COU Academic Colleagues Committee Report to the Ontario Tech U Academic Council

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Synopsis

This report provides an overview of the meetings of the Academic Colleagues held on **May 10 & 11, 2022.** These meetings occurred in a hybrid form (online and in-person).

Background

The objective of the Council of Ontario Universities Academic colleagues committee is to support the COU Council, consisting of the executive heads of the institutional members of the COU and academic colleagues.

Meeting Summaries

COU Colleagues Meeting (May 10 & 11, 2022)

Evening meeting, May 10, 2022

1. Conversation with Dr. Candace Brunette-Debassige, Assistant Professor and Teaching Fellow (Indigenous), Western University, Faculty of Education on the topic of Decolonizing Academia **

Dr. Brunette-Debassige spoke to the Colleagues about Western University's Indigenous Strategic Plan.

- The report of the TRC in 2015 marked the end of a 4-year process and was a significant policy moment. Past commissions and reports had raised many of the same ideas and called attend to long-standing struggles of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples have been calling for the decolonization of the academy for 30 years. The focus of the TRC was about exposing the policies and dark history about residential schools.
- Residential schools are only a part of a larger system of settler colonialism that has existed since the beginning of the country, including the Indian Act. It was a threat to one's indigenous identity, along with enfranchisement which meant giving up one's Indigenous identity. Historically, few made it to university. Today, the system still requires people to conform. Indigenous peoples are chronically underrepresented and struggle in the universities, but universities are among the strongest leaders in working for change. At the same time, they are complicit: in the omission of Indigenous knowledge and perpetuation of colonial myths; universities benefited from acquiring Indigenous lands; Indigenous peoples have been written about, but not through an Indigenous lens. Indigenous peoples have unique rights and treaties were created in exchange for land with a promise that indigenous peoples would have self-determination and rights, but those promises were not kept, and universities contributed by silencing the voices and history of Indigenous peoples.
- Today, we are in an unique time of reckoning: reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization operate together, but decolonization must happen before Indigenization. Reconciliation is part of a larger global effort that is similar to what other places have gone. The complex dimensions of colonialism operate within the larger imperial project connected to economics and power. Decolonization is being embedded into EDI, just as colonialism is embedded in all the research

and methodologies we use, and in structures of governance. As part of the decolonizing process, we are starting to transform the system in order to redress past wrongs and ensure Indigenization, so that others can come into the academy without being forced to assimilate.

- This process occurs through the creation of Indigenous senior administrative roles, by revisiting policies so that the land of Indigenous nations can be recognized (including policies around smudging in classrooms and elsewhere indoors, flags that are allowed to be flown, the catering of Indigenous foods, etc. Settler colonialism is still embedded into policies and structures by default. There needs to be a shift away from a human rights legislation approach to recognizing that racism is systemically embedded. We need to be more proactive rather than reactive.
- Indigenization is about about naturalizing Indigenous knowledges, because it has been hard to get Indigenous knowledge recognized, and to move away from assumptions based on racism and biases. Universities, researchers, administrators, and instructors need to accept that Indigenous peoples have a paradigm, epistemology, methodology, etc. based in the land, Indigenous languages, and so on, and that they have something to offer the world. If we are going to change the system, we need to create space for other knowledges.
- Once we do these things, how do we measure their success and impact? How do we define excellence?
- Dr. Brunette-Debassige commented on the policy movements that are occurring. She is seeing discourses coming out of different organizations with institutional work happening at every university (sector-wide, institutional, faculty level), but we need to build proactive, long-term support in order to meet the challenge of keeping people. She noted the unique nature of Indigenous research which cannot be measured in the same ways as colonial research, because it takes longer.
- Institutional indigenization is a whole of university approach that strives to make broad-based change across all sectors of the university, including student affairs, teaching & learning, research & assessment, space planning, workforce planning, and governance, policies & decision-making (Rigney, 201, p. 45).
- One resource for creating institutional change is *Towards Braiding*, by Elwood Jimmy and Vanessa Andreotti, http://decolonialfutures.net/towardsbraiding which discussus systemic pitfalls: epistemic ignorance (dominance of euro-centrism), conditional inclusion (measuring against traditional standards), and under-representation (overwork).
- To do this well, we need reflective cycles of change that includes interrogating what we see as the problem. It is messy work that involves tensions and uncomfortable conversations. It means giving Indigenous colleagues the opportunity to say 'no' and respect when they do, and giving them the autonomy to define their priorities. We need to ask and not give up, but also respect their decisions and knowledge of their own needs.
- Dr. Brunette-Debassige ended by commenting that everyone can decolonize, but not everyone (e.g., not every course) should Indigenize. It is important to think about indigenous content at a program level.
- Additional resources are attached.

Morning meeting, May 11, 2022

1. COU update (Steve Orsini)

College Degree-Granting Expansion

- On April 11, MCU announced the government's decision regarding the expansion of publicly assisted colleges' mandates to offer three-year applied bachelor degrees, which was initially introduced as part of the Fall 2021 Red Tape Bill: Supporting People and Businesses Act.
- This provision, which is effective immediately, includes a number of restrictions on college three-year degree granting:
    - There will be no additional funded spaces provided to colleges within existing funding corridors.
    - There will be no additional operating grant funding to support expansion of three-year degrees.
    - There will be an increase in degree cap limits for all colleges by five percentage points. This means that ITALS (Institutes of Applied Technology and Learning -- Humber, Seneca, Sheridan, and Conestoga) now have a 20% cap on all degree-level program activity and all other colleges have a 10% degree cap limit (calculated as a proportion of programs).
    - Previously the four-year degree-granting cap was set at 15% for the ITALS and 5% for all other colleges.
    - Each proposed three-year degree, including any conversions of advanced diplomas to degrees, must meet the Ontario Qualifications Framework, must undergo a PEQAB review, and be approved by the Minister.
    - Three-year degrees must be:
        - in an applied area of study;
        - career-oriented; and
        - distinct from university degrees.
    - Program tuition must conform to the *Tuition and Ancillary Fee Minister's Binding Policy Directive*.
- The Minister's memo did not grant colleges the authority to grant applied master's degrees.
- The university sector currently has the opportunity to comment on new college degree applications that are submitted to PEQAB. Given the sector's interest in Ontario's postsecondary quality standards, COU will confirm the details of the review process for these new programs with MCU and will, in keeping with present practice, continue to flag any new PEQAB applications to OCAV.
- HEQCO has released a report finding little evidence of cost savings of three-year degree program delivery at the college level (compared to four-year baccalaureate degrees at universities).

2022 Budget

- On April 28, Ontario's Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy delivered the provincial government's 2022 Ontario Budget. "**Ontario's Plan to Build"** reflects the government's plan for "better jobs and bigger paycheques, building more highways and hospitals, and keeping costs down for Ontario families while keeping our economy open and strong."
- The budget will not pass but rather serve as a basis for Ford's election platform. The government has committed to proceeding with this budget if elected.
- The Budget is built around five pillars outlined below with the overall goal of supporting the government's efforts in "Rebuilding Ontario's Economy."

- **Rebuilding Ontario's Economy:** The government has a plan that will help bring better jobs across the province as critical minerals in the North help drive battery and hybrid electric vehicle manufacturing in Ontario.
- **Working for Workers:** The government has a plan for making Ontario's workers among the most highly skilled and best supported in the world. The government is working for workers to support better jobs and bigger paycheques.
- **Building Highways and Key Infrastructure:** The government has a plan to get shovels in the ground for more highways, transit and key infrastructure to fight gridlock, boost the economy and create jobs.
- **Keeping Costs Down:** The government has a plan to help keep costs down by increasing the housing supply, making it less expensive to drive or take transit, and providing relief on everyday expenses from child care costs to taxes.
- **A Plan to Stay Open:** The government has a plan to build the health care workforce, shore up domestic production of critical supplies, and build more hospitals and long-term care homes. These measures will expand the capacity of the health care system and ensure the people of Ontario can access care when and where they need it.

