Visualizing Pedagogy and Power with Urban Native Youth: Exposing the Legacy of the Indian Residential School System

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The Indian Residential School System, an institution of colonization that reflects White racist culture, has had deleterious effects on the lived social reality of Indigenous peoples in Canada. The intergenerational effects are manifested in social, cultural, economic, political, spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, and linguistic ways. Sadly, citizens of Canada are overwhelmingly unaware and misinformed about the Indian Residential School System's egregious legacy. This article represents one attempt by descendants of the Indian Residential School System to interrogate the mnemonic landscape of Canada—one that has a tradition of forgetting, erasing, or making invisible Indigenous peoples histories, their realities and their existence. Using photovoice methodology, three urban Native youth helped to answer the question, "How do urban Native youth interpret and experience the intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School System in Canada?" Through a critical examination of their photographs, my research partners visualized pedagogy and power by engaging in critical consciousness, by educating the greater community, and by talking back to the master narrative of Canadian society.

Introduction

Billie-Jeanne: There's just not a lot of knowledge of the residential schools or of the different forms of oppression that First Nation people have faced. It's just really saddening, you know, for it to be in Canada, and people live their whole lives here, but they just don't know. And it's sort of taught in schools, but it's not from a First Nations perspective—the people writing the history books are not First Nation people. So it's good for me to share my perspective on the intergenerational effects of that system.

Since the turn of the new millennium, survivors of the Indian Residential School System (IRSS) have begun to receive reparations for their experiences within the IRSS. Thousands of class action suits, initiated by survivors, have progressed into a shared experience lawsuit against the Government of Canada. In 2007, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement was finalized as a result of a negotiated settlement. This legal process forced an unavoidable public statement on the history of the IRSS and of the government's role in its legacy. On June 11, 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper officially apologized to survivors of the IRSS on behalf of the Canadian government for its role in administering over 130 federally-funded Indian residential schools during a 165-year time span (1831-1996). That same month, a court-sanctioned Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was launched and, using compensation funds from the settlement, the TRC of Canada began its 5-year

mandate to collect narratives and document the truth-telling process towards the goal of reconciliation.

This article, adapted from my Master's thesis (Spring 2010) in socio-cultural anthropology, responds to the mission of the TRC by offering additional narratives from intergenerational survivors, who engage in an interrogation of the intersection between pedagogy and power, in an effort to expose the egregious legacy of the IRSS. As an act of truth-telling, this article reports on a community-based participatory action research project that I facilitated in January 2008 in Vancouver, BC, Canada, in collaboration with the Urban Native Youth Association. Using photovoice methodology, three urban Native youth—Herb Varley, 25 (Nuu-chah-nulth); Billie-Jeanne Sinclair, 23 (Nisga'a); and Daniel Cook, 28 (Nuu-chah-nulth/Nisga'a)— helped me to answer the research question, *"How do urban Native youth interpret and experience the intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School System in Canada?"* Through a critical examination of their photo-graphs, my research partners visualized pedagogy and power by engaging in critical consciousness, by educating the greater community, and by talking back to the master narrative of Canadian society.

The Indian Residential School System

Daniel: I want to show people that there are other 'little things' that have affected people, which are maybe not so little....

The IRSS was mandated as a constitutional obligation to "educate" Indige-nous children while the nation-state of Canada was coming to fruition [for a detailed history of this system in the North American context, see the fol-lowing authors/publications: Adams, 1995; Archuleta et al., 2000; Barman et al., 1986; Castellano & Davis, 2000; Chrisjohn, 2006; Churchill, 2004; Deloria, Jr. & Wildcat, 2001; Fournier & Crey, 1997; Grant, 2004; Hampton, 1995; Lomawaima, 1994; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; McKegney, 2007; Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Whattam, 2003; York, 1990]. These so-called schools, run by the churches and supported by the federal government, often failed to protect children from assaults of the most egregious manner: sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape; physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual torment; military and prison-style discipline; negligent homi-cide; public humiliation and punishment for cultural expression; and industrial training or indentured servitude instead of an edifying or nur-turing pedagogy. The survivors of this system suffered posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), similar to that experienced by returning war veterans and survivors of genocide (Brasfield, 2001; Gagne, 1998; Quinn, 2007; Robert-son, 2006).

