The journey of a kêhtê-aya (elder):

kiskisi sōhkisiwin, tāpōkēyimoh, sōhkītehē, nākatohkē:

Memorize the strength, have faith, have a strong heart, pay attention

Doctoral Video Dissertation Submitted to the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Curriculum Studies University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Canada

By

okimāw-asiniyiskwēw (Chief Stone Woman)

M.A. Linda Young, 2023

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Abstract

I am from Onion Lake Cree Nation. I am a nêhiyaw-iskwêw (Cree woman). My first language is nêhiyawêwin/Cree. I lived with my great-grandparents until I started residential school in 1956.

My PhD research is based on my belief in healing, reconciling, and reclaiming Indigenous education to benefit students, families, and communities. There is a critical need to explore the role of Elders in schools. How are they used and positioned, by whom, and why?

How can the education system move away from inviting Elders to check box-type activities and progress to having Elders acknowledged as having integral and continuous roles in schools where their knowledge is central to shaping and informing the unfolding curriculum being lived out with children and families? These are the questions that you will find explored and discussed in the videos that comprise the core of this dissertation, focused on discussions of the commodification and changing role of Elders; cultural trauma; artivism and reparation; and healing, reconciling, and reclaiming Indigenous education for the benefit of students, families, and communities.

As a methodological approach, I followed the teachings shared by my mother, who is central to this work. What I did, and how and when I did it, was led by following protocol, prayer/prayer songs, and the offering of tobacco; it guided every aspect of my journey. My daily work began with smudging and prayers, the tobacco led me to invite thought leaders for the four conversations, it inspired my bookwork, and it guided my thought processes and decision making throughout my doctoral journey. Each conversation began with smudging, prayer/prayer song, and the offering of protocol to the thought leaders so that our conversation would unfold in a good way, with open eyes, ears, minds, and hearts.

From January through December 2022, I spent one year in the field as an Elder/kêhtê-aya. I kept a journal of my Elder/Knowledge/Keeper requests and recorded my research to prepare for the commitment and my experience. This fieldwork was integral to planning and preparing for four video conversations with invited thought leaders. To fully understand the work asked of Elders it was necessary for me to immerse myself in the work of an Elder/Knowledge Keeper. I made a commitment to accept up to three protocol requests per week. Topics were varied from sharing opening prayers and comments, presenting on residential school history or treaties, and sitting on cultural advisory committees.
To prompt each conversation, I created a bookwork arising out of the conceptualization that became the focus. A bookwork is a non-book that relies on the viewer’s interaction with the object to make meaning. Each installation is a narrative that tells a story. Artists’ books, or bookworks, first emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as an expression of social and political activism, a way to “talk back” to mass production and mass media. Creating the bookworks required extensive research on the focus topic, including consulting with artists, art professors, curators and visiting art exhibits. Each bookwork took six months to a year to complete.

My video dissertation is a compilation of 10 videos: my introduction to the research journey, the four core conversations with thought leaders conducted in a talking circle format, each with a separate video introduction by me, and a culminating video that shares my research reflections. The videos have an accompanying transcript, in which I included the spoken Cree and I translated the Cree language into English. My doctoral work also includes an eleventh video which captures the gallery show I arranged and hosted at AKA Gallery in the Saskatoon community to profile the four bookworks and showcase the video dissertation.

In summary, the videos, the transcripts, the bookworks, and the gallery show are all integral pieces to my doctoral dissertation. Further, I have included a glossary of terms to accompany the viewing/reading of the videos and transcripts, and a bibliography for those individuals who want to pursue aspects of this work more deeply or for purposes that move forward their own work and thinking.
Acknowledgements

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ninanâskomâwak oki kêhte-ayak. I thank the kêhte-ayak/Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and artists who travelled to Saskatoon to participate in the conversations. I thank Wallace Awasis, Lyndon Linklater, Daniel Sangrey, and Joseph Naytowhow for their prayer songs. I thank Grant Young for smudging us and getting us started in a good way.

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Special thanks to Derek Sandbeck of AKA Artist Run Centre for the use of the gallery space and for his assistance in installing the bookworks dissertation exhibition.

My deepest gratitude to my husband Grant, who has been the backbone of all the Elder/Knowledge Keeper projects and commitments I have endeavoured to do. He has given me unconditional support without judgement or complaint.

To my sons-in-law, Michael and Josh, and my daughters-in-law, Melinda and Erin, for being supportive and good partners to my sons and daughters.
Dedication

I dedicate the PhD research and work I have traversed these past few years:

- to my mom, chupno, Ellizabeth Littlewolf, who is the epitome of resilience, strength, fortitude, and toughness;
- to my daughters, Lua and Nahanni, and my sons, Sean, Marek, and Marcel;
- to the five younger grandchildren, Nevaeh, Naima, Lee, Annabel, and Riley, who continue to remind me to stay focused on the reason for taking on the PhD and kehtê-aya journey;
- to my older grandchildren, Leighton, Kaleb, Keone, Mackenzie, and Maddison, who show me that the circle of trauma can indeed be broken and re-lived as a circle of living the good life, miyo pimâtiswin. I would also like to acknowledge two grandchildren, Zachry and Ashton, whom I have not yet met but keep in my prayers and heart. kakiyaw kimamicihinawâw, all of you make me proud.
Notes from the Researcher

I am from Onion Lake Cree Nation. I am a néhiyaw-iskwêw (Cree woman). My first language is néhiyawêwin/Cree. I lived with my great-grandparents until I started residential school in 1956.

I had seen white settlers before attending residential school, as my great-grandfather had friends who farmed near the reserve and would visit us occasionally. However, seeing nuns dressed in black with only their hands and faces showing was foreign to me and to add to my confusion, they spoke in a language I did not understand.

In residential school learning to speak, write, and read in English was often accomplished by shaming and punishing us, as Cree-speaking students, for not grasping the nuances of the English language quickly enough. A fellow student who was a year older would read to me, and through her caring mentorship, I learned to read, write, and speak in English by grade 2.

What Brought Me to This Research

In 2016, I attended a Saskatchewan Community Association in Education (SACE) Conference where Dr. Debbie Pushor gave the keynote address. Her comments about "gatekeepers" and schools as “protectorate” more than piqued my interest. Finally! Someone understood and could explain my experience in residential school in those two words. Having spent ten years growing up in an institution, what I heard and took away was the hope for educational and emotional reparation for the descendants of four generations of Residential School Survivors. The notion of “protectorate” is more than just a concept to reference and discuss; rather, it is the foundation through which the education community is invited to join what Pushor (2018) refers to as the “gentle revolution.”

Listening to Pushor's inspiring keynote address started me on my journey in pursuing a master's degree in curriculum studies first, and now this PhD. I not only wanted to participate in the “gentle revolution,” but I also wanted to understand better how I could be a player in this “gentle revolution” and what that would look like for Indigenous learners in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools.

With this in mind, I believe that as a nehiyaw iskwew/Cree woman, kohkom/grandmother, a chapan/great-grandmother and as a parent, it is my responsibility to share my education story as a way of supporting the work towards repairing the damage done to Indigenous families because of residential schools, in much the same way my Anishinaabe (Odawa) visual artist friend Barry Ace
talks about our inherent role as artists and what that means in the performance of a reparative act. In response to my question about his work in Paris, Ace wrote:

The reparation of those Anishinaabe dancers who succumbed to small-pox and who were buried in unmarked and unknown graves in Paris was so upsetting for me as an Anishinaabe (Odawa) dancer. I felt and still do that I had an innate responsibility, need and urgency to repair that tragic history, and long period of neglect where they lay abandoned and forgotten in a foreign land. I knew at that point in time that I had to find a way to ceremonially bring them home and back to the dance circle and back to our Anishinaabe homeland, which I did. For me, they were like fallen eagle feathers that were waiting to be retrieved. (Personal communication, January 2019)

I am of the belief that to create change in (perceived) achievement gaps, we have a communal responsibility to fully understand how we became, and continue to be, protectors and gatekeepers. And how we the colonized still (sometimes unknowingly) assume the position of having little or no strength/voice in the education of Indigenous learners, be they sons, daughters or grandchildren. When you grow up in an institution where the goal is to cut you off from your family, language, culture, and land by living in an environment structured to follow the rules, you become robotic in responding to your situation. You learn not to ask why, what, how.

