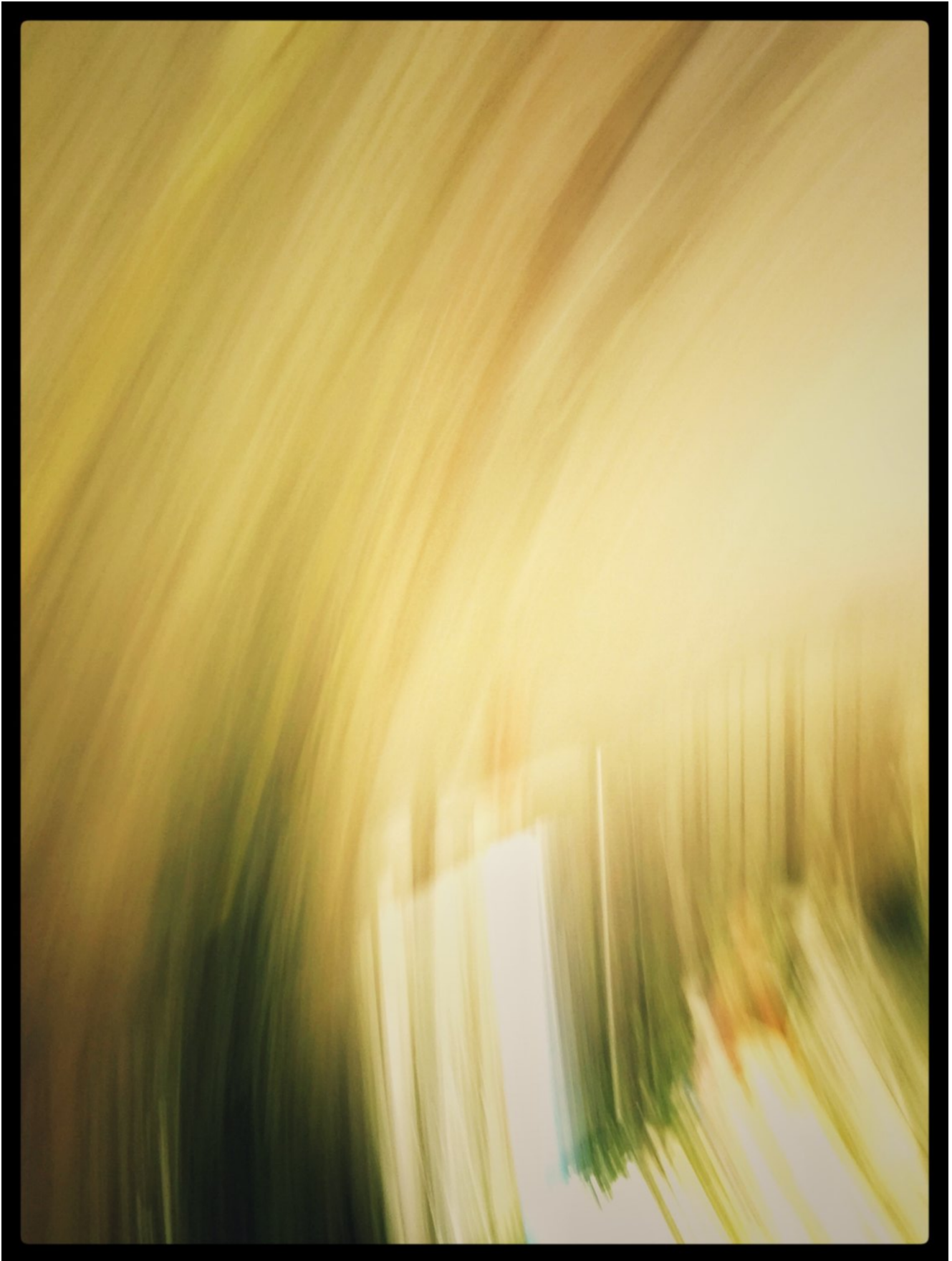


Mantle

The Annual Review of
Interdisciplinary Research

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Mantle: *The Annual Review of Interdisciplinary Research*

Volume 1, Number 1, July 2023

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Our Mandate

Mantle is the student-run and peer-reviewed online journal of the Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program (ISGP) at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

Mantle invites students and faculty to share their ideas about and experiences with interdisciplinary research. It is an open access online journal dedicated to publishing thoughtfully provocative and rigorously reviewed work from across all disciplines. We solicit manuscripts that open new fields of inquiry; create new intellectual methods, models, or paradigms; and demonstrate how interdisciplinarity can work within and beyond disciplines as well as open new vistas. The journal is a forum in which to argue, synthesize, report, and critique all issues in interdisciplinary theory and practice. We accept submissions on an ongoing basis.

Volume 1:1 Issue Editor

Ritwik Bhattacharjee

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Ritwik Bhattacharjee

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Contents

Introduction

Of new beginnings 5

Feature Article

True Stories – Shapeshifting between mode and metaphor 7
Nigel Haggan, T'uy't'tanat—Cease Wyss, and Emily Haggan

Articles

Empowered Learners: How Martial Arts Foster Self-Regulated Learning 29
Jessie Gordon

The Essence of Theatre as the Foundation of Law 40
Meghan Robinson

Spotlight

Close Encounters 54
Rachel Moylan, et al.

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Mantle: *The Annual Review of Interdisciplinary Research*
Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 2023)

Of New Beginnings

Ritwik Bhattacharjee
Editor-in-Chief

Welcome to the first issue of **Mantle**, a new journal that aims to foster dialogue and collaboration across and beyond disciplines. In this inaugural issue, we present a collection of articles that showcase the diversity and richness of interdisciplinary research.

While there are journals that are interdisciplinary in scope or cater to specific disciplinary crossovers, our mission as an Annual Review is to showcase ideas, questions, concepts, and projects that are neither bound by disciplinarity nor strangled by thematic straitjackets. With the heydays of discipline-bound research behind us, we are picking up the scholarly **Mantle** and supporting the next generation of interdisciplinary researchers who are tackling some of the most difficult, interesting, and crucial questions in today's world. Each annual issue of **Mantle** will reflect our commitment to these promises and will include one *Feature Article* that underscores the expansive and critical reach of interdisciplinary research; several regular *Articles* that are more traditionally interdisciplinary in their scope and articulation; and a *Spotlight* entry that is unabashedly exploratory in nature, concept, and execution. Future issues will also include a '*Comments, and Arguments*' section to cater to reader submissions.

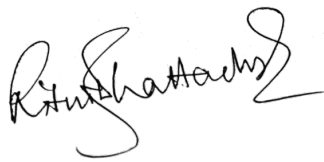
In this issue, the *Feature Article* by Nigel Haggan *et. al.* explores what it really means to decolonize knowledge production and questions the established practice of only focusing on the intellect at the cost of well-being. Engaging with the Indigenous concept of compassionate mind it articulates a damning critique of the Western approach to education and learning. In the regular *Article* section, Jess Gordon continues the conversation on interdisciplinary approaches to education by addressing the role of martial arts-based learning interventions in fostering student empowerment. Meghan Robinson's piece picks up where Haggan *et. al.*'s discussion ends and explores the essence of theatre as a communal site of resistance against colonization. Finally, the inaugural *Spotlight* entry by Rachel Moylan *et. al.* invites AI into a meditation on the phenomenology of everyday objects. The standalone piece opens, what Moylan calls, "doors to the wonder of the ordinary" in a breathtaking manner where not only disciplinary lines are blurred but also experience and interpretation get fused together.

I am deeply thankful for the kind encouragement and support of Rena Del Pieve Gobbi, Enid Ho, Steven Taubeneck, Barbara Weber, and Michelle Zapiola, without which this issue would not have been possible. My thanks also go out to the reviewers whose comments and suggestions have enriched the submissions featured here. Finally, I thank the reader for engaging with this journal and for supporting interdisciplinary research in all its unsettling glory.

We hope that this journal will serve as a platform for stimulating and disseminating interdisciplinary scholarship, as well as a catalyst for creating new connections and networks among researchers from different disciplines.

This is **Mantle**. Interdisciplinary research at its finest.

Enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rena Del Pieve Gobbi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Unceded, ancestral, and traditional Musqueam Territory
July 2023

Mantle: *The Annual Review of Interdisciplinary Research*

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True Stories—Shapeshifting between mode and metaphor

Nigel Haggan¹, T'uy't'tanat—Cease Wyss², Emily Haggan³

ABSTRACT: For the Squamish Nation, the two peaks of Vancouver’s North Shore are twin sisters who brought lasting peace. As the “North Shore Lions” they symbolize colonial effacement of Aboriginal presence. We draw on ‘true stories’ from Indigenous, Irish, and scientific traditions to explore the tension between the ultimately unknowable ‘truth’ of mountains, salmon, and people and the ‘stories’—myths, models, maps, equations, parables, poetry, plays, paintings, and prose—that help us to grasp aspects of their mystery. Indigenous, religious and a growing number of scientific authorities argue that wisdom and well-being have physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions. We suggest that over-valuing the intellectual leads to the chronic stress, broken relationships, and suicide that are all too common in school and university. In other words, that the demands of academic excellence are inimical to wholistic well-being. We conclude that denigration and exclusion of emotional and spiritual intelligence is an insidious form of epistemic or cognitive injustice. Indigenous concepts of ‘good’ or ‘compassionate mind’ point to deficits in the university mission of research, teaching, and service, but also suggest ways to enrich knowledge and increase well-being.

KEYWORDS: *prophetic imagination; salmon; metaphors; compassionate mind; good heart/ mind; heart knowledge; spiritual literacy; pollinators; cognitive/ epistemic (in)justice; holistic well-being;*

¹ Nigel Haggan is an aging student of the sea, from past abundance to present depletion to what it might become under different trajectories of human desire. He lives in Vancouver as a grateful, if uninvited guest on the traditional, ancestral and unceded homelands of the Coastal Salish peoples – the *x^wməθk^wəyəm* (Musqueam), *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* (Squamish), and *səlilwataʔl* (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations. Email: nhaggan@gmail.com.

² *T'uy't'tanat*—Dr Cease Wyss is an Indigenous ethnobotanist, artist and spiritual activist of *Skwxwú7mesh* (Squamish), *Stó:lō*, Hawaiian and Swiss ancestry. Email: ceasefire66@gmail.com.

³ Emily Haggan, MSc, is an Irish environmental scientist, artist and teacher who lives in the south of England. Email: emily.haggan@protonmail.com

Introduction

Pacific Northwest Indigenous⁴ cultures are the result of thousands of years of conversation between people, animals, plants, lands, waters, and spirit. Mission Christianity condemned Indigenous spirituality as idolatrous or demonic (Marsden, 2016; Turner, 2005, p. 233). Enlightenment science saw it as primitive superstition. The combined effect being to deny personhood to non-humans, leaving everything open to commodification. This ancient conversation⁵ continues amongst Indigenous people, between ordinary people and their gardens and the guerilla gardens of the inner city (Harris, 2022). The language of personhood and moral consideration for non-humans is however excluded from the management of forests, fisheries, farming, mining and other ‘natural resources’. While Aboriginal⁶ spiritual leaders are welcome in the corridors of power, industry, and science, Aboriginal people are by and large excluded from the *work* of science and management where, of course, spirituality does not belong.

Meanwhile, those charged with resource policy and practice are strongly discouraged from expressing any deep spiritual and emotional commitments they may have to their field of study. This double cognitive injustice excludes entire dimensions of value and commitment from environmental review of major Pacific Northwest projects such as the Kinder Morgan oil/tarsands⁷ pipeline and the Site C hydroelectric Dam. The same could likely be said for global initiatives such as the 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Might it be that the perceived ‘difference’ lies first, in that Aboriginal people do not separate spirituality and ecology? Also, that spiritual matters are part of the everyday conversation? Contrast mainstream society where mention of religion provokes discomfort and notions of division. Scientists who venture into the territory of religion face mockery or being written off as being of unsound mind (Jastrow, 2000; Spash, 2000), leaving terrible silences in the academy (Lee, 1998; Rose, 2007).

Yet, many researchers trace their passion for their subject to an encounter—often in childhood—with a non-human entity. In religious terms, this is a ‘call’, in some Indigenous societies a ‘Vision Quest’ and in lay terms a ‘career-forming experience’. Sticking with the Pacific Northwest, let’s say a beautiful silver fish fascinates a young girl. Their encounter is inseparable from the water, sun, wind, parents, or companions of the day. At school, the fish that spoke to her in its beauty and particularity acquires a long name *Onchorhynchus nerka*, functionally identical to all other sockeye salmon. In grad school, she may learn to put the salmon in an ecological and later a bio-economic model where market price makes it interchangeable for other ‘goods and services’ from aspirin to Teslas. Of course, she does this to be able to spend her life in service to the creatures, people, and places she loves. Her love drives and inspires her scientific work, but the sadness is that the scientific language of her research has no words to express that love.

At the Nexus 22 conference where this material was first presented (ISGP, 2022), we asked participants to tell of an encounter that fired their research passion and explore:

- 1 The tension between their private words and feelings and their academic framework
- 2 How they dealt with any spiritual aspects of the formative experience or later fieldwork that don’t fit the scientific reporting framework

⁴ “Indigenous” is capitalized as in “European”.

⁵ Celia Haig-Brown (1992) describes how conversations move into chats and eventually stories.

⁶ We capitalize “Aboriginal” using the same logic as in “European”.

⁷ Names matter. For the developers, they are ‘Oilsands’. To Indigenous and allied land protectors and climate change activists they are “Tarsands”.

- 3 To suggest modes of expression whether it's poetry or dance or anything non-traditional that would be most helpful to add.

This paper takes the form of a conversation between *T'uy't'tanat*—*Cease Wyss* an Indigenous ethnobotanist and spiritual activist and Nigel Haggan, a Pacific Northwest settler since 1981. Our conversation is informed and enriched by the art of Cease and Emily Haggan, a science teacher and artist living in the UK and a few lines of poetry. We touch on the wealth of “True Stories” or metaphors that help to grasp aspects of entities that are unknowable in their entirety, be they mountains, salmon, people, or sheep.

Recognizing that most if not all latecomers have a spiritual and emotional attachment to the Pacific Northwest, but acknowledging the deep, ancient spiritual literacy of Indigenous people, we ask Cease to open the conversation...

Skwxwú7mesh Introduction

Ha7lb skwáyel i7xcw ta new-yap
T'uy't'tanat kwi n-Kwshamin
Cease kwi n-sna
Kultsia iy Bruce-t ten elbtech
Senaqwila lha en men
Iy kamaya lha en imats
Lily lha en stáyalb
tina chen tl'a sla7hn uximixw
Skwú7mesh chen, iymen, tina tl'a Stó:ló,
Hawaiian , iy Swiss.
An wanamxs en skwalwen
An ha7lb en skwalwen ti sti7s
Tsátsaxw mexweya skwayel

English Translation

Good day everyone
T'uy't'tanat is my ancestral name
 Cease is my name
 My parents are Kultsia, Barb Wyss
 and the late Bruce Wyss
 My daughter is *Senaqwila*
 and granddaughter *Kamaya*.
 I come from the village *Esla7hn*
 and I am Squamish,
 I am also *Stó:ló*, Hawaiian, and Swiss.
 I respect who I am
 It is a beautiful day today!

I always start with the language, our ancient way of communicating. Looking north from Vancouver, is a beautiful view of *Ch'ich'iyúy Elxwíken*, the Twin Sisters who speak to how our creation stories affirm our belonging in the land. British settlers promptly renamed them “The Lion Peaks” in a futile attempt to efface our presence (Figure 1).

Figure 2 is an example of my artwork from my mother’s retelling of the story for our children (Wyss & *T'uy't'tanat*, 2006), but the language is written by my daughter *Senaqwila*, who has actually now become my teacher because of the erasure of our language, our culture, our stories. So, now our next generation are the ones that are bringing us back.

This image is not just a story of creation. It’s a story of change, and it’s a story of how our laws affected us in our lives. In the past we had wars between different tribes. As our Elders tell, a great Chief was preparing a coming-of-age feast for his two daughters, helped by a mighty run of salmon in the Capilano River. While they were preparing, the young women approached their father and asked if he would invite the northern tribes who were their traditional enemies. He was very surprised—and likely somewhat doubtful—but respected their wishes and sent the invitation.

The northern tribes left their weapons at home and filled their canoes with gifts. The feast lasted many days, till at the very end, their father, a transformer *Xaays* uplifted them into two new peaks on the closest and highest mountains, where they remain from that day forward. Their presence on those mountaintops helps us remember how to do things better. This story tells how

two visionary young women who could see farther than we could, brought about the great peace and changed the way that we relate to one another. These women were always the ones that should have been recognized and acknowledged. Our creation and change stories give us our laws that connect us directly to the food systems, to the land and to everything in our biosphere.