The disruption of well-formed, traditional systems of social organizing (including, but not limited to: cultural expression, governance, social wel-fare, education, economics, and community development), coupled with the invasive internalization of negative behaviours from the IRSS (includ-

ing, but not limited to: cultural shame, personal and collective silence, and physical, emotional, and sexual abuse), has led some survivors of the IRSS to adopt a "pedagogy of the oppressed" (Freire, 1970). This pedagogy often results in the victim internalizing and accepting a destructive cycle of silence and shame. While many of the negative learned behaviours associated with colonization, White racist culture, and residential schools have been passed on to the children of IRSS survivors, so has a tradition of resiliency, survival, and strength. Any contemporary consideration of the IRSS and its legacy must include an intergenerational analysis and a meaningful engagement with the descendants of IRSS survivors.

Research supports the fact that approximately two thirds of Aboriginal peoples in Canada have experienced trauma as a direct result of the IRSS (Quinn, 2007). In addition, studies confirm that the IRSS affects not only the individuals who attended these institutions but also their children, their children's children, and so on (Gagne, 1998; Quinn, 2007). The intergenerational effects are pronounced and further demonstrated by the current estimate that over 25,000 Aboriginal children across Canada are within the child welfare system (Blackstock, 2003). Even though Native youth comprise only 5% of the child/youth population in Canada, they represent 30% to 40% of all children in care (Human Resources Development/Statistics Canada, 2006). In some of the western provinces, from British Columbia to Manitoba, the number of Aboriginal children in care range as high as 40% to 60% (Blackstock, 2003). Although the Indian residential schools no longer remain, the ideologies leveraged to support that system continue into the present day under the guise of child welfare [for the most notable and convincing argument of this correlation, see Fournier & Crey, 1997].

Mnemonic Socialization

Beyond the obvious devastation to land base, culture, families, and language as a result of the IRSS, this article is particularly concerned with the power dynamics associated with remembering and forgetting. That is, which stakeholders benefit from acts of remembering and forgetting, and does it matter what is at stake? I argue that, yes, it does matter—whatever is at stake will determine the scope of remembrance. For example, by framing the IRSS in a way that privileges a narrative of well-intentionality to provoke sympathy and understanding for the perpetrators, rather than framing a story of intentionality to provoke disgust and ignominy for the way the perpetrators oppressed their victims, Canada self-exonerates rather than holding itself accountable. This implicit self-exoneration promotes a tradition of forgetting the legacy of the IRSS, while endorsing a tradition of remembering certain versions of this unpleasant history. This project argues that remembering and forgetting are mechanisms for social control in the context of the nation-state.

To demonstrate how acts of remembering and forgetting are funda-
mentally about power, I refer readers to the theoretical underpinnings of
sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel's concept of mnemonic socialization
(Zerubavel, 1996, pp. 286-289). Zerubavel describes *mnemonic socialization*
as a "tradition of remembering" that is "more than a spontaneous personal
act" and is normalized by *social rules of remembrance*:

such rules determine, for example, how far back we remember. Just as society delineates the
scope of our attention and concern, it also delimits our mental reach into the past by setting
certain historical horizons beyond which past events are basically regarded as irrelevant and,
as such, often forgotten altogether. (Zerubavel, 1996, p. 286)

Zerubavel continues to outline the processes of mnemonic socialization by
declaring history textbooks and holidays commemorating 'discoveries' [I
would also add mythical relationships such as Thanksgiving celebrations
and public apologies] as evidence of what we are socialized to remember
and what we are socialized to forget (Zerubavel, 1996, pp. 286-288). To con-
sider the IRSS as merely a well-intentioned mistake, on behalf of a kind
and tolerant nation, is to overlook the ideological policies of the nation-
state which are founded and structured on racist notions of humanity and
society—that is, the nation-state 'wins' if the Indigenous 'disappears' (fig-
uratively and literally). Any type of meaningful and critical discourse
pertaining to Indigenous peoples should be, by nature, in response to a
national consciousness of forgetting that has contributed to erasing or mak-
ing invisible Indigenous peoples' histories, experiences, and realities.

Conceptual Framework

A decade into the new millennium, one might be comfortable with the
impression that Indigenous peoples are no longer oppressed. Yet, however
'diverse,' 'progressive,' or 'politically correct' we claim to be, the
mnemonic landscape of Canada remains fragmented at best. Biological
anthropologist John Relethford refers to "the palimpsest of the past" as a
metaphor for human genetic diversity. He states that human population
movements resulted in genetic admixture to the extent that, across time,
the modern human genome is a palimpsest of our past, reflecting this
genetic diversity (Relethford, 2003, pp. 101-122). This same metaphor can
be applied to the 'evolution' of Canada: Canada is a palimpsest of its own
past, inheriting Indigenous peoples as a part of the landscape only to grad-
ually obscure their existence through the processes and structures of
nation-state building. This necessitates adding new people to the equation
(admixture), and moving closer towards the idealized 'melting pot' or
'mosaic' (genetic diversity) that North America purports to embrace.