As an adult, I have struggled with advocating for myself and have come to understand that one way I can learn is from others whose families are marginalized. In a chapter about LGBTQ parents, Kroeger (2008) wrote, “LGBTQ parents are not just assertive with school people, but push school change through activism to shape curriculum and school policy, and can exert considerable force upon the institution beyond their own child's classroom” (p. 124). When my daughters started kindergarten I looked for schools that had excellent kindergarten teachers because I felt that this was one way to ensure their long public education journey would be with a teacher who ignited in them a love of learning. As parents, Grant and I also attended every child’s parent/teacher meeting, whether it was elementary or high school. We wanted the school community to know we were paying attention. It was our way of protecting our children. I have had to unlearn silence and to learn to ask why, what, and how. My master's project, *acimowin Telling and Retelling My Residential School Story What Was Lost? What Replaced It? What is Needed to Heal, Reconcile, and Reclaim Indigenous Education for the Benefit of Students, Families, & Communities?* is comprised of a short and long video. These videos, which explore
my residential school experiences in order to look to future possibilities, are a reparative act intended to work toward school change.

When I first heard Dr. Momina Khan present her doctoral research at *Walk Alongside: A Parent Engagement Forum* (2018), I was struck by how she used poetry to talk back. I asked her if I could translate her words into Cree. I wanted to feel her words in Cree, to see if they transformed my perceptions of who I am, what I know, what I practice. In Khan’s (2018) poem, *The Art of Knowing*, she wrote:

You teach him how to speak English  
I teach him how to speak his voice.

You teach him how to share with others his culture  
I teach him how to live between two cultures.

You teach him how to read and write a story  
I teach him ways to tell and live his own story.

You teach him the way knowledge is acquired  
I teach him the way knowledge is imparted.

With Khan’s permission, I have inserted Cree into her poem:

You teach him how to speak English  
I teach him how to speak his voice  
*kiya kikiskinawamâw tânisi kâkayâsîmot.*

You teach her how to speak a different language.  
*I teach her how to speak up for herself.*

You teach him how to share with others his culture  
I teach him how to live between two cultures  
*kiya kikiskinawamâw kâ-wâpahtihat kotaka awiya nêhiyaw isîhcikêwina.*

You teach her to show others our nêhiyaw/Cree ways.  
*I teach her how to live two pathways.*
You teach him how to read and write a story
I teach him ways to tell and live his own story
kikiskinawamâw tânisi kâ-ayamihcikêt ekwa tânisi kâ -masinahikêt.

You teach her how to read and also how to write
maka nikiskinwahamawâw tânisi kâ-âcimot ekwa tânisi kâ miyo pimâtisit
But I teach her how to tell a story and how to live a good life.

You teach him the way knowledge is acquired
I teach him the way knowledge is imparted
kikiskinawamâw tânisi kakahtina kiskeytamawin
You teach her how to acquire knowledge.
    maka nikiskinwahamawâw tânisi kâ-âcâpacitât iyinisiwin kâ-mikosit.
    But I teach her how to use the wisdom that has been given.

Listening to Khan read her poem, as an artist and an academic, I was struck once again by the importance of using art to resist the pressure of being remade into a Canadian at the sacrifice of losing one’s language and culture. I needed to borrow her words and translate them into Cree so I could feel her powerful words.

**My PhD Research Journey**

I left my master’s experience, convinced that to heal, reconcile, and reclaim Indigenous Education for the benefit of students, families, and communities, there was a critical need to explore the role of Elders in schools. How are they currently being used and positioned, by whom, and why? How can the education system move away from token invitations to Elders to speak on Orange Shirt Day or Indigenous Peoples Day, check box type of activities in many instances, to have Elders be acknowledged through integral and continuous roles in schools where their knowledge is central to shaping and informing the unfolding curriculum being lived out with children and families? These questions became key in my PhD research.

**Methodology**

I followed my nêhiyaw/Plains Cree way of being and living as my approach to my research. I offered protocol to be taken into ceremony, along with my research intentions. It was with the Elders’ blessing that I began my journey.
I followed the teachings of my mother, who is central in this work. Protocol, prayer and the offering of tobacco, guided every aspect of my journey.

Field Work

From January through December 2022, I spent one year in the field as an Elder/kēhtē-aya/Knowledge Keeper. I kept a journal of all of my tobacco requests, accepting an average of at least one tobacco request each week, often many more than that. I recorded the research I did to prepare for the commitment and I detailed the experience of that commitment. This field work led to my planning and preparation of four conversations with invited thought leaders.

Recorded Conversations and Book Work

The Medicine Wheel, a standard visual tool Indigenous people use to share traditional teachings from their respective Nations, represents life cycles, seasons, cardinal directions, and elements, structured my planning of the four conversations. A child is understood to be born with four gifts actualized in the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental realms. These realms are reflected in the four cardinal directions on the Medicine Wheel that represent balance. With a focus on the four seasons and the four realms, I engaged with key conceptualizations, in dialogue with thought leaders, four times throughout the year.
Through prayer and offering of tobacco, I invited eleven individuals who are Elders, Knowledge Keepers, cultural advisors, artists, and educators to sit in conversation with me. Protocol opens up your mind and your heart so vastly that when an elder speaks, you cannot only conceptualize what that kêhtê-aya is saying, you can believe what that kêhtê-aya is saying. That's how big a medicine it is and always begins with that tobacco. That's why it's so important to have it to open up those doors when it comes to culture and those things. (Saddleback, Conversation 1)

To prompt each conversation, I created a book work arising out of that conceptualization. A book work is a non-book, not for normal reading but for thinking about, that relies on the viewer’s interaction with the object to make meaning. Each piece is a narrative that tells a story. Pushing the limits of the traditional book form and constructed using a wide variety of formats and materials, artists’ books first emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as an expression of social and political activism, a way to “talk back” to mass production and mass media (Nunn, 2019).

Below you will find a description of each video conversation and the bookwork that served as a provocation for the conceptualization being explored in the conversation.

**Conversation 1: Commodification, Urbanization, and Changing Role of Elders**

With thought leaders Wallace Awasis, Jerry Saddledback, and Jo-Ann Saddleback, we discuss the shifting roles and responsibilities of Elders, the effect of urbanization concerning what Elders are requested to do in different places, and the commodification of Elders. In 1994, The Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples stated very clearly that Elders must become an integral part of the learning process for Aboriginal children and youth. The report asserted that reinstating the Elders’ roles as the primary educators of Indigenous languages, history, land, and culture would require the removal of obstacles that discourage Elder participation in the schools.

Elders’ experiences that culminate in wisdom gleaned from their long years of living position them to be the true educators of those who would inherit all that was protected and maintained, the children. Elders are a vital link from one generation to the next and maintain continuity for the oral transmission of knowledge and practice. (Makokis et al., 2010)

For this book work, the art piece consisted of a photo transfer of text, a checklist of expectations from Elders’/Knowledge Keepers’ job descriptions, and expectations from sites that employ elders
in their organizations and institutions. Using found pieces in the art acknowledges that ancestral memory guides my work as a kêhtaya/older person.

**Conversation 2: Cultural Trauma**

With thought leaders Adrian Stimson and Nahanni Olson, in this second conversation we focus on an examination of cultural trauma—what it is, how it has marked Indigenous groups’ consciousness, and what meaningful reparation and rebuilding efforts to heal cultural trauma might entail.

The trauma and effects of residential schools are complex and intergenerational. Taking children away from their families, separating the generations, dismantling family structures, are acts of violence that are embedded in the collective memory and inform our contemporary experience. (Makokis et al., 2010)
In this second book work, I explore the impact of trauma on our physical bodies. Again, my mom is the central focus of this art installation. I work with all of the pills she is required to take for all of the various diseases affecting her well-being, and how foreign the medical terms and information about their purposes and side effects are to her. The art piece brings to light how deeply embedded the impact of intergenerational trauma is on our bodies.

Conversation 3: Artivism and Reparation

The combination of two words, activism and artist, name and describe the use of creative expression to cultivate awareness and social change. The three thought leaders who engaged with me in Conversation 3 come from very different experiences with artivism and reparation. The thought leaders in this conversation with me are Marek Tyler, a musician; Carey Newman, the artist who created The Witness Blanket for the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada; and Nina Wilson, one of the activists who prompted the Idle No More movement.

