then, more and more Aboriginal writers have engaged with the topic of residential schools in overtly thematic ways, from Loring's *Where the Blood Mixes*, to Robert Arthur Alexie's novel *Porcupines and China Dolls*, to Wagamese's *Indian Horse*, to Anishinaabe playwright Drew Hayden Taylor's recent play *God and the Indian* (2014). D. H. Taylor, himself never one to shy away from controversial topics, wrote about the Apology directly. He, like Wagamese, is a regular contributor to Canada's national and regional newspapers. In 2009, D. H. Taylor published "Cry Me a River, White Boy," a jokey⁶⁴ but pointed personal essay that attempted to contextualize, from his personal and cultural perspective, the experience of hearing, viewing, and *receiving* the Apology:

Aabwehyehnmigziwin is the Anishnawbe word for apology ... I know a lot of people who were a little cynical about the sincerity of the apology. That is their right. If an abusive husband apologizes to his abused wife and kids, however sincere it might sound, some may doubt the authenticity of that apology. Same as in this situation, an admission of responsibility is as good a place as any to start. Ask any lawyer. But the healing must start somewhere. (94)

⁶⁴ For a more critical treatment of the Apology see, in particular, Chrisjohn and Wasacase.

The TRC, too, has and will continue to come under scrutiny. Since 2008, the TRC has organized seven mandated national events and numerous community events, which have included authors such as Johnston, Beatrice Mosionier, and Joseph Boyden as part of the artistic programming. The TRC has also made an open call for artist submissions, initially placing the call firmly on the testimony side of its mandate:

One of the main roles of the Commission is the gathering of statements and experiences of those impacted by the Residential School System. This is often done through written, audio, video and recorded statements. Artistic expressions are another way to make a statement about the residential school experience. All statements will be archived at the National Research Centre on the Residential School System. This Centre will act as the country's largest and most complete record of the Residential School System and the experiences of survivors. (TRC, *Call*)

A more refined and detailed description followed, as I highlighted in Chapter 4 in reference to the TRC's *Open Call*.

7.4 Reconciliation in Theory

Maria Campbell summed up the feelings of many with regard to truth and reconciliation when she said quite succinctly to me:

I don't like those words. I don't like them ... It seems like it's really easy for us to get caught up in government language, or in language, the words of the state. Those words came out of South Africa and everybody was buzzing with those words when South Africa [had its own Truth and Reconciliation Commission] ... Never mind reconciliation, just look at our history in the last 35 years of government funding. They determine what words we're going to use ... and then they become the sexy words, they become the buzz words and then everybody is saying that stuff and we buy into that and it doesn't liberate us. It ends up causing divisions and grievances and awful things happen to us as a result of that. (Campbell interview)

Others, like Thomas King in *The Inconvenient Indian*, argue less for rejection of reconciliation than for the same kind of caution called for by LaRocque. King's work looks to tell some of the truths about Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations. Of Canada's prospects for reconciliation, King argues that ignorance is not the problem, rather "[t]he problem was and continues to be unexamined confidence in western civilization and the unwarranted certainty of Christianity. And arrogance. Perhaps it is unfair to judge the past by the present, but it is also necessary" (265).

7.5 Reconciliation in the (Literary) Works

Joseph Boyden may be said to be testing Thomas King's assertion as he goes deep into Canada's past in his 2013 novel *The Orenda*, which intertwines three narratives as it explores mid-17th Century Huronia and the last days of the Wendat Confederacy as it succumbs to war with the Haudenosaunee, disease, and Jesuit missionary zeal. This book came out at the height, we may argue, of the valuation of the currency that is reconciliation discourse in Canada and, as such, many reviews and commentators explicitly ring that bell, even if Boyden's narrators – the Jesuit known to his captors as Crow (Cristophe); Bird, the vengeful Wendat warrior; and Snow Falls, his teenage Iroquois captive – do not. Boyden attempts "to reconcile the irreconcilable" (Al-Solaylee). This means juxtaposing, unflinchingly, the violence of the times and the rites and rituals practiced by the Wendat and Haudenosaunee with the reverence for nature and spirit – the Orenda – held in those same beliefs. Where Boyden may be said to have invoked a spirit of reconciliation within families and communities scarred by the many points of colonialism in his previous novel, *Through Black Spruce*, and questioned

whether Residential Schools left an indelible mark of violence on Elijah Weesageechak in his First World War novel *Three Day Road*, there is no question that the centrality of killing and torture to the lives and beliefs of these First Nations peoples is an often overlooked fact with which we Canadians must reconcile. In fact, as musician and public intellectual Wab Kinew argued in his defense of *The Orenda* on CBC's 2014 *Canada Reads* as the book Canadians *must* read, it must be acknowledged, understood within its own Indigenous paradigm, and celebrated. In so doing, Canadians can be reconciled with a mostly dishonourable history of failed right relations with First Peoples.

Returning to the subject of residential schools, in June 2014 the Aboriginal community sadly marked the passing, at 58, of the author of *Porcupines and China Dolls*, Robert Arthur Alexie. He was found with fatal head wounds alongside the Dempster Highway in the Northwest Territories near where he was born. Like his *Porcupines* protagonists, James Nathan and Jack Noland, Alexie struggled throughout his lifetime with his experiences at residential schools. He lost friends to drink and suicide, as do James and Jack. His novel, written years after Basil Johnston's *Indian School Days*, might be said to have benefitted from the tireless and ceaseless work of many Survivors – Alexie was certainly one of them – to create safe (enough?) spaces to begin to share and heal. Like James and Jack, though, it meant a booze-filled and booze-fueled journey first, which for some lasted a lifetime. Alexie did not shy away from pulling the veil off the stories of severe physical and sexual abuse. Not only do James and Jack fight their demons and win, they seek justice and see their perpetrators punished for their crimes. Alexie lived to see tens of thousands of Survivors get the opportunity to tell their stories to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and to the adjudicators of the Independent

Assessment Process, which provides compensation to Survivors for the abuses they suffered.

For those who have worked tirelessly to create spaces and opportunities for Survivors to share their experiences at residential schools in meaningful ways, the recent exponential growth in scholarly interest in residential schools broadly is, to many, disconcerting, bordering on worrisome. Are scholars, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, claiming – colonizing⁶⁵ – yet another facet of the Aboriginal experience to further their careers? In whose interest is activist scholarship being carried out? While it may seem I am arguing for some to back off⁶⁶ – as was sometimes the call in the 1980s and 90s with debates around “appropriation of voices, denial of Indigenous subjectivities, and the exploitative politics surrounding the treatments of Native literatures by the academy” (Sinclair and Eigenbrod) – I am not.⁶⁷ Rather, I am arguing for a careful and thoughtful exploration of residential schools and related issues, particularly with regard to the theory and practice of reconciliation. This is an important part of the Aboriginal writing and reconciliation question, and recent critical studies seek to contextualize this work within Indigenous ethical practices and research methodologies, such as McKegney’s *Magic Weapons* and Episkenew’s *Taking Back Our Spirits*.

How do we practise a responsible, ethical, and indigenous-centred literary criticism of Indigenous writings? First, we acknowledge that the jury is still out on the practice of reconciliation, particularly with regard to Canada’s and individual Canadians’ coming to terms with the history and living legacy of residential schools. And, in terms of

⁶⁵ Kimberly Blaeser made this point some 20 years ago, arguing that “reading Aboriginal literature by way of Western theory [is] a new act of colonization and conquest” (55).

⁶⁶ See Lee Maracle’s “Moving Over.”

⁶⁷ Armand Garnet Ruffo also makes this point: “[Kimberly] Blaeser’s call is cautionary and not separatist” (“Exposing” 93).

reconciliation being a part of Indigenous literatures, in the same way we may argue that these works tell *truths* that do or do not contribute to *healing*, we should, first and foremost, consider ensuring that said jury is comprised of the real experts – those engaged in ongoing survival despite the conditions wrought by centuries of legislation and policy meant to destabilize and eradicate Indigenous cultures. This does not mean that only Survivors can speak of residential schools, or that only Aboriginal scholars can study and teach Aboriginal literatures. What it does mean is that these topics require a careful and critical consideration of the Aboriginal/Settler/ally relationship, as always. I argue that such a topic is still a nascent one, and one that has itself been destabilized by significant recent developments, many of which have left individual Survivors and those affected inter-generationally reeling. Many more continue the work of supporting their fellow Survivors. As such, we owe them our support, primarily through the acceptance that they can and should be – and are, most importantly – leaders in the efforts to educate Canada and the world about our shared history.

8 Chapter: Case Study 2 - Exhibiting the Legacies: *Where Are The Children?* and *'We were so far away...'*

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, an intensifying spotlight was directed at the history and legacies of Indian Residential Schools and the tremendous damage they did to Canada's Indigenous peoples between the early 1800s and 1996.⁶⁸ A spotlight alone is not, however, enough. There must also be craft and expertise in the wielding of such a tool, as well as culturally-appropriate and ethical practices. The questions of who wields the spotlight, how and with what expertise are critically important, as a number of commentators have pointed out. Trudy Govier, I noted earlier, observes that non-Indigenous Canada turns away from Residential Schools and other events of our colonial history because the stories “are unpleasant and incompatible with the favoured picture we have of ourselves, and they imply a need for restitution and redress, threatening our rather comfortable way of life” (78). For non-Indigenous Canadians, her point is that individuals must acknowledge that “we share responsibility for these things” and we “are beneficiaries of the injustices” (78–79).

In Canada, two Aboriginal-run organizations with mandates to address the tragic legacy of the Residential Schools, developed public exhibitions and continue to circulate them to museums and other sites as tools for public education and healing. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) and the Legacy of Hope Foundation (LHF) worked with two Aboriginal artists and curators, Jeffrey Thomas and Heather Igloliorte, to develop separate exhibits over the course of several years beginning in 2000 with

⁶⁸ A version of this chapter was published in *Museum Transformations: Art, Culture, History* as “Where Are the Children?” and “We Were So Far Away...”: Exhibiting the Legacies of Indian Residential Schools, Healing, and Reconciliation” (Dewar).

Thomas, in the course of which the sponsoring organizations and the curators faced many of these pressing questions (who wields the spotlight, how and with what expertise). The challenge continues, furthermore, as the work the Legacy of Hope Foundation continues. Thomas and Igloliorte, too, continue to deploy and interpret their exhibits, and the feedback and impacts they have produced, and as the exhibits continue to inform their artistic and curatorial practices. This chapter explores the trajectories and challenges of the two exhibits, *Where Are the Children? Healing the Legacy of Residential Schools* and *“We were so far away...”: The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools*. It is based on extensive interviews with Thomas and Igloliorte, their writings for and about their projects, as well as on interviews and research at the AHF and the LHF. In highlighting their voices and the important roles each played in using exhibitions as tools for illuminating a dark and difficult history, and the education of diverse audiences spanning the spectrum from the former Residential School student traumatized by abuse to the ignorant and uninitiated member of the general public, I hope to honour their work and the positive impacts each have had on community.

8.1 The Truth, Healing, and Legacy Landscape

As I wrote earlier, the legacies of Residential Schools were first meaningfully illuminated at the grassroots level during the late 1970s and early 1980s when Survivors came together for the first reunions, as various health, healing, and social movements began to grow within and across Aboriginal communities. Further, the release of the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) raised much broader questions about the past and present realities of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples. The negative impacts of the

Residential School experience for Survivors and their descendants loomed large throughout the RCAP Report, and the many shocking details led to a federal policy document entitled *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* and the creation, in March 1998, of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

The AHF recognized a need to raise awareness amongst Canadians early in its mandate (1998-2000). As it worked with Indigenous communities to develop healing initiatives, participants in these initiatives were confronted with widespread ignorance about the existence of the schools and the effects that cycle through Survivors' families and communities. As Igloliorte wrote in her catalogue essay, “[T]oday there is still a lack of public *comprehension* [emphasis added] ... and this lack of public knowledge and understanding is exacerbated by the exclusion of this history from our educational system, and the unwillingness or inability (until very recently) of Survivors to speak about their experiences in the schools” (“A Message,” 24). As summarized under the rubric “Lessons Learned” by the authors of the AHF publication, *The Future of the Residential Schools Healing Movement*, “Several communities saw Legacy education as ‘the answer’, especially for youth and in the broader Canadian context. They also want partnerships established with educators and tools to help all who are eager to learn” (22).

The AHF disseminated its research on the schools' legacies through publications that were widely distributed to Aboriginal people and communities, service providers, policy makers, educators, and others working to heal the legacy of the residential schools. It developed a publication entitled *Misconceptions of Canada's Indian Residential School System* to combat some commonly held stereotypes, starting with the simple truth that

residential schools were a part of a larger policy of assimilation by the Canadian state, designed to remove the “Indian problem.” In July of 2000, aware of its time-limited mandate and federal funding commitment⁶⁹, the AHF established the Legacy of Hope Foundation (LHF),⁷⁰ an Aboriginal-governed charity, in order to raise funds to continue the AHF’s healing projects so that these activities could be sustained after the initial grant finished. Despite signs of growing public awareness, the LHF had difficulties developing support for its healing initiatives and came to believe that if the Canadian public knew more about the schools and their enduring health and social consequences on peoples’ lives today, they would be more likely to support healing efforts.⁷¹

In 2005, the Board of Directors decided to focus its mandate on public education as the most important way to support healing initiatives for Survivors and their families. As the LHF intensified the spotlight Survivors and groups representing their interests were taking legal action to force the federal government to make an official apology and compensate Survivors. Individual lawsuits against government, Churches, and perpetrators grew in number, as did class action lawsuits. As I highlighted earlier, this wave of activity led to negotiations that culminated in 2005 with an agreement-in-principle for the multi-billion dollar Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) that was finalized September 19, 2007. There were two funds within the IRSSA, as well: the Commemoration Fund (\$40 million), which would ultimately be allocated through a process of proposal adjudication by the TRC and Aboriginal Affairs and

⁶⁹ The mandate was meant to expire in 2009. The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement in 2007 would see a second mandate, extending federal funding of the AHF to March 31, 2012.

⁷⁰ It was originally called the Aboriginal Healing Charitable Association; the name was changed to the Legacy of Hope Foundation in 2001.

⁷¹ Background material for the LHF is drawn from an email received from Trina Bolam, in her capacity as LHF executive director, and from *Legacy of Hope Foundation - A Vision Beyond 2010*, a report prepared for the LHF by First Peoples Group for use internally. Elements are shared here with permission from the LHF.

Northern Development Canada, and the Healing Fund, which saw an additional \$125 million go to the AHF to continue funding existing projects under a new mandate, beginning September 19, 2007, and running to March 31, 2012.⁷²

8.2 *Where Are the Children? Healing the Legacy of Residential Schools*

In 2000, Iroquois (Onondaga) curator, photographer, and cultural analyst Jeff Thomas was approached by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to develop an exhibit in partnership with Library and Archives Canada – and, later, the newly created Legacy of Hope Foundation – that would “acknowledge the experiences of, and the impacts and consequences of Canada’s Residential School System on Aboriginal peoples; to create a public and historical record of this period in Canadian history that could be easily accessed by Canadians; and to promote public awareness, understanding and education of the history and legacy of residential schools” (LHF, *WATC Exhibition*). However, for Thomas, the use of archival images posed immediate personal and professional challenges, despite the years he had spent thinking through notions of Indian-ness with regard to the historical and contemporary realities of First Nations peoples. Thomas describes his reaction as follows:

When Gail [Guthrie Valaskakis⁷³, AHF’s original director of research] gave me the job, it was like, “How the hell are you going to do this?” Then I discovered that there were no photographs that showed the things that they wanted to show and I asked, “How do you begin to work with that?” That’s when the creativity part came in in terms of how an artist would look at this as opposed to somebody like an institutional curator. So, I had

⁷² The AHF had also received \$40 million in 2005 from the federal government, bringing the total of funds received by the AHF through the two mandates to \$515 million. The AHF’s mandate under the IRSSA officially ended March 31, 2012, however, it remained open with a small operational staff managing monies from the Catholic entities, parties to the IRSSA, who chose to commit a portion of their obligated financial commitment within the IRSSA to the Healing Fund. The AHF continued to fund at least 12 of its longer-term healing centres; however, it wound down in August 2014.

⁷³ Gail Guthrie Valaskakis passed away in July of 2007. I was honoured to follow in her footsteps as the AHF director of research from 2007–2012.

to start looking at those things differently and the idea with the exhibition was to use these photographs as a catalyst to get people, one way or another, to take that first step, [to resist the temptation to] not talk about something so negative. People had to find a way to talk about something negative that has to be heard. Gail said, “We’ve held these inquiries across Canada and we continually get asked by young people who don’t understand this history, ‘Why is it affecting my life in this way?’” So, the exhibition was based on addressing their questions. (Thomas Interview)

Engaging Thomas meant that the partners to this endeavor would be getting a particular expertise; they did not choose, as Thomas notes, “an institutional curator.” Thomas’ body of work and years of experience working with archival photographs in high profile projects such as the 1996 exhibition “Aboriginal Portraits from the National Archives of Canada” and the 1999 “Emergence from Shadow: First peoples’ Photographic Perspectives” at the Canadian Museum of Civilization were very well known. It was clear to all parties that, in Thomas, they would be collaborating with a senior artist and curator working from well-defined artistic and curatorial practices rather than museum, pedagogical, or therapeutic practices. (The absence of the therapeutic approach was particularly significant because the exhibit was meant to contribute to “healing,” as its future title would boldly state.) Thomas describes his reaction when this facet was made explicit:

What I imagined were aboriginal families being able to come into the gallery space to look at an image and use it as a way to start talking or describing something that they wouldn’t have before. I understood that this wasn’t my exhibition. It wasn’t an exhibition of Jeff Thomas photographs. But [this notion of healing] added an element to the exhibition that I hadn’t thought about and so I realized I had to find a way to actually address that in the exhibition. Because I was given such a short period of time to curate the exhibition to begin with, when they then added this to it I thought, “Ok. How am I going to deal with this now?” (Thomas Interview)

Ultimately, this would culminate in Thomas confidently stating in an exhibition text panel:

Aboriginal youth want to know about the experiences of their parents and grandparents, the stories that have not been told. It is hoped that this exhibition of photographs will bring healing and restore balance in Aboriginal Communities by encouraging children to ask, and parents to answer, important questions about their family histories. (Text panels)

Thomas has been a committed and thoughtful curator and interpreter and was, in many ways, ideally suited for this work, as illustrated in the following discussion of his artistic and curatorial practices:

[A]s an artist ... the usual kind of framework is that you produce something, you have an exhibition and you move onto the next thing, but you produce a portfolio. I never saw my work that way. I saw each experience, each step, as a life experience – because one of the things that I was told [by my Elders] is that you have to experience life, you have to be able to know what you're talking about. So, for me, I saw each project as a stepping stone, leading to something else and I never knew what that something else was [going to be], but I knew that I had to go somewhere first. So, what I explored with my own photographic work was building on that, trying to flesh out [issues around identity] because when I started in the '70s there were no First Nations, no Aboriginal photographers around. There were no historians, historical image-makers, who were of Aboriginal background. So, I had to start right from the beginning. And the thing was, nothing I saw that already existed spoke to what I felt I had to say. So, all along it was just this sense of needing to just keep on moving forward because at some point you're going to begin to understand what it means. It was the same thing when I started working in the archives and doing historical research which pre-dated my work with *Where Are the Children?* It was ... applying the same visual techniques that you use with a camera to looking at historical photographs. It's that search for information, those little clues that tell you something, in a sense a kind of truth about the image that you can live and work with. (Thomas Interview)

Thomas is now in his second decade of working with the LHF on *Where Are the Children?*

Figure 13: *Where Are the Children* installation, Tom Thomson Gallery, Owen Sound ON, 2009. (Photo courtesy of the Legacy of Hope Foundation)

Figure 14: *Where Are the Children* installation, Tom Thomson Gallery, Owen Sound ON, 2009. (Photo courtesy of the Legacy of Hope Foundation)

Figure 15: *Where Are the Children?* Installation at Algoma University, fall 2012. (Photo credit Jonathan Dewar)

He has written and spoken at length about the development of the exhibit and the challenges he faced as curator and those of the various partners as the ideas and the exhibit itself traveled throughout Canada. As Andrea Naomi Walsh has written in discussing Thomas's work, "Collections or archives of photographs that form visual records about individuals and collective experiences bring to the fore competing narratives of history and identity regarding their production, circulation, and consumption" (27–28). In Thomas's more usual work, she further observes, "To take a photograph is to commit an act full of hope," (27) and "photographers by trade are all activists to differing degrees," In his exhibit for the LHF, however, Thomas had to confront a largely hidden history that could be told only in part, as writers such as John

Milloy (*A National Crime*) and the authors of the RCAP Report showed, by digging through government, church, and community archives. Thomas was given clear direction on two fronts: use archival sources, principally from the institutional partner, Library and Archives Canada, and make the exhibition somehow about “healing.” Thomas's account of his handling of the narratives he discovered can be distilled from interviews and his other reflections on the project.

8.3 Jeff Thomas on *Where Are the Children?*

As stated earlier, Thomas and Igloliorte has written and spoken extensively on these curatorial projects. In keeping with the spirit of the Indigenous methods employed in this dissertation, I hereby present a description of *Where Are the Children?* in Jeff Thomas' own words. On the importance of photographs to individuals and communities, Thomas writes,

Photographs tell us many things about the past – what our ancestors looked like; how our cities and towns once appeared; or who was present at important political events. People look to their photographic archives for their history. Yet when Aboriginal people look for images of their ancestors, what their communities looked like, or important historical events in their lives, the records become scarce. We are more familiar with the stereotypes of the Indian chief and the squaw, the Eskimo, or Half-breed, than engaging with them as real people. Quite often, Aboriginal people in photographs are not named nor is the specific time or place of the photograph given. Our historical photographs tell more about colonial society and their prejudices and stereotypes. The true stories of Aboriginal people are rarely seen or heard (15).