This discussion of the photovoice project is in response to Canada's
mnemonic landscape—its national consciousness of forgetting—and the
strategy that this kind of project represents for healing in Indigenous com-
munities (Quinn, 2007). The project required participants' introspective

collaboration to decolonize the mind, body, and spirit for the sake of community. For the reader, it requires the same. Colonization in the Americas continues to be a disciplining process. Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith asserts that the "disciplining of the colonized... is not simply a way of organizing systems of knowledge but also a way of organizing people or bodies" (Smith, 1999, p. 68). In order for colonizing practices to sustain their functionality, they require not only the seizing of land, but also the seizing of minds (Asante, 2006, p. ix). In short, every human being has been impacted by colonization in different ways, and so there is a role for every human being to play in either perpetuating or dismantling colonization and White racist cultural projects. In Canada, colonization and its attendant institutions—for example, Indian residential schools—required not only a *de-Indianization* process, but also a whitening one. Thus, one cannot speak of colonization without also calling attention to White racism.

Linguistic anthropologist Jane Hill's *The Everyday Language of White Racism* (2008) successfully demonstrates that, despite public discourse, racism remains unabated in the 21st century. This is important because, like colonization, public discourse tends to treat racism and White supremacy as something of the past—as either something that we have overcome, or something that only a few, and therefore outcast, individuals perpetuate. Thus, as we engage in this discussion that aims to interrogate the intersection between pedagogy and power, it is important to keep in mind that colonization and White racist culture operate in tandem with common-sense folk-theories about the nature of social reality.

In her book, Hill uses critical race theory to challenge the "folk theory of race and racism" which she states "is an interpretation, a way of thinking about racism that is crucial to the perpetuation of White racist culture" (Hill, 2008, p. 4). Hill argues that "for most White people the folk theory is undeniable commonsense" (Hill, 2008, p. 4). Her main research question examines how negative stereotypes and racist thinking can be produced and reproduced by people who claim that they are not racist and who claim to despise racist acts. In short, those who subscribe to the folk theory of racism believe that race is biological and not a social construction, and that racism is entirely a matter of *individual* beliefs, intentions, and actions and not collective in nature (Hill, 2008, p. 5). The folk theory of racism interacts in complex ways with various linguistic ideologies such that it is possible to perpetuate and deny the existence of White racism simultaneously. Instead of focusing solely on how individual beliefs factor into racism, critical race theorists emphasize the collective, cultural dimensions of this social phenomenon.

Since this research is inherently Indigenous (i.e., researchers, topic, methodology, theory, lens), the nine tenets of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit), proposed by Indigenous scholar, Bryan Brayboy (2006, p. 429-430), are relevant. Of most importance to this dialogue is the primary tenet,

which states that, "While CRT [Critical Race Theory] argues that racism is endemic in society, TribalCrit emphasizes that colonization is endemic in society while also acknowledging the role played by racism" (2006, p. 430). Therefore, the aim of this article is to consider the ways in which scholars can dismantle "white racial frames" (Feagin, 2006, p. 27) and supplant them with decolonizing frameworks in an analysis of self, society, and scholarship, pertaining especially to the Indigenous context.

As an Indigenous anthropologist, I am extremely aware of the potential implications of my research interests and objectives. I am cognizant of these to avoid developing an academic ego; I am critical of my own discipline's theoretical and methodological foundations; I accept that all experiences can be objectively observed, but only from a subjective standpoint; I consent to letting Indigenous communities determine my research foci; I consider Indigenous peoples not as subjects or informants, but as coauthors and research partners; and finally, I seek to empower Indigenous peoples and communities through meaningful engagement.

The research project presented in this paper follows the same rubric. Each of the participants of the photovoice project, including me, has one or more living relatives who are recent survivors of the IRSS in Canada, and we have experienced the intergenerational effects in many different ways. In addition, the partner organization, the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA), hosted a series of Youth Forums in 2008 and, collectively, urban Native youth recognized and articulated that one of the most pressing concerns in Native communities today is the need for healing from the intergenerational effects of the IRSS. Also, UNYA supported urban Native youth to produce a short film for the Reel Youth Film Festival titled *Residential Truth: Unified Future* [the 12-minute video can be viewed using the following link: http://citizenshift.org/residential-truth-unified-future]. In this film, urban Native youth express concern over the lack of education about the IRSS in the non-Native community.

