The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the College of Graduate and Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

Transforming Settler Identity Through Art and Engagement with Indigenous Culture in the Okanagan

submitted by Crystal Kay Przybille in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

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Abstract

How can learning about, listening to, and engaging with Indigenous people and culture transform Settler identity in the Okanagan? I explore this question, through the arts, to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s findings that the arts can “invite people to explore their own world views, values, beliefs, and attitudes that may be barriers to healing, justice, and reconciliation,” and that the arts can “serve to shape public memory in ways that are potentially transformative for individuals, communities, and national history” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Honouring the Truth 280-83).

I’ve taken an autoethnographic approach to this research, reflecting on ten years of engagement with Indigenous culture in the Okanagan Valley. This personal study of the developments of my changing understanding, reflected through art, is used to examine Settler identity from the inside. This reflection includes my participation in dialogical engagements with Syilx activists, community developers, and artists. These projects are intended to raise awareness of Eurocentric place-claiming, emblematic in the celebrations of the Canadian state’s sesquicentennial, and the omission of the historical and ongoing impact of colonialism on Indigenous culture.

Producing these works and participating in Syilx-led projects provided an opportunity to hear individual perspectives and learn about the local history of the Indigenous community. This research led to a variety of insights and broadening of my perspectives, including glimpses into how the European project of Canadian state-making impacted, and impacts, existing nations. I made efforts to recognize the limitations inherent in understanding another’s perspective.

Personal identity has defensive biases that may prevent us from transforming understanding and behaviour. These biases include the pursuit of a sense of “arrival” to reassure ourselves that we are free from participation in historical or ongoing injustices, or that we are in a position to judge the limits of empathy and a will to action experienced by fellow Settlers. Navigating this discourse is an unsettling process. Challenges seem insurmountable when faced with frameworks that maintain that reconciliation is self-serving for Settlers. However, I work on the premise that reconciliation means taking care of essential goods that serve our collective interests.
Lay Summary

The image many non-Indigenous Canadians have of our past and present is of a peaceful, progressive nation of immigrants and descendants of pioneering settlers. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s findings re-examines this image. The findings encourage us to recognize how we benefit from, and are complicit in, the Canadian enterprise that has, and continues to, oppress Indigenous peoples. After coming to a better understanding of this need, I determined to further apply my work in the arts for the purpose of reconciliation. This led me to work alongside members of the Indigenous community in the Okanagan to help foster a public re-examination and understanding of history. Through my experiences, I attempted to investigate my own complicity and ways of being that run counter to reconciliation. Examining our own mistakes and delusions is difficult. It’s also vital for making positive change, benefitting all.
Preface

The artwork and research discussed in this paper was designed, created, and reflected upon by me. I facilitated the mural art discussed in section 8.6, which was created by Kelowna Senior Secondary Honors 12 art students and Syilx artist, Sheldon Louis. My role in this work included fundraising, organizing, facilitating discussions, documentation, writing media releases, organizing exhibitions, artistic guidance, and converting the mural to a digital file for printing.

*The Father Pandosy Mission 150th Anniversary Commemorative Sculpture* discussed in Chapter 5, was supported by the Okanagan Historical Society, and influenced by discussions with Westbank First Nation. *The chief sḵn̓c̓ut Monument* discussed in Chapter 12, was commissioned and supported by Westbank First Nation.

The *Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth Billboard Art* and collective, discussed in Chapter 8, was initiated by Edna Terbasket and Dixon Terbasket. I was invited to participate in this collaboration by them in my capacity as a Master of Fine Arts student, and as a friend. The aesthetic content of the billboard art was envisioned and created by me, but directly informed by conversations led by Dixon Terbasket, Edna Terbasket, Galen Terbasket and Justin Terbasket.

Other individuals who contributed to discussions and actions of the *Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth collective* are Dr. Delacey Tedesco, Dr. Allison Hargreaves, Dr. David Jeffress, Dr. Neil Nunn, Jeremy Bowers, Sheldon Louis, Stephanie Prentice, Lorna McParland, Myron Campbell (who designed the Rethink 150 logo), Carrie Karsgaard, and Ronnie Roesler.

The sources for the images used in this thesis are given credit below the images.

Publications arising from work presented in my thesis are:

“In the Okanagan Valley, We’re Not Letting Canada Drive: How an Indigenous-led collaborative is rethinking Canada’s 150th birthday.” The Tyee. June 19, 2017. This article was written by Dr. Delacey Tedesco on behalf of the Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth collective. It features a photograph of Dixon Terbasket in front of the billboard art I created, and discusses the art and the broader work of the collective discussed in Chapter 8.

“Members of Okanagan-Syilx Nation are unsettling Canada 150. It’s time for Canadians to listen.” rabble.ca. June 30, 2017. This article was written by Neil Nunn. It features a photograph of Dixon Terbasket in front of the billboard art I created, and discusses the art and the broader work of the collective discussed in Chapter 8.

“Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth, Billboard Art Near Cawston, BC - Artist Statement.” BC Studies, The Front. vol. 195, no. Autumn, 2017. This article was written by me, discussing the creation of The Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth Billboard Art. The art is featured on the front and back cover of the journal.

“Reflections on Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth.” BC Studies. vol. 195, no. Autumn, 2017. This article was written by me, on behalf of the collective, for the section titled: This Space Here. It discusses the work of The Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth collective around Canada’s sesquicentennial.

Public exhibitions that include work done specifically for my thesis:


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Acknowledgements

This work was created in the Okanagan, the unceded, traditional territory of the Syilx people.

This work is created with an appreciation for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the BC Arts Council, and the University of British Columbia and their important financial support.

Sincere gratitude to the members of my supervisory committee: Stephen Foster, Carolyn MacHardy, and Allison Hargreaves. Thanks also to Samuel Roy-Bois. The guidance from all has been astute.

Heartfelt gratitude to the members of the Syilx community who have helped me see myself and my culture better, through sharing theirs. Of special mention are Dixon Terbasket and Edna Terbasket.

Much appreciation to the members of the Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth collective, with whom important projects were visualized, and realized in a spirit of warm cooperation.

Deep gratitude to Dante Wetherow, for his invaluable insight and steadfast support in every aspect of my endeavours.

Foundational gratitude to my family, for their constant, unwavering support.
Dedication

I dedicate this work to Dixon Terbasket, Edna Terbasket, Dante Wetherow, and my family.

Love is something you and I must have. We must have it because our spirit feeds upon it. We must have it, because without it we become weak and faint. Without love our self-esteem weakens.

Without it our courage fails. Without love we can no longer look out confidently at the world. Instead we turn inwardly and begin to feed upon our own personalities and little by little we destroy ourselves.

You and I need the strength that comes from knowing that we are loved…

Chief Dan George, Tsleil-Wautuh Nation
(I am a Native of North America 34)
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Literature Review

Armstrong, Jeannette. Constructing Indigeneity: Syilx Okanagan Oraliture and tmix "centrism:

Dr. Jeannette Armstrong is an Okanagan Syilx author, artist, educator and activist. She was appointed Canada Research Chair in Okanagan Indigenous Knowledge and Philosophy in 2013.

In Constructing Indigeneity: Syilx Okanagan Oraliture and tmix "centrism, Armstrong describes the Syilx Okanagan environmental ethic as a philosophy expressed in the practice of Indigeneity as a social paradigm. She describes Indigeneity as a social paradigm that is identified by interrelated and inter-reliant existence with the land. The ethical approach to this interconnectedness is a spirit of reciprocity shaped through spirituality and land-use practices that are in tune with the land.

This philosophy of connectedness and reciprocity with the land is evidenced in the Indigenous language, nsyilxcan, of which she is a fluent speaker. The philosophies and knowledge of the land as a self-perpetuating system, are embedded in the language and are communicated through the captikʷl (traditional, oral stories handed down generation to generation). These understandings are especially poignant when the stories are told in the original language of nsyilxcan. The stories are an integral part of Syilx social instruction and the construction of the Syilx Okanagan worldview and approach. The ethics conveyed through them encourage behaviour which sustains and respects the natural environment.

Armstrong describes Indigeneity as an attainment of knowledge and wisdom pertaining to the wholistic scheme of the self-perpetuation of nature, as opposed to a delineation of human ethnicity. She explains that Syilx Okanagan Indigeneity reflects an understanding that optimum human self-perpetuation is not human-centered, but rather centers all of nature in a way that is consistent with optimizing the ability for the environment to regenerate itself.
Armstrong explains that the Syilx Okanagan environmental ethic is purposeful and expresses an egalitarianism. This egalitarianism holds in reverence the right of each life-form (tmixʷ), which is also the life-force of a place (the land animated by tmixʷ), to fully regenerate. This reverence guides ethical behaviour toward other life-forms:

> tmixʷ as life-force makes up the tmxʷulaxʷ or life-force-place and the human can be—placed as life-force as tmixʷ themselves through Indigeneity as a social paradigm within a criteria of cooperating fully in the regeneration of all the life forms of a place…[This ethic of sustainability] does not construct value based on human utility as the defining line in the decision-making as to which life forms will be conserved and therefore which are to be devalued and displaced. (11)

Armstrong’s work frames an environmental ethic from a tmixʷcentric position, rather than a human-centric position. This social paradigm of Indigeneity offers a path to sustainability. Armstrong suggests that human society can access this social paradigm through “literatures which demonstrate, imbed and advocate a regenerative land ethic toward re-indigenization of place which is widely accessible through human discourse, dialogic and story.”

Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*:

Claire Bishop, art historian, critic, author, and professor in the art history department at CUNY Graduate Center, NY, offers an overview of the history and politics of participatory art. In this form of art, the public is invited to engage in the artistic process. In doing this, they become an art medium unto themselves.

In contrast to Grant Kester, who proposes that dialogic art does not need a lasting product and that the social interaction is the only necessary outcome, Bishop argues that a product is a key part of solidifying the process in an aesthetic form. In this way, the artist maintains the role of the artist, rather than simply becoming a social mediator. The process is also represented in a form that can impact a wider audience of non-participants. This perspective is valuable, supporting my intent to engage in dialogue and projects with community while offering my primary skills as an artist to render images and objects reflecting that engagement.
Decter, L., Taunton, C., *Strategies of Settler Responsibility and Decolonization*:

Intermedia artist, Leah Decter (MFA in New Media from Transart Institute, Berlin. PhD Candidate in Cultural Studies at Queens University, Kingston, Canada) and Dr. Carla Taunton (Associate Professor in the Division of Art History and Critical Studies at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and Adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Cultural Studies at Queen’s University) discuss the importance of positioning oneself in approaching intercultural work, as a foundational aspect of “unsettling the settler within” (alluding to Paulette Regan’s book by that name). They discuss the importance of understanding one’s family history. They explain this can serve to better understand how we fit into the history of settler society in Canada, and how settler society benefits from wrongs of the past and the perpetuation of oppression. The authors argue that we can then begin to participate in deconstructing and dismantling nationalist narratives that buttress settler dominance and complacency in colonization.

The authors acknowledge the potential for art to inspire. It can stimulate the imagination to make room for decolonization efforts in creative interventions. At the same time, the authors raise consideration of how their work might take up space and unwittingly create a new colonizing discourse. These are important considerations in doing intercultural work. They have underlined the importance of the work I am doing while leading me to pursue the understanding of my family history. In this way, I examine how my existence is involved with colonialism while positioning myself in my work.

DiAngelo, Robin, *White Fragility*:

Professor Robin DiAngelo writes about White Fragility, which is part of the concept of Whiteness Studies. She explains that “White” people in North America come from a place of racial privilege that protects us from race-based stress. Our prevailing situation makes us feel universal and ubiquitous. Therefore, when we find ourselves in a discourse in which we are subject to racialization, we have not built resilience and tend to be reactive. DiAngelo refers to this lack of resilience as White Fragility. This leads white people to a series of moves that may include “the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such
as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium” (54).

The ideas of DiAngelo have been influential in my research, as they help identify ways in which Settler culture avoids looking critically at itself. This can be a barrier to positive change. However, my considerations of her ideas include questioning DiAngelo’s suggestion that emotional reactions are largely indicative of White Fragility, and attributed to a lack of resilience or refusal to self-analyze. This bypasses the recognition that they may sometimes genuinely come from a different place, including from a concern about the destruction that can come from the human tendency to divide into Us/Them groupings and essentialize (section 10.5). However, as this has already occurred in societies, we should not avoid looking at how it has happened.

Dove, Mourning. Coyote Stories: This book is a collection captikʷl by Syilx writer, Mourning Dove (also known as Hu-mis’-hu-ma as well as Christine Quintasket). The book was originally published in 1933, and is a relatively early recording of the stories. As the captikʷl are integral to Syilx cultural understanding and worldview and are part of an oral tradition of passing on knowledge, the collection has helped me to gain insight into these aspects of Syilx culture from an outsider perspective.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. and Bochner, A., Autoethnography: An Overview. Forum: Qualitative Social Research: Carolyn Ellis, an interdisciplinary scholar and qualitative researcher at the University of South Florida, and her co-authors, Tony Adams and Arthur Bochner, provide an overview of Autoethnography. They define it as a means to perceive and analyze personal experience to help understand how this informs cultural experience. They present this method as growing out of a need for research that avoids authoritative, insensitive and damaging approaches to others and their cultures.
This combination of autobiography and ethnography provides a process for researchers to honestly engage both with their culture and with other cultures, through ethnographic practices. It integrates characteristics of biographical work and the realizations that come from understanding one has a particular cultural identity. Autoethnography offers a guiding structure for conducting intercultural research, encouraging the owning of my voice to tell the story of my interactions, processes and personal realizations.

Ellis, Carolyn. *Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives: Relational Ethics in Research With Intimate Others:*
Carolyn Ellis, interdisciplinary scholar and qualitative researcher at the University of South Florida, discusses relational ethics in research with intimate others. Ellis describes two dimensions of ethics: procedural ethics (mandated ethics), and ethics in practice (or situational ethics—unpredictable, ethically significant moments that come up in research). To these, she adds a third dimension of ethics—relational ethics—likened to an ethics of care.

Ellis suggests that relational ethics requires researchers to take responsibility for their approaches and actions, acknowledge interpersonal bonds, and to utilize consideration and empathy in our research. She also points to the importance of being integral and true to one’s character. Ellis poses we should, as researchers, ask the question, “What should I do now?” rather than make the statement “This is what you should do now,” articulating the importance of self-reflection and reflexivity when working with intimate others. Her work discusses that there are no set paths through research with intimate others, only a general direction of “do no harm.” However, Ellis suggests that the ever-growing collection of stories of research experiences help us navigate our options.

It is my observation that there is no set path through sensitive intercultural work. Yet, it is my hope that my thesis work, done reflexively and carefully—even if not done perfectly—will add to the collection of stories of research experience. As Ellis suggests, I hope it will also leave the communities, participants, and myself, better off at the end than at the beginning.

Flowers, a graduate student from Political Science at UVIC, with a focus on settler/indigenous relations, discusses the role of Indigenous women’s anger and love in the Truth and Reconciliation process in Canada. She argues that Indigenous women’s bodies represent the land and nature and that violence against murdered and missing Indigenous women is both a product of colonial violence and a parallel to the misuse and appropriation of Indigenous lands. She offers that the anger of Indigenous women is rooted in historical and current forms of oppression, dispossession, and violence.

Flowers suggests that the hope many settler descendants have for that anger to release through forgiveness is an unrealistic expectation that overlooks what’s required for a reconciliation of the past and that it fails to address current forms of repression. She validates the holding of anger to resist this shortcut. She asserts that the healing of anger is a process for the victim, and not for the absolution of the perpetrator. She clarifies that culturally speaking, this type of healing is not about fixing the past, but healing a connection to the land. This article is an important work that supports a deeper understanding of why forgiveness is a challenging process and that there are different cultural conceptions of anger that require different methods for healing and forgiveness. These concepts have been useful in my research. They help me contextualize frameworks of decolonization that do not include consideration of settler emotions or futurity, such as the work of Tuck and Yang, discussed below.

Jha, B. K. *Fanon’s Theory of Violence: a Critique*:

In a concise paper published in *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, scholar B. K. Jha identifies the grounds on which Frantz Fanon attaches great importance to violence, and then offers a critique of the usefulness of violence for decolonization based on those same grounds. Jha’s analysis of violence aligns with non-violent approaches to decolonization.

Jha addresses the claims of those who regard Fanon as an advocate of “humanistic” and “non-violent violence,” by pointing out that violence used for the purpose of “liberation” does not
make it non-violent: “Violence advocated to achieve the aims of non-violence is still violence and no amount of poetic juggling of words can escape this fact” (364).

Jha organizes Fanon’s glorification of violence into six basic concepts: 1) It is only through violence that man creates himself. 2) Violence is a cleansing, cathartic force. 3) Violence is a unifying force for native people. 4) Violence is required to gain independence and also to destroy the constructs of colonialism. 5) Violence is a key to social truth and action (the first phase of violence motivated by racial hatred, the second by political indoctrination). 6) Violence liberates the oppressed from an oppressor and frees the future of the previously oppressed from “demagogues” or “opportunists” becoming new oppressive leaders.

In addressing the first concept, Jha raises the doubt that man can “create himself” through the use of violence. There is no guarantee that one can escape the feeling of alienation through inflicting violence, and Jha suggests that it is more likely that one will create a feeling of alienation through this means. Using violence may change an individual, but the most likely outcome of this change is a more violent individual. “Fanon overlooks the fact that too much preoccupation with violence orients man’s mind towards violence even when the real object of violence disappears after the victory of revolution” (Jha 363). Jha points out that the shortcomings of using violence are not limited to the psyches of the individuals employing it for decolonization, but also to the social and political order that may arise through its use. “It is not improbable that military and terroristic styles of government generated in underground and revolutionary civil war may result in the institutionalization of violence as mode of social control in the post-revolution era” (364).

Jha maintains that it is possible to achieve liberation of consciousness through political and mental contemplation, and points out that Fanon, himself, admits this. Given Fanon’s admission that decolonization and revolution can, and has, been achieved non-violently, Jha questions Fanon’s assertion that violence must be used. Given Fanon’s work as a psychiatrist, Jha also questions Fanon’s assertion that violence must be used as a tool to liberate the mind, pointing out that Fanon, himself, had patients whose case histories of inflicting violence on others clearly exemplified that killing leads to dehumanization, neurosis, and negative distortions of personality (365).
Jha goes on to critique Fanon’s third concept: *violence as a unifying force*. Jha asserts that violence “is the result of a psychological state of mind which is haunted by anger, hatred, divisions and fighting” (365). Jha suggests that though a bond of unity may be established between people experiencing a similar psychological state, there is no guarantee that such unity will continue after the disappearance of the common enemy. Jha argues that real unity is only possible where there is harmony and friendship and that these can’t be secured through violent means. Further, inflicting violence disrupts union with oneself as well as with others, and the prevalence of violence toward an outgroup establishes an approach of violence within the group as well.

Jha argues that though Fanon maintains that violence always pays, the trouble is that it pays indiscriminately and can only achieve short term goals while at the same time introduces violence as an approach into “the whole body politic” (365). Jha disagrees with Fanon’s promise that violence can heal the wounds it has created, and quotes Hannah Arendt: “If this were true…revenge would be the cure-all for most of our ills” (qtd. in Jha 365).

As for Fanon’s final concept of violence as a liberating force which frees the future from “demagogues” or “opportunists” who would become new oppressive leaders, or as a safeguard against bureaucratic perversions, Jha argues that “armed struggle is not an end in itself, still less a panacea against counter revolution and reaction” (367). Jha brings attention to the example of the internal violence that continued in Algeria after achieving independence, where Fanon had fought as a revolutionary, after Fanon’s death. Jha’s work has helped clarify why theories of violence can lead to action which does not secure the liberation promised by those theories.

**Kester, Grant H. *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*:**
Grant Kester, Professor of Art History at UC San Diego, describes a new genre of public art in which the artist acts as a facilitator of dialogue between diverse political, cultural and social groups. Rather than jarring the public out of their routine views through modern or postmodern works that challenge, but ultimately exclude the viewer, he argues for collaborative works that engage the audience to build a sense of shared identity where it would otherwise be lacking.
Although Kester offers that collaborative works do not necessarily need to include a tangible product, he does not exclude the possibility of using art as a medium for collaboration; however, the primary goal of this type of engagement is dialogue and social progress. He sees the rapport between artists and collaborators as essential for building toward increasing empathy between groups as they work towards solidarity and countering hegemony.

Kester argues for a gentler form of public engagement that encourages groups and individuals to step outside of their roles or positions in society, and that the only appropriate goal of collaborative practice is to challenge reliance on such societal positions. As such, he offers this genre as a way of establishing collective identity and action. I have considered that stepping outside of the role of the artist might require understanding, education and experience that an artist may not have, as it falls outside of their area of expertise. In this way, artists may find themselves with responsibilities that require a steep, but valuable, learning curve, and we must be mindful of our limitations and approach.

Lanier, Jaron. *Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now*:
Philosopher and computer scientist Jaron Lanier writes about the advertising-model of social media found in platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and others. He explains how the advertising-model’s actual customers are the paying advertisers, while the platform users (we) are used and manipulated for these customers. Lanier’s book describes how behavioural psychology is used by these platforms to keep users addicted and how these techniques are becoming ever-more tailored and sophisticated. At the same time, the algorithms, by default, reward short-term emotional responses, which are mostly negative, such as anger and outrage. The impact of these algorithms creates an ever-more polarized and vitriolic online environment, which is undermining society. He argues that the most finely targeted way to push for a new social media platform model, which avoids these pitfalls, is to boycott social media. Deleting their accounts will help people find more balance with themselves and each other while signalling the need for the creation of a better social media model. As the title indicates, Lanier expands upon ten main arguments to make his point, many of which relate directly to my experiences in research and the discourse:
1) You are losing your free will
2) Quitting social media is the most finely targeted way to resist the insanity of our times
3) Social media is making you into an asshole
4) Social media is undermining the truth
5) Social media is making what you say meaningless
6) Social media is destroying your capacity for empathy
7) Social media is making you unhappy
8) Social media doesn’t want you to have economic dignity
9) Social media is making politics impossible
10) Social media hates your soul

Although I expand on some of these points in the body of this work, the primary message I want to convey from Lanier’s analysis is that while social media has provided marginalized groups with an unprecedented platform for amplifying their voices, the platform itself has fundamental features which distort the messages being articulated.


In this book, former Attorney General of Canada, and Independent Member of Parliament, Jody Wilson-Raybould (from the Musgamagw Tsawateineuk/Laich-Kwil-Tach people) compiles a series of talks and lectures on Indigenous issues which she has given over the last ten years. These reflect on Indigenous-Crown relationship and the future of Canada. Wilson-Raybould’s vision for reconciliation involves Indigenous peoples passing through “the postcolonial door.” Passing through the door will indicate the return of Indigenous Sovereignty. In Jody Wilson-Raybould’s view, the future of Canada includes the establishment of:

1) harmony between the laws of Canada and the UNDRIP [The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples]

2) the replacement of the Comprehensive Land Claims Policy, the Inherent Right of Self-Government Policy, and consultation and accommodation approaches with policies based on true recognition
From Where I Stand: Rebuilding Indigenous Nations for a Stronger Canada has informed my research and thinking about directions for reconciliation. It provides clear and practical goals that are grounded in Indigenous Sovereignty but do not exclude non-Indigenous people from a future vision of life on these lands. Wilson-Raybould highlights the importance of effective change in working towards a stronger Canada for all.

