

PRAXIS AND ALLIES: DECOLONIZATION, ALLIANCES AND THE POSSIBILITY OF SPACE

A Study-Centred Conference hosted by Carleton University's
Centre for Indigenous Research, Culture, Language and Education (CIRCLE)
March 15th, 2014

PAPER ABSTRACTS

SESSION IA

9:15-10:45

NINDIBAAJIMOMIN: CREATING AND SHARING DIGITAL STORIES ABOUT THE LEGACY AND EXPERIENCES OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Roberta Stout (organizer and session chair, University of Winnipeg), Wendy McNab (University of Winnipeg), Lorena Fontaine (University of Winnipeg)

In the fall of 2010, Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence (PWHCE) gathered six First Nations women to participate in a digital storytelling research project entitled, *kiskinohamâtôtâpânâsk*.¹ *Intergenerational Effects on First Nations Women Whose Mothers are Residential School Survivors*. Building on this, the Oral History Centre, in collaboration with Indigenous Studies, at the University of Winnipeg, expanded the scope to include First Nations men. In the winter of 2013, seven First Nations men participated in a digital storytelling project called *ininiwag dibaajimowag*.² *First Nations Men and the Intergenerational Experiences of Residential Schools*.

With an understanding that First Nations people's stories are intellectual traditions, and to ensure the research remained decolonized, arts-based and grounded in life stories, digital storytelling³ was used. All of the women and men produced a digital video looking at the legacy of residential schools: emotional detachment from their mothers and fathers and their reconnection with them; their own journeys into parenthood; their reconciliation of childhood and adulthood trauma as intergenerational survivors; their strength, determination and resilience transmitted through their parents; and their move toward spiritual healing for families and all community people who have been affected by the residential school legacy.

Our presentation will screen the digital stories produced by both groups of digital storytellers along with a period for reflection.

¹ *kiskinohamâtôtâpânâsk* is a Cree phrase that means "school bus," but has various other nuanced meanings when looking at each of the root words individually. The root word *kisk* means "to learn," *mâtow* is a verb that, on its own, means "to cry," and *otapanâsk* is the word for "wagon." Through this particular morphological interpretation, crying is part of the school bus experience.

² *ininiwag dibaajimowag* is an Ojibwa phrase that means "men sharing their stories."

³ Digital storytelling, the art of combining oral tradition with digital technology, is a community-based, learner-centred approach to generating knowledge. It involves using digital storytelling computer software to blend voice-recorded, first-person narratives with a collection of still images, music and sound effects to create a 3-5 minute video to illustrate a personal story.

Positioning Self: Critical Settler Consciousness-Raising

Cody d'Entremont (Carleton University)

This presentation will be a summary of the autoethnography I am currently writing for my Honours Research Essay titled, *Positioning Self: Critical Settler Consciousness-Raising*. This project undertakes a critical analysis of Settler emotion, thought, and action processes in relation to Indigenous resistance – existence – within Canada. In this context, Indigenous existence (*Indigeneity*) manifests itself as resistance: narratives of place, nationhood, and culture; violent and non-violent protest; self-determination and efforts for recognition of sovereignty. Settler processes are argued to be reactions emanating from *unsettledness* of self and place. Such feelings are understood as rising from individual and collective exposure to Indigenous narratives that tell of a stronger connection to place, title, and rights that *legally* and *justly* lie therefrom.

The autoethnography strives to evoke *unsettling* emotions of a Settler/Colonizer-self during periods of reflection on personal and historical events that unearth tarnishing personal/national narratives. After passing through places of dismissal, denial, anger, confusion, and then loss of a once mythical self, there is a need for renewing [read reviving] narratives that I (and Indigenous peoples) can be proud to live and work by. The autoethnography aims to illustrate the navigation of a multiplicity of identities, tropes, and Indigenous appropriations that lead to opportunities of *unlearning* and building stronger allyship with Indigenous struggles towards decolonizing Settler mentalities and life-ways.

Honouring the Aterihwihsón:sera Kaswenta: A Relational Framework for Consultation with Indigenous Communities in Canada and Australia

Ashley Sisco (The University of Wollongong)

Meaningful and ongoing consultations are critical to Indigenous self-determination. Consultations are the processes by which organizations and Indigenous communities meet to discuss actions that could potentially affect Indigenous rights or interests. This project is a community-based partnership study, which applies the Aterihwihsón:sera Kaswenta (a Haudenosaunee wampum belt treaty with Settler Canadians) as a relational framework to investigate how two Indigenous communities across the world—the Carcross/Tagish First Nation (C/TFN) in Yukon, Canada and the Narungga Community of Point Pearce (NCP) in South Australia—can create and implement online tools to make consultations more meaningful, equitable and effective.