This sentiment resonates within Indigenous communities across the North American landscape and it is also the reason why I chose to attend graduate school and pursue a doctorate in anthropology. As Indigenous people, we ask, "How is it possible for non-Indigenous people to have little or no understanding of our experiences?" "How is it possible for millions of people to misperceive us all of our lives?" This research project is one of many attempts undertaken by Indigenous peoples to help bridge the gap of misunderstanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations.

Methodology

Often, it is implicit that our research "empowers" people. To me, empowering people—especially "people of colour"—means teaching and researching issues of race, class, gender, and power relations in ways that can be understood and utilized by "target populations." Moreover, as applied anthropologists, we should do more participatory research and not use Native people as consultants but as co-directors of research projects. Thus, they can learn research techniques

and initiate and implement their own "needs assessment" and application strategies to improve the quality of life in their own communities. (Medicine, 2001, p. 329)

Photovoice is a community-based participatory research (CBPR) method that was developed by public health scholar Carolyn Wang (1997; 1999). Photovoice revolves around three elements: (1) photography; (2) eliciting discussion and participant voice; and (3) reaching a broader audience, especially policy makers (Harper, 2009). Photovoice uses the power of the visual image as a catalyst for critical consciousness. While this method helps historically marginalized communities express themselves in creative and empowering ways, the quintessential strength of photovoice is its ability to foster critical discussion and meaningful dialogue. In addition, photovoice has increased relevance in the anthropological or qualitative research toolkit because it helps us to access and contextualize the perspectives that are typically left out of the ethnographic record—in particular, youth perspectives.

Importantly, if modified according to the target population (Castleden, Garvin, & Huu-ay-aht First Nation, 2008), photovoice has strong potential to plant more seeds for healing at both individual and community levels. This is something that traditional participatory observation methods alone have not achieved. All too often, Indigenous peoples and communities experience research fatigue (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2006), which is exacerbated by researchers who only employ the typical one-way extraction process instead of building two-way relationships that foster a commitment to ongoing engagement with those communities.

Furthermore, photovoice is not just about purpose or why we use this method; it is fundamentally about product or *what* we generate from using this method. Photovoice moves beyond story-telling or simply sharing experiences to do two things: (1) liberate the minds and spirits of research participants because they are able to achieve what Indigenous intellectual Sandy Grande calls "the testimony of a journey of consciousness, a coming to know *through* transgression" (Grande, 2004, p. 4); and (2) produce tangible artifacts. Archaeologist H. Martin Wobst posited that artifacts are "devices to bring about futures different from the present and its expected trajectory" (Wobst, 2006, p. 1). This decolonization project is an active attempt by descendants of the IRSS to recapture the present by using material and symbolic capital to "keep the present from changing into less desirable futures" (Wobst, 2006, p. 1). Indeed, Native youth represent what Taiaiake Alfred (2005) defines as the new warrior: "The ethos and the ethics of the new warrior is to be a free speaker, an independent and creative thinker, and to live direct and radical action" (p. 83). Native youth are speaking so that others can speak again. As exemplified in this research project, Native youth are using the artifacts of their project (photos, narratives, videos, and articles) as weapons to be used in this battle against a state-constructed mnemonic landscape.

For this project, three urban Native youth participants—Billie-Jeanne, 23 (Nisga'a); Herb, 25 (Nuu-Chah-Nulth); and Daniel, 28 (Nuu-chah-nulth/Nisga'a)—received two disposable cameras each. With each camera, they were asked to answer a sub-form of the research question, *"How do urban Native youth interpret and experience the intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School System in Canada?"* For the first part of the question, they were asked to document what they perceive as negative reminders of the IRSS. In the second part of the question, they were asked to document what they perceive as strengths in the Native community to continue the healing process. We began with a two-hour training session to allow my partners to become qualified in the photovoice methodology, with the explicit intention of leaving them with the confidence to use the methodology to facilitate their own projects in the future. After training in research ethics, two weeks with the cameras, various member-checking moments, and finally development of the film, we then videotaped the sessions where our pictures were revealed to one another and we shared our insights. The narratives that follow are drawn from transcriptions of videotaped sessions. All of the youth have waived their confidentiality privileges and wish to be recognized as authors of their knowledge and their photos.