Regan, Paulette. *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*:

Dr. Paulette Regan, Director of Research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (PhD from the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Victoria) writes of the significance of Canada’s formal apology (as delivered by Stephen Harper in Parliament, June 11, 2008) to Indian residential school survivors. This apology marked a significant moment in which Canada began to approach its history with more honesty. Regan discusses how we must not rest on this apology, and stresses the importance of non-Indigenous action in moving towards reconciliation.

Regan asserts that if non-Indigenous people are to join in helping Indian residential school survivors (including intergenerational survivors) heal from the negative impacts of residential
school experience, we must consider our roles and responsibilities. She highlights the importance of shifting the focus from trying to address “the Indian Problem” in Canada, to trying to address “the Settler Problem”—encouraging non-Indigenous peoples to examine our identities in order to “unsettle the settler within.” Regan suggests Canadians must educate ourselves about the past by learning about what Indigenous people have underwent as a result of assimilation policies. We should offer acknowledgement while recognizing the strength and resilience of Indigenous people in surviving these policies and actions. In unsettling ourselves, we must determine how we have reaped the benefits of colonialism and what we must do to heal damages done. Further, we must do this in ways that acknowledge truths, repair trust, and put us on a path to significantly improved and peaceful relations with Indigenous Peoples.

This work towards reconciliation is behemothic in scope. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (of which Paulette Regan was Research Director) was officially established on June 2, 2008, and closed December 18, 2015. The ongoing reconciliation work lies with all Canadians.

Robinson, Harry. *Write It On Your Heart*:
Part of learning about Syilx culture was reading the captikʷl as relayed by Harry Robinson and recorded and transcribed by Wendy Wickwire in *Write It On Your Heart*.

The stories were collected over ten years. Robinson did not want the stories to be lost and permitted Wendy Wickwire to transcribe them for publication. The stories convey Syilx cultural understandings about the origin of the world, the age of the animal people, the age of the human people, the time before the coming of the white man, the stories of power, and the age of the white man.

Russell, Catherine. *Autoethnography: Journeys of the Self*:
Catherine Russell, Professor of Film Studies at Concordia University in Montreal, and Director of the PhD in Humanities Program, offers autoethnography as a research, writing and
documentary method and style that embraces subjectivity. It embraces subjectivity by examining it directly through the work. She presents ideas that lend themselves to writing that “…has to do with time, with sequence and what makes up the continuous flow of life” and that through the autobiographical aspects of the method that “…a sense of the self emerges…” that is “…not a fixed form but is in constant flux (275-276).” She promotes this process of self-reflection as a tool for critiquing cultural identity, and which can be utilized to challenge imposed forms of identity.

Russell suggests that autoethnographic approaches “…cover a range of techniques and strategies that merge self-representation with cultural critique” (279). She suggests that the term ‘autoethnography’ completely departs from the colonialist and authoritative approaches of ethnography. It “…makes no grand scientific claims but is uncertain, tentative and speculative” (277). This is partly accomplished by writing or doing other work, using the first-person voice.

**Sapolsky, Robert M. *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst*:**

Neuroscientist and primatologist Robert Sapolsky analyzes human behaviour from a scientific perspective and a range of disciplines to explore the foundational causes of human behaviour, both positive and negative. I primarily draw upon Chapter 11 in his book, titled: *Us Versus Them*. This chapter examines the innate human tendency to divide into Us/Them groupings, and what factors inflame or reduce these biases. Sapolsky explains that the universal tendency to Us/Them, combined with *essentialism*, is a slippery tendency accentuating Us/Them-ing. This accentuation can lead to the justification of oppression. However, Sapolsky tells us there is hope in that it is not inevitable that these recategorizations are based on particular traits. We can consciously re-group as *Us* based on more expansive, constructive concepts.

Sapolsky’s work informs my research as it analyzes the roots of racism and how oppressor/oppressed groups formulate. His work examines ways in which we can consciously move beyond essentializing thinking, and mitigate these tendencies to group and differentiate in oppressive ways. This examination is relevant to research that considers groupings as perceived through Settler/Indigenous dichotomies. I expand upon Sapolsky’s work in section 10.5.

Nato Thompson, Chief Curator at public arts institution Creative Time in New York, presents examples of socially engaged art. Some of these examples include a Dutch boat (*Women on Waves* with Atelier Van Lieshout) that used international water laws to provide legal abortions to people who had not been afforded this right, and a project in which weapons were turned into shovels to plant trees (Pedro Reyes’ *Palas Por Pistolas*). He argues that while these types of art interventions may not address the target problem in a practical sense, the symbolic gestures can be instrumental in effecting change. He also posits that socially engaged art is not an art movement, but a practice that speaks to a cultural shift towards participation and interdisciplinary work.

Thompson identifies socially engaged art as being a type of practice similar to various conceptions of activist art, such as social aesthetics, new genre public art, social practice, tactical media, dialogic art, and social sculpture. While he does not throw out the need for aesthetic, he wants to put it into the service of social interventions. Thompson outlines several ways to engage, including types of gatherings, manipulating the media, presenting research, or presenting alternative ways for living, producing food, or means of transportation. As such, he provides a variety of methods for applying art as an intervention. This article has helped me better contextualize and put words to my work within a relatively new genre of art-making.

Tuck, E., Yang, W.K. *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor*:

Eve Tuck, Associate Professor of Critical Race and Indigenous Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), and Wayne Yang, Associate Professor in the UC San Diego Department of Ethnic Studies, argue that the term ‘decolonization’ should be used, not as a metaphor, but to identify a movement requiring the repatriation of land. They write “decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of...all of the land “that is currently occupied in the “...permanent settler war” (7). They assert that reconciliation is incommensurable with their framework of decolonization. This contribution to Indigenous scholarship, in the words of the authors, requires “...a dangerous understanding of
uncommonality” (35). To support their thesis, they present a binary or Manichean framework influenced by the ideas of Frantz Fanon.

The paper also supports a variety of ways that settler descendants problematically try and mitigate guilt they may feel. This is sometimes done by co-opting ‘decolonization’ as a social-justice metaphor. The authors have also identified ways that non-Indigenous people try to deal with the cognitive dissonance caused by facing the destructive consequences of colonialism, and their work has helped me better understand my Settler identity through making explicit these tendencies.

Walia, Harsha. *Decolonizing Together: Moving Beyond a Politics of Solidarity Toward a Practice of Decolonization.*
Harsha Walia, author and social activist, starts with the premise that the wealth of the Canadian state is based primarily on gains made from unceded Indigenous lands and resources. She presents this article as instructional for non-Indigenous people. She suggests that supporting Indigenous struggles must include solidarity in the resistance of colonization. She partially defines decolonization as a reimagining and transformation of relationships between land, people, and the state. To do this, we must unlearn preconceived notions and communicate with each other.

Walia encourages others to not act from a place of guilt, but of responsibility. This can help us determine the path we can walk between intervening in unhelpful ways and being paralyzed. She articulates that non-Indigenous supporters of decolonization need to walk a very fine and shifting line, depending on who is involved, and what the particular stance of a given group of Indigenous people might be. She encourages others not to burden Indigenous activists with too many questions, but neither remain too passive.

Walia hints at revolution, or at a form of radical reformation of relationships between people and the state, and what constitutes the state. She suggests we must educate ourselves about the histories of the lands we reside upon, rather than rely upon constructed, dominant narratives. We
can begin to escape complicity with the imposed narratives of settlement by being in active opposition to them. She concludes that this involves developing spaces where we can have dialogues and discussions as natives and non-natives.

Walia’s writing discusses the importance of doing intercultural work. It articulates that constant sensitivity and re-balancing while remaining reflexive and open, is simply part of what must be done in doing intercultural work. This understanding has helped inform my approach to the work, of which I have been part.

1.2 Thesis Statement

How can learning about, listening to, and engaging with Indigenous people and culture transform Settler identity in the Okanagan? Through the creation and consideration of a body of visual art, I explore and communicate the process of deconstructing, or “unsettling,” my Settler identity as an effort in reconciliation (Garneau, Imaginary Spaces 24; Regan 17-18).

1.3 Observations Leading to Thesis

Like many regions in Canada, the Okanagan is steeped in colonial culture. Through my research over the past ten years for two public sculptures commemorating local history, I have become increasingly aware of the gap in my (and “Settler” society’s) awareness of Indigenous culture and history. This ignorance is perpetuated by the Eurocentric nature of public information that shapes perceptions of history and the identity of the people in the Okanagan Valley (Tedesco 106-109). This ignorance has been systemically utilized in place-claiming (Regan 102-105). It is an ignorance of omission.
1.4 Goals

I communicate the process of exploring my Settler identity by gaining an understanding of Indigenous history and culture through research and engagement with the Indigenous community. I relate this by discussing the artwork I’ve created over the past ten years (2009–2019). I focus on the years devoted to my thesis studies (2016–2019) and contextualize it within my larger body of work. By sharing a narrative of my artistic works, while describing the processes and developments which accompanied their creation, I hope to shift public consciousness regarding Settler identity by exploring the shifts in my personal understanding. Similarly, I aim to contribute to the establishment of better foundations for an understanding of local history and how history shapes us all. Through the development of knowledge that is more inclusive of the intercultural nature of our community, I would like to offer this thesis as a way-finding guide based on personal experience and observations, for others who may engage with the work of improving Settler and Indigenous relations.

1.5 Methodology

My research for the artworks discussed in this paper has been autoethnographic and qualitative. It has been informed through research of text-based sources, and through dialogical and experiential engagement with the local Syilx community. It has included collecting, reading and listening to personal and historical stories and accounts, captikʷl, and experiencing Indigenous culture through events, ceremonies, and engagements. My research has taken into account the qualitative research methodological principle that “human action is seen as infused with meaning in terms of intentions, motives, beliefs, social rules and values, and that these factors must be taken into account in both understanding and explaining it.” And that “These meanings are seen as socially constructed rather than universal ‘givens’ and thus contingent on social context” (Draper 643).

Through dialogue and collaboration with members of the community, I looked to experience and consider the resulting interactions to better understand myself and those around me. In this way, my approach to this research has been autoethnographic: “Autoethnography…acknowledges and
accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist” (Ellis et al. 274). As such, I chose to work with a method that allows me to insert myself into the study with the understanding that I cannot observe others without interacting and influencing what I see. Similarly, I cannot listen to those around me without shifting my perspective, including experiencing changes in my conception of myself or my culture.

My approach to writing in the first-person voice and largely sequentially is influenced by the ideas of Catherine Russell. This approach supports the sense of the continuous flow of life, which speaks to change and transformation through space and time. She also promotes this process of self-reflection as “...a vehicle and a strategy for challenging imposed forms of identity” (276). I have found this to be so. The process of examining my emotional responses, thoughts and observations through the exercise of writing this paper has helped me gain a more conscious understanding of myself within my culture and within the discourse. This consciousness helps me to communicate that understanding, rather than (for lack of words to express myself) uncomfortably accept imposed definitions of my identity, or authoritatively impose identity on others. Russell’s approach to research also acknowledges a position that “...makes no grand scientific claims but is uncertain, tentative and speculative” (277). As such, I have attempted to own my perspective while holding it lightly enough to allow for change.

These methodological approaches helped to meet a need to “resist colonialist, sterile research impulses of authoritatively entering a culture...and then recklessly leaving to write about the culture for monetary and/or professional gain, while disregarding relational ties to cultural members” (Ellis et al. 274). This combination of autobiography and ethnography provides a process for researchers to honestly engage both with their culture and with other cultures. It integrates characteristics of biographical work and the “...epiphanies that stem from...possessing a particular cultural identity” (Ellis et al. 276).

Alongside learning about Indigenous culture, my research has, therefore, also included observation and qualitative research of Settler culture. This has been informed, in part, through the Truth and Reconciliation events I attended, and through the University of British Columbia’s
Alterknowledge Discussion Series, including, but not limited to, the events: “Truth and Reconciliation: At the BC National Event and in the Okanagan,” “Misrepresentations of Indigenous Peoples,” “Reconciliation as land, ecology and Health,” and “Imagining Kelowna's History and Present.”

Research for The Father Pandosy Mission 150th Anniversary Commemorative Sculpture and The chief’s wknct Monument included conversations and direct consultation with Westbank First Nation. For these works, I was provided with oral accounts of history and cultural perspectives by elders and representatives of the community. These broadened my understanding of inclusive history in the Okanagan and informed my work, generally, over the last decade.

I spoke with representatives from the En’owkin Centre (including discussions with Delphine Derickson and Linda Armstrong) and gathered relevant readings at the En’owkin centre, as suggested by Linda Armstrong. I was guided through the Sncwips Heritage Museum by cultural and operations administrator, Jordan Coble, who offered cultural perspective and applicable readings. I spoke with Elder Grouse Barnes, and his wife, Pamela Barnes, and attended a gathering for cultural learning, held in their house and on their property. I attended a series of events such as Alternative Urban Futures—Urban Sustainability Forum, including a presentation by Pauline Terbasket (Okanagan Nation Alliance) and Dr. Marlowe Sam.

I have worked with the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Centre as a community partner, and have attended several events there. The Friendship Centre helped support the mural discussed in section 8.6. I have had many visits and discussions with Syilx activist, Dixon Terbasket. He, along with his sister Edna Terbasket (executive director of the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Centre) informed my work through sharing personal and cultural stories and perspectives, as well as inviting me to a variety of Indigenous ceremonies to gain personal experience, such as the sweat lodge Edna Terbasket has been facilitating on her Okanagan property every week for several decades, and also Sundance (near Merritt, BC). I have also been welcomed to some of their family ceremonies. The Terbasket’s also initiated the Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth collective—an Indigenous-led initiative created to help raise public awareness of the impact of colonialism on Indigenous culture. I continue to be a member of this collective.
This public awareness has been raised, in part, through participatory and socially engaged art and associated discussions and events. “Socially engaged art is not an art movement. Rather, these cultural practices indicate a new social order—ways of life that emphasize participation, challenge power, and span disciplines…” (Thompson 19). I have applied my skills to create art based on the principle that the arts have the power to invoke an emotional response in the viewer that can create an important psychological space “in which differences and ethics are communicated, negotiated and shaped (Boler 21).

1.6 The Use of the Term Settler

In keeping with an autoethnographic approach, I utilize the term “Settler” and identify myself as part of Settler society. The use of “Settler” to identify non-Indigenous individuals and communities has been put forward by Paulette Regan and later, Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker. It identifies that non-Indigenous people in Canada are generally part of a systemic and ongoing colonial structure on this land, and this requires significant redress for real reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to occur (Regan 11; Lowman et al. 16).

I capitalize the term “Settler” to differentiate it from the traditional definition of the word “settler”—a person who has arrived from elsewhere alongside a large group of others to live in a new land. As there are non-Indigenous people who were born in Canada, they don’t embody the traditional definition of “settler.” The construct of “Settler” is a term that can be a useful tool in identity discourse. It encompasses different things for different individuals but is generally used to describe people involved in, and benefiting from, systemic advantages based on worldviews that are in opposition to Indigeneity (Lowman and Barker 17).

The theoretical construct “settler” has been used by influential scholars in the decolonization discourse, like Frantz Fanon, or more contemporarily and regionally by scholars in Canada such as Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, in a Manichean framework or “Indigenous-colonizer”
dichotomy. This dichotomy supports concepts which largely preclude consideration of certain complexities such as transformation of individuals or societies in thought and action, or cultural blending over time. This framework can help us identify and discuss dynamics and oppressions between groups of people, but under certain circumstances might exacerbate the innate human tendency to essentialize within Us/Them groups. (Sapolsky, Behave 387-424). I discuss these issues in greater detail in section 2.2. and 10.5.

In an attempt to avoid essentializing in a discourse involving identity politics, I employ the construct of “Settler,” as defined by Lowman and Barker. Their definition is influenced by concept philosopher Anne Waters. They explain that Waters’ study of Indigenous linguistic traditions has helped introduce a conceptual framework for understanding the “Indigenous” and “Settler” relationship but through non-discreet and non-binary dualism. In other words, they examine the Indigenous/Settler dynamic in ways that give space for overlap and integration. I find non-binary frameworks to be more finely tuned, and better suited, to help us discuss important situations within identity politics while avoiding stereotyping and exacerbating implicit biases in ways that can be damaging.

Lowman and Barker expand upon the Indigenous/Settler relationship within their non-discreet framework:

…Indigenous and Settler identities exist in tension between each other, even as these identities interpenetrate each other, and with other identities that cannot be accounted for within the Indigenous-Settler construct. The groups are non-discreet in the sense that they overlap with each other and there are many people caught between Settler and Indigenous identities…Indigenous and Settler peoples are not defined by their distances and differences, but rather their relationships to each other and to the land.

“Settler” should not be assumed to be pejorative or an insult. When we say Settler we recognize that being a Settler Canadian in the present is inherently bound up with the settler colonization of these lands. However, we also recognize that settler colonialism is collective in nature. We identify ourselves as Settler Canadians and understand that, in so doing, we are declaring that we benefit from and are complicit with settler colonialism and therefore are responsible, as individuals and in collectives, for its continued functioning. (Lowman and Barker 17-18)
By adopting the term “Settler,” I move forward, acknowledging that neither people nor societies are completely set or static, and that complexities and particulars are important considerations. By using the term, I also acknowledge that certain attitudes and social, political and economic structures are perpetuated by certain groups of people at certain times, at the expense of others, and we need the tools to talk about this so that we can consciously create positive change.

1.7 The Use of the Term Reconciliation

“Reconciliation” is a term used in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. I use the word in this paper for consistency with the commission’s efforts, findings, and calls to action. However, the use of the word reconciliation is sometimes questioned for its definitional implications, which I would like to acknowledge.

The word might imply that there was once a peaceful state established between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, to which we are trying to return. However, apart from some harmonious relationships built between early non-Indigenous and Indigenous people, the power dynamics imposed by settler colonialism on Indigenous people became rapidly and consistently oppressive. The word reconciliation also has Catholic connotations, meaning “the reunion of a person to the church.” This connotation is objectionable to many, especially those harmed by members and constructs of the Catholic church. It also implies that the imperfect and “transgressive” human must reconcile themselves with the “perfect” whole of the establishment. These connotations may not have been intended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission but may create discomfort. (Garneau, Imaginary 24-33). In using the term reconciliation, I do not wish to imply these discomforting connotations.

My intent is consistent with the definition of reconciliation offered in Pulling Together: A Guide for Curriculum Developers. Here it is suggested that reconciliation can be imagined as:

…work to ameliorate a damaged relationship. Imagine that there was an individual who had been abused, lied to, and exploited for years—that person would have a lot of fear, mistrust, and trauma. The abuser would also have negative feelings: shame, guilt, self-blame, and possibly anger toward the victim. The abuser may even blame the victim.
Repairing this relationship would mean apologizing, rebuilding trust, hearing each other’s stories, getting to know each other to appreciate each other’s humanity, and taking concrete action to show that the relationship will be different from now on.

With reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, we are not only talking about a relationship between two individuals, but we are also talking about a relationship between multiple groups of people and between many generations over hundreds of years. (Antoine et al.)

1.8 The Self and Transformation

It might be obvious, but nevertheless valuable, to bear in mind that I’ve brought myself to the studies and experiences discussed here, just as you bring yourself to the reading of them. These selves are what and who they are, where they are. These selves are influenced by our cultures, environments and experiences, up until any given point in space and time. The understanding I’ve gained of Indigenous culture in the Okanagan, and the research and production of my work, have been processed through the specific combination, which is myself, at any point in space and time.

Who I’ve been...who I am now…and different understandings I’ve come to which have led to each of the artworks discussed in this paper, are part of a progression. A still-shot of this progression is captured in this paper, but the progression will continue beyond this still-shot. My future self will understand things differently than I do now. This is an acknowledgement that what I put forward, as a wayfinding guide of a kind, has been considered with these limitations in mind. This is part of the autoethnographic approach I’ve taken. It is also an acknowledgement of the potential for transformation. In using the word transformation, I don’t mean a sudden and dramatic change that constitutes an “arrival,” but rather, a subtle and ongoing change that constitutes a progression. I believe it’s important to consider both the limits and potentials for transformation of self in intercultural practice, where our personal and cultural understandings must continually be confronted and considered.

Through the opportunities I’ve had to be exposed to different environments and ideas through engagement with Indigenous culture, I feel I’ve gained some traction to step a bit outside of my
previously held worldview (or let different concepts come within it). I've tried to be reflexive and adaptive within my capacity to be so. In this way I’ve experienced some gradual change or transformation of self. Having discovered, a couple of decades ago (in my early twenties), the liberation of mind which accompanies leaving the gate-kept worldview of an all-encompassing religion one is born and raised into (a process which requires exposure, reflection, and adaption to “outside” influences), I've come to value such experiences. Leaving religion helped instill in me the awareness that worldviews are often influenced more by custom, status quo and personal preference than the concrete reality we sometimes believe they are rooted in. It made me more aware of how thoroughly ideologies reinforce deep-seated beliefs in the perceived righteousness of “Us,” and the impropriety of “Them” (see section 10.5). This awareness has been valuable in “unsettling” aspects of my identity, and in attempting to see and deconstruct Settler society by gaining some glimpse of understanding to envision this from an outside perspective.

The more we are open to observing and experiencing new worldviews and ways of being beyond those embodied in ourselves, the more information we have to draw upon to determine the best course forward. We can integrate these new understandings while shedding old misconceptions. This process of transformation is essential for improving relationships with ourselves, each other, groups of people, and our environment.

My partner, Dante Wetherow, introduced me to a quote that has long influenced him, from African-American philosopher and civil rights leader Howard Thurman: “…always within me there is the rumor that I may be wrong! That’s my growing edge!” (Crosby 27). These words have been helpful to me, for it’s been useful to try to bear in mind that endeavours in reconciliation require humility and self-reflection, which nurture the growing edge that can lead to transformation.

1.9 A Note on the Impact of Colonialism on Syilx Culture

The disruption colonialism and the Indian Act inflicted upon Syilx society, as upon all Indigenous societies in Canada, was a catastrophe that Settler society is only beginning to
comprehend. Though the effects of colonialism have been vast and far-reaching, they have been largely excluded from dominant public narratives. In his 1988 foreword to *The Queen’s People*, Chief Murray Alexis of the Okanagan Indian Band wrote of this exclusion and hidden oppression:

Very little to date has been recorded of the life of the original inhabitants of our beautiful valley. Our presence has been somewhat reluctantly acknowledged, without full appreciation of the contribution our people made to the early settlers of the past and the continuing influence we could have for healthier development in the future.