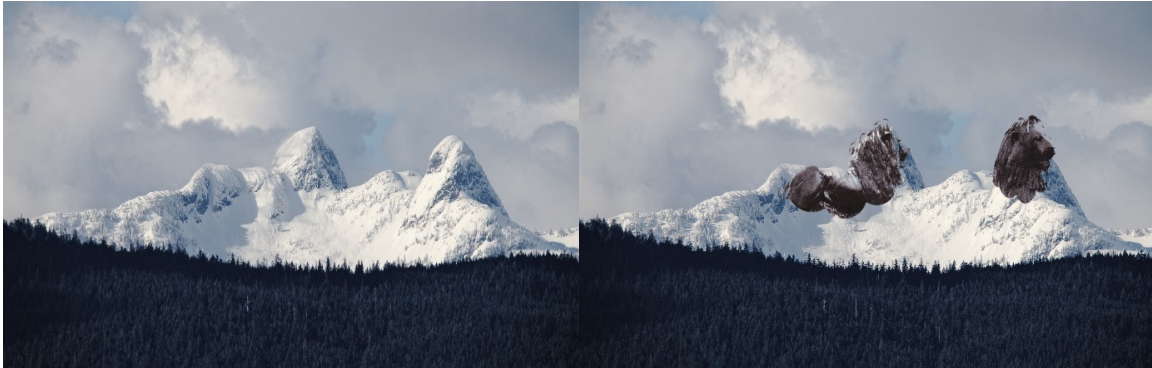


Figure 1 North Shore Mountains showing Ch'ich'iyúy Elxwíkn, the Twin Sisters, aka the "Lion Peaks".
By Jonathanfv - Own work, CC BY 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=57237377>

Na t'íks ta st'kin, iy ta siyam na kwi'kways
esk'esku7 ta stelmexw kwis na mi ayatway.

Na xí7t ta smenmanit
Iha síhenlhanay.

Xechnexw i7xw ta nimalh,
wa ayatway ta
skwxwu7mesh iy st'kin.

Figure 2: Ch'ich'iyúy Elxwíkn, the Twin Sisters who brought peace to warring Nations. Original Art by Cease Wyss. Skwxwú7mesh Language by Senaquila Wyss.

And now Nigel has some salmon stories...

Yes, simple salmon stories and, as you would properly expect with Irish logic, the salmon stories start with sheep. Figure 3 shows Cuilcagh Mountain that divides the Irish counties of

Fermanagh and Cavan and where a household of Roman Catholic mountain farmers informally adopted this boy from the polite streets of Protestant Belfast. They taught me a great deal, but I am still functionally illiterate compared to my adoptive brother John Thomas McGovern (inset) who left a two-room schoolhouse in the mountain at the age of 16. His lack of formal education is offset by deep intergenerational knowledge of the land driven by an inquiring mind and a wicked sense of humour. He it was who told me the parable of the sheep.



Figure 3 Cuilcagh Mountain viewed from the County Fermanagh side. Inset photo of John Thomas McGovern with Nigel Haggan somewhere on the slopes

The parable of the sheep

The scene is an arithmetic class in a two-room schoolhouse. The teacher gives a simple example (or so they think):

Teacher: *Well now children, there are five sheep on a road and two of them turn through a gate into a field. How many sheep are left on the road?*

Farmer's child: *None sir!*

Teacher: *You! You're just an ignoramus, you know nothing about arithmetic!*

Child (smiling): *And you sir, you know nothing about sheep!*

So, who knows best, the scholar or the farmer, the student, or the teacher?

This parable, charmingly illustrated by Emily in Figure 4, talks about the disconnect between local and traditional knowledge and formal education. The teacher's condescension emphasizes the way science often seeks to 'capture,' 'harness,' 'incorporate' or 'integrate' local and traditional

knowledge. On the bright side, it speaks powerfully to the conversation they could have if they ever sat down smiled into each other's eyes and said what do *we* know?

Now, if you were to walk over the right shoulder of Cuilcagh Mountain, you would come to a deep pool where the water rises out of the mountain limestone. It's the source of the Shannon River⁸, and the home of one story of *An Bradán Feasa*, the salmon of knowledge.



Figure 4: *The Parable of the Sheep*. Pencil drawing by Emily Haggan, 2022.

⁸ Named for Sinann, daughter of *Lodán whose thirst for knowledge brought her to an untimely death, as told in the Metrical Dindsenchas—recorded by Edward Gwynn (1935), translated by Isolde ÓBrolcháin Carmody (2012).*

An Bradán Feasa or the salmon of knowledge

The story goes that in the otherworld there's a pool surrounded by nine Hazel trees—the first thing that came into Creation (Figure 5). These trees bear purple nuts which drop into the pool. Salmon dwelling in the pool eat the nuts and acquire the wisdom of the universe. If you were skillful or fortunate enough to catch and eat one of these fish, that wisdom would come to you. As the old people tell, a sage finally caught the fish after many years. No sooner had he put it over a fire to cook, than he was overcome by an urgent call of nature.

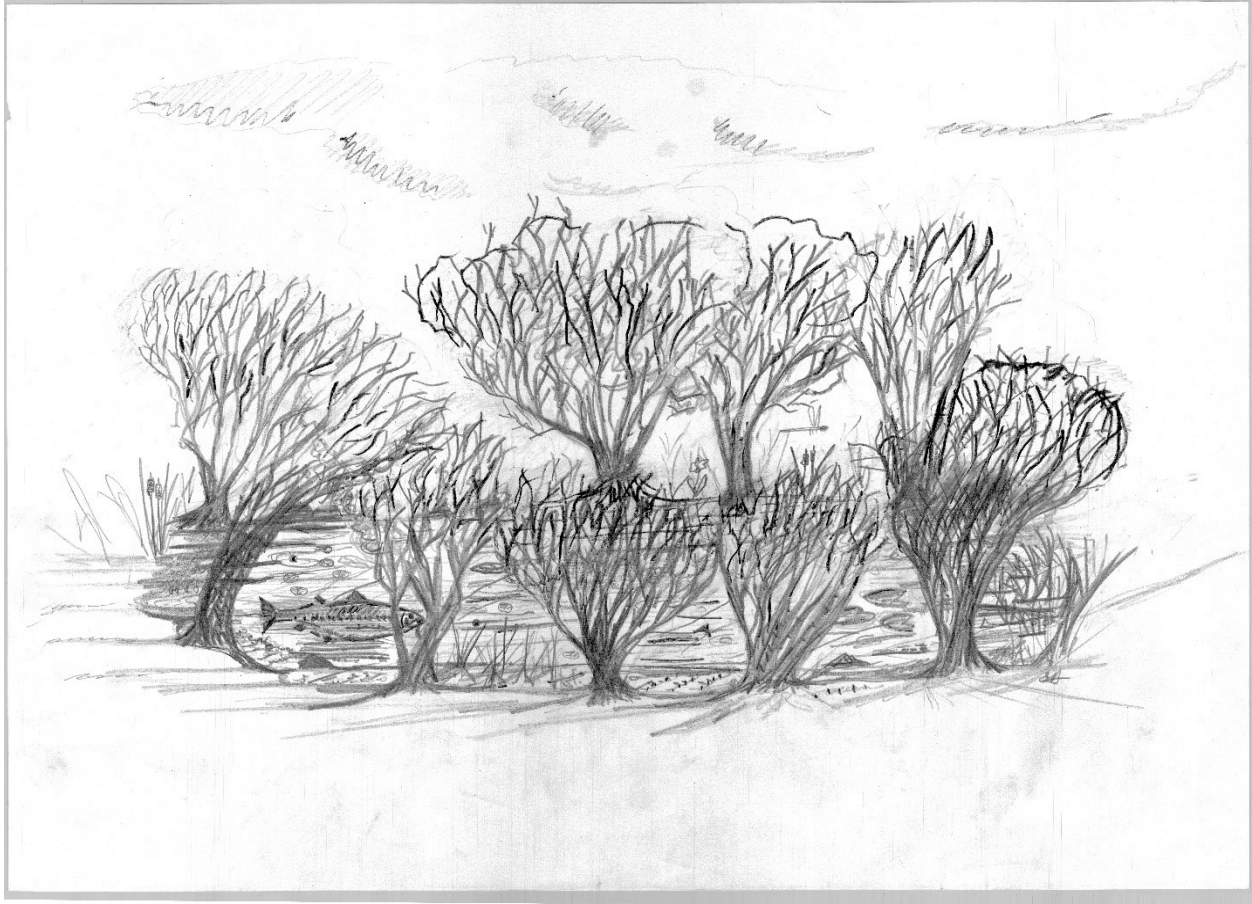


Figure 5: Nuts fall into an otherworld pool from the nine Hazel trees that surround it. The salmon who eat the nuts acquire the wisdom of the universe. Pencil sketch, Emily Haggan

At that very hour, minute and second, the young hero Finn McCool⁹ happened to come along the riverbank, so the sage hailed him:

Hey, young fella! Would you watch that fish so it doesn't burn but don't dare taste it till I get back from these trees.

⁹ Sometime in the late 3rd century (Christiani, 1965; Mong, 1994).

Finn was ever an obliging child, so he watched the salmon like a hawk. Thinking it was done on one side, he reached to turn it over, but burned his thumb as he did. As he sticks his thumb in his mouth to cool it, he happens to swallow a bit of the salmon skin. Thus, the wisdom comes to him, to the irritation of the sage according to this 2012 Irish stamp (Figure 6).

This story has many versions, one of which tells that the sage took it well, sagely, and offered to teach young Finn the three arts of poetry: *imbis forosnai*, signifying prophetic facility, *teinm laeda* the ability to interpret wisdom, or get to the bottom of things and *dichetal do chennaib*, the ability to create metric poetry ‘on the spot’ (Carey, 1997). I’d be tempted to equate this with Rap or Slam Poetry, except that “metric poetry” signifies adherence to strict form which harks back to a twelve-stage apprenticeship.

The poets of ancient Ireland were at least as powerful as kings. I first thought that was because if a king happened to vex a poet, he would become the subject of satiric verse that would make him a laughingstock throughout the four Provinces of Ireland¹⁰.

The truth, as ever, is more complicated. Poets who attained the highest of twelve grades were known as *filidh*, or poet-historians (Drew, 2007) whose duties included memorizing genealogies¹¹ (MacNeill, 1921). Any queen or king unwise enough to vex a poet might then find themselves written out of succession.



Figure 6, Finn McCool tastes the salmon of knowledge. Irish postage stamp. 2012

Forever after, when Finn was losing at chess, in battle or caught in the toils of sorcery, he had only to put his thumb in his mouth to know what to do. Figure 7 shows an 8th century cross-slab in Co Donegal, Ireland, close to where Emily grew up and Nigel failed as a salmon farmer, setting him on the path to this paper. The two top figures likely represent Finn chewing his thumb, in all probability wondering what to do about the Christian bishops coming in under his feet... (Ó hÓgáin, 1999, pp. 197–198). The elaborate Celtic decoration on the Christian cross might be interpreted as the entanglement of pre-Christian and Christian traditions in Ireland and the Pacific

¹⁰ See Patrick O’Kelly’s 1735 satire The Curse of Doneraile (In: Hoagland, 1981, pp. 355–359).

¹¹ This role would appear to be similar to the responsibility of Indigenous knowledge-keepers called to witness the titles of hereditary chiefs in the Pacific Northwest (Drucker & Heizer, 1967).

Northwest and the entanglement of people and salmon on both sides of the Atlantic. Speaking of which, Cease will now tell you about the First Salmon Ceremony of the Pacific Northwest:



Figure 7. Carved stone tablet in Drumhallagh, Co Donegal, Ireland. Top figures likely represent Finn McCool. Bottom Cristian bishops. – Pencil drawing by Emily Haggan

The first salmon ceremony

So, when we and many of our Nations gather that first salmon as you can see here this one's being laid out on fir boughs... ...so we use sacred medicine that are often our local conifers so on the West Coast. My people use cedar, but these inland Salish Nation folks are using fir boughs to lay the salmon down and gut it and cook it (Figure 8). That first salmon goes to the oldest people of the village who we have to honour—our knowledge keepers—our ancestral story keepers that help us with our protocols, our *chixach*, our laws.

And you know it's always important to take that time for your first salmon, to take care of it to feed those elders because they carry the precious knowledge. They carry the precious teachings, for example that we have to return the bones to the water (Figure 9).

Our Elders have lived the longest and seen the changes in everything from the earliest point of colonization. In our family, we talk to our Elders to find out what things were like 100 years ago—they're the ones that can tell us.

So, I have a quick Squamish story about a young woman who was dipping water from the Capilano River when she saw translucent people¹² moving towards the river. They looked so slow and weak that she could see through them. She asked one of them, "Who are you?" and they said, "We are the salmon people." (Figure 10).



Figure 8: First Salmon Ceremony. Salmon are respectfully laid on fir branches and prepared for the feast. Photo credit: Arnie Narcisse

She asked them, "Why are you so weak?" And they said, "Because you haven't been returning our bones to the river and when you don't, we cannot be replenished." So, she went with them—they took her into the river for what she thought was an hour but was for four years—and when she returned, she told the people what they were not doing for the salmon and for the environment. And so, these are the stories that we use as part of our *chixach*, part of our law. So, every year we bring those bones back to the river where we captured those salmon to let them know that we still love them, and we thank them for everything they provide. And today, we see more and more in the height of global population increase, that the ceremonies become less and less. And as

¹² In many cultures, all living beings were human until the time Transformers such as *Xaays* gave them their present form. As people and nations, they merit moral consideration.

we all can see the salmon are disappearing. So, we have to go back to our old ways, we have to respect the land, the water and the teachings that come from those places, and they have more value today than they ever had. And now Nigel will say a few words about the salmon of science:



Figure 9: Returning salmon remains to the river after the First Salmon Ceremony.
Photo credit: Arnie Narcisse

The salmon of science

Wild salmon are the needle, their migration the thread, that sew this big broken region into a whole.

- David James Duncan (2001)

Some thousands of years after the First Salmon Ceremony and ~1,800 years after Finn McCool, a fisheries scientist called Tom Reimchen observed that the growth rings of riverside trees were much thicker in the years when there had been big salmon runs (Reimchen, 2001). And if you cast your eyes up, or your mind back, to the mountains—the *Ch'ich'iyiy Elxw'ikən*, the Twin Sisters—you'll understand that the rain runs off this coast like water off an iron roof, carrying nutrients into the sea. And every year, tens of thousands of tonnes of salmon return, spawn, die and fertilize the land (Stockner, 2003). Nitrogen from the land and sea are different isotopes,¹³ so scientists can detect this marine nitrogen a kilometer back from each bank (Bilby et al., 1996). At least 200 creatures from insects to bears to humans benefit from this incredible pulse of nutrient as any gardener or farmer can understand (J. I. Helfield & Naiman, 2002; J. M. Helfield & Naiman, 2001; Naiman et al., 2009). The first salmon ceremony is a much earlier and more eloquent telling of this cycle of marine nitrogen and how everything is the poorer when it gets broken or interrupted.

¹³ Nitrogen from land ($\delta^{15}\text{N}$) and sea ($\delta^{15}\text{N}$).



Figure 10: Salmon people weakened by failure to return their bones to the river breaking the cycle of nutrients between land to Sea. Original art by Cease Wyss, 2022.

The finger and the moon

*I am an open book to my boss
I am a complete mystery to my closest friends*

- Lawrence Fernlinghetti (1958)

These three stories call to mind Alfred Korzybski's caution, "A map is not the territory" (Korzybski, 1933). Anymore, we would add, than the icon on your computer screen or in a place of worship is the thing that it points to. Myths, maps, parables, poetry, ecological and climate models, equations, and plays are all fingers pointing to the Moon (Figure 11). So, the more metaphors we have the merrier.

Now, in the spirit of harmless mischief, we suggest changing the title *Be Well - Excel* of the 2022 Nexus conference where this material was first presented to *Be Well versus Excel*, because we know that our schools and universities cause stress, mental and relationship breakdown, even suicide. So, there is a brutal tension or disconnect between holistic wellness and academic excellence.