Project data consist of individual photographs coupled with narratives, representing an act of engagement. As such, data analysis was grounded in an emic narrative analysis, which posits that people are the experts in their own lives and thus can expand an academic view of their intra-cultural reality. In addition, the act of engagement, or the critical consciousness, dialogic component, provides an opportunity to employ participant observation, grounded in an anthropological analysis of culture and society. Together, the data reveals two main themes: (1) education is often confined to the institution, whereas pedagogy can occur anywhere; and (2) remembering and forgetting create power dynamics that have social consequences.

We ask the reader to keep in mind that this article represents only a portion of the entire photovoice project [the Master's thesis in its entirety can be read at: www.robingray.ca]. In order to keep a thematic focus, I selected photos, narratives, and dialogues that "speak, so you can speak again", borrowed from the title of the book dediticated to the life of Zora Neale Hurston. The photos and narratives that follow should help empower others to *remember*.

Discussion

Billie-Jeanne: This picture [Figure 1]…it could symbolize taking a child away to residential school or, nowadays, it could symbolize a social worker taking a child away. To me, I didn't experience the residential school, but I experienced being taken away from my family and put into foster care, and that's kind of the equivalent, to me, of residential school. And, just the number of children that have been taken away from their families and placed into foster care is now more than the number of children that went to residential school. It's a huge influence, First Nation children being taken away from their families.

Figure 1

Billie-Jeanne's ability to connect the institution and ideology of the Indian Residential School System to the child welfare system is an important correlation to make regarding the intergenerational effects of this system of policy:

Billie-Jeanne: And also, residential schools took people away from their families, and the environment they were brought to was not a nurturing environment, so when they had children, they didn't know how to properly take care of them because they had been abused and mistreated.

Herb: It's circular. And then, even if they are treated well, right, what are the chances that the people who adopt or take on an Aboriginal kid knows anything about their culture? So even if they are nurtured well, it serves the purpose of eliminating the culture before it has a chance to take form. It serves the original purpose to eliminate and strip away Aboriginal cultural ways.

Indeed, this demonstration of dialogue and critical consciousness by my research partners was an intellectual interrogation of the intersection between pedagogy and power. By making visible the government's continued attempt to *kill the Indian in the child*, these urban Native youth are challenging the mnemonic landscape of Canada—a landscape that blames Native youth for their school dropout rates, for getting into trouble with the police, for having their children taken away, and for being insecure in their identity. It is also a nation with a tradition of forgetting Indigenous peoples; engaging in this *mnemonic battle* over the social legacy of the past (Zerubavel, 1996, p. 295) and the present is both personal and political for me and my research coauthors. For example, many people would be con-

tent to claim that the IRSS was an archaic system that has no relevance today. Yet, as the photograph *[Figure 1]* and dialogue between Billie-Jeanne and Herb demonstrate, the child welfare system is symbolic of a *wolf in sheep's clothing*. It might not be an Indian residential school, but if it functions like one, acts like one, and speaks like one, it certainly is reminiscent of one.

The photovoice methodology helps to reveal that everything has a vantage point, but my research partners also recognized that a picture is not always what it seems—that pictures are worth more than a thousand words, containing both what is conceived and perceived, what one can see and what one cannot see. Using the following photograph *[Figure 2]*, Herb was able to demonstrate the power that narrative wields in the context of a visual image and, conversely, the power the visual image wields in the context of its narrative:

Herb: This one was supposed to be a picture of the apartments where I spent my years 15 to 20ish. It was a cloudy night so that's what all that is—it's the fog right in front of the camera reflecting right back at it, so you can't get any discernable features from the apartment. But I wasn't hoping for a lot of discernable features…I was kind of just hoping for the apartment and then the fog. But it still kind of works anyway, because I remember…16, 17, 18…being really lost, not being proud of my heritage, and, you know, just being a badass cruising around at night doing stupid stuff. And that's because my parents were never there. And when they were there they were there to yell at me. And, really, that's what residential schools did—they broke down those patterns of healthy communication between parents and kids. So that breaks down, and many of our teenagers go through life in a haze, in a mist, trying to live life moment by moment.
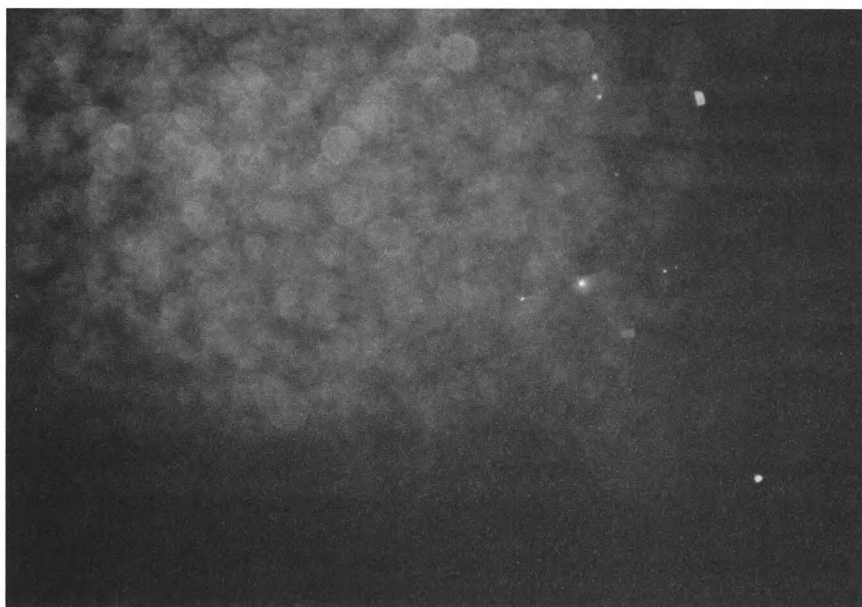