The government defines us as ‘Indians’ under the Indian Act and then set us apart by mapping our lands and restricting our movements. This attempt to dispose of us effectively removed our people from any major role in the development of the valley...the issues that arose as a result of this were never definitively resolved and remain, if anything, more obscure than ever. True recognition of the Okanagan people in their ancestral homeland continues to be avoided by the government and the larger community alike.

...Unfortunately, the thoughts and the feelings of our forefathers, who were treated in such a grievous and insensitive manner by some of those whom they had welcomed to share their life, have never been recorded except in our bones. Some of these newcomers took what had not been given to them, and paid no heed to the Spirit that kept our world in balance.

This trauma is still part of our life and shapes much of our thought and action. Even now, these feelings find no words to express the distress and loss that was experienced. Perhaps when the time is right and we see each other as true brothers and sisters, with full respect for each other, the Mother Earth and the Spirit that sustains us, the words will then be found or no longer needed. Then, there will be no distinctions between the ‘Queen’s People’, and we shall all be Okanagan. (Alexis xiv-xiv)

The Residential School system, which Prime Minister Stephen Harper formally apologized for in Parliament, is only one aspect of the Indian Act’s oppression. However, the apology and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have been instrumental in introducing an awareness of this catastrophe to the public, and in highlighting responsibility for repairs to government and non-Indigenous society:

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…Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, “to kill the Indian in the child”…

[T]he Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions [and] that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry. (Harper et al.)

The formal apology acknowledges that “the burden of this experience has been on [Indigenous people’s] shoulders for far too long. The burden is properly ours as a Government, and as a country.” The findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission expand upon this acknowledgement. The Calls to Action are directed towards the government and the non-Indigenous community in Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Calls to Action).

By internalizing the words written by Chief Murray Alexis, we can further understand how we can help to repair the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous society. It could be paraphrased like this: Don’t dismiss us. Don’t obscure atrocities. Try to understand our pain. Have gratitude for what we have shared. Don’t steal. Heed the Spirit that keeps our world in balance. Respect nature. Respect our ways and our common humanity. Through my work, I attempt to explore some ways in which Settler society might better hear and respond to these words.
Chapter 2: Indigenization, Reconciliation and Decolonization

2.1 Distinctions and Interrelationships

Indigenization, decolonization and reconciliation are separate but interrelated concepts (Antoine et al.) Indigenization involves transforming society (its people, spaces and places) through the comprehension and internalization of Indigenous knowledge systems. Decolonization involves addressing unbalanced power dynamics, deconstructing the ideologies of superiority and privilege in Western/colonial ways of thinking and being, and dismantling oppression and the structures which perpetuate it. Indigenization and decolonization must be primarily led by Indigenous people, whereas reconciliation is primarily a non-Indigenous responsibility.

Reconciliation is about addressing past wrongs done to Indigenous Peoples, making amends, and improving relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to create a better future for all. Chief Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has stated, “Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem—it involves all of us.”

…Clearly, the onus for this action is on the party that perpetrated the harm, which in this case is settler society…for settlers it involves gaining in-depth understanding of one’s own relation to Indigenous Peoples and the impacts of colonization, including recognizing settler privilege and challenging the dominance of Western views and approaches. (Antoine et al.)

Not every voice in the discourse shares this formulation of reconciliation and its call to bring us together through actions of repair that establish a sense of belonging for all. These perspectives may be holding out for something more than a “…premature attempt at reconciliation” (Tuck and Yang 10) or they dismiss reconciliation altogether in favour of more radical models of decolonization.

2.2 A Haunting View of Decolonization

Unangax scholar, Eve Tuck, and Wayne K. Yang have expressed a more radical view of decolonization than what is often described, and which is also maintained by other individuals. In their influential paper, *decolonization is not a metaphor*, they assert that decolonization means
the return of all the land to Indigenous people as well as the disappearance of the “settler nation” (meaning non-Indigenous structures and people) from the land (29, 36). In their paper, they argue that decolonization is incommensurable with reconciliation. According to Tuck and Yang, “Reconciliation is about rescuing settler normalcy, about rescuing a settler future. Reconciliation is concerned with questions of what will decolonization look like?... Incommensurability acknowledges that these questions need not, and perhaps cannot, be answered in order for decolonization to exist as a framework” (35).

The framework helps us understand that decolonization is not a matter of lip-service, but of real and tangible change. It doesn’t end with an apology from the government, psychological acceptance, or acknowledgement from Settler society. It underlines the goal of Indigenous sovereignty. In considering this framework, as a Settler, I’ve found it helpful to bear in mind that anger, along with feelings and thoughts of violence, are understandable responses when considering the history of human rights violations, cultural genocide, stolen lands, alienation, and the ongoing systemic oppression of colonialism, which has been inflicted on Indigenous society.

Even in my acknowledging these factors, and supporting the concept of Indigenous Sovereignty and governance, this framework of decolonization has remained confronting to me, and at times, paralyzing. When I've encountered it in its various forms through my research and work, I've stopped in my tracks and wondered how, or if, I should proceed. This concept of decolonization, as presented by Tuck and Yang, has had a significant impact on my psyche, as I believe it may have for others who do not read the paper simply as a sort of Zen Koan, or otherwise metaphorically (as the title reminds us we ought not to).

Through addressing it, I hope to encourage those who might feel a “fight, flight or freeze” response when discovering conceptions of decolonization that exclude them, both as part of a group and as an individual, to continue on with the endeavours they believe are for the good of all. I hope that they will not abandon or reverse their efforts. I believe we must be able to discuss our responses, thoughts and feelings, both with integrity and reflexivity, so we can continue to improve understandings of what the best course of action might be. This is part of an ongoing, “unsettling” struggle.
In their paper, Tuck and Yang posit that all reconciliation work non-Indigenous people do on themselves, their society, or with Indigenous communities, is motivated by a misplaced desire to stay more peaceably in a place we ultimately do not belong. Though they do not fully dismiss work for reconciliation, they argue there is no work that can be done so that non-Indigenous people may belong here. Therefore, in this view, working towards reconciliation is largely a misguided effort. Through their lens, the work I’ve done with reconciliation in mind can be considered as “moves to innocence” (9-28), that is, as attempts to assuage my guilt as part of Settler society in the hope of securing my future belonging.

Their paper has assisted me in becoming more aware of “moves to innocence” I attempted. One example of this is my having looked into my genetic family history. This was done, in part, to try to understand my position doing intercultural work. I was influenced by the words of the artist, Carla Taunton, who realized she could not properly work within “a politicized anticolonial framework” without knowing her family history. Taunton embarked on research to understand how and why she and her family were “implicated” in the colonial project (Taunton and Dector 32). As my work examining Settler identity in a colonial context progressed, it became clear that I should contextualize myself, as well. I needed to know where I was speaking from and how I had come to be in this place.

My mother was an immediate source for gaining some understanding, having spent decades doing genealogical research. But I was especially intrigued by a family story that suggested we had Indigenous heritage. I wondered if having Indigenous heritage put me in a more readily acceptable position to do work on reconciliation. Could it explain the affinity I felt with aspects of Indigenous culture? Or the reason why people sometimes assumed I had Indigenous heritage due to my appearances? In my family was the question of an ancestral Indigenous family member, and the documents related to this woman and one of her descendants pointed in this direction.

For years my mother had considered having genetic genealogy testing done. With my wanting to know more, she had it done, but there was no evidence of a family connection found between her and any North American Indigenous group. This information brought my position in the
discourse and history back into focus. This was fortunate in the sense that had I discovered Indigenous heritage—I may have considered it a “way out.” This would have been misguided and unproductive. I was feeling challenged by the discourse and to see myself as a part of the systemic juggernaut—colonialism—which drove an oppressing process. I was finding it difficult to figure out what my place was and how I could understand or embody my role. I believed, on some level, that finding an Indigenous ancestor may offer an escape from some of the tensions I was experiencing. But this would have been a false escape from an uncomfortable history.

Tuck and Yang point out that the myth of the Indigenous grandmother is an “escape to innocence” (Tuck and Yang 10). Even if clear evidence was found for an Indigenous ancestor in my family, my family does not have embodied Indigenous history of a systematically disrupted language, nor the trauma of having children forcibly removed from our homes. We do not have stories of our ancestors being raised without their culture by people dedicated to reworking children in their own image through a distorted sense of religious and cultural duty while abusing or neglecting them. We did not live life on reserve or as part of an Indigenous tribal system.

Learning that I did not have evidence of Indigenous ancestry removed early notions of a misguided excuse to explore intercultural work more autonomously. It removed notions that I might escape complexity through exploring my possible Indigenous roots, rather than focusing on, and accepting, my Settler identity and how it is complicit in colonialism. This would have been a significant, lost opportunity in the development of my understanding. It might have excused me, in my own mind, from feeling a need to listen to members of the Indigenous community about how my works might land. While this early approach is uncomfortable for me to admit, I’m now more aware of this part of my thinking and feel it’s important to acknowledge. Tuck and Yang helped me to see this in myself, and to realize it is the kind of “move to innocence” thinking that many Settlers might experience.

Though Tuck and Yang’s framework of decolonization has been useful, it’s also built on several premises that I continue to find questionable and unhelpful. Though not directly named in their work, one is the premise of a form of ancestral sin, or that the sins of the “forefathers” should lead to the punishment of their descendants. The culpability ascribed to contemporary, non-
Indigenous people in Tuck and Yang’s framework goes beyond the consideration of the inheritance of privileges as a result of those sins, or the perpetuating of adapted forms of oppression to maintain those privileges. Evidence of this premise is found in their words “When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future” (Tuck and Yang 3). In Tuck and Yang’s view, descendants of settlers—though born to their lives here through no choice of their own—are guilty from birth not only for their inheritance or perpetuation of privilege, but for the circumstance of their existence in this place, and in their ongoing desire to belong.

Another related premise is the adoption of Frantz Fanon’s Manichean conception of settler/native identity. In this framework, transformation or subjectivity within identities is not a focus of consideration. Within this framework, there isn’t a way for individuals or a group to shift from being “settlers” while remaining on the land. Transforming oppressive attitudes and behaviours, and returning land and resources to Indigenous Peoples, wouldn’t constitute decolonization. In their view, decolonization is non-inclusive. It does not result in the co-existence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. This is evidenced in the final sentence of their paper, where they assert: “Decolonization is “not an ‘and’. It is an elsewhere” (36).

Tuck and Yang’s assertion that the goal is for all non-Indigenous people to leave these lands raises ethical considerations and questions of new human rights violations (for example, what it would mean to send refugees back to compromising political situations, displacement, statelessness, and the permanent separation of intercultural families). Though implementation of their concept would lead to these human rights violations, Tuck and Yang declare this isn’t their concern: “We want to say, first, that decolonization is not obliged to answer those questions” (36). To this, they cite Frantz Fanon’s theory of violence as applicable to supporting decolonization efforts. They include quotes from Fanon, which, in their original context, belong to some of the most graphic and violent passages in his Wretched of the Earth (Tuck and Yang 2, 7; Fanon 36-37).
The conceivable trajectory of Tuck and Yang’s absolute framework, supported by theories of violence to decolonize the land of “settlers” (who are monolithically categorized and essentialized), is a confronting concept which I’ve encountered in my work. I find it confronting not because it threatens my privilege, but because it’s squarely based in the human tendency to divide into Us/Them groups, that organizes a propensity to justify the dehumanization and oppression of the Them group (see section 10.5). This approach is how colonialism has justified its horrors and ongoing oppressions (which is also what the framework seeks to point out). This approach is how all of the most harrowing actions in human history have occurred, including the Holocaust, the Gulags, Rwanda, and any other war and genocide. No part of humanity is immune to Us/Them-ing or dehumanizing whomever they determine to consider “other.” I continue to hold deeply that Us/Them-ing and essentializing are tendencies we all must constantly work to overcome so that we do not perpetuate devastating action.

A United Nations News article states: “Genocide must and can be prevented if we have the will of applying the lessons learned from Rwanda, Srebrenica, and the Holocaust. It is important to identify risk factors that would lead to genocide rather than to wait to when people are being killed…The Holocaust did not start with the gas chambers and the Rwandan genocide did not start with the slayings. It started with the dehumanization of a specific group of persons” (United Nations, Genocide Begins with ‘Dehumanization’).

I’ve encountered the absolute, binary framework Tuck and Yang present, in different forms. It has affected my subconscious and entered my dreams. Eve Tuck is aware of the “haunting” effect of the framework, and has used it purposefully. In their writings, Glossary of Haunting, Eve Tuck and C. Ree explain this purposeful use of haunting:

Haunting…is the relentless remembering and reminding that will not be appeased by settler society's assurances of innocence and reconciliation. Haunting is both acute and general; individuals are haunted, but so are societies…

Haunting doesn't hope to change people’s perceptions, nor does it hope for reconciliation. Haunting lies precisely in its refusal to stop. Alien (to settlers) and generative (for ghosts), this refusal to stop is its own form of resolving. For ghosts, the haunting is the resolving, it is not what needs to be resolved.
Haunting aims to wrong the wrongs, a confrontation that settler horror hopes to evade… Social life, settler colonialism, and haunting are inextricably bound; each ensures there are always more ghosts to return. (Tuck and Ree 642)

As the worst of history (and the present) is filled with ideas and words leading to and justifying, devastating actions and human rights violations, I have felt—albeit theoretically—protective of my human rights, my culture, my nationhood and my home as a result of my encountering such frameworks as set forth by Tuck and Yang. It has been sobering to reflect on the fact that my experience of these feelings stem from reading confronting ideas, whereas Indigenous peoples have had to deal with the impact of real oppression under the impact of colonization. This consideration has led me to think we should not be surprised if we are confronted with threats and haunting to bring us to such reflection if we have become too complacent in a comfort that has come at the expense of others.

We must accept that looking at certain truths from the past and present is haunting. And though it may be tempting to avoid knowing disturbing truths in order to escape the haunting the knowledge brings to our minds and hearts, part of us must remain deeply haunted so that we are desperately motivated to change, and to avoid the hellish injustices humans have, and can, inflict upon one another.

2.2.1 Accepting the Haunting: The Dream of the Beautiful River

As I experienced, one might come to feel paralyzed and cornered in such a binary framework, which asserts that empathy, cooperation, reciprocation, reconciliation, and transformation are all, ultimately, ways of trying to sidestep inescapable guilt. When I encountered and began to comprehend this framework of decolonization, reconciliation between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people appeared to become impossible, and I began to lose hope. This was exacerbated by the polarization of the discourse as impacted by social media (discussed more in section 10.4). When I looked through the lens of this binary framework, I questioned whether, by working for other’s fundamental human rights and security, that it would inevitably lead to undermining my own family’s fundamental human rights and security (not just privilege). How
could I honestly bring myself to the endeavour if it ultimately meant I’d be working for the statelessness of myself and my family? I did not want to, hypocritically, pretend to be an ally of decolonization while secretly resting assured that I would never really need to leave this place which I consider home. The binary framework presented the illusion of a zero-sum game, where my gain was inevitably another’s loss, and vice-versa. When viewing reconciliation through this framework, I sometimes wondered if I should abandon the effort.

A release from these feelings of fight, flight or freeze eventually came to me, in part, in a dream. I dreamed that I was trying to protect a beautiful river, alongside the parallel efforts of an Indigenous woman, doing the same. The river was a life-force, embodying sustenance, nature and peace—and it was under threat. The endeavour to protect and rejuvenate the river was an effort in reconciliation, but there were external forces in the dream which demanded both the young woman and me to internalize our efforts as naïve and in vain. When we came to accept the naivete of our efforts, we abandoned them, and at once, the external forces that were threatening us, lifted. We felt we had escaped from immediate peril. However, the river rapidly dried up when no one was still working to save it. It didn’t seem like a better place when the river dried up. An essential and life-giving good was lost. Both the young woman and I began to understand that the loss of the river would bring the accelerated demise of nature and humanity.

The dream was a key that tumbled the lock of the psychological impasse I’d come to. It helped solidify my understanding that at the heart of reconciliation must be the joint effort in the preservation of, and deep respect for, nature. This understanding has been informed by the work of Okanagan Syilx scholar, Jeannette Armstrong, who invites non-Indigenous people to internalize an Indigenous environmental ethic and to learn to embody the importance and value of this essential and transforming endeavour:

The human is going to experience…togetherness regardless of where they’re from, or who they are; their feelings can be opened up because they have that primal sensory part of them that can’t be denied. And we try to find ways to open up the connection to other cultures and other people in relation to this land, so people who live in this territory can recover what they might have lost or been disconnected from. I think we have a lot more opportunity to build an ethic towards the land that way than we do passing laws and rationalizing. While laws are needed, for them to work we must not only feel good about
what we’re doing, but find the necessity of connecting. The only way is if we, individually, can experience and know that feeling of relationship with the land…

I think creating those connections are extremely critical right now. To be able to hear, to feel and hear, the pain…of the land itself. To be able to feel that inside is the only thing that’s going to move people to change…So I think that much of the work I do…is to allow that opportunity to happen, and to create a space for that…We invite people to come and share in that ritual in the way they wish to share…More and more of these should be happening for children and for all people. That is the role that people who care about the environment need to be thinking about. If we can manage to figure out a way to do these things in one place, then we should be able to manage to do them throughout the land.

And I think building community in that way also heals some of the things that caused the biases and prejudices and bigotry that arose, and can still arise, as a result of simply not being connected to each other and from thinking of our past as something that we can bring up and hold against each other. To do this is really a way out of the kind of human disaster we find ourselves in. (Armstrong. *Reciprocities* 13-14)

The dream, along with Jeannette Armstrong’s and others’ words, taught me that though there are concepts, frameworks and perspectives that people hold which critique the endeavour of reconciliation as ultimately naïve and misguided, attempting to escape being the focus of such critiques by abandoning the reconciliation effort has direr consequences for humanity and the environment. I believe we live in a time when working together is needed more than ever, and the best we can do is to continue to strive—together.

### 2.2.2 Moving Beyond Theories of Violence

My dream taught me I could sit with the view of decolonization as expressed by scholars like Fanon and, subsequently, Tuck and Yang. I could sit, not frozen, but contemplative. These views exist, and though confronting, it’s worthwhile to process them and understand where they come from and why they exist. One might infer, by merely reflecting upon feelings which have arisen through interpersonal experience, that frustration, anger and eventually, violence erupts when concerns about justice and rights go consistently unheard.
The writings of Rachel Flowers (Leey’qsun from Taat’xa on Valdez Island) has been helpful in my gaining understanding to better sit with frameworks which exclude considerations of Settler emotional security and futurity. Flowers offers that the anger of Indigenous women is caused by historical and current forms of oppression, dispossession, and violence. Like Eve Tuck, Flowers asserts that we cannot bypass shortcuts to real healing through bypassing the redress of current forms of oppression. She argues that the forgiveness being sought through the reconciliation processes may represent such a shortcut and that Settlers should not expect such easy, emotional release through forgiveness. She explains that holding onto anger is a way for Indigenous people to resist these shortcuts (Flowers 32-34). This understanding caused me to wonder if the seemingly irresolvable binds of Tuck and Yang’s framework was intended as a blocking of such a shortcut.

Scholars such as Fidelis Chuka Aghamelu and Emeka Cyril Ejike understand that through his theories, Frantz Fanon was fighting against the dehumanizing, alienating and oppressive circumstances imposed by colonialism. Though Fanon was writing in the context of Algeria in the mid 20th century, they see that some of Fanon’s thinking is still relevant today. In their article Understanding Fanon’s Theory of Violence and its Relevance to Contemporary Violence in Africa, Fidelis Chuka Aghamelu and Emeka Cyril Ejike discuss and apply the ongoing relevance of Fanon’s theory of violence in settler-colonialism. They acknowledge that violence continues to erupt from oppressive circumstances in the wake of colonialism:

Piqued by economic deprivation and exploitation, marginalization and developmental neglect, Niger Delta militant youths emerge to struggle for resource control. Rather than involve the armed youths and the community leaders in constructive dialogue and peaceful negotiations, the pattern of regime response is more or less militaristic in nature—unleashing state violence through militarism. (Aghamelu and Ejike 37)

Though they highlight the ongoing relevance of Fanon’s theory of “inherent violence” in colonial and post-colonial dynamics, Aghamelu and Ejike go on to reject Fanon’s theory of “instrumental violence” as a means for societal and personal liberation:

[Fanon’s] claim that his call for violence is rooted in “a profound humanism characterized by the primordial concern for the human being and in all human
beings, no matter their color and their condition” is untenable. Humanity is indivisible in the sense that no one can degrade or brutalize another without brutalizing himself. In other words, no one can inflict psychic damage on others without inflicting it on himself. This is because when people are dehumanized, their self-worth and dignity are destroyed. In so doing, both the oppressed and oppressor deprive themselves and the world of the benefits of their potential contributions to humanity…Fanon’s emphasis on violence risks the reduction of action to reaction, that is, the determination of a solution by the nature of the problem it aims to solve. (Aghamelu and Ejike 18)

Aghamelu and Ejike’s position was informed by scholar B. K. Jha’s astute and concise analysis and critique of Franz Fanon’s theory of violence, as published in *The Indian Journal of Political Science*. The conclusion offered by B. K. Jha is: “it is time to think afresh about the roots, the efficiency and the controllability of violence, and this means going beyond the ideas of Frantz Fanon” (Jha 10). In the context of reconciliation in Canada, Fanon’s perspectives on violence can be seen not as a prescription for action but as a diagnosis of a cycle to avoid.