Cree scholar Walter D. Young (1992) said that the compassionate mind, also known as good heart or good mind (Archibald, 2008; Christian & Wong, 2013; Newhouse, 2008) combines physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual learning with humility, truth, and love. These four dimensions of knowledge, wisdom and well-being are mirrored in the Great Commandment of Christianity to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbour as ourselves. For those who cringe at any mention of religion, I invoke eco-theologians who argue that the past, present and future meaning of 'neighbour' includes the entire animate and inanimate world (Fishbane, 2008; McFague, 1997), a concept of personhood familiar to Indigenous people and to the private relationships of citizens with their gardens, companion animals, special places, etc. The four dimensions are also recognized in the scientific notion of *Biophilia*—the love of life and living things (Kellert & Wilson, 1995; Wilson, 1984). Figure 12 A, redrawn from a University of Toronto website on Indigenous health

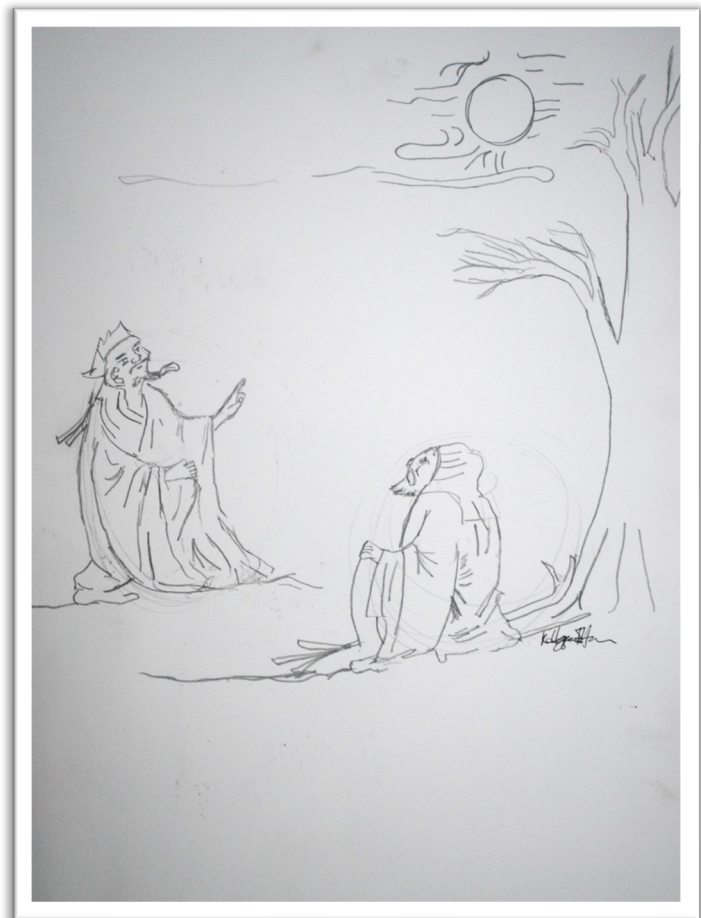


Figure 11: Sage pointing at the Moon. Pencil drawing by Emily Haggan from an original clay tablet by Kate Haggan, ca 1987.

shows a typical placement of these four aspects on the medicine wheel (Anon, n.d.). We prefer to see them as the four petals of a flower with Walter Lightning’s compassionate mind where the petals meet at the centre (Figure 12 B). This is the Bunchberry *Cornus canadensis*, the humblest member of the dogwood genus native to the Pacific Northwest. As luck would have it the dogwood is also emblematic of present-day BC.

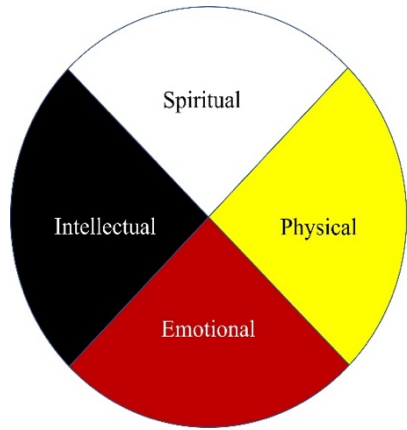


Figure 12 A, 4-dimensional wellness as Medicine Wheel—redrawn from U. Toronto webpage (Anon n.d.).



Figure 12 B, 4-dimensional wellness as dogwood flower with compassionate mind at the centre. Watercolour by Emily Haggan, September 2022

Now, if we were to transplant the Bunchberry into the academy, we might see that the ‘intellectual’ petal has grown to enormous proportions at the expense of the physical, emotional, and spiritual. Figure 13 shows Nigel sitting under a dogwood tree much like the one he planted on his boulevard some 17 years ago. The more he tries to pin the salmon down with scholarly references, the more the sweat of his brow dissolves the ink while the salmon swims crossly away. Outside the hallowed halls, the salmon gifts him with a few staves of verse:

The salmon of knowledge



Figure 13. All Nigel's Intellectual efforts fail to 'capture' the salmon of knowledge. Drawn by Emily Haggan.

I am the salmon of knowledge
I am the salmon of science
I am the salmon of abundance
I am the salmon of industry
I am the salmon of scarce resources
I am the first salmon
The shape that shifts from tree,
To bear, to plants and people

I am a term in an equation
Connection in a model
I am a noun in a government report
And a verb in the river
I am a scintilla of stardust
A sparkle of sunlight
I am the depth of the sea
I am the life of the river

I am the death and resurrection:
A chorus of carbon
A net of nitrogen
A parable of potassium
A psalm of phosphorus
I am the dress of the cedar
The brawn of the bear
The dance of many peoples

Heart knowledge, compassionate mind, and the prophetic imagination

A person with heart knowledge has a deep understanding of their history, tradition, and culture (Archibald, 2008, p. 47; Holmes, 2000, p. 46). Such individuals are recognized as 'Elders,' though the title doesn't demand that they be an old person¹⁴. The title *Elder* does signify respect for using their knowledge for the flourishing of the human and non-human community and their dedication to pass it on to the next generations. The Indigenous Nations of the Pacific Northwest, like many others, have adapted to dramatic change from the spread of cedar trees and salmon as the ice retreated over 12,000 years (Haggan et al., 2006). Since colonization, they have endured nigh

¹⁴ Nigel's friend and mentor the late *Kla-Kist-Ke-I*, Chief Dr Simon Lucas was named an Elder at the age of 40.

annihilation from Old World diseases (Boyd, 1999), the wholesale annexation of their lands, the depletion of fish and forests once thought to be inexhaustible and attempted cultural genocide through church and state-run residential schools (MacDonald & Hudson, 2012). Yet they endure. The Twin Sisters that brought peace to the warring tribes are an example of the *prophetic imagination*, where prophets are not fortune-tellers, but rather the women and men who can look catastrophe in the face and ask, how can we, being true to our best selves, open the future to a level of justice we don't believe to be possible (Brueggemann, 2001).

As noted, compassionate or good mind brings the four dimensions of knowledge to bear with humility, truth, and love. This is often described as being “of good mind” (Miller, 2007). Onondaga scholar David Newhouse eloquently describes the painful struggle to have the University of Trent recognize the ‘research credentials’ of Indigenous Elders recruited as advisors in a new Indigenous PhD program (Newhouse, 2008). While Walter Lightning’s criteria might have some traction in the caring professions, too often the qualities of humility and love get short shrift in the natural sciences (Oreskes, 2021).

“Good” or “Compassionate mind” which puts head and heart knowledge to work for the flourishing of the entire human and non-human community is projected onto the iconic Pacific Northwest Trillium flower (Figure 14 A). It seems as if good mind resembles the university mission of research, teaching, and service but without the gold silver and bronze standard.

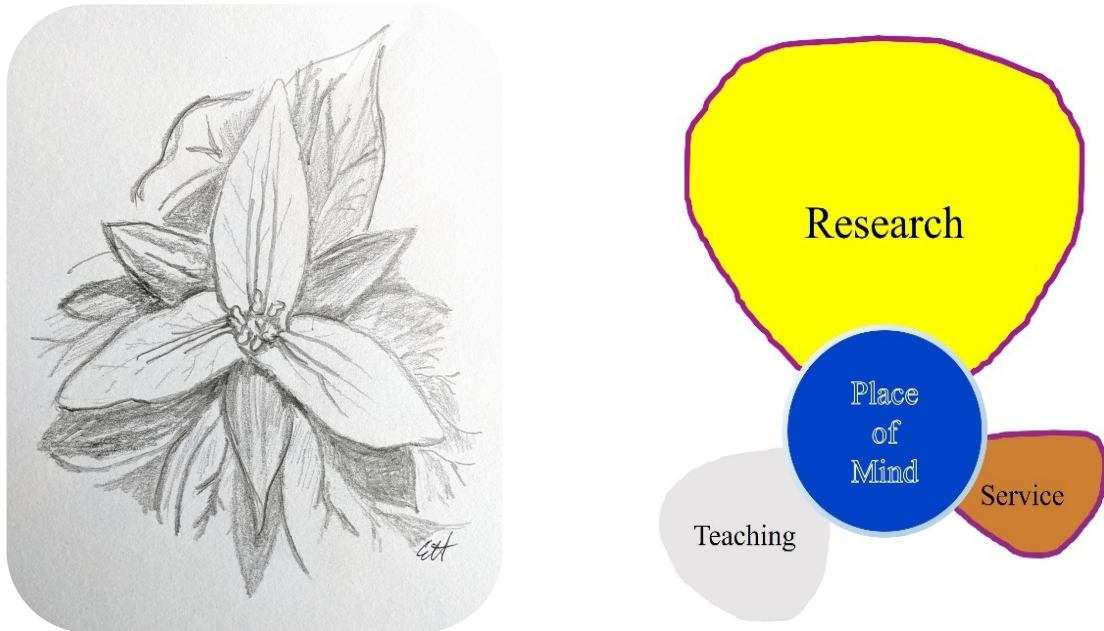


Figure 14 A: “Good” or “Compassionate mind,” as Trillium flower where the petals represent ‘Head’ knowledge, ‘heart knowledge’ and dedication to community well-being. 14B: This maps onto the university mandate of research, teaching, and service, but without the implicit gold, silver, and bronze standard. Trillium drawing by Emily Haggan.

It seems that the academy might be able to call on the help of Indigenous scholars of good mind in rebalancing the four dimensions of knowledge or even hark back to St Augustine's Rule of Charity (1876 Chapter xxv) which states that any interpretation of scripture that lacks compassion is "illegitimate" (Nielsen, 2008). While St Augustine referred to the Christian bible, the rule might apply to all texts regarded as authoritative from the Qur'an, Bible or Bhagavad Gita to The Origin of Species.

Cross-pollination

The dogwood and the Trillium are both pollinated by insects, including bumblebees, and Cease has a good story about that...

So, we've said that many researchers trace their passion to an encounter with a non-human; so, let's talk about this and what it means. One day I needed the help and guidance of the spiritual leaders in our community – the ceremonial leaders that do sweat lodges. Feeling overwhelmed, I went to the nearest sweat lodge, down by the train tracks in North Bend and not one of them was there. Feeling sad and a bit lost, I started to walk through a little cedar grove along the train tracks and I heard a buzzing. I looked to my right—facing south, thinking it was the trains or something like that, and this cloud was coming toward me bumbling and I realized it was a cloud of bumblebees, probably at least 500 of them!

And I stood still, I just didn't move, what do you do when you see a swarm of bees coming toward you? And they actually swarmed around me a few times and it felt like a couple of them were looking me in the eyes and almost hypnotizing me. They carried on after this for a couple of minutes. I looked to my left and it felt like two blinks and they were gone. I watched them fly up, turn into a funnel and swarm down into the ground and disappear. Later on, my mentors told me that the people rarely see a swarm of bumblebees moving their hive, so I was witness to a rare occurrence. And you know, the loss, the feeling that I needed guidance, was lifted from me—all from that one interaction with these creatures.

And I realized, that focussing on the pollinators would give me a deeper connection to the Earth and help me understand that my part as a human is to help the environment through helping these creatures that are often unseen. We see the evidence in the blossoms turning to berries and trees bearing fruit, but we don't always see the bees. We're not often witness to the actual pollination and definitely not to their moving of hives, so we don't always think about them living underground, but everything we need to care about in the environment starts underground at the root systems. So, my encounter with these bumblebees, led me to understand what a lot of my life work was meant to be. And I followed that, and I've had so much strength and vision as a result.

So, I ask all of you to think about how your formative encounters have shaped your relationships with non-humans. What lessons did you take home? How did that change your life vision and the goals you set to achieve it? What obstacles stand in the way of expressing the full range of your values and commitments in your life and or research?

Cognitive or epistemic injustice

Miranda Fricker coined the term Epistemic Injustice to signify a wrong done to a person or group in their capacity as a knower. She identifies two types, the first she calls Testimonial Injustice, where for example I wouldn't pay attention to my co-author Cease because she's Indigenous or

because she's a woman, or perhaps my daughter Emily because she doesn't have a PhD (Fricker, 2006, 2007).

The other is much more sinister, and the example she gives is of a woman suffering from sexual harassment in a culture where the concept does not exist. And we suggest to you that the exclusion of spiritual and emotional and other immeasurable ways of knowing from the academy is a deep-seated form of epistemic injustice.

Now, I'm going to tell you a story about my friend Chief Robert Joseph affectionately known as Bobby Joe. For those who don't know, Chief Robert Joseph is one of the most respected elders in British Columbia. He was a major figure in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that set out to expose and address the wrongs done through the residential school system.

Anyway, Bobby Joe and I were sitting having breakfast one day about three years ago when he said, "You'll never guess where I'm going next Nigel". And I said, "Tell me." "Well, he said, I'm going down to the Vancouver Club to talk to the owners and directors of all of the mining companies in British Columbia".

"Oh", I said. "Well, you might think of asking them how it is that they welcome into their company as a spiritual person, but not into the work of mining where, of course spirituality has no place. Whereas they, who no doubt have deep individual spiritual connections to places and may indeed suffer some unease about mining impact on lands, waters, and people, may not express that spiritual attachment in their work." So, we have a double-edged epistemic injustice whereby the people who may speak of the spiritual may not practice and those who are called to manage our fisheries, our forests and conduct environmental reviews may not use their spiritual knowledge or insight.

I'm going to let my Shuswap Nation friend Tim Michel speak here because he says things that would get me into trouble. The quote is from the film *Unsettling Environmental Review*¹⁵ that explores the impact of exclusion of entire categories of immeasurable value from review of major pipeline and tanker projects to transport diluted Alberta bitumen to overseas markets:

"Now Aboriginal people are allowed to talk about spiritual matters. Unfortunately, that's all they're allowed to talk about. So, the form of censorship is, "You, we can trot you out, do your little song and dance, say your little prayer. And now, get along, the big boys are going to play." (Tim Michel cited in Pierce, 2017)

Conclusion

I am a noun in a government report

And a verb in the river

We have argued that the physical, spiritual and emotional dimensions are as essential to science as to all other aspects of existence. The issue is not the disappearance of an ancient way of life, but of an imbalance of power where things that can be measured, counted, and modeled dominate social decision-making, where people somehow exist outside of the 'environment'. The challenge is to overcome the epistemic injustice inherent in discounting Aboriginal sacred values and excluding the insights (as opposed to the dogmas) of religion from resource management. Why do we care? Why do we fight for the animals, plants, lands, and waters to flourish? We do it because we love them and would miss them desperately if they were no more. We believe extinction, depletion and

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVIYf17qWK0&t=1044s> (Last accessed March 5, 2023).

impoverishment are ‘wrong’. We believe flourishing is ‘right’, but as scholars, we are denied the language of love, compassion, gratitude, and contrition. These feelings overflow in the ‘dedications’, ‘acknowledgements’ and the occasional ‘personal statement’, but they may not appear in our scientific and economic analysis.

And yet, to say that the voices of science and economics are too loud is unfair to scientific and economic friends and colleagues who work endless hours to the flourishing of people, places, and beings they love. Their voices are not too loud, just too lonely. The voices of Indigenous spirituality, of religion as compassion for the poor and for impoverished nature, the musicians, poets, and painters are as lonely outside the wall as the scientists and economists are inside.

The good news is that our common language of love and need can liberate science and economics to explore all the ways the Earth contributes to our physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual well-being.

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Empowered Learners: How Martial Arts Foster Self-Regulated Learning

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ABSTRACT: Learning and academic success are often characterized by intellectual proficiency. However, they are increasingly being recognized as a multifaceted endeavour that requires a holistic approach, encompassing the social, emotional, and physical domains. The cultivation of “soft skills” such as self-regulation, critical thinking, and effective communication skills are essential for one’s success in the classroom and beyond. Such competencies, influenced by familial, community, and cultural environments, are increasingly being addressed in schools and educational settings through social-emotional learning (SEL) and self-regulated learning (SRL) methodologies. This paper explores the unique opportunity that martial arts-based interventions, characterized by their approach to psychoeducation, mindfulness, and interpersonal kinesthetic learning, provide in empowering learners. Based on existing literature, this paper illustrates the potential of martial arts-based interventions for fostering self-regulated, socially, and emotionally competent learners, enhancing their educational experiences and empowering them beyond the school environment.

KEYWORDS: *Martial arts-based interventions; self-regulated learning; social-emotional learning; social and emotional competencies; academic outcomes; student well-being; physical and health education; empowered learners;*

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Introduction

“If we want the best academic outcomes, the most efficient and cost-effective route to achieve that is, counterintuitively, not to narrowly focus on academics, but to also address children’s social, emotional, and physical development. Similarly, the best and most efficient route to physical health is through also addressing emotional, social, and cognitive wellness. Emotional wellness, similarly, depends critically on social, cognitive, and physical wellness.”

- (Diamond, 2010).

