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“The Scream”: Using the Visual Critical Pedagogy of Subversive Indigenous Art in the Elementary Classroom to Discomfort the Comforted and Activate the Empathic, Ethical, and Relational Dimensions of Reconciliation

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Résumé de l'article

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"The Scream": Using the Visual Critical Pedagogy of Subversive Indigenous Art in the Elementary Classroom to Discomfort the Comforted and Activate the Empathic, Ethical, and Relational Dimensions of Reconciliation

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Abstract

This paper uncovers my journey as K-12 practitioner in British Columbia towards exploring the use of "subversive art" as a "visual critical pedagogy" (Gil-Glazier,2015; Naidus, 2005; Peters, 2016; Zorilla & Tisdell, 2016) to advance my students and myself towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada. I use the powerfully unsettling painting done by Cree artist, Kent Monkman, titled "*The Scream,*" as a springboard for this inquiry. "*The Scream"* provides an Indigenous counternarrative to the colonial versions of residential school histories and has the potential to progress practitioners and students towards actionable reconciliation by activating their empathic and ethical consciousness. I attempt in this essay to weave together a cluster of concepts, as I explore: (a) the nature and evolution of truth in BC's elementary school curriculum (Andersen, 2017); (b) the historical establishment of the curriculum in a positivist modality (Gadamer, 2013; Greene, 1975; Marker 2004); (c) Greene's (1995) argument that aesthetic education can help students and practitioners to engage meaningfully with difficult knowledge; (d) Greene's (1977, 1995) philosophy of wide-awakeness, through which students and practitioners can activate the power of difficult knowledge; (e) Gadamer's (2013) "fusion of horizons" as a means by which wide-awakeness can function in this context; (f) "subversive art" as a form of "visual critical pedagogy" (Gil-Glazer, 2015); and (g) and the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire. I braid these concepts together using the scholarship of Indigenous scholar, Michael Marker (1951-2021), to provide the pedagogical *rationale* for my determination to establish the visual critical pedagogy of "subversive art" in my classroom.

Opening

Before proceeding, I should situate myself. I am a South Asian, cisgender, heterosexual male. I am a K-12 practitioner, currently working in both elementary and secondary settings. I reside on the traditional lands of the Semyome (Semiahmoo) First Nation in Surrey, British Columbia. I am a first-generation Canadian who has no ancestors that originally colonized the lands of Indigenous Peoples; nonetheless, I do reside and earn my living upon unceded Indigenous lands. Therefore, it behooves me to acknowledge that I participate in and benefit from the legacies and continuing effects of colonization.

During the summer of 2020, I took my eight-year-old son for a tour of the University of British Columbia's Vancouver campus. We spent the morning biking through the campus and visiting the various buildings and facilities. We stopped for a snack and to cool off at the Museum of Anthropology, which was near our bike path. The museum was hosting an exhibit called *Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience* by Cree Artist, Kent Monkman, that day. The exhibit was

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billed as “a journey through the past 150 years of Canada” that “reclaims and reinserts Indigenous voices into the collective memory of our country, challenging and shattering colonial ideas of our history” (UBC MOA, 2020). My habitual “teacher mode” immediately asserted itself. As an elementary school practitioner, I saw this occasion as “the teachable moment”—a chance to “cover” some elements of the Indigenous curriculum with my son and to give him a leg up in Social Studies for the upcoming school year. I did not suspect that one of the paintings would have a profound and transformative effect on me, both as an individual and as a practitioner.

Figure 1. “The Scream” (2017) by artist Kent Monkman

The section of the exhibit titled, *Chapter V: The Forcible Transfer of Children*, featured a painting called “The Scream” (2017). I was intrigued by the title of this painting because it mirrored the Edvard Munch painting (1893) with which I was familiar. Unlike Munch’s painting, where the reason for the sole character’s scream remains unclear, the reason for the scream in Monkman’s painting was immediately clear to both my son and me. Monkman illuminates the violent, life-altering moment when Mounties[1] in red serges, nuns in black habits, and priests in long black robes descend upon an Indigenous village to dislodge children from their homes and

[1] The word “Mounties” refers to the Canadian federal police force known as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which participated in the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their homes.

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transport them to Residential Schools. For my son and me, "The Scream" evoked the colonial violence, immorality, and horrific consequences of Canada's Residential School System.