In total 64 participants took part in this study, including 22 consultation and e-learning expert interviewees, and 42 participants in research conversations and consultations. Thematic content analysis of this data, along with literature, participant observation and digital ethnography revealed that there is an overall lack of consultation with the C/TFN, and the NCP, and that existing consultations tend to be: 1) ambiguous; 2) fraught with process breakdowns; 3) tokenistic; 4) colonizing; 5) oppressive; 6) ineffective; and 7) lacking community engagement. While leading practices were identified, a relationship-based approach was found to be integral to meaningful consultation. Within the Kaswenta framework, this is characterized by three interconnected principles: 1) equality; 2) distinction and self-determination; and 3) harmonious, and interdependent co-existence, as well as time. Therefore, while the study suggests that technology can be an important tool in consultations, the key finding is that the most significant determining factor of the meaningfulness of consultations is relationships.

Rethinking Indigenous-Settler Relationships: A Case Study of the Indigenous and Canadian Studies Students' Association (ICSSA) of the University of Ottawa

William Leonard Felepchuk (University of Ottawa)

How can harmonious relationships be created between Indigenous and settler people who wish to work together on decolonization projects, without perpetuating the unequal, unilateral, and colonial patterns that have, more often than not, characterized such settler-Indigenous relationships in both past and present? In my presentation I will explore how the Indigenous and Canadian Studies Students' Association (ICSSA) of the University of Ottawa has attempted to answer this question in their efforts towards academic decolonization and campus indigenization. I will propose that the ICSSA could be a useful microcosm for the larger dynamics of settler-Indigenous relations. I have been an insider to this process, as an undergraduate student of settler origin in the Aboriginal studies program and an active ICSSA member.

I will focus on three principle aspects that I have identified as essential to the ICSSA's efforts:

- the identification and subversion of settler cultural hegemony and privilege in the academic sphere through the study and implementation, in our association's operations, of the spirit of the Two-Row Wampum Treaty Belt.
- the recognition of the Omamiwinini Anishinabeg (Algonquin) nation on whose non-ceded territory our studies take place, through seeking the guidance and participation of Omamiwinini Anishinabeg individuals and communities in our activities, thereby establishing a community alliance in an academic setting.
- the incorporation of Indigenous theoretical frameworks of governance into our activities, such as through the mandate of general assemblies, using holistic consensus methodologies inspired by Indigenous traditions.

SESSION IIA : NARRATIVES OF DECOLONIZATION

11:00-12:30

Pleasure, Shame, Alright: Challenging the Colonial Entitlement of Space in Steven Cohen's, *Chandelier*

Skye Maule-O'Brien (York University)

Presenting a work in progress to encourage dialogue, this paper engages with the emotional terrain in learning and intersections of identity, through an analysis of a performance by South African artist, Steven Cohen (b. 1962). The art work, *Chandelier: to bring to light* (2002), is a video documentation of a live performance by Cohen, who presents his gay, Jewish white male body adorned in drag moving through a shelter camp in Newtown (Johannesburg) where mainly Black and Coloured South Africans live. This preliminary paper introduces a critique of the widely shown, highly praised performance documentation, calling for an acknowledgment of participation in the colonial apartheid history and its employment of spatial segregation (Razack, 2002). Using a narrative approach fused with personal experience, as a white settler from Canada I interrogate the "difficult knowledge," or knowledge that resists learning, presented by the video (Britzman, 2000). The goal being to confront the too-often celebrated and protected narcissistic white voices that refuse listening or learning from others, while important voices of dissent are ignored. Revisiting the uncritical navigation of 'pleasure' and 'shame' in Cohen's work, I ask how the conversation could be shifted and utilized as a teaching tool to engage with difficult knowledge in order to challenge colonial pedagogical projects that limit responsibility and accountability, and perpetuate hierarchical forms of oppression. This research is currently ongoing as part of a reflection project with SPARCK (Space for Pan-African Research, Creation and Knowledge).