- Postsecondary announcements (note that no further details are available and that COU is working with the Ministry to obtain clarity):
  - **MCU Budget:** Postsecondary education sector expenses are projected to increase from $10 billion in 2021-22 to $11.4 billion in 2024-25. The medium-term expense outlook for the sector shows increases in funding levels for 2022-23 and 2023-24.
  - **Research Investments:** The Budget announced $55 million over three years to invest more in research and innovation to support productivity, economic growth, and address current and future pandemic preparedness, including additional funding to support Phase 1 of the Biosciences Research Infrastructure Fund.
    - The budget also included an announced investment of $2 million in 2022–23 and $3 million in 2023–24 to create a Critical Minerals Innovation Fund to support the mining industry, academia, startups and research and development firms to find innovative solutions for extraction and processing of critical minerals.
  - **Health Care:** The previously-announced $41.4 million to support clinical education for nurses will be for three years, for a total of $124.2 million starting in 2022–23 to modernize clinical education for nurses. This commitment of two additional years of funding is new in Budget 2022. The Budget included items previously announced including:
    - Making it easier for foreign-credentialled health workers to begin practicing in Ontario by reducing barriers to registering with and being recognized by health regulatory colleges.
    - Investing $142 million to launch the new "Learn and Stay" grant to encourage workers to remain in underserved communities.
    - Investing $42.5 million over two years beginning 2023-24 to support the expansion of undergraduate and postgraduate medical education training in the province.

- **Tuition Framework:** The Budget re-announced the tuition freeze for 2022-23, originally announced in March 2022, for domestic students residents of Ontario. The tuition framework contains an allowable five per cent increase to tuition for domestic out-of-province students.
- **Facilities Renewal:** There were no new announcements. The Budget reiterated previous government commitments of $1.3 billion, announced in Budget 2020, over ten years to help "modernize classrooms by upgrading technology, carrying out critical repairs and improving environmental sustainability." This includes the confirmed $135 million in capital investments in 2022-23: $125.2 million for the Facilities Renewal Program (FRP) and $10 million for the Training Equipment and Renewal Fund (TERF).
- **Intellectual Property:** The budget re-announced the creation of Intellectual Property Ontario, which is being supported by an investment of approximately $58 million over three years.

International

- On April 29, Executive Heads endorsed the creation of a COU cross-functional working group on international education. The mandate of the group will be to conduct research, review key issues, and develop policy and advocacy options around the quality, supports, and outcomes of international education in Ontario for member input and review. The group would report to OCAV, who will in turn bring initiatives forward to Executive Heads.
- The group will be made up of COU affiliate representatives, including OCAV, VPs International, OCGS, OCSA, OURA, CUPA, GRO and OUPAC.

COVID-19 & Mandatory Vaccination Policies

- COU's COVID-19 Reference Group has been active for the past 18 months addressing operational, academic, advocacy, legal and other sector issues related to COVID. The group had its last meeting in April and will shift into a smaller cross-functional COVID Advisory Group to advise Executive Heads, COU and government with respect to any issues that arise related to COVID-19 on an ad hoc basis.

Teacher Spaces Advocacy

- The government has announced that it will be funding expansion of Wilfrid Laurier University's Bachelor of Education program at its Brantford campus (60 students this year, and another 60 in 2023-2024). MCU has said it continues to examine the broader issue of teacher supply and enrolment caps.

2. Information Sharing

- Colleagues shared information about their university's COVID protocols, how well courses were running, and so on.
- One person noted that there is a lawsuit against predatory companies calling themselves tutoring companies who are targeting student to blackmail them about cheating. There seems to be increased harassment of faculty and students online.
- In the Fall 2022, we should be prepared for what will essentially be a triple cohort of frosh since many going into 2nd and 3rd years will have never been on campus before.

- There seems to be mental health benefits to bring in person, but there will be challenges in getting everyone to get used to commuting again.
- Quillbot is a paraphrasing software that students use, but if people are using the same material, it will paraphrase in the same way and they will get caught for cheating.
- At Western, faculty voted down the continuation of self-reporting of illness due to unsustainable workload because it was massively abused.

3. COU Reference Group on Aboriginal Education update (Denise Baxter)

- The Reference Group on Aboriginal Education (RGAE) began in 2009 and was intended to work towards improving access and outcomes for Indigenous students. The Reference Group acts as a focal point for dialogue with government and other stakeholders on issues relate to Indigenous education and serves as a place for discussion on issues of common interest across the Ontario university sector. They meet with the government 3 times a year. The Indigenous Student Success Fund provides some funding for universities
- Current mandate: RGAE is working to ensure the development and sustainment of Indigenization related-activities across Ontario universities. With the goal of improving access and outcomes for Indigenous students at Ontario universities, the Reference Group will provide a circle for: 1. Discussion of issues of common interest across the Ontario university sector; 2. Common policy development; and 3. Dialogue with and response to government, as well as other stakeholders. The Reference Group provides updates to the Council of Senior Administrative Officers (CSAO), the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV), Ontario Council on Student Affairs (OCSA) and Executive Heads as required.
- Representatives are from all members of the COU. Each institution nominates 1 person who is Indigenous and 1 senior, non-Indigenous person who is involved in direct service delivery to Indigenous students.
- Current priorities include: Self-Identification and Ancestry Verification; Recruitment and Admissions; COVID-19 (University response, vaccines/exemptions and student emergency funding); OCAV/RGAE- focusing on Ancestry Verification (2 members of RGAE sit on this committee); Indigenization plans; Indigenous Spaces, faculty and student supports; Indigenous Student Services
- Regarding ancestry verification, self-identification has led to some misrepresentation. Need to ask: Where do they sit in their community, family, etc.? Do they have a commitment and connection to their community? The committee has been discussing how do you determine a person's right to be in a particular space. It is important for universities to build equity into the position which requires making sure they deserve to be in that place. It is important to build policy with community and to have Indigenous people sitting around the table. It is complex because many people were displaced during the 60's scoop or lost their status due to marriage, so not everyone will know where they are from.
- National Indigenous Senior Leadership committee has been active for about 1.5 years.
- Recruitment is relational. Universities need to be in it for the long road for students and families. It is important to get to know the communities by going to events (e.g., powwow) and having a recruitment table at community events. Use SSHRC connections grant to work with elders and

high school students on an ongoing basis because we want them to see that further learning is important. (Some examples: Indigenous guidance breakfast, anyone with influence on students should be invited, swag labelled with Indigenous initiative and name of university, anyone who worked with access community; hold an Indigenous preview day – might go into science labs or meet with English dept, etc; try to grow the networks with kids; tutoring program with high school students; be in the community and even providing financial support to pay for applications to university; use local artists and artisans for gifts; etc.).

4. Quality Council Update

Quality Council has met once since the last meeting of the Academic Colleagues. Assessment of new programs and cyclical program reviews continues on an ongoing basis. As recommended by the appraisal committee New Programs were approved for University of Guelph, Laurentian and University of Toronto. Final Assessment reports were accepted for programs were approved from Laurier and Nippissing. As recommended by the audit committee, updated IQAPs were approved for Carleton and Toronto Metropolitan (formerly Ryerson).

APPENDICES

1. Logics of Indigenous identification, by Chris Andersen (September 23, 2021)

2. Scholarly References, by Dr. Brunette-Debassige

3. Article: Dion & Salamanca. (2018). Enunciation: Urban Indigenous being, digital storytelling and Indigenous film aesthetics. The Canadian Journal of Native Studies XXXVIII, 1, pp. 183-207.

4. Indigenous Identity Forum Reading List

Logics of Indigenous identification
Chris Andersen
(September 23, 2021)

As it stands, university administrators "measure" Indigeneity based primarily on *self-identification*. In two instances they often ask for further information – reserved seats and awards (i.e., scholarships and bursaries) – but generally, self-identification is the major dynamic of identity making in the academy, as in society more generally.