Education is far more complex than the mere transfer of academic knowledge from educator to student. It is a holistic process that encompasses not only intellectual growth but also the social, emotional, and physical development of learners. Emphasizing these areas is crucial as they form the foundation for essential skills such as self-regulation, critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication and play a significant role in shaping students' academic success, future career prospects, relationships, and overall well-being. However, the value of these abstract concepts varies widely among cultures, communities, schools, families, and individuals, making it difficult to determine where responsibility for imbuing them lies. In recent years, an increasing number of schools have taken it upon themselves to introduce practices and curricula that address the development of these competencies. A step away from the traditional academic rigour that once held schools accountable for high grades and perfectionistic standards, these approaches emphasize the importance of social and emotional competence in students’ learning experiences and learning outcomes (Black, 2021; Tantillo Philibert, 2021). Social and emotional competencies are defined as a set of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive skills and dispositions that enable individuals to “be better prepared for life’s opportunities, responsibilities and challenges” (Black, 2021, p3). For many children, school serves as the initial setting where they learn and practice social and emotional skills with individuals beyond their family circle. This learning process, rooted in one's unique cultural context, is guided and shaped by social interactions and the motivation to 'fit in' (Trach, et al. 2020). Successfully meeting the environmental expectations and demands of the classroom or community necessitates the development of self-awareness, social awareness, and effective management strategies. Therefore, self-regulation, or the ability to manage oneself, is a key component of social and emotional competence, giving individuals a sense of control over their lives and in the learning context, control over their own learning. This appears in the form of self-regulated learning (SRL), a process whereby students actively manage their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour in order to achieve their goals or learning objectives (Zimmerman, 2002).

When it comes to developing students’ academic engagement and outcomes, martial arts may not be the first thing that comes to mind, but as a discipline that places a strong emphasis on mental, emotional, and physical self-regulation, there are many skills developed within that are primed to transfer to other domains of life. This idea makes it an appealing approach for schools seeking to empower their students in becoming resilient, lifelong learners. This paper explores the ways in which martial arts-based interventions align with SRL practices to provide an experiential and integrated learning opportunity for students in which they are supported, equipped, and empowered in their learning. I will first provide definitions of martial arts-based interventions and self-regulated learning (SRL), and then delve somewhat briefly into the ways they interconnect with four SRL-promoting principles identified by Butler et al. (2017). These principles are 1) creating safe and supportive learning environments, 2) designing complex activities, 3) integrating supports for SRL into activities, and 4) implementing SRL-promoting assessment and feedback practices. Through this exploration, the aim is to illustrate the potential of martial arts-based interventions as a

means of fostering self-regulated, socially, and emotionally competent, and empowered learners in all their educational contexts and in their lives beyond the school setting.

Defining Martial Arts-Based Interventions

Martial arts are systems of practices and traditions that involve the use of physical and mental discipline to develop and improve one's physical and mental capabilities (Moore et al., 2018; Prime Partnership, 2018). These practices can include a wide range of activities such as self-protective techniques, physical conditioning, and combat sparring. Traditionally, they emphasize the importance of respect and self-discipline, with a focus on how one maintains control of oneself, whether this be mentally, emotionally, or physically, in the face of conflict, threats, or trials. Though martial arts originated from Eastern philosophies that traditionally embody these values, not all modern approaches have developed the same intent. As Tremlow et al. (2008) emphasize in their work, “*traditional martial arts* instruction emphasizes psychological, spiritual and non-aggressive aspects of the art and *modern martial arts*, . . . tends to underemphasize these aspects and focuses instead on competition and aggression” (p. 948). This issue is important to note in connection to martial arts-based interventions to avoid the misconception that they are just about “learning to fight.” Martial arts-based interventions may use various martial art styles or techniques, such as Karate, Taekwondo, Judo, or Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, but they also incorporate elements such as mindfulness, meditation, and psychoeducational instruction with equal value. The psychoeducational and mindfulness components of these approaches draw parallel to social-emotional learning (SEL) which is a field of education that focuses on the development of core social and emotional competencies in students (Black, 2021). The pairing of these components in this interpersonal kinesthetic experience of learning martial arts techniques is a unique opportunity for individuals to learn new skills, put them into practice and embody the information they are learning; moving one’s learning “from the head to the heart” so to speak.

For the purpose of this paper, martial arts-based interventions refer to purposefully designed programs that incorporate psychoeducation and mindfulness (or SEL) alongside physical martial arts-based self-protective techniques to address specific goals. The focus of this type of intervention may include anti-bullying initiatives, learning disabilities, emotional and behavioural issues, self-regulatory abilities, and mental health (as can be found in several studies by Lakes & Hoyt, 2004; Marusak et al., 2022; Moore et al., 2018; Milligan et al., 2015; Twemlow et al., 2008 and others). Educators responsible for facilitating these interventions would require experience in the domains of (psycho)education or special education and martial arts instruction, though there is an opportunity to develop and provide resources for teachers to implement martial art techniques without extensive experience.

Understanding Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulated learning (SRL) is an intricate and collaborative process with cognitive, motivational, emotional, behavioural, and social components; it is an essential part of the educational journey, from the earliest formative years to adult life. From the learner's perspective, it is the process of taking an active and intentional approach to one's own learning, and for educators, it is the process of guiding and supporting their learners to meet this same end (Butler et al., 2017). It can be beneficial for educators to explore theories and practices related to SRL when they consider the complexity of their students' needs, emotions, prior experiences, abilities, motivations, interests, etc., and how they influence their ability to learn. Commonalities among SRL theories largely consist of the following three components: (meta)cognition, motivation, and emotion, and

(cyclical) strategic action (Butler et al., 2017; Perry et al., 2020). Metacognitive learners are conscious or self-aware of their personal strengths and challenges as individuals and as learners and have an awareness of what is required of them to be successful. Motivated learners are eager to take on new or challenging tasks, they value personal progress and persist in the face of challenges to achieve their learning objectives. Finally, strategic learners have a wide range of learning strategies, they are adaptive and can modify their strategies to suit different tasks and activities through iterative planning, monitoring, evaluating, and adjusting their approaches to learning tasks i.e., strategic action. As learners develop a greater sense of control and awareness of themselves and what they are capable of through these cycles of strategic action, they may also begin to experience an increase in agency, self-efficacy, and growth mindset. Agency refers to one's capacity to exercise control over one's thoughts and actions in any given situation, whereas self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's own ability to succeed (Code, 2020; Zimmerman, 2002). A growth mindset refers to the belief that one's abilities, intelligence, and talents can be developed and improved upon through hard work, persistence, and learning from failure (Sarrasin et al., 2018). These psychological concepts are often associated with increased academic performance and persistence, adaptability, higher motivation and engagement, resilience, and a greater sense of self-worth (Sarrasin et al., 2018; Zimmerman, 2002), all of which are vital to keeping pace with the constant "shifting conditions in workplaces and daily life that demand continual learning and adaptive expertise" (Butler et al. 2017, p187).

An Opportunity to Empower Learners

In the pursuit of fostering self-regulating learners, researchers Butler et al. (2017) identify four core principles for educators to consider when designing and implementing their teaching practices. These principles take into account the learning environment, the learning activities, the supports provided and the assessment and feedback processes that all weave together to create opportunities for self-regulated learning (SRL) and that foster student autonomy. I will now discuss how these principles and practices are intrinsically embedded in martial arts-based interventions, making them an effective approach to empowering learners.

Building a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment. Butler et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of safe and supportive learning environments so that learners may feel valued and comfortable learning together. With this sense of safety or inclusion, the classroom becomes a place for students to take risks, make mistakes, and engage in the process of learning in ways that can open them up to new ideas and challenges. Building an environment like this can be accomplished through such means as positive relationship building, positive messaging and reinforcement, and clear participation structures. Approaches to increase inclusion and reduce stress and anxiety, which can often be barriers to learning and self-regulation, also help foster a sense of trust and respect among the community of learners. This consideration may be especially important for individuals who may have experienced trauma or face daily challenges in their lives that impact their ability to feel safe and supported or present in the classroom (Greenwood, 2019).

Martial arts-based interventions provide a safe and supportive learning environment in a number of ways but primarily through its values-based approach, highly structured design, emphasis on differentiation and inclusion, and its ability to foster connection among participants and instructors. As mentioned previously, traditional martial arts place a high value on safety, respect, and self-discipline, as well as developing a growth mindset. Having a values-based methodology emphasizes "educational outcomes that centre on imparting values, rather than developing fitness, skills, or other typical objectives of sport coaching." (Channon & Matthews, 2018). The emphasis on these values is reflected in the environment established by the educator/instructor; overemphasizing

safety protocols to avoid injuries, stating clear learning objectives so everyone knows what to expect, breaking down complex techniques into simple steps, and understanding the learners' needs and differentiating instruction to meet those needs. Students can watch, experiment, ask questions and embrace challenges with a low risk of being embarrassed or singled out for failing. In fact, mistakes are viewed as an integral part of the learning process and are encouraged as students work toward mastery. Additionally, educators familiar with special education and inclusion practices are also better equipped to differentiate instruction and support those learners with learning differences (Prime Partnership, 2018). A sense of safety is also built by fostering communication and connection among its community of learners. Owing to the physical nature and the close proximity of movements, students engage in a form of intimate, cooperative, social learning that allows them to develop and practice verbal and nonverbal communication skills; one learns to read and interpret the body language and movement cues of others while also expressing themselves and their needs. This interpersonal coordination is associated with greater rapport, feelings of closeness and prosocial behaviour all of which continue to build students' capacity and motivation to engage further in their learning and that transfer well into other contexts where group work is required, and challenges arise (Borowski, 2021). For example, when a student is paired with a partner to learn a certain technique, the success of this exercise is dependent on clear communication between the partners - both verbal and non-verbal. One partner might initiate a movement, subtly shifting their weight or altering their grip, and the other partner must quickly interpret these cues and respond appropriately to maintain balance and control. In this setting, students learn not only the physical techniques of martial arts but also how to communicate effectively, cooperate, and build rapport. These skills are not only essential for a successful self-defense lesson but are also invaluable when applied to academic group projects, when conflict arises, and they must work together to find a solution.

Designing Complex Activities. According to Butler et al. (2017), to provide rich opportunities for learning, activities should be complex in design. This means that they extend over time and include depth and variety. They say this is not to be misunderstood as complicated or confusing, but rather as activities that afford students the opportunity to think creatively and critically, to make meaning, to exercise choice and agency, and to persevere over time. When activities have multiple goals, focus on big concepts, give choice, and integrate across content areas, students have more opportunities to engage deeply with big ideas from multiple perspectives. This can increase their adaptive expertise, or their ability to use knowledge and skills flexibly, which will benefit them when faced with future challenges in other contexts.

Martial arts alone are inherently complex systems of movements and techniques, add to that the complexity of social and emotional skills and one has a unique learning opportunity that extends beyond a typical physical education class or social-emotional learning lesson. The ability to learn physical techniques requires a variety of cognitive strategies; one needs to repeatedly observe, analyze, synthesize, and practice in order to execute the techniques and movements correctly and build muscle memory. One may not simply watch a technique and expect to replicate or even remember it without engaging in a form of strategic action and physical engagement. In fact, it will require a lot of trial, error, and effort for students to master the techniques, which can sometimes be extremely challenging and un motivating but yields a tremendous intrinsic reward when mastered. Instruction may be broken down into sequences of smaller parts, practiced individually, and then layered back together to form a smooth, fluid movement. This process of breaking down the steps can be implemented explicitly by educators, but it is also an implicit process learners engage in as they *interpret* the instructions or expectations, *plan* how to proceed, *implement* their plan, *monitor* how their plan is going and make *adjustments* if needed (Butler & Schnellert, 2020). This process of strategic action is central to SRL as it provides a framework for how learners can go about engaging

in their learning. Each time a learner successfully cycles through this process, their sense of accomplishment and competence grows. So too may their self-efficacy, which in turn motivates them to take more risks, persevere through more challenges and experiment further because they know they are capable of doing hard things.

In addition to the cognitive processes relevant to martial arts-based interventions, it is important to recognize how the body, movement and experiential learning play a role in developing embodied cognition. Embodied cognition is a neuroscientific concept that holds the understanding that how we think, learn, and understand is influenced by the physical processes involved in the interactions, perceptions, and emotions of the body. In other words, people learn and understand through their bodies, movements, sensations, and interactions with others (Borowski, 2021; Hrach, 2021). Embodied cognition aligns with Indigenous ways of knowing that view “culture as holistically inclusive of the interrelated aspects of spirit, emotion, physicality, and mind” (Tanaka, 2016. p.59) and learning as “holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)” (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2007). For example, as students grapple with the abstract concepts of consent, boundaries and healthy relationships, role-play (i.e., the self-defense scenarios) can provide opportunities for students to explore different roles and emotions related to conflicts such as bullying or boundary setting. Through practice, students learn the skills to navigate different situations and make informed decisions, however, they also begin to develop an awareness of the emotional and physical responses needed to do the right thing when needed. As Salmivalli (1999) argues, “most students probably already know that taking action against bullying would be the right thing to do. However, actually doing this is another matter” (p.456). Young students, like many people, need help connecting their cognitive understanding of “I know what I *should* do” to an embodied knowledge that comes from one’s own inner conviction, confidence, and competence, which then spurs them into action. This combination of experiential learning and targeted social-emotional learning sets students up for success as they play, experiment, and reflect on emotions and behaviours that arise in the scenarios and in real-time, supporting them to integrate their new learnings, understanding, and awareness leading to greater intuition, know-how, responsibility, and action (Salmivalli, 1999). In the context of martial arts training, a learner not only understands a move intellectually, but they also physically practice and feel it. This intimate connection between physical action and understanding contributes to a more holistic learning experience. As the learner becomes more aware of their body, movements, and the impact of these movements, they can monitor and adjust their actions to better achieve their learning goals. This process resonates with the principles of self-regulated learning, whereby students are using metacognitive strategies to respond and manage the challenges they face, rather than responding emotionally or impulsively without consideration of potential consequences or alternate strategies.

Integrating supports for SRL into activities. When it comes to built-in supports that foster self-regulated learning (SRL), Butler et al. (2017) ask, “how do I help learners *learn how to engage* in this activity in the future, when I’m not here to guide them?” (p. 108). The goal is to build students’ capacity to take control of their own learning by first providing the support they need to do so. Academic self-regulatory processes include time management, paying attention to instructions, strategizing how to organize, rehearsing, and storing information, creating an efficient work environment, and utilizing social resources wisely. Learning how to do these can be done through *modelling*, which refers to demonstrating and teaching a particular set of skills or strategies, typically through the use of a concrete example, and *scaffolding*, which refers to the way a teacher instructs and guides their students through particular activities, increasing responsibility over time as deemed necessary (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997). For students to take responsibility for their own learning,

they must know how to attend to and interpret the instructions and then how to meet those expectations or requirements. In practice, examples of this could be co-creating expectations with students, explicitly teaching learning strategies such as asking questions, and incorporating self-reflective moments into activities so that students better understand what they need to do and how to do it.

In the martial arts context, instructors provide clear scaffolded instruction and ample practice time. Mastering a new motor skill can be a challenging and demanding process that requires perseverance and hard work. From a social cognitive perspective, learners acquire new skills through four sequential levels: observation, emulation, self-control, and self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2000 as cited in Kolovelonis & Goudas, 2010). In both physical education instruction and martial arts, these four levels can be intentionally employed to enhance the support offered to learners. As Kolovelonis and Goudas (2010) explain, during the observation level, students watch their instructor demonstrate a technique and listen to the key elements needed to perform the new skill or technique. During the emulation level, students begin to practice the new skill by trying to replicate the technique. Social feedback and assistance during practice are important at this level as they help students fix mistakes, ask for and offer help, build fluency, and develop a growth mindset. At the self-control level, students practice their new skills independently and are developing automaticity and reflexivity. They set personal progress goals to guide their practice and use self-monitoring techniques to track their performance. Finally, at the self-regulation level, students have mastered the skill, they can easily adapt and use it in changing conditions, such as in combat or sparring scenarios; they may even have their own unique styles and preference for techniques. Through participation in martial arts-based interventions that support learners through these levels, individuals are scaffolded in their learning. They also gain insight into themselves by constantly circling through cycles of strategic action; interpreting, applying, monitoring, adapting, evaluating, and reflecting on their progress. While martial arts may not be a traditional academic activity, it is an interpersonal kinesthetic experience that naturally supports learners in developing greater self-awareness (i.e., metacognition), self-efficacy (i.e., confidence and motivation), and mastery of skills (i.e., strategic action). To support the transfer of these skills to other domains, educators can work with their students to identify strengths and weaknesses and adapt future lessons to address their needs. In this respect, the educator acts like a guide to support their students with individualized feedback and direction. This process requires active formative assessment and adaptability on the educator's part, which will be discussed next.

Implementing SRL-promoting assessment and feedback practices. SRL-promoting assessment and feedback practices are important considerations for educators and their practice, and for students to understand their learning processes and what to do next. One can regard assessment and feedback from an extrinsic perspective, which considers the teacher-student outcomes i.e., grades and teacher feedback, and an intrinsic perspective, which focuses on the student-learning connection i.e., self and peer assessment (Butler et al. 2017). For educators, assessment is about investigating how their students are progressing and interpreting that information to inform their practice and provide meaningful feedback that supports their students' growth. Effective feedback that is perceived as honest, attributes effort and strategy, and provides students with clear, specific and attainable information, helps students refine their learning approaches and make connections between their current abilities and goals, this metacognitive awareness is fundamental to fostering self-regulating learners (Mouratidis et al., 2008).