But Thomas faced some initial challenges, which he describes in the exhibition catalogue: “When I began research for *Where Are the Children?* I found a large number of residential school photographs, but none that illustrated the kinds of experiences that Survivors have described or that directly imaged the abuses Survivors were disclosing.

This was a challenge, and also discouraging, because it meant that the exhibition would not be able to respond directly to their experiences” (15). He goes on, in the unpublished audio narration to *Where Are the Children?* to say that, “Instead, I had to weave a story from photographs that had originally intended to show the so-called “good work” taking place at the schools and make that story meaningful to the indigenous community; not only the survivors, but their children and grandchildren, as well as the youth who are feeling the inter-generational impacts of that horrific history” (LHF “Audio”). He then goes on to say that

The experience of developing the exhibition has not been easy. After examining several thousand photographs and trying to understand the residential school experience, I began to develop an understanding of my maternal grandmother, the last in my family to attend residential school. I now understand why she didn’t speak her language, why she had to go to Buffalo to find work, why she worked as a house cleaner for non-Aboriginal families, and why there was so much pain and secrecy in my family. I began to understand the loneliness that residential school children and their families must have experienced. How many of us can understand what it must have been like to have been taken away from our families and placed in institutions where we didn’t understand the language and were made to feel ashamed of our culture?

And of the truths he and, ultimately, the exhibit would go on to tell, some push back is expected: “Some will argue that not all schools were bad and that not all teachers and administrators were abusive. Some will even argue that some children prospered. But it remains true that many fell by the wayside... Yet the objective of [*Where Are the Children?*] is not to place or direct blame. Rather... it is directed at self-empowerment by providing Aboriginal people with the opportunity to begin to understand the residential school experience by being finally able to see the places to which Aboriginal children were taken. Again, the photographs offer an opportunity to come full circle and move on” (“Where,” 18). And this push back wouldn’t come only from those outside the residential

school experience. As he notes, “The challenge of re-purposing the archival photographs was compounded by a traditional indigenous suspicion of so-called “documentary” evidence – photographs, written reports, and tape recordings had been used for centuries by anthropologists and government agents in ways that did not speak to indigenous experiences or benefit their communities. The views of the indigenous people who went to those schools were not part of the archive.” As such, “It meant I had to take a different route. I chose the story-telling tradition I learned from my elders as the exhibition framework. The photographs would tell a story, but not always the one they were originally intended to tell” (LHF “Audio”). He goes on to say,

Take as an example [the photograph in the exhibition “‘Thou Shalt Not Tell Lies.’ Cree students attending the Anglican-run Lac la Ronge Mission School in La Ronge, Saskatchewan, 1949”]. Bud Glunz, a photographer for the National Film Board, presumably took the photograph to document everyday life in this school as part of a broader project of documenting everyday life across Canada. Once the photo was enlarged, I was able to see that “Thou shalt not tell lies” was written on the blackboard. It must have been confusing for the kids to read that on the board while they were being told that their culture was bad, and demonized... The words “Thou shalt not tell lies” were there to teach the students Christian dogma. But today, we can turn the question around. Who is really telling the lies? Isn’t it the children [who] are being told lies about their own culture? (LHF “Audio”)

As for his solution, Thomas writes,

Journeying into the past is full of twists and turns. What should we believe and not believe about the photographs? Whose stories do they tell? Can we trust the vision of the white photographer? Indigenous people have an understandable suspicion of institutional archives. And, as my experience searching through these archives can attest, it is difficult to know what to trust and what to question. In the end, however, I believe we can choose how much power we want to give these images. There are new stories waiting to come out of the photographs shown ... in the exhibition. Rather than dismissing them simply as images of colonialism or racism, we can choose, as Indigenous people, to make them our own, to add them to our stories, and to give the children of residential schools a voice. I envisioned

the exhibition space of *Where Are the Children?* as one where children's voices could finally be heard (LHF "Audio").

Ultimately, Jeff Thomas crafted an experience for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal audiences, balancing the need for education about the history and the living legacy of residential schools with the need to make the images accessible so that they could contribute to "healing." This meant the exhibit would tell hard truths but also be sensitive to the traumatic experiences of many Survivors and people affected inter-generationally by residential schools. This required careful thought by the partners – the AHF, LHF, and LAC – in deciding when and how hosts of the exhibition could make various support services available onsite and/or as follow-up, particularly for Aboriginal audiences, and who should bear that responsibility. Ultimately, the LHF, as the steward of the exhibition, has accepted that responsibility and it has developed a policy for providing emotional and cultural support services. The exhibition project also had to ensure that the use of archival photographs did not convey a sense that the narrative recounted a distant past disconnected from the present lives of many Canadians, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Thus, although much of the content speaks to the past, including sections such as "Leaving Home," "Approaching the Schools," "The Doorway to Civilization," "School Architecture," "Classroom Scenes," and, devastatingly, "Remembering the Children Who Never Returned Home," the exhibition also includes a section that explores the importance of family photo albums in revisiting this history – and their cathartic possibilities. Here, Thomas includes a personal anecdote in one of the text panels to illustrate the power of this type of engagement with photographs:

As part of my curatorial research, I visited my friend Lori Blondeau, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Lori introduced me to her mother, Leona Blondeau (nee Bird), and her grandmother Virginia Bird (née Cyr), both

of whom attended residential Schools ... [As we talked] Virginia brought out her photo albums and began telling stories, as did Leona, about their family histories [and it] was then that I realized how important family photographs can be in stimulating discussion with family elders (Text panels).

Finally, Thomas chose to close the exhibition with a section called “Contemporary Role Models.” It features portraits taken by Thomas of notable Survivors – Pitsula Akavak, Shirley I. Williams, Douglas Cardinal, Madeleine Dion Stout, and Judge Alfred Scow. In the exhibition catalogue released in 2003 by the AHF, the LHF, and LAC Thomas asks, under the heading “Residential School Survivors as Role Models for Healing”:

Can historical photographs contribute to the healing process? I have tried to address this question in the last section of the exhibition. Five contemporary Aboriginal men and women who attended residential schools have been identified and photographed, acknowledging that some children did survive the residential school experience. These people can act as role models ... [giving] voice to the thousands of children we never heard from. (“Where” 7)

He also includes biographical information about these role models and their own first-person accounts of their experiences at the schools and with regard to healing. Finally, the exit space for the exhibition includes a display of resource material, most notably free publications from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation’s communications and research units.⁷⁴ And, importantly, there were various avenues available to visitors to the exhibition who wished to leave comments, another tool the LHF, Thomas, and later Heather Igloliorte would wield to address the needs and concerns of different audiences.

⁷⁴ All materials produced by the AHF and LHF are available for free, including shipping, as well as online in PDF format. See www.ahf.ca and www.legacyofhope.ca.

8.4 Expanding the Reach

In 2003 the three partners to the exhibition published a catalogue for *Where Are The Children?* and the AHF and LHF have provided it for free to interested parties. Detailed information about the exhibition – its background, the multi-party partnership, the exhibition's content and intent, and its availability for further showings – can be found on the Legacy of Hope Foundation website. There, visitors can also find a web-based gallery of the images from the exhibition with detailed captions, an educational video, also titled *Where Are the Children?*, and a link to the LHF's next major awareness and education endeavor: www.wherearethechildren.ca. As the LHF site explains,

Starting in 2002, the LHF received an overwhelming number of requests from communities across Canada to host the ... exhibition. It was not possible to accommodate this demand, and as a result, the LHF and its partners decided to create a website that would make available the material and information contained in the exhibition.

In March 2005, Phase 1 of www.wherearethechildren.ca made the photographs from the ... exhibition available online and allowed users to navigate their way through a virtual reconstruction of the Mohawk Institute in Brantford, ON.

Phase 2 of the website was launched in 2007 with a new interactive component that enabled visitors to sit at a desk equipped with a virtual textbook, dictionary, map and timeline. Targeted to students aged 12 to 18, the objective of Phase 2 was to present material on the legacy of Canada's Residential School System in an engaging, youth-oriented, interactive format involving the creation of original text and graphics.

The LHF set about developing the third phase of the website in 2008. Built on the model and success of Phases 1 and 2, it offers grade-specific learning and interactive tools on the history and legacy of residential schools. Users entering the site will find themselves sitting at a desk with a suite of tools and resources around them that can easily be accessed to learn about residential schools. These tools include: grade-specific textbooks; teacher's guide and lesson plans; an interactive map and timeline; an interactive study guide which uses assets such as videos, photographs, and audio narration; and a virtual tour of the ... exhibition.

The website has become an important companion piece to the *Where are the Children? Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools* exhibition and has assisted in promoting a new understanding of the experience of attending residential school. This online educational resource receives an average of 28,000 hits per month. (“WATC Website”)

Another significant project of note was also in development at this time. *Our Stories...*

Our Strength is “a national commemoration and education project that collects, organizes and shares the stories of Residential School Survivors and others affected by residential schools” (LHF, *Our Stories*). For this project, the LHF has worked with

[twenty-two] Aboriginal communities and organizations from across Canada since 2005 to organize gatherings of Residential School Survivors and others impacted by residential schools. These gatherings provided a forum for Survivors, their families and communities to come together to share their experience with others, to learn about counseling services and healing programs available to them, to obtain information about issues related to residential schools, and most important, to have their residential school experiences recorded and preserved for future generations. These experiences were video and audio recorded through one-on-one interviews and through group discussions using Indigenous methodologies such as sharing and talking circles. These gatherings have also allowed others impacted by residential schools, including non-Aboriginal Canadians, to hear about the experiences of Survivors and to record their own memories and thoughts of the schools.

Our Stories is informed by the methodology that Thomas developed for the *Where Are the Children?* exhibition. As in the exhibition and catalogue and other projects that grew out of his work, Survivors' voices are included. And, ultimately, feedback from visitors similar to that elicited by *Where Are the Children?* would inform Heather Igloliorte’s approach to the exhibition she developed about the Inuit experiences of Residential Schools.

8.5 “We were so far away...”: The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools

Between 2002 and January 2008, when the Legacy of Hope Foundation hired Labrador Inuk artist, curator, and scholar Heather Igloliorte to curate a second, Inuit-specific exhibit, the LHF had received feedback from viewers drawing distinctions between the First Nations, or “Indian,” experience in Residential Schools and the Inuit experience. As Igloliorte notes, “the LHF had collected approximately 75 archival photographs directly linked to the history of Inuit residential schools from church, private, and government archives across the country” (Igloliorte, 2011, 32). When she joined the project, she, like Thomas, was immediately confronted with a challenge:

It was thought at the time that these [archival photographs] would be the basis of the exhibition, and that the Inuit exhibition would closely resemble its predecessor *Where Are the Children? Healing the Legacy of Residential Schools...* [however, a]lthough this idea resonated deeply with First Nations peoples, who were intimately familiar with the process of being objectified through images and other photographic practices – those of Edward S. Curtis, as well as other anthropological surveys and the like – this strategy would not have made as great an impact on the Inuit, who had experienced colonialism differently than their southern peers. (“We Were” 32–3)

As Igloliorte notes,

[T]hese federally funded, church-run schools had been operating since the 1830s, but there weren’t many northern schools until 1955. What makes the Inuit situation unique and deserving of separate consideration is that, for Inuit, the residential school system was but one facet of massive and rapid cultural changes during the first half of the 20th century, which included the settlement of communities, the rapidly developing economy, [forced] relocations, adaptation to Christianity, and the devastating outbreak of such epidemic diseases as tuberculosis. Residential schools were introduced throughout the north amidst this cultural turmoil, and Inuit children were taken to schools far from their homes and introduced to a completely foreign way of life. (qtd in Grussani 10)⁷⁵

⁷⁵ See also “A Message from the Curator” in the “We were so far away...”: *The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools* (Igloliorte 15–31) for a detailed description of these events.

This contrast was but one of the challenges that faced Igloliorte. She studied Thomas' work and engaged him and others in dialogue to develop an approach appropriate to Inuit experiences. Like Thomas, Igloliorte has spoken and written in detail about her curatorial methods and has commented on the general trends of the past few decades:

[Practices incorporating ethical, indigenous world-views are] better museum practice and it leads to better exhibitions, whole new methodologies and approaches for creating exhibitions that the western art world didn't have on its own, providing more exciting, engaging and interesting interpretations on the arts and cultures. I think it's better for audiences and more interesting really, to do it in the Aboriginal way. (Igloliorte Interview)

In interviews, she discusses her approach to challenges of the Residential School exhibit: "As a [Legacy of Hope Foundation] project, healing is at the forefront, but I also wanted to broach this sensitive issue from a thoroughly Inuit perspective, and to honour and demonstrate respect for the Inuit people affected by residential school. That included trying to incorporate Inuit values and traditional practices into the exhibition."

Unlike Thomas' approach, focusing on archival photographs, Igloliorte says,

I didn't think that archival photographs would resonate as much with the Inuit, who don't have the same long history of colonial photography as do First Nations and Métis peoples. In this situation, I thought the most valuable thing we could do would be to place the primary focus on honouring survivor's voices, their living legacies. We looked to what was culturally appropriate in representing the Inuit experience by placing primary importance on the integration of Inuit philosophies and epistemologies into the exhibition, including the oral tradition – a cornerstone of our culture for thousands of years" (qtd in Grussani 10).

Thus, "[w]e decided to foreground the cornerstone of our Inuit culture for thousands of years: oral tradition. We gave prominence to first person oral testimonies by participants, an approach that helped emphasize that these stories were part of a *living* [emphasis in

original] history” (Igloliorte, “We Were” 33). She goes on to write, in the text that accompanies the exhibit, that

In 2008, a group of courageous Inuit residential school Survivors shared their experiences with the Legacy of Hope Foundation with the hope of contributing to the healing process for Survivors, their families and communities, as well as the rest of the nation. Their stories, recorded [in full in the] exhibition catalogue, are presented in their own words and illustrated with their personal objects and photographs, as well as with historical photographs from archives across Canada. The Survivors, two from each Inuit region – Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region – provide us with moving examples of what life was like for many Inuit before, during, and after their time in the Residential School System (Igloliorte, “A Message” 16).

Igloliorte’s article “‘We were so far away’: Exhibiting Inuit Oral Histories of Residential Schools,” she writes: [I]t was my great honour to conduct these interviews with the eight participants and bear witness to their personal testimonies. It was my responsibility to take care of these stories and the people who shared them with me. Doing so depended on the development of a unique curatorial approach to representing this sensitive knowledge to a particular hierarchy of audiences: residential school Survivors, Inuit communities across the Arctic and Subarctic where the exhibition would tour, and the broader Canadian public (“We Were” 23). She goes on to say that “[t]he title of the exhibition was taken from my interview with Marius Tungilik, who described his experiences as a former student of Chesterfield Inlet’s Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School, which he attended between 1963 and 1969. He meant that Inuit were not just far away from their geographic homes when at school, but also separated spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically from their families and communities. We thought it was an apt title for an exhibition about returning these stories full circle, coming back to a holistic place of health and reconciliation.”

Figure 16: 'We were so far away...' curator Heather Igloliorte at the Iqaluit, Nunavut, installation, 2011

As with Thomas' experiences, there were challenges to overcome: "The greatest challenge was ... to represent the survivors' painful and often explicit recollections without precipitating trauma or distress in the viewers, many of whom would be residential schools survivors themselves. This risk is exacerbated in many northern communities by a lack of access to professional counseling services to deal with the impact of the abuses they endured and a lack of resources or expertise to deal with the intergenerational impact that today affects up to *three living generations* [emphasis in original] of Inuit in the North (qtd in Grussani 10). Further, "We hoped that these personal stories, combined with their intimate childhood images, would help make this difficult history more tangible to the general public, and more relatable to other Survivors in the North" (Igloliorte, "We Were" 23–4). Ultimately, she says of the exhibit that she "will consider this exhibition to be a success if it facilitates and furthers the dialogue on

residential schools in Canada... I hope the exhibition fosters greater awareness and contributes to the national conversation, but, most importantly, that people in the North will go and see it and, hopefully, begin the conversation in their own homes and communities as well (qtd in Grussani 11).

Igloliorte has also detailed the many *practical* challenges she faced. The Survivors she engaged may have all agreed that “their goal was to educate the public and support the healing efforts of Inuit within their own communities” (“We Were” 30) and that the voices of Inuit Survivors should be the central focus of the exhibition, but the curator and organizers still had to solve the problem of how to package these narratives and combine them with the visuals and audio elements generated for the exhibition through Igloliorte's work with the eight individuals. It was also clear that the installation designed for *Where Are the Children?* could not work for a project intended to travel in the north. As Igloliorte explains, “The difficulty and expense of transportation in the North demanded lightweight, durable, and compact exhibition materials and crating. The dearth of ‘real’ [emphasis in original] exhibition spaces such as galleries or cultural centres and the small scale of alternative venues such as classrooms and community halls required that the exhibition be flexible, make maximum use of available wall space, and employ freestanding elements where walls were not possible” (“We Were” 31). Thus, its look and feel has much more to do with a reality of living in the North than the aesthetic preferences of Igloliorte, her collaborators, or the Inuit. Further constraining the scope and scale of the exhibition content and materials was the issue of language – and the importance of the focus on the oral tradition for Inuit. Because of the partnership with LAC, the exhibition text had to be produced in English and French, Canada’s official

languages. And, while Igloliorte conducted interviews in English – the language in which she works – the audio was recorded in the different dialects of Inuktitut spoken by the participants and the transcripts were translated from English and reproduced in, as Igloliorte explains, “the different Inuit languages of the four northern regions, of which one – the Inuvialuit region – has three official dialects.” She writes,

We resolved the language issue by employing both a regional and national perspective. Most of the contemporary Inuit population lives in the eastern Arctic, in Nunavut and Nunavik; there the most commonly read version of Inuktitut uses syllabics. All general texts were printed in English, Inuktitut Syllabics, and French, assuming that all visitors would be literate in one of the languages; that this is a safe assumption as a direct consequence of residential school education. Whenever the text was about an individual or specific region, however, we additionally translated it into the most commonly written form for the region. For example, rather than syllabics, Inuvialuktun participant Abraham Anghik Ruben has the appropriate western Arctic roman orthography on his banner, in the transcription of his story in the exhibition catalog, and in all of his photo captions... By translating this knowledge into Inuktitut and the regional dialects, we both honour the perseverance of the language and aid in the development of a lexicon around residential schools and healing. These linguistic strategies were adopted to foster understanding about a difficult topic throughout both the North and South (“We Were”^{31–2}).

Figure 17: An Elder reads the introductory text panel at the Arviat, Nunavut, installation, 2009. (Photo courtesy of the Legacy of Hope Foundation)

Figure 18: Community members prepare for the opening on the Arviat installation, 2009. (Photo courtesy of the Legacy of Hope Foundation)

As with Thomas' exhibition, the LHF provides a gallery of images and videos on its website that expands the reach of "*We were so far away...*". In 2010, a beautiful, coffee-table-book-sized exhibition catalogue was released. As described above, it contains the full interviews with the Survivor participants and is also available for free from the AHF and LHF.

8.6 Conclusion

The experiences of Thomas and Igloliorte taught the AHF and LHF many lessons about how best to reach Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal audiences. While much of what these two organizations have done was built on careful deliberation, research, and evaluation, it is clear from the stories Thomas and Igloliorte have to tell that there was a time in the not-too-distant past when many professionals engaged in these activities – even the

professional artists and curators, researchers, and administrators –had to break new ground.

Interestingly, in 2010 when the LHF engaged Nanos Research to conduct a strategic assessment of its goals, objectives, methods and products, the polling data confirmed what Thomas and Igloliorte seemed to know already as a result of their experiences curating the two exhibitions. In answering questions about “Ways to Learn About Residential Schools,” respondents identified hearing stories directly from Survivors and going to a museum exhibition as their preferred channels (Nanos, 3). Although the LHF is not a museum or a cultural centre, it was able to engage in partnership with one of *the* premier national Canadian institutions in Library and Archives Canada. By combining its expertise in collecting the first-person narratives of Survivors with the archival resources and exhibition technology of this institutional partner it could confront the difficult challenges that have been identified in this discussion. In the end, however, it was Thomas and Igloliorte who led the partners to new approaches. Thomas’s understanding of the difficulties that *Where Are the Children* might pose for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal audiences in comprehending the negative legacies of residential schools led him to hit upon a new approach in the guise of a familiar-looking infrastructure. He assembled an exhibition that would be at home in any museum or gallery space but he managed to use the conventions of the exhibition of archival photograph to initiate discussion and dialogue about the unseen pain behind the often-staged images and imagery. And, by concluding with the faces and stories of successful living Survivors rendered through his own photographic artistry he gave audiences a new component the LHF would later identify as an example of best practice.

Igloliorte was forced to consider a different route, yet in the end her methods led to a focus on voices to generate dialogue, as, arguably, Thomas had also done in a different way. "*We Were So Far Away...*" is recognizably an exhibition, but one designed specifically to seek out audiences. It is worth noting in closing that at the time this chapter was written, neither exhibit had a permanent home. Whether or not that is a necessary component of a successful exhibition and/or educational initiative may be open for debate. However, in a landscape where the stewards of these important materials must operate in terms of time-limited mandates, we should ask ourselves where these materials – and we collectively perhaps – should go next.