It might be useful to encourage administrators to think about the issue of Indigenous identification in terms of two dynamics and two "moves" (based on this preponderance of self-identification):

Two Dynamics:

1. non-Indigenous administrators not wanting to be racist (or be accused of being racist) for challenging someone's claim to Indigeneity;

2. a looming 'white possessiveness' (Moreton-Robinson 2016) that encourages non-Indigenous/white people with various distances of Indigenous ancestry to make claims to Indigeneity despite their lack of lived experience or ongoing connection to an Indigenous collective or collectives.

Changing the conversational "pitch" at universities through two "moves":

1. moving from genealogy to kinship;

- Métis historian Brenda Macdougall (2013) differentiates between genealogical and kinship focused studies in terms of the former's focus on establishing links between people living today and ancestors who have passed, while kinship studies were meant to gain insight into Indigenous worldviews through an examination of their family (and other) relationships. While genealogy requires no ongoing relationships, kinship does. As such, it is important for us to think about identity claims in terms of kinship dynamics.

2. moving from self-identification to citizenship;

- Self-identification is a hallmark of genealogical logics – it operates as a form of "inert" kinship, since it requires no ongoing relationships with living collectives but rather, needs only the urge to self-identify (a primary marker of white possessiveness). Citizenship, conversely, not only requires a link to an on-going collective, but it respects their decision-making processes regarding who belongs and who does not. Self-identification is about who I claim to be; a requirement of citizenship is about who claims me.

Scholarly References

Gaudry, A., & Lorenz, D. (2018a). Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: Navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples 14*(3), 218-227.

Gaudry A., & Lorenz, D. (2018b) Decolonization for the masses? Grappling with Indigenous content requirements in the changing Canadian post-secondary environment. In E. Tuck & W. Yang (Eds.), *Indigenous and decolonizing studies in education. Mapping the long view* (pp. 159-174). New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Jimmy, E., Andreotti, V., & Stein, S. (2015). *Toward Braiding.* https://decolonialfuturesnet.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/braiding_reader.pdf

Sensoy, O., & Diangelo, R. (2017). "We are all for diversity, but…": How faculty hiring committees reproduce whiteness and practical suggestions for how they can change. *Harvard Educational Review 87*, 4.

Smith, L, & Smith, G.H. (2018). Doing Indigenous work: Decolonizing and transforming the academy. In E. A. McKinley & L.T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Indigenous education* (pp. 1-27). Springer Nature, Singapore: SpringerLink. https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9789811038983

Indigenous Campus & Space Planning – University Roundtable

Post-secondary Institutions and Indigeneity in Infrastructure Planning. (2021, February 5). Roundtable Discussion hosted by McGill University. https://www.mcgill.ca/campusplanning/indigenous-roundtable

Indigenous Curriculum & Learning – An Institutional Review

Indigenous Curriculum and Learning Sub-Committee. (2021, June). *Maamwi Gzikewag Curriculum Report and Recommendations*. Western University. https://indigenous.uwo.ca/docs/Western%20Maamwi%20Gzikewag%20Curriculum%20Report%20and%20Recommendations%20June%202021.pdf

Indigenous Faculty Relations – Policy Statements

University of Western Ontario Faculty Association (UWOFA). Collective Agreement. *Indigenous Letter of Understanding (LOU).* https://www.uwo.ca/facultyrelations/faculty_relations/faculty/LOU---Indigenous-Faculty-Members---AODA-check-website.pdf

Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). (2020, January). Bargaining for Indigenization of the academy. https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/caut-bargaining-advisory-bargaining-for-indigenization-of-the-academy_2020-01.pdf

ENUNCIATION: URBAN INDIGENOUS BEING, DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND INDIGENOUS FILM AESTHETICS

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Abstract

The power to define who is and who is not "authentically" Indigenous is part of the broader colonial project of establishing and maintaining social and spatial dominance. It is a practice that contributes to the challenge urban Indigenous people confront. This paper articulates a theory of urban Indigenous being in response to a collection of digital stories created by urban Indigenous youth, parents and educators. Bringing together literature in urban studies with literature in Indigenous film aesthetics to inform our analysis, we illustrate how their stories reflect the complexities of urban identity and explore lives lived with consciousness of what it means to be Indigenous in contemporary times. Framed by theories of self-determination, sovereignty (Alfred, 2005, 2009; Henderson, 2008; Simpson, 2011) and survivance (Vizenor, 1994) we recognize that diversity, dynamism and urban living do not take away from but rather contribute to the strength and endurance of Indigenous being. Links to the digital stories discussed in the paper are embedded in the text, providing opportunities for readers to augment our analysis of the stories with their own viewing.

Résumé

Pouvoir définir qui peut et qui ne peut pas se qualifier d''autochtone' constitue une part du projet colonial d'établir et maintenir une situation de domination sociale et spatiale. Cette pratique contribue aux défis que subissent les autochtones urbains. Dans cet article, on présente une théorie de l'identité indigène urbaine en réaction à un ensemble d'histoires numériques créées par des élèves, des parents et des enseignants autochtones urbains. Rassemblant, afin d'éclaircir notre analyse, divers écrits sur les études urbaines et sur l'esthétique du cinéma indigène, nous montrons comment leurs histoires exposent la complexité de la vie urbaine et explorent des vies marquées par la conscience de ce que signifie être autochtone aujourd'hui. Encadré par des théories portant sur l'auto-détermination, la souveraineté (Alfred, 2005, 2009; Henderson, 2008; Simpson, 2011) et la survie (Vizenor, 1994), nous reconnaissons que la diversité, le dynamisme et la vie en ville ne retire rien à la force et à l'endurance de l'identité indigène, mais on contraire y contribue. On fournit dans l'article des liens aux histoires numériques, donnant aux lecteurs l'occasion d'en savoir plus à leur propos que ce qu'en dit notre analyse.

> *One's voice is individual, but as it communicates shared cultural experience, it is also ancestral and capable of transcending time. (Momaday in Woodward, 1989, p.76)*

Links to the digital stories are embedded in the text, providing opportunities for readers to augment our analysis of the stories with their own viewing. To watch the digital stories, go to_(https://vimeo.com/album/4486873). Following the prompts, type the password "Enunciation2017." Please note: these videos are intended for readers only and are not for public screening.

Introduction

Speaking back to dominant discourses participants in the INVISIBILITY Digital Storytelling[1] project record their own experiences and perspectives. With expertise, beauty and skill they tell stories of being Indigenous[2], being urban and being in school. Their stories reflect the complexities of urban identity and explore lives lived with consciousness of what it means to be Indigenous in contemporary times. Storytellers assert their presence and articulate a theory of urban Indigeneity[3] that is informed by tribal and family histories, traditional knowledge and worldviews, formed within communities of recognition and culti-

vated within practices contributing to new emergence (Simpson, 2011). In this paper we bring together literature in urban studies (Peters, 2002; Newhouse & Peters, 2003; Proulx, 2006; Wilson & Peters, 2005) with literature in Indigenous film aesthetics to inform our analysis of their stories. Framed by theories of self-determination, sovereignty (Alfred, 2005, 2009; Henderson, 2008; Simpson, 2011) and survivance (Vizenor, 1994) we recognize that diversity, dynamism and urban living do not take away from but rather contribute to the strength and endurance of Indigenous being. We agree with Masayesva who writes "it is the accumulative experiences, traditional or not, that inform our lives as Indigenous people today" (In Hopkins, 2006, p. 343). We recognize storytelling as a transformative practice, as "a lens through which we can envision our way out of cognitive imperialism" (Simpson & Manitowabi, 2013, p. 281).