Through martial arts, students experience both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of assessment and feedback. As students engage in practicing and drilling the techniques, they receive real-time feedback from instructors. Instructors closely observe and provide verbal feedback, they may

demonstrate directly or indirectly with students or co-instructors and make physical adjustments such as moving body parts to the correct position. In addition to this, they may use belt promotions to mark and celebrate one's progression towards mastery, these forms of extrinsic motivation often incentivize students as they work towards achieving certain goals (Winkle & Ozmun, 2003). As students work and practice together, they engage in intrinsic, self-evaluative and peer feedback processes. Students continuously assess their own performance in relation to the instructions and to their partner's performance before they can offer feedback. Peer feedback is much more informal and may sound like telling one's partner "that's right," "use the other hand," or "stop doing that". It will look like partners working together, collaborating, interpreting, practicing, moving, reflecting, challenging, correcting, and encouraging each other. They may observe moments of frustration with a particular technique and employ strategies to self-regulate their emotions and behaviour. The added benefit of this embedded process of self-assessment and feedback in learning martial arts is how they provide learners with the social-emotional competencies necessary to navigate challenges or conflict in other contexts. For example, the constant cycle of practice, self-assessment, and adaptation in martial arts is parallel to the iterative process students undertake in academic problem-solving or project-based learning. As students learn to appreciate the value of honest feedback and see the direct correlation between their efforts and improvement, they may start applying this learning approach to their academic tasks. They may learn to seek feedback actively and integrate it into their learning process rather than seeing it as criticism. This positive attitude towards feedback and self-assessment is crucial in developing their SRL skills as it encourages active engagement in learning, fosters a growth mindset, and nurtures resilience in face of challenges. Moreover, the martial arts practice offers an opportunity for developing interpersonal skills such as effective communication, empathy, and collaboration, all of which can be beneficial in other social contexts. Through peer feedback, students learn how to give and receive constructive feedback in a respectful and supportive manner, a skill that is valuable in collaborative work or team projects. Thus, martial arts serve as an excellent platform for nurturing self-regulated learners who are not only skilled and resilient but also socially competent and collaborative.

Conclusion

Martial arts-based interventions are undoubtedly an unconventional approach to academic learning but looking through a self-regulated learning lens, one can piece together how they support learners in taking ownership of their own learning. They provide a safe and supportive learning environment through their highly structured design, emphasis on personal growth and values, and ability to foster connection among their community of learners. The complex and challenging nature of martial art activities in conjunction with social-emotional learning requires iterative strategic action that promotes the development of cognitive strategies and self-awareness, leading to increased self-regulation, agency, and positive self-perception. Additionally, through built-in support and meaningful assessment and feedback, students can track their progress and receive targeted guidance and support. While there are additional benefits to learning martial arts such as physical fitness and health (Prime Partnership, 2018), the opportunity for learners to move, interact with others and experience for themselves their ability to self-regulate and persevere through challenges is paramount in supporting them in becoming confident, self-regulating learners.

The term Experiential SEL is an emerging concept in social-emotional learning (SEL) but seems appropriate to describe the process of developing social and emotional competencies through interpersonal kinesthetic activities such as martial arts. The key takeaway is that martial arts-based interventions support learners to "develop a sense of control over their bodies, emotions, intellects, and interactions, [which] allows them to monitor their emotions and manage their actions in [all]

contexts” (Borowski, 2021, p. 7), including one’s learning experiences. While there is a need for more research in this area, as Borowski (2021) also highlights, there is an undeniable correlation between social and emotional competencies and better academic and life outcomes and that the most successful programs designed to promote these competencies use active forms of learning based on movement and participation.

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The Essence of Theatre as the Foundation of Law

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ABSTRACT: Canada has been described as a pluralistic legal society that recognizes and values both the common law and Indigenous legal orders. However, the predominant legal order in Canada was used as a tool for the attempted colonization of Indigenous cultures across the country and is built upon a normative worldview that fundamentally contradicts Indigenous worldviews. The liberal worldview that guides the common law has concentrated on the individual and has relegated the interrelationship between community, story, and land to a facet of society that holds little importance. This article is an investigation into the relationship between theatre, story, and law, exploring the essence of theatre as a communal site of resistance against the dominant structures of a liberal worldview. It explores whether theatre, as a creative medium, could have the power to make space for a pluralistic society in which Indigenous laws and the common law are valued as equal and autonomous. This article draws on the work of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Glen Coulthard, and Jarrett Martineau to explore the interconnection between the natural world, story, theatre, and law.

KEYWORDS: *Indigenous legal traditions; Canadian state law; colonialism; environmental protection; theatre; story; legal pluralism;*

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Introduction

Imagine back to the moments before a piece of theatre began. The soft hum of the audience members; the shifting, trepidatious feet of the performers and the muffled murmurs of the technicians making their last-minute show calls. The darkness of the theatre space embraces the entire collective with the promise of transporting the group to a shared realm of reality that deviates from the social constructs of the everyday. Within a moment, a constellation of light spreads across the stage, transporting the collective into a story that shapes communal capacity, engaging consciousness and shaping shared counter-realities. Now imagine that same theatre space unconstrained by the walls of a structure. The trees stand beside the audience members with excited anticipation; the nerves of the actors are grounded by the comfort of the soil; the wind whispers words of encouragement to the technicians, and a constellation of stars lights up the stage. The natural world encircles the collective as they journey together through an imaginative interrelated existence explored through story.

These storied experiences have existed since the world began.² They are the creation of community, the embodiment of imagination and the foundation of culture that have woven together relational networks of responsibility to people, place, creativity, and spirit. Stories shape our understanding of the world and our relationships within its dynamic continuance, but they also provide a possibility for transformative imaginings of renewed realities.³ Theatre acts as a medium to teach and embody these stories, as does the law.⁴ Where there is land, there is culture, where there is culture there are stories and where there are stories there is law.⁵ As Barak writes, “the world is filled with law. Every human behaviour is subject to a legal norm... Wherever there are living human beings, law is there. There are no areas in life which are outside of law.”⁶ Over time, however, cultures have converged, and value systems have clashed. Above all, the foundational source of colonizing Nation States, the violent domination of liberalism, has attempted to consume diverse cultures and lands.⁷ The pursuit of power and progress led liberalism to separate law from land and story,⁸ for the foundation of the liberal worldview is the autonomy and centrality of the individual.⁹ In order for the individual to exercise the critical values of liberalism, one would have to control, alter and dispose of the natural world as a lifeless object of property.¹⁰ Liberalism became the architect of colonialism, attempting to destroy the interconnected relationships centring community,

² Jarrett Martineau, “Creative Combat: Indigenous Art, Resurgence, and Decolonization” (Doctor of Philosophy: University of Victoria, 2015) [unpublished].

³ Andrew Hatala, Kelley Bird-Naytowhow, “Performing Pimâtišiwîn: The Expression of Indigenous Wellness Identities through Community-based Theater” (2020) 34:2 *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 243.

⁴ Geoff Park, *Theatre Country: Essays on Landscape and Whenua* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2006).

⁵ Janet Stephenson, Mick Abbott & Jacinta Ruru, eds, *Beyond the Scene: landscape and identity in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Otago: Otago University Press, 2010).

⁶ Aharon Barak, “Judicial Philosophy and Judicial Activism” (1992) 17:1 *Tel-Aviv University Law Review* 483.

⁷ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

⁸ Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital* (London: Verso, 2016).

⁹ Aaron Mills. “The Lifeworlds of Law: On Revitalizing Indigenous Legal Orders Today” (2016) 61:4 *McGill Law Journal* 847.

¹⁰ Alan Ryan, *The Making of Modern Liberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014) at 593.

culture and land.¹¹ Within Canada, the liberal worldview is engrained within the systems of the settler Nation state.¹² Many of these systems, including Canada's common law, have been and continue to be used as instruments through which colonialism permeates.¹³ As James Boyd White writes, "what has been happening to law, however, is that it is becoming an instrument of empire and power, and in the process losing its essential character."¹⁴

In this paper, I argue that *story and law are in fact one in the same, and story is the essence of theatre*. Story and law "weave together an understanding of both the established (what is) and the possible (what might be)."¹⁵ They are an imaginative framework for interpreting relationships alongside obligations. Many Indigenous laws and legal traditions¹⁶ recognize the integral connection between law and story. As Borrows illustrates, "within Indigenous legal traditions, creation stories are often one source of sacred law".¹⁷ In Canada, however, our common law has been stripped of its true meaning¹⁸ by the liberalist Nation State, forced to become the product of the colonizing will, immersed in liberalist thought. As the dominant legal structure in Canada is common law, its invalidation of story and land have caused Indigenous thoughts, values, lifeworlds and laws to not only be undermined, but exist as a mere whisper within our legal structures.¹⁹ This has caused not only disastrous consequences for relationships with each other and the natural world, but it is constructing a singular story that could jeopardize our collective survival. In this paper I argue that theatre can act as a medium for guiding law back to its fundamental elements, reconnecting common law to story in order to support law's purpose of guiding people to "maintain good relations: relations within communities, relations between communities and relations with other beings of creation."²⁰ I argue that theatre can create collective, creative space for the common law to learn from Indigenous legal orders by reconnecting law to story and story to land. Theatre has the creative capability to make space for a re-imagined pluralistic society in which Indigenous laws and the common law are valued as equal and autonomous and the natural world and story are once again reconnected to law.

The first section of this paper will explore the essence of theatre, setting the foundation for why this art form has the power to make a difference. The second section will analyze how liberalism attempted to use colonization to eradicate theatre and assimilate Indigenous legal traditions. Theatre and Indigenous lifeworlds have both had to resist and refuse the dominant

¹¹ Cormac Cullinan, *Wild Law: Manifesto for Earth Justice*, 2nd ed (Cambridge: Green Books, 2011).

¹² Gordon Christie, *Canadian law and indigenous self-determination: a naturalist analysis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).

¹³ Patricia Monture-Angus, *Journeying Forward: Dreaming First Nations' Independence* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1999), at 9.

¹⁴ James Boyd White, *Keep Law Alive* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2019).

¹⁵ Hester Lessard, Rebecca Johnson & Jeremy Webber, Eds, *Storied Communities: Narratives of Contact and Arrival in Constituting Political Community*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011) at 8.

¹⁶ It is important to note that I do not essentialize all Indigenous cultures, laws, stories or legal traditions as the same, for all Indigenous cultures are unique. However, for many Indigenous populations, their unique laws and legal traditions have philosophical underpinnings that are shared through story. This relationship between story and law is explored by scholars such as John Borrows, Glen Coulthard, Wade Davis, Patricia Monture-Angus and Jeremy Webber, among others.

¹⁷ John Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010) at 25.

¹⁸ Gerald Postema, *Bentham and the Common Law Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) writes about how the Common Law, or *lex non scripta*, was understood as an unwritten body of attitudes, practices, and thought patterns recorded in the memories of the community that were passed on through tradition and occurrence. It was understood as a practice that only communal use could validate, an expression of the shared values of the common good.

¹⁹ James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson, "Postcolonial Indigenous Legal Consciousness" (2017) 1 *Indigenous Law Journal* 1 at 55.

²⁰ *Supra* note 12.

structures of a liberalist worldview.²¹ The liberal belief system can be seen as antithetical to the values of many Indigenous peoples and most forms of theatre. This strength demonstrated by the shared resisted refusal and the mutual resurgence by both Indigenous laws and theatre can act as a guide for common law. This strength can guide common law towards a resistance against the dominant liberal power structures that have disconnected it from its life source: story, creativity, and the natural world. The third section of this paper will expand upon this co-resistance by theatre and Indigenous lifeworlds by exploring the metaphorical connection between creation, creating and the *constellations of co-resistance*, as described by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson²². Finally, this paper will explore the elements of law and theatre through the lens of grounded normativity, as defined in Glen Coulthard's *Red Skin, White Masks*. By framing law and theatre in grounded normativity, I will demonstrate the vital connection between the natural world, creativity, story and the law.

As I write this paper, the liberalist worldview under which I have grown has shifted much of the world into a modality of thought that is threatening our collective existence. Climate change is humanity's greatest threat, and it is a consequence of a cultural worldview that has valued infinite growth on a finite planet, employing domination over diversity to do so. The dominant worldview has used the natural world as a mere prop to be used then thrown away in the theatre of human progress. The IPCC 2019 Report on Climate Change acknowledges that "the current geographic spread of the use of land, the large appropriation of multiple ecosystem services and the loss of biodiversity are unprecedented in human history"²³. As a non-Indigenous person, I must situate myself within this work. I do not claim to fully understand Indigenous legal traditions, stories or lifeworlds. I also do not essentialize that all Indigenous cultures, traditions, laws are the same, in fact I implore that the diversity of Indigenous knowledges is required to guide the liberal world towards reconciliation with the Earth. I believe it is of vital importance to diversify our understanding of the world, including the diverse realities contained within in it and the laws that correspond with these realities. As Rob Clifford writes, "it is not just considering a different set of laws or rules. It is a shift in our thinking and approach"²⁴. This shift must include transforming our perception of the language onto which our legal system is built, to see language through diverse lenses, expanding Canada's values to include a polychromatic, pluralistic, imaginative worldview, within which the natural world and stories are valued. As Wade Davis writes, "together the myriad of cultures makes up an intellectual and spiritual web of life that envelops the planet and is every bit as important to the well-being of the planet as is the biological web of life"²⁵. I write this paper because of my belief in the power of theatre, imagination, and creativity to revitalize a connection between the dominant worldview and the natural world. Reconnection and reconciliation with the natural world and the teachings of stories requires non-Indigenous peoples to share the commitment of responsibility to the power of story, diversity, and interconnectivity. Though the theatrical story of human civilization may change, the themes are constant: The only way to protect Mother Earth and all of her diversity,

²¹ Aaron Mills, *supra* note 8.

²² Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

²³ IPCC, 2019: Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, E. Calvo Buendía, V. Masson-Delmotte, H.-O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, P. Zhai, R. Slade, S. Connors, R. van Diemen, M. Ferrat, E. Haughey, S. Luz, S. Neogi, M. Pathak, J. Petzold, J. Portugal Pereira, P. Vyas, E. Huntley, K. Kissick, M. Belkacemi, J. Malley, (eds.)]. In press.

²⁴ Robert YELKÁTTE Clifford, "Listening to Law" (2017) 33:1 Windsor Yearbook Access to Justice 47 at 51-52.

²⁵ Wade Davis, *Wayfinders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Inc, 2009) at 2.

is to uphold the importance, influence and strength of the thousands of languages, stories, laws, realities, and imaginations that have remained akin with the natural world.

The Essence of Theatre

Theatre is a fascinating enigma. It is ephemeral yet everlasting, individual yet collective, respected but undervalued. It has been fundamental to human civilization across all cultures, beliefs, and landscapes since the dawn of imagination.²⁶ Theatre has the power to be political, social, physical, ethical, or spiritual, it is a limitless expression of human consciousness, which has survived to nourish the creative souls of societies around the world. At the heart of theatre is the story, the two are interwoven through time and space. As Eugenio Barba writes, “The essence of theatre does not reside in its aesthetic quality or in its capacity to represent or criticize life. It consists rather in radiating through the rigor of scenic technique an individual and collective form of being. Theatre can be a social cell that embodies an ethos, a set of values that guide the refusals of each of its components”.²⁷ As the world navigates the contagion of liberal dominance, which has separated the individual from the community, creativity from logic, and human from nature,²⁸ we must imagine a refusal to the single story that threatens the existence of our planet and therefore our futures. As Barba notes, “at the origin of a creative path there is often a wound. It indicates the separation from something vital, reevaluating a part of us that remains in exile deep within us”.²⁹ The natural world is wounded, and we have been separated from a vital condition of our being, our Mother Earth. The essence of theatre as an embodied creation of our social, political, creative, collective histories. Theatre has the potential to captain the ship that is currently sinking, leading us back to the diversity of thousands of imagined realities, a future of connectivity, with one another and with the natural world.

Reframing Law Through Constellations of Co-Resistance

By understanding law within the art space, whether it be within the metaphor of theatre, or itself an art form, one can begin to break down the entrenched liberal values within which the Canadian common law is currently caught.³⁰ As James Boyd White writes, “the law in this living sense is not just a set of rules or institutions, but an activity of the mind and imagination – a form of life – that has the value of justice at its heart.”³¹ At its deepest level, law is imagination. It is an art that frames our understanding of how to live justly in the world.³² However, throughout Canadian history, *justice* has had multiple stories and consequences for different people. State practices have been used to undermine rather than affirm Indigenous legal orders, framing law within a paradigm of “denying the existence, relevance, and legitimacy of Indigenous legal orders”³³. This has

²⁶ Joshua Abrams, “State of the Organizations: Thoughts on the Importance of Theatre Education in 2020” (2021) 31:1 Theatre Topics 1.