In 2018 Senator Murray Sinclair (Ojibway) spoke at an event in Cranbrook organized by the East Kootenay Humanity Network. He said, “We are in a transitional period right now, from oppression to freedom. Oppression is the anchor we drag around. Reconciliation is the challenge that will lead us to freedom” (qtd. in Jardine). When a member of the audience asked, “How can we help? What does reconciliation look like for you?” Senator Murray Sinclair replied:

> We have spent over seven years learning about and documenting the truth, the experiences that have resulted from the indoctrination institutions that we know as residential schools. Now that we know about it, what are you going to do about it? Reconciliation looks like this: I will be a friend to you. And I hope you will be a friend to me. You need to teach your children how to speak with us respectfully. You need to protect your children and grandchildren from becoming racists. Don’t stand by and witness injustice without speaking up. You cannot do everything, but you can do what you can where you are with who you know. (qtd. in Jardine)

These are motivational words that inspire positive action. We are reminded by this accomplished man, who has seen and been through much—that we needn’t be perfect. We must simply work from where we are at, with what we have, right now, and continue to try. Senator Sinclair continued in his address, speaking about the ideas of Frantz Fanon. Sinclair understands that
Fanon’s theories apply, diagnostically, to the Indigenous condition in Canada, and that we must all work to prevent the damage that is implicit in, and will stem from, oppressive systems:

…Franz Fanon identified the four stages of oppression. One: give in to it. Two: hurt yourself. Three: oppress others. Four: rise up and strike back against the oppressor. We don’t want to perpetuate any of these. We have to stop this cycle. That is the great challenge of reconciliation. It is also a great opportunity. (qtd. in Jardine)

Though many activists have similar concerns about colonialism, post-colonialism and Settler/Indigenous dynamics as Fanon, and Tuck and Yang, many have distinctly different approaches to solutions. In these, I have also found inspiration, motivation and positive vision. For example, Mohawk activist Taiaiake Alfred argues that reconciliation can be a “huge obstacle to justice and real peacemaking,” if it is used to assuage Settler society guilt, yet fails to make actual change and difference in the lives of Indigenous people. He suggests that Settlers are not peacemakers, but shape-shifters who continue to erase Indigenous narratives, perspectives, and place through ever more subtle forms of violence. Like Tuck and Yang, Alfred expresses skepticism and criticism of the concept of reconciliation but calls for “creative confrontation” as opposed to turning to violence to redress ongoing colonialism. Rather than ushering the exodus of all non-Indigenous people, he calls on those who would be Indigenous allies (which he describes as those “who are capable of listening”) “to share our vision of respect and peaceful co-existence.” He expresses the need for cooperation which “creatively confront[s] the social and spiritual forces that are preventing us from overcoming the divisive and painful legacies of our shared history as imperial subjects.” Alfred’s perspective is that this creative confrontation can repair unjust relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples, but they must be “based on re-establishing respect for the original covenants and ancient treaties that reflect the founding principles of the [Indigenous/original people]-settler relationship” (qtd. in Regan. 61). Prior to the recent re-election of a Liberal government in Canada, an outline of this constitutional work was offered to the public by the former Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Jody Wilson-Raybould.

In her book From Where I Stand: Rebuilding Indigenous Nations for a Stronger Canada, Jody Wilson-Raybould (from the Musgamagw Tsawateineuk/Laich-Kwil-Tach people of Northern Vancouver Island) writes about her vision of, and substantial efforts towards, a reformed Canada.
Wilson-Raybould believes that the transformation of Canada can occur through replacing Canada’s modes of operation, which are still based on the denial of Indigenous rights, with true recognition. Like others, she asserts that lip service and good intentions are not the answer to improving Indigenous lives. “Thinking that good intentions, tinkering around the edges of the Indian Act, or making increased financial investments (however significant and unprecedented) will in themselves close the gaps [between Indigenous and non-Indigenous quality of life] is naïve. Transformative change and new directions are required” (196).

In Jody Wilson-Raybould’s vision, the Indian Act will be abolished through the democratic process. In addition, Indigenous Sovereignty will be secured and relations between the government of Canada and Indigenous Peoples will become based on a rights-recognition framework. She lists the minimum elements required for this new framework. This list includes (but is not limited to): harmony between the laws of Canada and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the replacement of the Comprehensive Land Claims Policy with the Inherent Right of Self-Government Policy, and the development of accountable partnerships, self-determination, and “proper processes and structures between Canada and Indigenous governments for decision making, including in order to obtain free, prior, and informed consent” for land use (197).

Jody Wilson-Raybould understands that there are those who do not want to move towards a future that involves “Canada.” She understands that there are those who see efforts made in the direction of reconciliation as ultimately misguided. She writes:

…[T]here are some Indigenous voices…that will—purportedly in the name of upholding Indigenous Rights—critically oppose almost any effort to change, often relying on inflammatory rhetoric and misinformation that spreads fear, confusion, and mistrust. These voices, paradoxically, sometimes end up reinforcing the same outcome— inaction—that those who oppose rights recognition for Indigenous Peoples and reconciliation pursue.

As a former Regional Chief, I understand this. Among this group of Indigenous voices, one sometimes sees a tendency to what I would label as fundamentalism, which in any context is problematic. This includes the idea that there is not a place for Indigenous People within a changed, rebuilt Canada…—this [is] because [it would involve] articulation of the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Rights and the state and
confirm the ongoing existence of the state: Canada. The rights recognition and Nation building we are advancing is within a strong, changed, and united Canada reflecting our system of multilevel government, cooperative federalism, and legal pluralism, including Indigenous jurisdictions and legal orders. (Wilson-Raybould 199-200)

I have found the greatest motivation through the Syilx people I have worked for, directly, and alongside. They have been an ongoing inspiration and have generously welcomed me. We have found our way through various challenges through honesty, communication, and the warmth of our common humanity. I’ve learned much from them and know that together we’ve made a difference in opening up space in the consciousness of some of the public—space where collaboration for new understanding and action can happen. It is this felt reality that I can continually ground myself in, even when certain concepts, histories, and theories may haunt me. For progress to occur, I believe that unifying frameworks that help build a broader and more inclusive sense of Us, while still recognizing and accepting difference, is an essential good that must be developed.
Chapter 3: The Need for Transformation of Settler Identity

3.1 Transformation for Personal and Universal Well-Being

In the Dalai Lama’s 1989 Nobel Peace Prize lecture, he said “The realization that we are all basically the same human beings, who seek happiness and try to avoid suffering, is very helpful in developing a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood—a warm feeling of love and compassion for others. This, in turn, is essential if we are to survive in this ever-shrinking world we live in. For if we selfishly pursue only what we believe to be in our own interest, without caring about the needs of others, we not only may end up harming others but also ourselves” (qtd. in Piburn 16). To me this speaks to a need for using the politics of identity to build frameworks that resist isolationism, and protect the rights of all.

The destructive feeling of isolation and depression from which Western society suffers, is becoming more prevalent. In Depression as a disease of modernity: explanations for increasing prevalence, Brandon H. Hidaka, studies cross-cultural comparisons to determine why depression and anxiety are reportedly higher in modern, Western societies. He concludes that our universal, human, evolutionary predispositions to pursue wealth, status and calorie consumption, combined with the economic and marketing philosophies and forces of modern society, have created an environment that maximizes consumption to our long-term detriment (Hidaka 214). These contemporary observations of isolating practices are in keeping with Albert Einstein’s observations seventy years ago.

Before expanding upon Einstein’s observations, I’d like to mention that Einstein was not only a scientist but also a refugee, social activist, and humanitarian. A man with vision ahead of his time, he regularly wrote, for the general public, about social conditions and the need for social reform. In consideration of the Israeli occupation today, and Einstein’s support for a Jewish national homeland after World War II, it’s worth noting that Einstein wasn’t in favour of the establishment of a Jewish State. Einstein was a pacifist in very complicated times, and his writings indicate he would not be in support of current Israeli operations if he were alive today (Einstein, Einstein on Politics 33). In 1949, nine years after becoming an American citizen,
Einstein wrote about the isolating effect of individualistic, capitalistic, endeavours over social drives, which he observed in the post-war society around him:

I may indicate briefly what to me constitutes the essence of the crisis in our time. It concerns the relationship of the individual to society… [His] position in society is such that the egotistical drives of his make-up are constantly being accentuated, while his social drives, which are by nature weaker, progressively deteriorate. All human beings, whatever their position in society, are suffering from this process of deterioration. Unknowingly prisoners of their own egotism, they feel insecure, lonely, and deprived of the naive, simple and unsophisticated enjoyment of life. Man can find meaning in life, short and perilous as it is, only through devoting himself to society. The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of evil. (Einstein, Why Socialism?)

In his essay, Einstein discusses that human nature is such that we are always negotiating between the natural urges of our individualistic desires (which are entirely “fixed”) and our social aspirations, or “cultural constitutions” (which are flexible and adopted from society). Though Western culture has developed a destructive focus on individualism, Einstein suggests we can find hope for our society’s transformation through witnessing very different social behaviours and focuses as developed in Indigenous cultures. “It is on this that those who are striving to improve the lot of man may ground their hopes: human beings are not condemned, because of their biological constitution, to annihilate each other or to be at the mercy of a cruel, self-inflicted fate” (Einstein, Why Socialism?).

However, though Einstein suggests we can look to Indigenous cultures with the hope of transforming into a more socially-driven society, he is not suggesting we can return to a hunter-gatherer society. In Why Socialism?, he writes: “The time—which, looking back, seems so idyllic—is gone forever when individuals or relatively small groups could be completely self-sufficient.” And writes, “It is only a slight exaggeration to say that mankind constitutes even now a planetary community of production and consumption.” Seven decades after his essay was written, this is even more evident. I believe we can improve our ways of being and our well-being through listening and learning from Indigenous culture, and through the development of fairness and connection with each other. This can lead to a positive transformation of self and society that, without sentimentality, is in our best interest. The possibility of transformation may
necessitate a re-examination of our use of social and political hierarchy and sense of capitalistic entitlements.

Neuroendocrinologist, Robert Sapolsky, explains that studies show that the steeper, more consequential, or more overt hierarchies are in societies, the more we form Us/Them dichotomies, which then justify oppressions from those in dominant positions to maintain those hierarchies (Sapolsky, *Behave* 421-422). Settler society should strive to balance the unbalanced, even if it does not appear to fall in our favour.

It’s not useful to pretend to be altruistic. I don’t believe in altruism but consider “altruism” to be a more conscious, expansive sense of self. We are not altruistic when we genuinely care for each other. We all stand to gain. The isolation, disconnection and unhappiness that individuals experience through the self-interested pursuits and gains which result in loss for others is real, as is the anger, hurt, and intense suffering experienced by the oppressed. We are all better off in moving beyond essentializing models of Us/Them-ing and zero-sum-games. Reducing these distinctions includes not only recognizing the connections between self and other, but between self and environment as well.

### 3.2 Transformation for Environmental Well-Being

As the world becomes ever-more interdependent and inter-engaged through trade, travel and communication, it has become evident that our choices and actions affect each other significantly. With general understanding gained through post-colonial analysis and information-age-exposure to previously suppressed truths and perspectives, the world population is becoming increasingly aware of the unjust relationships nations and people have imposed on one another. We are increasingly aware of our interconnectedness with each other and the environment. This awareness speaks to the need for intercultural and international cooperation—although current populist movements are, unfortunately, antithetical to this awareness. These movements are spurred on by the polarizing, and radicalizing, effects of social media and its negativity-rewarding algorithms (discussed in sections 10.4 and 10.5).
Science has helped reveal the effects of industrialization and certain technologies on the world, for better and for worse. In *Enlightenment Now*, Stephen Pinker discusses and provides statistical evidence for science and technology’s contributions to the substantial global reductions in violence, starvation, poverty, mortality, disease, and other undesirable human conditions. His work reminds us that in many ways, the world has improved through science and technology—and that this shouldn’t be taken for granted (Pinker 133-143).

Scientists, like Robert Sapolsky, remind us that this is a somewhat Eurocentric perspective. He offers that though the West may have become more peaceful with one another after coming to realizations after the devastations of World War II, “they’ve sure made war elsewhere. Moreover, parts of the developing world have been continuously at war for decades—consider the eastern Congo. Most important, such wars have been made bloodier because the West invented the idea of having client states fight proxy wars for them” (Sapolsky, *Behave* 618). Sapolsky also reminds us that when we correct for differing duration of violent events, as well as world population, half of the history’s most violent events in the world have taken place in the last century:

[Though] “things are better in terms of fewer people acting violently and societies attempting to contain them…the bad news is that the reach of the violent few is ever greater. They don’t just rage about events on another continent—they travel there and wreak havoc. The charismatically violent inspire thousands in chat rooms instead of a mob in their village. Like-minded lone wolves more readily meet and metastasize. And the chaos once let loose with a cudgel or machete occurs now with an automatic weapon or bomb, with far more horrific consequences. (Sapolsky, *Behave* 618-620)

One can also argue that if we step out of a human-centric mind-set, we have become more violent towards nature, and this, in turn, creates upheaval and violent situations for humans. Scientists have revealed that we are contending with human-caused global warming, and this is leading to a cascade of devastating effects on nature and humanity. As geologist Marcia Bjornerud has explained:

Sometime in the last century we crossed a tipping point at which rates of environmental change caused by humans outstripped those by many natural geologic
and biological processes. That threshold marked the start of a proposed new epoch in the geologic timescale, the Anthropocene...this unprecedented time when the behaviour of the planet bears the unmistakable imprint of human activity.

The Anthropocene is marked by human activities, which have vastly increased the rates of geological processes, including erosion and sedimentation, sea-level rise, ocean acidity, extinction rates, and atmospheric carbon dioxide. (Bjornerud 128-129)

The Western World’s pattern of consumption is disproportionately high and generally accounts for a larger carbon-footprint per capita than much of the world. Because CO2 emissions become quickly dispersed throughout the planet, the need to reduce them does not seem so immediately apparent as it would if they remained concentrated where they were first emitted. If that were the case, it would become more obvious that it is an immediate problem that must be dealt with—like garbage piling up during a collection strike (Bjornerud 144). Yet the adverse effects of our consumption pollute the planet as a whole.

In an article titled *Humanity’s unsustainable environmental footprint*, Arjen Y. Hoekstra and Thomas O. Wiedmann underline the need for humanity to reduce its ecological footprint toward a sustainable level. They argue that “the way societies and economies have institutionalized responsibility is clearly insufficient to warrant environmental sustainability, eco-efficiency, fair sharing, and long-term resource security” (1117). They assert we must redress this to achieve a sustainable future and suggest that improved technologies will not be sufficient. They posit that human consumption patterns must change, but they are unsure how such a paradigm change shift might happen. They write: “How such a cultural shift and transformative change in the global economy could take place remains an open question” (Hoekstra and Wiedmann 1117). However, Syilx-Okanagan scholar Jeannette Armstrong offers an answer to this open question.

### 3.2.1 A Note on Syilx Environmental Ethics

Like Albert Einstein, Jeanette Armstrong suggests there is hope for global societies to improve by learning from Indigenous cultures. Armstrong suggests we can cultivate, from the inside out, a more balanced relationship with each other and the environment through learning and embodying Indigenous ethics. This includes growing the conscious awareness that humans are not separate or
apart from nature and our environment but vitally interconnected with it. Jeanette Armstrong believes that the restoration of Indigeneity in all peoples is necessary to create the global paradigm shift, which can regenerate our environment:

…the desperate need for change in all people at this time requires both a pathway to relearning Indigeneity through restory-ing the human relationship with nature and situating Indigeneity as a viable argument in environmental ethics discourse…The process by which the specific knowledge of appropriate interactions with the ecology of a place is made available to all levels of society is a necessary component in society…indigeneity is a viable tool toward transformation of the people…to be a life-force in a life-force place rather than being part of the social order of depletion and destruction. (Armstrong, Constructing Indigeneity 332-333)

As part of Settler society in the Okanagan, I’ve felt invited by members of the Syilx community to learn about Indigenous philosophies of place and environment. Jeannette Armstrong’s writings eloquently articulate these invitations, and I have focused on them in my work. Attendance at Indigenous events and ceremony has been, for me, the source of the most powerful and felt inspirations for transforming Settler identity. They are an active example and reminder of what Settler society has lost through the pursuit of individualism and disconnection from nature (a list of Syilx events and ceremonies, all people are welcome to respectfully attend, can be found at www.syilx.org/images/pdf/ONA_tourism_guide.pdf. Just as shared events have potential as a means to reconciliation, the arts provide another source of means.
Chapter 4: Unsettling Settler Identity Through Art and Engagement

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has highlighted the responsibility of non-Indigenous people to improve Settler/Indigenous relations through greater self-awareness, reciprocity and collaboration with Indigenous people. It has underlined the power the arts can have in facilitating this:

The arts...invite people to explore their own world views, values, beliefs, and attitudes that may be barriers to healing, justice, and reconciliation...[This] is potentially healing and transformative for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples...[and] may serve to shape public memory in ways that are potentially transformative for individuals, communities, and national history. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Final Report 280-83)

With this thesis, I log my endeavours for reconciliation. It’s not a story of arrival, but of learning how to better understand and tend to the Beautiful River. It’s a story of trying to gain perspective to see oneself differently, and perhaps transform oneself, through exploring beyond the familiar worldview and assumptions cultivated by the camp one was born and raised in. It’s an exploration filled with wrong turns, bumps and bruises, but also with successes, bonds of friendship, and personal growth. Regardless of concerns about criticisms that may come my way, I highlight the missteps of which I’ve become aware. I hope these accounts, along with the acceptance of mistake-making as part of learning, might encourage others who want to embark upon the task of tending to the Beautiful River.

Throughout this endeavour, I made art and helped make art. I sometimes made it independently, and sometimes in direct dialogical engagement with the Indigenous community. The works have become artifacts of efforts in reconciliation and illustrate this logbook. I deconstruct and discuss the artworks using 20/20 hindsight, in conjunction with concepts and ideas I have encountered, which apply to Settler and Indigenous relationships, to reveal the learning the artifacts embody. Métis artist David Garneau said, “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...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” (Garneau, Imaginary Spaces
39). The artifacts discussed in this paper are not transformative unto themselves, though they can point to transformation, and can create psychological space for it to happen.

Some of the artworks discussed in this paper are artifacts of Participatory Art, where the public is invited to engage in the artistic process. Art Historian, Claire Bishop, explains that the public, through participation, becomes part of the artistic medium (Bishop 29). Bishop asserts that a final art product of this process is important in order to encapsulate and communicate the broader art process (Bishop 26-27). The artwork is useful in helping share the process with a wider audience of non-participants. The art product also ensures the artist maintains the role of the artist, rather than simply becoming a social mediator (Bishop 12-13). These ideas have influenced the following works being discussed: *The Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth Billboard Art*, *VIEWPOINT*, and the participatory installation, using *Privilege Protectors* and *Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth* fact cards. These ideas also apply to the mural project led by Syilx artist, Sheldon Louis, with Sheldon maintaining the role of the artist, while I was in the role of facilitator and social mediator.

The facilitating role I played in the mural creation was a process more in keeping with the ideas of Art historian, Grant Kester, who believes that the primary goal of participatory art is engagement and dialogical process. This process can build increased empathy between groups as they work towards a larger and inclusive goal as they step outside of their typical roles or positions in society. This can assist in resisting the hegemony such roles might support (Kester).

Creating and engaging with the arts can help people become more conscious of their thoughts and feelings, and can help people to imagine the perspectives of others. This is helpful in mitigating the felt gap between groups of people, and in expanding our sense of responsibility and obligation (see section 10.7). When the arts are shared publicly, they can help shape these processes within the public. This consciousness is important as it can aid in transformative processes. But we must not accept feeling empathy as a point of arrival, but as a motivation for change and action. It has been the endeavour of exploring and learning, and the engagements and interactions driving the inspirations to create the works of art discussed in this paper, which have been most transformative. My hope is that these will lead to more meaningful change and action.
David Garneau’s painting titled *Not to Confuse Politeness with Agreement* is a visual work that reminds us of the difficulties in moving beyond distrust (fig. 1). It reminds us of the challenges we face in doing so, and in seeing past our worldviews to understand each other in the process. Garneau writes: “The image is of an ‘Indian’ and a representative of the state’s power. I suppose the intention of the original image [on the postcard the painting was based on] was to show the old giving way to the new country, but the young man (who isn’t given a name) is clearly out of his league. I repurposed the image to suggest two very different ways of thinking and seeing the world” (Garneau, *New Trail*).

Artist, Leah Decter has said “[B]y harnessing the significant capacity for creative practice to generate productive entry points for critical engagement with contentious issues, the settler imaginary, long stagnating in a self-imposed “narrative deficit” can be influenced to dislodge entrenched colonial attitudes and open up to the potential of decolonizing imperatives.” I have attempted to create such “dislodging” levers in artwork discussed in this paper (Decter and Taunton 33). However, Garneau’s image reminds me that my worldview is a lens that will always affect my understanding—a fact that is easier to see in hindsight.

*The Father Pandosy Mission Commemorative Sculpture* and *The chief snw’cut Monument* bookend the artifacts of learning deconstructed in this paper, which span ten years (2009–2019). I (more-or-less) chronologically focus on the artworks created while pursuing my thesis (2016–2019) and contextualize my thesis work with art created outside of that direct pursuit, which has been a vital part of the learning process leading to it.
Figure 1 David Garneau. *Not to Confuse Politeness with Agreement*. Oil on canvas. 122 x 122 cm. 2013. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.
Chapter 5: The Father Pandosy Mission 150th Anniversary Commemorative Sculpture

5.1 Sculpture Conception

In my early twenties, I lived in an old picker’s cabin across from the Okanagan Mission heritage site in Kelowna. The site is colloquially referred to as the Pandosy Mission, or simply, Pandosy’s Mission. It is home to the simple log buildings of the first permanent, Euro-Canadian settlement in the Okanagan. It was founded, most famously, by Father Charles Pandosy—an Oblate priest. I was taken with the history of that site, and with Pandosy as a character within it. My existence on the land felt merged with it. I bit into crisp apples from the tree outside my cabin door and wondered if they might have descended from trees Pandosy first planted. I walked across the field out back to visit the miniature chapel marking a small cemetery. For years the grave had been unmarked and planted over with tomatoes until a priest’s skeleton had been exhumed—purportedly Father Pandosy’s. The legend of Pandosy was engaging—rich with pioneering endeavours and struggle, and when one looked closer, the affinitive qualities of human complexity and the intrigue of the cognitive dissonance he experienced because of his position between two cultures.

While living in that cabin, young, somewhat naïve, and still ignorant of Syilx culture, I dreamed of creating a sculpture of this influential and interesting man. In 2009—almost a decade later—I was approached by the caretaker of the Okanagan Mission heritage site, who remembered my dream of the sculpture I’d described to him many years prior. The 150th Anniversary of the Okanagan Mission was approaching, he said, and maybe it was the right time for that sculpture. The project was supported by the Okanagan Historical Society and received funding from the community and Canadian Heritage.

5.2 Researching Pandosy

While researching for the sculpture, I became increasingly uncomfortable with the dominant, Euro-centric framing in books and other information, such as signage and brochures, about the
history of the Okanagan and the Okanagan Mission. I began to perceive that Indigenous considerations were marginalized or trivialized in the recording of history—if included at all. And there were many examples of miscomprehension.

I may have been able to begin to see this because of my experiences in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut. In 2002, I accepted an opportunity as Artist-in-Residence at Matchbox Gallery, engaging with Inuit adults in an open, educational environment. While there, I became acquainted with personal stories of damage and dysfunction stemming from the impacts of colonialism. The town had been established through mining, which had come and then gone. I met a teacher there, who told me how long it had taken her to realize the Inuit children were neither confused nor belligerent when she asked them questions, and they seemed not to respond. She eventually discovered that, in Inuit culture, “yes” and “no” were often expressed through the raising and lowering of eyebrows. It is a simple and sobering example of how someone can completely miscomprehend and make false assumptions about people of a different culture they are involved with. When those in “positions of authority” miscomprehend, the consequences can be heartbreaking.

As I researched Pandosy, I thought about the Syilx—the Indigenous people who have been in the Okanagan for thousands of years. I began to understand the strategies and tools used in colonization, and the impact colonization has had and continues to have, on Indigenous people and their culture. One-hundred-and-sixty acres of land, which was part of the area known as N’Wha-quisten by the Syilx, was pre-empted for what became known as the Pandosy Mission (Kowrach 117). Like the vast majority of the land in Canada, it is unceded territory.