Premised on a notion that authenticity is grounded in a past life lived on the land and the idea that cities are civilized, advanced places only for settlers – being urban and being Indigenous are judged incongruent (Howard & Proulx, 2011; Peters & Andersen, 2013). Resistance to acknowledging urban Indigenous presence serves a colonizing agenda. The power to define who is and who is not authentically "Indian" is part of the broader colonial project of establishing and maintaining social and spatial dominance. In Canada until 1950s, leaving the reserve resulted in the loss of Indian status and was considered by the state to be an active step toward assimilation. In the United States, the Indian Relocation Act of 1956 was a law intended to encourage Native Americans to leave Indian reservations, acquire vocational skills, and assimilate into the general population. Native-created places of interaction within urban spaces "conflict with the cultural images that pervade the settler imaginary" (Goeman, 2014, p. 236). Images that place "Indians" on the land, in the bush, or on the "rez" dominate.

While Indigenous knowledge is rooted in relationship with land and traditionally passed on through practices on the land, people adapt and create new ways of accessing and sharing knowledge (Hopkins, 2006). Urban spaces of Indigenous resilience and cultural innovation exist in all major Canadian cities. "Urban Indigenous peoples have resisted expectations of assimilation by building communities in and beyond urban areas and by reformulating Western institutions and practices to support their particular Indigenous identities. Indigeneity survives, adapts, and innovates in modern cities" (Peters & Andersen, 2013, p.2). Within the cityscape people gather cedar for tea, go on water walks, participate in full moon ceremonies, tap maple trees, and attend powwows. Cities are built on land that Indigenous people remember and interact with in traditional ways. Change and continuity exist simultaneously. While ways of sustaining life change, Indigenous teachings, values, beliefs and worldviews continue to inform how people understand, de-

termine themselves and recognize each other within their community.

The *INVISIBILITY* Project

Funded by a Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connections grant, *INVISIBILITY: Indigenous in the City* was a two-phase project aimed at exploring the experiences of urban Indigenous students, parents and teachers. In phase one of the project, members of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) community were invited to take part in a digital storytelling workshop. Digital stories are 2 to 3-minute short films that combine photographs, video, animation, sound, music, text, and a narrative voice-over. As a medium, digital storytelling allows people to share experiences and insights by producing and mobilizing knowledge. Hopkins (2006) asserts that Indigenous storytellers continually use new technologies to create distinct narrative forms and that "digital technologies have become a medium for speaking and telling our stories" (p. 343). Moreover, Hopkins contends that the shift to digital storytelling "is merely a continuation of what Aboriginal people have been doing from time immemorial: making things our own" (2006, p. 342). Firmly situated in an urban environment, the *INVISIBILITY* digital storytellers address issues in urban Indigeneity.

Our commitment to participating in the project of enunciating urban Indigenous being is informed by both our personal and professional lives. During the past four years, we have been working together on projects addressing urban Indigenous education, art and research. An Indigenous scholar (Potawatomi /Lenape) working in the field of education for 30 years, Susan Dion was --- on the *INVISIBILITY* Knowledge Mobilization project. Angela Salamanca is a mixed-race immigrant woman who was born in Colombia and has spent half her life as an uninvited guest and settler on the traditional territories of the Anishinabek and Haudenosaunee (southwestern Ontario and Toronto). She is a graduate of the Master of Education—Urban Aboriginal Education Cohort at York University and works with Author 1 on research and writing projects.

Urban Indigenous Being Self Determination, Survivance and Sovereignty

Recognizing oneself and being recognized is a concern for Indigenous people, particularly for those of us who live in urban centres (Newhouse, 2011; Peters, 1996; RCAP, 1996). Dominant discourses that position Indigenous people as a people whose cultural practices are grounded exclusively on the land suggest that urbanites who have "left the land" fail to qualify. A self-professed "middle class urban Indian"

Newhouse (2011) addresses the authenticity question explaining, "My life in the city has not made me less of an Aboriginal person. It has made me a different Aboriginal person" (p.33). Referencing the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People from 1996 Newhouse explains further,

> [T]he markers of Aboriginality for urban peoples are different from those of rural residents: an Aboriginal spiritual ethos, speaking an Aboriginal language, maintaining a connection with an ancestral territory and land, the presence of elders, the use of traditional values in daily life, a family centered life, and an active ceremonial life to reinforce traditional values and spirituality. (2011, p.33)

Grounded in values, beliefs, and an understanding of self-in-relationship with others and the world, being Indigenous is an act of self-determination. It includes responsibilities, rights and needs, and is reflected in actions that are informed by and give power to our traditions. The telling of our stories, experiences and perspectives is an act of self-determination in service of survivance. As Vizenor explains "more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence." (Vizenor, in Taunton, 2010, p. 54) Informed by Indigenous experiences, our stories are evidence of survivance. Speaking back with our own voices—not as a singular voice of authority but with multiple voices—our stories "demonstrate the impact of history on identity and link the past to the present and the future" (Gauthier, 2010, p. 34). Our stories occupy a place of significance - they inform our being, give us strength, and assert ongoing presence. We are responsible for passing on these stories that make clear our responsibilities to and with each other.

Indigenous sovereignty honours Indigenous people's inherent rights to self-determination based on distinct laws, governance systems, languages, cultures, territories, economic systems, histories and social structures. Self-determination is the fundamental right and power to administer and operate political, legal, economic, social and cultural systems. For scholars like Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, Indigenous sovereignty is more than an acknowledged political construct. It is the ability to be Indigenous. For Alfred and Corntassel this means, "thinking, speaking, and acting with the conscious intent of regenerating one's indigeneity" (2005, p. 614). The values and actions that sustain culture and provide continuity over time are being revived in new contexts. Taunton (2010) adds "[r]ecuperating what was forcibly taken and responding to the call for the "rememory of the past and the creation of new stories in the present" (p. 46) Indigenous people survive, flourish and work to re-establish sovereignty.

In the following section we introduce a selection of digital stories created in the *INVISIBILITY* Storytelling workshops. In our analysis we explore themes that embody urban Indigenous being, demonstrating that it is not about blood quantum or where one lives. Informed by Indigenous worldviews, shared through family and community experiences, Indigenous being is about an understanding of self-in-relationship with kin and community and it is cultivated through participation in what Leanne Simpson has characterized as new emergence. As part of this process, Simpson calls "for Indigenous Peoples to delve into their own culture's stories, philosophies, theories, and concepts to align themselves with the processes and forces of regeneration, revitalization, remembering and visioning" (2011, p.148). Urban Indigenous being is a complex and self-determined understanding of one's responsibilities. It includes a commitment to knowing and living in relationship with ancestral teachings and the next generations.

Urban Indigenous Being and the *INVISIBILITY* Digital Stories

The *INVISIBILITY* digital storytelling workshop followed a format originally developed by Dr. Carla Rice, Canada Research Chair in Care, Gender, and Relationships and Director of the *Re•visioning Differences Mobile Media Lab* (REDLAB) at the University of Guelph. Dr. Rice, Susan Dion, Tanya Senk, Hannah Fowlie and research assistant Rachelle Dickenson worked in collaboration to Indigenize and decolonize the format. The four-day digital storytelling workshop was held in two parts. Students, parents and teachers came together and were supported in creating scripts for their digital stories. The first part involved a story circle to support skill development in script writing and critical media analysis. Through the process of sharing individual stories, there is a collective naming and articulation of the complexities of representations and their impacts on people's wellbeing and learning. The second part involved working directly with REDLAB during which the participants had the opportunity to create their digital stories.[4]

Six of the sixteen project stories were screened during the INVISIBILITY *Indigenous in the City: Art Exhibition and Speaker Series.*[5] The overarching theme of the exhibition was Indigenous perspectives on urban Indigeneity and schooling.[6] In this paper we write about eight stories that embody the overarching themes present in conversations we heard in response to the exhibition, and the strategies for self-representation found in the literature on Indigenous film aesthetics.