Un-settling Theology: The Challenge of Postcoloniality and the Gift of Indigenous Worldviews in the Canadian Context

Joëlle Morgan (St. Paul University)

In the spirit of Idle No More, un-settling addresses patterns of dominance that have shaped and continue to shape the relationships between the Indigenous peoples and those of us who have come to Canada as settlers. This paper will explore some of the ways that Indigenous peoples and their settler-allies are addressing the systems of power -- both historic and current -- that perpetuate colonial dynamics. In Canada, the churches were instrumental in the colonial movement to "civilize/Christianize" Indigenous peoples, in particular through their role in residential schools. As such, addressing the political ramifications of colonialism also calls for recognition of religious and spiritual impacts. Un-settling theology requires listening deeply to the challenge of Indigenous scholars and theologians who are offering ways to liberate theology and for theology to be liberating in light of the colonial reality.

This paper will begin by rooting the historical/political reality of the Indigenous-settler dynamics in one place, the nation's capital: Ottawa. The particularity of this story points to the more general experiences of postcoloniality in Canada. Secondly, this paper will explore some of the ways that listening deeply to Indigenous peoples and their teachings can shift the understandings of key Christian notions, such as salvation. Shifting to a principle of healing and, thus, reconciliation, can help bring about a transformation of consciousness and offer tools for righting relations in, on and with this land.

Constructions of violence and decolonization

Derek Antoine (Carleton University)

Depictions of violence have, for a long time, played a role in the colonial/colonized relationship between Settler societies and Aboriginal Peoples in North America. Acts of violence as they relate to colonialism and decolonization have been theorized by scholars like Fanon (1969) who, for example, argues that it is a necessary component of the decolonization process as it helps the colonized overcome many of the psychological impacts of this social relationship. Arendt (1970) explains how violence and power are separate in that violence does not project nor embody power. For communication research, what violence as well as depictions of violence communicate are important lines of inquiry. Aboriginal Peoples have long been depicted by settlers as the angry warrior (Francis, 2010; Fleras, 2011). Governments have ascribed narratives of violence to quash protest and resistance. Aboriginal activists have also used such narratives to further their goals and projects of decolonization.

This paper will look at the depictions of violence around the Idle No More social movement to understand how they were used and their implications to projects of decolonization. During the height of the movement, many in the mainstream media framed round dances as acts of escalating violence while government officials warned about potential confrontations. At the same time, the movement itself adopted violence against women as a core tenet of its call for change, departing from its focus on the government's omnibus budget bill. This paper will detail the differences in how violence was depicted by these two groups and look to potential implications around projects of decolonization.

“Le métissage! Pour moi, c’est ça la culture maintenant.”: An Alliance Studies Approach to the Work of Inuit Singer-Songwriter Élisapie Isaac

Sarah Howard (Carleton University)

Élisapie Isaac exercises many voices in many formats as an indie Inuit singer-songwriter based in current Québec. Her musical output combines lyrical content in Inuktitut, English, and French and is highly collaborative, involving many prominent personalities of the mainstream industry. Her first album with guitarist Alain Auger, *Taima*, won the Juno for Best Aboriginal Recording of the Year in 2005. Her newest album, *Travelling Love* (2012), won the Félix Award for Best Anglophone Album of the Year, although the album contains Inuktitut lyrical content. Similar to other female contemporary Indigenous artists, Isaac also undertakes a multitude of social activism activities. Her documentary, *If the Weather Permits* (2003), discusses life and the loss of culture in Kangirsujuaq, in her home region, Nunavik. Like many contemporary Indigenous artists, Isaac arguably negotiates expressions of Inuit “distinctiveness” with southern musical “mainstreamness.” Through musical and communications activities, Isaac engages in a multitude of practices which form relationships with genres, individuals, places, time periods, and institutions. These practices include genre alliance, language choice, collaboration, and citation. Using Beverley Diamond’s “alliance studies” approach as a theoretical model, my aim is to map Isaac’s activities onto the mainstream Québécois industry. Through a presentation of visual, lyrical, and musical analysis of music videos “It’s All Your Fault (Leonard)” and “Moi, Elsie”, I consider Isaac’s alliances to the Québécois socio-musical field as described by Line Grenier and Val Morrison. Such an examination reveals the complexities of balancing both “mainstreamness” with “distinctiveness” as an Indigenous artist in the mainstream music industry.