As I gazed at this painting, my attention was drawn to various characters and the stark differences in their behaviors. In the background, I saw a nun and a Mountie seizing two Indigenous toddlers, who cried and clutched each other's hands. I saw their fright at being separated and torn from their home. I saw a Mountie and a nun dragging a half-dressed girl from the arms of her frantic mother. In the foreground, a priest grabbed the arm of a young girl and snatched her from her mother, who still clung to her daughter. In the central foreground, two grim-faced Mounties tugged at the arms, the clothing, and the hair of a mother in a blue dress, straining to separate her from a stunned toddler, who had been swept up by a priest robed in black. The mother screamed, her face contorted in pain, shock, desperation. For me, this bespoke cultural genocide in action, as it stripped Indigenous children from their homes and forced them to survive in an alien, white, Christian, hetero-patriarchal, capitalist culture. My eyes remained fixed on the mother's face. Standing with my son, I was shocked into awareness. The extreme violence of the act dawned on me as well as how ravaged and how negated the mother felt, bereft of her child, perhaps forever. A desperate unease came over me; I reached for my son's hand and drew him closer to me.

I felt unsettled as we drove home that day, and these feelings recurred whenever I relived our experience with this painting. Multiple contradictory emotions jostled in my consciousness, but I found it hard to lay hold of them. I continuously recalled the face and form of the mother as she reached out to reclaim her son. Now that two years have passed, I feel better able to articulate why the painting still affects me as a person and how it informs me as a practitioner.

Introduction

Unsettling experiences, like the one I have described, are troubled by "difficult knowledge" (Britzman, 1988). However, the current BC elementary curriculum does little to grasp and value this form of knowledge and does even less to provide practitioners with the pedagogical tools to deal with such knowledge. My encounter with Kent Monkman's "The Scream" awakened my emotional and critical consciousness and motivated me to investigate the human and relational sides of truth, which is necessary for reconciliation but so underrepresented in BC's elementary curriculum. I now propose that such unsettling works of Indigenous art can activate students' empathic and ethical consciousness and move them to act upon their new understandings of human and relational truth.

In pursuit of this aim and inspired by the wisdom of Professor Michael Marker (1951-2021), a long-term relation of the Lummi Nation and Arapaho (1951-2021), as well as other scholars, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, I will seek to engage in what Marker (2019) described as "alluvial processes" (p.503), and what Donald (2009) termed "Indigenous Métissage" (p. 5). Both suggest a relational intermixing of Indigenous and western understandings (p. 503) without

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negating or appropriating distinctive Indigenous ways of knowing.[2] Says Marker (2019), "[a]lluvial processes combine sediments at one level but the essences remain discrete at another level" (p. 503). For Marker, Indigenous and western knowledge can coexist by "combining the best of both" (2015, p. 3), which is what I seek to accomplish. I will attempt in this essay to weave together a cluster of relevant and complementary concepts, as I explore: (a) the nature and evolution of truth in BC's elementary school curriculum (Andersen, 2017); (b) the historical establishment of the curriculum in a positivist modality (Gadamer, 2013; Greene, 1977 Marker, 2004); (c) Greene's (1995) argument that aesthetic education can help students and practitioners to engage meaningfully with difficult knowledge; (d) Greene's (1977, 1995) philosophy of wide-awakeness, through which students and practitioners can activate the power of difficult knowledge; (e) Gadamer's (2013) "fusion of horizons" as a means by which wide-awakeness can function in this context; (f) "subversive art" as a form of "visual critical pedagogy" (Gil-Glazer, 2015); (g) "*The Scream*" as a prime example of the efficacy of "subversive art"; and (h) the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire.

My aim is to evaluate the complex relationship between Truth and Reconciliation Commission and BC's elementary curriculum. The scope of this essay will permit me to consider only the *rationale* for my determination to establish the visual critical pedagogy of "subversive art" in my classroom[3]. I have not yet fully integrated these concepts into my practice beyond theorizing their compatibility; therefore, I hesitate to comment on them definitively. Professor Marker's contributions to my understanding of truth and reconciliation have been immense. His scholarship provides the impetus for this inquiry into the role of subversive visual art in discovering empathic and ethical *truths* relating to Residential Schools. His wisdom has stretched the canvas upon which I now paint my thoughts.

The Evolution of Truth in BC's Elementary Curriculum

Indigenous Peoples have rarely been in charge of *truth* as it relates to the dominant colonial representations of Indigenous history and experiences; in efforts to suppress, oppress, and assimilate, settler agents of colonization have deliberately silenced Indigenous voices (Marker, 1998, 2003, 2019). Indigenous narratives were dismissed as "irrelevant ramblings of the uncivilized mind," and settlers were appointed as spokespersons (Marker, 2003, p. 362) to function as "cultural brokers" (Marker, 1998, p. 474) or "ventriloquists for Native communities," and to rehearse a self-valorizing Eurocentric version of reality (Marker, 2003, p. 361). Even highly educated Indigenous individuals have been vilified as "naïve, contradictory, and illogical" or "presumed to be inauthentic and unable to speak from a real Indigenous position" (L. Smith 1999, p. 14). The result has been a skewed version of history, which has impacted the truth about Residential Schools and how that truth has been "covered" in the BC curriculum.