Tribal and Family Histories in the Senk and Dion Digital Stories

> *[M]ixed-blood urban Native people are Native people for one clear reason: they come from Native families, that is from families that carry specific histories, Native histories. In urban contexts, where other sources of identity language, band, territory or clan may no longer apply, family becomes all the more important for grounding a persons' Aboriginal identity. (Lawrence, 2004, p. xv)*

Within Indigenous conceptions, history is not a chronological telling of events but rather encompasses those events that are significant to a people's understanding of themselves (Dion, 2009). Indigenous people are survivors of colonialism. Wherever we live our histories include being dispossessed of traditional territories, surviving imposed systems of government, education, and law, and recovery from the attempted eradication of Indigenous languages and cultural practices. We bear the marks of colonialism, and live with its legacies. We carry stories of survival from our parents, grandparents, aunties and uncles. Many of us live with silences, stories of denial and fragmented histories. While these stories are critical to us, they are largely absent from the dominant narrative of Canadian history.

Like other Indigenous filmmakers, the *INVISIBILITY* storytellers "engage with particular Aboriginal conditions and contexts, and in their historical and cultural specificity about relations of domination and resistance, [they] provide complicated problematization of race and Indigeneity and sovereignty and self-determination" (Hladki, 2006, p.1). Although recent events including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada, the Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, the Sioux Nation-led resistance at Standing Rock in North Dakota and the public debate over the legitimacy of writer Joseph Boyden's claim to Indigenous identity have brought public attention to the history of colonialism, many Indigenous families continue to live with its legacies in a vacuum. The absence of recognition can contribute to family and community disruption, it also means family (hi)stories occupy a place of particular significance. Within an Indigenous film aesthetic, history is ever-present. Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin's work is characterized by the historical context provided in her films. Her films draw attention to the impact history has on the contemporary lives of Indigenous people. Gauthier elucidates, Obomsawin "speaks back to official history, speaking with her own voice, but also with the voices of all native peoples who have been disenfranchised" (2010, p. 33). For both Senk and Dion the past is present and informs an understanding of Indigenous being. This relationship is integral to the techniques of cir-

cular storytelling and imagery present in their digital stories. (https://vimeo.com/album/4486873; password: Enunciation2017)

One Of These Things by Tanya Senk

In her story titled *One of These Things,* Tanya Senk inserts the image of her great-grandmother into an iconic 1982 picture of the repatriation of the Canadian constitution. The insertion of this black and white image of her kin is contrasted with the color images of the then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and Queen Elizabeth II. For viewers in the present, this image is historical, embedded in a shared story of establishing nationhood. By inserting a picture of her great-grand aunt Marie-Marguerite Mone dit Belhumeur, and by setting this montage against the backdrop of the prairies, Senk reasserts a chain of historical events—both personal and national—that insert Indigenous people and nations into the fabric of this land. This effect is felt most strongly when Senk uses archival and more contemporary footage of her family "counting down" history from 200, 100 and 50 years ago, to images of herself and her relatives in present-day Canada. Senk accompanies her visual progression of history through archival pictures with a voice-over cataloguing the various pejorative, colloquial or legal epithets for Métis and Indigenous people as well as the unique language of treaties, constitutions or charters (e.g., Indian act, displaced, surrendered, scrip, sovereignty). Juxtaposing historical events of the nation with her own family history, Senk reminds the viewer that her tribal/family history is integrated in her urban Indigenous being.

Senk's sardonic approach to storytelling evokes a multitude of emotions in the viewer. The playfulness in her song at the beginning belies anger, sadness, pain and loss at the historical and contemporary injustices visited upon Indigenous people; while the sequence of the images and the accompanying voiced-over text evidence the complexity and implications of "re/memorizing" (Taunton, 2010) the past. Senk's juxtaposition of the legal language employed in treaties and constitutions with pictures of her family emphasizes the historical and contemporary impact of institutional policies and practices at a personal level. Her storytelling is brought full circle as she reads from the constitution in a voice-over with the image of her elders laughing. With the portrayal of her family laughing and enjoying each other's company, Senk offers a glimpse of the complexities of Indigenous being; there is also beauty, humour and the assertion of the self-determination of her family members. Writing about Indigenous filmmaker Dana Claxton's work, Hladki asserts that overlapping imagery that evokes the past and the present suggests "how legacies of colonial violence inflect the present and future of Indigenous peoples and how the violence is neither separated into, nor contained within, particular temporalities. The violence

is continuous and continuing" (2006, p. 84). At this point in the story, Senk subverts a singular meaning of victimry, and deploys images of her elders as a sign of survivance. Like Claxton's video, Senk's digital story "activates radical interrogation, remembrance, and disturbance" (Hladiki, 2006, p. 85). Throughout her story there is a strong presence of family, whose continuance is emphasized by Senk's presence at the end of the film.

Legacy by Susan Dion

Drawing on relationships with mother and family to make sense of her conflicted relationship with institutions of formal schooling, Dion's digital story begins with a memory. A five-year-old child's nervous excitement in anticipation of the first day of kindergarten is interrupted by the image of a gate, separation and standing apart. An archival photo pierces the story of a mother walking her child to school. Occupying space in the memories of the mother, the residential school experience seeps into the memory of the child.[7] Dion's capacity to make sense of her relationship to schooling is in the strength of her mother's words and actions. Messages from her mother aimed at securing pride in self are juxtaposed with messages from school aimed at instilling fear of judgment and fear of failure. The disciplining of her body is set against the disciplining of her mind with lessons that position Indigenous people as a romantic mythical people of the past (Dion, 2009). The desire for acceptance and success fuels her learning to please teachers, to copy teachers, to be a teacher. When she catches herself in the act of teaching a history that does not reflect her family's lived experience, Dion seeks and comes to know other stories; "the postindian conversions are in the new stories of survivance over dominance" (Vizenor, 1994, p. 4). The audience is invited to witness the experience and expression and in the process, re-think the political in the context of the personal.

Circling back and grounding the story in relationship, the closing scene is an image of mother and daughter years later. The experience of standing apart and taking good care endures but the camera catches more; the image exposes a moment of exchange, a touch that gestures toward learning across generations. The legacy of residential school exists alongside the legacy of a mother's concern. Teachings about love, loyalty, family history and responsibility broke through the dominant story constructed by stereotypical representations of being Indigenous.

> 'The eyes in a photograph are the secret mirrors of a private presence,' since they contain 'stories of resistance, and traces of native survivance' (158, 160). Survivance, according to Vizenor, is 'more than survival'; it refers to an active, enduring presence that demands sovereignty and repudiates 'dominance, tragedy

and victimry' (15). (Vizenor, cited in Romero, 2010, p.53)

For many families, residential school experiences and what it took to survive those experiences are private stories of resistance. Parents do not necessarily share stories about how attendance impacted their lives. Many do convey lessons about protecting oneself, family loyalty and shared responsibility for community wellbeing. The eyes in this photograph are not focused on the camera – they are focused on each other. Dion did not learn about being Indigenous from living on the reserve or from a classroom history text – being Indigenous is rooted in being her mother's daughter.

Knowledge and Worldviews in the McLeod and Steele Stories

> *The very expression of Indigenous Knowledge is inextricably linked to the relationships in which it is situated. Thus, the significance of this kind of knowledge lies in both being and acting – being in relationship to and acting in relationship with. (Villegas, Neugebauer, & Venegas, 2008, p. 2)*

In her discussion of Native identity Tripathy (2006) acknowledges that while identity is a matter of how one sees oneself and how one is seen by others, she emphasizes that "[w]hat is perhaps more important than these is an identification with and participation in Native values and world-views" (p. 322). Indigenous being is rooted in knowledge, values and beliefs learned and expressed in relationship with each other, and with all living beings and spirits that share the environments within which we live (Battiste, 2008). Since time immemorial, Indigenous people have explored and developed "through visual and literary aesthetics our complex philosophical understandings of the world around us, and our relationships to other beings" (Goeman, 2014, p. 235).