Indigenous Modernities and the Performance of the Music of the Mission Archive of Moxos

Melba Villamizar-Rodriguez (Carleton University)

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Jesuits established the missions of Chiquitos and Moxos in what today is the Bolivian Amazon region. In these missions music was used as the main instrument of evangelization. The Jesuits taught the indigenous people how to perform Western European baroque music, as well as to make Western musical instruments. After the Jesuits were expelled from Latin America in 1767, the indigenous people continued performing the music taught by the missionaries and constructing Western musical instruments. According to historical documents, in the nineteenth century they performed masses, operas, and carefully preserved the scores, producing new copies regularly (Nawrot 2000). This music can be found today in the archives of Chiquitos and Moxos, the only mission archives in Latin America. In Moxos, the Indigenous Council has preserved approximately 7000 scores (Nawrot 2000). The recent discovery of these manuscripts has attracted the interest of many musicologists, who have edited and published some of them, and there has been a renewed interest in performing this music by young people of the area, specifically in the space of the San Ignacio de Moxos Music School, created in 1996, and the Ensemble Moxos, the most important ensemble of this music school. Through the analysis of music and video examples I will explore the way in which the performance practices of the Ensemble Moxos, which resist being labelled as either “traditional” or “modern”, express how the indigenous people of Moxos experience modernity and what it means to be Moxeño in the context of globalization.

Can the Baul Speak?: Development Hegemony and Baul cultural production in West Bengal

Smita Mitra (Queen's University)

Using the analytical framework of cultural politics, this paper critically analyzes interventions in "Baul" cultural production shaped by development hegemony. The "Bauls of Bengal" are described as a category of wandering minstrel, mystical seer or initiate of a system of esoteric practices indigenous to West Bengal and Bangladesh (formerly East Bengal). They are known to outsiders primarily through an ill-defined category of Bengali songs called "Baul-gaan" that are characterized by their "heterogeneity and frequently enigmatic language" centering on imagery and principles derived from Baul folk spirituality, philosophy and practice.

UNESCO recognized "Baul-gaan", in 2005, as an "Intangible Cultural Heritage". My research question hinges on the paradox presented by the "revitalization-preservation" model, enshrined in UNESCO's "Intangible Cultural Heritage" category, which is mirrored by the language and goals of development-oriented interventions in Baul cultural production by state institutions and NGOs in India.

My paper proposes that development hegemony, represented by the model, through its methods and ideological framework reworks the relationship between the 'tangible' and 'intangible' within Baul cultural production. By doing so, the model, instead of revitalizing and preserving, paradoxically, aids the disintegration of this folk spiritual form while incorporating Baul cultural production into the creative economy (Yudice 2003, Watt 2006, Ross 2009). The paper will also seek to outline possible development alternatives based on discussions conducted while collecting field interviews.

SESSION IIIA: STORYTELLING AS PRAXIS

1:30-3:00

Stories Worth Sharing: Storytelling from a Mi'kmaq Classroom

Julie Pellerin (Carleton University)

In promoting its community's rich Aboriginal identity, Elsipogtog School, in the Mi'kmaq Elsipogtog First Nation, works in emphasizing the integration of Aboriginal culture within its teachings as much as possible. For my paper presentation I examine the inclusiveness, adaptability, and nature of knowledge within school settings which contribute to the decolonization of Aboriginal Canadian education through storytelling. In the Aboriginal tradition – and arguably at a universal level – storytelling is inclusive by nature, as many participants partake in the experience. A sense of inclusiveness resounds in Elsipogtog School's efforts for cultural integration, educating not only its students, but the community as well. Through its adaptability, storytelling delivers an influential – even healing – experience for all those involved, as the storyteller and audience draw on their listening, interpersonal, creative, and emotional skills. The assessment of the nature of knowledge within the school setting may also provide key information in the decolonization of pedagogy and teaching. Moreover, by considering the integration of Aboriginal teachings such as storytelling-based programs within a wider Canadian educational context, we would potentially witness an even greater decolonization project. To teach Aboriginal stories and other ways of learning acknowledges the presence – past and current – of Aboriginal people in the places where we live. This acknowledgement will hopefully incite further action toward reconciliation. Education in Canada, after all, is the result of a long colonial and assimilationist project; to share the stories of the Aboriginal peoples would help reclaim the cultures and voices that have been almost lost.

***“This is not my story, but yours ...”*: The Russ Moses Mohawk Institute Memoir as a Source for the Auto Ethnography of the Indian Residential Schools Experience in Canadian History**

John Moses (Carleton University)

Six Nations Delaware band member and Carleton cultural mediations PhD candidate John Moses provides a public reading from the unpublished residential school memoir of his late father Russ Moses (1932-2013), as means of Aboriginal awareness building and facilitating conference participants in their own journeys of truth and reconciliation. Written by the late Russ Moses in 1965 upon leaving the Canadian military and embarking upon work with the federal public service, the memoir recounts the elder Moses’s experiences at the Anglican-run Mohawk Institute Indian Residential School in Brantford, Ontario from 1942 to 1947. As an important source for the indigenous theoretical framework of auto-ethnography, wherein indigenous experts interrogate indigenous subjects and experience, the document sheds light on previously unexamined dimensions of the residential schools experience in Canadian history, including the contributions of the forced agricultural labour of Indian children at the residential schools to Canada’s economy on the homefront during the Second World War. This is one aspect of the presenter’s larger PhD research in cultural mediations, concerning the incorporation of Aboriginal experiences and perspectives in Canada’s national commemorative events and spaces, culminating in the upcoming Canada 150 commemorations in 2017.