Artivism can convey a strikingly coherent message about the quintessential role of the arts in the prevention of systematic violence and provide examples of how art may be used as a grassroots tool for addressing political violence and human rights abuses. The impact of the Canadian Indian Residential School System and its corollary cultural trauma provides testament to the importance of this risk category. (Murphy, 2021)
Together we discussed how art is our narrative. It is a way to speak, to tell our stories, to share our thoughts, and even to protest or disagree with elements of our society. It is both a way to have voice and move people’s spirits.

For Conversation 3, my book work was the replication of a grub box, a practical object used by Indigenous families to store and transport food and items used for cooking as they camped and moved between encampments seasonally. I used photo transfer to transfer images of previous artworks, paintings, and sculptures I created. Subject matter in the artworks deals with residential schools, land, identity, language, Bill C31, the Gender Equality Act, and Treaty 6, all topics that were central in the conversations core to this doctoral research, all topics that have been part of intentions “to kill the Indian in the child.”
Conversation 4: An Examination of Lived Reconciliation in Schools.
How might Indigenous children, youth, parents, and families take space and claim power in schools?

With thought leaders Joseph Naytowhow, Delvin Kanewiyakiho, and Pauline Muskego, we explored our experiences as Elders and educators within schools and we imagined new possibilities for what can be done to ensure Indigenous children, youth, parents, and families are given a central place and voice that builds from pride in their identity, culture, and language.

The marginalized positioning and silencing that has occurred for decades has to stop. Pushor (2001) wrote, “Parents are silenced and kept submerged in a situation in which critical awareness and response are practically impossible.” She asserted that the “silencing of parents happens in many ways, not just by limiting their opportunities to speak or ask questions.” In the same way, The Pass System implemented by the Indian Agents gave permission to residential schools to control access to families, language, and traditional way of life. It created a culture of silence that lasted for generations.

What became evident is that our efforts to decolonize are often not to speak about colonization, but to engage in guerilla teaching. We work to enact a Cree discourse in action. Just as I hold a person’s hand when they present me with tobacco and ask me to provide a teaching, as Elders we all trust the tobacco. We share stories and we talk about the memory bank we possess. As we go back to the stories of our people, we talk about our historical ceremonies and we relate treaty teachings. We speak in kinship terms and we use our Cree words.

For the book work for Conversation 4, I created an art piece comprised of five boxes that represents five sectors in Canadian society—justice, commerce, health, social services, and education—that have had an historical impact on Indigenous students’ success. To explore reformation in education, it is apparent that it will take systemic and related reform in other human sectors of our society simultaneously.
Reflections on the Research Process

PEYAK
I am a teacher there /
slash elder
I teach the language so that they really talk like a
nehiyaw
not every elder is knowledgeable
in everything
namôya piko kêkway e kiskeyitaman maka kêkway kakisteyiman ka wihtamâtin
the tobacco opens the door
for me
to help you

All of our culture, language, traditions, practices, ceremonies
they all come from one source
our Creation Story
if the way in which we do business is not cultural
what you get is not culture
PROTOCOL
it’s such powerful medicine
it opens up your mind and your heart
a world that was invisible to you
becomes visible

Syllabics
The symbols Very structured Orderly System
Of our written tradition
We have our own traditional academia
The Old People
call it
the University of Nature
The qualifications that the elder had to possess
learned from his mosom, his capan
that level of consciousness of kêhtê
a field of knowledge that they know
inside out

NISO
We have survived trauma
Trauma gets entrapped
in our bodies our DNA
How long is it going to take to move through that trauma?
I have to go back
And unpack that trauma
And heal it
Through my art
to fully express and fully exorcise that history
I think about our ancestors
They provide strength
They are part of that historical DNA
At the root of it is LOVE
The importance of LOVE

I introduce myself with my identity from both sides of my family
BUT
I walk in this world as a Cree Woman
Issues of identity, cultural trauma, cultural resilience are important
the single most damaging thing that came out of residential was
the lack of love
A huge key to the healing is
healing through love and building relationships
the science around intergenerational trauma is the grandchildren are the ones who still had those genetic markers

It doesn’t have to be inherited by every generation.

Telling these stories, having these conversations, having people bear witness pouring the love all over that has really helped do that healing.

NISTO

Reclaiming, depixilating

A language I don’t understand

A perspective I haven’t heard

Trying to figure out

Repurposing, reframing into a contemporary way

Like the two stream analogy

An artist statement beside a piece of artwork

It’s a static statement It doesn’t change

Everyone reads the same piece

But then there’s the people’s experience with the work

The two streams running

Side-by-side

In this work of reclamation

Sometimes I feel like an interloper.

But if I’ve got my identity bundle open

I know I’m on and I’m following my instincts

That’s the map for me.

The Bentwood box

Our treasure box

Where we put culturally significant pieces

A kawatsi

The Art the Songs they’re about telling our Stories

Some of the work is facing out Other ones are facing in
If you’re honoring the underlying purpose of a thing
    Then it’s still doing it
I try not to determine or dictate what I want it to be for others
    It becomes an invitation
    And in that
    People can find their own meaning in it
    You can plant seeds
    It’s about practicing culture
    and then having those practices become the seeds
Bringing those things into relationship with each other the way we do in our ceremonies bringing
that kind of mindset into how we do research how we teach it kind of lifts the burden of trying to
change something you know is maybe intractable.

You have a map set out for you
    where you don’t have to fall off the edge
    and bang into this and that
Trauma is not just the only thing passed down
We are passed down something really profound
    when we have our language,
    when we start developing our language,
    when we know the origin of certain things,
    the fear starts falling away
Representation, whether it's artistic, political, all of it is related
when Idle No More happened, everyone and their dog was in the streets
    Keep doing your thing,
    whether you fit in a box or not, just keep doing it.
If your roots grow so big, you crack the foundations, crack them up, break it all apart.
    Let those tree roots come out and be what they are.

NEWO
    that's a new word, ëwako anima
Reconciliation

I have to face daily, the system, the institution that created the laws and policies to change my whole world when I was a little child

kiskisiwin, nâkatôhke, sôhkitêhe nâkatohkê,
those are beautiful words,
have a strong heart
be careful what you're doing
watch
be very watchful and have a good heart.

Those are very powerful words
I can understand those because I could feel them ni-kimôsihtân,
I can feel them in my body and then I can project them out

being a storyteller, being a musician, being a cultural knowledge keeper, ceremonial people,
I have to count my blessings.

We have been disrupted as nêhiyawak
and things have been put upon us without our consent, without our input

nêhiyaw names.
carry with a sense of pride,
something is attached to me that takes care of me
my touchstone in that healing is " nêhiyaw-pimâtisiwin, Cree way of life.
it's a constant process of reconciling

I see lived reconciliation within my own work as a teacher
It's our turn to teach our language
It's our turn to teach you how to smudge
It's our turn to teach you about ceremony,
It's our turn teaching you about our relations
three points to decolonize

asiskiywin, land based education,
wâhkôhtowin relationships, and
oskâpêwisîwin being of service.
I had hardly any confidence in myself 
this institution was able to give me a post-secondary education 
as you keep moving forward, that confidence grows 
It's like a healing journey 
our young people need encouragement 
We have to move forward in this world that we're living in 
promote the language and the culture 
but keep moving forward 
education can include all fields learn all the different areas 
Education is our Buffalo 
Indigenize the curriculum 
having elders they're number one 
they're the ones that set the foundation 
We live in this world together 
everybody has hopes and dreams to move forward 
and to live successfully together.
Foreword

I join you from Treaty 6 territory and the traditional homeland of the Métis. We honour the original people of this place and our shared legacy.

The Government of Canada has formally recognized this day, Canada’s first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, previously known as Orange Shirt Day, in fulfillment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call To Action #80. The Call stated, “We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.”

The survivors of residential schools have carried a disproportionate burden in the pursuit of truth and reconciliation, sharing their experiences publicly and repeatedly at Independent Assessment Process hearings, at Truth and Reconciliation Council hearings, at the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls hearings, in the courts. Opening their wounds again and again to illuminate the truth of Canada’s colonial legacy. We, including myself, have relied on the survivors by asking them to bring awareness to the horrors and atrocities that 150,000 Indigenous children experienced through the personal sharing of the abuses they endured. The task has been a monumental one borne out by the survivors.