The exhibits have toured extensively⁷⁶ since their openings and the LHF continues to augment its interpretive tools for both *WATC* and *WWSFA* and to seek to respond to feedback. In 2010, Trina Bolam, then the Executive Director for the LHF, and Thomas sought to address some of Thomas' own criticism of the exhibit, due to the constraints of the original commission, through such tools. As Bolam describes in an email response to my queries, this led to the development of new curator commentary in the form of multimedia interpretive material accessible both in the exhibition space and on loaned handheld devices, Apple's iPod and iPad, and online through Apple iTunes. As Bolam wrote,

⁷⁶ The LHF website has an extensive list of institutional and community-based approaches to touring and sites include: Algoma University - Sault Ste Marie, ON (Aug. 3-6, 2012); University of Manitoba - Winnipeg, MB (February - March 2012); Cape Breton University Art Gallery - Sydney, NS (May - September 2011); Glooscap Heritage Centre - Millbrook, NS (March 2011); The Forks - Winnipeg, MB (June 2010); Canadian Broadcasting Corporation - Toronto, ON (June 2008); Parliament Hill - Ottawa, ON (June 2008); Danaojia Zho Cultural Centre - Dawson City, YT - (May-August 2007); Campbell River Museum - Campbell River, BC (September-December 2006); Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre - Red Lake, ON (January-April 2006); Woodlands Cultural Centre - Brantford, ON (September 2005 - January 2006); Yellowknife Legislative Building and Sir Franklin High School - Yellowknife, NT (September 2003-January 2004); and Wanuskewin Heritage Park - Saskatoon, SK (February-August 2003).

The new interpretive material effectively doubled the content of the exhibition, providing context for exhibition photographs as well as linking additional archival assets and Survivor testimonies. One of the reasons this was done was to reach greater audiences and to promote media literacy among audiences. In some of WATC's first public exhibitions, Jeff observed, and was surprised to learn, that many visitors didn't have the skills to interpret historical photographs and lacked both historical and media literacy. His guided tours and curatorial discussion provided rich interpretation, when offered, however without this interpretive element, the exhibition did not have the impact, particularly in non-Indigenous audiences that he had intended. This was mitigated, to a degree, by a video that was produced to accompany the exhibition; however, the video hadn't been designed as an interpretive layer but rather as an extension of the exhibition itself - a means to integrate oral histories and archival footage. For Jeff, the process of curating and recording new content on an exhibition, which, by that time, had been touring for more than a decade, gave him an opportunity to reflect on his original work and consider how much or how little had changed on the IRS landscape. Although his work and the work of many other notable artists and curators, Heather Igloliorte foremost among them, had made considerable gains in what Jeff calls "making the invisible visible," exposing the residential school history and legacy to the Canadian public, Jeff still felt the burden of a pervasive "cloaking" of Indigenous culture and history from the larger non-Indigenous populace. In so many ways, the landscape had changed very little. (Personal correspondence)

Other feedback, particularly from the Survivor community, is not as easily remedied.

Recently, In Labrador, WWSFA and the LHF came under fire by a number of visitors to the exhibition who felt their region had not been accurately represented because "the two Survivors representing Nunatsiavut were considered Settlers, rather than Inuk, by many of their peers and former residential school classmates. As such, they reasoned that there were no Inuit representing Nunatsiavut in the exhibition and thus Nunatsiavut had been excluded" (Bolam). The Labrador experience with residential schools is complicated by a history where Settlers, Settlers of mixed-heritage (many of whom under the Nunatsiavut land claim were later recognized as Inuit), Inuit, and First Nations attended residential schools together. Further, the schools themselves were not recognized under the Indian

residential Schools Settlement Agreement. As such, compensation was not available to Survivors from that region. For all these complicated reasons, the exhibition became a catalyst for mounting tensions to erupt. Bolam, then the Executive Director of the LHF, describes her experience of the Happy-Valley Goose Bay installation as follows:

“Although I had, up to that time, experienced my share of racially-charged hostility, I had never before witnessed such a degree of lateral violence and conflict along racial lines from within Indigenous communities. It makes the tasks of navigating and representing their stories almost impossible. Rather than asking Heather to re-approach the communities involved, we elected to contact representatives within the Nunatsiavut Government to provide us with narratives that Nunatsiavut felt better reflected their experiences and even their language.”

From the perspective of an organization struggling to keep the Residential Schools legacy in the public consciousness, the pressure to complete its mandate “while public and government interest is waning, is palpable. Our task, as the LHF,” Bolam says, “is to ask Canadians to re-examine the legacies of [Residential Schools] and our own complicity in perpetuating colonialism. This process has begun in the construction of narratives, both by Jeff and Heather, to both unsettle non-Indigenous audiences and to honour and bring focus to the experiences of Survivors and the impacts and legacies of their personal and collective histories.” Within the last several years, the LHF has increasingly focused on developing educational resources for middle and secondary school audiences that may be integrated with provincial/territorial curricula. As the LHF winds down, organizations like the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and the future National Research Centre, articulated within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s

mandate, are likely candidates to continue similar work and, as Bolam notes, “perhaps offer a permanent home for the these groundbreaking exhibitions,” which may lead to future questions about how curators Jeff Thomas and Heather Igloliorte might continue to feed into further development and refinement of each exhibit, respectively, particularly given the institutional nature of both those likely suitors for such work. This next chapter must still be written.

9 Chapter: Case Study 3 – *Mush Hole Remembered*

In the fall of 2009, artist and curator Heather Igloliorte invited me to moderate the panel “Healing through Exhibitions” at the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective’s Curator’s Camp Kabeshinàn at the National Gallery of Canada. My role would be to introduce the four presenters and their topics: 1) Jeff Thomas and *Where Are the Children? Healing the Legacy of Residential Schools*; 2) Heather Igloliorte and “*We Were So Far Away...*” *The Inuit Experience with Residential Schools*; and 3) the artist R. G. (Gary) Miller Lahiaaks⁷⁷ and Neal Keating,⁷⁸ working with Miller as both curator and collaborator (and, it is important to note, as a friend), and the body of work called *Mush Hole Remembered*, which details Miller’s time at Canada’s oldest and one of its most notorious Indian Residential Schools.

The organizers and I knew the content of Thomas’ and Igloliorte’s talks (and the respective exhibitions) very well. And we’d received a PowerPoint and information package from Keating so knew we would be exposing the audience to, at the very least, some very challenging imagery (rape, Holocaust) and themes (abuse, genocide) and that

⁷⁷ R. G. (Gary) Miller – Lahiaaks is a Mohawk painter. He was born in 1950 on the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ontario. He studied at the Ontario College of Art and Design and the University of Toronto where he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree. His works are represented in numerous public and private collections (including a painting presented to HM Queen Elizabeth II) and have been widely exhibited, including at the Russell Gallery in Peterborough and the Ingram Gallery, Toronto. His 2008 solo exhibition, *Mush Hole Remembered* at the Woodland Cultural Centre depicted the artist’s own memories of abuse at the Mohawk Institute, a residential school in Brantford.

⁷⁸ From the jacket blurb of *Iroquois Art, Power, and History*, of which he is the author: “Neal B. Keating is Assistant Professor of Cultural Anthropology at the College of Brockport, State University of New York. The author of numerous articles and reports, he has conducted research with indigenous peoples in North America, Central America, and Southeast Asia” (“*Iroquois*”). An American-born Canadian citizen, he also serves as curator for artist R. G. Miller’s *Mush Hole Remembered* where he conducted “ethnography and exhibit curation of the Indian residential school experience in Canada and its impact on Indigenous peoples in Canada, centering on the history, memory, and visual expression of an Indigenous Mohawk artist who spent 11 years as a student-inmate in the Mohawk Institute Indian residential school in Brantford, Ontario” (Brockport College).

the focus would be on a “failed” attempt to heal (according to the artist and curator statements).

Miller had shown up in Ottawa and attended the event the day before the panel. According to one attendee, in hindsight, he seemed to be in distress. This was not addressed by the organizers if, in fact, they knew of this dynamic.

The next day, Keating showed up for the panel but Miller was nowhere to be found. We had a discussion about how to proceed and Keating decided that he would go ahead without him, despite being concerned about Miller’s absence.

After Thomas and Igloliorte spoke, Keating introduced the fact that Miller was missing and that this was a serious concern; however, given that Miller was, apparently, according to Keating, adamant that he wanted people to see this work because he felt that galleries and others were turning their backs on him, Keating felt he should make this presentation to the experts assembled as they were in the best position to help their cause. In conversation with Keating I came to learn that Miller had reason to feel this way; Keating’s ongoing attempts at organizing a national tour were proving to be challenging, with the recent development of a venue that originally confirmed its participation in a tour suddenly pulling out, without explanation, causing the funding for the tour to dematerialize and, thus, the planned tour itself to collapse despite months of strenuous effort.

Keating started in a respectful fashion by reading Miller’s artist statement, followed by his own curator’s statement, and then went into the PowerPoint presentation. Given the powerful nature of the material and my opinion that the room contained people with a heightened sensitivity to the subject matter, I felt there was a palpable tension in

the room as he walked through how he and Miller had organized the work for its 2008 opening at the Woodland Cultural Centre. Further, I felt that the themes and images, while appropriately contextualized as absolutely necessary to the artist's vision and intentions, were deeply challenging to many in attendance but I remained keen to see where the discussion would lead us.

When Keating reached what I assumed was the end of the presentation – because that is where the PowerPoint file he'd supplied us with ended – he announced that Miller's absence was an example of how little “healing” Miller feels he got out of the four years he had spent doing this work, which took him away from his successful “mainstream” practice of landscape and portrait painting, trying to “exorcise his demons.”

And then Keating proceeded to announce that they had decided that the show had to be reworked to address this feeling of rejection that Miller was facing. Returning to the closing line of Miller's statement, “You cannot cauterize an infected wound,” Keating announced that the show would be reworked around the theme of “cultural necrosis,” arguing that the larger cultural system that is Canada (and in which Keating is entangled as a settler-citizen) needed to be examined more thoroughly and that this was a potential lens. He even showed an image of a necrotic foot as an example of the theme/imagery they would explore, which led some in attendance, I believe, to assume he was arguing that “Residential School Syndrome” was like rotten flesh that needed to be cut away, thereby medicalizing victim-survivors. In hindsight, I now see that this is where, due to the emotion already bubbling in the room, Keating's actual words were lost in a fog of surprise and disgust at the image he'd shown.

Finally, Keating ended by reiterating his wish that the people there would help him help Miller by realizing a national tour through the galleries/institutions many of the people assembled were affiliated with. He thanked the room for their attention and concluded his presentation. And the room was absolutely silent. That is, until some members of the audience moved from the back of the room toward the front, with one member, curator and ACC board member Steven Loft approaching the podium. Clearly upset, he berated Keating for his insensitivity.

This was followed by the artist Robert Houle, who, in obvious distress, spoke quite calmly given the circumstances directly to Keating. He said (I paraphrase from memory), “Do you not know there is a history of First Nations being pathologized by White people?” As it turns out, Houle had left the room part way through the presentation when the material triggered him, as had happened to others.

While I would go on to develop a more nuanced reading of the situation in the future, in that moment I was left with one impression: the presentation was a disaster.

The organizers turned to me, among many others, for advice and I suggested they have their Elder take charge. Unfortunately, she’d been sent home. In the chaos, a number of us spoke about how to proceed and in the end, senior arts administrator Louise Profeit Leblanc was asked to lead a ceremonial aspect, which took place in another room. The rest of us sought to restore order. I was not alone in also being concerned that in the uproar the missing artist and his work would be overlooked and he and his work would be thrown under the proverbial bus, something a handful of other audience members also said to the people still in the room, in no small part due to the optics of an ACC organizer in an ACC shirt denouncing Keating and by extension the exhibition.

Keating also spoke with me about how to address the situation, since we had spoken the day before and in the lead up to the panel. I told him I thought he should stay, particularly if we were able to get back on track. If there was ceremony to help us move forward, then it was my understanding that he should be a part of that. I was also able to ask him if he understood what had happened. He was shocked; so was I. In the end, he was asked to leave and did. The conference got back on track and people moved on, without a fulsome discussion of what had transpired – and certainly no opportunity for Keating to say more.

Igloliorte and her co-organizer Linda Grussani were very troubled afterward and Igloliorte and I spent a good deal of time talking about what happened. We both felt we needed to make sure the artist's needs were addressed. Miller resurfaced a few days later and returned to his home near Peterborough (he explained the seriousness of his absence: that he'd been unconscious due to his diabetes). In the meantime, according to Igloliorte, she and the other ACC organizers/board members had been engaged in an email back-and-forth with Keating, which satisfied neither party and was, I am told, acrimonious at times. Keating himself would later say that he felt the ACC acted unprofessionally toward him, both at the time of the presentation and later in their dealings with him. I intervened and offered to act as a mediator, offering to host a follow-up meeting to work through the issues. Miller's wife spoke directly with the organizers, who suggested she get in touch with me.

After speaking with Miller's wife, the artist Tobe Muir, I agreed to host a meeting at the Aboriginal Healing Foundation offices between Miller (accompanied by his wife), Igloliorte and her co-organizer Linda Grussani. I spoke with Miller by phone and offered

to bring Keating in as well but Miller declined, saying he wanted to clear the air with the ACC and felt Keating was still a bit too hurt. In the end, the meeting took a while to pull together, ending up being half a day in February 2010.

Miller spoke articulately and passionately – but also very accessibly – about his work, his Mush Hole experience, and what happened to Keating. He said he understood and that there were no hard feelings. He did say that what Keating said that day as part of the presentation was an accurate reflection of what Miller and Keating had discussed; on this point he was very clear. He asked us if we'd still provide support if we could and invited me to stay in touch. I told him about my PhD work and he invited me to visit him some day at his home to conduct an interview for a "case study." Over the next several months he and I spoke every few months by phone and I began to hear less and less from Keating. I made several presentations of Gary's work, with their permission, and circulated the material they had asked me to circulate.

Miller and I spoke occasionally, as I'd promised I'd keep in touch, and he reiterated his interest in having me visit. However, we were not able to pin down dates that worked for both of us. Then, in December 2011, after having called Miller, I received a passionate but forcefully worded email from Keating. I had apparently and unbeknownst to me upset Miller in this latest correspondence and Keating said that if I wanted to work with Miller, Keating said he was instructed to be the go-between.

I was shocked. But more so I was anxious to correct what was a clear misunderstanding. I also felt I understood where Keating was coming from, as his relationship with Miller is also a close friendship.

Keating and I spoke several times, first over email and then over the phone. I reiterated that I had always said I would support Miller's interest in seeing his work shown but had been very clear that I was not in a position to fund the tour or create a space in my role at the AHF. Keating and I eventually apologized to each other for our strong words and we agreed to proceed with some sort of collaborative exploration of Miller's work and its exhibition. Shortly thereafter I was invited to and subsequently did a presentation in February 2012 at the University of British Columbia on Miller's work for the "Living Through Violence" workshop hosted by the Liu Centre, again with Miller's and Keating's permission (via Keating). For that public talk, Keating provided me with their combined "Artist/Curator Re-statement regarding the 'Mush Hole Remembered' exhibit, and the prospects for Truth and Reconciliation in Canada." It is very pointedly critical of the TRC. I later agreed to a face-to-face meeting with Keating at SUNY Brockport and drove down there in spring 2012. He and I spoke at length (and on tape) and I said that if it was appropriate in my upcoming role at the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, I would work with them to see if the show could travel to Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

We picked up that conversation in the fall of 2012 and I confirmed that I would be in a position to host a scaled-down version of the very large original show. I insisted that I work directly with Miller and Keating and so in July of 2013 I met with Miller and Keating at Muir's home in Bancroft, Ontario, to discuss our approach (also audio recorded with permission). This led to a unique approach to showing "*Serving Time at The Mush Hole: Visual Testimony of R. G. Miller-Lahiaaks (Mohawk, Six Nations)* — Selected works from *Mush Hole Remembered* (2008)."

My funding of the exhibition at Algoma University also allowed the work to travel to SUNY's the College at Brockport for a show curated by Keating.

Miller and I have kept contact since then but I was nonetheless surprised to receive a phone call from a distraught Miller when I was in Edmonton for the TRC National Event in March 2014. He had been triggered, by his own admission, by a piece on the CBC's The National television show the night before on hockey and Residential Schools. However, during our conversation, what struck me was his return to the same previous narrative that no one will believe Survivors' stories of abuse, no one will believe his story, no one will look at his work, and many – including the TRC and the parties to the Settlement Agreement – are trying to sweep all this into the closet.

9.1 R. Gary Miller Lahiaaks (Mohawk, b. 1950)

There are few sources for information on Mohawk artist R. Gary Miller Lahiaaks. The most comprehensive is Keating's own 2012 book *Iroquois Art, Power, and History* and its focus is largely on Miller's experience at the Mohawk Institute or Mohawk Indian Residential School (Auger) in Brantford, Ontario, and the subsequent focus, years later, by Miller on that experience in the body of work originally known as *Mush Hole Remembered*. Miller, born July 18, 1950 (I know this first hand because I interviewed him on his 63rd birthday), was placed in the Mush Hole, as it was derogatorily known, as early as at the age of two or three and remained there until 1964.

According to Keating, Miller emerged in the 1970s as an expressionist painter of some note, successfully breaking into the mainstream Ontario art world (*Iroquois Art* 259). However, unlike many other Native artists of this period, Miller's engagement with Native – and in his case, specifically Haudenosaunee – “culture and philosophy is quite

ambivalent. Instead he has consistently focused on the classic prototypes of painting: portraits and natural landscapes.” And while he has painted many Indigenous portraits and his landscapes are open to Indigenous interpretation, his work, according to Keating, “has rarely dealt with the political issues facing Indigenous peoples” (260). That changed in 2008 when, “after four years of preparation, Miller explosively created more than forty paintings and sketches dealing with the abuse he experienced as a child locked up in an Indian Residential School.” Keating, who met Miller in 1999 and came to work with him as curator in 2007 says, “I came to understand his predilection for landscape painting and portraiture not so much as a rejection of his indigenous identity, but more as a strategy for survival. By his own account the residential school experience destroyed him psychologically.” Further, he “holds his own people partially responsible for what happened to him in the Mush Hole, so consequently feels rejected by his culture.” Thus,

[h]is landscapes provide a spiritual escape from the ruins of his daily life. His portraits provide a means to bring out the truth in people’s faces and eyes, a truth that often evaded him when he was a child. Were it not for his painting, Miller would likely have killed himself long ago.

In conversation, Keating makes the further point about this rejection, again focusing on eyes, that, “his feelings toward his community are really complicated and include very strong feelings of alienation... You know one of the reasons I called the film *Whitey & the Mush Hole* is because that was his nickname given to him by other kids in the Mush Hole and he got beaten up a lot because he had blue eyes, light skin” (Personal interview). Miller himself takes it further: “As I’ve said, my nickname was Whitey. I survived eleven years of sexual abuse and Indian abuse, by my own cousins, brothers, and sisters, people in the Mush Hole. All because I had blue eyes” (Personal interview). This emphasis on eyes plays an important role in the *Mush Hole Remembered* work,

which is not at all surprising given the above but also because of Miller's skills as a portrait artist.

9.2 The *Mush Hole Remembered* at the Woodland Cultural Centre, 2008⁷⁹

There is no better way to introduce R. G. Miller's arresting inaugural showing of his ground-breaking work than with his own words and so I reproduce the original artist's statement in full:

This exhibition represents a combination of vague, mundane memories of years at the school, and flashes of horror experienced there. They are the strongest memories I could approach without descending into a place I would not be able to emerge from.

This project evolved from decades of need to express my personal outrage at the world, combined with a moment of political timeliness. I thought it would be groundbreaking and exciting to tackle - it turned into four years of nightmares and breakdowns, until I realized I had a more fragile grip on my center than I knew. This was as close as I could come with sharing my story.

Perhaps other Residential School Survivors will take up the gauntlet and excise their demons in their own way. Mine have only been exposed - not destroyed. I know now that I cannot carry on living on the surface of my self. My artwork previous to the conception of this project has always been an attempt to find a *raison d'être* and self-respect.

I am incomplete and I need help to heal and achieve peace with my past.

You cannot cauterize an infected wound.

R. Gary Miller-Lahiaaks, 2008

⁷⁹ Keating features much of the work from the 2008 exhibition in a public Facebook page called "Mush Hole Remembered: R. G. Miller," which can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/60736041003/>. The reader should note that the titles of individual works used in this chapter are taken from Keating's 2009 PowerPoint presentation and accompanying promotional package. The same images on the Facebook page sometimes have different titles.

When *Mush Hole Remembered* opened at the Woodland Cultural Centre⁸⁰ in 2008, the exhibit contained more than forty works in a variety of sizes and media (Keating, *Iroquois Art* 262). Upon entering audience members were armed with Miller's and Keating's respective statements, the tone and themes foreshadowed by the poster⁸¹, which reproduced the screaming child from "Mush Howl," and the show's warning at the entrance to the exhibit so the veil was already off. This would be a challenging body of work to behold. And Miller's statement, above, pulls no punches.