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[2] Since I currently have no access to a subscription service or a university library, I will rely primarily on articles that have come to hand at no cost: a K-12 practitioner-scholar must learn to function as a *bricoleur*.

[3] I plan to investigate the important subtopics of (a) support for students experiencing "settler shame," and (b) strategies for pedagogical implementation and evaluation, in two additional essays.

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The "truth" about Residential School history in BC's elementary curriculum has mirrored the evolution of Canada's national narrative. Each of the three phases of the national narrative has served different colonial purposes, which have been reflected in BC's elementary curriculum. Our national narrative arose in the 19th century with the romantic notion of national identity, which featured white settlers struggling to gain dominion over untamed lands and to forge a nation (Andersen, 2017). This phase was guided by the Doctrine of Discovery[4], which portrayed Indigenous Peoples as "primitive," "exotic . . . savages," whom Christian settlers were called upon by their God to civilize (Andersen, 2017, p. 17).

The second phase of the national narrative commenced in the mid-20th century and promoted a storyline of progress and multiculturalism (Andersen, 2017). Canada portrayed itself as a tolerant society built on principles of equality and social justice. Non-Europeans (i.e. Indigenous-Canadians) were still characterized as "unstable until they have been subsumed into the nation-building narrative as hyphenated Canadians" (Andersen, 2017, p. 19). There was some recognition of historical injustices, and the concept of reconciliation began to take root, but denial of historical inequalities and the attendant injustices continued (Andersen, 2017; Shiu, 2008). Indigenous Peoples were still represented in post WWII curriculum as uncivilized, potentially violent, and a threat to nation building; however, Indigenous Peoples could be assured of taking part in nation building by surrendering their claims to their traditional lands and identities (Carleton, 2011).

The BC curriculum continued to normalize colonialism and to characterize Indigenous Peoples as separate, inferior, potentially violent, and deficient; Donald (2009) found that "teachers, now confronted with the specter of Aboriginal perspectives in their classrooms, [were] naturally finding it difficult to relinquish the more comfortable stories of Canada that they have been told and grown accustomed to" (p. 4). As a student, my own K-12 education was an example of this second phase; it remains a recurring source of tension as I attempt to decolonize my teaching practice.

Phase three of the national narrative produced a counter-narrative (Andersen, 2017) that arrived in the late 1980s with the inclusion of Indigenous Treaty Rights in the *Canadian Constitution Act-Section 35(1)* (1982). Previous representations of nation-building and social justice relating to Indigenous Peoples came under scrutiny and were challenged (Andersen, 2017). This counter-narrative transformed the BC curriculum, particularly after the conclusion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 2015. As a practitioner who has witnessed firsthand the most recent and revised versions of BC's curriculum (beginning in 2009), I have observed a greater urgency to ensure factual accuracy by including Indigenous voices. However, these efforts are largely intellectual, factual, and genericized, rather than affective, personal, and systemically actionable. Marker (2019) described this paradox as one where "they [universities (which I see as being similar to K-12 schools)] ostensibly invite Indigenous expression, but resist the undoing of hierarchies that maintain hegemonic equilibrium" because "they are slow to renovate their ethos" of the supremacy the colonial academy (p. 502). To be fair, in its *Core*

[4] The Doctrine of Discovery was repudiated by Pope Francis in 2023.

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Competencies (2022), BC's new curriculum does refer to understandings gained through an emotive lens, but that lens appears to be secondary to the inculcation of generic and non-relational factual knowledge, whose roots can be traced to a Eurocentric, colonialist orientation.

Truth: Positivist or Humanist-Relational?

The concept of truth is critical, and at this juncture, I would like to distinguish between colonial positivist and Indigenous relational truths, and to identify some practical problems with the elementary curriculum that relate to truth. To understand Residential Schools clearly, it is essential to examine how truth is constituted and to determine its sources and their claims to authority. How students and practitioners understand truth and validate its sources will affect both their consciousness and the relevance of their subsequent actions.

Marker (2004, 2019) found that post-secondary curricula have functioned within a positivist orientation, which does not address the holistic and relational capacities that are crucial to Indigenous knowledge systems. I believe elementary education contends with many of the same issues. These include an overvaluation of factual "scientific" knowledge, where "the researcher relentlessly searches for facts or data"; a disregard for "unrelated [emotive] data or irrelevant data"; and an emphasis on "a narrow kind of questioning, compartmentalizing, and specializing knowledge" (Marker, 2004, p. 105). As a result, learning becomes less about personal understanding, relational connection, and transformation and more about managing, memorizing, and categorizing information. "This approach resembles the industrial model of resource extraction," where the student is pushed to "go relentlessly to get the information and bring it back to the academy where it is to be processed and made acceptable" (Marker, 2004, p. 105).