While shared knowledge, worldviews, values and beliefs make us recognizable to each other and ourselves, we are not necessarily recognized by those outside our communities or the state.

> Native philosophical ideas have been shaped by connections to our surroundings, other individuals within our Nations, our immediate neighbors or with those regarded on a nation-to-nation basis. With the onslaught of varying settler-colonial concepts of land, however, these connections and interpretations are largely erased, contained, buried, displaced, denied, or overlooked, though they are in plain view and enacted in Native people's daily lives. (Goeman, 2014, p. 235)

Vizenor (1994) explores the complexities of Indigenous being in plain view and as enacted in our daily lives within the colonized world explaining that "the Indian" was an invention implicated in a legacy of dominance and the erasure of Indigenous people's ways of knowing and being (p. 11). The invention took on permanence, erasing the real. The ongoing practice of not only reproducing the invention—but insisting on the innocence of reproducing it—exists in contrast to the work done by Indigenous people to recuperate, to share, and to live by Indigenous values and worldviews.

Recognizing an Indigenous sensibility and way of looking at the world, finding spaces and places to access, cultivate and pass on knowledge can be a challenge. Since time immemorial artists have played a key role in this endeavour.

> Contemporary Aboriginal artists in Canada and around the world are continually interpreting, portraying, and recasting Indigenous histories and knowledge teachings. Through their art they pass on ancestral stories depicting the knowledge gathered along pathways of family bloodlines, community histories, and across generations. These stories are not fixed in the past, but are told in the present, being continually regenerated, weaving their way in and out of our personal narratives. (Dion Fletcher, 2011, p. 12)

The work of contemporary Indigenous artists provides access to ancestral teachings in contemporary times. By engaging with the work, participating in artistic practice, and gathering to listen and learn from artists, Indigenous people in urban centers create sites of strength and survivance.

For those of us who are Indigenous, our worldviews—grounded in "a way of life that has respect, sacrifice, love, honesty and the quest for balance at its core" (Alfred, 2008, p. 11)—can be under constant pressure when operating within systems grounded in western worldviews. It is both simple and complex. Being Indigenous means prioritizing harmony, balance and co-operation, and recognizing that individual rights are asserted with the responsibility to act in service of family and community wellbeing. While we are made to think that our knowledge systems are primitive, simplistic and incapable of advancing civilization, Indigenous knowledge and worldviews nurture Indigenous survival. In their digital stories, McLeod and Steele reflect on their actions in service of re/establishing the place of Indigenous knowledge in their lives. (https://vimeo.com/album/4486873; password: Enunciation2017)

Spirit Awakenings by Shane McLeod

In *Spirit Awakenings*, McLeod tells the story of coming to know his Indigenous self. His understanding of the Seven Grandfather teachings and the significance of those teachings in his life are literally written on his body. The tattoos are an outward facing visualization marking his body and making visible the significant place of the teachings in his life. He embodies the teachings. Through the use of visual art produced by his cousin Brandy, McLeod introduces viewers to his own growing awareness of and appreciation for the spiritual and cultural teachings that inform his Indigenous being. "First I felt was truth. In the process of being truthful with myself I began to feel more alive and more visible to the world. I learned truth" (McLeod, 2013). McLeod's desire to know is motivated in part by a need to provide his children with positive learning experiences. He works with the education system to bring Indigenous language and culture into his children's school experiences. While the viewer sees and hears the story of connection between parent, children and Indigenous knowledge, McLeod withholds details. McLeod intersperses shots of himself and his children with imagery that holds significance to Indigenous people but does not provide a specific context for these images. Like Masayesva's *Itam Hakim Hopiit* (1985), McLeod's strategy serves to communicate different things to a diverse audience; for Indigenous people this move "reflects the function of a traditional storytelling audience, to fill in missing and implied information. However, it also limits non-Hopis'[non-Anishinaabe] access to the cultural significance of these images and their relationship to ceremonial life" (Romero, 2010, p. 58). McLeod attends to his physical and emotional wellbeing and this supports his learning and his meaning-making from traditional teachings. "It felt so amazing, my spirit was alive and I didn't want this feeling to go away. What was happening to me, my curiosity was growing stronger. I started to love myself and my children more. I learned love" (McLeod, 2013). McLeod turns toward the teachings to inform his understanding of self, his understanding of the world and of himself in the world. His actions in life are informed by his understanding of the teachings, which are in turn formed in and through relationships with the people, the urban landscapes he lives within, as well as the living beings and spirits he encounters within those landscapes.

More Than Just An Ordinary Indian Woman by Shanese Steele

In her digital story, Steele uses ceremony, land and archival pictures of herself and her family to ground herself in her Indigenous womanhood. Steele's portrayal of ceremony and the soundtrack in her story are meant to communicate several layers of meaning to different audiences. In a strategy reminiscent of Hopi director Victor Masayesva's portrayal

of ceremony in *Itam Hakim Hopiit (1985)*, Steele gives the audience a small glimpse into a ceremony related to her spirit name, she does not go into detail about the context of the ceremony or what it involves, though she does explain what the rocks are for, providing the viewer with enough information while maintaining discretion. Masayesva portrays a ceremony in his film without translating all the words used to describe it, and presents imagery meant to deepen the ceremony's meaning for people already familiar with Hopi cultural contexts (Romero, 2010). Similarly, Steele uses the Strong-Woman song as the soundtrack to her story, which has different meanings to different audiences with various contextual knowledge of Anishinaabe culture. Some people may only hear the beautiful drumming and accompanying vocals as a sample of an Indigenous song, while other people with previous experiences in Anishinaabe ceremonies may be familiar with this song and know its name, and yet another segment of the audience may be intimately familiar with the song's story, words and meaning. There is a circularity in her story, with the song starting out loudly and quieting down as she tells her story, and then coming back stronger toward the end, I [Dion] almost felt like Steele had a sense of her strength but she didn't really understand herself until she looked back; there is a sense of her learning just beginning, as this knowledge gained is putting her in a position to continue her journey of learning. Steele's story is not a progress narrative; instead there is a sense of process and circularity about her journey. Her parting words "aren't we all" are not a conclusion but a starting point, there is a time beyond the story. Steele's narrative gestures toward a future in which Indigenous knowledge and ceremony will continue to inform her understanding of self and her way of being in the world.

Land, Community and Place in the Galvez and Jackson Stories

> *Aboriginal people in cities actively make the urban place their space. (Howard & Proulx, 2011, p. 4)*

An absence of Indigenous presence can make being in the city an alienating experience. Refusing erasure many people choose to live and work within community contexts where Indigenous being intellectually, linguistically, physically and spiritually exists. Indigenous being is cultivated and affirmed in relationships; in the city Indigenous people seek and create communities of recognition where we feel at home, where we don't have to continually explain ourselves and where we are acknowledged. We occupy urban spaces and claim our right to thrive as Indigenous people within those spaces. Alfred (2004) explains the connection between colonialism, sovereignty and space.

> The thing that must be defeated, colonialism, is far beyond being merely a political problem with psychological manifestations. I think of it like this instead: it is the fundamental denial of our freedom to be Indigenous in a meaningful way, and the unjust occupation of the physical, social, and political spaces we need in order to survive as Indigenous Peoples. (p. 89)

Urban Indigenous people are asserting their presence and creating spaces where possibilities and expectations for thinking, speaking and acting in service of regenerating our own and our communities' Indigeneity not only exist but are expected.

While we can be made to feel illegitimate in the city, when we come together there is a collective sigh of mutual appreciation and relief. In those gathering places we recognize and are recognized. Commitment to decolonizing, responsibilities to land and home, participation in support of sovereignty, commitment to traditional languages, access to ceremonies and elders matter a great deal. We work to change existing institutions, making them more habitable by establishing policies and practices that reflect Indigenous worldviews, values and beliefs. We actively participate in the creation of our own institutions such as Friendship Centres, art and culture centres and educational institutions. We participate in cultural activities such as round dances, powwows, pipe and sweat lodge ceremonies, transforming space and creating place (Pitawanakwat, 2008, p. 169).