Collectively, we can improve outcomes and dismantle the systems that have discriminated against Indigenous peoples. The time for hesitancy is over, “To be clear, courts must take judicial notice of such matters as the history of colonialism, displacement, and residential schools and how that history continues to translate into lower educational attainment, lower incomes, higher unemployment, higher rates of substance abuse and suicide, and of course higher levels of incarceration for Aboriginal peoples.”

And now it is time for all of us to come together with the survivors and their families in the spirit of learning, reparation, and reconciliation and to walk this healing path alongside them and share the burden of the history of colonization that manifests itself in the over-representation of Indigenous peoples in the courts, in jails, and child welfare systems.

Using multimedia as a means to convey the narrative of resiliency, survival, and healing, my mother has created a number of impactful and moving art pieces. Her work is the intertwining of her story-telling mixed with various media and forged together to share her residential school experience visually and viscerally.

Her passion for her work stems from her family and her lived experience as a survivor. She is the living embodiment of how the cycle of trauma can be broken by the actions of a single person.

The Honourable Judge L. Gibb, September 30th, 2022
# Table of Contents

Permission to Use ........................................................................................................... i
Abstract.............................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................... iv
Dedication ......................................................................................................................... v
Notes from the Researcher ............................................................................................... vi
  What Brought Me to This Research ............................................................................... vi
My PhD Research Journey .............................................................................................. ix
  Methodology .................................................................................................................. ix
Field Work ......................................................................................................................... x
  Recorded Conversations and Book Work ....................................................................... x
Conversation 1: Commodification, Urbanization, and Changing Role of Elders ............ xi
Conversation 2: Cultural Trauma ...................................................................................... xii
Conversation 3: Artivism and Reparation ........................................................................ xiii
Conversation 4: An Examination of Lived Reconciliation in Schools. .............................. xv
Reflections on the Research Process ................................................................................ xvii
Foreword .......................................................................................................................... xxiii
Table of Contents .............................................................................................................. xxiv
Introduction to the Research ............................................................................................ 1
Videos ................................................................................................................................. 1
Glossary of Terms .............................................................................................................. 2
Bibliography ...................................................................................................................... 22
  Doctoral Learning .......................................................................................................... 22
  Conversation 1: Commodification, Urbanization, and Changing Role of Elders ....... 29
  Conversation 2: Cultural Trauma .................................................................................. 33
  Conversation 3: Reparation and Artivism ..................................................................... 35
  Conversation 4: Reclaiming Space in Schools .............................................................. 37
Introduction to the Research

Videos

Research Introduction

Intro to Conversation 1

Intro to Conversation 2

Intro to Conversation 3

Intro to Conversation 4

Conversation 1

Conversation 2

Conversation 3

Conversation 4

Research Reflections

Gallery Show
Glossary of Terms

In nehiyawewin/Cree, the word “tawâw!” is a greeting for welcoming guests/visitors into space; it is often followed by the phrase “pihtikwe!—come in.” In much the same way, this glossary of terms invites you, as the reader, to come in and join the conversations in this doctoral journey that explores questions such as, Who is an Elder? Who decides that a particular individual is an Elder? Who defines the role of Elders? How might an Elder contribute to the reform of schooling for Indigenous children, youth, parents, and families? Institutionally and systemically, what changes may be needed? Thought leaders discussed these and other questions through stories, teachings, and vignettes. The shared stories gleaned insights and possibilities of hope for a brighter future.

In the definitions and excerpts from the four conversations that make up this Glossary of Terms, you, as viewer/reader, will be invited into this exploration. In a professional development presentation on the teaching of language arts in 2002, Stephanie Harvey stated, “The reader writes the text.” In this same way, you will bring your background knowledge and experiences, your understandings and your wonders, to how these terms are used in the four conversations and the way they are defined here.

tawâw! There is room for you to join the conversation by exploring what these terms mean for you and how they resonate with you.

artivism: The combination of two words, activism + artist, to name and describe the use of creative expression to cultivate awareness and social change.

“Using art as a means for social change, artivists can change the world…all successful activism is artistic activism” (Funderburk, 2021).

If you’re not represented somewhere, someone else will represent you. And we need to represent ourselves, we need to have more authors, more artists. Artists can get away with a whole heck of a lot, I tell you, you can get away with so much with, if I were to go out and do the same thing with using a different medium, I’d probably go to jail. But some of these artists, they can represent in such a powerful way and sort of be like hidden right in front of us, right? So it’s their imagery, the way that the songs, all this stuff, they’re powerful. And what’s powerful about a lot of it is not per se the song itself, but that that person is, they’re
changing, they’re changing and they’re not afraid to show that change. They’re not afraid, to me fear is such a, it’s the most crippling thing in the world. (Wilson, Conversation 3)

**bentwood box:** Commissioned by the Truth and Reconciliation Committee of Canada (TRC) in 2009, the bentwood box travelled with the TRC to its eight national events throughout Canada, where people placed personal items into the box to symbolize their journey toward healing and expressions of reconciliation.

A bentwood box is traditionally made from a single plank of wood (typically spruce or red or yellow cedar) and steamed at three corners. It is then bent around, tied, pegged, or glued to the fourth corner. The bottom and lid are usually attached with pegs. These boxes are indigenous to the Northwest Coast people and are often elaborately decorated with shallow relief carving, painting, or inlaid with shells. Bentwood boxes were used for practical and symbolic purposes, oil and food dishes, storage boxes for food, medicine or ceremonial regalia, water buckets, burial boxes, canoe tackle boxes, drum boxes and more. They could also be used to steam food by filling the box with water and dropping stones from a fire into the box.

I just want to pick up on the Bentwood Box. We have, we call it our treasure box or box of treasures and that’s where we put significant, culturally significant pieces and it’s called a ˈkawətsi. We use bentwood boxes for lots of different things, but one of them is that sort of sacred and ceremonial purpose. (Newman, Conversation 3)

**blood memory:** “The experiences of one generation felt by the next, and the next after that. Experiences, teachings, woven into the fabric of our DNA” (Robertson, 2020, p. 60).

When I think of cultural trauma and also our basic human health, I look back and as Indigenous people, we have survived over 500 years of trauma. So I often wonder how long it’s going to take for us to move through that trauma. And, you know, science and other, other investigations, there’s the idea that that trauma gets entrapped in our bodies and our DNA. (Stimson, Conversation 2)

Trauma is not just the only thing passed down. We are passed down something really profound. This is why you see people who have never been raised with their own people, all of a sudden have this huge desire and this huge pull towards finding out who they are. (Wilson, Conversation 3)
**bookwork:** A non-book, not for normal reading but for thinking about, that relies on the viewer’s interaction with the object to make meaning. Each piece is a narrative that tells a story. Pushing the limits of the traditional book form and constructed using a wide variety of formats and materials, artists’ books first emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as an expression of social and political activism, a way to “talk back” to mass production and mass media (Nunn et al., 2019).

**bundle:** Bundles include our knowledge and innate ways of knowing, being, and doing as Indigenous peoples. We can carry dancing bundles, sacred songs bundles, medicine bundles, healing bundles, and the list goes on based upon the norms of the diverse Indigenous groups and Nations we work with or belong to.

kaskahpicikan – a ceremonial/medicine bundle;
mîwat – a bundle that contains sacred objects.

pitikwahpitam – s/he ties it into a bundle. (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2019).

When I work with people, they’ll tell me, I don’t know who I am. I don’t have a bundle. And I’ll say, go get a towel. And they’ll go get a towel, put it on the floor. Put the towel on the floor, spread it out. Now go get every rock that you ever collected or a feather or something, go get it. And they’ll go get it and then pretty soon, oh yeah, I got this over here. Oh yeah, this over here. Oh yeah, I have this box over here. Pretty soon, the towel’s all full. Lies, I say, you have a bundle. Look at it, it’s right there. (Wilson, Conversation 3)

**colonization:** Forced cultural transformation through subjugation and exploitation. A form of genocide that takes place through a process of settling among and establishing control over the Indigenous people of an area.