The first winter after having arrived in the Okanagan Valley, and camping near Duck Lake, Father Pandosy and his fellow Oblate travellers found themselves so hungry and ill-equipped that it became necessary that they eat their horses (Sthankiya, The History of Pandosy and the Mission). In most historical accounts I’ve seen of this harsh winter, the authors neglect to mention that when found starving, the priest and his troupe were given food by the Syilx people, and then led to the more hospitable area of N’Wha-quisten by what is known now in the Kelowna area as Mission Creek. This is just one example of what has been left out of the local history books—omissions that help Settler society feel more conveniently entitled to this place.
Haitian-American historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that academic historians have influenced what is considered “legitimate” history, and this has sometimes been done through silencing the stories and counter-narratives of oppressed people. (qtd. in Regan 75). It became increasingly evident that such stories and counter-narratives had mainly been left out of the Okanagan history books.

5.3 Approaching the Indigenous Community

Finding reoccurring examples of omission of Indigenous perspectives in my research, I began to experience my own cognitive dissonance. Though I understood Pandosy held a vital place in Kelowna’s Euro-Canadian history, I didn’t want to create another tool of colonization through the creation of a bronze monument perpetuating a one-sided story. After deliberations and encouraging advice from the City of Kelowna heritage planner, Maria Stanborough, I approached Westbank First Nation to discuss my concerns. Frank and receptive discussions followed with heritage officer and curator Gayle Liman and Cultural Advisor and fluent nsn̓yiłx̱can language speaker, Elder Delphine Derickson (nee Armstrong). Gayle and Delphine accepted an invitation to become part of the Pandosy Sculpture Committee, and our discussions led to a collaboration resulting in essential developments in the sculpture. A Letter of Acknowledgement was provided for the project, written by Gayle Liman, in which was stated:

[Extending the invitation to us to join the committee] is a groundbreaking step taken by the [Pandosy Sculpture] committee and it is my opinion that the final work created will therefore be a powerful depiction of the benefits of collaboration…

There are many reasons why I feel that this project could set a new benchmark for future collaborations between First Nations and Euro Canadians. Acknowledging Aboriginal voice, which has been adversely affected by colonization, residential schools, and trans-racial adoptions, is a huge step in understanding and healing. We are after all living here together, and that the future must include the voice of Canada’s First People in understanding Canada, British Columbia and Kelowna’s past.

I congratulate the Sculpture Committee, the Okanagan Historical Society and the Pandosy Mission on Taking this initiative (appendix A).
5.4 Collaboration for Disruption

The collaboration resulted in providing an on-site disruption of the dominant narrative of Father Pandosy and early settlement. Instead of creating a one-sided commemoration of Settler history where Indigenous presence was yet again omitted, the concept included confronting the whitewashed status quo. Trouillot suggests that “the pedagogical intent of public history and commemoration of histories of oppression should always be to challenge the public to confront its own comfortable myths” (Regan 75). In the commemorative sculpture, we developed an inclusion offering insight into an omitted reality in the recording of history.

We strove to disrupt the too “comfortable legend” of Pandosy and early settlement by integrating into the sculpture a relief of the Four Food Chiefs: skəmxist (black bear), siyaʔ (saskatoon), sı̱̓pi̱ƛ̓əm (bitterroot), ntytyix (salmon). We also featured sə̱̓n̓k̓lip (coyote). The Four Food Chiefs and sə̱̓n̓k̓lip are important characters in the captikʷl — traditional stories communicating Syilx philosophy and ethics from generation to generation (Armstrong, Constructing Indigeneity 1-2). The characters carry their individual and collective cultural significance, but each also stands as a counter-narrative to the Euro-Canadian aspects symbolized in the sculpture. Where Pandosy grasps a pruning representing his introduction of orcharding to the Okanagan, the Food Chiefs offer symbols of flora and fauna traditionally hunted and gathered by the Syilx. Where Pandosy represents a spiritual leader from the European tradition, sə̱̓n̓k̓lip represents a Syilx spiritual leader. Where Pandosy pushes forward in blind determination, clenching his robe with his fist, skamxist snarls, sə̱̓n̓k̓lip howls, ntytyix struggle in their swim, and the foliage of sı̱̓pi̱ƛ̓əm and siyaʔ blow in the turbulent force of Settler culture.

In an attempt to subtly subvert the traditional approach to historic bronzes of colonial figures, I focused on creating a portrait of Pandosy, the man—human and fallible. He’s depicted walking on the ground, rather than standing on a pedestal. He walks in bare feet, as he was reported to do, unorthodoxly wearing trousers under his cassock, and his wide, leather belt. His cross is concealed. It is a reminder that this is a portrait of a man, rather than a symbol of a priest. Pandosy’s expression is fraught as he pushes forward, lost in the cognitive dissonance he experienced during his mission in North America. This cognitive dissonance is communicated in
a letter Pandosy wrote to his Superior General, Bishop Mazenod, in France. His writing is an account of what Pandosy said to his friend Kamiakin, a Yakima chief, who appealed to him for advice about the colonial forces wreaking havoc on his people:

It is as I feared, the Whites will take your country as they have taken other countries from the Indians. I came from the land of the White man to the East where the people are thicker than the grass on the hills. Where there are only a few here now, others will come with each year until your country will be overrun with them…You and your lands will be seized and your people driven from their homes. It has been so with other tribes; it will be so with you. You may fight and delay for a time this invasion, but you cannot avert it. I have lived many summers with you and baptized a great deal of your people into the faith. I have learned to love you. I cannot advise you or help you. I wish I could. (qtd. in Kowrach 78)

Pandosy’s position was complicated. Both part of the colonial juggernaut, and a defender of Indigenous peoples against it. Kowrach writes, “That Father Pandosy was firmly entrenched on the side of the Indians never did escape the troublesome Indian Agent Bolon. He had written an inflaming report eight months earlier…claiming Pandosy and the Oblates were an obstacle to settlement of the Indian territory because of their overt prejudice against Whites” (86-87).

The Father Pandosy Mission 150th Anniversary Commemorative Sculpture and its accompanying plaque embodied the first permanent disruption to the dominant Settler society narrative at the Okanagan Mission heritage site. The site is operated by the Okanagan Historical Society, and the land is held by the Catholic church. Previous to the Pandosy sculpture, there was minimal reference to Indigenous culture or perspective on the site or in the city. The Pandosy sculpture was one of the first city-sanctioned, permanent disruptions of the Settler narrative installed in the City of Kelowna (see fig. 2-3).

During the years through which the Pandosy sculpture was being realized (2009–2012), Settler society maintained a complete monopoly on public narratives. As urban geographer (and personal friend) Delacey Tedesco, observed about Kelowna in a 2015 paper titled Begin Again, Return Again: The Transition Narratives and Political Continuities of Global Urbanization:
Kelowna…is not a geographic place as such, but an unstable political production only encountered in its specific patterns of emplaced and displaced effects…[An] effect has been to emplace and displace, simultaneously, dominant configurations of sovereign, colonial, and neoliberal politics and emergent practices that attempt to reconfigure these boundaries. As one example, Kelowna’s narrative of urban development has previously excluded any recognition of indigenous presence. (Tedesco 107)

At the time the Pandosy sculpture was created, the spirit of the times in Kelowna was such that if a disruption of the dominant Settler narrative was going to be sanctioned, it needed to be ushered through the gates through something of a trojan horse. It needed to be subtle enough to still be acceptable by powers-that-be. The disruption integrated into the Pandosy sculpture was subtle, but also insistent enough to have wedged open what had been a previously shut door. The Food Chiefs and sən̓kl̓ip are there to remind us that truths have been hidden, that there are other stories and perspectives to be considered, and that colonialism in Canada did not happen without violence and turbulence, as Settler society had become accustomed to believing (Regan 83-110).

5.5 Different Perspectives

After The Father Pandosy Mission 150th Anniversary Commemorative Sculpture had been cast in bronze, unveiled, and stood awhile on-site, I came to understand that different viewer perceptions of the relief images of the Food Chiefs and sən̓kl̓ip didn’t always align with intentions for including them. The gentle but honest feedback from a Syilx man named Dixon Terbasket (who I met at a reconciliation event at the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society while researching for the chief s*kn̓cut sculpture) helped me understand that, for him, the juxtaposition of the Syilx cultural images with a Catholic priest was painfully incongruent. For him, a priest is equivalent to a symbol of the oppression of his people, whereas the Food Chiefs are sacred. He felt protective of the Food Chiefs. With a lump in my throat, I listened to his perspectives. In return, he considered my intentions—the processes and collaborations, which brought me to the inclusion of Coyote and the Food Chiefs. From this honest and open communication sprung a friendship that eventually developed into a partnership of activism, with the goal of understanding and improving Settler and Indigenous relations.
5.6 A Shift in Settler Society

The Pandosy sculpture was unveiled in 2012—a year before the Truth and Reconciliation events in Vancouver, and three and a half years before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Final Report was released in 2015. Given understanding I’d gained from research and discussions with Westbank First Nation and Delacey Tedesco about the sculpture, I communicated to the Father Pandosy Mission Committee (a sub-committee of the Okanagan Historical Society) the importance of reframing the sesquicentennial of the Pandosy Mission site as an event to *commemorate* rather than *celebrate*. To their credit, the committee made the decision to both accept the Indigenous cultural inclusions in the sculpture and to reframe the 150th Anniversary event (2010) as a commemoration. They also invited Westbank First Nation to participate in the event. Chief Robert Louie spoke about Indigenous perspectives of the mission, its history on Syilx lands, and its impact on the Syilx people.

Though these were new and needed steps towards shifting dominant Settler narratives regarding historical commemoration in the Okanagan, I was dismayed by local media coverage of the Pandosy sculpture unveiling. Despite my efforts to highlight my collaboration with Westbank First Nation to the media, including the significance of the elements in the sculpture, which I intended to encourage a consideration of Syilx culture, the media seemed largely incapable of recognizing this aspect of the work in reporting. Whether it was an inability to comprehend the significance of the inclusion, or an unconscious or deliberate act of omission to protect the comfort and interests of their presumed readership, the media mostly managed to perpetuate the folklore of Pandosy (Squires; Walters). The door to Settler awareness regarding the considerations that we were working to bring attention to, remained closed.

I sense that if the Pandosy sculpture was unveiled today, the reporting might be different. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its findings, and other decolonization, Indigenization and reconciliation initiatives have had an effect these past four years. It may be that the Pandosy sculpture would never be unveiled today, considering the bronze colonial figures being removed across North America (Stiem, *Statue Wars*). Though in its time it was a unique, sanctioned disruption to the dominant narratives of colonial Kelowna, things have changed rapidly since
then. And although the Pandosy sculpture was created in a different spirit and with different considerations and conversations than the bronze colonial works being removed, not everyone will recognize those subtle subversions in a work that might just be considered too reminiscent of those traditional bronze figures. After all, it is a commemoration of Settler history, as well as a disruption of it. Not everyone may see this as the “door-opening” device it was intended to be, as the door opens wider still.

5.7 A Shift in Commemorative Narratives

A year and a half after the Pandosy sculpture was unveiled, banners communicating Syilx culture, created by Syilx artist Janine Lott and Jordan Coble, were installed at the gateway of Kelowna’s main street, Bernard Avenue. Syilx words for local flora and fauna were engraved on paving stones utilized in the downtown revitalization project, of which the gateway banners were a part. It was the first public art collaboration directly between the City of Kelowna and Westbank First Nation. Settler consciousness and concepts of inclusion in public narrative had begun to shift.

In the article *Begin Again, Return Again*, Tedesco suggests that the art banners created by Syilx artists Janine Lott and Jordan Coble, which were part of Kelowna’s downtown revitalization in 2014, are evidence of this shift in the public narrative:

> The largely decontextualized use of Syilx cultural imagery is consistent with neocolonial urban development and neoliberal place-making. However, these representations unsettle claims that Western settlement and urbanization define the configuration of politics that determines place-making in this place. By asserting an unceded connection between land, language, and people, they assert a different configuration of the politics of place in time. (Tedesco 107)

There also has demonstrably been enough of a shift in Kelowna’s public consciousness in the last ten years that, while bronze colonial figures are being removed across North America, a bronze sculpture of an Indigenous chief (which I was commissioned by an Indigenous Nation to create) was unveiled in a prominent public location (on the waterfront boardwalk by Kelowna
Visitor’s centre) on National Indigenous People’s Day, 2019. The Indigenous and the non-Indigenous community were equally represented at the event. Chief Roxanne Lindley of Westbank First Nation and the mayor of Kelowna, Colin Basran, both spoke. Local media reported on it, and this time didn’t omit Indigenous voice (Mott, *Statue of Historic Syilx Chief Unveiled*). Later in this paper, I expand upon the creation of the chief sʷkn̓cut monument. The entirety of the work discussed in this paper helped inform and prepare my understanding for the creation and unveiling of that public monument.
Figure 2 Przybille, Crystal. *The Father Pandosy Mission 150th Anniversary Commemorative Sculpture*. 2012. Bronze. Kelowna Public Art Collection, Kelowna, BC

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Figure 3 Przybille, Crystal. *The Father Pandosy Mission 150th Anniversary Commemorative Sculpture*. 2012. Bronze. Kelowna Public Art Collection, Kelowna, BC

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Chapter 6: *Wish*

As part of preparing my understanding to create the *chief sʷkn̓cut Monument*, I attended the four-day Truth and Reconciliation Event in Vancouver. The courageous testimonies shared at the event had a lasting impact on me, as I imagine they have for most all who witnessed them. Around the time of attending the events, I also read Paulette Regan’s book *Unsettling the Settler Within*, which discusses the importance of people in Settler society to improve relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through looking inwards to ourselves and considering the ways in which we perpetuate colonial attitudes and action: “How can we, as non-Indigenous people, unsettle ourselves to name and then transform the settler...not just in words but by our actions” (Regan 11).

Inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation events, while having had accepted an invitation to create a work of art for a six-month exhibition in 2014 at the Kelowna International Airport, I created a sculpture entitled *Wish* (fig. 4). Evocative of the mechanical wings of an ornithopter, *Wish* references the history of flight—a dream once considered impossible. At the same time, the sculpture makes reference to the eagle fans used in Indigenous brushing ceremonies. I had been moved by these ceremonies at the Truth and Reconciliation Event in Vancouver. I intended to create an artwork that spoke hopefully to the challenge of reconciliation—to remind us that it is through wishing and striving, even for the “impossible” dream, that we can achieve it.

The work was seen by a great many people who came and went from the Kelowna airport over six months, and I hope it raised some awareness of the importance of reconciliation efforts in Canada. But after communicating with a representative of Syilx leadership about the piece, I began to question my having conceived of and executed the work without consultation or having been asked to create it by the Indigenous community. I hadn’t been corrected or chastised for my judgement. The representative acknowledged my intent, then proceeded to teach me about the meaning and sacredness of the ceremonies. He guided me in obtaining some understanding of his culture, and then let me come to my own conclusions.
Though reconciliation is terrain we are all in, the Indigenous cultural content and context in the work are significant. I believe it is part of a profoundly human practice of empathy to try to imagine oneself in another’s place, and I believe in the importance of an individual’s liberty to practice understanding or process the world around them, including cultures outside of their own, through the creation of art of any kind. However, the sale or public exhibition of that art is a matter that has more significant implications, and so is subject to stronger ethical considerations.

The guide *Think Before You Appropriate: Things to know and questions to ask in order to avoid misappropriating Indigenous cultural heritage* presents clear considerations regarding the matter. It acknowledges that cultures have always exchanged information, ideas and inspirations with each other, but misappropriation is somewhat different:

In the case of heritage, appropriation happens when a cultural element is taken from its cultural context and used in another…. “Misappropriation” describes a one-sided process where one entity benefits from another group’s culture without permission and without giving something in return…

Take into consideration that the worldview and experiences of the people whose cultural heritage inspires you may differ from yours. Ensure that your approach isn’t at odds with or, worse, threatening their values and practices, and take steps to adapt your process and objectives accordingly. (Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage Project)

It took some time for me to come to understand these considerations but, eventually, I began to feel that creating work such as *Wish* for public exhibition, or without first seeking proper consultation from the Indigenous community, is something I wouldn’t do again.
Figure 4 Przybille, Crystal. *Wish*. 2014. Mixed Media. Collection of the Artist

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Chapter 7: The Hands of Time

Stepping, for a moment, outside of work created in the Okanagan, I discuss a different approach to artwork I envisioned that included Indigenous content. In this case, I was selected to create a public artwork for the City of Victoria’s sesquicentennial in 2012. As part of my research, I inquired about meeting with artist Butch Dick (Songhees Nation/Lək̓ʷəŋən People). Once he understood the project I was researching for and how I was selected for it, Butch accepted my request to meet. He showed me some of his artwork, including his powerful Signs of Lekwungen. Driving with him around the inner harbour area, he pointed to where vital things used to be. We drove by the British Columbia Parliament Buildings, and he explained that one of his people’s primary camps had been exactly where the behemothic buildings now stood. His people had been pushed, in stages, from their territory. Their way of life violently disrupted.

His words underscored my desire to avoid creating a monolithic, pedantic artwork that merely reinforced the colonial state. It felt important to use the opportunity I’d been given to include consideration of the Indigenous history and presence in the area. I conceived of a series of twelve bronze sculptures of hands in action with objects, symbolizing different aspects of the area’s history. These sculptures are mostly placed throughout the inner harbour area and are titled The Hands of Time.

Two of the sculptures in the series directly refer to Indigenous culture. For these, Butch put me in contact with his son, Clarence Dick (Songhees Nation/Lək̓ʷəŋən People), and Carolyn Memnook (T’souke Nation) who agreed to collaborate for the purpose of these pieces. Clarence designed and carved the paddle element for the sculpture Carving a Canoe Paddle (fig. 5) located at Lime Bay Park, and Carolyn created the gathering basket element in the sculpture Digging Camas Bulbs (fig. 6) located at Beacon Hill Park. The artists were financially compensated for their work and credited for their contributions. The artists also modelled their hands for the works, and I replicated Clarence’s carving knife in the sculpture.

Their contributions brought authenticity to the work. Through inviting them to collaborate, I avoided a temptation to appropriate clearly Indigenous art forms, for artwork I’d conceptualized
with the hope of representing inclusive history. The conversations, experiences, and understandings that came about through the collaboration are valuable to me. My hope is that the sculptures, though place-taking in their own way, will encourage people who come across them to contemplate the complicated history of the area, and to learn about the Indigenous Peoples who belong there, but have been displaced and disenfranchised.

Figure 5 Przybille, Crystal and Clarence Dick. *The Hands of Time: Carving a Canoe Paddle*. 2013. Bronze. City of Victoria Public Art Collection, Victoria, BC

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Figure 6 Przybille, Crystal and Carolyn Memnook. *The Hands of Time: Digging Camas Bulbs*. 2013. Bronze. City of Victoria Public Art Collection, Victoria, BC

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Chapter 8: *The Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth Billboard Art*

I came to understand better the obvious strength of working in direct consultation with the Indigenous community in doing work for reconciliation. When I began my studies in the fall of 2016, I approached Edna Terbasket (executive director of the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society in Kelowna) and asked how I might be of service to the Indigenous community in my capacity as a graduate student. The choice to ask how I could be of service was informed by the writing of Carolyn Ellis. Ellis discusses relational ethics in research with intimate others and suggests we should, as researchers, ask the question, “What should I do now?” rather than make the statement “This is what you should do now” (Ellis. *Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives* 4).

In answer to my question, Edna explained a need that she, along with her brother Dixon Terbasket, and a few others from the community, had identified while sitting around a kitchen table: raising awareness of Indigenous perspective regarding Canada’s 150th Anniversary of Confederation. It became a project far more meaningful, involving, and altogether rewarding, than anything I could have imagined.

8.1 Canada 150 “Celebrations”

The Canadian government was gearing up to celebrate the sesquicentennial on July 1, 2017. It had been less than a year since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had released its final report, and already the Canadian government was advertising the sesquicentennial in only celebrational terms. This underscored a one-sided, colonial approach in blatant disregard to the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s events and findings and a momentous missing-of-the-boat regarding the inspiration which had swept the country as a result of those events. At a Truth and Reconciliation event, an Indigenous youth named Jessica Bolduc spoke on behalf of a national Indigenous and non-Indigenous collaboration. She said:

> We have re-examined our thoughts and beliefs around colonialism, and have made a commitment to unpack our own baggage, and to enter into a new relationship with
each other, using this momentum, to move our country forward, in light of the 150th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada in 2017.

At this point in time, we ask ourselves, “What does that anniversary mean for us, as Indigenous youth and non-Indigenous youth, and how do we arrive at that day with something we can celebrate together?” ... Our hope is that, one day, we will live together, as recognized nations, within a country we can all be proud of. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Canada’s Residential Schools 6)

So many of the people of Canada, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, were ready for something different when it came to the sesquicentennial—something that spoke to reconciliation. Not only did Canada miss the boat, but chose to ride in on a giant, inflatable, selfie-inducing duck (fig. 7). (Canadian Press, Giant Rubber Duck for Canada 150).

8.2 The Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth Initiative

Meanwhile, from the Terbasket’s kitchen table (and simultaneously from tables across Canada) sprung plans for more meaningful events—events reflecting some of the last words written by Indigenous activist Arthur Manuel before he died in January 2017. About the Canada 150 celebrations, he wrote, “I do not wish to celebrate Canada stealing our land. That is what Canadians will be celebrating on July 1, the theft of 99.8 per cent of our land…” (qtd. in Canadian Dimension 31).

The Terbasket’s plan grew to include other Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists who developed a collective called Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth. Meeting regularly, we gained insight from each other and developed plans. We consciously determined these plans would not threaten violence. They were in line with Taiaiake Alfred’s concept of employing “creative confrontations” to redress colonialism. We were not the only ones working on counter-narratives. Creative confrontations were happening across Canada.

One such example of other creative resistance to the dominant narratives of Canada is the 2017 painting of Cree artist Kent Monkman, titled The Scream (fig. 8). This painting depicts members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Catholic nuns and priests taking Indigenous children
from their homes and families. The painting alludes to events that have only recently become part of the public consciousness through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Some of the people depicted are in modern dress, suggesting the work speaks to the impact of the residential and child welfare system on the present, as well as the past. In his general practice, Monkman “explores themes of colonization, sexuality, loss, and resilience—the complexities of historic and contemporary Indigenous experiences” (Monkman).