From time immemorial migration has been a part of Indigenous people's experience. With each move people renewed their relationship with the land, cultivating a bond with local environments. Brock Pitawanakwat (2008) writes, "[h]onouring our ancestors means that we carry our language and customs with us wherever we go. As urban nishnaabeg, our ancestral legacy is to reconnect with the natural landscape and live honourable and sustainably-wherever we reside" (p. 171). Our teachings inform our understanding of self, our understanding of the world and our understanding of self-in-the-world. Living in an urban environment does not erase our connection with the land, as our lives are informed by ancestral teachings from the land passed on and practiced in relationship with each other. "Land is at the core of Indigenous being and learning across diverse urban and rural landscapes and learning environments" (Zinga & Styres, 2011, p. 62). In this context, Zinga and Styres also affirm that land "is not a geographically fixed space; rather, she is a spiritually infused place that is grounded in interconnected and interdependent relationships, and cultural positioning" (2011, p. 63). (https://vimeo.com/album/4486873; password: Enunciation2017)

I Remember by Rosario Galvez

In her digital story, Rosario Galvez describes coming to know and accepting her mother's and her own Mapuche identities. Speaking from a place of relationship in community where experiences of recognition and understanding provide belonging, Galvez is able to explore her past. Learning and sites of learning are the focus of her story. She begins with a memory of elementary school, the military presence and an imposed history aimed at erasing Indigenous presence. Her mother's story of moving from the rural south to live in an urban center is fraught with experiences of prejudice and discrimination. In the tense environment of her childhood, Galvez sees that her mother is subjected to discrimination, but is unable to make sense of it. As a child she is witness to her mother's insistence on honoring difference, but in the absence of community Galvez rejects her mother's difference. In the city her mother's messy garden stood out among the neatly kept gardens of the colonial elite. As a signifier of Indigenous identity and difference Galvez rejects the garden. When she is an adult and once again in school, Galvez is able to re-engage with her story. As a member of the Urban Aboriginal Masters of Education Cohort, Galvez finds herself reflecting on and sharing her story. She comes to know her Indigenous identity "by growing my own messy garden and by going to class with Indigenous students who don't judge me – who also know about messy gardens" (Galvez, 2012). For Galvez, participation in the Urban Indigenous community provided her with a place of recognition. Writing from this vantage point she is able to explore aspects of history that she had not previously engaged. Being in a community where she was recognized and valued for her difference created a sense of safety for Galvez, providing a place for engaging with aspects of her own history.

Night Walkers by Lenore Jackson

The urban landscape occupies a powerful place in Jackson's story and in her day-to-day lived reality. She shares intimate knowledge of the urban landscape, showing us the places where she walks. The audience sees but is not seen, mirroring the experience of being seen but not recognized or being dismissed that Jackson seeks to convey: "nobody sees you but everyone's watching" (Jackson, 2012). Jackson copes with the challenge of needing/wanting to be present. She hears the call of the warrior but feels unable to measure up and perform this role because of her precarious status as a high school student without a home. There is contradiction in her story about being seen and not being seen.

Recognizably Indigenous, Jackson gestures toward the people who inhabit her community. I/we are called to be a warrior; they are warriors of the city streets. Jackson's knowledge of the urban landscape and the

way she portrays it tell a powerful story of her experiences in the city. Jackson's use of light, shadow, recurring images of alleyways, staircases and wide shots of inviting places creates feelings of loneliness and being cold that pervade her daily existence. Jackson's measured cadence in her speech convey to the viewer both an intimacy, as she recounts her struggles, and a distancing, so that the viewer is not allowed to "put oneself in her shoes" but rather to see them, to see her experiences as an Indigenous youth in the urban landscape. *Night Walkers* is not an attempt by Jackson to evoke empathy or pity in the viewer in response to her experiences. Jackson's story centers her own experience and invites the viewer to see "for themselves" her world, to learn something from her telling of her own story. Jackson does not want us to imagine ourselves in her shoes, traveling the uncertain and at times dangerous terrain familiar to her. Rather she is extending an invitation for the viewer to travel along with her, and see, through her use of long shots of warm places from across the street or the bottom of the stairs, the longing for a warm "place to unpack". The juxtaposition of her intimate voice narration and the pictures that evoke loneliness and isolation allow a consciousness of the space between the viewer and the storyteller. The power in Jackson's story derives from the honouring of her voice and experiences, without appealing to the viewer's individual empathetic reaction. Jackson wants the viewer to see her, to witness her experiences but also to refrain from centering themselves in the narrative. Jackson occupies this space without ever exposing herself.

Jackson describes in poetic detail what it means to be homeless. The external struggle to find a bed and shelter from the cold is intertwined with the internal battle for initiative. In the face of words that celebrate her worthiness Jackson confronts the day-to-day experience of poverty and not having enough. While her words always advance the story, the gentle polyphony encourages repeated viewings and the sense that we can gather only glimpses and should not imagine ourselves completely informed.

New Emergence in the Sylvester and Landon Digital Stories

> *[T]hat day we turned inward to celebrate our presence and to build our resurgence as a community. (Simpson, 2011, p. 12)*

Learning in collaboration with Elder Doug Williams, Anishinaabe writer, editor and educator Leanne Simpson describes the present as a time of new emergence. Reflecting on a pivotal National Aboriginal Day experience she writes:

> [W]e created a space and a place where the impacts of colonial-

> ism were lessened, where we could feel what it feels like to be part of a united, healthy community, where our children could glimpse our beautiful visions for their future. (2011, p. 12)

Howard and Proulx (2011) observe processes of new emergence taking place in urban centres and draw attention to "the present states and alternative futures Aboriginal peoples in cities are constructing for themselves through the creative use, reshaping, recontextualizing, recombining, and mobilizing of traditional values and actions" (p. 9). Asserting the right to determine for themselves what it means to be Indigenous, people are not inventing tradition, rather they are drawing on the inventiveness of "tradition" to Indigenize modernity (Howard & Proulx, 2011, p. 10).

Actions informed by the knowledge embedded in our stories keep us alive, while storytelling continues to be a practice through which we envision our way out of a colonial mindset. Simpson articulates and advocates for a practice of new emergence.

> All the knowledge that the creator possessed was passed down to us. We can access this vast body of knowledge through our cultures by singing, dancing, fasting, dreaming, visioning, participating in ceremony, apprenticing with Elders, practicing our lifeways and living our knowledge, by watching and reflecting in a good way. Ultimately we access this knowledge through the quality of our relationships, and the personalized contexts we collectively create. (Simpson, 2011, p. 42)

These relationships are forged within Indigenous community contexts both on reserves, rural communities and in urban environments. We come to know and affirm our Indigenous being through active participation in new emergence.

People in urban centers across Turtle Island work to create, make time to engage with, and participate in events that provide access to and opportunities for learning more about their cultures. After generations of oppression and the suppression of culture, people are participating in and uncovering and recovering ways of being and knowing what it means to be Indigenous. In their films, Sylvester and Landon embody the intergenerational aspect of teaching and learning within Indigenous ways of coming to know; by recognizing the importance of passing on their own hard-won learning to the generations coming after them. (https://vimeo.com/album/4486873; password: Enunciation2017)

Higher Education by Jen Sylvester

Jen Sylvester takes her responsibility for new emergence seriously.

Her story is about looking back on her own experiences in school—explicitly stating how she was made to feel less than capable of academic success—and looking forward to what she wants for her son. Sylvester's story is one of determined action. Contrary to her teacher's expectations Sylvester accepts the challenge of the mainstream education system and achieves success. An active participant in the TDSB Aboriginal Community Advisory Committee and contributor to the broader urban Indigenous community, Sylvester cultivates her own and her child's understanding of Ojibwa being.