²⁷ Eugenio Barba, “The Essence of Theatre” (2002) 46:3 TDR/The Drama Review 12 at 16.

²⁸ Wade Davis, *supra* note 24.

²⁹ Eugenio Barba, *supra* note 26 at 18.

³⁰ Mark D Walters, “The Emergence of Indigenous Rights Law in Canada” in Benjamin J Richardson, Shin Imai & Kent McNeil, eds, *Indigenous Peoples and the Law* (Portland: Hart Publishing, 2009).

³¹ James Boyd White, *supra* note 13 at 122.

³² John Borrows, *supra* note 16.

³³ Minnawaanagogiizhigook (Dawnis Kennedy) “Reconciliation without Respect? Section 35 and Indigenous Legal Orders” in *Indigenous Legal Traditions* at 81.

enveloped common law in colonial law and framed the concept of *justice* as one which disrespects the potential for pluralism, purports the theft of land assimilates Indigenous lifeworlds and legal orders. As Bobbi Sykes asks, why has the concept of justice become the rationale for white domination of Indigenous peoples?³⁴ It is as if common law, the nation-state and their interpretation of justice are centre stage, encompassed by a single spotlight, leaving all other legal orders and their encounters with justice, hidden in darkness. Therefore, the concept of justice and the understanding of law must be reframed. As Tuhiwai Smith writes, “reframing occurs where Indigenous people resist being boxed and labelled according to categories which do not fit”³⁵. The current Canadian common law and its concept of justice do not fit. Common law is being used to perpetuate colonization, which rejects the true meaning of justice. Therefore, I connect theatre with Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s concepts of co-resistance, to reframe common law as a form of imagination that will refuse “the forces of mindless empire and control, [imagining] newness of thought, creativity and surprise, the introduction into the world of power an unrecognized voice”.³⁶

Just like stars, lights of the theatre illuminate knowledge. As Simpson writes, “collections of stars within Nishnaabeg thought are beacons of light that work together to create doorways into other worlds. On a conceptual level, they work together to reveal theory, story and knowing”.³⁷ Like stars and constellations, theatre lights may guide the audience towards an accentuated spotlight of creativity, or they may work together to bring light to the entire stage, highlighting the entire story. Like stars and constellations, theatre lights “act as conceptual doorways that return us to our core essence”,³⁸ casting light upon acts of creation, acts of creativity that spotlight the essence of law, which, in essence, is learning how we situate ourselves within relation to each other, to land, to time and to all creation. Simpson describes how when we look at stars, we are seeing the past, by the time we see the light of a star, it has already vanished.³⁹ The constellations of light in a theatre space illuminate the past, present, and future, transporting the collective into a creative space that allows for a reimagining of the world and our relationships within it.

The constellation of light is a necessary aspect of theatre, highlighting the interrelatedness of all things, acting as a metaphor for the interrelatedness between creativity, meaning, relationship and continuity⁴⁰ The practice of creativity and art-making as constellations of meaning, constellations of resistance, have been used by Indigenous communities for millennia, to understand reality, community and more recently, to resist colonial forces.⁴¹ As Jarrett Martineau writes, “at its core, Indigenous art reaffirms our relationality with the dynamism of all creation. Artmaking enables Indigenous people to intervene into dominant colonial discourses, histories and regimes of colonial representation that have normalized our dispossession. By altering the terrain of our perceptual experience, creativity reconfigures not only given distributions of the sensible, but our relationships to place, space and time”.⁴² With its interrelated elements of light, story, community and resistance, theatre offers a space for innovation for the rule of law, a reframing of legal structures towards the

³⁴ Roberta B. Sykes, *Black Majority* (Melbourne: Hudson Publishing, 1989) at 146.

³⁵ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed (London: Zed Books, 2012) at 154.

³⁶ James Boyd White, *supra* note 13 at 103.

³⁷ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017) at 212.

³⁸ *Ibid.* at 212.

³⁹ *Ibid.* at 218.

⁴⁰ Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011).

⁴¹ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2011).

⁴² Jarrett Martineau, “Creative Combat: Indigenous Art, Resurgence, and Decolonization” (Doctor of Philosophy: University of Victoria, 2015) [unpublished].

opportunity for legal pluralism in Canada. As Martineau observes, “new worlds demand new stories, and Indigenous creativity and storytelling offer a primary means through which to mobilize resurgent art-making within decolonial struggle”.⁴³ Creativity is a foundational aspect of Indigenous culture and it is interwoven with Indigenous legal traditions.⁴⁴ It is also foundational to storytelling and to theatre. Indigenous laws and theatre can re-awaken common law’s creativity, affirming its necessity as a collective practice in the creation of laws. Theatre has the potential to connect creativity with diverse legal structures in meaningful ways, rebuilding collective responsibilities of equal respect, so legal pluralism may become a creative expression, “an embodied practice that is lived and expressed within a dynamic continuum of existence”.⁴⁵

The Liberal Worldview and its Attack on Theatre and Indigenous Laws

The liberalist worldview is a modern extension of imperialism, and colonialism has been an accessory to both.⁴⁶ As Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes, “Imperialism frames the indigenous experience. Imperialism and colonialism brought complete disorder to colonized peoples, disconnecting them from their histories, their landscapes, their languages, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world.”⁴⁷ These structures have attempted to force a set of values upon the diversity of the world, values that are built upon control, exploitation, measurement, reason, never-ending “progress”, and individual freedom; values that are antithetical to Indigenous lifeworlds.⁴⁸ Throughout history, the natural world designs the foundations of stories and stories delineate laws. However, imperialism used colonialism to perform a singular story of what is deemed real, significant, and valuable; as Gordon Christie writes, “given that the liberal cannot easily countenance forcing individuals or groups to change their way, mechanisms must be put in place within these Indigenous societies that “gently” encourage movement towards more liberal environments. This transpires, however, through the exercise of Crown power.”⁴⁹ One of these mechanisms was an attack on the significance of story, notably within the medium of theatre. Theatre’s cultural value became tied to its economic value, caught within a liberal ideology of necessary, continual economic growth.⁵⁰ As Barba writes, “All forms of theatre, even under the most favorable conditions, are subject to constraints: time, money, space. These constraints decide the rules of the game and mark the boundaries of what is possible”.⁵¹ The spectator became a consumer, and theatre and its stories became an economic liability. The liberal paradigm attempted to reduce story to fiction, stripping stories of their worth, truth and essence. As Johnny Mack describes, “the presence of imperialism in this plurality cultivates grounds that encourage certain stories to thrive

⁴³ *Ibid.* at 12.

⁴⁴ Umeek/E. Richard Atleo, *Tsavalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).

⁴⁵ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “I am Not a Nation-State”, *Indigenous Nationhood Movement* (November 06, 2013) <<http://nationrising.org/i-am-not-a-nation-state/>>.

⁴⁶ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *supra* note 34.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* at 20 & 29.

⁴⁸ Aaron Mills, *supra* note 8.

⁴⁹ Gordon Christie, *supra* note 11 at 312.

⁵⁰ Janelle Reinelt, “What UK Spectators Know: Understanding How We Come to Value Theatre” (2014) 66:3 *Theatre Journal* 337.

⁵¹ Eugenio Barba, *supra* note 26.

and choke life out of their competition.”⁵² This imperial shift in value towards story was a direct undermining of Indigenous cultures, for stories were used to instill Indigenous law, truth, and ways of knowing.⁵³ Intricately bound to one another,⁵⁴ stories, the natural world and the common law became disconnected by liberal forces in order to advance imperial power over other ways of knowing. As Asch et al. explain, within Indigenous cultures, stories were used to represent creative relationships depicting “the earth’s teachings. They represent the land waking up. These characters encourage relationships, and their interactions and tensions help us understand ourselves as human beings in deeper ways.”⁵⁵ Indigenous knowledges, the natural world and theatre were caught within the imperial maelstrom that was attempting to eradicate the value of culture, story and land.

Despite this, theatre has survived. Not only that, but theatre also continues to flourish, bringing together community in a collective imagining of new and old possibilities. Both Indigenous cultures and theatre have refused the singular story of imperialism, rejecting its attempts of assimilation. As Perry Shawana writes, “once considered dead or dying, Indigenous legal regimes have re-emerged as a vibrant and integral aspect of Indigenous desires for autonomy and self-determination.”⁵⁶ Because common law is currently ensnared within the jaws of the liberal regime, theatre can act as an example of strength, a precedent for defiance against a single story. Theatre can also create space for working towards a pluralistic society in Canada, holding common law and Indigenous laws on equal footing, operating side by side, embracing their independence and interdependence.⁵⁷ Common law and Indigenous laws can use theatre as a space to co-exist as independent systems, each “capable of existing in its own rights, while at the same time each open to incorporating new ideas and knowledge from the other”⁵⁸ Theatre can create space for the transmission of laws, the common law acting as audience, actively listening towards a movement of reconciliation and resurgence, moving towards a truly pluralistic society. The movement towards legal pluralism in Canada can use theatre as not only a medium, through the transmission of laws, stories, and collective space, but theatre can be a metaphor for what pluralism should look like. Just as a piece of theatre requires an audience, the audience requires a story. But not a single story, as imperialism has endeavoured to construct, but a diversity of stories that spread across time, cultures, lifeworlds, environments and relationships.

Theatre, Law, and Grounded Normativity

Theatre is a metaphorical demonstration of the interrelatedness of all things. Without an audience, there is no creation; without performers, there is no meaning; without light, there is no focus; without stories, there is no diversity. We return, therefore to the theatre located beneath the stars, nestled between the trees, set within the natural world. How do theatre, law and the natural world relate to one another? They relate through their intimate, indivisible connection: the natural

⁵² Johnny Mack, “Hoquotist: Reorienting through Storied Practice” in Hester Lessard, Rebecca Johnson & Jeremy Webber, Eds, *Storied Communities: Narratives of Contact and Arrival in Constituting Political Community*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011) at 302.

⁵³ Val Napoleon, Catherine E Bell, Eds, *First Nations Cultural Heritage and Law: Case Studies, Voices and Perspectives* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2008).

⁵⁴ Hester Lessard, *supra* note 14.

⁵⁵ Michael Asch, James Tully & John Borrows, eds, *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-settler Relations and Earth Teachings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018) at viii-ix.

⁵⁶ Perry Shawana, “Legal Processes, Pluralism in Canadian Jurisprudence, and the Governance of Carrier Medicine Knowledge” in Law Commission of Canada, Ed, *Indigenous Legal Traditions* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

⁵⁷ *Ibid* at 121-123.

⁵⁸ *Ibid* at 123.

world shapes stories and stories guide law. All three are relational, they envision relationships bound by responsibilities, connected through *grounded normativity*.⁵⁹ As Coulthard explains, we are (or should be) “deeply informed by what the land as a mode of reciprocal relationship ought to teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and our surroundings in a respectful, non-dominating and nonexploitative way. The ethical framework provided by these place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge is what I call grounded normativity”.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, when liberal thought turned land into property, the connection between land, stories and law was damaged.⁶¹ Grounded normativity, for those caught within the liberal doctrine, was a knowledge that was distorted by the structures of the Nation State, disconnecting creativity, law, and land. As Radha D’Souza writes, “Land is, quintessentially, a relationship. Land is not a ‘thing’. It is a bond that ties people to nature and to each other. Historically, rights transformed places into property. It transformed a relationship into a thing, a commodity”.⁶² Theatre as a medium has the potential to reconnect these relationships through its embodied expression of stories and the elements that are necessary for its creation, such as relationship, convergence, diversity, content, and imagination. As Tuhiwai Smith observes, creativity can reframe the liberal worldview. Imagination can “unleash the creative spirit as a way of reimagining the world and our position within the world”.⁶³ Theatre can create space for new potential, but can also describe past wrongs, as delineated by the natural world.⁶⁴ Land presents relationships, both good and bad, because land *is* a relationship. Land also communicates creativity, constantly demonstrating acts of creation amidst interdependence, responsibilities, and reciprocity.⁶⁵ Laws flow from these connections and creations, laws are *performed* by the Earth. As Borrows explains, “aside from sacred sources, Indigenous peoples also find and develop law from observations of the physical world around them. When considering laws from this source, it is often necessary to understand how the earth maintains functions that benefit us and all other beings”.⁶⁶ Therefore, Indigenous laws can guide common law towards a reframing of its relationship with the natural world, reconnecting the animacy of the natural world and disconnecting property from land. This may then guide common law back towards its core essence of imagination, creativity and story, guided by the relationships of the natural world, reconnected to grounded normativity.

Conclusion

Some may still question the connection between theatre, law and the natural world. This paper attempts to illustrate the critical truth that we are all intimately connected “within a dynamic continuum of existence”⁶⁷, to which these three elements are connected. The dominant liberal worldview has attempted to distort this understanding by using mechanisms, like the common law,

⁵⁹ Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

⁶⁰ *Ibid* at 60.

⁶¹ Robert J Miller et al, *Discovering Indigenous Lands: The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁶² Radha D’Souza, *What’s Wrong with Rights?* (London: Pluto Press, 2018) at 5.

⁶³ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *supra* note 34 at 201.

⁶⁴ Laurie Anne Whitt et al, “Belonging to Land: Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the Natural World” (2001) 26:2 Oklahoma City University Law Review 701.

⁶⁵ Jaskiran Dhillon, “Notes on Becoming a Comrade: Indigenous Women, Leadership, and Movement(s) for Decolonization” (2019) *American Indian Culture & Research Journal* 43:3 41.

⁶⁶ John Borrows, *supra* note 16 at 28.

⁶⁷ Jarrett Martineau, “Creative Combat: Indigenous Art, Resurgence, and Decolonization” (Doctor of Philosophy: University of Victoria, 2015) [unpublished] at 30.

to disconnect the human and non-human worlds, which in turn has endangered our collective existence. The liberal worldview has attacked the influence of creativity and story in order to spotlight a single story; as Thomas Berry observes, “we are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story... this story presents the universe as a random sequence of physical and biological interactions with no inherent meaning, the society supported by this vision has no adequate way of identifying any spiritual or moral values”.⁶⁸ This liberal story has used legal systems to alter values and misinterpret justice, as Gordon Christie writes, “these systems go into structuring how people *understand* their lives (how they ought to act – “normalized” normative senses of what is correct and incorrect behaviour), and how they understand their interactions with others, with neighbouring peoples, non-humans, the lands, waters, and the rest of the natural world”.⁶⁹

However, the true essence of law is the imaginative reality of spiritual and moral values, it is the living embodiment of *justice*, taught by the natural world and grounded in creativity. Common law must be reframed in order to restore its purpose of guiding justice, as Leanne Betasomasake Simpson writes, “justice” to me... means the return of land, the regeneration of Indigenous political, educational, and knowledge systems, the rehabilitation of the natural world, and the destruction of white supremacy, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy”.⁷⁰ Theatre can reconnect law to its essential nature, which is the creative, imaginative practice of how to live in a good way through relational responsibilities.⁷¹ Theatre is a multifaceted space for recovering common law from the stronghold of the liberal worldview, but also as a path towards creating legal pluralism in Canada. Theatre can function as an example of fortitude, as it has survived the attacks of colonial powers and continues to show possibilities for resistance, continuing to challenge the domination of a single story, having survived, and thrived through thousands of years of history. As Barba describes, “our ancestors gave the example. They approached theatre as one enters the desert: to encounter themselves, but also to found a place different from all others, a fortress with walls of wind where new rules of life could be established”.⁷² Theatre is a place different from all others, it is a metaphorical paradigm that manifests the interrelatedness of all things. Like life itself, theatre is only possible through a relational responsibility to all elements - space, light, darkness, spectators, performers, creativity, imagination, stories. This relational responsibility is also a responsibility to the imagining of new rules of life, new laws, new stories.

Stories are fundamental to theatre and stories act as an imaginative mode of creation that should continue to guide law.⁷³ Therefore, theatre can provide a collective space for (reformed) common law and Indigenous laws to co-exist within complementary, independent systems of affirmation, valuing the diversity of stories to guide just, creative relationships amongst each other and the natural world. As Borrows writes, “When cultures, customs, symbols and traditions of Indigenous peoples form part of Canadian law, this helps to facilitate two kinds of reconciliation: with the earth, and between humans who occupy particular places on that earth”.⁷⁴ Theatre, as the essence of story, is a collective mode of imaginative creation that has the power to reconnect law to

⁶⁸ Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books: 1990) at 123.

⁶⁹ Gordon Christie *supra* note 11 at 321.

⁷⁰ John Borrows, *Drawing Out Law: A Spirit's Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

⁷¹ John Borrows, “Seven Gifts: Revitalizing Living Laws Through Indigenous Legal Practice” (2016) 2:1 Lakehead Law Journal 2.

⁷² Eugenio Barba, *supra* note 26 at 28.

⁷³ Aaron James Mills (Waabishki Ma'iingan), *Miinigowizhwin: All That Has Been Given for Living Well Together One Vision of Anishinaabe Constitutionalism* (PhD, Thesis, University of Victoria, Faculty of Law, 2019) [unpublished].