When it came to the whole idea of colonization, I come to understand that we’re all colonized, you know, not just Indigenous people, but even those people that came on those boats, you know, with their muskets and their spears, with their admirals and commanders and that hierarchy that was represented on that ship, and in the spirit of wihtikowin, cannibalism, you know, that’s what brought those ships over because it started with that Doctrine of Discovery. And so, this document caused those five godfathers of colonization, England, France, Spain, the Netherlands, and Portugal to mete out that Doctrine of Discovery or that doctrine of control. And they went out and colonized the world, not just
Indigenous people, but Indian people, African people, Asian people. And you find these five countries, you know, wherever they’ve landed, you know, they put that stamp of colonization upon the people. Well, we experienced that. (Kanewiyakiho, Conversation 4)

**Creation stories**: Indigenous peoples have their own versions of origin stories. Creation stories contain teachings about the importance of connection to the land (the natural environment) and all of Creation. Indigenous worldview is grounded in the Creation story. Indigenous people view the earth as their mother and the animals as their spiritual kin. There is an interconnectedness between all living things and we are all part of a greater whole which is called life.

“I just wanted to say this, that all of our culture, language, traditions, practices, ceremonies, they all come from one source and that’s our Creation story” (Saddleback, Conversation 1).

The Creator recited that to that first couple, a tiny excerpt from that history of Creation story. A small excerpt takes from the time the sun comes up to the time the sun is at its fastest setting point on the month of May. They call it the “ceremony of the memory bank,” the “power of the ceremony of the memory bank.” A meticulous, orderly, recited word for word, where chronological, meticulously ordered sequence of our own psychological developmental stages, as per delivered by the father and the mother to their son and their daughter. That’s the power we have with that. (Saddleback, Conversation 1)

**Cree worldview** – A specific Indigenous worldview of the nêhiyawak (Cree) that expresses their belief in the interconnectivity between people and nature and their understanding that health and happiness are achieved by living a life in balance with nature.

So both my mother’s side and my father’s side is Anglican and traditional nêhiyaw-ihtâwin and Cree worldview. Both—I have both that kind of background. But I defer more to nêhiyaw-ihtâwin and the Cree worldview. That’s partly plus other things, you know. But I was raised Anglican. It never really stuck, you know. It just wasn’t meant to be part of my path. So I just—sêmâk, in my 20s, I went right into Cree worldview, Cree teachings, songs. That’s why I’m glad I brought my drum wherever I go. (Naytowhow, Conversation 4)

But certainly my touchstone in that healing is nêhiyaw-pimâtisiwin, Cree way of life. And that is something that helped me to decolonize and to come to where I am today and to sit with Elders, to work with Elders, certainly my parents are Elders and Pipekeepers. And so
they teach me a lot, even today, as did my late uncle and my late aunt, who were my mentors as well. So yeah, that is what this body is. But my spirit has been here for a long time, perhaps in other lives previous, but in this lifetime I am Delvin Kanewiyakiho in this nêhiyaw body. (Kanewiyakiho, Conversation 4)

cultural trauma: While individual trauma focuses on the impact on a singular person of an event or series of events, cultural trauma refers to those injurious events that impact entire communities (even as the specific details of experience may vary across individual). Sociologist Jeffrey Alexander (2004) wrote that “cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.” Such cultural trauma can pass along unhealed psychological and social wounds that impact the formation of individual and group identities for generations, leaving recovering societies especially vulnerable to future iterations of atrocity. Without meaningful reparations and rebuilding efforts, these legacies of conflict, grievance, and trauma put a country at risk for future cycles of violence. The impact of the Canadian Indian Residential School System and its corollary cultural trauma provides testament to the importance of this risk category. (Murphy, 2021, pp. 80-81)

I was just recently at the WIPCE Conference, World Indigenous Peoples Conference for Education. And you know, we’re gathering as Indigenous people from all around the world, all these different communities, and we share the same stories and we share the same experiences and we share the same trauma. And you know, I think there’s something just so incredibly, there is something so healing about that, about not having to explain. And you know, being able to share the things that have hurt you or have caused you pain or impacted you in your life and not have to justify or rationalize that at all is just, that it’s an acceptance of, yeah, I know. And I hear you and I believe you and I love you. And I think that was something that, that’s something that’s so special about having these conversations with Indigenous people. And then non-Indigenous people as, you know, listeners and witnesses to that. (Olson, Conversation 2)
**decolonization:** Decolonization acknowledges the harm that Canada’s colonial history has had on Indigenous nations, peoples, and culture. It is a process that moves us towards a nation that holds a strong and respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through a focus on re-Indigenization and resurgence. Decolonization is about “cultural, psychological, and economic freedom” for Indigenous people with the goal of achieving Indigenous sovereignty—the right and ability of Indigenous people to practice self-determination over their land, cultures, and political and economic systems (Belfi & Sandiford 2021).

You know, we need to realize, we need an education to survive in this world. Yes, we can live off the land, but we also need to have our education to be able to be successful in this world. And education, language and culture for all of us to work together. You know, you can’t take the, what did somebody say, you can’t take the Indian out of us? We’ll always be native, First Nation, no matter what, you know, and we have to learn to get along with everyone. We live in this world together, because everybody has hopes and dreams, and that’s mine that we all have this hope to move forward and to live successfully together. (Muskego, Conversation 4)

**Elder:** All of the video conversations in this doctoral dissertation explore the use, meaning, and multiple definitions of the word Elder. It is important to note that the word Elder is an English term, one assigned to Indigenous old persons by white settlers, not one chosen by them to name or describe themselves. See “ketay-aya” below. I invite you to consider your definition of this term as you engage with the videos and determine for yourself a definition and usage of the term.

Everything that I did after that experience of 13 years being in school suddenly changed into a return, a reclamation to Indigenous culture, Indigenous ceremonies, Indigenous stories and songs, it all went back to that, and it came back through singing, right, came back through connection with the old people, the women, the old men, you know, and it also came back onto the land, back to the land, walking on the land and being with the land, being where I started off when I was a child, you know, we’d go out into the bush and hunt, and then we’d live out there for two or three weeks, and sometimes I hang on to a memory like that, knowing that it would bring some peace, to myself, as an older person. I’m in my 70s now. (Naytowhow, Conversation 4)
**grub box**: A practical object used by Indigenous families to store and transport food and items used for cooking as they camped and moved between encampments seasonally.

“‘I have reason to believe. That the agents as a whole …. Are doing all they can, by refusing food until the Indians are on the verge of starvation, to reduce the expense,’ Macdonald told the House of commons in 1882” (Hopper, 2018).

All winter long, ekwa aya, e-papâmâtisïyahk [we wandered] we had to provide food for the powwow, Thunderchild powwow. We had to kill moose, skin it, cut up the meat, put it in baggies, all that stuff, êkwa aya, [and] ration it off. Rations, ayis mâna kayâske ki mêkiwak [rations were given out a long time ago], at the powwow. (Awasis, Conversation 1)

“My aunty also gifted me my grandpa’s grub box for rations from those days which I still have and is an important keepsake for us” (S. Wuttunee, personal communication, October 14, 2020).

nôhkom would say it has to be 6” at the middle so nimosôm can stand up inside. And of course me always remember the grub box. The most important. Those of us that travelled with her remember how she packed everything she needed to be comfortable. (C. Tootoosis, personal communication)

We kids would play around all day and come home when we were hungry and dig in the grub box (a wooden box made for dry food storage). Kokom would have her bed there and watch us as we’d play around outside and mom was always busy cooking or trying to keep us clean lol. I always wanted one. (C. Tootoosis, personal communication, August 10, 2021)

“bannock, peanut butter and jam...memories of nimosom. I can just picture him sitting by the grub box making himself a peanut butter and jam sandwich (K. Chamakese, personal communication, November 23, 2014).

“Many years ago, over in Thunderchild, there was a sundance happening. My parents loaded up the truck with their grub box, blankets, carpet and white canvas tent. In the states, they call these tents, walled tents” (J. Chamakese, personal communication, December 31, 2016).

**institutional Elder**: Departments and agencies of governments at all levels, of large corporations, of human sector services, and of educational institutions are increasingly inviting Indigenous Elders to work with them. Elders who “work” for these institutions are sometimes referred to as
“institutional Elders.” With the topic of conversation 1, the commodification, urbanization, and changing role of Elders, this construct is addressed by various individuals.

The role of the Elder has expanded beyond Indigenous communities and what some would consider more traditional roles. “The elders that I know often have an endless demand placed on them,” said Blair Stonechild, professor of Indigenous studies at the First Nations University of Canada. He is from Muscowpetung First Nation and is a residential school survivor.