Keating, too, sets a definitive tone in his "Curator Statement," writing, "Sometimes art is created for the purposes of revealing truths that hurt, and performing a rite of exorcism. This is one of those occasions. Like tens of thousands of other First Nations people alive in Canada today, R. Gary Miller-Lahiaaks (Mohawk, b. 1950, Six Nations) is surviving the Indian residential school experience. This exhibit is about that experience, and the memory of trauma induced by a genocidal system aimed at achieving a "final solution" to Canada's Indian problem" (Miller and Keating). He asks and answers the question that many viewers may have been inclined to themselves ask:

⁸⁰ "The Woodland Cultural Centre is a non-profit organization which preserves and promotes the culture and heritage of the First Nations of the Eastern Woodland area. To meet these goals, the Centre offers programs in the area of language, research, library, museum and museum education. [It] was established in October 1972 under the direction of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians upon the closure of the Mohawk Institute Residential School. The Centre originally began its focus on collecting research and artifacts to develop its library and museum collections. By 1975, the Centre's Director Glen Crane found it necessary to include the arts in to the Centre's yearly programming thus developing Indian Art, an annual juried art exhibition the Centre still holds to this day albeit the title has been changed to First Nations Art... A driving force behind the changes to the Centre's programming during the 1980s and 1990s was Tom Hill as the Museum Director. Today, the artistic staff is responding to the needs and diversity of our First Nations artists. Many of today's artists are studying art at a post-secondary institution and being exposed to the mainstream art community, thus influencing the medium(s) in which they work. The Centre's collection has developed throughout the years with much of the art being acquired through gallery visits, First Nations Art submissions, and purchasing art displayed from one of our exhibitions. The Centre also works closely with the performing artists in our community by either presenting the artists in our venue as part of our public programming, or partnering with the performing artists on a collaborative project that assist both our programming and development of artists" (WCC).

⁸¹ The poster can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018013490695&set=gm.10150705084576004&type=3&theater>.

What happened to him? Like many others, Miller's childhood was burned up in the aboriginal holocaust of Canada. His young body was regularly beaten for some nine years (starting at the age of four or five), serially raped and molested for more than six years, and undernourished for all eleven years. In addition to this, the curriculum of the Mohawk Institute taught him that aboriginal culture was wrong, that aboriginal language was forbidden, and that aboriginal spirituality was particularly abhorrent.

One significant difference between Miller's and Keating's statements comes down to the choice of one word, which foreshadows Keating's eventual reframing of the exhibit and the challenging reception he received. However, that frame already exists in Miller's statement. His choice to use the word "excise," where Keating uses "exorcism," is telling, as is his final line highlighting an infected wound. If one cannot cauterize such a wound, what option is one left with? So, where Keating characterizes the wounds as psychic and/or spiritual, requiring an exorcism, Miller grounds the wounds in his body. Certainly, both can be read as metaphors. But there is something inescapably intense and real about Miller's words. We are meant to believe that, while he may have gone into his studio to work through his issues, Miller genuinely wishes he could cut the pain from his mind and his body. What Miller cannot excise though is the reality of the system in which he lived, which Keating sums up as follows:

To characterize the Canadian Indian residential school system as a system of genocide is to say that the system operated with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial and religious group; in this case those groups of people collectively known as Indians, Aboriginals, or First Nations. There are a variety of ways in which the intent to destroy a group can be carried out. In Europe, under the Nazi regime, they used ovens, gas chambers, and concentration camps. In modern Canada, they used the Indian residential school system, which seems to have operated along the following lines: remove the children from their families and remove them from their culture and heritage. Rather than provide them with a new culture that would help them live, instead provide them with a culture that all but guarantees a dysfunctional and self-destructive outcome of fear, self-loathing, and hatred. Beat the children, rape the children, and feed them rotten food. This is what you teach them. Keep them in the basement. Teach the older children how to

do it to the younger children. Make sure everybody knows that you have to fight everyone else if you want to survive. Teach them that nobody cares. Then when they grow up, they will not care either. And when they become parents, the culture of dysfunction is expanded intergenerationally. In such a system, you do not need to build gas chambers or ovens to kill their bodies. That is because you have taught them how to kill themselves. In the end, it is hard not to ask, which is the better way to die? The answer has to be neither. (Miller and Keating)

So, what allowed Miller to get to this point, displaying his work publicly while stating in no uncertain terms that there is no definitive closure? Keating tells us up front:

There are perhaps two things that set Miller apart from many of his fellow inmates at the Mush Hole. The first is that he is still alive; most of the people he knew from there are now dead, many from violence and/or self-destruction. The second thing that sets Miller apart is his ability to paint, and it is this ability that perhaps best explains Miller's ongoing and stubborn hold on life. In his case I think painting saved his life, although it hasn't really healed him either. It has kept him going.

But Keating's statement closes in similar fashion to Miller's statement, pulling back from any hint of healing: "Perhaps MUSH HOLE REMEMBERED does not offer reconciliation. But it does offer truth."

9.3 The Exhibit

For the opening at the Woodland Cultural Centre, there were four sections: Introduction; Evocation; Genocide; and Surviving. "Introduction" introduces the artist "as a whole person, fully conscious of what happened to him when he was a child, and of the connection between violence and colonization" (Keating, "Mush Hole" slide 5). This opening section contains many elements that those who are familiar with Miller's work would recognize: portraiture, the use of vibrant colours, and hints (subtle and not-so-subtle) of influence from other artists that one with Miller's educational pedigree would be intimately familiar with. And the viewer is immediately struck with the importance in

these works of the eyes. The exhibit began with the same mixed media image from the poster, in large scale, of a child crying out, its eyes imploring the viewer to respond, react. “Mush Howl” invokes the silent but obvious lament of the child pictured or, as Keating put it, the subtheme that ran through the exhibit: the scream. Interestingly, Keating also refers to this piece as “Rape,” dated 2006, in his chapter on Miller in *Iroquois Art, Power, and History* (263). “Mush Howl” was followed by the first of two self portraits, “Nothing Left But the Husk,”⁸² a figure without eyes, and “A Legend in His Own Eyes,” a striking, realistic self portrait of Miller with his piercing blue eyes.

Two more “portraits” – perhaps self portraits – follow and these undeniably hit home the subtheme Keating highlights. They are meant to invoke and, in the case of the latter, parody Edvard Munch’s “The Scream.” “Scream Too”⁸³ is composed in a very similar fashion to “Mush Howl” and, in fact, its use of the word “too” brings the viewer back to that opening piece after the brief respite of the two previous self portraits, which present a stoic Miller. It also plays on the notion of a scream *in addition to* that opening piece and the one that follows, “Aboriginal Scream (after Munch),”⁸⁴ wherein Miller makes no play of hiding the appropriation of that famous work by Munch.

At play, here, is both the kind of work that had sustained Miller for decades, first in his studies and later in his practice: classic works of art and the practice of portraiture. But the fact that Miller’s blue eyes are both present and erased in the course of two works, coupled with the return to the notion of the screaming voice – again, silent to the

⁸² “Nothing Left But the Husk” can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018018010808&set=gm.10150705084616004&type=3&theater>.

⁸³ “Scream Too” can be viewed here: <http://www.brantfordexpositor.ca/2013/04/08/gladue-reports-boon-or-bane>.

⁸⁴ “Aboriginal Scream (after Munch)” can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018018050809&set=gm.10150705084631004&type=3&theater>.

viewer – show in no uncertain terms what he and Keating were aiming at. The little boy’s voice and the subsequent two screams say to the reader, “Hear me!” But do we know what we are meant to hear? There are glimpses for sure and Miller’s words from his opening statement should ring in the minds of viewers. But what is causing that little boy to howl? What lurks in the shadows behind him? This idea of shadow resurfaces in at least one prominent work in the following section. In “Scream Too,” however, the shadows are replaced with bright colours à la Munch and expressionist painters Miller studied. His ability to create original works in that fashion – and to mimic one of the greats – hints at the salve that permitted a younger Miller to survive over the three decades since his release from the Mush Hole and his decision to take on the topic of his memories of abuse. That salve is, of course, his love of and for art and his own practice. What is meant to be evoked by this opening section – the secrets behind that howl – are soon revealed in Section two, “Evocation.”

This section “evokes memory through a large mural that “reads” from right to left, and also through a video kiosk in which loops a 37-minute video documentary about the artist and this exhibit, filmed by the curator” (Keating, “Mush Hole” slide 12). But first, Miller returns to eyes. In “Gary in a Hole,” we see a representation of a small person, perhaps even a toddler, like Gary was when he was taken to the Mush Hole. Surrounding the figure, which cowers with hands raised over its head, are dozens of red and black eyes. We are not meant to know whose eyes these represent but, again, we have hints at what Miller wants us to understand and, certainly the video that follows blows that wide open. The eyes are those of his tormentors, both adult and fellow children.

The next piece leaves the focus on the eye and instead turns to the notion of the gaze. In “To Show You Were There” we see the underside of the girls’ sewing table from a child’s point of view. Etched into the wood are names and phrases and we can imagine a child cowering under such a table or perhaps seeking the agency of vandalizing school property in an act of resistance or defiance. Not every child who sought refuge under the table was engaged in both activities though. We do not yet know if this painting is meant to imply a hiding place for Miller, and the subsequent discovery of other children’s acts, or that he, too, engaged in such scrawled resistance. (We learn later from the video that Miller did scrawl his name on the brick exterior wall of the school.) Subsequent pieces in Section three return us to this theme as Miller actively and literally scrawls on canvas and paper to speak of his experiences – and perhaps directly to the viewer. From there, the exhibit proceeded to what in many regards is a centrepiece to the exhibit, the “Dismembered Memory Wampum Belt”⁸⁵ (although it may appear to the viewer that the 11 pieces are hung left to right, they are to be read in a counter clockwise fashion as is Haudenosaunee custom.)

In many ways “Dismembered Memory Wampum Belt” is also the most accessible piece in the show that is obviously residential school-related, given that the school is featured prominently at the centre of the belt. Read from right to left, we see a group of boys in poses reminiscent of posed residential school photographs. Notably there are no smiling faces (here I disagree with Keating’s statement, in which he refers to the boys as

⁸⁵ “Dismembered Memory Wampum Belt” can be viewed, in order, from right to left, at the following links:
[https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018021010883&set=gm.10150705084661004&type=3&theater](https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018021010883&set=gm.10150705084661004&type=3&theater;);
<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018021050884&set=gm.10150705084671004&type=3&theater>; and
<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018021130886&set=gm.10150705084686004&type=3&theater>.

smiling; however, I do not see it), unlike so many of the photographs used by administrators and Churches to promote the good work of the schools. There's no propaganda here. The boys are also separate from the girls, who appear three images down the line. In between we see the Mohawk chapel and two scenes of children seated, mournfully, at tables with meals in front of them. Here the titles of the individual pieces, "Mush Taste Bad" and "Mush all Gone" tell more of the story. We know these, too, are not happy children. As Keating says in his statement, this is

the peculiar character of the aboriginal genocide: its frequently benign appearance - how on the surface everything could seem to be normal, even happy. This character was carefully cultivated by school administrators all across Canada, as part of institutional image management. It is the daytime image of progressive assimilation into Christian Canadian Caucasianhood. Yet here the expressions are troubling: no one seems really happy. Even the older boys who are smiling seem to be simultaneously leering. (Miller and Keating)

These images are followed by a painting of girls who, like the group of boys, appear artificially posed and, like Miller's self portrait, stoic. The girls huddle together near the right side of the Mush Hole building, which is pictured over three canvases, the first of which is called "The Girls' Side," followed by the self explanatory "Mush Hole Front" and then "The Boys' Side." The separation of boys and girls is essential as this was the practice at Residential Schools; boys and girls were separated, as were siblings regardless of sex. Further, Miller was housed as a toddler with the girls before being transferred to the boys' side, and this is suggested in the subsequent image titled "Little Boy." As he says in the accompanying video *Whitey & the Mush Hole: Reclaiming Lahiaaks*, "I ended up on the girls' side. Nothing to do with anything, anything, except I was a baby... [But I was] going through my first crushing separation [and] one day I went to sleep on the girls' side and woke up on the boys' side. I might have been four or five... [I was] totally

abandoned again.” His placement on the girls’ side of the school is both a biographical detail but also indicative of the lax policies of the system. Children of that age were not meant to be “incarcerated” in Residential Schools.

But the true horror awaits. In the bottom, left corner of “Little Boy” is the hint of a shadow. That shadow can literally be traced back to both the penultimate image and the final and leftmost canvas, wherein an ominous shadow is cast across a floor, toward that little boy (“Falling Shadow”), emanating from an open doorway in which a shadowy figure begins to emerge from the overwhelming light of the hallway (“Lesson Time”), respectively. We are meant to imagine who this may be entering this space. The contrast of light and dark and shadows allows the viewer to imagine the night time image as a counterpoint to the benign daytime or propaganda images of posed children. Because this sequence of paintings is meant to be read right to left, Miller and Keating certainly mean for the audience to move through the benign to the hinted horror. However, in the exhibition space, viewers are just as likely to encounter the sequence left to right. In this reading, the horror precedes everything else and underscores just how dangerous Residential Schools could be and how prominent the abuse narrative is – for Miller to be sure but also overriding the whole system. After all, that final image (or the first in this right-to-left reading) is titled “Lesson Time.” Miller’s memory may be fragmented insofar as his inability to remember exactly how old he was when he was taken as well as when he ended up on the boys’ side, and some aspects of his memory are dreamlike, as he says in the video: “When I dream of my childhood it’s always of the Mush Hole.” However, he is unequivocal here in 2008 that he cannot forget:

My own sister wants me to paint happy things... Other people want me to forgive... Why don’t you forget about it? How in the hell can I forget

when they gave us so much to remember? There's no escape from it. You have to deal with it. (video)

While the viewer is well aware of the theme of abuse, from Miller's and Keating's statements, "Dismembered Memory Wampum Belt" – read either right to left or left to right – merely hints at what was given to them to remember. At the very least, this sequence of paintings shows the common experience of Residential Schools: being removed from families and forced to live at school, the preoccupation with the quality and quantity of food, the separation of boys and girls, and the shadows to come. What happened to Miller and many others in the shadows is not every Survivor's experience but most knew that the shadows existed. And Miller shines a bright light in the following section, "Genocide."

The following section, according to Keating's presentation "takes the viewer further into Miller's memory, into the night-time of extreme loneliness, fear, loathing, and sexual predation that constituted the lived environment of the Mush Hole. These are expressions from the inside of the artist's mind, both verbal and visual" (Keating, "Mush Hole" slide 20). Miller's words – "I can't show you the emotion [in words], I think I can show you in paint, in drawing, in my art" (video) – come to life in this section.

Interestingly, along with striking, disturbing imagery in this section, there are many words featured in the works here.

The first image, "What Was in the Mush,"⁸⁶ returns the viewer to the title of the exhibit and that derogatory name for the school, the Mush Hole, and it asks a darker question as it depicts a young child helping to feed a pale, (perhaps slightly) younger

⁸⁶ "What Was In the Mush" can be viewed here:
<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018018090810&set=gm.10150705084641004&type=3&theater>.

child. Perhaps, too, Miller's voice rings in the ears of the audience as he notes during a walking tour of the Mush Hole (now the Woodland Cultural Centre) that maybe the mush is not about what they were fed – literally mush for breakfast “364 days a year,” he says (video) – but the fact that their minds and souls had been turned to mush leaving only husks (recall “Nothing Left but the Husk,” above). The next image, “Christian Service,”⁸⁷ of the

minister who appears to be getting fucked in the drawing underneath the word, AMEN, is John Zimmerman, who was a Canon in the Anglican Diocese of Huron, and the principal of the Mohawk Institute from 1945-1969. Zimmerman regularly beat Miller and the other children, using a strap. He would often make his prisoner strip naked in front of other children, and then have them watch while he went to work. Miller and others remember that he would get so excited while strapping them that he would start jumping up and down, and strap them all over their bodies, including their face. Zimmerman didn't rape Miller. Instead he was known for going after the girls. (Miller and Keating)

That one word, Amen, is featured prominently but the real explosion of words happens in the two pieces that follow: “Untitled Collage I” and “Ribbon Shirt.”⁸⁸ Here, accompanying some visuals drawn roughly as well as, in the latter, spattered colour, blue highlighted text, and a prominent black splotch that appears to blot out yet more words, Miller unleashes a stream of consciousness rant about his experience.

In contrast, the following works are almost entirely blacks and greys on white. This is certainly true of “Mush Hole” and “Holey Bliss”⁸⁹: “The twisting, grimacing face that appears in the drawing with the text “Holey Bliss” is that of Reverend George Boyce, an

⁸⁷ “Christian Service” can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018024530971&set=gm.10150705084751004&type=3&theater>.

⁸⁸ “Untitled Collage I” and “Ribbon Shirt” can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018029851104&set=gm.10150705084846004&type=3&theater>.

⁸⁹ “Mush Hole” and “Holey Bliss” can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018024610973&set=gm.10150705084786004&type=3&theater>.

Anglican minister who serially raped Miller for six years. Boyce was the head supervisor of the boys” (Miller and Keating). There is no doubt at this point where Miller is taking the viewer, as he screams the words “Rapist” and “Pedophile cock sucker” among other statements. “Erasure,”⁹⁰ which features an image of a church with steeple and rows of children holding hands ascending into the sky where they are literally erased as if from a chalkboard, is similarly somber.

The section “Genocide” continues with three of the most troubling images, driving home the themes of rape and genocide via Holocaust imagery. The first, “The Curse of the Ruined Girl,”⁹¹ is a return, albeit sparingly, to the use of colour. It pictures a newborn child, likely the product of rape. We are left to wonder what happened to this child but it certainly appears that the child, given its colour and facial expression, is dead. The girl’s fate is also left to our imagination.

In “Holocausts Target Children Especially”⁹² and “Still There” the viewer is confronted with overt Holocaust imagery in the form of emaciated boys. And rather than a hopeful message of “still here,” that is, a message of survival despite the hardships, “Still There”⁹³ communicates to the viewer just how trapped Miller remains by these memories. Words in red read “I died there,” “I’m still starving,” and “We are still there.” And, like the video, which shows Miller exploring the brick walls of the Mush Hole and

⁹⁰ “Erasure” can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018024570972&set=gm.10150705084761004&type=3&theater>.

⁹¹ “The Curse of the Ruined Girl” can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018029891105&set=gm.10150705084881004&type=3&theater>.

⁹² “Holocausts Target Children Especially” can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018017970807&set=gm.10150705084606004&type=3&theater>.

⁹³ “Still There” can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018029811103&set=gm.10150705084831004&type=3&theater>.

pointing out the graffiti of children over several decades, we can imagine various children etching their names or initials and, like the example Miller points out in the video, the voices proclaim “I served eleven years” and “I served ten years.” And in all caps the phrase “I SERVED” – severed in two parts by the emaciated boy’s pelvis, genitals on display – is both a repeat of the theme of serving time and a nod back to the theme of rape. These images are followed by the final two images, “Better Dead Than Red,” which contains the lists “father, minister, mentor, guide, teacher, friend, comforter, liar, betrayer, corrupt, rapist” and “mother, love, nurse, comfort, teacher” (perhaps a nod to the women in the school, notably the nurses, who Miller says were outspoken about the abuse) and “Burned From the Inside Out,” the final image.

The fourth and final section is, according to Keating,

“Surviving” and includes works that do not directly engage the Mush Hole experience, but provide information related to surviving and living on after such experience. For Miller, this meant developing his ability to positively engage the larger world through pure painting, a practice I suggest helps Miller to stay alive. The implication here is that painting can be a form of medicine. In fact the entire exhibit is offered as medicine. If reconciliation is going to become possible, there will need to be real truth-telling about what happened, a psychic purging. Some may do it visually. Some may do it through performance. Others may write it, or simply speak it. There is no guideline, no standard way to go about telling the truth of what happened in the Indian residential schools. (Miller and Keating)

The return here to Keating’s notion of exorcism – “psychic purging” – brings the viewer to ask how Miller is doing today for we know from his Artist Statement and the video that he rejects the notion of a successful purge, of healing. He still has wounds he needs to excise. Thus, this last section is called “Surviving,”⁹⁴ alluding to the ongoing work of

⁹⁴ Interestingly, in the Facebook photo gallery, Keating identifies this section as “Art of Healing/Healing of Art,” which can be viewed here: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018037571297&set=gm.10150705084906004&type=3&theater>. He also includes a photograph of the exhibition’s “safe space”:

survival, for as Miller says in “Whitey & the Mush Hole,” “[There are n]o Survivors.” And then he stresses, “The rest of us are surviving.”

9.4 The Aftermath

The exhibition closed December 4, 2008. Its next prominent unveiling (by PowerPoint) would be that challenging presentation at the National Gallery of Canada in 2009. When I interviewed Keating in the spring of 2012 his reception at that event was still fresh in his mind and, while contrite and still concerned that he’d inadvertently hurt people, he remained adamant regarding the second half of that presentation: “They heard me say ‘there’s a pathology here’ and I stand by that. But I wasn’t pathologizing Indians. I was pathologizing Canada and that’s what nobody really got... Calling it cultural necrosis I think is actually fairly descriptive for this national pathology but, yes, that was clearly not picked up on at all” (Personal interview). Missing, too, from the discussion was a focus on the nature of the curator/collaborator and artist relationship. As Keating says, “I came up with this interpretation and he and I went over it very carefully, point by point. I said this is what I think. What do you think? And we discussed it some more and his sense was that I got it dead on.” But Keating is clearly still concerned about the experience he had in 2009 and continues to evaluate his ongoing role as curator/collaborator as Miller experiences various ups and downs. Consider Keating’s comment that “it affected my credibility, a non-native anthropologist trying to work with native people on issues that seem to be relevant. It’s always touchy ground... That kind of credibility is really hard to come by for non-native anthropologists these days and it really took a hit for me that day... I felt really bad and this is also the first time I’d experienced triggering. I’d heard

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1018029731101&set=gm.10150705084801004&type=3&theater>.

of it before but I'd never sort of felt it before." But their relationship is much more than simply curator and artist; they are friends and Gary trusts Neal and values his perspective.