Many of these views originate from Eurocentric scholars such as Gadamer (2013), who emphasized that western education has been rooted in Descartes' separation of "subject" and "object," which runs counter to the holistic nature of Indigenous Knowledge. For Gadamer, it had become impossible to consider sources of truth and their interconnectedness outside of western science. He argued that the *human sciences* offer a form of truth "in modes of experience that lie outside science" and are inaccessible to natural science. In human science, "truth is communicated [that] cannot be verified by the methodological means proper to science" (2013, p. xxi). Gadamer claimed that the consequences of a strict application of scientific method to a human science are "catastrophic" (2013, p. 18). For me, the *human science* described by Gadamer (2013) is complemented by the "ethical relationality" of Donald (2009): "Ethical relationality" is an "ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to more deeply understand how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other" (p. 6). Relational truth, such as the truth of Residential Schools, is not discoverable by a scientific method that "obliges one to sever one's bond with life" and, therefore, renders one's access to human truth incomplete (Gadamer, 2013, p. 6). For Gadamer, "the aim of natural science is to so objectify experience that it no longer contains any historical [human or relational] element," and "hence there can be no place for historicity of experience in science" (Gadamer, 2013, p. 355).

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Although working from distinctly different genealogies, epistemologies, and ontologies, both Gadamer and Marker held that positivist truth and human-relational truth serve different, often incompatible purposes and yield different results. I feel that emotive, ethical understandings remain shadowy in the BC curriculum, and this leaves students and practitioners with limited understandings of human truth. Although the move toward factual accuracy suggests progress, I believe the BC curriculum still excludes the emotive and ethical aspects of the social injustice of Residential Schools, which are both historical and ongoing.

Marker (2004) lamented the separation between scientific and moral understanding in Western education, as truth resides as much in moral understanding as it does in factual knowledge. For him, "Indigenous values are oriented towards promoting human conduct and traits that are often in conflict with what has become commonplace in universities [and K-12 education]" (Marker, 2004, p. 108). Natural science asks us to believe that "experience is valid only if it is confirmed; hence its dignity depends on its being in principle repeatable" (Gadamer, 2013, p. 356). But this is not the case with human-relational truth (Gadamer, 2013). Factual accuracy, by itself, does not produce the transformation of consciousness needed for meaningful action. Sylvia Smith, an Ottawa teacher and *Governor' Generals Award for Excellence* winner (2008), addressed the deficiencies in contemporary curriculum: "This kind of learning is something we can't get from books. A lot of teaching experiences don't touch the heart and spirit. And yet, as teachers, I think we all know that the affective component is the most important component. It's what stays with you" (cited in TRC, 2015b, p. 124). Expository text, however, is a key source of communication within colonial systems, in contrast to Indigenous cultures, some of which express themselves orally. The colonial education system has depicted and continues to depict Indigenous histories and cultures using standard western grammar and academic conventions that intrinsically misrepresent Indigenous Peoples (Marker, 2019, p. 504).

For me, the generic textual rendering of truth is a significant practical concern that prevents students and practitioners from understanding the human-relational aspects of Residential Schools. Factual truth is presented in the curriculum in generic terms, which overlook the individual narratives where the emotive and ethical truths reside. Marker (1998, 2015) stressed that the histories and legacies of Residential Schools must include personal narratives (Archibald, 2008). The new curriculum tends to represent Residential School history as a monolithic event that agglomerates individual stories, though these stories reveal aspects of truth that are often ignored. Western positivist education tends to consolidate individual experience in abstract terms, where emotive and ethical aspects are glossed over by grand theories that lose touch with the telling effects of individual narratives.

The new curriculum remains dominated by textbooks, which retain their status as the key source and authority over "what" and "how" students learn about Residential Schools (Shiu, 2008). As a practitioner who has used textbooks to explore this topic, it is clear to me that printed prose passages do not convey the affective truths of Residential schools, especially for students who have learning disabilities or autism spectrum disorders (Rao & Gagie, 2006). Many elementary children are primarily visual learners who understand more from images than from words. Textbook-based curriculum provides a factual, non-relational view of history that evokes neither

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the emotional responsiveness nor ethical responsibility required to cope with difficult knowledge.

What is "Difficult Knowledge"?