Figure 2

Herb was originally concerned that he did not get the "perfect shot" yet, as demonstrated in his narrative, he was still able to communicate his intentions through a careful examination of what we can see and what we cannot see in the image. Furthermore, Herb connects the impact that the loss of culture has on generations of Native people to the youth context and the importance of achieving balance in our lives [*Figure 3*]:

Herb: We can juxtapose this picture [Figure 3] with the last one [Figure 2]. This is a baseball diamond right by the apartment that I live in right now. I moved back there…20, 21, 22 until now…and everything's a lot clearer. I'm proud of who I am, I know who I want to be, I know what I want to do. But yeah, this is the neighbourhood where I grew up, where I started coming into my manhood. It's clearer; it's nicer, more composed. I think me finally accepting my heritage is me embracing the strength of my ancestors.

Together, Herb's photos are visual representations of the life phases he has experienced—one representing the confusion and the uncertainty of not being strong in one's identity, and the other representing the clarity experienced when a strong identity is in place.

To further symbolize what occurs when families are dismantled and cultures are at risk, Daniel offered this image [*Figure 4*]:

Daniel: This [Figure 4] is a negative reminder of the residential schools. When I went up to the Queen Charlotte Islands, I visited the old village sites. The tour guide was talking about some of the reasons why people had to leave these sites—a lot of it had to do with hunting, because they couldn't hunt in the area anymore. But also because all the kids were being taken away to the residential schools and the parents wanted to be near their kids, so they went to-

Figure 3

Figure 4

wards them. That's one of the reasons the old village sites were abandoned. This is a picture of one of the abandoned villages showing the fallen house posts.

When most people see the abandoned village sites, they often interpret this as the government respecting cultural heritage and allowing for the past to be preserved, since a tour is available. For example, one of Canada's world heritage sites in Haida Gwaii is the Haida mortuary poles in the Nan Sdins village at SGang Gwaay. The Parks Canada website says that the mortuary poles are all that is left of a once vibrant village; according to Parks Canada, why it is no longer what was "once a vigorous Haida community" is because "disease decimated the population ...and by the turn of the century only remnants of the houses and poles remained" (http://www.pc.gc.ca/progs/spm-whs/itm2/site5.aspx). Yet, as Daniel points out, many of the reasons for the demise of these villages, beyond disease, was in response to the changing landscape (needing to find places to hunt) and the abduction of the village's children (needing to find or be close to their children). The people *"went towards them"* and the villages suffered as a consequence.

Daniel's analysis of the abandoned village in Haida Gwaii demonstrates the power of memory in the landscape. Daniel understood that the historical memory of British Columbians, never mind Canadians, has been socialized towards interpreting abandoned village sites only in this way, resulting in the perception of these villages as remnants of a lost civiliza-

tion. As is often the case when Indians "disappear" from the static time-space backdrops that they are superimposed on, hardly anyone wonders where the Indians have gone. Instead, they often assume that with the landscape, the Indian has been erased. Daniel has offered insights regarding the interpretation of the landscape that are often overlooked. Zerubavel (1996) points to the fact that ruins, for example, play a "mnemonic role" in the preservation of social memories and that in the current era of preservationism, we "purposefully design 'future ruins' to capture our memories and preserve them" for purely commemorative purposes, and to "allow future generations mnemonic access to their collective past" (p. 292).