If Miller had been there in 2009, instead of missing, Keating says,

He would have wanted me to give the presentation. That's the way he sees my role as curator. I'm the speaker, he's the painter and he wants me to speak for what he's painted. He doesn't want to talk about it, he doesn't want to write about it, he doesn't want to analyze what he's done. He just wants to paint. And, so, were he in the room, what kind of difference would it have made? He would have sat in the room, he would have been there. Chances are that if that same reaction had happened the way it did, I think he would have become instantly confrontational. He would have stopped [them] in [their] tracks.

When asked if he'd go back to the ACC, Keating says,

Yes, in a minute. Look, from the moment that happened and up to now what I've continued to say is what I'm looking for is dialogue here. I want to talk about this. I think this is a real issue. There is a real problem in Canada, there is a pathology, the truth about what happened is not coming out. I think I've been consistent about that. I think it's necessary for the truth to come out before you can talk about reconciliation, and if the government is not going to facilitate the truth telling then it's up to civil society to do that. It means academics like you and me, it means artists, it means the public. We have to figure out alternative ways. But if the truth doesn't come out then what I said in the presentation takes hold, this kind of pathologic response of denial on the one hand by the perpetrators and then this pathology of this sort of self-destruction, as measured by suicide rates etc. will just continue and you'll have a Canada that's really not united at all.

I have had the opportunity to bring Miller's work into the classroom and to conferences and workshops over the ensuing few years – with Miller's and Keating's approval. One notable presentation, which I mention above in the opening section, took place in February of 2012 at the Liu Centre at the University of British Columbia. I was invited to join other scholars and Transitional Justice practitioners at a workshop called "Living Through Violence." In preparation for this workshop, I contacted Keating to get an update on where he and Miller felt they were with regard to the exhibit. Keating

agreed to allow the presentation with the caveat that I present the work with a new statement that reflected their current thinking. And so, I took Miller's and Keating's words and, of course, the images to Vancouver and presented their work, talked about the 2009 reception at the ACC conference, and Miller's ongoing struggles. I also highlighted their continued disappointment that the show never had the opportunity to tour, with funding having fallen through as described above. Now, two and a half years later, with our own relationship ups and downs (as I explain in the opening section), I was able to take yet more of their words to a new audience, this time in the form of their "Artist/Curator Re-statement regarding the 'Mush Hole Remembered' exhibit, and the prospects for Truth and Reconciliation in Canada". I opened as Keating had with Miller's original statement, read parts of Keating's statement and then distributed the restatement to the group. I then proceed to walk them through the exhibit, as Keating had presented it at the ACC, including the proposal to reframe the exhibit around a theme of cultural necrosis. After explaining what had happened there and the fallout over the following few years, I turned to the restatement and provided the above context for its inclusion there that day. I then presided over a discussion of Miller's work and the content of this new statement, which reads:

I, R. G. Miller am an artist from the Six Nations Grand River Territory, and was put into the Mohawk Institute Indian Residential School when I was 2 years old. I was kept there for the next 11 years, during which I experienced first hand what happened in Indian Residential School: chronic rape, physical and psychological violence, malnourishment, and no love at all. I went on to become a successful landscape and portrait painter in my life, but I will never forget what happened to me in the Mush Hole. In 2008 I finally expressed my memories in my art, and with the collaboration of Neal Keating as curator, I put together a large exhibit that tells my truth about my experience, and invites other Survivors to tell theirs. Although the exhibit was well-received by my peoples, the state (including the TRC) completely ignored it; when we attempted to travel

the exhibit in Canada, we found that few institutions were willing to take it. When we sent a request to the TRC for support in documenting the exhibit as a commemorative activity, it was mysteriously lost. When we followed up with an inquiry into what happened to our request, we were told by the TRC that they didn't know, and that we should just send them another one. When we gave an invited presentation of the exhibit and its meaning at the National Gallery in Ottawa, we were impolitely asked to leave, and were literally shown to the door. We see a pattern of evasive governmentality at work in all this.

We believe the Canada Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a sham and a national disgrace, for both Indigenous peoples and non-Native Canadian citizens. We say this because we see no evidence that the Commission is producing any truth, nor is it asking the honest question that really counts: Was the Indian residential school program in Canada a program of genocide? We think it was, and we challenge you to negate our hypothesis. We cannot decisively prove or disprove this hypothesis at this point, because we cannot fully access the records and documents that the perpetrators (i.e, the churches and the state) created during the course of the program; they remain closed to us. However the combination of experience and research that we do have access to supports the hypothesis of genocide and suggests an intent to destroy national groups of distinct peoples in order to seize their lands, territories, and resources. Because the information of what really happened remains restricted, we suspect the outcome of the TRC will be an equally restricted account, that will ignore the honest question, much as it ignored my art. We think the TRC's shortcomings are symptomatic of a larger national malaise that is going untreated, and getting worse.

We are not done, and are actively seeking alternative paths to bring this exhibit into national and international awareness. We think this exhibit tells more truth than the TRC is capable of bearing. We invite you to prove us wrong. (Miller and Keating)

Like Miller's original "Artist Statement", this "Restatement" pulls no punches. It also makes central a new element: dissatisfaction with both the government and Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, then midway through its five-year mandate. It also returns to the notion of national sickness – "malaise" – and this is much more in keeping with Keating's explanation above that their intent was to pathologize Canada, not Miller or other Survivors. However, there is still the incongruity between Miller's

desire to “excise” and Keating’s theme of “exorcism.” Where Miller, from the outset, implied that his wound needed – and perhaps could be – cut away, Keating originally framed Miller’s work as an attempt to exorcise his demons but also described the exhibit as medicine. Despite the incongruity in this reading of the exhibit and accompanying text, Keating and Miller were, to my eyes, at least partially on the same page in that 2009 presentation, with Keating presenting the theme of necrosis and the image of the necrotic foot. Nonetheless, Keating is clear that his argument is that the state suffers from the malaise. Regardless, on their own or when presented together, the two statements and the restatement lead viewers to again ask how Miller is faring. He wants to cut loose his pain, the bad memories, where Keating seems to imply the need for a remedy at the national level – each of which can be truths; such is the nature of artist and curator relationships: one paints, the other talks. Although, having already questioned whether reconciliation is that remedy we are left asking, What next? That question has multiple meanings: What is next in the life of R. Gary Miller? And what is next in the story of the exhibition *Mush Hole Remembered*?

9.5 *Mush Hole Remembered* at the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre

In 2012, Keating said that “It’s really very simple. He (Miller) wants to engage with society, he wants to tell his story or he wants to get a sense that people are hearing his story and if they’re not seeing his art they’re not hearing his story” (Personal interview). But a large part of his story is his position as one who is merely surviving. He is not the healed Survivor who, having forgiven and sought forgiveness as needed, offers his story as one of hopefulness and reconciliation. He is not the palatable face of post-violence remedy. We are asked to witness his truth telling but he does not create a space for us to

simply move on, past the truth (the concept of which is itself explored thoroughly in the exhibit), to healing and reconciliation. The restatement furthers this positioning. He's told his story but now a part of that story is the "fact" that the state has turned away and that the mechanism for truth and reconciliation – the TRC – is a sham that will fail. So, while he has said publicly that "It's somewhat of a re-birth and at the same time I turned a corner, I'm walking inside my landscapes now, I'm just not looking at them," (London Free Press) he also says in that interview that "I'm not finished yet; I still have to do some more." Four years later that's still what he's saying.

Like that call I received from him in 2014, he has gone on record saying that, while he understands that some people have positive things to say about their experience, he "may not agree if they said it was the most wonderful experience of their life and 'I became a nurse' and 'thank god for that, I found god at the chapel of the Mohawk school'" (Personal interview). "That's their experience," he says, adding "I didn't. I got fucked at the chapel of the Mohawk school." Interestingly, when he does allow some room for healing in his comments he quickly reigns himself in. When asked if it was his art practice that kept him going he said, "Well, it kept me alive... it was very therapeutic... the creative process is a healing process. Yes, art is a very good healing instrument to be used. However, it has to be used honestly. You can't say 'Let's get a bunch of Indians together and we'll do a show and we'll have them paint the residential school and that'll fix them up. No.'" He then went on to say, "I'm not fixed. I'm not. I haven't even begun to be healed... I can never forgive, I can never heal, I never will. My health has almost killed me. I've almost committed suicide. Total self destruction. I've never been in a stable relationship in my life so where's the healing?" Later, in the same

conversation, he says, “Well, I have even deeper memories. As I said, once you jump into the well of truth it has a way of drowning you, or you get back up and you tread water as long as you can. And that’s what I’m doing. I’m surviving. I’m not a survivor, I’m just surviving. I’m treading water.”

The conversation in the summer of 2013 did not spare the government or the TRC either. Of so-called truth telling to-date he says, foreshadowing that 2014 call I received,

There’s so much bullshit that I’ve seen on tv and what’s been accomplished through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that, yes, I’m not going to stop my mouth from talking or my brush from painting until the truth comes out! There’s no truth, it’s bullshit. There’s not one iota of truth. There may be, yes, one or two people that might be happy... They make it sound like ‘We’re not going to fund you because you’re an asshole. You don’t support the government stance that the residential schools were a good thing, so why give you any money?’ [And then] John Doe comes along: “Oh, but hey, I’ll do some paintings and show you what a wonderful person I turned out to be. I teach high school now.’ Oh hell, give him some money... They’re going to show the art that fits into their conclusionary book, report, or whatever it is they’re going to file in the back closets of nowhere. In the end that’s what you’re going to get. You’re not going to get what I painted or what I may paint in the next six months or year or years to come.

His truth, ultimately is, as he says, that “There’s a 13-year old child in me. That’s still who I’m dealing with now. That’s who I’m fighting more than anyone else.” Can the notion of this child treading water include hope? Miller allows some room for it when asked about the prospects for reconciliation, particularly given the fact that members of the church came to that 2008 opening and seemed to accept the work and his story: “Yes, I don’t want to become a caricature of myself but there’s always hope.” However, he quickly pulls back and turns his focus to that national malaise: “Hope is such an elusive word and in this instance, when it comes to truth and reconciliation in Canada, I don’t think there’s any hope. The only hope will be that we all die off and the sooner the better.

Yes, we all feel better in a group but when we get home... we're back in hell. We're back in residential school. We never left. I don't know who ever got the idea that we left residential school. That little boy in me is still there. Yes, I tried to exorcise, I tried to purge. I tried to and for a while it worked."

Here I am reminded of Keating's words in 2012 when we discussed the prospects for bringing a scaled down version of the show to Sault Ste. Marie; it seemed clear to me that all of the above needs to be represented but also the national malaise theme:

It's difficult. I mean, I guess the connection that I'm trying to make is that the whole objective of the exhibit is so that Gary can tell his story. And the connection with genocide is part of his story. I didn't invent it. I wrote it, but that's only after talking to him. So, in terms of that, I think there's different ways that he can tell his story. He doesn't necessarily need all of the artworks in there, but he needs to be able to tell his story, that's where it would become kind of critical. So, are there other ways that he can tell his story, that let him tell his story?

But the story is not just about his time in the studio and whether or not it contributed to his healing. It's not just about telling one man's experience within a genocidal system.

His story is also the story of the *Mush Hole Remembered* exhibit and its reception:

Part of his story is that he needs to make this connection and that's part of why it never healed because the public, really outside of his own community, the larger public of the country of Canada didn't really accept his art. And I think that was more shattering to him...you know, what happened in Ottawa was just one piece of that larger rejection. In his mind, I think that's how he sees it. It's like, "Oh yeah, they're just like the rest of Canada. They're just like all these other galleries that were withdrawing from the tour, you know, it's like they can't deal with my story." And that's why there was no healing effect, I think. Had that happened, had he been received well in Ottawa, had galleries received and taken his art on tour, I think he would be in a lot better physical shape today.

It is this full story that led me to work with Miller and Keating to realize a version of the exhibit at the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre at Algoma University. The goal was

not just to exhibit the works but to place them within the context of Miller's larger, fuller story, to address Miller's comment in 2013 that "The thing is, if I can become part of the river of truth – and it's there – and if I can become a part of that, I'll be more than happy to continue painting and speaking of it. But it has to be the truth. And all they have to say to me [is] it's their truth. Then I'm satisfied" (Miller interview). However, space was a concern. This new iteration would require choices. To that end, I discussed the possible approaches with Miller and Keating in 2013. When I suggested that we may only be able to exhibit fifteen of the 40 plus works, Miller said, "Then you choose the fifteen and we'll go after them. If you only wanted the residential school ones, then you pick the fifteen of those you want [because] I can't choose which baby to put up on the wall. They're all my children so it's someone like Neal [Keating] or yourself or someone who knows what they're doing. I gave him the job. So, he accepted it and I accepted it. I thought he put together a pretty darn good showing of a lifetime of work. [But] You can put three or thirty" (Personal interview). When I asked if he'd feel censored he said, "My granny always put it this way: Sometimes you have to bend with the wind. And sometimes it shows a lack of spine but you know you gotta know when to bend and when not to. And three or five paintings on your wall are better than three or five paintings in a closet."

Part of the challenge, beyond space, in exhibiting at the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, was the fact that the Centre is governed independently by a committee made up of two members from the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association (the Survivors) and one from Algoma University, the two partners in the establishment of the Centre. To that end, the decision to host – and what to host – would be a collective

decision made between me and the two Survivors who advise the Centre via that committee (former Shingwauk students Shirley Horn, herself an artist who graduated from Algoma University's Fine Arts program, and Irene Barbeau). As such, I presented the entire show to them along with a lengthy account of the full context covered above so they would have a full sense of what they were being asked to consider. I was particularly interested in how they would see exhibiting Miller's work within the context of the Centre's mandate of "Sharing, Healing, and Learning." It was the healing piece that I was most concerned about and something I flagged for Miller, to which he responded, figuratively, "Well if you have a boil, sometimes you have to lance it. And that's my response basically to what you're saying. But if they feel like they can just put bandages on it and wait for it to burst and drain itself on its own then I have to be okay with that too" (Personal interview). In the end, as I had expected, the two CSAA members were completely open to the work and left the decision of what to show and how up to me and Keating.

That led to Keating and me discussing over the ensuing months which pieces to include. As he'd had the opportunity to visit the SRSC in the summer he'd already said that the "Dismembered Memory Wampum Belt," as a sequence of large canvases, was too large for the space and using only some pieces of it was not an option. Keating ultimately suggested that we just show select pieces from the Genocide section, which I took back to the CSAA members. Their suggestion was that that was too narrow an approach given the sophisticated understanding of Residential Schools that most of our patrons had; we didn't need to hit anyone over the head with the themes of rape and genocide. They also expressed a strong affinity for "Dismembered Memory Wampum

Belt” as a work that showed the common experience of Residential Schools. They also said it was essential to tell the most difficult stories of Residential Schools. These comments led me to work with Keating to strike a balance between their affinity for the benign and hinted horror of “Dismembered Memory Wampum Belt” and the desire to also see us feature the other aspects of the show. In the end the solution was to hang “Dismembered Memory Wampum belt” on two walls – the leftmost wall and the adjoining far wall – and construct mobile gallery walls to sit to the right of the leftmost wall in the open space between that wall and the library and reading area that comprises the other, right half of the Centre.

We would employ a relatively simple strategy: As “Dismembered Memory Wampum Belt” would be hung on the leftmost wall by the entrance to the space, viewers upon entering the small space would encounter it left to right, instead of right to left (although the instructions to read it right to left were also shared, in the form of Keating’s Curator Statement as a handout and in the role of SRSC staff as interpreters). That meant the shadow creeping across the floor to the image of the little boy would be the first image they saw, foreshadowing – perhaps highlighting – what was to come.

To the right, hung on easels and the mobile walls, which form a disjointed T (each wall formed an S of right angles – see image below, Figure 19 – which presented additional narrow surfaces upon which we displayed the related texts: Miller’s original Artist Statement and a new Explanatory Note⁹⁵ by Keating) were works from the “Genocide” section of the show.

⁹⁵ Miller (b. 1950) served 11 years (1953-1964) in the Mush Hole - the Mohawk Institute Indian Residential School, located on Mohawk Street in Brantford, Ontario - At the age of 2 he was removed from his longhouse family and community and, at the hands of church authorities, was treated as an object of sexual violence. It was not occasional. This dehumanization was part of the Church- State

Figure 19: The shape of the mobile gallery walls.

This was to allow us to present the common experience of residential schools – which all Survivors can relate to – alongside the abuse narrative – an experience that not all but too many Survivors have in common. Walking through the space in a clockwise fashion, then, would see some deliberate choices; for example, “Little Boy” (image three in “Dismembered Wampum Belt”) looked directly across the space between the leftmost wall and the first mobile wall, running parallel, to the little boy in “Mush Howl.” It appeared as if their gazes were locked together. This created a clear, albeit intangible, connection between the “evocation” of “Dismembered Memory Wampum Belt” in the original show’s second section with the works from the third section, “Genocide,” without the separation of the works into sections. All of the works were presented under one unifying title: “*Serving Time at The Mush Hole: Visual Testimony of R. G. Miller-Lahiaaks (Mohawk, Six Nations) — Selected works from Mush Hole Remembered (2008),*” with all the major themes – rape, Holocaust, abuse – and sub themes – shadows, screams, silence – of the original show on display. The shape of the mobile gallery walls also created natural pathways for viewers, whether entering to the left in a clockwise fashion (where the hinted horror begins in “Dismembered Memory Wampum Belt”) or to

program. It went on for years. It was not just Miller who was raped, but children from across all the nations of Indigenous peoples in Canada and, one may argue, entire nations themselves violated by legislation and official policy. Miller is now 63 years old and still painting today. This exhibit is part of his visual testimony to his experience. His question to Canada and the world is about truth and meaningful reparations. How can you forget when they gave you so much to remember? And how can you forgive when apologies are followed by continued assault and theft? Miller believes the Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission is pre-destined for failure and that it is up to the people to tell their own truths, and in that to find the strength to change what is now.

the right, where viewers encountered “The Curse of the Ruined Girl” and “Holocausts Target Children Especially.” These were followed by “Still There,” “Christian Service,” and “Holey Bliss.” As such, the large “Collage I” and “Collage II,” along with “Ribbon Shirt,” which feature the scrawled rants of Miller (and possibly other students) were left out – out of necessity, as space was at a premium (their inclusion would have meant we could not include “Dismembered Memory Wampum Belt”). However, this meant that the words featured in “Holey Bliss” and “Still There” stood out much more prominently than in the opening exhibition at the Woodland Cultural Centre. As the very few examples of text, the words were like screams or shouts to the viewer, which nicely tied into that sub theme that was so prevalent in the original exhibition.

Thus, works from the original opening section, “Introduction,” and the closing section, “Surviving,” were not included. While space was an obvious element in our decision-making, it ultimately came down to the Survivors who advised us; as host, the SRSC was already a space where a sophisticated level of discourse and dialogue took place. That meant that Miller’s words and the images we included alone could set the stage and “introduce” Miller and the themes in the show, particularly the notion of “visual testimony.” We also screened the video *Whitey & the Mush Hole* at various times, providing yet more context. Who Miller is and what he’d gone through – and continues to go through – would be implied by the words he had chosen to include and, perhaps most importantly, by the ability of the SRSC staff, led by me, to interpret the exhibition. Our role was, therefore, not passive. We actively engaged in providing any missing context. This was achieved at the opening by my remarks as exhibit organizer. I told the audience about the original show, its breadth, and its challenges, notably the reception it received

in 2009 at the ACC Curator's Camp. I also described the important role the CSAA and the SRSC itself played in the exhibition. The original version had a final section called "Surviving," in which quiet, contemplative spaces were created alongside the works from Miller's mainstream practice of painting, as well as the inclusion of medicines for smudging. While we did not include this section in this iteration of the work, the SRSC itself was a stand-in for these elements as it has been created as a safe space for Survivors by Survivors. As with all our programming, at the opening we had Survivors and Elders, as well as professional emotional and cultural support workers on hand to assist our guests as required, including offering ceremony such as smudging. During the subsequent days, the most challenging works were only on display at prescribed times (2-4 pm daily, select Saturday and Sunday hours, and by appointment). Outside of these hours, these works were either removed from display or draped. The only work that stayed on permanent display was "Dismembered Memory Wampum Belt."

In introducing these very challenging images and imagery to this space, we were mindful that the SRSC is a multi-use space. That means the Centre would not operate solely as a gallery space, as described above; we would also carry on the usual business of the SRSC throughout the five-week run of the exhibition. We were also very mindful of the fact that we often have Survivors and others affected inter-generationally by Residential Schools drop in unannounced. This meant taking special care to ensure that the people who entered the space during that 2-4 pm period – or what was to them our regular business hours – knew that they would encounter the exhibit. This meant having at least one staff member and one volunteer on hand, one to greet people at the door and introduce the exhibit (and to discern whether or not the visitor was here for the show or

other business with the SRSC) and one to “staff” the Centre. Also available at all times were emotional and cultural support workers, available by phone courtesy of the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association. From there, guests would be invited into the gallery space and the interpreters would make themselves available to answer any questions and/or to provide the broader context of the complexity of the show and its evolution to this point. Guests always asked about the artist and his wellbeing, which allowed the interpreters the opportunity to share more biographical information about Miller, including the elements discussed at length in this chapter, as appropriate. Ultimately, the five-week run came to an end and the works were shipped to the College at Brockport, where they would join other works from the original show for an exhibition put together by Keating.