Our work was also raising awareness of marginalized voices. The following excerpt comes from Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth collective’s public statement, written by Dr. Delacey Tedesco, on behalf of the group, and communicates the original mandate of the collective:

> Across Canada, all levels of government and many social and cultural groups have been organizing to celebrate the 150th anniversary of confederation, from July 1, 1867, to July 1, 2017. This date is considered by many to be the official beginning of Canada as a country. However, this story about the beginnings of Canada ignores the long history of Indigenous peoples on their lands…

> The idea for a powerful local alternative to the celebration of Canada 150 came from members of the Okanagan Syilx community. Over conversations, these individuals thought about ways to present a Syilx perspective on Canada 150 and all that this celebratory story ignores… They expressed their interest to others—both Indigenous and settler-identified—who shared concerns about the focus on Canada 150 as a celebration, and the idea started to grow…

> We have chosen to call our project Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth. These efforts are rooted in our shared desire to interrupt the story of celebration and open space for Indigenous stories—stories about communities and their lands, the experiences of contact and colonization, and cultural and political resurgence…

> We understand, together, that there is no possibility of reconciliation or decolonization without disrupting the power of “Canada” to claim ownership over what stories matter and whose stories are heard…

### 8.3 The Billboard Art

The first Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth meetings were a series of seven discussions. They were led by Indigenous members and involved sharing perspectives on the impact of colonialism on
the land and its peoples. These perspectives were both broad-scoped as well as very personal in nature.

Dixon had a billboard on his property in the Similkameen, and he wanted an artwork created for it that would raise awareness of counter-narratives to the sesquicentennial “party.” In discussing different approaches to the creation of the billboard, the group agreed that it would be my task, in my capacity as an artist and Master of Fine Arts student, to process these discussions into an artwork that would be made into billboards that would eventually be raised on several Okanagan highways. Justin Terbasket suggested the work be created solely from my hand, rather than in collaboration with other artists, in order to maintain a direct, aesthetic vision for it. The non-Indigenous members of the group listened as openly as we could to all of the discussions, and the contributions from all of the Indigenous members helped conjure the imagery for the billboard artwork. Galen Terbasket’s words were especially poignant in evoking imagery in my mind. As he spoke, the billboard image progressively presented itself in my imagination, and the day I left that meeting, I knew what to draw. I offered the artwork back to the group for input. Dixon made a few suggestions for revisions. After final approval, the artwork was sent to print the billboards onto vinyl. We also made paper prints of the artwork for fundraising purposes.

I understood the billboard art would need to be eye-catching and carry its essential message to as broad a demographic as possible, in the time it would take to drive by it. With this in mind, I utilized a bold, representative style, evocative of the linocut and woodcut prints expressing resistance, land-rights issues and political struggle throughout the 20th century.

Social realism developed throughout the world through the 19th and 20th centuries in places such as America, Latin America, Europe, Russia and the Soviet Union. It has traditionally utilized realistic and stylistic representation to make art that is immediately accessible and legible to the broad public. Social realism has aimed to bring attention to the conditions and suffering of oppressed classes and people and to challenge and implicate the government and systemic constructs responsible for this oppression. An example of this can be found in Käthe Kollwitz’s print titled Die Mütter, which concerns the grief of mothers of soldiers in WWI (fig. 9).
In the billboard art (fig. 11), an Indigenous man, woman and child compose the land, intrinsically connectedness with it (Armstrong, *Constructing Indigeneity* 2). Hair and tears become waters. These run black with pollution, and fire encroaches symbolizing destructive, unsustainable approaches to nature and its resources. The figures embrace and protect each other. On the man’s shoulder is a medicine wheel. “The Medicine Wheel, sometimes known as the Sacred Hoop, has been used by generations of various Native American tribes for health and healing. It embodies the Four Directions, as well as Father Sky, Mother Earth, and Spirit Tree—all of which symbolize dimensions of health and the cycles of life” (Bell).

The form composing the figures/land references the Okanagan landscape. Dr. Allison Hargreaves pointed out to me the similarities to the formation of Kelowna’s Black Mountain (fig. 10). Though I wasn’t conscious of emulating the specific mountain while creating the work, I believe I subconsciously referenced it. Black Mountain is prominent in the eastward view from Kelowna, and I have long seen it as a male figure reclined to the right, hair flowing down.

Depicted in the artwork is a tall ship, sailing to shore—a recognizable symbol of early contact and colonization of the Americas. On the backs of the people is built the church, development, and industry. Though the oppressed are depicted in the image, I avoided using representational images of the oppressors. This helps the viewer consider how forces of oppression are interrelated. Rather than showing a specific person (an early explorer, for example, or a priest), we cannot merely interpret that “they are the oppressors.” Instead, we can consider how our lives are engaged with these forces and how we benefit from them.

### 8.4 The Billboard Raising and Other Rethink 150 Events

The billboard art was utilized as a visual in a public discussion at the Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art. The *Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth* initiative was discussed, and Dixon Terbasket spoke about the effects of colonization on the Syilx people (fig. 12). This event was written about in *The Tyee*:
The night before the billboard installation, more than 60 people—Indigenous and non-Indigenous, from throughout the Okanagan territory—participated in a community discussion event held at the Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art in downtown Kelowna. Under a large-scale print of the billboard image, we listened to Syilx project member Dixon Terbasket put his challenge to the community: *You’ve turned your backs on us for 150 years. Don’t turn your backs on us any longer. Learn about the real history of this place. Learn to walk with us.* (Rethink 150 Indigenous Truth Collaborative, *In the Okanagan Valley, We’re Not Letting Canada Drive*)

The billboard raisings on highways running through Indian Reserves, like all the Rethink 150 events, were warm and beautiful (fig. 12-17). The public was invited, and in a spirit of intercultural cooperation, many hands helped raise the printed vinyl artwork onto the plywood boards. We worked, talked, listened, and laughed together. Speeches were made. Edna and Dixon’s mother, Theresa Terbasket, spoke at the event. As one of the few remaining fluent Syilx language speakers, Theresa spoke in n̓syíłx̣ən. Afterwards, we shared a meal.

The billboards received a substantial amount of media attention and review, locally, provincially and nationally. The billboards and events were featured in *The Tyee, Canadian Dimension*, and *BC Studies*. We were glad that our message reached so many more than those who simply drove past them, and our social media page distributed the message further yet.

Social media helped all of the events organized by Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth geared around the sesquicentennial to gain public exposure. Other events Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth held in resistance to the celebrations of Canada’s sesquicentennial included an exhibition of art by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Artists at the Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art in Kelowna. This was opened on July 1 by the St’át’imc Bear Dance Group, who danced and sang powerfully not as performers, but in solidarity with the resistance movement happening across Canada.

Another event was a community discussion about cultural appropriation, led by the late Dr. Greg Younging (Opaskwayak Cree Nation). Dr. Younging was an Indigenous Studies Professor at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan, had been the managing editor of the Okanagan Indigenous publishing company, Theytus Books for fourteen years, and was the assistant director of research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He also wrote the book *Elements of*
Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples, in which he discusses cultural misappropriation in the arts.

### 8.5 Concerning/Discerning Misappropriation

During the community discussion led by Dr. Greg Younging, Dixon Terbasket presented an image of the billboard art and asked the professor if he considered it to be cultural appropriation. Dixon asked this because the current discourse concerning cultural misappropriation had raised some questions on social media. Dixon explained to Dr. Younging that the image was drawn by a non-Indigenous artist and described the process through which it had been made. Professor Younging responded that though the image utilized Indigenous content, he didn’t consider it cultural misappropriation, as it had been created through direct collaboration with members of the Indigenous community, and at the service of an Indigenous-led initiative.

The community discussion went on to range from the misappropriation of cultural artifacts and symbols to concerns surrounding the residential school and child welfare systems. Connections were made that not just Indigenous objects and images have been appropriated, but even Indigenous children have been taken (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Honouring the Truth 37-41). The anger, sensitivity and protectiveness surrounding Indigenous cultural appropriation are understandable when the devastating history and ongoing issues are kept in mind.

The concerns raised reminded me that it is vital to bear in mind that in offering my artistic skills to such collaborations and initiatives, I must continually focus my visual language on supporting Indigenous voice—which is not my voice. This is, understandably, a sensitive process. It requires ongoing communication, revisiting requests and offers to ensure those involved continue to support plans and procedures, and adjusting operations, if necessary. As I consider my greatest skills to be based in the creation of art objects, it has felt important to make such products of engagement to bring attention to the discourse. However, it has been challenging to find visual language appropriate to communicate engagement, without being considered by some as cultural
misappropriation, or taking up too much space in the discourse. Leah Decter and Carla Taunton have written, “We are wary of the space that settler decolonization has and could potentially claim, and are aware of the potential risks of becoming another colonizing discourse and aesthetic. With this in mind, our conversations are framed by the following question: How can the practice of decolonizing settler colonialism work in productive ways that do not co-opt or de-centre Indigenous decolonization and political and cultural sovereignty?” (Decter and Taunton 32). It is a vital question, and not an easy one to answer.

Around this time, I was also working on the sculpture commission from Westbank First Nation of chief sʷkn̓cut. The current public discourse regarding cultural misappropriation made me concerned about what might be said when the chief sʷkn̓cut sculpture was unveiled. The sculpture was necessarily filled with a great deal of Syilx cultural content. The process had been similar to that leading up to the billboard art: I’d offered my skills and availability to members of the Indigenous community. Those involved considered and discussed my offer, and requested I do the work. I envisioned the artwork after listening, learning, and collaborating with members of the community. The artwork was offered for review and revision.

With escalations in the public discourse, re-approaching conversations about the sculpture commission felt necessary. Through further conversations with Westbank First Nation, I was able to ground myself in the understanding that the process remained vetted and important to the community. This knowledge reinforced in me the importance of the work. Through transparency and open communication I was able to better contextualize perspectives raised on social media, and to carry on in a way that felt integral for myself, and responsive to the Indigenous leaders for which I was working.

8.6 Facilitating Art for Reconciliation

For a different artwork which would also become a billboard, I stepped outside of the role of the artist and focused on creating and facilitating an opportunity for the creation of a collaborative artwork titled *Lifeline - Sqilxw Resilience*, led by Syilx artist Sheldon Louis. I created room for
this community outreach project in my capacity as a University of British Columbia Okanagan Academic Assistant and secured partial funding for it through the UBC Community Engagement - Partnership Recognition Fund. The project was a collaboration between Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth, the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, and the Honors 12 Art students at Kelowna Senior Secondary, guided by their teacher, Tim Mayer.

Envisioning the content of the artwork began with a discussion between the high school art students and Sheldon Louis and Dixon Terbasket (fig. 18). The students listened as Sheldon and Dixon talked about the impact of colonialism on Syilx culture, and later asked questions. The students and Sheldon had more discussions over several weeks, then developed imagery to express the content of their discussions for inclusion in a mural (fig. 19). The mural was painted and printed. It was presented in multiple locations: the school, the school district building, several galleries, and on the opposite side of the first Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth billboard near Cawston. This was raised during an event on July 1, 2019 (fig. 20).

Dixon Terbasket commented on the mural project, saying: “Our hope…is that this project will help change the conversations around various tables. There has been a lot of prejudice towards Indigenous peoples in Canada, a lot of misunderstanding. The truth needs to be spoken, and with listening, this younger generation might be inspired to change things” (qtd. in Oddliefson).

Sheldon Louis said of the project, “If I stood in the streets on a soapbox to speak the truth…People would pass by, closed off and offended. The power of art is that it gently opens people’s minds. They become curious, and initiate learning more about it” (qtd. in Oddliefson).
Figure 7 Canada’s Sesquicentennial Rubber Duck

Reprinted with permission of Joel Levy, Editor-In-Chief, Toronto and Calgary Guardian. Source: www.instagram.com/p/BV-Pl4cAX8L

Figure 8 Monkman, Kent. The Scream. 2017. Acrylic on Canvas. Collection of the Denver Art Museum

Reprinted with permission of Kent Monkman
Figure 9 Kollwitz, Käthe. 1867-1945. Die Mütter (The Mothers)

Source: [Public domain] www.upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b0/%22Die_M%C3%BCtter%22_-_K%C3%A4the_Kollwitz_%3B_Felsing_%28printer%29.LCCN2009630850.jpg
Figure 10 View of sntsk’il’nten/Black Mountain, Kelowna, BC

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille

Figure 11 Przybille, Crystal. *The Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth Billboard Art.* 2017. Digital image

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Figure 12 Dixon Terbasket Speaks at Alterknowledge Discussion Event: Canada 150 & Alternative Commemoration. May 19, 2017

Reprinted with permission of Uniters Media

Figure 13 Carrying a Dugout Canoe for the Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth Exhibition. June 25, 2017

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Figure 14 *The Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth Billboard Raising on Indian Reserve #7. June 17, 2017*

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Figure 15 *The Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth Billboard Raised on Indian Reserve #7. June 17, 2017*

Reprinted with permission of Dante Wetherow
Figure 16 Crystal Przybille and Dixon Terbasket Sit Under Billboard Art on Indian Reserve #2. May 17, 2017

Reprinted with permission of Dante Wetherow

Figure 17 Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth Billboard Art on Indian Reserve #2

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Figure 18 Dixon Terbasket and Sheldon Louis discuss the impact of colonialism on Syilx culture with Kelowna Senior Secondary Honors 12 Art students

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Figure 19 Kelowna Senior Secondary Honors 12 Art Student Help Paint *Lifeline - Sqilxw Resilience*

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille

Figure 20 Raising *Lifeline - Sqilxw Resilience* on Indian Reserve #2, July 1, 2019

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Chapter 9: *VIEWPOINT*

Another *Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth* event was a public discussion regarding place-claiming, which accompanied an art intervention that I created. The intervention was titled *VIEWPOINT*. The work came from a desire to create an artwork which could be helpful in the endeavour of reconciliation, without using Indigenous imagery or cultural content. It felt important not to use Indigenous imagery or material, as the piece was a personal initiative and not done at the request of, or in direct collaboration with, the Indigenous community. I wanted to situate the work squarely within Settler society, deconstructing it from within.

Located a short distance north along Okanagan Lake’s shoreline from Kelowna’s downtown, Knox Mountain has been a large part of my life. I’ve spent a lot of time hiking its slopes and swimming in the waters lapping its foot. Over the years, I’ve watched it become a heavily utilized recreational area, with increased efforts to preserve its grasslands—grasslands which burst alive each spring with Balsamroot blooms and the white-lace blossoms of the Saskatoon.

The park was named after the Scottish settler Arthur Booth Knox who, in 1883, bought a great swath of land which included the mountain. Knox Mountain Park was dedicated to the City of Kelowna in 1967—Canada’s centennial year. I know this because it is written on a bronze plaque embedded into a stone plinth near the top of the mountain.

I also know more about the history of Kelowna from nine similar bronze plaques placed a little further down the mountain. They’re situated at the “Lower Crown Lookout,” where one can read the plaques while overlooking the vast, valley vista. These bronze plaques also inform the viewers of the Settler history of these lands. For example, I know from one of these plaques that two ladies won a contest to rename what was known as “Dry Valley” in 1905. They renamed it “Glenmore” and split the prize money between them. I also understand that a homesick Scottish fellow acquired valley land in the 1890s and named it “Benvoulin” after his home in Scotland. “Orchard Park Mall is built there now.” The plaques go on with quaint tales to lull one into thinking that these recorded events were, indeed, the beginning of history in the valley. That
areas were neither named nor utilized before the white people came, but that the settler names and the bronze plates claimed the place as far as the eye could see.

To be fair, one plaque mentions the “Indians,” but in the past tense: “Ogopogo known to the Indians as Nhaatik. The Demon of the lake. Legends were handed down from father to son about the monster whose home was between squally point and the island. He had to be appeased, or he would churn the waters in a fury. Ogopogo was the name given by the white men in the twenties” (fig. 21). The use of past tense has the effect of removing Indigenous people and culture from considerations of the present, delegating them only to times-gone-by. It’s a cognitive dissonance workaround, making it easier for Settler society to continue to, unquestioningly, develop unceded territory without consultation with the Indigenous community. The plaques and their narratives serve to claim the place.