Residential School history represents "difficult knowledge," a term developed by Britzman (1988), to "signify both representations of social traumas in curriculum and the individual's encounters with them in pedagogy" (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 755; Bryan, 2016, p. 10). Both the history of Residential Schools and its continuing legacy among Intergenerational Survivors can be described by this term. Difficult knowledge is a very sensitive and human form of knowledge, which cannot be treated like science or mathematics. Difficult knowledge needs to include the human dimensions: "Despite the hegemony of rationality within mainstream education, in recent years there has been growing recognition of the need to understand teaching and learning as psychic and affective—as well as cognitive—experiences that are imbued within emotional complexity" (Bryan, 2016, p. 12).

In the *Introduction to British Columbia's Redesigned Curriculum*, BC's Ministry of Education describes how the new curriculum "incorporates Indigenous *voice* and perspective by having Indigenous expertise at all levels, ensuring that Indigenous *content* is a part of the learning journey for all students, and ensuring the best *information* guides the work" (BC Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 7). For me, the words *content* and *information* tend to represent factual truth rather than truth's affective, ethical, and relational aspects, while the word *voice* appears to be notional and non-holistic. Marker (2009) cautioned against the "distorted" versions of history presented by curriculum (p. 760). He clarified the current trend to incorporate Indigenous voice, arguing that "representing the Indigenous perspective and voice in these histories is denser than simply including testimony from Indigenous students who attended the schools," and cautioning that the authentic truth about Residential Schools must be ascertained by more than a token inclusion of Indigenous voices that have been sprinkled into the curriculum to satisfy ministerial requirements of inclusion (2009, p. 760). The included voices need to be dialogically uncontrived, and they need to comprise the core of our search for truth.

The focus on factual accuracy ignores the human and relational costs of colonization for Indigenous Peoples and turns Residential School experiences into "lovely knowledge" (Britzman, 1988) or "easy knowledge" (Gil-Glazer, 2015), which, "while recognizing certain historical 'wrongs' attempts to lay them to rest, to yield them as difficulty primarily in their past-ness" (Failer, Ives, & Milne, 2015, p. 4). Factual knowledge creates an emotively and relationally comfortable distance between the observer and the observed, so that there is no ethical responsibility on the part of the former toward the latter. Practitioners, me included, have tended to avoid discovering the emotive truth, because we fear the truths we might discover about ourselves. Working through emotive truth is a more difficult task for students and practitioners than working with factual truth. Emotive truth creates a relationality between students, practitioners, and the Indigenous content (in this case) that establishes an ethical responsibility toward one another and requires settlers to venture into a dark corner of consciousness, where many are reluctant to go. Difficult knowledge activates consciousness in a distinctly critical manner, which obliges students and practitioners to examine what was

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previously invisible and compels us to engage ethically with truth and to *act* upon it—a position also advocated for by Mi'kmaq Scholar Pamela Palmater (2018). Difficult knowledge activates our "ethical relationality" (Donald, 2009), which compels non-Indigenous peoples to see ourselves as coexisting with Indigenous Peoples as neighbors, rather than as distant "Others."

Wide-Awakeness, Hermeneutics, and Crucial Narratives

Maxine Greene (1977, 1995, 1999, 2007, 2018) explored the ways that art and aesthetic education can assist students and practitioners to access the human dimensions of life. For Greene, art transforms knowledge into a narrative encounter. Marker's recognition (2015) that story is important in understanding the history and legacy of Residential Schools complements Greene's position (1977, 1995, 1999, 2007, 2018).

The encounter with art permits living stories to emerge, which enable the observer to become wide-awake (Greene, 1995). "Wide-awakeness" is a concept developed by Australian philosopher Alfred Schultz (1967), who described it as:

> a plane of consciousness of the highest tension originating in an attitude of full attention to life and its requirements. Only the performing and especially the working self is fully interested in life and hence, wide-awake. This attention is an active, not a passive one. (cited in Greene, 1977)

Greene (1995) amplified this idea and applied it to aesthetic education, coming to see wide-awakeness as a higher level of consciousness that encourages critical and ethical awareness and physical engagement with the world (Williams, 2017). Aesthetic education is an effective pedagogical tool for practitioners and students to activate their wide-awakeness and to grasp the relevant human issues[5].

Art activates imagination, which permits the observer to enter the narrative and to achieve the wide-awakeness that allows students and practitioners to *see* things that they "had not particularly wanted to see" (Greene, 1995, p. 98) and to "experience the bitter taste of knowledge" (p. 92). Art "can enable us to see more in our experience, to hear more on normally unheard frequencies, to become conscious of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and convention have suppressed" (Greene, 1995, p. 123). Wide-awakeness permits students and practitioners "to think of a deepening and expanding mode of tuning-in" to modalities of consciousness that we have previously ignored (Greene, 1995, p. 104).