Elders are now present within health, education and justice institutions. There are Elder-in-residence programs at libraries. They often travel to speak or share at community events and meetings.

“Many Elders are kind of burned off their feet, and at the same time, in the traditional system of Elders, they really can’t refuse when they’re asked in the proper way.” Stonechild said it’s critical, when calling upon their services, that people remember what Elders carry with them, dating back to the harms of colonization and everything that followed: the Indian Act, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop and the current foster care system, broken families, addiction, loss of culture and tradition.

Stonechild said it’s a shift toward a new type of modern Elder, as fewer people grow up on the land and more Elders are invited into institutions.

“They’re being expected to provide ready solutions for intractable problems and be at the beck and call whenever,” he said.

“I don’t think it’s ever been an easy job to be an elder to begin with, and I think to be an Elder now is even more challenging.” (Latimer, 2019)

kêhte-aya: old one. Within their communities, and beyond, they are seen to be repositories of cultural and philosophical knowledge, and transmitters of this storehouse of information. They are regarded as living libraries, with information on a wide variety of practical, spiritual, and ceremonial topics.

[kêhte-aya] emphasize listening and not asking why. There isn’t any word in the Cree language for “why.” A learner must sit quietly and patiently while the Elder passes on his wisdom. Listening is considered to be very important. Questions were not encouraged. Asking questions was considered rude. Clarification of a certain point or comments was considered
okay. Learners were also encouraged to watch and listen to what was happening around them. Eventually with enough patience and enough time the answer would come to the learner. When this happened, the learning was truly his own. (Tipahaskan, 1986, pp. 104-105)

**Knowledge Keeper:** A term often used as a synonym for Elder, or interchangeably with the term Elder. According to Queen’s University, Office of Indigenous Initiatives, the term Elder is bestowed to an individual by their community because of the spiritual and cultural knowledge that they hold. In contrast they define a Knowledge Keeper as someone who has been taught by an Elder or a senior Knowledge Keeper within their community. They state that this person holds Traditional Knowledge and teachings, they have been taught how to care for these teachings and when it is and is not appropriate to share this knowledge with others.

As with the term Elder, I invite you to determine for yourself, as a viewer of the videos, what your definition and usage of the term Knowledge Keeper will be.

**lateral violence:** Anger and rage directed towards members within a marginalized or oppressed community rather than towards the oppressors of the community—one’s peers rather than adversaries. It is a cycle of abuse with roots underlying factors such as colonialism, oppression, intergenerational trauma and the ongoing experiences of racism and discrimination.

Lateral violence happens when individuals who have endured oppression suppress feelings such as anger, shame, and rage. Eventually these feelings manifest in behaviours such as jealousy, resentment, blame, and bitterness; and they are directed toward their Aboriginal co-workers. (Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2011)

So I have a lived experience of reconciliation in my own family, you know, forgiving, you know, lateral violence and how it’s come to be within my own family, within the community. And it’s because of that colonization expressed through intergenerational trauma that comes from dispossession of the land, from dependency on an outside entity like the government, and the oppression like the Indian Act, all of these things that play out in our lives. (Kanewiyakiho, Conversation 4)
**Medicine Wheel:** represents the life journey (Cree/neyiyawak).

The old people will tell you it is life itself. Look at the four seasons and follow the sun. Spring in the east, summer in the south, fall in the west and winter in the north. It tells the whole story of how all life came into being abundantly bright, rising in the east and then fading away as it moves west and north. All life rises and sets like the sun. What we do in between is our journey. This is where the gifts of the four directions are needed—the gifts of the spirit, physical body, emotions and mind—and where we need to find balance within these four realms. (Elder Mary Lee)

I know we have what they call a balanced, nurturance aspect, prescribed by the first couple of how they raise their kids, like that from the physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, tipahwan, balance. Physical, mental, spiritual, emotional balance, they call it tipahwan stage. “Even though it’s a balance, if you’re going to overdo one of them, let it be the essence of compassionate kindness. Overdo that one in this balance picture.” That’s what she said. “Why?” She said, “If you do that, meticulously and very carefully, conscientiously, apply it, minister that, right from those age ranges they’re talking about, in only the growing years of that child, if you’re doing it, apply yourself fully, as a parent, in that manner.” She said, “If you apply only mainly the emotional kindness, compassion, the rest will fall into place.” Those other three will fall. That’s how powerful essence of compassionate kindness... (Saddleback, Conversation 1)

**Microaggressions:** Subtle comments or actions that express a prejudiced attitude toward, in this context, an Indigenous person. They are slight and often seen to be invisible or unconscious on the part of the perpetrator, an individual unawake to their own biases and prejudices. Microaggressions are the everyday slights, insults, putdowns, invalidations, and offensive behaviors that people experience in daily interactions with generally well-intentioned individuals who may be unaware that they have engaged in demeaning ways.

“As a man of color I’ve experienced this so many times I can’t even tell you. The constant glares the talking amongst each other the unnecessary attitude the superiority complex that some Exhibit” (K. Cumberland, personal communication).

“There is an accidental racism and ignorance in this country when it comes to history” (C. Delorme, personal communication, 2021).
For many years, I was in the political realm and certainly I saw the dysfunction in our communities. You know, it really manifests in such insidious ways, the jealousies, the aggressions, the microaggressions, the lateral violence and then, you know, we face that within our communities, but we also face that within the greater communities. So we have this like this double indemnity that we’re constantly fighting. And it’s one of the things that I’ve been really thinking about is that all our lives we fight, just fight, to be ourselves and, you know, when are we going to get to a point? And, you know, a lot of it relies on ourselves and our own stuff, but when can we get a point where we actually have solace, where we have grace, where we don’t have to worry about those things? (Stimson, Conversation 2)

**MMIWG:** Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Walking With Our Sisters is a commemorative art installation to honour the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous Women of Canada and the United States; to acknowledge the grief and torment families of these women continue to suffer; and to raise awareness of this issue and create opportunity for broad community-based dialogue on the issue. Collectively we are creating one unified voice to honour these women, their families and call for attention to be paid to this issue. There is power in numbers, and there is power in art. (Various, 2013-2019)

We come from a matriarchal society. People forget that. We come from a clan system. Some of our people don’t even know that. And there’s a reason for that. It’s because Europeans thought that women were property. And they began to systematically disengage and to denigrate the role and status of First Nations women to being that matriarchal society. I mean, the Pope is coming to Alberta, coming to Edmonton. He’s going to apologize, make this big apology for residential schools. And I thought, “You should start with apologizing to women.” I mean, the violence that we were forced to endure and what happened to women when they took our children away. That’s the first time you saw women leave their communities, leave their families, be on the streets in cities, drink for the first time. Be alienated from who they are and their purpose here and what they’re doing, their role in the community. But it began with contact like that. (Saddleback, Conversation 1)
**protocol**: a complex term that is explored, in particular, in Conversation 1.

The term protocol includes many things, but overall it refers to ways of interacting with Indigenous people in a manner that respects traditional ways of being. Protocols are not just “manners” or “rules” – they are a representation of a culture’s deeply held ethical system. They also have highly practical applications that may have arisen in a pre-contact context but still apply today. Protocols differ vastly from one Indigenous culture or community to another, and they can be highly complex and multi-layered. Coming to understand and practice protocols appropriately is a lifelong learning process even for Indigenous people growing up within their culture. Following protocols is a significant sign of respect and awareness. It shows that you are taking the time to learn about Indigenous cultures and are challenging the often unconscious bias that everyone should interact in the way that mainstream settler culture dictates. (Allan et al., 2018)

Protocol opens up your mind and your heart so vastly that when an Elder speaks, you cannot only conceptualize what that kêhtê-aya is saying. You can believe what that kêhtê-aya is saying. You begin to see all the possibilities of the culture then in front of you. A world that was invisible to you. It starts becoming visible. That’s what protocol is. That’s how powerful it is. That’s how big a medicine it is and always begins with that tobacco. (Saddleback, Conversation 1)


Getting to the truth was hard, but getting to reconciliation will be harder. It requires that the paternalistic and racist foundations of the residential school system be rejected as the basis for an ongoing relationship. Reconciliation requires that a new vision, based on a commitment to mutual respect, be developed. It also requires an understanding that the most harmful impacts of residential schools have been the loss of pride and self-respect of Aboriginal people, and the lack of respect that non-Aboriginal people have been raised to have for their Aboriginal neighbours. Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one. Virtually all aspects of Canadian society may need to be reconsidered.
I still get upset, you know, about what happened, you know, at times, and I can feel now, never used to be able to feel so numb and paralysis for years, but once I can feel now, I can cry naturally or normally, you know, and I can, the hard part is to be assertive, that’s a difficult part sometimes, to assert yourself and to voice yourself and speak out and just, you know, be confident in what you’re saying and be grounded, sort of getting to that place, so that’s my own kind of reconciliation as I live it, you know, from day to day, everybody else can. (Naytowhow, Conversation 4)

reparation/reparative act: An art practice that incorporates the notion of coming to terms with recuperating and or healing past political cultural suffering. It is an artistic act intended to alter a negative incident in history. It is an ethereal alteration. In that reparation, you’re able to create healing, healing from the past of what has happened for the present and the future.