⁷⁴ John Borrows, “Earth-Bound: Indigenous Resurgence and Environmental Reconciliation” in Michael Asch, James Tully & John Borrows, eds, *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-settler Relations and Earth Teachings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018) at 60.

its foundation of relational justice. Theatre is the soul of a society, the land is its foundation, stories are the medium and laws are the outcome.

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Wade Davis, *Wayfinders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Inc, 2009) at 2.

Umeek/E. Richard Atleo, *Tsanalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).



A surreal, colorful landscape with a yellow text box containing the text "close encounters". The scene is a vibrant, abstract landscape with a dark, swirling foreground in shades of blue and green, transitioning into a bright, glowing horizon line. Above the horizon, the sky is a mix of red, orange, and blue, with a dark, textured upper section. The overall composition is dynamic and visually striking, with a strong sense of depth and movement. The text "close encounters" is centered in a bold, black, sans-serif font within a bright yellow rectangular box.

close encounters

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Close Encounters

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ABSTRACT: *Close Encounters* is an experience of proximity and distance, of the self and the Other, of the human and the non-human, of familiarity and strangeness, of possibility and impossibility. In short, it is an experience of experience. *Close Encounters* is a compilation of writings and images developed through a phenomenological practice involving a deliberate, prolonged study of technological objects as part of a UBC graduate course in the fall of 2022. Drawing on the work of Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Bernard Stiegler, Don Ihde, and Max van Manen, our phenomenological practice created an opportunity for each member of the class to dwell within the nuances and complexities of our embodied experiences with our technological objects. Our writings that came from this experience, along with unique images created with Midjourney's AI image generator, are presented in this compilation. We hope experiencing *Close Encounters* helps create openings for new perceptions of the ordinary, new questions about meaning, and new insights into the world.

KEYWORDS: *phenomenology; technology; cultural objects; artificial intelligence;*

“Cyborgs are beings with organic and inorganic parts. Human cyborgs are humans equipped with mechanical, electronic, and robotic parts. But from a Stieglerian technics point of view, cyborgs should not be seen as humans outfitted with technological contraptions—caricatures of human ontology. Rather, technology is the condition of human evolution and existence. So, humans have always been cyborgs in the sense of being wound up with technology. But humans are organic and inorganic in an even more profoundly evolutionary sense.

Humans do not just create technology; they are in turn created by technology.

Their evolving biology and intelligence are creations of technology just as much as technology is their own creation. Therefore, Stiegler wants to correct Heidegger. It is not just the being of being that has been forgotten by philosophy, but the technics of being: technics is the fundamental ontology of humans.”

– Max van Manen, 2014, p. 184

Preface

I use the pen, I make the mark, but the pen is also using me.
- Don Ihde, 2017

Close Encounters is an experience of proximity and distance, of the self and the Other, of the human and the non-human, of familiarity and strangeness, of possibility and impossibility. In short, it is an experience of experience. It is an invitation for you to join us in the wonder of the everyday, in the “unwilled willingness to meet what is utterly strange in what is most familiar” (van Manen, 2014, p. 223).

Close Encounters is a compilation of writings and images developed through a phenomenological practice as part of Dr. Barbara Weber’s graduate seminar course, EPSE 604: Phenomenology in Practice, at the University of British Columbia in the fall of 2022. I was a student in this course. The course was designed to familiarize us with phenomenology and to expand and enrich our approaches to education, research, and life. As part of the course, each student in the class designed and facilitated a phenomenological practice activity. These activities, such as riding a bus to nowhere, moving our bodies in tune with Japanese radio calisthenics, and eating oranges as we never had before, opened doors to the wonder of the ordinary, fostering the sensitization of our perceptions. When it was my turn to lead the class in a phenomenological practice, I designed an opportunity for the deliberate, prolonged study with technological objects, described in detail below, which led to the creation of *Close Encounters*.

This preface serves as a manual of sorts. A manual, from the Latin *manus*, meaning hand, is a small book typically providing instructions or guidance. The word manual is also used to describe work done by hand and not by machine (Merriam-Webster, 2022a). This preface is a manual in that it aims to provide just enough information to guide you through our compilation. But is it a manual manual? Is this small book of writing, this preface you are reading right now, done by hand or machine? In our postdigital age (Jandrić et al., 2018), a time of messiness and uncertainty, of blurred boundaries between analog and digital, of technological and non-technological, what does it mean to do work by hand? Certainly, I am typing these words, but is my laptop a tool or a collaborator? I misspell a word; the software program automatically fixes it. I get stuck in my phrasing; a simple right click offers a list of suggestions. Would I have come to these words on my own? My fingers move automatically on the keyboard, touch typing their way through thoughts and ideas. Where does my body end and the machine begin? And does it matter? Questions such as these form the foundations of my Ph. D. research as a Media and Technology Studies Education scholar, as well as the foundations of the phenomenological practice that led to the creation of *Close Encounters*.

In the following, I provide a brief overview of phenomenology and the specific ideas related to phenomenology of technology that informed my design of our in-class phenomenological practice activity. Next, I explain the in-class activity in detail, then describe the creation of this compilation. Finally, I introduce the organization of this compilation and send you on your way.

Phenomenological Inspirations

Phenomenology marks both a turn from and an expansion of traditional philosophical study. Rather than attempting to reason one’s way logically and rationally through life, phenomenology offers openings for pushing into complexity, diving into the depths of experiences, and developing an attunement to the world (van Manen, 2014). Phenomenology shifts the focus from cognition to perception, challenging scientific approaches to meaning making. As Max van Manen (2014)

explained, phenomenology “is more a method of questioning than answering, realizing that insights come to us in that mode of musing, reflective questioning, and being obsessed with sources and meanings of lived meaning” (p. 27).

The phenomenological practice that led to the creation of *Close Encounters* was inspired by the notions of phenomenological reduction, embodiment, and lived experience. The phenomenological reduction is a way of bracketing assumptions and theories, and suspending presumptions, to push through the limits of our concepts (van Manen, 2014). Though phenomenological reduction can help us get closer to direct descriptions of experiences, we can never fully break free from the “prison house of language” (Henriques, 2010, p. 83). As the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2012) put it, “the most important lesson of the reduction is the impossibility of a complete reduction” (p. lxxvii). Nevertheless, phenomenological reduction can bring us closer to disclosing the subtleties and intricacies of experience. Embodiment connotes the knowledge of the body and the significance of sensory perception. Merleau-Ponty (2012) described how our bodies are our intermediaries through which we experience the world, writing, “the thing can never be separated from someone who perceives it; nor can it ever actually be in itself because its articulations are the very ones of our existence” (p. 334). Both the phenomenological reduction and embodiment help us take a reflective view of our lived experiences (van Manen, 2014). Simply put, lived experiences are our experiences as we live through them. Phenomenology provides opportunities for returning to these experiences, examining them, and dwelling within their nuances and complexities. In doing so, we can find meaning and wonder.

Of particular relevance to *Close Encounters* are Merleau-Ponty’s (2012) ideas about cultural objects. Cultural objects are more than the physical objects of culture, but extend to ideas, language, and even “the other’s body as the bearer of a behaviour” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 364). Cultural objects can also make others possible to us while simultaneously leading to a sense of alienation. As Merleau-Ponty (2012) explained,

“In the cultural object, I experience the near presence of others under a veil of anonymity. One uses the pipe for smoking, the spoon for eating, or the bell for summoning, and the perception of a cultural world could be verified through the perception of a human act and of another [hu]man.” (p. 363)

Cultural objects, therefore, suggest the Other and allude to one’s cultural situatedness, but also elucidate the inherent distance of our perceptions. Cultural objects are also means of disclosure. For example, the cane of a blind person can transform into an extension of the body. As Merleau-Ponty (2012) illustrated, over time a blind person’s cane “ceases to be an object ... it increases the scope and the radius of the act of touching and [becomes] analogous to a gaze” (p. 144).

Phenomenology of Technology

The blind person’s cane in Merleau-Ponty’s example above is a type of technology. The word ‘technology’ is commonly used to refer to digital technologies, such as smartphones and laptops, or industrial technologies, such as factory robotics. A less common but still widely understood use of ‘technology’ has to do with tools and instruments, such as a hammer or a harmonica, as well as inventions, like the wheel. However, technology also has a deeper, more significant meaning in the context of *Close Encounters*. The word technology can be traced to the Greek words *téchnē* – meaning art, craft, or the method of engaging in art or craft – and *logos* – meaning word, discourse, reason, or plan (Merriam-Webster, 2022b). Technology, therefore, can be used to mean the way in which art is accomplished, as well as the writing or study of our ways of being-in-the-world through art.

The phenomenologist Martin Heidegger (1977) explained that we often accept an instrumental definition of technology as a means to an end and as a human activity. This definition

guides us to the idea that we are meant to master technology, to use it to carry out our will. Heidegger, however, posited that technology is not merely instrumentalist, but is a “way of revealing” (p. 12). This revealing, he went on to explain, is a provocation, a way of challenging or directing nature to produce. Technology as revealing, therefore, creates an enframing – a Gestell. This has led to a way of thinking in which everything, including humans, is understood as raw material (Huttunen & Kakkori, 2022).

Building on and critiquing Heidegger’s ideas, Bernard Stiegler drew from an interpretation of the myth of Prometheus to create a technogenic phenomenology (van Manen, 2014), which he developed in his trilogy *Technics and Time*. In the Prometheus myth, Zeus has molded all life forms and has assigned Prometheus the task of giving them features that will help them cope with the world before bringing them to life. Epimetheus, Prometheus’ brother, begged him to do the job in his stead, and Prometheus agreed. Being a bit vapid, Epimetheus inadvertently used up all the adaptive features, such as sharp claws to catch prey or speed to flee from predators, before reaching the final animal: humans. When Prometheus realized Epimetheus had left humans without any way to fend for themselves, he knew he had to give them something to prevent their immediate demise, so he stole fire from the gods. From fire, Prometheus knew humans could not only gather warmth but also create tools. According to Stiegler’s (1998) interpretation, the myth of Prometheus shows us that humans and technology have always been bound up together; without technology, we are without origin. Though Stiegler accepted Heidegger’s views of technology as a Gestell, he saw humans and technology as co-constitutive. From a “Stieglerian technics point of view ... technology is the condition of human evolution and existence” (van Manen, 2014, p. 184).

Another philosopher whose work has centred around phenomenology of technology is Don Ihde. Ihde’s technoscience postphenomenology outlined four types of human-technology relations: embodiment, hermeneutic, alterity, and background (van Manen, 2014). Ihde’s conception of embodiment relations built on the ideas pertaining to embodiment and cultural objects developed by Merleau-Ponty (2012), though Ihde (2010) argued that Merleau-Ponty was too indirect about technologies. Embodiment relations as defined by Ihde (1993) concern technological artifacts that we depend on so thoroughly that they have become part of us, such as eyeglasses. Hermeneutic relations describe our relations with technologies like thermometers that give us representations of the world. Alterity relations concern technologies that take on a state of otherness through the way we think of them. For example, smartphones have, for many people, become anthropomorphic extensions of the self (Park & Kaye, 2019). Finally, background relations describe those in which technologies, such as electrical wiring, have become so commonplace that we no longer notice or think about them at all. Ihde’s (2010) main point in elucidating these four types of relations is to show that technology cannot be understood in a vacuum but is always conceived through our experiences and relations.

Phenomenology in Practice: *Close Encounters*

In designing the in-class phenomenological practice that led to the creation of *Close Encounters*, I considered the various perspectives regarding phenomenology of technology described above as well as the questions mentioned in the introduction to this preface. I was especially fascinated with Stiegler’s reinterpretation of the Prometheus myth, and his ideas that without technology, humans would not exist. Ihde’s human-technology relations – in particular, his extension of Merleau-Ponty’s ideas concerning embodiment – also stood out as intriguing in light of our contemporary fixation with wearable sensors and computing devices. Though I was enthralled with these ideas, I was not sure if my classmates, all of whom were pursuing research in areas other than Media and Technology Studies Education, would be as interested in them as I was. Rather than

focusing on digital technologies, with their complex processes hidden behind smooth interfaces, I decided to design a phenomenological practice related to the close study of everyday technological objects. Ever wary of concepts, I intentionally avoided using the word technology when asking my classmates to bring an object to class for this practice, worried the term would constrain their choices. Instead, I requested that they bring objects that were functional, meaningful, and belonged to each of them personally.

For the in-class practice, each of us spent 10 minutes silently observing and writing descriptions of our objects. Writing, as van Manen (2014) explained, can bring our “experiences into being as experiences because we name and describe them” (p. 35). Through the phenomenological reduction and embodied attunement, we pushed into our experiences as we tried to perceive our familiar objects anew. After the 10 minutes had passed, we traded objects with a partner. With this trade, each of us had in our hands something entirely unknown. In encountering the object of another, we were not only experiencing the object, but were experiencing a means of making the other possible (Merleau-Ponty, 2012). After writing about this unfamiliar object for another 10 minutes, we came together as a group to discuss our experiences.

To push us even further, I then, with permission, collected and compiled our writing. I paired texts by object rather than by author, as I was interested in how the same object could be disclosed differently depending on one’s relation to it. For each pair, I selected words and phrases from the writings that stood out as particularly captivating, combined them together, and fed them into the Midjourney AI image generator. AI image generation tools like Midjourney’s use a machine learning algorithm trained on a large database to produce unique images from text prompts (Islam, 2022). Essentially, the Midjourney tool draws from an immense collection of language and images to discover how we have visually represented our concepts throughout history, and then uses this knowledge to create a new image based on specific textual input. After trying out combinations of phrases from the paired writings about each object, I selected images that best captured the sensations of the writings. I chose to include AI as a co-creator of our compilation as a way of offering another viewpoint on each of the objects; a viewpoint that is simultaneously an abstraction and a concretization of the meanings disclosed through our study. Midjourney’s AI image generation tool is both human and non-human; it was created by humans, its algorithm relies on data generated by humans, yet it does things in a way humans cannot do. To paraphrase Ihde (2017), we use AI, we give it the commands, but it is also using us. Introducing AI as a co-creator pushed us into the uncanny valley of the postdigital and created openings for further questioning, wandering, and wondering.

Organization of *Close Encounters*

Close Encounters is a collective collaboration born from the phenomenological practices described above. After this preface, you will find an alphabetical list of the compilation’s creators, followed by the body of the compilation. Paired texts describing the same object, one written by the owner of the object and the other by a classmate, are included with a corresponding image. There are also full-page images interspersed throughout the compilation that were created by combining phrases from multiple writings about different objects, bringing together our encounters and capturing the atmosphere of our conversations.

You will likely notice that the pages do not have titles and the names of the objects are not mentioned in the writings. This was a deliberate decision and is meant to contribute to the sense of wonder we hoped to create. We do, however, recognize that this approach may skirt the line between wonder and frustration for some readers, so we have included a list of our object participants as an appendix. We encourage you to wait until you have absorbed the writings and

images in the body of our compilation before taking a peek at this list. Or you may wish to ignore the list altogether, preferring to dwell in the mystery. The choice is yours.

An Offering

Most importantly, *Close Encounters* is our offering to you. In creating this compilation together, each of us have undoubtedly deepened and enriched our ways of knowing and being. We hope experiencing it helps create openings for new perceptions of the ordinary, new questions about meaning, and new insights into the world.

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1

The dial in the front is covered in transparent plastic, its round perimeter serrated, you can turn it around to adjust the speed of the clicks. Turning it produces a crackling noise, like the one heard when winding an analogue clock. It fits perfectly within my hand, and also has a stand that allows me to place it on the table in front of me. There are two types of click sounds it produces, one is an Bb tone, and another is a lower pitch A, which I prefer, since it sounds less digital and closer to an analogue metronome (although still identifiably digital in timbre). There is also a volume button that you can use to increase and decrease the loudness of the clicks.

A black and polished branded box. Smooth, static, and stable. Balanced by thin, weak, fragile detachable feet. Covered by interconnected white, silver, and red wheels. Slender and dense. Overwhelmingly accompanied by digits and, on occasions, signs. By unfamiliar words, rhythms, needs, and styles. Secret doors, holes, and switches, waiting to be revealed. A small, pocket-sized, hand-held, and quiet artifact. Ready to enjoy loudness.