Gadamer (2013) examined the role of aesthetics in understanding truth, and this suggests an affinity between Gadamer's hermeneutics and Greene's (1995) concept of wide-awakeness. Hermeneutics is an activity that appreciates the intentions or the *horizon* of the other. Horizon is defined by Gadamer as "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (2013, p. 313). In order to appreciate the horizon of another, one must

[5] Brice-Heath (2000) discussed the neurological implications of art on the "visual brain" (p. 122) in being able to make meaning beyond what reading text can accomplish, giving further pedagogical credibility to art as teaching strategy.

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position oneself in relation to the other. Each time one tries to imagine the horizon of the other, one attempts to experience it. Through iterative dialogue, a "fusion of horizons" is approached, and an appreciative understanding can be reached (Gadamer, 2013, p. 382). I am extremely mindful that this "fusion" does not involve appropriating or pathologizing Indigenous trauma (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019), both of which would contravene "ethical relationality" (Donald, 2009); instead, it involves compassion for those we encounter in relation. Elementary school practitioners strive to develop compassion among our students. Compassion is a social-emotional capability that we address consciously in our daily practice; it carries a critical significance in K-12 schooling. A fusion of horizons, in a state of wide-awakeness, will enable one to recognize the other in ways that plain facts will not. With respect to Residential Schools, students and practitioners can attempt to fuse horizons with individuals like the mother in the blue dress in Monkman's painting, in order to attempt to gain some emotive understandings of the seeing, hearing, feeling, and thinking as the artist is portraying them.

By fusing the observer's horizon with that of the observed, the former to some extent comes to be in an "ethical relationality" (Donald, 2009) with the latter. Aesthetic education eliminates the cognitive and physical distance between the observer and the observed in a manner that objective knowledge rules out (Greene, 1995). Art "enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called 'other' over the years" (Greene, 1995, p. 3). When students and practitioners learn the histories of Residential School experiences through art, they have a greater potential to become active, ethical, and compassionate participants in the narratives they observe. In this way, aesthetic experience becomes dialogical and relational (Williams, 2009); it is "dynamic rather than static"; and it engages our active attention and participation (Greene, 1995, p. 102).

As Michael Marker affirmed, education needs to focus on individual and collective narratives in order to understand Residential Schools. We can do this by approaching the horizons of Residential School Survivors and Intergenerational Survivors like those depicted in "The Scream," in order to induce the wide-awakeness of our critical consciousness. Aesthetic education invites students and practitioners to engage the narratives that are being explored in an ethically sensitive way. It removes Indigenous Peoples from generic abstraction and identifies them as specific individuals with both personal and collective stories to tell. Imaginative proximity compels students and practitioners to become relationally involved. Wide-awakeness, induced through aesthetic education, energizes the empathic and ethical consciousness of students and moves them from passive observation toward relational engagement and activity, as the horrific lived stories of Residential Schools emerge from the artwork that the students encounter.

Subversive Art and "The Scream"

For students and practitioners, "subversive art" can hermeneutically induce the wide-awakeness needed to understand emotive and ethical truths about Residential Schools. "Subversive art" is a form of "visual critical pedagogy" that seeks to increase our critical consciousness about issues of social injustice (Gil-Glazer, 2015; Naidus, 2005; Peters, 2016; Zorilla & Tisdell, 2016). I become aware that this usage of the term *subversive* derives from a colonial perspective, even as

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it challenges the dominance of the colonial gaze and exposes the violence in which settlers (past and present) are implicated (Johnson, 2019). For Indigenous Peoples and artists like Monkman, “subversive art” is not inspired solely by critical theory but was/is a reflection of reality. Henceforth, I will no longer refer to these works as “subversive” but rather as Indigenous art, which is meant to disrupt and challenge the dominant colonial narrative by presenting counter-narratives that speak truth to power via visual dialogue. The effectiveness of Indigenous art lies in its bluntness and boldness: “It’s in your face and it’s so strong . . . but it's like somehow inevitable already . . . it represents where we are in this world” (Gil-Glazer, 2015, p. 267). It is designed as a provocation to jolt both students and practitioners into wide-awakeness (Gil-Glazer, 2015).

Through the hermeneutic fusion of horizons, Indigenous art prompts students and practitioners to become more aware of the experience of the colonial violence associated with Residential Schools. The observer ceases to exist as a passive intellectual spectator, but becomes an immersed, active, and relational participant, who must confront and respond to the experience. “Comforted” settler students and practitioners can no longer hide behind the wall of factual knowledge and its non-reciprocal nature. Indigenous art pushes settlers to engage with Indigenous peoples in the present and compels them to engage with their histories and the continuing violence they face. Indigenous art functions as a *critical space* in which the tireless work of decolonization can manifest in elementary education (Santana & Akhurst, 2019). Indigenous art has the potential to be the “ethical space” (Donald, 2009) where there can be “purposeful juxtaposition of mythic historical perspectives (often framed as common sense) with Aboriginal historical perspectives” (Donald, 2009, p. 5).