And I feel that so strongly with a project like the Witness Blanket where I went into it thinking, I’m going to make this artwork and it’s going to be about reconciliation. But what I realized pretty early on was I had no idea what reconciliation even was. And so the art was teaching me, the process was teaching me. And so that’s a form of reclamation. That’s a form of reparation because as I was gaining understanding. So that’s a pretty beautiful thing to have. (Newman, Conversation 3)

repatriation: The act or process of restoring or returning someone or something to the country of origin, allegiance, or citizenship.

The memory and spirit of these dancers had to be honoured. Having gone through the protocol, ceremony, teachings and initiation that dancers undergo upon entry into the dance circle, I knew it was my responsibility to somehow recognize and repatriate their trapped spirits back to their traditional homeland on the Great Lakes. Repatriation for us is new, we never had the need to create a special ceremony or develop a ritual protocol for retrieving the remains of our people or sacred bundles taken and housed in distant and inaccessible museum collections around the world. (Ace, 2011)

representation: In the context of Conversation 3, representation is being seen, being visible, being known as who you are, in the way that you see and know yourself; having your identity
acknowledged and honoured. Representation is power. It is everywhere. They need to see someone who represents them in that space.

When I went to university, my sister and I, we had each other, you know, we kept our heads down and we got our work done and we were able to be successful in this world. And now when I see students in university, Indigenous students, they don’t put their heads down. You know, they’re standing up and they’re saying, you know what, this isn’t right. Or actually we’re gonna do this instead. And they’re making these changes without asking for permission. And I think that’s really another part of it too. It’s very exciting for me to see because it’s sort of things we wished could be different, but always asking for permission or making ourselves as small as possible so that, you know, we don’t cause any ripples or we don’t stand out. And, you know, I think that the youth are saying, you know, like we’ve had enough of that and we’re ready to like really stand out and stand up and make these changes without asking for permission. And I think that’s because we are raising them in the way to know you have a voice, you know, and like you do have, you are important and you need to be represented in these halls and you need to be represented in what we’re doing. So, and that’s, of course, I mean, I was talking to a young teacher a few years ago and I was telling her all this. I said, I’m so proud of you guys. Like, you’re just making all these changes without asking for permission. And you’re just, and she said, well, it’s because of people like you who, you know, trailblazed for us and you were in ahead. And I was like, I’m not like, I’m not a trailblazer. Like I’m a young person. (laughs) I’m not that old, but it’s amazing how much has changed in the past few generations. And the awareness, I think, of the young people to know what is right and what is wrong and what they’ll stand up for, I think is really incredible. (Olson, Conversation 2)

residential school education trauma: The effects of residential school trauma continue intergenerationally, in all four quadrants of the Medicine Wheel—physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Given that the trauma is carried in blood memory and DNA, such trauma affects how Indigenous individuals, regardless of their generation or their own personal experiences, are able to engage with present day schools, with teaching and learning, and with the formation of trusting relationships with educators and staff.

You know, we were on this journey as brothers, you know, try to understand our culture
because we were all taken away to residential schools and stuff. So all those things I saw as a child, the matotisân [sweat lodge] ceremony and stuff like that. So I figured, you know, when they put me in residential school that it was just all torture because you can’t take away some that somebody already learned, you know, it’s, you know, they’re trying to take it out of you, yank it out, you know, and it’s like, you know, but how do you undo that? You know, it just becomes torture. So you pretend, you know, that you don’t know or you renounce it stuff like that. It really confuses. It’s really what happened. (Awasis, Conversation 1)

We come from a matriarchal society. People forget that. We come from a clan system. Some of our people don’t even know that. And there’s a reason for that. It’s because Europeans thought that women were property. And they began to systematically disengage and to denigrate the role and status of First Nations women to being that matriarchal society. I mean, the Pope is coming to Alberta, coming to Edmonton. He’s going to apologize, make this big apology for residential schools. And I thought, “You should start with apologizing to women.” I mean, the violence that we were forced to endure and what happened to women when they took our children away. That’s the first time you saw women leave their communities, leave their families, be on the streets in cities, drink for the first time. Be alienated from who they are and their purpose here and what they’re doing, their role in the community. But it began with contact like that. (Saddleback, Conversation 1)

They were taught the skills that nôtokwêw had that capacity to be able to convey, to articulate that in a very structured, orderly, I call it dynamics of human psychological way so that they had what she planted in them was an intrinsic drive, intrinsic motivation to be able to say, “Hey, I can do this on my own. Look at that, I can go make my own home.” And everything, I can do it, everything myself. They have all these stages of rites of passage, stages. (Saddleback, Conversation 1)

So it says [reading from her poem]“I have to admit, I’m still learning how to love. This is why my body pulls away from yours. And then sometimes won’t let you go. See, when your mother is raised in an institution, she doesn’t know how to kiss you goodnight.” (Tears) So, I’m trying not to apologize for my tears anymore too, because it is hard, do you want this back? It is hard and it’s painful to unpack these things, but it’s really important,
obviously. This only way through this is together, is crying together and healing that way together. So thank you for bringing that and allowing me to share that. (Olson, Conversation 2)

It’s so true that severing of love, and it’s one of the, I think one of the hardest things to move through is reclaiming that love, because it was pretty brutal when you think about it and we’ve experienced it, we know the trauma that it inlays. And I’ve been really sort of thinking a lot about that and even that physicality and how that has been so corrupted through the residential school system where we’re afraid to touch each other and the touch that we got was not, it was rape, it was violent, it was horrible. It was in so many different ways. What tools do we have to find that help us to move through it and, because we have a lot of love in us and the importance of sharing that and importance of rebuilding our communities with that. Because I often see that anger, because of course what comes from it is anger, there’s a lot of work that’s been done, a lot of work that continues to happen, I know on my First Nation, but there’s still a lot of damage and there’s still a lot of sorrow and a lot of hurt. But I do see it, one of the things is that, in spite of that, I do see an awareness, I do see the sort of hope that we can move through, we’re incredibly resilient. (Stimson, Conversation 2)

And then we spoke about the bundle. And you said identity pieces. That, I’d like to just clarify the identity piece. I guess I’ve had a bundle for a long time because I mean, I don’t know, you can’t see it, but like Mom sent me protocol and I always like, and then I have a lot of this Mom stuff that... I don’t keep it in a towel, but, I used to keep it in the blanket, to put the blanket on the wall. So I have to keep it in the... I just have a bundle. I didn’t know, that’s great. You said there was an identity, those identity pieces. I really love that. It’s not for anyone else to judge my bundle. I have to determine what those identity pieces are. That’s my value system in there. I really love that. (Tyler, Conversation 3)

My dad, is a residential school survivor, he didn’t want to share his stories with me and my sisters. And as we went through the process of gathering the objects and Marek, you can probably attest to this better than me because you were there more often. That’s a really common thing for survivors to feel that they don’t want to pass on that trauma of telling their own children the things that they went through. But for me, in hearing the stories of others, I began to understand those stories of my father better. And the more I understood
about him, the more I understood about myself. And so maybe that’s like a, on a personal level, breakdown of this work of art that is intervening into the space of reconciliation and carrying a different kind of truth or different kinds of truths out into the world, operating in two ways at the same time. (Newman, Conversation 3)