The mortuary poles in the Nan Sdins village at SGang Gwaay were originally designed and raised to remain in the landscape for future generations by the Haida people—to teach them the ways of their ancestors—but the village site has been *re*preserved for *Canadian* heritage, not for the Haida people, because it is preserving in the national consciousness a certain portrayal of Canadian history. In this way, the Government of Canada is actually obscuring a reading of the landscape that could explain the types of decisions people had to make in an era of heightened assault. Preserving abandoned villages and citing the reasons for their abandonment as disease and decimation actually helps the state to continue thinking of Indigenous peoples as existing in past times and disappearing with their traditional landscapes. It also presents a narrative of the past that positions Indigenous peoples as victims of their nature, unable to defend themselves from alien disease. While this was certainly the case, especially in the preliminary periods of contact, an emphasis on this reasoning distracts from other plausible reasons.

Thus far, Billie-Jeanne, Daniel, and Herb have touched on issues of identity, heritage, and social welfare, but they have also spoken about the contemporary terrain of educational opportunity:

Herb: Here's the...Native Education Centre [Figure 5]...I went on a tour and met some of the people who worked there, and so I made a conscious decision to take a picture of it on even keel, because that's how I felt when I was in that school.

And I was going to go to Britannia [High School]....I was going to go as close to the school as I could, tilt my head up and take the picture so the picture would look like the school was towering over me. Which is how I felt there, I felt insignificant because there were very few First Nations kids there, and a lot of the teachers—not all of them, but—they were pretty condescending, towering over me, trying to fix me, you know, and so a lot of the other students felt superior...so they used to pick on other Native kids, and myself...until we stood up. Me and my brothers stood up for ourselves...which kind of helped...but it didn't, because once we stood up to one guy, the next time we had to stand up to five, ten guys...so, yeah, Britannia is a symbol of how it's an ongoing cycle—we'll always be considered lesser than the norm, and it's unfortunate, you know, 'cause we end up going through that, feeling like that, until we are 17, 18, until we finally just get sick of it...and we either rise above it or commit suicide—either literally, or by falling into a bottle, or a needle, or whatever, just to deaden the senses.

But back to the Native Education Centre...we are taking that power, you know, we have a right to empower ourselves in a meaningful way, in a one-to-one way, through empowerment. And I also tried to make it so it's composed, so it doesn't dominate the whole picture, because education shouldn't dominate you in your life, it should only be a part of it.

Figure 5

Inevitably, Herb raises a fundamental question in education studies: simply put, what is the purpose of education? And what is the purpose of education in the present day for Indigenous peoples?

A recent major study by the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) asked, "What can we learn from the professional knowledge and experiences of Aboriginal teachers who teach in public schools about how to better promote and support the success of Aboriginal students?" (St. Denis, 2010). In-depth and ongoing discussions with 59 Aboriginal teachers across Canada revealed four themes in the data: (1) philosophy of teaching; (2) integration of Aboriginal content and perspectives into curriculum; (3) racism in education; and (4) allies of Aboriginal education (St. Denis, 2010). Of most relevance to this article from the CTF study was the finding that racism in education is largely denied, ignored, or trivialized and that institutional responses to racism were often inadequate. Research participants reported experiences where their qualifications, their Indigenous knowl-

edge systems, and their perspectives were disregarded; they witnessed teachers lowering expectations for Aboriginal students; and they were often met with a discounting of the effects of colonization and oppression on the lives of Indigenous peoples (St. Denis, 2010).

In context of these experiences, it becomes clear how our children's high school achievement rates seem so dismal. The statistics that report on "drop-out rates" do not accurately reflect the experiences of Aboriginal children in the public school system; rather, one should recognize that these social statistics actually represent push-out rates. Educators, especially now, should start questioning how they can prevent this from occurring. If educators understood the structural inequalities inherent in the institutions of the state, they would better understand how to nurture Indigenous youth and retain them rather than unconsciously push them out.

Billie-Jeanne: The last pictures [Figure 6] are of the drum, and the smudge, and the beading I've been working on. To me, it shows the resilience of our people. Everything they used to oppress our people was to kill the Indian…they want us to be like them. Just seeing the drum or the medicines or the traditional arts and crafts, that those teachings are still being passed down today, you know, that, to me, is the strength of our people. And this might not be my people's teachings, and I still don't know a lot of them, but that's something that I'm striving to learn. So I still respect and acknowledge these teachings…that they're still being passed down. For instance, this picture is of a west coast drum, but I sat in a woman's drum group and we sang around a big prairie drum, and I learned the songs and the teachings that weren't necessarily my people's teachings, but they are there for me and I draw strength from it.