2

I turn and shake trying to observe everything about it, but nothing about what I knew before. The sound of water against its metallic insides catapults me back into the reality of seeing a water bottle. I've seen them drink out of it. I know on a surface level its purpose is hydration, and yet this silver metallic bottle with its brand 'hydro

flask' subtly, classily displayed in black writing on the on the black lid is one of a kind. I can feel scratches on the handle. Indentations on the body of the bottle signalling this water bottle has been through some physical ordeal. Whether repeatedly dropped or tossed into bags - it seems used but loved and sturdy. Adorning the bottle are a plethora of colourful stickers that I can attempt to drag meaning from. A sticker with hearts that says 'best friend' that makes me think of my best friend, should I get her matching stickers? There's a pink sticker overlapping it - suggesting it's newer. The amount of wear in a sticker and its placement suggests the existence of a calendar or timeline I can just attempt to decipher. One sticker details a body with breasts and long hair being used as a bridge. Cars drive over it and breast shape mountains adorn the horizon. In small writing the url of the store www.menom.store and what I



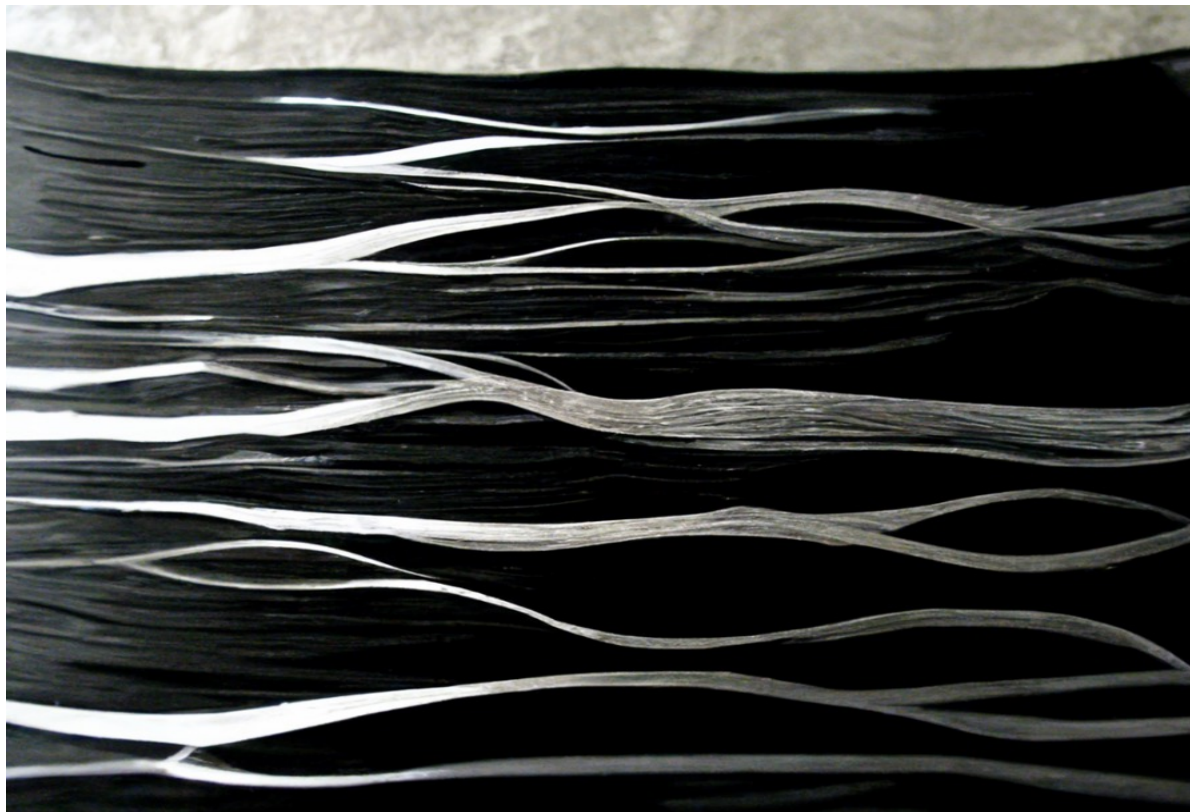
assume are social media handles written on it. I first assumed Instagram, then questioned my judgement and wrote social media. Now I consider what I would have thought if I were unaware of the use of the '@' sign as an indicator of a social media username. "We have always existed" scrawled in white text over a pastel rainbow shape calls my attention from the sticker below. A Gemini sticker - I wonder if the owner of the bottle was born in June or July - so many stickers that for me serve as a hopeful window into their life - but what does it mean for them?

I drink from this. It offers hydration, and occasionally, caffeination. I flick the cap open. I take a long sip. In contrast to my old one, the 'loud' one, it makes VERY LITTLE NOISE, which is why my dear friend has gifted this to me. Although there is an exception: when I drop it, which is not infrequently, it makes a deep, echoing clang (clang, clang, clang) as it hits the ground. Stickers accompanied this gift as well: a pineapple welcoming me to my new home and country, the constellation of astrological sun sign, and two hearts above the words Best Friends. I take a sip and it feels like home. Since then, many more stickers adorned the curves of this cylinder: stay radical! We have always existed! A rainbow flag, and a tadpole-looking-creature holding a fish-shaped balloon (or is it a fish floating, tethered by a balloon-like string?) I check the long-neglected bottom of the object, which I rarely see, but flash to anyone in front of me when I take a drink. Now here is a sticker that I have never

considered, yet it tells me exactly what this object “is”: a 32OZ WIDE MOUTH W/
STRAW LID, GRAPHITE, 32oz (946mL) with bar code and all. To me, it is much
more.

3

It rests in my hand: smooth but determined. There is no question, no openness, but
an almost impatient directedness. And yet the actual point touching the page is so
small and fragile. How odd to make such a big thing for such a minuscule point of
contact. It says “Japan” and I think of a purist’s aesthetics - no excess, no redundancy.
Made for fragile hands, a pen is to an idea like a fishing rod is to a whale.



Cold steel, though warm to touch, with reliable lead forever sharpened. Made in
Japan, it crossed many seas to shine in tests of stress since 1999— I assure you, it is
not quick to snap. Stolen from my brother’s room as payback, it patiently willed,
migrating to now make its debut. Weightlessly guiding fingers, with precision, to the
most intuitive grip. With luck that is refillable, this is superstition— rid me of
perfectionism.



This object is about fifteen centimeters long. Half of it is made of a plastic cylinder-shaped piece with about one-and-a-half-centimeter diameter. This cylinder-shaped piece is yellow and is carved in four areas and raised in four areas between the engraved sections. The other half of the object is made of a long metal piece with about 0.5 cm diameter and a pointy end that is carved in four places. A hexagon cylinder-shape piece connects the yellow plastic part of the object to the metal part. This piece is made of a black rigid plastic material with one centimetre diameter.

Mustard yellow handle, yellow like French's mustard. The handle is short, smaller than the width of an adult hand in length; it sits still on the



table. There are four ribs on the handle that make it have an effective square posture without being square. The end is like a half-sphere. The ribs stop about an inch from the end of the handle; there is a small cylindrical portion for that inch with a rounded neck bump. The other end is metal. The yellow end is plastic. Between the yellow end and the metal end there is a black section of about an inch that is cylindrical. The hexagon is not aligned neatly with the square ribs but is offset. The black section is smaller in diameter than the yellow section. The metal section is yet again smaller. The small metal cylinder is smooth and terminated in a four-sided point. Between the four-sided edges, there are four indentations in the metal, causing it to have a star-like appearance when pointed toward the eye. The point is not very sharp but is blunted.

He's flat. Like Stanley, but more solid. Stanley would blow over in a gust of wind. This fella, however, is equipped to handle a storm. Even if I were to smack him on the table, he'd probably be okay. I wonder, would he or the table become dented? The answer to that question though, has nothing to do with his purpose. Unlike us, he's here on this planet for one purpose.

Or is he? The original concept of this item was for one thing. But this is some kind of spin off. The spinnage-offing of the original design has provided a plethora of bonus purposes. Now he is him, or at least he is a 'him' through my assumptions. He brings joy... though I suppose the original design concept would also bring joy... but the joy this guy brings to me is different. A more authentic joy. Funny enough, I've used him for two purposes mainly, neither of which are his designed purpose. It's ironic that the "item with a purpose" I brought to class is an object that I've never used for its intended purpose. . Anyway, I'm starting to drift off into a world of word garbage, which could have potential but likely will not amount to anything. So, let's get back to the point. The point of the object I brought today is to open alcohol bevies. I use it mainly as a keychain. Maybe someday it will bring me joy as I sip on a drink freshly popped open by this, but until then, I'll allow it to bring me joy because it was a gift, given to me by my sister. Really, I guess it's my sister offering me joy through an object that really doesn't serve its intended purpose in my life. Cool.



The paint around the rim of the flat piece of metal is worn away – the marks of time and use. The metal steals heat from my skin, leaving me with a comforting coldness. The chill and weight of such a small thing is satisfying and familiarly unfamiliar. The fisherman's gaping mouth is also a bottle opener. An auditory hallucination of the crisp hiss of a bottle opening. The link hangs loosely from the fisherman's head, hinting at the former presence of a larger, split ring and an unfulfilled purpose. On the back there is a small, round, flat metal button that could be magnetic. Or not. A label says, "Manufactured in Austin, Texas." I smile at the image of this old salty dog strolling the streets of the Texas town I know so well. He has come alive. Does he welcome my touch, or resent it? The fisherman's expression never changes, never betraying his feelings. I wish I could be more like this sometimes.



6

On the face of this weathered key, my eyes lock with an engraved demand, DO NOT DUPLICATE. Thoughts trickle in: What if I do duplicate this item? Just picture the solace of having a spare. But these capital letters scream that I steer clear. My eyes struggle to avoid these intrusive letters. I find momentary distraction in its resilience on display. But sedimented changes to its hue have only made its message more visible than ever. This must be the Master key, for it enslaves one with constant preoccupation of its protection.

It makes a high clicking sound. It speaks pieces of information as I touch it. It is both smooth and rough. There is a directionality to it. As I touch it, I am reminded of

teeth – little, sharp baby teeth. I see how time has engraved its signature. As I look closer, its imperfections appear almost like a landscape. A smell of heaviness. A key can open, but also close off a space. A key is to space like a beginning is to time.



7

The thin metal rod gently curves to a bend at the tip. Delicate yet powerful. The stem melts seamlessly into a smooth cylindrical segment of wood. There are two pairs of small indentations in the handle. They were made by cat's teeth, but only I can know that because it's mine. The metal rod is flattened near its point of integration with the wooden cylinder, stamped with "F/5-3.75MM." The shine of the metal compliments the warm, dull glow of the wood. The bottom of the wooden cylinder is rounded like the poles of the earth. Dark speckles mark the moment long ago when the wood was cut to make this. The metal feels flimsy and solid all at once. Just stable enough for

the task at hand. The callous on my palm aligns perfectly with its rounded wooden end. I know it with my hands and with the gifts we've produced together.

Pointy stick with wood. I don't know what you are. I don't know what you do. I'd try to figure it out, but you're not mine, and experiments to figure out what you do might cross boundaries that I don't know about because to be honest, I don't know the person who let me see you too well. So, to respect the owner, and you I guess, I will just stare at you aimlessly, pretending to know what is going on. Essentially how I spend the rest of the time in this class. lol. Jk. I am going to actually do what I do in this class, stare at you and try to figure out what the heck the point is. At first, when I saw you from a distance, I thought it was one of those sticks that people use to poke their pores to clear blemishes. Your owner does have beautiful clear skin, so maybe it works and this is the secret to her stunning complexion. Or, knowing that she's great



at techy-art stuff, you could be a tool of some kind, with a very specific techy-art purpose. One that your owner knows, because I seem to be noticing this recurring trend of her being very smart and knowing a lot of things that I do not know. Which is very cool. So therefore, she is cool. Aha. You must be what makes your owner cool. Which therefore makes you cool! Or I am just rambling uneducated blubber because the reality of it is that I have no idea whatsoever what the purpose of this object is. I wonder how often it is for rambling results in a good thing compared to when it leads us

nowhere and is just an endless puddle of opaque mud. Big word there. I hope opaque is the right one... the "not see through" one right. Hm. This object is opaque. Opaque looks like plaque. This tool could be used to remove plaque off teeth. Or something by some kind of dentist or dental hygienist. Or it could be not that. It also looks like the handle portion of a ribbon, like in rhythmic gymnastics. No ribbon though, so likely not a miniature one of those made for a racoon. I like how they said the art of phenomenology. That's cool. This could be an art tool. Maybe to shape, sculpt or poke things. Or for baking cakes. Maybe it's used to carve faces into fondant. Or to pick strings when repairing a guitar. I wonder what I would use this for if it were mine.



Cold but warm. Smooth and rough. Round but sharp. Harmless and violent. Sterile but filthy. Opening and closing. Opposites attracting each other to the rhythm of mellow harmonies. A mother-child dyad working in tandem to fulfill multiple tasks. Both grounded by a fundamental but irrelevant actor. Accessible and readily available to diverse hands, different needs, and varied purposes. Sharp, long, and slim extensions, in line, ready for action. Equipped with approval symbols supporting their function.

One of the openings in the handle is bigger than the other. When I tried to use it, I could not figure out how many fingers should go in each hole. Upon further inspection, and trying to imitate a cutting movement, I realized that my thumb went on top, and three fingers



went through the bottom opening. I use the scissors to cut a piece of paper and notice that they are sufficiently sharp, cutting through the paper in a clean and rather satisfying manner. In opening and closing the scissors there is a certain resistance I can feel in my hand, and it seems that this arises from residue of glue or some other sticky substance that the scissors may have cut through in the past. The grey plastic handle is rather tough and sturdy, and has a coarse texture to it, which is not my preferred texture when it comes to scissors. I would prefer a smooth handle, or even better, a rubber one, which would feel nicer against my fingers. The screw that holds the scissors together is encased in a round plastic button which allows you to swirl them around on the table, like a kind of spinning top.

9

Made of two sections, one black and one grey. The black is matte black, though it catches moments of the fluorescent light and reflects sharply. The grey part is shinier; there are more moments of light reflecting on it. The black section is two sections or two ends of the object connected through the grey part. Each black section is composed of a straight section and a section that looks like a capitalized D, but the Ds are positioned as mirror opposites, with the rounded part facing away from the other. If the two black parts were disconnected from the grey section, they would perhaps lay flat, but due to the height and twistedness of the grey section, only the two top parts of each D touch the table, while the straight parts are angled upward toward the joint within the grey section. The grey section is made up of a number of parts, a joint, a spring, and a few metal bars that are connected to each other. Two distinctly thicker bars have a crescent moon shape. Their crescent shapes are stacked perpendicular to the black D's and are about three-quarters of an inch apart. They are parallel crescents connected at each end by two bars that hold them parallel. The furthest out crescent is connected at two places firmly to the bars, while the crescent that is in the middle is connected at five points, two hoops at either end, two bars at the one-third sections and a spring in the middle.



This object is something I can hold in my hand. It has two handles like a pair of scissors. The handles are made of black plastic, and the rest of it is metal. The metal part has two curved-shaped pieces. One of the curved pieces is covered by a rubbery material. A spring connects one handle to one of the curved pieces. When I pull the handles together, the two curved shaped pieces collapse on each other. When I release the handles, the spring pulls one of the curved pieces back, so the two curved piece no longer touch each other. It is hard to tell what one can do with this object.

10

Its glimmering gold is so reflective I can see a distorted version of myself peering at it as I type. This smooth metal coated impersonation of a much bigger beast with its

limb extended in the air is still just about the size of my middle finger. It's a small elephant figurine - sitting like a pet in wait - the indentions meant to be its eyes look up at me plaintively. It looks decorative - a beloved desk trinket for an elephant lover. In fact, it waits for it's true use - it's raised trunk waiting to be the holder of rings. It's tusks long enough to do the same.

I pick it up trying to feel more, to gain a better sense of this object that has inhabited my room for so long. It's lighter than my phone, but heavier than a pen. Upon holding it I realize I'd forgotten its felt underbelly - soft enough to be dragged across any surface and leave no trace. Its four legs are moulded into its body - such that if I didn't see what it was, or had not known what it was replicating, I would have struggled to describe it. Had I been asked to describe it using purely my memory I would have insisted it had a tail. The absence of a tail when I looked reminded me that this thing that I see daily is still foreign to me.



And yet, in a way it has guided the way I dress myself. I had one ring when I was given this elephant. And, in an effort to appease its waiting trunk, I've made efforts to buy and collect more - wanting to ensure that this tiny trinket could live to its purpose and not simply be reduced to decoration. Before its presence in my life, any rings I obtained would disappear into oblivion lost somewhere behind bedside tables or in laundry baskets. Now my rings have a home.

It's heavier than I anticipated once I am holding this delightful belonging of theirs. Two eyes, two ears, two tusks, each three dimensional and there is a beautiful simplicity to the design. The cracks in the gold around the edges of its ears and tip of its trunk remind me of dandelion seeds blowing in the wind. It's so shiny. I wonder if it has a name. I wonder if it was gifted with love.

As I rotate it in my hands, I realize it's seated. When I first approached from the front, I perceived it to be standing tall. Now, I see its trunk lifted high above as it sits. I turn it forward once more, and my perspective is changed. No longer stretching from an upright stance, instead it is resting and reaching, grounding and rising.



Appendix:

object participants (in order of appearance)

digital metronome

metal water bottle

mechanical pencil

screwdriver

keychain bottle opener

key

crochet hook

scissors

eyelash curler

elephant-shaped ring holder

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