Sylvester's digital story reflects intimacy of relationship. Images of the school establish a connection to time: pictures of Sylvester as a child alongside her friends are given deeper context and meaning since the viewer has been told about her experience in school as someone who looked and was culturally different. Not left to learn from the images alone, the audio exposition of her experience coupled with the images portray multiple layers to this story. While her classmates are being told to "reach for the stars" Sylvester is told "you'll be lucky if you make it through high school" (Sylvester, 2012). Without being explicitly instructed Sylvester knows that her teachers' low expectations are tied to her being Ojibwa. She uses video clips to bring the viewer inside her experience and then with a precise didactic move clarifies that this will not be her child's experience. A keenly attentive mother, Sylvester outlines her purposeful steps to ensure it is not. Demonstrating her skill as a filmmaker, Sylvester swiftly switches back to the intimacy of relationship. This time the focus in on the mother-child relationship and suddenly viewers are basking in joy, love and commitment to an Ojibwa future. The film closes with a video clip of her son walking the path toward university. Shot on the University of Toronto campus, the audience watches and is captured by the image of a child who exudes ownership of this path; he sweeps his hand across the plants and raises his arms triumphantly and viewers are left waiting in anticipation of his arrival.

When I Moved to Toronto by Cedar Landon

Expressing hope for what she wants to accomplish in her life, Cedar Landon's digital story documents her participation in new emergence. She begins with making clear her dual commitment to finishing school and embracing her Indigenous identity. Sharing with the viewer a story familiar to those of us on the inside of Indigenous Education, Landon explains being Indigenous and being recognized by educators as capable of success is not easily accomplished. Enrolling in one school and then another and another and another, her search is for a place of learning where people will not "keep their distance" (Landon, 2012).

In her digital story Landon depicts the urban context of her day-to-day lived experience. It centers on her time at the Aboriginal Education

Centre doing Indigenous-focused programs that allow her to participate in and contribute to new emergence while at the same time earning high school credits. Landon invites viewers in with her use of colour: a lime green plate, a chartreuse cup, the deep red of a Canadian flag embedded with images recognizably Indigenous. Borrowed texts from street signs and the smell of spray-painted words leaking from the concrete walls in the alleyway convey the urban landscape where she locates and inserts her Indigenous being.

The story is as much about her desire to share knowledge as it is about her own journey of coming to understanding. As Landon explains it, she always thought of herself as "spiritually inclined" and in touch with her Native identity; what surprises her is learning about the political and educational components of colonialism's impact on Indigenous people. Landon is compelled, "everything I've been learning, I've been sharing with my little siblings, family, friends, and peers" (2012). Linking education with responsibility to pass on what she is learning, Landon wants others to understand the intergenerational effects of colonization and the systemic nature of racism in "schools, reservations and the court system" (2012).

Drawing on the Nishnaabeg (Anishinaabe) prophecy of the Eight Fire, Landon tells about her experience writing a script and creating a short film called Crossroads about people coming together to fulfill the prophecy. Her community context and family are present as a "direct evidence of survival and continuation" (Romero, 2010, p. 51), showing change and adaptation alongside continuity and ongoing presence. Her strength and subjectivity are asserted in the direct gaze she has with the camera; her humanity and Indigeneity exist simultaneously, asserting her right to return the gaze. Landon knows what it feels like to be part of a community of learners deeply engaged with the experience of understanding and expressing her story; her teachers and peers are present but just outside the camera's lens. Looking up to the sky through the poles of the tipi, the spirit of her ancestors (also her teachers) are present but not seen.

Conclusion

> *For we are a people of renewal, a people seeking each other out in our century-long reclamation of culture, language, family and identity. We are a people bound by our relationships. (Hayden King, 2016)*

The *IN VISIBILITY* storyteller' assertion of presence and survivance through their stories (taken as a body of work) are in themselves a message layered with complexities and meanings dependent on the audience. These stories challenge the colonial gaze, humanizing Indigenous

lives and experiences and speak back to the myth that cities have been built in a sort of "no-man's land" (it is someone's territory). The stories are richly interwoven tapestries of cultural meaning and significance, representing individual interpretations through the multi-faceted art of storytelling in contemporary formats. These stories are possible because people speak from a place of asserting, "not only an independence of vision and thought, but an assumption of cultural sovereignty not previously accorded Aboriginal people" (Loft, 2012, p. 24).

While the decision to celebrate or conceal one's Indigenous being (a practice not available to everyone) can depend on varying social-political contexts; the practice of judging each other's authenticity is rooted in colonial regulations, competition for limited resources and the challenge of understanding and working through what it means to survive profound experiences of violence, poverty, racism and attempted cultural genocide. The desire to escape oppression can contribute to practices of denying, ignoring and sometimes accusations of having or lacking sufficient experiences of harm. Conversely, when being Indigenous is accorded romantic, mythical or privileged status, the act of playing, claiming, or pretending further complicates the work of resurgence, cultivating distrust and suspicion. The *INVISIBILITY* digital stories offer expressions of urban Indigenous being, thus recuperating and contributing to ways of knowing and recognizing ourselves and each other. These storytellers situate themselves and articulate how it is they know themselves to be Indigenous. Their self-affirmation is an act of "transformative praxis" (Coulthard, 2007 p. 456), an enunciation of their identity that is not reliant or dependent on recognition by others.

In response to recent controversies over Indigenous identity claims, in an opinion piece for a national newspaper Anishinaabe scholar Hayden King reminds readers that while "there is a long tradition of playing Indian" (2016), being Indigenous is about relationships. The *INVISIBILITY* storytellers illustrate Indigenous being is not a matter of performance, neither is it a matter of blood quantum or where one lives. It is about family and community relationships, accessing, engaging and advancing Indigenous knowledge and participating in new emergence.

Notes

1. The authors would like to thank the *INVISIBILITY*: Indigenous in the City storytellers for sharing their stories with us and allowing us to share them in this paper. We are grateful to the team of colleagues, advisors, assistants and storytellers who made the workshops possible.

2. We capitalize the word Indigenous as a reference to communities of people who assert their sovereignty as peoples – or as unique cul-

tural groups because of their status as the original inhabitants of the land.

3. For a description of urbanization patterns see "The Urbanization of Aboriginal Populations in Canada: A Half Century in Review" in Indigenous in the city: Contemporary identities and cultural innovation, Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen (Eds). Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press. 29-46.

4. Participants in the *INVISIBILITY:* Digital Storytelling workshop included students who had completed courses and symposiums, parents who were active in advocacy work on the Aboriginal Community Advisory Committee and teachers who had participated in professional development workshops focused on decolonizing and Indigenizing education. After receiving a personal invitation to take part in the project, each participant received an email with a detailed project description and an outline for the process of creating their story. The research team followed up with individual phone calls, providing the opportunity for the storyteller to "talk through" their ideas about the story they wanted to tell. When participants gathered for the story circle they shared ideas or a first draft of their stories. The three-day intensive digital storytelling workshop takes place about 7- 10 days after the story circle. This allows storytellers time to craft their story and gather images, music and video they want to include in their stories. During the workshop participants learn the basics of editing software Final Cut Pro X, they participate in a mini workshop focused on issues of representation, and create their digital stories with assistance from expert facilitators. The three-day workshop concludes with a screening of participants' stories.

5. Digital Stories from the *INVISIBILITY* project have been presented with permission of the creators at national and international conferences and professional development sessions for educators.

6. For a more comprehensive explanation of the *INVISIBILITY*: exhibition, please see Dion, S & Salamanca, A. (2014). *INVISIBILITY*: Indigenous in the city Indigenous artists, Indigenous youth and the project of survivance. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society. 3(1), 159-188*

7. Audrey Dion's parents and older brothers attended the Mount Elgin Residential School. While Audrey was the first in her family for whom attendance was not required - the Indian Residential School experience had profound and lasting impacts on her family and community.

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