I decided I’d replace the plaques. I conceived of the interventional artwork and wrote a poem of nine lines, titled VIEWPOINT. I wrote this in the autumn of 2016. Each new plaque would carry a line from the poem:

```
I LIKE THIS PLACE
I’M GOING TO TAKE IT
MAKE IT MINE
THROUGH FORCE, DESIGN
NAME IT, ANEW
MAKE A SIGN
IMPOSE MY STORY
STAKE MY CLAIM
BELIE MY CRIME
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I created plaques in bronze-infused resin and in a similar style to the existing bronze plaques (fig. 22). Though convincing enough in their aesthetic, I knew that if installed and left, they wouldn’t stay in place for long. Individuals, the Regional District, or the City would discover and remove them for a variety of reasons. The concept called for a documented event to accompany the installation so that the work could affect a broader audience.
When I shared my concept with members of the *Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth* collective, a participant showed me a relatable project they had seen on social media, by archaeologist and anthropologist Joanne Hammond. Hammond was photoshopping the familiar BC Stop of Interest signs, overwriting the Settler narratives with text exposing the pioneer glorification and place-claiming strategy of those signs (fig. 25). “My goal was simple,” she wrote. “Awareness. Being a responsible witness to the past. To push back the veil of words to show alternate stories, to encourage people to see the holes in public history and to know that we can fill them with the truth” (Hammond, Decolonizing BC’s Roadside History).

Our goals were similar. Through the *Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth* initiative I was part of, I invited Joanne Hammond to speak about her work at the planned “art intervention” plaque-placing event. I also invited Delacey Tedesco to speak from her perspective in urban geography, in which she has observed that “Kelowna’s narrative of urban development has previously excluded any recognition of Indigenous presence” (Tedesco, *Begin Again, Return Again* 107). Dixon Terbasket spoke from his cultural perspective. After the public discussion, nine volunteers from the public placed the art plaques over the bronze plaques (fig. 23). The event and installation were documented and circulated through social media (fig. 24).
Figure 21 Plaque at the Lower Crown Lookout, Knox Mountain, Kelowna, BC

![Plaque Image]

UOOPOGO
OOPPOGO KNOWN TO THE INDIANS AS KHAATIK, THE DEMON OF THE LAKE. LEGENDS WERE HANDED DOWN FROM FATHER TO SON ABOUT THE MONSTER WHOSE HOME WAS BETWEEN SQUALLY POINT AND THE ISLAND. HE HAD TO BE APPEASED OR HE WOULD CHURN THE WATERS IN FURY. OOPPOGO WAS THE NAME GIVEN BY THE WHITE MEN IN THE TWENTIES.

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille

Figure 22 Przybille, Crystal. Plaque 1 – VIEWPOINT. 2017. Cold Cast Bronze Resin. Collection of Artist

![Plaque Image]

I LIKE THIS PLACE

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Figure 23 Participant Places *VIEWPOINT* Art Plaque on Original Plaque, Knox Mountain, Kelowna, BC

Reprinted with permission of Dante Wetherow
Figure 24 Participants Prepare to Place *VIEWPOINT* Art Plaques, Knox Mountain, Kelowna, BC

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Erasure of Indigenous lives in BC public histories is dangerous because it works: think *terra nullius*, the ‘empty places’ doctrine that justified the theft of the New World. A public fed Indigenous-free history is fed doubt about the depth & intensity of precontact occupation, and skepticism about Indigenous rights & title. Narratives that deny the extent & severity of colonial injustices help rationalize ongoing marginalization of Indigenous people.
Chapter 10: Privilege Protectors

Another work I attempted to situate within Settler culture and imagery is an installation titled *Privilege Protectors* (fig. 26-29). The work speaks of Settler society’s difficulty in stepping outside of our worldviews to listen to different perspectives. The work was influenced by an account of an early settler in the Okanagan valley, Susan Allison.

10.1 Lessons from a Pioneer Gentlewoman

In 1868, Susan Allison arrived in the Okanagan. She was a settler from England and gave birth to “the first white child born in the Similkameen Valley.” She wrote *Recollections of a Pioneer of the Sixties*. These recollections were edited by historian Margaret A. Ormsby, who claimed the memoirs “are the only account we have of the life of a pioneer woman in British Columbia” (Ormsby, 1i).

In a manner indicative of Settler society’s worldview through the decades, Ormsby goes on to write, “Mrs. Allison remains our only authority on the life and customs of the Indians of the Similkameen region” (Ormsby, 1i). As a historian, Ormsby must not have had the Syilx people, themselves, as authorities of their own lives and customs, in mind. I don’t write these words with criticism. I know that if I were Margaret Ormsby in 1976, I would have written the same thing. I would not have had the Syilx people in mind, and I would not have had a sense of how to connect with them, even if I did.

But, in her recollections, Susan Allison has given Settler society a valuable clue, if people have the wherewithal to look for one. Susan Allison recollects being isolated in the winter at her log house in the Similkameen Valley as a very young woman and relatively newly arrived settler. Her husband was a rancher who sold beef at the Westminster market, and there were times when the Hope Mountain trails became impassible with snow:

I had a visit from an Indian woman, niece of Quinisco, the “Bear Hunter” and Chief of the Chu-chu-ewa Tribe. She was dressed for the occasion, of course, in mid-Victorian
style, a Balmoral petticoat, red and gray, a man’s stiff starched white shirt as a blouse, stiff high collar, earrings an inch long, and brass bracelets! I did not know my visitor seemed to think she ought to sit upright in her chair and fix her eyes on the opposite wall. I think “Cla-hi-ya” was the only word she spoke. I was not used to Indians then and knew very little Chinook. I felt very glad when her visit was over. I know now that I should have offered her a cigar and a cup of tea. (qtd. in Ormsby 23-24)

The valuable clue Susan Allison gives us is; that we should not be so uncomfortable and closed. We shouldn’t let our presumptions, or our ignorance of differences in customs and protocols, get in the way of opening our minds, ears, and hearts when a generous invitation has been extended to learn and connect. That we should get over ourselves and reciprocate. I can imagine that by the time Ormsby wrote her introduction—one hundred years after the niece of Quinisco kindly dropped by to try to keep an isolated, settler woman company—there had been so many rejections, so many hurts, so much damage done, that Margaret Ormsby neither received a visit from (nor did it occur to her to set out and visit, herself) the authorities “on the life and customs of the Indians of the Similkameen region.”

The artwork Privilege Protectors was, in part, inspired by Susan Allison’s recollection of this particular visit. White, porcelain teacups “made in England” are not used, in this construction, to offer tea (fig. 28). Instead, they compose a piece of equipment used to protect one’s worldview. When worn over the ears, they effectively block the ability to listen to anything outside of the oceanic sounds of their own circulatory system. One becomes more isolated in their own “echo chamber.”

I exhibited Privilege Protectors in a few different formats. For one exhibit, I utilized them in a participatory art happening where the audience was asked to put them on and “play a game of cards” (fig. 29). The cards utilized were the Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth Fact Cards that I created, which are composed of historical facts and statistics revealing oppressions brought about through colonialism and the Indian Act in Canada (fig. 30). While playing, the participants consumed tea and ate cookies. The effect of this while wearing the cups over one’s ears is the echo of one’s circulatory system and chewing and swallowing. These sounds contribute to the inability to hear the reading of the fact cards. Eventually, it becomes clear that one must remove the Privilege Protectors in order to step outside of one’s own worldviews or “echo chamber.”
another instance, I exhibited *Privilege Protectors* in an installation format. The hearing protectors are present as 3-D objects and as drawings on a gallery wall and floor. Reminiscent of instruction manual illustrations, the hearing protectors are depicted as being removed and discarded into a pile (fig 26-27). Both exhibitions speak to the hope for Settler transformation through learning to step outside of our protective worldviews and listen to Indigenous truths.

### 10.2 Listening

Stepping outside our worldviews and learning to listen to Indigenous perspectives is a task we are called upon to do by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *What We Have Learned* 115). But it is challenging. It requires us to open ourselves up to hear painful truths which, once comprehended, make it painfully obvious we have benefited from the oppression of others. We aren’t entirely as we like to think we are, and we need to change our ways. When we begin to hear these things, like the porcelain teacups themselves, we are fragile:

...we are apt to protest that we did not know. But we did know something—enough to ignore the situation in the first place, to avoid paying attention to it. We knew enough to know we did not want to know more. We did not know because we did not want to know. We did not want to know because the truths we would face would be unpleasant and incompatible with our favoured picture of ourselves, and they imply a need for restitution and redress, threatening our rather comfortable way of life. (qtd. in Regan 45)

We can all relate, on some level, to what it means to close our ears to the concerns, complaints, or cries of someone who has been hurt by something we’ve done, or to be on the receiving end of someone who is closed to listening to our hurts and concerns. But closing ourselves off to hearing concerns doesn’t protect us as we may hope. In desperately avoiding the sting of shame, we become more isolated, hard and brittle. We also miss the opportunity to learn from our mistakes, so we can transform and, hopefully, improve.
Though I’m not an expert in listening and have my own difficulties with it to overcome, I wrote about observations and the importance of it in context with the *Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth* collective’s series of discussions and work:

Listening requires curiosity. Openness. Non-judgment. A suspension of agendas, assumptions, opinions, and worldviews. A willingness to truly know what someone wants to express, regardless of how it might make us feel or what we may need to sacrifice. It requires non-defensiveness, non-deflection. And if we are able to lower our defences to truly listen, a space is opened within us to experience understanding, empathy, and connection. Only when this space is made can we begin to build a foundation of trust to collaborate and develop a positive plan of action. It is space with potential for healing, growth, and transformation. (*Artist’s Statement 5*

**10.3 White Privilege**

The concept of “White Privilege” and “White Fragility” informed the artwork *Privilege Protectors*. These are tied to the construct of Whiteness Studies and first made popular by scholar Peggy McIntosh in the 1980s. McIntosh wrote an article titled *White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women’s Studies*. The paper contains 46 examples of white privilege, one example of which is “I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race” (McIntosh 30-36).

The paper was very influential. In an interview conducted 24 years after being written, Peggy McIntosh explained why she thought the article had received so much attention: “I think it was because nobody else was writing so personally, and giving such clear examples, drawn from personal experience, which allowed readers to understand this rather complicated subject without feeling *accused*” (qtd. in Rothman).

Dr. Robin DiAngelo is a consultant on issues of racial and social justice. Her research is focused on Whiteness Studies. She describes the concept of White Fragility as referring to a lack of resilience that people in North America, who are part of a dominant group (and predominantly light-skinned), display when exposed to perceptions, expressions and actions which challenge
the status quo and expose its racialization. She explains that “White Fragility may be conceptualized as...a response or “condition” produced and reproduced by the continual social and material advantages of the white structural position.” In other words, we are unaccustomed to hearing about ourselves in racialized terms. This is because of the dominant, comfortable, privileged, ubiquitous, largely unchallenged position we enjoy. In this position, we can imagine ourselves as “universal” and therefore, “free from the psychic burden of race in a wholly racialized society” (DiAngelo 60). She observes that our lack of tolerance and resilience, which has arisen from not having had to build endurance to discuss racial discomfort, results in resistance to hearing perspectives that are critical of tenets of white culture, which have resulted in oppression. This lack of endurance can take the form of “shutting down and/or tuning out, indulgence in emotional incapacitation such as guilt or ‘hurt feelings’, exiting, or a combination of these responses” (DiAngelo 58-62).

These responses can get in the way of listening and continuing with important work. I’ve struggled with these responses in myself. It’s an ongoing challenge to parse out when I’m being defensive because I’m confronted with information or critique that disrupts a more favoured view I have of myself, or when I’m being defensive because I’ve come across concepts that seem potentially injurious. I do not mean injurious to privilege or ignorance, but to something more foundational. It seems clear that when people are used to ease, they expect ease, and are less tolerant of difficulty and challenge. As discussed, this is part of White Privilege, and we can learn that just because we feel confronted does not mean we should abandon efforts in reconciliation. It can be challenging to find oneself in a framework that suggests that all responses of defensiveness or questioning of ideas from a light-skinned person can be ascribed to White Fragility, when it might be grounded in deeper concerns, such as the oppressions that essentializing can lead to. Integrity, reflexivity, and open dialogue are crucial. We need to be honest, adaptive, to keep talking, and we need to keep listening.

Unfortunately, the concept of “White Privilege” has become—like so many essential concepts—reduced to an unnuanced meme when dispensed by mainstream and social media. This reduction can stunt useful dialogue. Though the idea has gained more public exposure on social media, it
circulates largely uncontextualized and unexplained by the research that composes the field of Whiteness Studies, and “dialogue” is more reactive than constructive.

10.4 Social Media’s Impact on Our Ability to Listen

The internet and social media help marginalized voices and ideas find a platform. Importantly, this challenges the status quo in ways that could potentially lead to transformation. The Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth initiatives were shared much more widely through online exposure. But while the internet has granted valuable access to new platforms, perspectives, and information, the “free” advertising-model social media is based on creates substantial problems that lead to destructive polarization.

Computer scientist, philosopher, and Silicon Valley founding father of virtual reality, Jaron Lanier, discusses how social media is damaging society and negating our ability to have nuanced conversations with each other. He explains that the advertising model of social media platforms, which are “free” to consumers, are actually in the business of selling their consumers’ information to the advertisers, who are their true (and paying) customers, and this is extremely expensive to the well-being of society. The more the customer advertisements are seen, the more the customers spend, so companies who run the platforms (Facebook/Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) do all they can to keep people hooked on their platforms. Everything that can be utilized to feed the addiction is used. The classic bell, the “like,” the “tweet,” which has everyone salivating like Pavlov’s dog, come directly from behavioural sciences and classical conditioning. Powerful computer processors are learning what we are interested in and what keeps us hooked, and stream us ever-more tailored and addictive content. This feed has the manipulative effect of leading us down incrementally radicalized rabbit holes (Lanier 25-28).

This manipulation is not the destructive masterplan of evil villains, but the damaging effect of algorithms set to circulate content that receives the most attention. Unfortunately, the content which gets the most attention on social media is that which provokes short-term behavioural response. Content that produces emotions like anger, frustration, aggression, jealousy, fear,
disgust, outrage, satisfaction and sexual response is the content that gets rewarded and circulated the most. The algorithms look for the easiest way to keep our attention, and it happens that the material which triggers our most base instincts is what keeps us engaged. Content geared to valuable long-term behavioural responses required for gaining nuanced understanding, such as compassion, empathy, trust, commitment, contemplation, don’t make the rounds. David S.H. Rosenthal, retired chief scientist of the LOCKSS Program at Stanford University, said:

The digital economy is based upon competition to consume humans’ attention. This competition has existed for a long time…but the current generation of tools for consuming attention is far more effective than previous generations. Economies of scale and network effects have placed control of these tools in a very small number of exceptionally powerful companies. These companies are driven by the need to consume more and more of the available attention to maximize profit. This is already having malign effects on society….Even if these companies wanted to empower less-malign effects, they have no idea how to, and doing so would certainly impair their bottom line. Thus these companies will consume more and more of the available attention by delivering whatever they can find to grab and hold attention. The most effective way to do this is to create fear in the reader, driving the trust level in society down. (qtd. in Anderson 5-6)

As one of the early architects of the internet, Lanier has a deep understanding of the way social media operates. From an inside track, he has watched its unfolding. Lanier has observed how it impacts us. In his book Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now, he explains how a common scenario is that young idealists, who genuinely want to create positive change in the world, turn to social media to spread their message. They can come from all walks of life, “liberal, conservative, or anything.” Lanier explains:

They meet early successes, often spectacular, ecstatic successes, but then the world turns sour, as if by magic. [Advertisement-model social media] ultimately fuels loudmouthed assholes and con artists more than it does the initial groups of hip, young, educated idealists, because in the longer term [it] is more suited to sneaky, malevolent manipulation than to any other purpose…

[Advertisement-model social media] studies early idealists and catalogs their quirks by its very nature, without an evil plan. The results have the unintended effect of lining idealists up so that they can be targeted with shitposts that statistically make them just a little more irritable, a little less able to communicate with dissimilar people, so a little more isolated, and after all that, a little less able to tolerate moderate or pragmatic politics.
[It] undermines the political process and hurts millions of people, but so many of those very same people are so addicted that all they can do is praise [advertisement-model social media] because they can use it to complain about the catastrophes it just brought about. It’s like the Stockholm syndrome or being tied to an abusive relationship by invisible ropes. The sweet, early idealists lose, all the time thanking [social media] for how it makes them feel and how it brought them together. (Lanier 110)

As people are exposed to less investigative, objective, nuanced and balanced information, and increasingly extreme versions of their own beliefs (and exaggerated versions of those beliefs different than their own), they become more extreme in their thinking, even radicalized. This radicalization, unsurprisingly, has a very negative and polarizing effect on society. Former vice president of user growth at Facebook, Chamath Palihapitiya has said:

The short-term, dopamine driven feedback loops we’ve created are destroying how society works….No civil discourse, no cooperation; misinformation, mistruth. And it’s not an American problem—this is not about Russian ads. This is a global problem….I feel tremendous guilt….so we are in a really bad state of affairs right now, in my opinion. It is eroding the core foundation of how people behave by and between each other. (qtd. in Lanier 9)

Rather than revolutionizing the financially lucrative system, the companies running the social media platforms are trying to mitigate this negative and polarizing system, without giving up their financial profit, by changing ‘recommendation algorithms’ that downplay extremist content (Friedersdorf). This cannot ultimately fix the problem, but instead sends it underground where people can no longer communicate and air their thoughts and feelings. It also puts censorship into the hands of the media companies, which is a problem. It also creates a situation where people feel oppressed and unheard, and where anger festers without the checks and balances offered in the open forum of the town square. This open forum can help many individuals better find their way.

Indeed, I felt most discouraged, upset, and tempted to abandon my efforts when the world seemed filled with hateful, unjust, unnuanced concepts as influenced by circulations on social media. What helped me overcome my reactivity to what I was seeing was taking the advice of Jaron Lanier and deleting my social media account. I was not a particularly “big user” of social media, but even so, once I deleted my account, over time, my reactivity faded. I was able to
re-ground myself in the efforts, understandings, and trust built with the people and physical world around me—a far more nuanced world, where people can see, feel, and compassionately respond to each other’s true intentions and emotions. And a place where long-term emotional investments are cultivated.

Lanier explains that in the online environment, which is neither pro-right or pro-left but rather “pro-paranoia, pro-irritability, and pro-general assholeness,” we are creating an insensitive world where it is increasingly difficult to have an honest, open conversation about complex subjects (Lanier 115). We are building a world where we gain points through being extreme and vitriolic. Sometimes the vitriol is obvious, and sometimes it is cloaked in the guise of virtue. On the one hand, people can say awful things without the tempering influence of seeing and feeling the emotional responses of those who the words hurt. On the other hand, many people have become afraid to discuss what they think or feel for fear they will be attacked, misunderstood or mislabeled. In a Vox article, German Lopez expands on this situation:

…many white Americans feel like they can’t even talk about how they feel due to what they call “political correctness.” Michelle Goldberg, a columnist at Slate who’s interviewed dozens of people at Trump rallies, wrote that she consistently heard this from Trump supporters: “Again and again, people told me how much they resented not being able to speak their minds, though none of them wanted to articulate what exactly they were holding in. They said they hated being shamed on social media, though they usually didn’t want to say what they had been shamed for.”

The undertone here is that a lot of Trump supporters want to be able to say racist, sexist, or otherwise bigoted things without consequence.

But another possibility is that these people want to be able to speak about issues—sometimes in a clumsy, accidentally offensive way, because they just don’t know the new language for these topics—without being shamed. Writing them off as simply racist, sexist, or otherwise bigoted only makes them feel like their actual concerns about the economy, state of the country, size of government, and so on are going ignored....(Lopez, The battle over identity politics)

Open discussion—talking and listening—remains the way we work things out non-violently. It is our best alternative to sorting out our differences by bludgeoning each other, which, of course, only serves to cultivate stronger differences.
10.5 Problems with Us/Them-ing

Here, I spend some time relaying the findings of neuroscientist and biologist Robert M. Sapolsky on the human tendency to form dichotomous groups. I focus on this because it directly relates to the Indigenous/Settler dichotomy my work examines. His work sheds light on how such groupings form, how they become inflamed, and how we can mitigate the tendency to form oppressive groups. This understanding is relevant to the work of reconciliation. We can overlay Sapolsky’s work on to the findings of Jaron Lanier, discussed in the previous section, to see how the tendency of Us/Them-ing becomes exacerbated through the polarizing algorithms of social media.

If the possibility of bludgeoning each other to try to sort out our differences seems remote or dismissible, we should consider that generations who have not lived through war or extreme conflict, who live in a relatively stable society, too easily take stability for granted. War might seem distant, belonging only to other times, other places, or other people. It is sobering to consider that only twenty-five years ago, one out of every seven Rwandans (over 1,000,000 people) were killed in genocide between the Hutus and the Tutsi. This genocide was spurred-on by fear and hate spread by the mass media (radio). These people, who had been living with and alongside one another (sharing food, children, and functioning as neighbours, colleagues, and family) turned on one another with machetes and objects wielded as weapons for a span of almost one-hundred days. Men, women and children were murdered. “Rivers ran red, not just metaphorically” (Sapolsky, *Behave* 572).

Only a few years before the genocide occurred, professor of biological and neurological sciences at Stanford University, Robert Sapolsky, spent time in Rwanda studying mountain gorillas on its border with the Congo. During his time there, he interacted with the people of Rwanda and found them both kind and generous. After the genocide happened, he realized almost everyone he met would have ended up dead, killers and/or refugees. The shocking discord between the kindness and generosity he experienced from the people of Rwanda, and the horrors that occurred between them shortly after, contributed to his writing his book on human behaviour *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst*. As a neuroendocrinologist, Sapolsky understands all humans
are capable of this kind of behaviour and hopes to spread scientific knowledge about the human condition to better equip our conscious understandings to prevent such tragedies (571-573).

Sapolsky explains humans have a universal, hard-wired, tendency to form Us/Them dichotomies and to favour the former group. He explains that this tendency (which he refers to as Us/Them-ing) combined with essentializing, can lead to terrible oppressions. Sapolsky informs us that our brains form Us/Them dichotomies from a very young age, automatically and unconsciously (though, as I will explain in more detail, these dichotomies are not inevitably categorized). These dichotomies are based on factors ranging from identifiable physical traits to psychological traits such as values, beliefs and ideologies. Though these psychological traits are invisible, they become tied to arbitrary, but identifiable markers like dress, ornamentation, or accents. We begin to link these arbitrary markers to meaningful differences in values and beliefs. Eventually, like Pavlov’s dog, we are conditioned to associate a marker with a reward (through association with Us), until the marker itself becomes rewarding (as exemplified in the example of Pavlov’s dog, through the pleasurable dopamine hit that begins to accompany the bell, even in the absence of food). At this point, “an arbitrary symbol of an Us core value gradually takes on a life and power of its own, becoming the signified instead of the signifier. Thus, for example, the scattering of colors and patterns on cloth that constitutes a nation’s flag becomes something that people will kill and die for” (390-391). Sapolsky goes on to explain that essentialism is a slippery tendency, accentuating Us/Them-ing:

Essentialism is all about viewing Them as homogenous and interchangeable, the idea that while we are individuals, they have a monolithic, immutable, icky essence. A long history of bad relations with Thems fuels essentialist thinking—“They’ve always been like this and always will be.” As does having few personal interactions with Thems—after all, the more interactions with Thems, the more exceptions accumulate that challenge essentialist stereotyping. But infrequency of interactions is not required….

(Sapolsky, Behave 399)

Sapolsky explains essentialist thinking quickly leads to dehumanization and pseudo-speciation, and that these are “the tools of the propagandists of hate.” When humans separate into groups and then cultivate conceptions of Us/Them, we are primed to prioritize Us and dehumanize
They. We consider Us as “noble, loyal, and composed of distinctive individuals whose failings are due to circumstance. Thems, in contrast, seem…ridiculous, simple, homogenous, undifferentiated, and interchangeable. All frequently backed up by rationalizations for our intuitions” and used to justify oppression of all kinds (404).

Us/Them-ing is found innately in each individual but becomes even more pronounced in groups. The tendency becomes fueled by markers (symbols and metaphors) we have psychologically ascribed significance to. These markers may serve to either inflame or recategorize Us/Them groupings. Though Us/Them-ing is hard-wired, there is still hope in that these recategorizations are not inevitably based on particular traits or symbols/metaphors. In other words, we are not inevitably bound to group into Us based on ethnicity or class, for example. We can re-group as Us based on more expansive, meaningful, and constructive concepts (553-579).

Inflammations of Us/Them-ing are most acutely exemplified by killings which occur over flag or gang colours, or religious symbols. Recategorizations are exemplified through Us groupings that prioritize different concepts over other Us/Them divides. Sapolsky offers several examples of this. One is the World War I Christmas Truce:

This is the famed event where soldiers on both sides spent the day singing, praying, and partying together, playing soccer, and exchanging gifts, and soldiers up and down the lines struggled to extend the truce. It took all of one day for British-versus-German to be subordinated to something more important—all of us in the trenches versus the officers in the rear who want us to go back to killing each other. (Sapolsky, Behave 410)

Another example Sapolsky puts forward is the My Lai Massacre, which he describes as probably the most horrifying event during the Vietnam War:

A brigade of American soldiers went into an undefended village full of civilians and killed between 350 and 500 of them. Mass-raped women and children…mutilated bodies…it was appalling. It was appalling because it occurred. Because the government denied it. Because the U.S. government eventually did nothing more than a slap on the wrist. And appalling because it was almost certainly not a singular event…. [A] man
[named] Hugh Thompson…stopped the My Lai Massacre. He was piloting a helicopter gunship, landed there, got out, and saw American soldiers shooting babies, shooting old women, figured out what was going on, and he then took his helicopter and did something that undid his lifetime of conditioning as to who was an Us and who was a Them: he landed his helicopter in between some surviving villagers and American soldiers and he trained his machine guns on his fellow Americans and said “If you don’t stop the killing, I will mow you down.” (Sapolsky, The Biology of Our Best and Worst Selves 13:35 – 14:46)

With this ability to recategorize in mind, we can take hope in understanding that Us/Them groupings are not set in stone. We can transform and expand our sense of Us. We can expand it to include all of humanity, depending on what concepts we are prioritizing. We should understand that Us/Them-ing is not a hard-wired tendency limited only to certain people, but present in all of humanity. Knowing this, we shouldn’t be too quick to dismiss someone’s knee-jerk reaction to what appears to be an Us/Them-ing concept such as “Whiteness Studies” as simply coming from a place of “White Fragility.” It’s crucial and understandable that people are deeply concerned about what can happen through the cultivation of Us/Them-ing. History has shown the devastation it can bring, over and over again. At the same time, we cannot dismiss identity politics as an essential construct for understanding divisions of groups and power dynamics, and for analyzing the specifics of how one group Them another group. We need special lenses through which we can see and explain what can otherwise seem invisible through the ubiquity of dominant groups.