9.6 Conclusion

It should be clear from the above that there are a few different dynamics at play in the exhibition of R. Gary Miller’s *Mush Hole Remembered* work. There is his desire to see his story told through his artwork but, just as importantly, this is informed by his collaboration with Neal Keating. Where the first iteration of the work may have been about Miller’s memories of his treatment at Residential School he also presents the broader notion of genocide, meaning the work is not solely about his experience or even solely that of the Mush Hole itself. It broadens to also tell the story of Residential Schools and the abuse narrative nationally, vis a vis Keating’s writings and the inclusion of Holocaust-themed work. And, of course, the work is open to interpretation. Are we meant to read *Mush Hole Remembered* as unresolved personal trauma? Are we meant to

see both the common experience of Residential Schools alongside the abuse narrative? Are we meant to read certain imagery as insisting that Residential Schools are Canada's Holocaust? Can all these be true? The answer to that latter question is yes, each of these dynamics can be true. What complicates Miller's story, though, is the aftermath of that original show. A national tour failed to materialize. A presentation on the work – and the introduction of a new theme to address Miller's response to that initial show – was misunderstood, in Miller's absence. Though he resurfaced to calm the other players down and to forgive, he does not forget that reception. Like his insistence that he cannot forget his treatment at Residential School, he also cannot forget that people have turned away from his work, albeit under particular circumstances. Keating's attempt to explain their desire to pathologize Canada, not Residential School Survivors, was missed by all but a few attendees at that National Gallery presentation. However, Miller and Keating have not fully implemented that reframing of the exhibition and this is made all the more difficult to realize precisely because of the response at the ACC meeting in 2009. More recent writings, such as the "Restatement" and Keating's "Explanatory Note" for the Shingwauk installation do not focus on that "cultural necrosis" – nor do they provide any additional focus on Miller's desire to excise his wound, which is in keeping with Keating's national malaise; rather, they focus on the failure of the state and the TRC to act properly, at that particular time. What we have then is a still-evolving body of work. This may one day also include the inclusion of new works to the already sizable body of work that was the *Mush Hole Remembered*.

That fateful presentation might have been swept under the carpet was it not for the prominence of the event. The event's audience was a veritable who's who of Canadian

Aboriginal artists, curators, and administrators. Thus, we must ask ourselves whether the work and perhaps even the reputations of Miller and Keating are forever coloured by that happening. I have certainly made the case that this was true for our consideration of the work at the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre. We considered Miller's full story, including his many ups and downs, and that full story includes Keating's assertion in 2009 that Miller came out of that original opening exhibition feeling that more needed to be done, more needed to happen. Keating picked up on Miller's notion of excision and posed the possibility that a similar rot exists in the flesh of our nation. As he says, had that presentation gone better perhaps Miller would be in a better place today. Instead, there is if not bitterness then a preoccupation with the idea that truths were told and those in the position to witness turned away.

I was there in 2009. My reading is that the audience for Keating's presentation did indeed get caught up in the confusion over whether he was pathologizing the state or people. Some were triggered emotionally by the frank and brutal nature of some of the imagery. And the tipping point was that picture of the necrotic foot. But my reading was and continues to be that those in attendance blame Keating for the confusion. They blame him for being an outsider who imposed too much onto a necessary body of work. However, Keating and Miller never had the opportunity to say to that larger community that Keating's words and ideas were condoned by Miller, that Miller did want an audience for his work to struggle with the notion of rotting flesh, whether in the person of a Survivor or at a national level. Perhaps that audience lacked the opportunity to do the close reading of Miller's statement that I've done here. They have certainly not had the benefit of the numerous conversations, both on and off the record, with Miller and

Keating that I have had. Nor have any of them had the opportunity to be forced to think through these issues because they took on the responsibility of showing Miller's work. Why did Keating feel compelled to work with Miller? Was it his activist scholar nature? Why did I – do I – feel compelled to work with both of them (and note I use the present tense, rather than saying with finality that I worked with them) to see Miller's desire to have his story told realized? Is it activism on my part? To answer that, I turn to Miller's words:

I never found it as a point of activism. No. I painted it as a way of getting it out of my system. It was a way of telling the truth from my perspective as to what happened to me. And if it could, if it could instill or inform, or even cause some something to happen, then great, but that wasn't my intent, to become an activist through my art in any way regarding the residential school. It was basically my way of telling my story in the hopes that it would help me heal in some way, and in so doing help others at least think about coming forth with what may have happened to them. (Miller interview)

If not activism, then, can we instead turn to another concept that all three of us have spoken of? That concept is responsibility. Keating himself has said in a follow up conversation that,

For me, curating this show is in a significant way an ethical obligation I perceive; it's an unpaid part of my practice and has to do with the obligation to do work that is of benefit to the groups that are collaborating with you. By writing a dissertation about Iroquois art (which benefited me), I incurred this obligation to reciprocate with work that benefits Iroquois people. My work here is to facilitate Gary's story and expression. I am not here to impose or disparage.

Where Miller says earlier in this chapter that he feels he has a responsibility to tell his story I propose that we, as witnesses, have a responsibility to listen. And that includes listening to the full story, the one that includes the refrain that audiences are choosing to not listen, to turn away. Here, I must, as I did in that 2014 phone call with Miller,

disagree with him. His audience at the *Mush Hole Remembered* show did not turn away. His audience at the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre showing of *Serving time at the Mush Hole* did not look away. Neither did Keating's College at Brockport audience, according to Keating. So, while a national tour failed to materialize, while the TRC apparently "lost" the package Keating sent to them, while several members of the ACC crowd reacted poorly – or as Keating says, misunderstood his intentions – when the work is properly on display as an exhibition of paintings with some accompanying text it is well received regardless of its challenging nature and the fact that some viewers do/must turn away (whether in response to the aesthetic of the work or due to emotion). Perhaps this is where the focus needs to lie, not in the failure to tour the work, not in a failure to communicate a difficult reading of the work, but in another attempt to have it shown as Miller intends. And this is the next big question mark. What, ultimately, is his intention, given the different dynamics at play here? Will it show in pieces, as it did at the Shingwauk Centre? Will it show to less initiated audiences as it did on the American campus of the College at Brockport, where it served as public education as much as an exhibit of art? Will Miller be asked to participate in a group show of Residential School-related work? Regardless, what is clear is that Miller intends to say that he is not healed. Keating intends to say that the state and the TRC at times, as evidence of the national malaise, do not support Survivors' efforts to tell their full stories, although Keating has gone on to laud the work that the TRC has done since its rocky early days, saying he supports the TRC's conclusions and recommendations that were released in the summer of 2015. It will be up to future host sites and their administrators and/or curators and/or

(Survivor) advisory bodies to determine if and how that full story is told. The nature of those relationships are still to be developed. Only time will tell.

10 Chapter: Case Study 4 – *Walking With Our Sisters* at Shingwauk

Walking With Our Sisters is a commemorative art installation for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women of Canada and the United States.⁹⁶ In May of 2014, the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, where I worked from 2012-2016,⁹⁷ partnered with Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig (The Teaching Lodge), an independent, culture-based educational institution, to host the installation in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. The Shingwauk Auditorium, part of the former Shingwauk Indian Residential School, which now stands as Algoma University's main building, was chosen as the site for the memorial.

Métis artist Christi Belcourt originated the project, which is described as follows on the *Walking with Our Sisters* website:

Over [1200] native women and girls in Canada have been reported missing or have been murdered in the last 30 years. Many vanished without a trace with inadequate inquiry into their disappearance or murders paid by the media, the general public, politicians and even law

⁹⁶ Parts of this chapter were published in *The Land We Are: Artists and Writers Unsettle the Politics of Reconciliation* within “*Walking With Our Sisters* in Sault Ste. Marie: The Commemoration of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women” (Dewar).

⁹⁷ I was hired in April 2012 to be the first full-time Director of the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre and Special Advisor to the President for the Residential School Legacy. Shingwauk Project co-founder and long-time faculty member Don Jackson had carried the title of director since 1979 when the Shingwauk Project was founded and through various incarnations. This new and ground-breaking initiative built on several years' worth of strategic developments led by the Survivors, Jackson, and past President Dr. Celia Ross. It was spearheaded by then Algoma University President Dr. Richard Myers (2010-2015) in close collaboration with the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association and in keeping with the formal Partnership Agreement between the University, the Alumni, and the National Residential Schools Survivor Society. The creation of the position and the fact that the University was investing financially in the Centre (as opposed to simply providing much appreciated in-kind and moral support) was met with much fanfare, particularly at the well-attended and highly visible 2012 Shingwauk Gathering & Conference, which was funded under the Settlement Agreement's Commemoration Fund to the tune of \$200,000, and was the first of four annual events I was privileged to host. Sadly and quite controversially, Dr. Myers' successor Dr. Craig Chamberlin, who arrived in July 2015, one month after the release of the TRC's *Calls to Action*, eliminated the position and the funding to the Centre in April 2016 as part of a secret budget prioritization process that saw several staff positions eliminated. There was no consultation with or notice provided to the Alumni, nor to any community, constituency, or partner representing any Anishinaabe interest. When this chapter was being finalized in late 2016 the Alumni had successfully petitioned the University Board of Governors to reinstate the funding to the position and I was hired as a consultant to work with both parties on a way forward. Chamberlin resigned in December 2016.

enforcement. This is a travesty of justice.

Walking With Our Sisters is by all accounts a massive commemorative art installation comprised of 1,763+ pairs of moccasin vamps (tops) plus 108 pairs of children's vamps created and donated by hundreds of caring and concerned individuals to draw attention to this injustice. The large collaborative art piece will be made available to the public through selected galleries and locations. The work exists as a floor installation made up of beaded vamps arranged in a winding path formation on fabric and includes cedar boughs. Viewers remove their shoes to walk on a path of cloth alongside the vamps.

Each pair of vamps (or "uppers" as they are also called) represents one missing or murdered Indigenous woman. The unfinished moccasins represent the unfinished lives of the women whose lives were cut short. The children's vamps are dedicated to children who never returned home from residential schools. Together the installation represents all these women; paying respect to their lives and existence on this earth. They are not forgotten. They are sisters, mothers, aunties, daughters, cousins, grandmothers, wives and partners. They have been cared for, they have been loved, they are missing and they are not forgotten.

When Belcourt first put the call out on social media in 2012 for interested parties to submit vamps or moccasin tops for a commemorative initiative, she was overwhelmed by the response. She was further overwhelmed by replies from those individuals and parties interested in hosting the eventual installation, which Belcourt describes as ceremonial – a memorial, not an exhibit. In fact, I was an early responder to this call having submitted my name under the mantle of the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre and I was thrilled when I received a reply, asking us to host the memorial.

In 2018.

Oh well, I thought. This issue is so important and the idea of hosting it anywhere at any time was worth considering. But I also felt strongly that this particular community *needed* this.

As a matter of happenstance, Belcourt would soon visit the Algoma University campus on another matter (it's a small world, Indian country, I am often reminded). On

February 5, 2014, Belcourt was a guest speaker on campus, invited by Algoma University's institutional partner Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig. During that talk, she floated the idea of the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre and Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig hosting *Walking With Our Sisters* sooner rather than later due to a cancellation. I glanced over at my Shingwauk colleague and Belcourt's host, Rebecca Beaulne-Steubing, then the Program Coordinator at Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig, and emphatically nodded to indicate my interest. Within 24 hours it was confirmed; together, we would host *Walking With Our Sisters* in the former Shingwauk Indian Residential School in 12 short weeks, in May 2014, funded through the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre's \$500,000 research grant from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (awarded in August of 2012).⁹⁸

Belcourt knew her host community for that first visit quite well; as a long-time resident of the region (Espanola, Ontario) and an active activist, artist, and promoter of language and culture, she had long-established ties with Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig and the Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario-adjacent communities of Garden River First Nation and Batchewana First Nation, as well as the local and regional Métis communities. But the addition of Algoma University as a host site for this poignant and challenging memorial was to become a complicating factor. Algoma University, like many host sites, is a mainstream institution, which was not in and of itself a problem (although some challenges abound, as I will explore). The problem was the complicated history of the site

⁹⁸ This was one of two \$500,000 research grants. The other was awarded to the University of Winnipeg for a digital storytelling project (see "Winnipeg researchers"). The Shingwauk grant funded 2 years of programming and two staff positions within the Centre, an archives assistant for one year and a researcher/curator for two years.

itself, first as a former Indian Residential School and later as a shared – and sometimes contested – site of post-secondary education.

10.1 Shingwauk: A History of Complications

My friend and colleague, the co-founder of the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, Prof. Don Jackson, serves as one of the unofficial historians of the site and I draw from some of his unpublished but widely shared writings on the history of the schools that bore the name Shingwauk and how Algoma College – later Algoma University – came to the site. His work has been informed by his decades-long relationships with Shingwauk descendants like Elder Dan Pine Sr. and his own research on the site and the people connected to it⁹⁹. I am grateful to Professor Jackson for helping me shape this section from his writings.

In 1773, visionary Anishinaabe leader Shingwaukonse (also known as Shingwauk, the Pine) was born to Ojibway Chief Shingahbawuhsin's daughter, Ogemahqua, and her European consort (either John Askin or, more likely, Lavoine Barthe). His mother and her family raised him in the Ojibway custom (Jackson 2004). In 1812, when the United States attacked Canada, Chief Shingwauk rallied the Upper Great Lakes Ojibway to defend Ojibway, Anishnabek, and Canadian territories against the American invasion. After the conflict, in exchange for a promise of security in the Canadas, the British agree to a border that partitioned the Anishnabek heartland of the Upper Great Lakes at Sault Ste. Marie (Bawating), thus compromising Anishnabek territorial integrity. Chief Shingwauk and his Band relocated to the north shore of the St. Mary's River, initially at Sault Ste. Marie just east and south of the traditional settlements

⁹⁹ J. R. Miller's comprehensive and lauded *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* is also a source of vital information but I defer to Jackson's account to honour his work.

of the Batchewana Band, and later east of Sault Ste. Marie at what became the Garden River First Nation.

In 1831, Shingwauk famously developed the idea of a “teaching wigwam” as part of a self-determination strategy, believing that incorporating European learning and skills into traditional ways would enhance Ojibway capacities to develop their own lands and resources in a manner consistent with their own needs. After holding council with his Band, Chief Shingwauk, accompanied by his son Augustin (1800-92) and others, travelled to York (Toronto) to ask Sir John Colborne, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, to send teachers to Bawating (Sault Ste. Marie). Rev. William MacMurray arrived in the fall of 1832 and founded St. John’s Mission to the Ojibway. Initially, classes and services were held in the Hudson’s Bay Post, until the first “Shingwauk School” was completed in November 1834 by MacMurray and Shingwauk’s Band at the top of Pim Hill behind the Ermatinger House. Serving as church and school, it officially opened for services and classes in November. Chief Shingwauk passed away in 1854 but his “vision” was carried on by his sons, Augustin (1800-1890) and Buhkwujjenene (1811-1900). Rev. James Chance (1829-1897) and the Band built St. John’s Church, Rectory, and the second “Shingwauk School” at the northwest corner of the confluence of St. Mary’s and Garden Rivers.

Rev. Edward F. Wilson (1844-1915) replaced Chance in 1871 and, inspired by the Shingwauk brothers’ “teaching wigwam” vision, accompanied Augustin the following year on a Southern Ontario ‘teaching wigwam’ fundraising tour. This was followed by a fundraising trip to England that helped realize the construction in 1873 of the third “Shingwauk School” constructed at Garden River. Now an industrial boarding school

called “The Shingwauk Home,” the large wooden structure opened on September 22nd but was consumed by fire six days later in the early hours of September 28th. Wilson and the Shingwauks then raised \$10,000 to rebuild. In June of 1874, Wilson purchased 90.5 acres of land along the bank of the St. Mary’s River, approximately a mile and a half east of the village of Sault Ste. Marie and ten miles west of Garden River, and construction of the Shingwauk Industrial Home began. On July 31st the cornerstone for the new building was laid by the Earl of Dufferin, Governor General of Canada. In February of 1875, Wilson deeded the land and new building to Bishop Frederick D. Fauquier, the first Bishop of the newly established Missionary Diocese of Algoma. The property was to be held in trust for the use of the school, thus creating the Shingwauk Trust. On August 2nd the new Shingwauk Home was formally opened by the Bishop of Huron and the Bishop of Algoma.

In 1893, as Jackson writes, “E.F. Wilson resigned as Principal of the Shingwauk Industrial Home and retired to Salt Spring Island, British Columbia. He is replaced by a series of principals who, lacking his commitment, drive and connections, preside over a downward spiral in the fortunes and conditions of the Schools” (1). And with that, the truly complicated nature of the Shingwauk Trust and the site began. It is safe to say that from this moment, certainly (if not before), the vision was no longer Shingwauk’s, or even one encompassing Wilson’s missionary-informed interpretation of that vision. Instead, as we would say in our public education work through the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, what Canada and the Churches gave Shingwauk’s descendants was anything but a teaching wigwam. The imported industrial school model was now transformed into Canada’s residential school system.

In 1910, Wilson foresaw the possible closure of the school when the Anglican Diocese of Algoma sought, as Jackson writes, “a Quit Claim from Wilson releasing it of its ‘Trust’ obligations” (2). Wilson consented, attesting that it was given “on condition that the release, to the extent that it can be given, is given in order to facilitate the carrying on of the work of the Indian Industrial Institution known as the Shingwauk Home. In effect, he reaffirms the trust obligation of the Church” (2). From there I will jump ahead to the details concerning the trust, although the history of the site – its two iterations of the school (1875-1934 and 1934-1970, the latter the building that still stands as Algoma University’s main building) – deserves its own full discussion; however, as that is precisely the purpose of the future Shingwauk Project, which I discuss below, I’ll leave it at that.

In 1935, the “Anglican Diocese of Algoma convey[ed] the 90.5 acre Shingwauk Site, except for the Chapel, Cemetery, small parking lot and right of way, to the Federal Crown on condition that the Crown construct a new Shingwauk Indian Residential School, and on condition that in the event of closure of the School, the property or fair value be returned to the Diocese. The new Shingwauk Indian Residential School is built behind the old School which, after the opening and relocation of the children to the new Hall, is demolished” (3). Between 1956 and 1963, the Sir James Dunn (secondary) and the Anna McCrea (elementary) Schools “are constructed with funds from both the local School Board and the Department of Indian Affairs to serve Indian and non-Indian students in an integrated setting. Shingwauk Hall becomes primarily a residence although some classes for Native and local settler children are held in the School. Over a period of seventeen years, 35 acres are conveyed to the School Board for the purpose of integrating

Indian children into the Provincial schools” (4). As well, during that period, in 1961, the Algoma Diocese “convey[ed] 13.74 acres to St. Matthew’s Church for \$1 for purposes of constructing a new Church on the northeast corner of the Shingwauk site” (4). And then comes the crucial element of this story, as detailed by Jackson:

[The] Shingwauk Indian Residential School [is] closed by the Department of Indian Affairs at the end of the school year in June. Former Shingwauk students and area Native community members organize under the name of the Keewatinung Anishnabek Institute to transform Shingwauk into a First Nations cultural and education center. [The fledgling Algoma University College, established in 1965] eyes Shingwauk as a potential temporary campus until its Fourth Line campus is ready and approaches the Keewatinung Institute with a proposal to temporarily share the use of the Shingwauk site. Following agreement on “Principles of Association” by the two institutes, AUC negotiates with the Anglican Diocese of Algoma and the Department of Indian Affairs that it be granted permission to temporarily relocate to the Shingwauk site. The Diocese and Department consent on condition that the Indian interest in the site is not compromised. After discussions and apparent agreement between the Garden River First Nation and the Institute, and AUC and the Diocese and Department, the Department transfers the site back to the Diocese for \$1. The Diocese then leases the site to AUC as the primary leaseholder on the understanding that AUC guarantees that the name Shingwauk Hall be retained and that it will work in co-operation with the Native community to develop Native programming. (6)

However, the spirit of cooperation did not last long. Eventually, AUC saw the current site as its best option for its permanent camps and, again according to Jackson, “It opens secret negotiations with the Anglican Diocese to amend the original lease. AUC negotiates an amended lease with the Diocese that deletes any reference to the Native interest and the retention of the Shingwauk name, reduces the term from ten to five years, and includes an option to purchase the site” (6). Then, in 1975,

AUC and the Diocese secretly negotiate the transfer of title to 34 acres and the main Hall of the Shingwauk campus for \$600,000. The Diocese retains the Manse [where the Institute had voluntarily relocated at the request of AUC as it began to grow and expand], Chapel, Cemetery, Deanery and the riverfront. Once the deal is made public, in spite of internal and

community protests of suspected fraud, AUC evicts the Institute from the Manse, stating that it no longer controls the Manse and must return it to the Diocese vacant. Chief Richard Pine of the Garden River First Nation publicly announces that a major breach of the Shingwauk Trust and a violation of the Indian People has occurred. (8)

In 1976, a Royal Commission of Inquiry (the Whiteside Commission) was struck by the Province of Ontario to examine and report on the issue of governance and conditions at the College, which ultimately resulted in the dismissal of the AUC Board of Governors, the dissolution of the Academic Council, and the recommendation in 1979 that Algoma College be closed (11). According to Jackson, after much protest from the local community the Government relented on closure but insisted that AUC vacate the Shingwauk site and relocate back to its original site on the campus of the Sault College of Applied Arts and Technology.