Billie-Jeanne's very important contribution to the dialogue poses questions back to those who suggest that the urban Native experience and contemporary reality for Indigenous peoples are a matter of strategic-essentialism. She asks, "Who are we to not support our young people in seeking out culture from other tribes that reinforces the foundational philosophies of their own people?" If a young person does not have access to their culture— which is more of a reality as the years progress—do we say, "Sorry, no culture for you!"? As Native peoples, we cannot comprehend doing that. If we can share our cultures with non-Native people, who are we to withhold our cultural knowledge and teachings from our own youth?
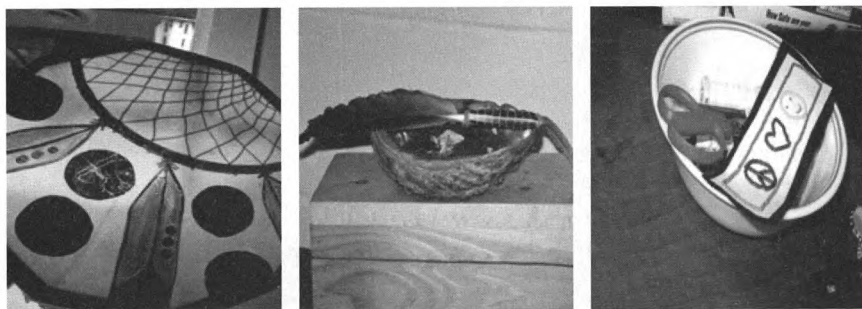

Figure 6

Concluding Thoughts

In the last seven years, our partner organization, UNYA, has struggled to secure a commitment of funding from the federal government of Canada for the Native Youth Centre (www.nativeyouthcentre.ca). Despite having a self-determined capital campaign, donated land to expand the existing space, and commitment from local and provincial governments, the federal government, through its lack of support, signals a refusal to recognize the necessity for a cultural space where urban Native youth can heal, learn, flourish, and thrive outside of state institutions, which many Indigenous people, as demonstrated in the dialogue of the photovoice project, believe and can prove to be more colonizing than liberating. One of the main elements of photovoice is its ability to reach a broader audience, especially policy makers. By reading this article, policy makers in government should better understand now that the IRSS legacy is not just a survivor issue but an intergenerational one; it should also be clear that Native youth deserve a meaningful space to heal outside of the institutions of the state. This is a minimum obligation.

This interactive discussion should equip readers—Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities alike—with the confidence to clarify facts that the state ideology, national consciousness, and mnemonic battles have obscured. To make invisible an entire people for the exploitative purposes of ensuring White virtue, White privilege, and access to the souls of Indigenous children is an egregious legacy that must be challenged. This photovoice project challenges the mnemonic landscape of Canada through its critical and ethnographic analysis of the intergenerational effects of the IRSS, as experienced in the present day by urban Native youth. Their contemporary expressions demonstrate that decolonization can occur above and beyond the text, and that all social actors, consciously or unconsciously perpetuating colonizing and White racist culture, can engage in this decolonization and healing imperative, and reorient the way one looks at education and child welfare of Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, this research project should help all social actors realize that reconciliation is not an end goal—instead, it is a *process*, and we hope that non-Native peoples can also contribute to ensuring that others understand this distinction.

This article and research project attempts to signal the value of the photovoice methodology to social science researchers and proponents of qualitative research methods. Not only is it an effective, comfortable, accessible, and fun method for conducting research with youth, but it also yields the type of data that we seek from interviews and focus groups with the added perk of not having to do either (when researchers approach Indigenous peoples or communities they usually consent to involvement but are then overwhelmed at the redundancy: "not another interview!"). Photovoice supports researcher engagement and pushes the boundaries of traditional research methods [the potential of photovoice projects can be viewed at:

http://www.youtube.com/user/UrbanNativeYouth?ob=5#p/a/u/2/2OT TvpMt54A]. It is important to recognize that visual technologies represent an "attempt to integrate such graphic and sonic efforts to preserve the past in our minds" (Zerubavel, 1996, p. 293). While the topic of this research could conjure silence and shame, it is also possible to break that cycle; photovoice proves that dealing with tough topics can actually be liberating—and if the "new warrior" has anything to do with it, it will be a topic for discussion for years to come. As research partners, we hold our hands up to you as a sign of respect and hope, as a result of this discussion, that you will have the motivation to support Indigenous communities to continue "talking back" to the master narrative of Canadian society.

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