Robert Sapolsky has said that although all humans innately Us/Them, we should study not only the horrors these dichotomies can bring when inflamed, but, more constructively, how we have the power to consciously transform these groupings and expand our sense of self and Us:

…We [have] this inevitable cliché: “Those who don’t study history are destined to repeat it.” What we have [to consider] is the opposite of it: “Those who don’t study the history of extraordinary human change, those who don’t study the biology of what can transform us from our worst to our best behaviours, those who don’t do this are destined not to be able to repeat these incandescent, magnificent moments. (Sapolsky, The Biology of Our Best and Worst Selves 14:55–15:21)
The members of *The Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth* collective, and those who joined in our efforts felt some of these incandescent moments. It was the feeling found in the positive transformation into a more expansive sense of Self/Us. This feeling speaks to the power of collaborating on big goals and higher goods (Przybille, *Reflections on Rethink 150*). All of this speaks to the vital need to not shut each other down through shaming and naming, but to keep openly talking, listening, visiting, and working together. We must not attempt assimilation but must keep trying to understand one another in nuanced ways, with resilience—so that we do not retreat. We must stay to learn where the other is coming from. We must take care not to let a focus on our common humanity blind us to seeing power dynamics that need redress, but we should also not lose sight of the Big Us. To adapt an adage, we can focus on the forest and the trees.

### 10.6 The Importance of Freedom of Expression

An essay by Albert Einstein titled *Freedom, Its Meaning* was originally published in 1940, when Fascist and Nazi regimes in Europe were attacking freedoms of many kinds, including freedom of expression. Einstein observed that we needed not only laws to uphold this freedom, but also a felt understanding that society, as a whole, valued and welcomed this freedom of expression and communication:

> By freedom I understand social conditions of such a kind that the expression of opinions and assertions about general and particular matters of knowledge will not involve dangers or serious disadvantages for him who expresses them. This freedom of communication is indispensable…In the first instance, it must be supported by law. But laws alone cannot secure freedom of expression; in order that every man may present his views without penalty, there must be a spirit of tolerance in the entire population. (Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions* 31-32)

We live in different times, but freedom of communication is no more dispensable than it was in World War II. Humanity will always have a great deal to work out. If we can’t openly talk about our concerns, ideas and problems—what will we resort to in attempting to sort them? Even if poor and destructive ideas are not given space to be aired in the
public forum, how can they be exposed for the destructive ideas they are to the minds and hearts who carry them? Or to those who might adopt these ideas if they are only expressed in dark places, where other voices are not present?

Early in our initiatives, the Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth collective discussed the need to keep the lines of communication open on our Facebook page. We anticipated we would receive unsavoury comments, but we decided that, though everyone is at different places in their understanding, it is only through allowing honest, even if difficult, discourse that real change in perspectives can occur.

However, the effects of advertisement-model social media must be taken into consideration, and ultimately, reformed, for the online discourse to be constructive rather than destructive. As Jaron Lanier has said:

Online, we often have little or no ability to know or influence the context in which our expression will be understood….you don’t know the context in which you are expressing anything and you have no reliable way of knowing how it will be presented to someone else.

This problem has become almost invisible, like air. We have given up our connection to context. Social media mashes up meaning. Whatever you say will be contextualized and given meaning by the way algorithms, crowds, and crowds of fake people who are actually algorithms mash it up with what other people say….Speaking through social media isn’t really speaking at all. Context is applied to what you say after you say it, for someone else’s purpose and profit.

This changes what can be expressed. When context is surrendered to the platform, communication and culture become petty, shallow, and predictable. You have to become crazy extreme if you want to say something that will survive even briefly in an unpredictable context. Only asshole communication can achieve that. (Lanier 65)

10.7 Expanding Our Sense of Self/Us

Though we innately Us/Them, we are not doomed to do this in destructive ways. For peace, we must always endeavour against the tendency. Robert Sapolsky explains there are situations that exacerbate or lessen Us/Them-ing. Studies have shown that when you prime subjects with
negative stereotypes of Thems, you increase racial bias. However, when you prime subjects with counter-stereotypes, implicit racial bias is persistently lessened. These studies show that our “automatic” tendency to Us/Them does not indicate an “inevitable” response. *(Behave* 418-419).

Sapolsky explains there are ways through which our implicit biases can be decreased: 1) Taking another’s perspective (listening to the experiences of others can help us better imagine these perspectives, such as listening to Residential School Survivors’ testimonies). 2) Consciously focusing on counterstereotypes. 3) Making implicit biases explicit, or in other words, showing people evidence of their automatic biases (this is a supporting argument for what Identity Politics tries to do to fight prejudice). 4) Bringing Us-es and Thems together, where there is lengthy contact on neutral, benevolent territory and where everyone is working on a superordinate goal they mutually care about *(Behave* 419-420). Reconciliation can be such a “superordinate” goal in Canada. And endeavouring against climate change and environmental destruction is best seen as a *world-wide, inter-cultural*, superordinate goal.

Sapolsky suggests it is evident that essentialist thinking (thinking of Thems as homogenous, simple, unchangeable) can be tempered through individuation. In other words, thinking of Thems as individuals helps us identify them as an Us. Individuation is proven to be a powerful tool against implicit biases *(Behave* 420). This evidence suggests why dichotomous/binary frameworks, such as those presented by Fanon, or Tuck and Yang, might foster implicit biases. When we lock individuals or groups into a frame of reference that is essentialized, we run the risk of pushing solutions based on mistaken identities.

Sapolsky tells us that steepening hierarchies worsens Us/Them-ing. The need for justification of privilege motivates the stereotyping of the oppressed. This includes blatantly negative stereotypes of the subordinate class, which are cultivated to maintain the dominant class’ sense of superiority. But it also includes “positive” stereotypes of the subordinate class. Positive stereotypes are sometimes utilized by the dominant class to help “the powerful feel self-congratulatory about their presumed benevolence, while the subordinated are placated by the sops of respect” *(Behave* 421). This is a reminder of the limitations of evoking empathy (through
the arts, or through other means) in the dominant class. Again, reconciliation cannot end with establishing understanding and empathy towards Indigenous culture, though it can begin there.

Figure 26 Przybille, Crystal. Privilege Protectors. 2017. Mixed Media Installation. Collection of the Artist

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Figure 27 Przybille, Crystal. *Privilege Protectors*. 2017. Detail of Mixed Media Installation. Collection of the Artist

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Figure 28 Przybille, Crystal. *Privilege Protectors*. Detail of Mixed Media Installation. Collection of the Artist

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Figure 29 Participatory Art with *Privilege Protectors* and *Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth* fact cards, 2018

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille

Figure 30 Przybille, Crystal. *Rethink 150: Indigenous Truth Fact Cards*. 2017. Printed Cardstock

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Chapter 11: *Listening to the River*

For my thesis exhibition, I utilized *Privilege Protectors* and a plaster version of *VIEWPOINT* in a new art installation titled *Listening to the River* (fig. 31-33). The pieces are reimagined to allude to the hope and potential for the transformation of Settler society. The installation draws upon my dream of the Beautiful River and the importance of the collective endeavour to protect nature as part of reconciliation. It speaks to the importance of discarding destructive worldviews and learning to listen to Indigenous worldviews. It reminds us of the importance of internalizing Indigenous values and knowledge systems to develop a reciprocal relationship with nature.

In *Listening to the River* the teacup hearing protectors are de-utilized as barriers to listening in a progressive format that cascades down the gallery wall. The installation continues, river-like, past stumps and stacks of soil packaged in oily black plastic, and across the gallery floor. Here, the cups become utilized differently. Some become discarded and broken, while others become containers for soil in which pinecones and trees are planted (fig. 31). As the river progresses, angles transform into more curved, organic lines. The teacups break down further, past a defunct surveyor’s tripod, eventually disintegrating into the soil from which trees sprout and grow.

The transforming river runs across the floor until it hits another wall. Here, the *VIEWPOINT* plaques are mounted in a column. The letters on the plaques, which compose the place-claiming poem, also disintegrate into soil. As this disintegration occurs, a video projection of an animated tree emerges from the earth and grows up and over the plaques. The trees in the installation are Ponderosa pines, a variety Indigenous to, and abundant in, the Okanagan. Ponderosa pines grow on Knox Mountain, where the *VIEWPOINT* plaques were installed over the original bronze plaques.

The process depicted in the installation speaks to the potential for the transformation of Settler society’s ways of being, and the re-centralization of nature. If we can learn to step outside of our damaging worldviews, and to remove the privilege protecting barriers we have developed, we can begin to learn from Indigenous cultures and cultivate different and more positive ways of being. As Jeannette Armstrong has suggested, we can learn to restore and “re-story” our
relationship with nature and “be a life-force…rather than being part of the social order of depletion and destruction” (Armstrong, Constructing Indigeneity 332-333).

For the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Jeanette Armstrong writes of the positive transformation which can occur through collaborating with Indigenous Peoples:

The act of “collaborating” with Indigenous peoples, on its own, would produce a transformative shift from a dominant framework of “control” toward instituting new ways of being. Such cooperation would be a crucial starting point of calling all peoples back to “Indigeneity” through forging new relationships of “coexistence” in land use practices and structuring new economies as a process of “restoring” Indigeneity to Peoples and lands. The “shift” that constructing such mechanisms would require would be tantamount to a pronouncement of justice for Indigenous Peoples as well as for all Peoples. (Armstrong, Indigenous Peoples)

Not long after I conceived of Listening to the River, I read Jody Wilson-Raybould’s book From Where I Stand. I was excited to read her words regarding the cultivation of a “new tree,” representing new ways of being. The symbols and words she used related directly to the concepts within the installation I had envisioned:

What we need to do together, Crown governments and Indigenous Peoples, and this work is long overdue, is dig up the dead roots and plant something new and then properly water and fertilize it. Entrenching the recognition of rights in federal and provincial laws, policies and practices—if done properly, in a way that recognizes the legitimate politics of Indigenous Peoples—is the soil for the new healthy roots of strong and rebuilt postcolonial Indigenous Nations and in which our collective and shared future will grow. A new tree. (Wilson-Raybould 196)
Figure 31 Przybille, Crystal. *Listen to the River*. Installation detail. 2019. Mixed Media

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Figure 32 Przybille, Crystal. *Listen to the River*. Installation detail. 2019. Mixed Media

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Figure 33 Przybille, Crystal. *Listen to the River*. Installation detail. 2019. Mixed Media

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Chapter 12: The chief sʷkn̓cut Monument

Here, we revisit the beginning as we near the end. The commission for the chief sʷkn̓cut Monument was first conceived during early conversations with Westbank First Nation about the Pandosy sculpture. The seed of the idea grew and was eventually brought by Westbank First Nation representatives to its leadership, discussed on multiple occasions, and voted upon. After the Pandosy sculpture was unveiled in 2012, Westbank First Nation commissioned me to create this correlative bronze monument of their historical leader at the time of early settlement—for chief sʷkn̓cut and Pandosy were contemporaries. It was an honour and a balm to me to be extended the opportunity to create a sculpture commemorating Indigenous culture and leadership that would be equivalent in scope and presence to the Pandosy sculpture.

Aware of the important trust being extended to me as a non-Indigenous artist by the Indigenous community, I had a sense of the responsibility and powerful learning opportunity I was being offered to inform and prepare myself to do the work meaningfully and well. The opportunity led to many transformational years of learning and engagement with Indigenous culture in the Okanagan. This learning involved text and artifact-based research, the reading of the captikʷl (as told by Mourning Dove, Harry Robinson and others), speaking with Syilx community members and elders, and attending Indigenous events and ceremonies.

During these years of research and preparation I underwent a divorce. Faced with the need to financially support myself and my son on the unsteady income of an artist, I determined to return to University to gain my Master of Fine Arts degree. This would enable me to move into a mentoring role and share my artistic understanding with a younger generation, and to deepen my understanding of Settler/Indigenous relations. I undertook my thesis work with a focus on reconciliation, which led to the thesis work addressed in this paper.

The chief sʷkn̓cut Monument embodies research and experiential learning gained over the span of a decade. Certain aspects of cultural ceremony and information leading to the creation of the sculpture are not appropriate to discuss here, but an information hand-out at the chief sʷkn̓cut Monument unveiling made some knowledge of the chief public:
Prior to 1876, before colonization and the imposition of the Indian Act, the syilx were a self-sufficient, self-governing people. Charlie sʷkn̓cut was the Village Chief of the Mission Creek area when the Okanagan faced both an influx of settlers and the imposition of the Indian Act. He was a modest individual with a high regard for peacekeeping and community balance, playing a vital role in maintaining communication that was vital to the syilx lifestyle. His Chieftanship correlates with the arrival of Father Pandosy, who came to the Okanagan in poor health, fleeing American Mercenaries and was nursed back to health by the syilx people. During his time as Chief, sʷkn̓cut maintained the central idea of peace between syilx people and settlers while balancing all aspects of community to his people.

Many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people were present at the unveiling of The chief sʷkn̓cut Monument on National Aboriginal Peoples Day, 2019. A bus brought Elders from the reserve across the lake to downtown. Okanagan canned salmon and other items were gifted by Westbank First Nation to the public. The sun was high in the solstice sky as the sculpture was unwrapped, then smudged with sage by Elder Grouse Barnes. Chief Roxanne Lindley and Mayor Colin Basran spoke. “Lindley said the event offered a chance to evaluate reconciliation and continue forward in the spirit of cooperation. ‘Everything is doable’, she said” (Mott, Statue of Historic Syilx Chief Unveiled).

The name “sʷkn̓cut” means “He who sees oneself” (Louis 261). chief sʷkn̓cut stands facing the narrows of Okanagan Lake—a traditional crossing point for the Syilx people, where the bridge between Westbank First Nation and the City of Kelowna is erected now. Unlike the turbulence and force conveyed through the expression and gesture in the sculpture of Father Pandosy—sʷkn̓cut is tranquil and at ease. His eyes are closed, and his arm raised in connection with the nature that surrounds him and to which he knows he belongs. He connects with nature despite the bustle of the city, reminding us of Indigenous history and presence on this unceded land, and inviting us to learn from Syilx culture and Indigenous ways of being.
Figure 34 Unveiling of *The chief s̱kn̓cut Monument*, 2019, with Westbank First Nation Chief Roxanne Lindley

Reprinted with permission of Roslyn Raina
Figure 35 Przybille, Crystal. *The chief sʷkal̓ut Monument*. 2019. Bronze. City of Kelowna Public Art Collection

Source: Crystal Kay Przybille
Chapter 13: Conclusion

Everyone who lives in Canada is involved, consciously or not, in complicated and oppressive situations established through colonialism. Though laws and perspectives change over time, there are systemic forms of oppression that continue and are embedded in, Settler society. It is useful to have tools for analysis of these relationships and situations to work towards remedying oppression in its different forms. We can work towards remedying oppressive situations through collaborative, interrelated endeavours in reconciliation, Indigenization and decolonization. This work must include tangible change, not merely a liberation of consciousness. These endeavours are vital for the positive transformation of self, Western society, non-Indigenous and Indigenous relations, and our environment.

The dualistic identity framework of Settler/Indigenous relationship, and also the construct of “Whiteness” studies are useful tools for analysis. They are useful as they help us to identify power dynamics that can otherwise be difficult to see, having become “normalized” through the status quo. They can help us see what is being left out of the dominant narratives and strategies for place-making. The frameworks can be confronting, in part, because they help us to see a view of ourselves, as Settlers, to which we are unaccustomed. They help us see that many privileges we enjoy are built on the oppression of others. They help us see we are not the peacekeepers we think ourselves to be (Regan 83-110). This can be both hard to see and to admit to. However, seeing and acknowledging these things can cut a green and “growing edge,” which, though painful, can lead to positive transformation for ourselves and others. The acknowledgements can lead us to search for new, conciliatory ways of being, which are not based on concepts of zero-sum games or conditions where “winning” for one mean loss for another, but can mean positive change for all.

Absolute, dualistic frameworks, such as those proposed by Fanon, and Tuck and Yang, should be considered for their usefulness as well as their limitations. Frameworks, such as those utilized by Regan, Battell Lowman and Barker, are also based on concepts of identity groups for addressing power imbalances and relations. However, these frameworks create more space for consideration of nuance, transformation, and complexities in identities and situations. In this way, I believe
they are both less likely to trigger negative, reactive response, polarization, and essentialized Us/Them thinking and behaviour, and are more useful for more practical application and for generating meaningful discourse. There are grounded reasons for moving beyond “theories of violence” to not repeat or perpetuate destructive action. Identity Politics are essential for seeing oppressions that are invisible to certain groups because of their dominance and prevalence. But Identity Politics also create concerns in people because binary frameworks, along with essentialization, reinforces Us/Them dichotomies that can lead to intolerance and dehumanization. This complexity reminds us we must keep in mind both the “forest and the trees” for a balanced and constructive approach.

Social media has helped minority voices find platforms to raise awareness of how minority groups are oppressed by majority/dominant groups. However, it is a tool that needs a foundational overhaul in order for the online discourse to be ultimately constructive, rather than destructive. This is especially important at a time when it is vital for humanity to be working together for the superordinate goal of environmental sustainability. The advertising-model of social media platforms prioritizes financial profit as bottom-line and presents ideas and communications out of context. The computer learning and algorithms are consistently and ever-more-sophisticatedly, analyzing and processing users’ information. The algorithms are set to maximize addiction, while rewarding the worst aspects of human emotional response, ultimately encouraging extremism and inflammatory and derogatory content. This creates a polarizing environment that reinforces essentialist, Us/Them thinking.

Rather than overhauling the lucrative system, the companies running the social media platforms are trying to mitigate this negative and polarizing system by limiting freedom of expression. This cannot fix the problem without creating significant new problems. It puts censorship—of a primary mode of public discourse—into the hands of the media companies. As a solution, we can take Jaron Lanier’s advice to step away from the lead-lined aqueducts of social media that we have come to defend and depend so much upon, but which are slowly poisoning us. By deleting our accounts, we can protest advertisement-model social media platforms until a substantially better model is put into place, where the users are the actual customers, and not the product being sold to advertisers (Lanier 25-28). These new platforms could be paid for through taxes and
offered to the public for free. Watchdogs must be put into place to ensure the system is never used for mass manipulations.

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has suggested, the arts can help people explore their identities, world views and attitudes that might interfere with healing, justice, and reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Honouring the Truth 280-83). The arts can be part of creative, powerful, non-violent approaches to decolonization. The arts have the power to evoke an emotional response in the viewer that can create a space in which we can re-negotiate and shape differences, ethics and approaches to being. However, art cannot be the end goal. Like an apology, art must be coupled with action for real change. Creating psychological and empathetic space through the arts for reconciliation is only useful if that space is then used to create meaningful and tangible shifts regarding approaches to land, resources and Sovereignty. Without action, art about reconciliation runs the risk of only placating and pacifying.

In becoming more conscious of the ongoing issues colonialism has created, we must choose how we respond to that awareness. The discourse is difficult, as it is bound to be when addressing complicated and harrowing situations and histories. Sometimes concepts and criticisms are confronting, and we must examine the nature of our responses and where they are coming from. Common responses to confrontation are fight, flight or freeze. However, there’s guidance in the words attributed to Baruch Spinoza: “Do not weep. Do not wax indignant. Understand.” In consideration of certain aspects that I’ve encountered within the discourse and my endeavours, I’ve wept and waxed indignant. But I’ve also found that it’s in finding one’s way past those initial responses and trying to understand and learn from different perspectives is where the power of transformation exists. This transformation is necessary for the good of all.

We should take steps in reconciliation thoughtfully, but also accept that mistakes are inevitable. If we can recognize when we’ve made mistakes, and carry on—always adapting our approach with our new understanding—we can grow and be useful. It is sometimes difficult to know when and if mistakes have been made. There are many different perspectives, sometimes conflicting, and it is sometimes hard to know who to listen to. We must open our minds, hearts and ears,
listen to feedback, ask questions, communicate! We must consider input for all we understand it to be, and in the end, let our conscience and integrity guide us. Avoidance of criticism is poor motivation.

In my experience, I need to feel I can bring myself to the table: my faults and strengths, my true thoughts and feelings. If I worry that I should suppress them in dialogue because I’m afraid they will be considered too uninformed, too ignorant, or too “white,” then how can I be honestly present in the endeavour? If I offer only a sycophantic façade, what am I offering? How long could I sustain such an offering? And how can genuine transformation of identity happen if there is no genuine identity brought forward, to begin with? This isn’t to say that one’s faults, strengths, thoughts and feelings need to take up too much space, or that they should not be put into perspective in order to focus on other things, but it’s to say that I believe one needs to feel they can be themselves, flaws and all, to do the work in a sustainable and integral way. In doing this, we need to be prepared to be wrong, to make mistakes, to apologize, to patch and repair, and to reflect and to shift along the way. Sometimes worrying about being wrong is something we need to overcome so that we can work on challenging things. I’ve felt fortunate to feel my complete self truly welcomed, and flaws understood, by the Syilx people I’ve worked beside.

I believe that if I’m asked by the Indigenous community to apply my artistic skills and abilities to a project that they have vetted and determined they want to be realized, then it makes sense for me to consider applying myself to that service. I believe there is strength and also incredible opportunities in asking the community how one might be useful to their endeavours. I trust the communication of the late Dr. Greg Younging, who suggested that work done at the request of, or in collaboration with, the Indigenous community through a vetted process does not constitute cultural misappropriation. These are reciprocal arrangements that can be powerful learning opportunities, through intercultural engagement, and can be useful experiences in reconciliation if approached responsibly.

Outside of creating artwork at the request of the Indigenous community, it can be helpful to develop and facilitate opportunities for Indigenous artists. This role may step outside that of being the art-making artist, but I have found it has welcomed a mentorship aspect, where I am
engaged at times as both mentor and mentee. This is a valuable learning experience and opportunity for reciprocity. It’s most clearly appropriate for me to make artwork that utilizes my own culture’s symbolism and imagery. This work can be useful for reconciliation through bringing to light Settler culture and worldviews that may be getting in the way of conciliatory ways of being and doing. However, this approach can more easily slip into a practice done in relative isolation. It’s important to continue to engage with, and learn from, the Indigenous community.

Though decolonization, Indigenization and reconciliation are challenging endeavours, I believe when we engage with each other by listening and learning about each other’s perspectives and worldviews, we can embody and practice kindness and reciprocity with one another in a way that can’t be done on a theoretical level. We can ground ourselves in our humanity and find comfort and courage with each other. When physically together, we can more fully understand each other through facial expressions and body language. We can look at each other and hear each other’s intonations. We can feel the energy someone brings and try to relate to each other through our shared humanity and genuinely develop an expanded sense of Us. It is especially important to develop this sense as we face substantial challenges and rapid changes of the modern world, including climate change.

Jaron Lanier has said that, in these times, when social media, the internet, and AI are becoming an increasingly significant, but unsatisfying part of our existence, we can “double-down on being human” (qtd. in Adams). Participating in the arts is a way of doubling-down on being human. Participating in ceremonies is a way of connecting with each other and with the land. Just as we develop a consciousness, connection, and embodied concern for people we spend time with, we develop the same things for nature and the environment by spending time in it. The feeling of connection will follow—a deeper relationship with ourselves, our families, each other, and with the land. This developed connection can fill the emptiness we persuade ourselves into thinking we can fill through other pursuits—pursuits which can lead to imbalance, consumption, isolation and significant loss.
In the endeavour of reconciliation, reading, writing, and making or viewing art can inform, inspire, and communicate transformative experience. However, it is through openly listening to and engaging with the Indigenous community that the understanding for positive transformation can be found. Transformation begins with a mental shift but must lead to action and tangible change that improves lives.

Despite the hurts inflicted upon the Syilx people through colonialism, past and present, all people are generously invited by the Okanagan Nation Alliance to respectfully engage in Syilx ceremony and to learn from and embody the environmental ethics carried deeply in Syilx culture (visit www.syilx.org/images/pdf/ONA_tourism_guide.pdf). Jeannette Armstrong highlighted the importance of engagement and learning from Indigenous culture to improve our state-of-being, and that of nature, which are vitally connected. In short, we must learn how to move beyond destructively Us/Them-ing each other, and Us/It-ing the environment. We can do this by working on the superordinate goal of reconciliation, which requires reconciliation with all of nature.

I conclude with Jeanette Armstrong’s words:

To transform the people-to-be, we must begin to raise up the pillars of how we need to relate to each other and how we need to relate to the land, in the minds of all who will hear… Transformation is necessary in order for ‘regeneration’ of the lands and ourselves to occur. (Armstrong, Literature of the Land 355)
Works Cited


Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Acknowledgement from Westbank First Nation

April 19, 2010

To whom it may concern:

As Research Curator for the Westbank First Nation (WFN), it is my pleasure to write this letter acknowledging the efforts of the Okanagan Historical Society to include Okanagan/Syilx voice in the planning of the Father Pandosy 150th Anniversary Commemorative Sculpture. This type of collaboration is extremely important in presenting a balanced perspective and interpretation of the history of Father Pandosy and the Pandosy Mission.

I, along with Ms. Delphine Derickson, WFN Cultural Advisor/Elder and fluent language speaker, have been asked to sit on the sculpture committee so that we might have input, especially regarding the narrative on the plaque and the imagery for the frieze. This is a groundbreaking step taken by the committee and it is my opinion that the final work created will therefore be a powerful depiction of the benefits of collaboration.

On a personal note, I am familiar with and have followed the work of artist, Crystal Przybille over many years and feel that she is the perfect choice to create such a work. Ms. Przybille took the initiative to contact WFN and include them in her research and made it clear that the sculpture created would honor both Euro Canadian and Okanagan Aboriginal history.

There are many reasons why I feel that this project could set a new benchmark for future collaboration between First Nations and Euro Canadians. Acknowledging Aboriginal voice, which has been adversely affected by colonization, residential schools, and trans-racial adoptions, is a huge step in understanding and healing. We are after all living here together. We are moving towards the future together, and that future must include the voice of Canada’s First People in understanding Canada, British Columbia and Kelowna’s past.

I congratulate the Sculpture Committee, the Okanagan Historical Society and the Pandosy Mission on taking this initiative.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at the email or number below.

Way’ Greetings and Lim lemp, Thank you.

Gayle Liman, Research Curator

[Signature removed to protect privacy.]

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