Kent Monkman’s “The Scream” is a prime example of Indigenous art that deals with difficult knowledge and engenders wide-awakeness. This painting captures the emotive, ethical, and relational *truths* about Residential Schools in a manner that factual prose descriptions do not. In relation to such art, students and practitioners have the potential to develop greater compassion and ethical commitment toward sincere reconciliation. Monkman’s brush strokes powerfully highlight the despair on the face of the mother in the blue dress. Monkman’s shading brings to life her direct experience with colonial violence. The colonial color schematic and textural features employed by Monkman bring “the inner” out to “the outer” (Castellano, 2000, p. 28) in a way that the colonial modality of expressive text cannot. We see the strain in her tendons as she reaches for the hands of her stolen child. The aggression of the Mounties, as they clench their teeth, tug at the mother’s dress, and seize her by the hair, makes the implicit *violation* of the scene explicit. Emotive, ethical, and relational aspects, which may have been previously inaccessible to some, have the potential to become more visible. After two years of unsettling dialogue with this mother, I now feel solidarity with her plight, and plan ways to decolonize a system that continues to perpetrate colonial violence upon her. As students and practitioners examine this painting, “they must risk interacting differently with Indigenous people” (Regan, 2010, p. 13). “The Scream” opens the potential for allowing students and practitioners to connect at some level cognitively, emotionally, physically, and spiritually with the Indigenous mothers and children depicted. They no longer remain as nameless, placeless, and ahistorical objects.

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As settlers, before we are able to read, we are able to see, but sight is the sense that adults often fail to use as they give credence to their colonial, objectivizing sensibilities. Indigenous art like "The Scream" can help us reclaim our ability to *see*. Many children are visual learners who gain more from images than from print. I witness children's visual abilities obscured by adults who stress the primacy of print-based factoids. Elementary curriculum, with its stress on factualization, fosters an opaque consciousness, which consigns Residential School children and their families to a "non being" that "ignores the reality of the human condition" (Greene, 1995, p. 23, 56). In my view, Indigenous art and visual critical pedagogy need to be more generally and intensively utilized in Residential School curriculum.

Indigenous Art, Transformation, *Praxis,* and Reciprocity

As a practitioner, I agree with Pratt, Danyluk, Beech, Charlebois, Evans, Fehr, Nielsen, and Sangreet (2019), who identify "the notion that reconciliation is merely a passing trend undeserving of action or even attention" as "the greatest risk of reconciliation" (p. 98). Sincere reconciliation must extend beyond conscientization and result in transformation and action. Students and practitioners must not only *think* reconciliation, but they must also *do* reconciliation, and Indigenous art provides an impetus. A useful fusion of relevant concepts and activities can be approached via Freire's (1970)[6] concepts of critical pedagogy and humanization, and Marker and McGregor's (2018) views on reciprocity. These notions provide the philosophical nexus that encourages me to weave together the differing and various strands of difficult knowledge, wide-awakeness, fusion of horizons, and Indigenous art, so that they may all contribute toward the service of transformation.

Humanization formed the foundation of Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy. For Freire, critical pedagogy was "animated by authentic humanist (not humanitarian) generosity, [and] presents itself as a pedagogy of human kind" (1970, p. 54). Humanitarian generosity can be a form of performative charity, which compels one to engage with others on a superficial and temporary level, rooted more in selfish desire for absolution, rather than sincere relational altruism. In comparison, humanist generosity compels us to connect genuinely with others as relations with whom we share ethical responsibilities[7]. A positivist elementary curriculum favors a humanitarian-relational approach, and thus promotes an optically favorable, non-transformative "do-gooderism," rather than sincere and durable transformations of critical consciousness resulting in meaningful relational actions. By virtue of its positivist affiliations, it is difficult for the BC elementary curriculum to move beyond a simple optics of concern. Indigenous art, like Monkman's "The Scream," is an effective pedagogical tool, through which students and practitioners have the potential to progress from the humanitarian approach to a humanist-relational one.

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[6] I employed the work of Paulo Freire as his ideas of critical pedagogy have been important to my practice. Freire's ideas have also been employed by Métis scholar Shannon Leddy (2008) in her examination of art as pedagogic practice.

[7] I do not suggest the term humanism represents saviorism, which runs counter to my understanding of compassion and ethical relationality.