10.2 The Shingwauk Project

Shortly after the closure in 1970 of the Shingwauk Indian Residential School, and in the early years of Algoma University College's relocation to the present site, Residential School Survivors connected to the Shingwauk School, their families and communities, and their allies, some of whom were associated with the Keewatinung Institute (1970-75), were catalysts in the growing Healing Movement, culminating in the development of the local Native Peoples' Group in 1977, the Shingwauk Project in 1979, and the Shingwauk Reunion in 1981. The Shingwauk Project has long been described as follows:

The Shingwauk Project is a cross-cultural research and educational development project of Algoma University and the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association (CSAA). It was founded in 1979 by Don Jackson in collaboration with Dr. Lloyd Bannerman of AUC, Chief Ron Boissoneau (1935-2000) of Garden River, Shingwauk Alumnus and Elder Dr. Dan Pine Sr. (1900-1992) of Garden River, and other former Shingwauk and Wawanosh students and friends who recognized the profound importance

of the commitment to the Shingwauk Trust and the relationship with Canada's First Nations that Algoma University assumed upon its relocation in 1971 to the site of the former Shingwauk and Wawanosh Indian Residential Schools.

Inspired by Shingwauk's Vision, the Shingwauk Project, the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association (CSAA – former students of the Shingwauk and Wawanosh Schools, and staff, descendants, families and friends) and the National Residential School Survivors' Society (NRSSS – former Indian, Inuit and Metis Residential School students from across Canada) are partnered with Algoma University, the Anglican Church, the Shingwauk Education Trust (SET), the Dan Pine Healing Lodge, and others to: research, collect, preserve and display the history of the Residential Schools; develop and deliver projects of “sharing, healing and learning” in relation to the impacts of the Schools, and of individual and community cultural restoration; and accomplish “the true realization of Chief Shingwauk's Vision”.

In 2006, Algoma University College signed the Shingwauk Covenant with Shingwauk Education Trust further cementing this commitment. In 2008, Algoma University College received its University Charter with the special mission of cross-cultural Aboriginal education and research, in keeping with the history of the site. Through their partnership, the CSAA, NRSSS and Algoma University have established the Residential Schools Centre (the Centre) which under shared direction with the University's Arthur A. Wishart Library co-ordinates, catalogues, stores and displays the Residential School artefacts, photographs, documents and resources donated and collected. (SRSC)

From these watershed events began the decades-long work of organizing, collecting, displaying, conducting research, and educating the public that led to the establishment of the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association (CSAA) and the Shingwauk Project, now known as the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre (SRSC), respectively, under a formal Partnership Agreement between Algoma University, the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association, and the National Residential School Survivor Society, which ceded its stake in the SRSC to the CSAA in 2016. The SRSC is now a bipartite partnership between Algoma University and the CSAA, governed independently by the partners' Heritage Committee, which is majority Survivor-led.

10.3 The Development of the Shingwauk Education Trust

The Diocese and AUC at various times contested each other's claims to the site and plans to sell off and/or develop portions of the property, which were met each time by resistance from Shingwauk Survivor groups and communities, but also the local First Nations communities, particularly Garden River First Nation, the original Shingwauk Band. The Shingwauk Project researched the legal title for the property and in 1988 released a two-volume report to the Project partners called *The Shingwauk Trust: A Summary of Title*. According to Jackson, "[t]he report along with supporting documents are sent by the College lawyer to lawyer David Paciocco in Ottawa who determines in a lengthy report to the College that the Shingwauk Trust remains a legally valid trust under Ontario Law which AUC is not advised to contest" (11) and in 1990 Garden River commenced legal action over the violations of the Shingwauk Trust, resulting in a May, 1991 lawsuit against the Diocese of Algoma and Algoma University College for \$20 million "for breach of the Shingwauk Trust citing a series of abuses including the 1975 fraudulent sale of 34 acres and the Hall to AUC" (11). Then, following the second Shingwauk Reunion, "the College with the assistance of the Shingwauk Alumni negotiate[d] a peaceful settlement of the lawsuit.

President Doug Lawson and Dean Jim Gibson on behalf of AUC pledge[d] to work with the other Shingwauk Partners to transform AUC into "Shingwauk University", an institution based upon an equal partnership between the Native and non-Native communities that will serve both communities" (11). With that, the new Shingwauk Education Trust was formed, apportioning a small piece of the campus (that same piece consisting of the Manse, Chapel, Cemetery, Deanery and the riverfront) to the control of

the Trustees, which include Garden River First Nation (the majority), Batchewana First Nations, the Diocese and, later (2001), the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association. In 1994, “The Shingwauk Education Trust [took] direct control of 20 acres, \$722,000 and other considerations from the Diocese” (11). With those funds, the Trust would go on to establish Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig: “In May 2006, the SET and Algoma University signed a covenant that entered a statement of common understanding and commitment to establishing Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig, an independent and degree-granting post secondary institution. The Shingwauk Covenant states that Anishinaabe, Canadian and International staff and students must learn to respect and understand each other's knowledge and cultural differences. ‘Our vision in creating Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig (University) will preserve the integrity of Anishinaabe knowledge and understanding in cooperation with society to educate the present and future generations in a positive, cooperative and respectful environment’” (Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig).

10.4 The WWOS Work Begins...

With the formal offer to host WWOS¹⁰⁰ in place, Rebecca and I began to pour over the lengthy document the WWOS National Collective had prepared for hosts. It was daunting to say the least. But we were in no way cowed by the tasks at hand. The opportunity to engage in this essential, transformative memorial was just too meaningful and too great an opportunity for both of our organizations, particularly given the mandate of the Shingwauk Indian Residential Schools Centre, which is “Sharing, Healing, and Learning”

¹⁰⁰ Walking With Our Sisters.

with regard to the legacy of Indian Residential Schools and the broader colonial context. And our community *needed* this engagement, too. We knew that all too well.

As WWOS is entirely community-based, our first tasks were to bring together the members of the community who would volunteer to fill the essential roles of Elders and Keepers. In each host community, local Elders are asked to provide guidance over the organization and ceremony to honour local protocols and needs. Keepers work closely with the Elders and take up the responsibility of looking after the bundle, ceremony, and protocols. I am indebted to our Elders, Shirley Horn, Barbara Nolan, and Brenda Powley and to our Keepers, Dallas Abitong, Linda Audette, and Rebecca Beaulne-Stuebing. We also had a dedicated team of men who volunteered to keep the sacred fire for the full three-week run of the installation, from opening ceremony to closing ceremony. These activities were ably led by Mitch Case, who also shared his pipe, along with others from the community, in the various ceremonies we held.

With those key responsibilities taken care of, we were then able to host the first of three Community Conversations. The Community Conversations are open to all and are meant to invite volunteer participation of all sorts, with a special emphasis on the many administrative duties we would take on (finance, scheduling, communications). Everything related to the event had to be done in ceremony, including receiving the installation materials, especially the vamps and sacred bundle; the long, painstaking, deliberate work of installation; and the equally detailed process of take-down, at which time we would close the initiative and send the materials, driven by volunteers, to Flin Flon, Manitoba. Once the memorial arrived at its new destination, both the volunteers and the materials would be welcomed in ceremony.

At our very first meeting we were struck by a challenge: How would we welcome this memorial, this ceremony, into a former Indian Residential School building? What special considerations were there to think through and act upon? We all knew, without hesitation, that WWOS was meant to be here, at this time, and we were ready. We also felt called upon, because of our “expertise” in Indian Residential Schools education and service to the community and Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig’s culture-based education focus, to be the ones to think through, with the National Collective, just how the issue of *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* should intersect with the legacies of Residential Schools, which include social and systemic dysfunction that leads to women and girls being put at risk.

At a subsequent meeting, keeper Dallas Abitong asked if special vamps could be made to honour the children who never returned home from Residential School. There was unanimous agreement that this was, in fact, a beautiful, meaningful, and profound way to honour these children and the Survivors who would be our hosts, by virtue of their decades of work on the issue, starting with the 1979 Shingwauk Project and culminating in the present-day work of the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, and to honour the children. Symbolically, the idea of honouring the spirits of these children in ceremony, along with those of the hundreds of missing and murdered Indigenous women we were memorializing, was powerful and we knew it was the right way forward. So, a special call for children’s or baby vamps went out and 117 new pairs were received and catalogued. It was at this point that the work began in earnest to plan the ceremony that would see these new donated works of art, of sacred items, added to the Sault Ste. Marie iteration of WWOS.

We subsequently had to decide where on campus we would – or even could – host an installation of this size. There was never any doubt that the most meaningful space on campus for Survivors was the historic Shingwauk Auditorium, which sits as an extension, centrally, of Shingwauk Hall. This building was constructed in 1935 and operated as the Residential School until 1970. Not only was this space the appropriate size, its use would also help us deal with some of the painful elements of working with the issues of Residential Schools and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. This is because many Survivors first and foremost remember the Auditorium as a relatively benign space; it is even remembered by some as one, if not the only, space where some positive memories reside. This is because the space was often used, in the experience of living Survivors, as a place of play and also where siblings were permitted, for a few minutes a month, to visit. The Survivors who have sustained the healing and education work of the Shingwauk Project over five decades have also used the space for many powerful events, such as the 1981 Shingwauk Reunion and the many Gatherings that have followed since.

Much thought went into determining how to prepare the space, both physically and spiritually, for the installation. We were armed with excellent advice on the necessary protocols for the project and were hard at work both within and beyond the Community Conversations in determining the new, local protocols that must be added. And, so, we proceeded to the welcoming ceremony and the other ceremonies that would allow us to enter and to use the space.

Each host community designs its own layout, following some basic teachings. Most importantly, the vamps are placed on the floor, pointing in the direction that visitors would walk or stand to contemplate the works. Underneath the vamps and the canvas

upon which they were laid are sacred medicines. Cedar was placed upon the floor covering the entire floor space and cedar bundles are hung from the walls.

After four long days of installation, photographs were allowed prior to the opening ceremony. The photo that accompanies this chapter is from that time, taken on my iPhone; its quality pales in comparison to the many photographs taken by the talented and committed volunteer, Melody McIver,¹⁰¹ who supplied them to the WWOS Sault Ste. Marie organizers, of which I was the titular head and funder through the aforementioned grant.

¹⁰¹ Those photos can be found in the archive of the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre and some are featured on the WWOS website.

Figure 20: *Walking With Our Sisters* - Sault Ste Marie installation in the Shingwauk Auditorium, May 2014.
(Photo credit Jonathan Dewar)

Not pictured in the accompanying photographs are the children's vamps that came out of that special call. And there is good reason for that; a very special ceremony took place days after the official opening to welcome the baby vamps into the sacred bundle.

Led by Elders, Survivors, WWOS keepers, and pipe keepers, these vamps were placed on the floor and welcomed in during a four-hour ceremony. The ceremony culminated in an invitation to each Survivor present – and afterward to each guest – to stand from our place seated in the circle and to approach the vamps, select a pair, and accompany it to the entrance of the room. There the guests followed a special path of cedar to the centre circle and a place of honour with the Eagle Staffs that had been donated to the project at a previous event. Once laid, the guest returned to their spot and a closing sharing circle was convened. At its close, those leading the ceremony led us from the room and on to a feast. The children's vamps are now part of the sacred bundle as WWOS travels across the country. They will return to the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre for a permanent memorial installation, to be developed with Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig.

Overall, the Sault Ste. Marie iteration of WWOS was deemed a great success and something the local communities – but especially the First Nations and Métis, Survivor, and Aboriginal student communities – really needed to affirm the importance of this contemporary issue of murdered and missing Aboriginal women and girls, the link to Residential Schools and the larger history and legacy of colonialism, and of Aboriginal perspectives on this complicated campus. Our hosting of the project was not without its challenges.

One issue in particular rattled different groups in different ways. It involved the practice of smudging, one of the core protocols of the project. Algoma had been struggling for months to develop an appropriate policy but at that stage only had a draft that was still contested, particularly by students from the Shingwauk Anishinaabe Students Association (SASA), some of whom pushed an all-smudging-all-the-time agenda. The volunteer WWOS organizers agreed by consensus that we would do our best to adhere to the draft policy's requirement, such as five days notice for events and strict scheduling so that Physical Plant staff could act accordingly, including going into the formal "fire watch" protocol of disabling the alarm system and notifying the Fire Marshall.

This, however, would be the biggest test of the draft policy and of the university community's goodwill as we also agreed that whatever the policy said, the final word would go to the Elders. Given that WWOS would be exhibited for three straight weeks and that there would be smudging of the Auditorium – not one of the schools' dedicated smudging spaces (in reality there was only one such space, the SASA lounge in the basement one floor below) – every morning and throughout the day, that essentially meant that Algoma University was on fire watch for three straight weeks. But the biggest challenge with the smudging was the amount of smoke produced from the various medicines (mostly sweet grass and sage). We passed along the request from Physical Plant that the Elders and their helpers should try to be conservative in their practice to minimize the smoke and smell but were immediately overruled by our Elders on the first day, as the room, given its history, needed a healthy dose of medicines. Thus, protocol required that we smudge it as necessary.

I still remember arriving the first day and entering the building from the back via one of the basement doors and being immediately immersed in a cloud of smoke, a cloud that grew in intensity as I climbed the stairs and made my way down the main corridor of Shingwauk Hall to the Auditorium. There, I met several staff members who expressed frustration and in some cases genuine anger. Even the Registrar spoke with me, informing me that some of his staff from down the hallway had complained and requested that they be allowed to leave. In the end, following a meeting with President Myers, it was agreed that the smudging would proceed (with as much care and consideration for all as possible) and the university, as an employer, would do its best to accommodate its staff who felt affected by the smudging. In some cases, people went home. Others temporarily relocated to other work spaces. And some simply complained in private and not so private settings. When I left the university two years later the policy was still a draft and the WWOS experience was still discussed as either a triumph of Indigenous knowledge and practices or an example of the university going too far, catering to special interests.

But nothing could dampen the organizers' and the wider community visitors' enthusiasm for the experience. It was truly a transformative experience for the participants and a lesson in the power of community, collaborative practices, and Indigenous protocol-informed exhibition-as-ceremony.

11 Chapter: Conclusion

The work over the past eight years that I have attempted to describe was in many ways a literal journey as I crisscrossed the country attending events, accepting invitations, and seeking out opportunities. There are several highlights, along with the circumstances that allowed for the opportunity, which I present here as a sort of chronological road map and conclusion. I reference the explosion of creative and scholarly works over the past several years. While this has been immensely gratifying, knowing that my colleagues and I helped to contribute to some of the catalysts, it has also been a challenge to keep up – and has made the writing of this dissertation a challenge in that I could not attend every event, read every new contribution, or trace all the faint lines that were beginning to appear; this latter work is being done by many of my colleagues and I look forward to new projects wherein I can explore those new ideas. This concluding chapter, then, is focused – just like the chapters that precede it. I draw a few conclusions from my very subjective experience over these eight years and aim to point to the new and still developing work within and beyond these themes.

I was very fortunate to have been able attend six of the seven TRC National Events. I deliberately skipped Inuvik in June 2011 despite a real connection via my work with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to promote the volume *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity* with my co-editors Ashok Mathur and Mike DeGagné when it became clear that people like us were taking up all the hotel rooms in town, relegating Survivors to trailers and tents. The other events were: Winnipeg, June 2010; Halifax, October 2011; Saskatoon, June 2012; Montreal, April 2013; Vancouver, September 2013; and Edmonton, March 2014. There were so many

fascinating presentations, conversations, and displays of powerful artwork, some of which I have already mentioned, such as the 2013 *Witnesses* show at UBC. Other highlights included Carey Newman's *Witness Blanket*, which I was introduced to in an appearance by the artist during the Edmonton event. There, Newman introduced the project to the audience through an inspiring talk, asking us, as he does through the project website, "[t]o bear witness, or to show by your existence that something is true, is to pay tribute to all who have been directly or indirectly affected by Canada's Indian Residential Schools."

He described this project as follows (here my notes mirror the words from the website so I quote directly from that source):

Strewn in the wake of the Indian Residential Schools are an immeasurable number of broken or damaged pieces. These fragmented cultures, crumbling buildings, segments of language, and grains of diminished pride are often connected only by the common experience that created them. Imagine those pieces, symbolic and tangible, woven together in the form of a blanket. A blanket made from pieces of residential schools, churches, government buildings, and cultural structures.

A blanket where the story of each piece is as important to its construction as the wood and screws that hold it together.

A blanket with the sole purpose of standing in eternal witness to the effects of the Indian Residential School era – the system created and run by churches and the Canadian government to "take the Indian out of the child". Left alone, these pieces may be forgotten, lost, buried, or worse – be uncomfortable reminders that leave painful impressions on the minds and hearts of those who recognize what they represent. Individually, they are paragraphs of a disappearing narrative. Together they are strong and formidable, collectively able to recount for future generations the true story of loss, strength, reconciliation and pride.¹⁰²

I kicked myself that day for not renewing my ethics approval which would have allowed me to interview Newman and ask all the questions that were now rambling through my

¹⁰² Witnessblanket.ca

mind (mindful though that I'd already done far more interviews than most people – supervisors included – had advised; I knew I had to stop eventually...). I had to make due with an inspiring chat and a commitment to seek out the *Witness Blanket* at one of its forthcoming installation sites, where I could witness it and bear witness as Newman asked. I finally had the opportunity at the TRC's Final Event, June 2, 2015 in Ottawa and I was in awe.

But there were three foundational projects that speak to what I have learned through this project, which is that community and responsibility come together through collaboration, trust, and protocol. My field work began in early 2011 and I eventually found myself in a long conversation with Chris Bose the day before the opening of a small, two-day artist and scholar gathering¹⁰³ hosted by the Centre for Innovation in Culture and the Arts at Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, BC, October 7–8, 2011, where project team member Ashok Mathur was Canada Research Chair in Cultural and Artistic Inquiry. As part of a project funded in part by a TRC research grant and the AHF, a small group of artists and curators joined a research team of which I was a part to help think through possible approaches and avenues toward effective and ethical research practice, not only grounded as necessary in reconciliation theory but also contributing to reconciliation practice. One of the key themes from this discussion was complexity. How could we work through all the complexities of history, legacy, and trauma—all of which exist simultaneously within the Residential Schools issue and art history in Canada?

¹⁰³ This text is a lightly edited version of the introduction I wrote for *Reconcile This!* a special art-focused edition of the journal *West Coast Line* I co-edited with Ayumi Goto, which is available free as a download from <http://reworksinprogress.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/wcl74h.pdf>, a website to support a follow up iteration of this ongoing work.

One suggestion was to acknowledge that reconciliation is a *work-in-progress*, a theme I and my fellow editors of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's *Response, Responsibility, and Renewal: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Journey* (Gregory Younging and Mike DeGagné) played with, constructing one of the section titles as "Reconciliation: A Work in *Progress*" [emphasis in original]. Other participants to the discussion noted, with some mirth, how familiar artists and curators are with the concept of a work-in-progress. It was at this point that the group hit upon the concept of incubation (an intense form of residency) as a way to approach these complexities. What if, the group concluded, we invited artists, curators, and other thinkers to come together equipped with works-in-progress of their own that would touch on, in some fashion, any of the themes and/or complexities within that question "What is the role of art and the artist in reconciliation?" The incubation would combine art, curatorial, and research practice and question if and/or how any one or all of these things, or the interplay itself, may contribute to reconciliation practice. Essentially, the advice was that taking "a residency approach, rather than an exhibition approach to these topics might also be more healthy as it plays less on the public display of pain and more on private exploration and study," as reported by Leah Sandals in *Canadian Art*. Sandals interviewed many of the artists I have worked with over these years, including David Garneau who told her "I have a lot of anxiety about shows that are basically a display of Aboriginal pain... Why are we—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal curators—presenting Aboriginal pain to a primarily non-Indigenous audience? What do we hope to achieve?" (qtd in Sandals) As such, the group I was working with advised that we would need to bring together people and ideas in some way to provide a foundation for the eventual physical and intellectual

gathering, a “pre-catalogue” of ideas. The catalogue is, of course, another play on words/ concepts, turning on its head the straightforward arc of artist/curator/space/exhibition/catalogue with which so many of the artists in attendance were familiar.

Reconcile This! became, as I wrote in 2011, “a pre-catalogue of an “exhibition” that may or may not one day materialize post–*Reconcile This!* For all intents and purposes, this event will lead into *Reconciliation: Work(s) in Progress*, a two-day symposium followed by a five-day incubation artistic residency, hosted by the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre at Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario” (6), an event I hosted in my then new capacity as Director of the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, September 27 through October 3, 2012. This was followed in 2013 by a month long artist residency at Thompson Rivers University in partnership with the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre called *Reconsidering Reconciliation* which culminated in the publication of *The Land We Are: Writers and Artists Unsettle the Politics of Reconciliation*. *The Land We Are* was edited by Gabrielle Hill and Sophie McCall, both long time collaborators on these interrelated and overlapping projects that allowed me so many opportunities to learn from wonderful artists and scholars and in the case of several of the interviews presented here, to be afforded the great privilege of sharing their ideas – at length, in their words – as part of this dissertation. It was protocol that guided me to and through the conversations, where dialogue informed my understanding of how artists, curators, and other cultural producers were puzzling through this new and rapidly changing landscape. And it is in the spirit of this generosity, which is itself outstripped by the generosity of the Survivors who elevated this platform

of healing, truth, and reconciliation to a national and international level of consciousness, that I share my modest ideas in concert with those voices.

On June 2, 2015, the TRC released its *Calls to Action*, and of the 94 there are a few that speak specifically to the arts, under the subheading “Commemoration”:

79. We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal organizations, and the arts community, to develop a reconciliation framework for Canadian heritage and commemoration...

81. We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Survivors and their organizations, and other parties to the Settlement Agreement, to commission and install a publicly accessible, highly visible, Residential Schools National Monument in the city of Ottawa to honour Survivors and all the children who were lost to their families and communities.