So these are things we need to remember what impacts our, the way what we’re going to represent, what impacts us. If we’re a domestic violence survivor, if we’re a residential school survivor, if we’re a 60s scoop, that story’s going to be told no matter what we make, because our innate drive is to get that shit out of us and get it out somewhere. So we don’t have to, it doesn’t have to cripple us. It doesn’t have to stop us and we could keep moving on. This is why when I see what people are doing, no matter what it is, I don’t care. I want to see it, I want to hear their story. Maybe it’s they might tell me this whole thing that I don’t really understand, but the thing is, is that I’m a witness for them. I am hearing them. (Wilson, Conversation 3)

êkwa, [and] I often think about that. You know, did I have a name back then before I got, you know, I guess, abducted or kidnapped, you know, at five years old? I don’t remember any of that. I never had a chance. Because of the language being compromised, you know, after a few years, I was never able to ask about those kinds of things, even much later. (Naytowhow, Conversation 4)

How do I reconcile with that, with that being, you know, how do I reconcile with my father who was affected by colonization? And how he treated us growing up, you know, how do I reconcile with my mother who was affected by residential school since she was a product of that system for 10 years? (Kanewiyakiho, Conversation 4)

And then just a little bit about me, who I am, why I am, the way I am. My way of life, I grew up on the reserve in The Pas. And I went to public school until grade two. And then from there we were sent to residential school. So I was there for about a year and a half to two years. So I’ve experienced residential school as well, and then back to public school. And then I decided I had enough education, so I quit school in grade 11. (Muskego, Conversation 4)

**Star Chart:** The nēhiyaw writing system, composed of 44 atahkipeyihkanah also known as syllabics or spirit markers is arranged in a specific order, called a Star Chart.
A man by the name of mistanaskewew had a vision about what I call ‘spirit markers’ and was able to develop a writing system for the nêhiyaw people. Our writing system is minimally 10,000 years old. (The Amiskwaciy History Series, 2016, 11:08)

thought leaders: Individuals who bring knowledge, expertise, and diverse perspectives to the topics and conversations that constitute this doctoral dissertation.

It’s not nearly as difficult to make a decision as it is to stand by it and stick with it. To say or think something is one thing; standing by it is quite another. This gets at the bones—and the heart—of thought leadership. Anyone who aspires to become a thought leader in their industry should consider: Are you firm in your purpose and beliefs? Are you staying true to yourself? Are you willing to shout about and defend your purpose? Being a thought leader means having a unique point of view and consistently living it. You must demonstrate strength and discipline in all your actions. You must have clarity about your purpose. (Biderman-Gross, 2023)

okiskinohtahiwêw – one who guides.

itêyihtamowin – thought

The chief and recognized leader of a successful, respected band was always an outstanding warrior acclaimed for his courage, skill, and leadership. He was recognized for his abilities as a hunter, trapper, and provider. His generosity and concern for others were well known, and his skills as an orator were demonstrated during councils with his own band members and in larger gatherings involving a number of bands. (Christensen, 2000)

trigger: Anything—including memories, experiences, or events—that sparks an intense emotional reaction, regardless of your current mood.

For me, you know, of course, I do it through my art, and I speak, you know, I exorcize, I often said, you know, like a real exorcism. (laughing) I exorcize my historical trauma through my art, and, you know, while I don’t see art necessarily as something that heals people, I think it’s a trigger for people that allows people, in seeing it, it triggers something within themselves, and then hopefully they have the ability and support to confront it and to move with it and through it. So that’s how I sort of see my art, by no means, I don’t have any grand illusions that my art heals people or any of that, by no means, but it is something
out there that is a moment in time that speaks to a lot to this historical trauma and cultural trauma and such. (Stimson, Conversation 2)

I remember when I was, we had just recently been married and I went back to his family farm for Christmas and his family was there and his uncle was there on the couch with his son, a grown man. And there was like snuggling, they’re sitting beside each other snuggling. And I thought, I was like, I had never seen anything like that in my life. And I thought it was so weird, but I realized like, no, that’s normal. That’s normal to be able to, you know, like to express your love openly and, you know, as an adult to be able to snuggle with your son. I just thought it was one of the first things I noticed. And, you know, it’s something that I’ve had to, my husband’s a very, he’s a very, like that’s one of his love languages for sure, is physical affection. And so I’ve had to learn that language because I didn’t have that language. So I’ve had to learn the language of, you know, snuggling or, you know, touch, even just touches on the way by that’s, you know, that’s an important thing for him. And so, but it’s hard, it’s triggering too. And, you know, like we didn’t experience as children, we didn’t experience the same physical violence and abuse that I know my mom was raised with and her brothers and sisters and my cousins. We didn’t have that in our lives, but we still carry those stories and we still carry those messages too, you know, those messages of protection to keep yourself safe. And so for me to be able to, again, come back to the safety thing, it’s okay. This is a, you know, this is a safe space. No one’s gonna harm you. (Olson, Conversation 2)

**University of Nature:** traditional Cree academia.

My dad was an Elder and raised me up just in and amongst the old people all of my life. The Elders sent me to school eventually getting my high school and into the university levels. And then he sent me over to University of Calgary to get my Bachelor of Education degree. And then so on and so forth from then on, they continued pushing me to do the learning of the world of modern academia, even though we have our own traditional academia, the old people call the University of Nature. (Saddleback, Conversation 1)

Thoughtfully interwoven Indigenous content and approaches must be informed by an understanding of Indigenous epistemologies (how knowledge can be known) and pedagogies, (how knowledge can be taught). (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Hampton, 1993;
Henderson, 2002; Marker, 2004).

**Witness Blanket:** Inspired by a woven blanket, artist Carey Newman led the creation of the Witness Blanket, a large-scale work of art. It contains hundreds of items reclaimed from residential schools, churches, government buildings and traditional and cultural structures from across Canada that asks all viewers to bear witness to the truth, and the effects, of residential schools, past, present, and future.

And I feel that so strongly with a project like the Witness Blanket where I went into it thinking, I’m going to make this artwork and it’s going to be about reconciliation. But what I realized pretty early on was I had no idea what reconciliation even was. And so the art was teaching me, the process was teaching me. And so that’s a form of reclamation. That’s a form of reparation because as I was gaining understanding. So that’s a pretty beautiful thing to have. Like if you’re thinking about the purpose of what we do in life, it can go both ways. It can face inward and it can face outward where the Witness Blanket, for example, started out being about preserving the truth, sharing the truth. Trying to make that truth visible through these tangible objects and the stories that are attached to them. And I think that it does that, but it also has this other effect where it’s transforming me. (Newman, Conversation 3)

So, Carey, when you said the Witness Blanket, we didn’t want to prescribe if it was a healing project. For me, that is the aha moment that we’re asking the viewer, the audience, the people who are taking in the information to have. They had the story and they had the object. And it was for them, it was their opportunity, to have their aha moment in between them, the two. But in silo, those two pieces of information, we need the streams to run side by side. But if they are separate, then the aha moment might not be there. And that’s where, for me, that’s where the Witness Blanket is extremely valuable. The stories that were kept, that were given to us, the objects that were placed on the blanket, and then the experience of the stories and the objects being had by the teachers and the learners who are taking on the work. The inward and outward conversation, the two streams running side by side. (Tyler, Conversation 3)
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Two fundamental premises underpin my creation of this bibliography. The first premise is one of relationality. The second premise is one of accessibility.

Regarding relationality, you will find many resources cited in this bibliography that reflect the work and thinking of people I know and admire and those I have reached out to for their wisdom, thoughts, and perceptions. They are often people I have worked with in my role as kohkom/knowledge keeper, as an artist, or as an academic. The materials I reference are diverse in form and representation and diverse in the venue through which they have been shared and disseminated. These materials give the reader a sense of where the tobacco requests, detailed in my logbook, led me and the materials that helped me to prepare and honour my commitment to the requests.

Concerning accessibility, you will find references to websites and blogs, podcasts and videos, social media entries, and personal communications. You will find materials that have been markers for Indigenous peoples across Canada—bills, policies, acts, treaties—and that have shaped our past and present. You will also find both practitioner-based and academic materials listed. Suppose we, those inside of education and those outside of it, are going to make a difference in school landscapes for Indigenous children, youth, parents, and families and provide them with the opportunity to take up space and claim power. In that case, EVERYONE must have access to the conversations and discussions that affect them, their well-being, and their future. My intention in assembling this bibliography is that it is accessible to all and, in particular, readable, familiar, and comfortable for those who do not reside within the walls of academia.

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