Standing up to Colonization: Indigenous Comedy as Decolonizing Praxis

Geraldine King (Carleton University)

Is it possible to be funny while dealing with the oftentimes devastating impacts of colonization? This is the question that sits at the core of Geraldine King's research. Through ethnographic and empirical research, Geraldine looks at how Indigenous comedy acts as a unifying agent, a healing mechanism as well as a way to feel intrinsically Indigenous. Geraldine will use her own stories to bring participants on a research journey into how humour has helped her own family cope with continued encounters with settler colonialism.

SESSION IIIB: INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

1:30-3:00

Standardization of Inuktitut

Jeela Palluq-Cloutier (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami)

This research project focusses on describing the various efforts at the standardization of Inuktitut in Canada. The questions investigated relate to pedagogical considerations of accounting for dialectal differences and the different writing systems in Canada. These questions will hopefully serve as a resource to promote understanding and awareness of the different dialects and the writing system used in the Inuit regions of Canada and which of them might be most appropriate and readily accepted as ‘the dialect of instruction’. This research will also have implications for the Governments in the Inuit regions and their curriculum development– all of which have a stake in the successful implementation of the new standards if adopted by Inuit Nunaat as they will have to ensure it is taught to the Inuit students across Canada. The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami National Strategy on Inuit Education (2011) includes a recommendation to explore the introduction of the standardized writing system for Inuit.

A Phenomenological Exploration of 'Learning to Teach' within the context of a Community Service Learning Project: Indigenous Knowledge, Teacher Candidates and a Relational Approach to Education

Desiree Streit (Ottawa University)

The focus of this Master of Arts in Education research project is to explore the question of what it is like for five teacher candidates to experience the phenomena of 'learning to teach' in a relational capacity. As a Metis woman, I feel a strong desire to utilize a holistic and relational approach throughout my research. This began with a purposeful choice surrounding what my research would investigate, looking at the lived experiences of these teacher candidates involved in a community service learning project. I also wanted to implement a conceptual framework that exhibited the teachings of an Indigenous worldview. As an analytic tool, the medicine wheel and its teachings felt like a good way to guide and shape this project. To tell the story of the teacher candidates who volunteered their time with the community service learning project, hermeneutic phenomenology is used to describe the lived space, time, corporeality, and relational existential qualities which will help formulate a deeper sense of what it is like to experience 'learning to teach' in a relational way. The data for this research was collected from experiencing the community service learning project as mentor, from conversations, observations, and reflection. A potluck was held at the end of their Bachelor of Education program and the group interview from this gathering was also used. The generative aspect of the medicine wheel continues to move the analysis of this ongoing research project, revealing the lived experiences, the story, of these teacher candidates.

Dropping the Hoop: Urban Aboriginal Youth and High School Completion Factors

Amber White (Queen's University)

The purpose of this study is to understand Aboriginal perspectives on dropping out of the secondary school system. Participants for this study include Aboriginal youth (12-30) who have dropped out of school between 1996 and 2008 in secondary schools located in Northern Ontario. My fundamental question for this study is: how do these Aboriginal youth describe their reasons that led to their decision to drop out of school?

The interrelationships among gender, educational attainment, and place of residence among Aboriginal students have been examined from diverse theoretical viewpoints and through a number of different disciplinary frameworks. Unlike traditional Western modes of knowledge acquisition—methods which are in service to scientific ways of thinking and being in the world—Aboriginal values are deeply relational, holistic, contextual, cultural, and spiritual. This study draws upon a holistic approach to examine documents, oral histories, and narrative testimonies. I will fashion my interpretation of the proposed research holistically to yield insight into the mental/emotional, social, spiritual, and physical realities that envelope decisions concerning school attendance and educational attainment.

My proposed study aims to provide a number of important insights. Among these include results from drawing attention to the unexamined area of research related to the issue of high drop out rates and reflection on the significance of implementing a holistic theoretical framework to guide the study.