82. We call upon provincial and territorial governments, in collaboration with Survivors and their organizations, and other parties to the Settlement Agreement, to commission and install a publicly accessible, highly visible, Residential Schools Monument in each capital city to honour Survivors and all the children who were lost to their families and communities.

83. We call upon the Canada Council for the Arts to establish, as a funding priority, a strategy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process. (9)

It is this last *Call to Action* that underscores the major finding from this work:

collaboration. I had always envisioned this project as one in which I would create space to feature the words and works of artists, curators, and other cultural producers but I had not originally envisioned it as a “collaboration.” Instead, as the reader will recall, I positioned this study as a dialogic effort to “give back,” to act on the responsibility I not only sensed I bore but that is featured so prominently in the literature around Indigenous research. And, of course, the question of responsibility was one of the core questions I wanted to ask. But it was not until I began to encounter the artists I would go on to interview that I realized how essential collaboration was to pushing intellectual and

creative boundaries. Yes, some of the artists featured here completed works in solitary fashion – and sometimes painfully so, as seen in the R. G. Miller example, where the painter initially faced his demons alone in his studio, only reaching out for a collaborator for the final push toward cohesion and exhibition. For Leah Decter, a concept initially conceived privately exploded with creative force in its activation in public with Jaime Isaac. *official denial*'s public sewing actions were interactive and performative and took the energy and strength of both the non-Indigenous originator and her Indigenous, intergenerationally-impacted collaborator to carry the weight of the project as it toured across the country. This collaboration across cultures and lived experiences with the notion of colonialism (or lack thereof, according to Mr. Harper) served as the way into that issue – and the many more interwoven issues within – for hundreds of Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, who sat with one another as a community in those sewing actions, carrying the art object forward to its ever more powerful counter message(s) to the Prime Minister's denial(s).

Yes, I was engaged in deliberately and definitively collaborative efforts to gather people and create opportunities – those mentioned above and the many spawned since, including ongoing residencies, such as 2016's *O K'inādās // complicated reconciliations: an artist residency* at the University of British Columbia Okanagan (<http://rmooc.ca/>), supported in part by a network I remain engaged with through the SSHRC-funded project '*Beyond Reconciliation*': *Indigenous Arts, Public Engagement, and the Aftermath of Residential Schools*, led by Keavy Martin (University of Alberta) and team members Dylan Robinson (Queen's University), David Garneau (University of Regina), Ashok Mathur (University of British Columbia Okanagan), and myself (see the *Creative*

Conciliations website for more information: <http://conciliations.ca>). *O K'inādās* was also funded by the Canada Council for the Arts (in partnership with the J.W. McConnell Foundation and The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada) through the new 2015 program *{Re}conciliation*, which is described as “A groundbreaking initiative which aims to promote artistic collaborations that look to the past & future for new dialogues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada” (Canada Council).¹⁰⁴ While it is obvious that this program speaks directly to *Call to Action* 83 (see above), it bears noting that the Council and its partners were already way out in front with their initiative when the TRC released its *Calls* on June 2, 2015, as the Council makes clear in this announcement:

This initiative aims to promote artistic collaborations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists, investing in the power of art and imagination to inspire dialogue, understanding and change. The Canada Council administers the *{Re}conciliation* initiative, which was developed by Canada Council, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and The Circle *in anticipation* [emphasis mine] of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report and recommendations. A first call for proposals was issued in May 2015. A second will be issued in 2016. Interested artists and arts organizations will be invited to submit proposals for project funding up to \$75,000. Applicants who submitted a proposal in 2015 but did not receive funding are eligible to re-submit to future deadlines. (<http://canadacouncil.ca/council/news-room/news/2015/reconciliation-programs>)

How were these partners able to anticipate such a thing? They were able in the same way that I was able in 2008 to anticipate that there would be an explosion of art making and arts scholarship related to Residential Schools, healing, and reconciliation, which led to this very dissertation: engagement with the Indigenous community at large and the Indigenous arts community in particular. The Council and its partners engaged

¹⁰⁴ I was privileged to serve as a member of the jury for what was at the time a one-time, special initiative that now appears likely to be sustained in ongoing fashion.

with the same communities I have referenced throughout this body of work. In many cases, the Council sought the advice and expertise of the same scholars, artists, curators, and other cultural producers I and many others were engaging with to explore the many questions around the role(s) of art and artist in reconciliation. While the idea of profound silences and the efforts over decades to break those silences was an important theme to explore in this work (as I do in the first two case studies on writing and the Thomas and Igloliorte exhibitions) and as it is clear this effort is still needed (as many of the contemporary works I reference make clear, as does the Canada Council's new program), it also became clear that *collaboration* was a principal finding in my work (the interviews that form the backbone of this project). This fed into the collaborative research my colleagues and I were doing for the TRC itself in *Practicing Reconciliation: A Collaborative Study of Aboriginal Art, Resistance and Cultural Politics*. The TRC was listening, as evidenced in Volume 6 of its *Final Report, Canada's Residential Schools: Reconciliation*, where our work is cited and the theme of collaboration – indeed that very word – features prominently throughout the volume and the *Calls to Action*. And the Canada Council for the Arts was listening, too, so much so that they arrived at the same conclusion that we reached, even before the TRC called for it. All because the wider Indigenous arts and Survivor communities had told us that collaboration, particularly across cultures was a tool – perhaps *the* tool – for taking reconciliation from theory into practice: art practice, curatorial practice, institutional/organizational support practice, and even the practice of witnessing through art.

This is entirely in keeping with my use of Indigenous standpoint theory, where the “emphasis [is] on the voice of the population members” (Adams and Phillips, 275). Here

I will tweak one of Dennis Foley's four criteria for Indigenous standpoint theory (from my *Introduction*) and argue that this criterion also speaks for art practice: The Indigenous [art practice]¹⁰⁵ must be for the benefit of the [practitioners']¹⁰⁶ community or the wider Indigenous community... The Indigenous epistemological approaches in an Indigenous standpoint enable knowledge to be recorded for the community, not the [funder or institution, whether gallery, museum, or TRC]¹⁰⁷ ("Indigenous Standpoint Theory: An Acceptable Academic Research Process," 34). We do have a responsibility to the community, as Jace Weaver and many of my interviewees have argued. While not all argue this is "activist" and therefore "communitism," all seem to agree with this assessment from France Trépanier and Chris Creighton-Kelly: "Aboriginal artists, even those living in an urban environment, have both a connection and a strong sense of responsibility to their community. These artists will create their work in collaboration with members of their community, even if those people are not 'professional' artists in the Western sense of that term. When that respect is given, honour is given back" (62). I, for this project, and my collaborators on those other projects, have sought to *practice* this as our research and creative practices. We know that, as Trépanier and Creighton-Kelly write, "This relationship is deepened when artists actually listen to community members. The artist seeks not just information for the content of their work, but a more profound understanding of how their work connects to history and knowledge." And, clearly, the practices of individuals, collectives, and communities are changing how others do business: "For some Aboriginal artists, implicating their community is an essential part of their work. Even the most professional of these artists will insist that they are not just

¹⁰⁵ Replaces "research."

¹⁰⁶ Replaces "researcher's."

¹⁰⁷ Replaces "the Academy."

making art, but involving their community in that process. In this way, art that is made in collaboration with a community can be part of a healing process that actually strengthens that community. *This aspect of Aboriginal art making is often misunderstood and ignored by funding agencies and other mainstream organizations* (emphasis mine)” (61). Of the latter, given the Canada Council development, perhaps we can say “no more.”

And yet...

If I was asked to make a recommendation to whomever will spearhead the creation of the monuments that the TRC calls for across the country, it will be to implore the creatives behind the work to ensure that their efforts create community and, ideally, ongoing collaboration between peoples. They cannot be static. They cannot be merely symbolic. They must be substantive as well. Maria Campbell had the most arresting argument for the subjectivity of symbolism when we spoke:

MC: For me, a good commemoration, I mean we had a commemoration ceremony in Batoche two years ago, they called it a commemoration ceremony and it was a battle between the Canadians and the Metis and they brought these people together and they sang songs and they did all kinds of nice things and the commissioners came, I don't know who all else was there but all of those people from opposing sides were there, for this commemoration ceremony. Well, for me, they went away and there's a plaque, but the people still have no land. Nobody ever talked about what did the people die for? What was this war about?

JD: Louis Riel is still a traitor.

MC: And I hope to God he stays that way. The next horrible thing they could decide to do is pardon him.

JD: People are arguing that.

MC: That's right and some people, I absolutely wonder where their common sense is, are fighting to have him pardoned. Why? I mean why would you do that to him? He gave his life so that at least he would give us something to hang onto forever and to pardon him is to say he didn't do anything wrong. Well, fine then we're all going to go away happy? Well, excuse me, what happened to the land? There was never any land settlement given.

JD: So what if the pardon is as the first step in those other things?

MC: To me that would be a really evil thing to do, but I wouldn't be surprised if it is. But it won't change anything, pardoning Riel, if it doesn't change what he died for. I think they think by pardoning him no one will talk about it, it's taking the martyr away from the cause. I would certainly never support anything like that, nor would I ever let anybody forget what he died for and that the pardoning was done so that we would say, 'OK, we forgive you.' And then it's OK for them to haul the resources away and for them to...

JD: Now, only the state can do that so, as objectionable as that is to you, that is an act by the state ...

MC: It was also an act by the state to charge him with treason and hang him.

JD: What if a commemoration of Riel or another historical figure also included your vocal opposition to the state's...like is there a way to have it reflect multiple perspectives? Or can we just not see eye to eye...

MC: I couldn't see me seeing eye to eye, maybe somebody else could, I can't. I can't see that I could sit across the table from somebody that pardoned him and I don't believe in the pardon and we're going to have some kind of commemoration together. What is that doing? It's not doing anything. For me everything for me is to make things easier for the state.

While fellow Métis artist David Garneau did not make this same point about Riel, he did offer a thought in *Reconcile This!* that might speak to Campbell's concern. He wrote,

Art is not healing in itself, but it can be in relation. Art is a stimulant and a balm when taken internally, but dangerous if mistaken for experience. There is a profound difference between reading signs and being engaged by a symbol. Sharing in a discourse about histories, responsibility, and transformation among artworks and with other human beings is a corrective to the colonial desire for settlement. ("Imaginary" 38)

As a curator, he and others may well have the solution to how to commemorate Riel beyond symbolism, in stone, song, line/form/colour, rather than law.

Commemorative efforts must, as Candace Hopkins stated at the "*Stronger Than Stone: (Re)Inventing the Indigenous Monument*" symposium that ran from November 21 to 24, 2014, at ACAD in Calgary, AB, and at Wanuskewin Heritage Park in Saskatoon, SK, ensure that "we will move from a place of resistance to a place of ownership" (qtd in Hughes). This certainly reminds me of my conversation with Alex Janvier and his use of

the descriptor “landlord.” Before our one-on-one interview, wherein he repeated similar themes, Janvier spoke to the small group of us gathered at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops in 2011. His words were rendered in free verse fashion from the transcript by Ayumi Goto and me in *Reconcile This!* I reproduce those words here:

The landlord’s gotta speak sometime
I’m tired of assholes making the laws
Riel said our people will sleep for 100 years and the artists will bring us
back
he predicted something
if the money comes to Native artists, Canada will benefit
they have to accept us as part of the big picture and not pigeonhole us

residential school was a low place
we couldn’t pray to our ancestors
we spoke their language
I still don’t understand English, in courts they have these words on a piece
of paper and another guy will have another paper with a different version
you’ll never win with their words

there is a tendency to point at other countries, how people are treated, but
there are three fingers pointing back
I have been painting on these issues
that’s why I’m not famous
though I am getting a medal, I’ll wear it around my neck, it’s better than
wearing it here (like handcuffs around his hands)

I’m glad to be here with rebels, with people reinstating the landlords
the old people talked about it
a few of us remember, residential school wiped it out
we have to build a better world, a Canada that includes the landlords
if the artists talk about it, it could be good
that’s why I came here, to say these few words

I’m from Cold Lake, Alberta, Dene
a residential school survivor, lifted from my home farm on the reserve
our people are survivors, the winter up north is hard, fishing and trapping
we didn’t need Indian Agents or missionaries, we were self-sufficient

I was privately tutored by a professor at the University of Alberta
at a very young age, 14 years old, joined an artist’s group in St. Paul
a professor noticed me, arranged for me to spend summers with him

I used my traditional background and language
am able to do creative work because of this
grew up with crayons and manila paper from Indian Affairs
went to college in Saskatchewan
did artwork for the paper
designed crests for the sports teams

was accepted at OCAD
went to the Indian Agent for a pass to leave the reserve
hitchhiked to St. Paul to apply for the permit
the agent decided instead to send [me] to the Southern Alberta Institute of
Technology and Art

I was influenced by winter on the trapline

I didn't understand people at the residential school
not their language or their culture
tried to adjust, went to church everyday
spent ten years at that school
then I was sent to North Battleford to a boy's college
the Indian Agent denied my entrance to many schools

in '61 and '62 taught art at the University of Alberta
but left in order to paint
was told I would starve

formed a group of eight Native artists
the media made a mockery of us,
comparing us to the Canadian Group of Seven
but Bill Reid knew how to talk to the media,
helped get [the] group in the news
[the] group of seven changed the world of art in Canada

Max Stern ran the Dominion Gallery in Montreal
the group sent someone to talk to him, to sell him the idea of exhibiting
them, of showing Canadian art rather than international art
when Stern's gallery opened its doors, others followed suit
both Morriseau and Daphne Odjig have exhibited in the National Gallery
Morriseau's show outsold Picasso's there

the next generation can push forward
now that the doors have been opened
I've been painting about these things
we're here to change the intelligentsia
we need more Native curators, who can speak openly against the notion of

two founding nations, an idea that comes from the days of Joan of Arc that
should have been left over there (in Europe)
they're in my country, I'm the landlord

I've painted about most things that anyone can talk about
the younger people can really start painting
and be the real people in the arts
go into the best galleries in Canada and the world
China, Japan, Germany, they want to see our work, they think it's really
something that we're surviving
eventually we'll be able to conquer the art world

we're in the forefront of a powerful movement,
asserting ourselves as the landlords
we may not get it all back, but we will get something, psychologically
even if you have a small reserve, it's important to know that you're the
landlord. (13–15)

Janvier is clearly calling for change and he alludes to the importance of
community, albeit across generations. The change he calls for is undeniably substantive.
But how can it be systemic? This last idea goes far beyond *Call to Action* 83's specific
reference to the Canada Council for the Arts and funding for reconciliation projects. And,
interestingly, in going beyond we actually have to go back to 1996 and the *Report of the
Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. That Commission made a very different
recommendation, one that has not been realized. While it spoke of the need to change
Canada's institutions (in ways we would now refer to as decolonization and/or
Indigenization), it also called for something new:

3.6.19: Federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments co-
operate to establish and fund an Aboriginal Arts Council, with a minimum
20-year life span and an annual budget equivalent to five per cent of the
Canada Council budget, to foster the revitalization and development of
Aboriginal arts and literature. (602)

My 2011 conversation with Armand Garnet Ruffo¹⁰⁸ contained the most precise return to this idea, which encompasses all three elements of symbolism, substance, and systemic change:

JD: So, do you have any misgivings around the idea of the TRC's \$20 million fund for commemoration initiatives? They've said they're going to look at everything from the tried-and-true monument—if that's what someone proposes—to a community that wants to have a Sunday afternoon gathering of some sort. So it could be permanent or it could be ephemeral.

AGR: Well, again, I have no problem with it. I guess it depends on the community, it depends on what one means by commemoration. Not that we shouldn't think about it critically. I mean there was an Elder on CBC radio, asking what has all this stuff accomplished. He was saying that he went through residential school, and his people are still being locked up and thrown in jail. And we still have the lowest educational attainments in the country. Many of our First Nations languages are on the verge of extinction and government after government has done little, if anything, about it. There's not even a repository, a library, of Indigenous languages in the country. To put up a statue, yes, it's important to commemorate what happened, and I think there's a place for that, but we can't stop there. We want to memorialize so we don't forget it, but let's also celebrate the future. Let's celebrate the things that we can do now to make things better, not only focus on what happened.

JD: I like that idea: a statue's okay, but also build the institutions.

AGR: Exactly. Our own institutions—that's what we need now! When we started this conversation, we talked about healing, and we talked about the role of the artist. Well, the role of the artist for me is to prod and poke society in whatever form that may take. So where are we as a people in this society? Where do we stand? At the end of the twenty-first century, will we even be here? Is all this stuff currently going on just lip service? Isn't the agenda still really about assimilation into capitalism and ultimately taking control of what little land we have left, by whatever means? Before long Aboriginal politicians will be sitting in the House of Commons working for the government of Canada, and then what?

JD: Back to the activism.

AGR: Yeah, right now we are basically being legislated out of existence. That's happening now, and so healing, yes, being healthy is critical, but we better also take the next step, and soon... for me it's important also to show our potential. We need the vision of where we can be, before we can get there. I think right now, we know the present, we know the near past, in terms of residential school, and we're learning about our distant past,

¹⁰⁸ This text is from a version of the Ruffo interview that he and I edited together for publication as "Our Roots Go Much Deeper": A Conversation with Armand Garnet Ruffo."

but we still don't know our future—where we can go. I'm concerned about our children seven generations from now. Will our beautiful cultures and languages survive another hundred years? I'd like to see a vision of us with our cultures intact, playing an active and positive role in Canada. So, yeah, that's the kind of artistic call I'd like to see. How do artists envision a positive future for us on this land? I think right now we need that vision more than ever. Louis Riel knew this when he said that his people would sleep for a hundred years and when they awoke, the artists would give them their spirit back. Let's look forward to another hundred years. (223–26)

In 2017, Canada will celebrate 150 years of Confederation. But what this project taught me is that many contemporary artists are still focusing their beams of light, to illuminate their existences and those of their communities that still exist in shadows, either because the stories have not yet been (permitted to be) told or are (perceived as) ignored or even relegated to “sad chapters” that we have now left behind. I have suggested in the public education work that I've done over many years that perhaps one element of reconciliation is knowing that the story of this space/place is the story of diverse First Nations and Inuit from time immemorial... through contact with Europeans... through centuries of cooperation and conflict, trade, treaty, and colonization, love and friendship, hardship, betrayal... through fair and forced settling, immigration, and (many forms of) migration... through the birth, marginalization, and resurgence of the Métis Nation... through relationship with, resistance to, and suppression by the Crown... through the privileged negotiation of the terms of Confederation toward the establishment of the modern nation state that is Canada... through its reliance on/reluctance toward (non-white) immigration... through and toward many individual, community, and national accomplishments across the wonderful diversity of languages and cultures of this land. That picture (painted here with words, my medium of choice) is not perfect but it has

allowed me to engage many different people in conversations about reconciliation, conversations that have allowed people to recognize enough of a connection to a story, a feeling, to want to interrogate it further. In doing so, people invariably place themselves within the narrative, sometimes sheepishly (as I did in my youth, grasping for connection to notions of culture and community) and sometimes defiantly. Creating opportunities for others to explore how they position themselves within the story/stories of Canada, as I did at length in both the *Preface* and *Introduction*, has proved to be, for me, one of the most useful tools in transformative learning. As Jean Paul Lederach says, “the capacity to restory imagines both the past and the future and provides space for the narrative voice to create” (*The Moral Imagination*, 149) and what I have seen audiences create for themselves is a space where position(s) and the concept of intersectionality, a key element of standpoint theory, allow individuals to be witness to the fact that it is impossible to tell our collective histories without many voices woven together. That is where Maria Campbell’s notion of “reciprocity” is so essential. It’s not just a matter of “you tell me your story and I’ll tell you mine” but rather a requirement for acts of respect and humility to create this new “work.” Then we can listen to the call in Ruffo’s *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* to “Dance with us as you can.”

Appendices

Appendix A - Interview Guide

Semi-structured Interview Guide

The following questions form the general line of inquiry but individual questions and/or follow up questions may not be posed in this order to allow for a natural flow of conversation.

Respondents can choose to answer or decline to answer any question, in whole or in part.

- Are you familiar with concepts of truth and reconciliation as they relate to Indian Residential Schools in Canada and/or more broadly? If so, please elaborate.
[Provide contextual information and use prompts sparingly but as necessary.]
 - With regard to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, are you familiar with its call for artist submissions?
 - Are you familiar with the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, generally, and its Commemoration fund?
- What role, if any, do you see for art and artist in *truth*, formally and/or informally?
- What role, if any, do you see for art and artist in *reconciliation* processes, formally and/or informally?
- Do you connect truth and reconciliation to healing, health, and/ or wellbeing?
 - How do you approach the concept of apology, generally and/or specific to the legacy of Residential Schools?
- Do you feel that Aboriginal people have a responsibility to community?
 - To be activist?
 - Is activism formal or informal? Does it respond to or resist formal processes?
 - Do artists have a special responsibility?
 - How is community defined, i.e. general Aboriginal, specific First Nation, Inuit, and/or Métis, or more broadly Canadian?
- [If applicable]: Tell me about how you came to produce NAME OF SPECIFIC WORK?
 - Did/do you see this work as part of healing, truth, or reconciliation efforts – or as a form of response or resistance of some sort?
 - [If applicable]: Was this a solitary effort or was it connected to a collaborative activity or initiative, formally or informally?

- Would you consider being part of a future reconciliation-themed effort and, if so, what might it look like? Who, ideally, would be involved? Would it be connected to commemorative efforts?

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