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As Freire argued, "for the oppressors, 'human beings' refers only to themselves, other people are things'" (1970, p. 57). In spite of encouraging changes, whereby BC's elementary curriculum has become more accurate in its representations of Residential Schools, the representations remain largely thing-like. Indigenous art has the pedagogic potential to breathe life into the affectively flattened landscapes of our textbooks. Viewed in this way, "The Scream" shifts from being a lifeless artifact and becomes a "living vestige fecund," which reverberates into the present (Donald, 2009, p. 11). Indigenous art "challenges subject-object separations" and "once the reader becomes entangled with the characters' thoughts and perceptions, she or he finds herself or himself conscious of questions and concerns buried in her or his ordinary experience" (Greene, 1995, p. 98). Unfortunately, the current curriculum continues to view Residential Schools through the distancing lens of the scientific method, where "the investigator who, in the name of scientific objectivity, transforms the organic into something inorganic . . . does want to study change—but in order to stop it, not in order to stimulate or deepen it" (Freire, 1970, p. 108). By genericizing Residential School history and legacy, BC's new curriculum still serves to colonize Indigenous Peoples, distort understandings of truth, and limit advancements towards sincere reconciliation.

An affinity exists between the braided concepts of difficult knowledge, wide-awakeness, fusion of horizons, subversive art, and Freire's (1970) concept of *praxis*. The TRC Commissioners related transformation to specific actions. The Commissioners were fearful that acts of transformation would largely be hollow and abstract rather than sincere and practical. For Freire (1970), praxis meant both transformation of consciousness and tangible action must occur simultaneously. He described praxis as a process which "cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to activism, but must include serious reflection" (1970, p. 65). In my attempted "Metisage" (Donald, 2009), the "clustered concepts" work together to begin to arouse the critical consciousness, or the *conscientizacao* (Friere, 1970) of students and practitioners so that they will approach Residential Schools, and their own relationships with Indigenous Peoples, in humanly relational and ethically responsible ways. The wide-*awakening* of Indigenous art requires students and practitioners not only transform themselves but also *act* meaningfully upon what they *see*, as "[a]rt and social change do not exist in parallel universes, but overlap" (Zorilla & Tisdell, 2016, p. 286). I believe my "Metisage" (Donald, 2009) of concepts has the potential to move students and practitioners from a position of ethical and empathic passivity to one of transformative, relational activity.

Finally, to consolidate Freire's (1970) conceptions of humanization and praxis, I will invoke Marker and McGregor's (2018) views on reciprocity. Within the curriculum (both past and present), students and practitioners have been free to draw from the well of Residential School violence to indulge their intellectual curiosities without meaningful and transformative (relational) reciprocity. BC's current curriculum suggests a shallow form of transactional reciprocity, which reduces the relationship between students, practitioners, and Residential School children to a form of *quid-pro-quo*. Marker and McGregor (2018) warned against this form of reciprocity. From my perspective, these intentions are humanitarian, rather than humanistic-relational. Grounded in respect, relationships, and responsibility, these scholars championed a reciprocity that is circular, continuous, and promotes relational accountability. I

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believe that Indigenous art can draw the observer and observed relationally toward "an ethical stance rather than a simplistic exchange of goods of tolerance" (Trainor & Blouchard, 2012, p. 2).

In Closing

Elementary practitioners often say, "a picture is worth a thousand words." Indigenous paintings, like Kent Monkman's "The Scream," make it possible for students and practitioners to understand Residential School history and legacy in emotive, ethical, and relational ways that bring the experiences of Residential School Children and their families vividly to life. Through my engagement with this painting, my affective and ethical consciousness has been awakened. Now, as a practitioner and a parent, I feel a human and relational responsibility towards engaging with Indigenous Peoples on a level where I both think and act differently. I've discovered that Monkman is not the only Indigenous artist whose work can be accessed by practitioners. Bob Boyer (Métis), Shelley Niro (Mohawk), Ron Noganosh (Anishinaabe), and Edward Poitras (Métis) are a few of the Indigenous artists whose works serve to challenge colonial misrepresentations. It would be wise for schools to start assembling collections of Indigenous art for classroom use. As both Paulo Freire (1970) and Michael Marker have argued, words without actions do little to transform the lifeworlds of students and practitioners and their relations with Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous art has the potential to promote deeper relationality with the violent histories and continuing oppression of Indigenous Peoples. Aesthetic education can provide an emotive, ethical, and relational impetus to understand truth and to work toward meaningful reconciliation. As Maxine Greene so clearly stated: "Art offers life; it offers hope; it offers the prospect of discovery; it offers light" (Greene, 1995, p. 133). Artworks like Monkman's "The Scream" offer truth and, by doing so, they face us toward reconciliation.

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