Postcolonial Directions in Education

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"TALKING IN/TALKING OUT": INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE, FILMMAKING, AND THE DECOLONIZING POETICS OF VISUAL SOVEREIGNTY

A CONVERSATION

Dorothy Christian, Sonia Medel and André Elias Mazawi
Office of the Vancouver Latin American Film Festival (VLAFF), Woodward's Building, Vancouver, BC, the early afternoon of June 7, 2019.

Positioning and introduction

Sonia Medel: I want to begin by welcoming you, Dorothy, and thank you for joining us for this conversation that will form part of the *Postcolonial Directions in Education* Special Issue on film and film festivals. I also want to acknowledge that we are engaging in this this conversation, here, in the Vancouver Latin American Film Festival (VLAFF) office, in the Woodward's building, in Vancouver, on unceded Coast Salish, Tseil-waututh, Musqueam and Squamish lands.

This is very much a contested building and land, a reality that forms part of our ongoing dialogue behind the need for a Special Issue on the (de)colonial potential of film and film festivals. I would like to hand over the floor to you, Dorothy, by asking "Who is Dr. Dorothy Christian and why were you interested in joining us today?".

Dorothy Christian: As this interview is planned for publication in a postcolonial journal, I need to take issue with that particular term – "postcolonial". For many Indigenous critical thinkers this term skews our relationship. Many of us believe this is a neo-colonial time that we live in, rather than a post-colonial one. I'm sure you've read many Indigenous writers who ask: what is this "post-colonial thing"? Colonial time is not over yet, it still is happening.

When you ask who I am, I am certainly more than the title, Dr. Christian. On a personal level, I am a mother, sister, an aunty, a great aunty, and a friend. I have over 65 nieces and nephews and great nieces and nephews. I am actually going home for vacation time, starting June 17th. My niece, Emily, is graduating and I'm making a huge deal of her because of the difficulty that our kids have in even getting to grade 12.

On an academic level, I have been involved in academia since the late 1980s when I started my undergraduate studies at the University of Toronto. Back then, I was comparing Indigenous thought with Western thought. I almost quit in the first semester because I had put myself into sociology and I found that I was locking horns with the professor at every turn. I asked an Elder to come for dinner one night, at Christmas time. He listened to me for about two hours. Then, he finally told me an Ojibway prophecy, which I won't tell in detail here. The bottom line was that the people from across the waters would either come with the face of brotherhood or the face of death. He said we know what face they came with. He asked me, "So, why are you trying to talk to people who don't have any eyes or any ears?" His words made me sit back and think about that. He also talked to me about who I should be working with. He said that I had put myself into this institution and that 80 to 90 percent of what you're learning there is "nonsense". He said, "Don't work with people that you're going to be fighting with all the time". I therefore shifted my attention to the teaching assistants who were working with the professors. I recognized that they were the new scholars and the new thinkers. They were more open and carried a different thinking. After my undergraduate studies, I took a hiatus. I started working professionally for a number of years in film and television production, for eight television seasons. I was out in the big world. After my undergraduate degree I served as the Chair of the Ontario Film Review Board. I got to see thousands of films and how Indigenous peoples, and communities of colour, were treated on and in film. I then moved from Toronto back home to my home territories I come from Secwépemc and Syilx territories, the interior plateau regions of what is now known as British Columbia (BC). I was still freelancing for Vision TV, a national broadcaster, and for other production companies. I ended up moving to Vancouver (Coast Salish territories) because the interior of British Columbia is very depressed economically

and it is really hard to get jobs there in the film and television industry. Vancouver is the industry's hub. I started working with the Indigenous Media Arts Group and taught an entry-level production course at the Native Education Centre. Meanwhile, I was thinking about my experiences out in the field, what I had seen, and what I had experienced. Working for Vision TV, I traveled to Indigenous communities all throughout Turtle Island (Indigenous reference to North America) and into Mexico. I got to see how people wanted their stories to be treated. I had to uphold cultural protocols to be able to deliver their stories to the national screen culture in Canada.

On Film Production and "Cultural Congruency"

SM: Thank you for bringing to the fore the issue of continuing to address what is so often an institutional and societal insistence on referring to the colonial as a "post". What led you to graduate studies?

DC: A number of factors guided me towards enrolling in graduate studies. In my teaching at the Native Education Centre, I had students from different age groups. I noticed that when they were putting their aesthetics together they were mixing and matching visuals from West Coast and the Prairie with those of communities from other regions. It left me unsettled. I was not quite sure what it was that was bothering me. In my own practice, intuitively, I made sure that, first of all, I respected the people who I was representing. I made sure that I got the images that were what I now call "culturally congruent" to them, as a people and as a nation. That propelled me into graduate studies. Yet, in Vancouver, I had also programmed Indigenous film festivals at the Indigenous Media Arts Group. In one programming meeting, we were looking at all these films from different Indigenous producers from across the land. A programming team member, an Indigenous person, said that the film pacing was "too slow. It just needs to be faster". I looked at her and said, "But that's the rhythm of the land, that's what the producer is trying to show".

What I've observed over years is that many productions from Indigenous people include the land and landscapes. This is part of what I call "cultural congruency", and how I intuitively approach it. For instance, when I worked with the hereditary women chiefs of Gitxsan and Wetsu'weten, following the 1997

Delga'muukw decision of the Supreme Court of Canada on Aboriginal Title (Persky, 1998), the mainstream media was talking mainly to male chiefs. I wanted to hear what the women had to say. I did an extensive preproduction—an important aspect of a "culturally congruent" Indigenous film production. I took much more time in relationship building by sending them copies of one of my productions so they could consider my approach. I talked to them about what are appropriate gifts to bring; what do I need to be mindful of when I am on their land and territories. I also asked about significant landmarks. When I was preparing my shoot-plan I made sure to include various things they had mentioned and which were important to them as a nation. I asked the women chiefs to record a song that I used as background sound. They understood what I was doing; there was no question about that.

Hence, what I mean by "cultural congruency" includes the time needed to build that relationship, before you even get there with the camera. When you do arrive with the camera crew, the people are already on board. They are not afraid of the camera, or shy of the camera. They know what story we want to bring out. When I talk about "cultural congruency" what I mean is that the interconnections between us as humans and the lands, plants, waters and all the other seen and unseen beings are reflected in the visuals and sounds that come from within that culture, that nation. They weave together a beautiful story of who they are as a people. Nowadays, people are very visually sophisticated in choosing the aesthetics of their visual representations. Indigenous peopal are clear about how they want to be represented. We live in a very visual culture, screens surround us at every turn. Our audiences are very savvy these days. We can't assume that they don't know.

Another example pertains to a four-part mini series on "gangs". I went to Arizona (USA) and did two short segments with Mexican youth who are affiliated with so-called "gangs" in Phoenix (Arizona). I also went to Winnipeg (Manitoba) and did two segments with them. I had heard about these young men in Phoenix through my network. Having attended ceremonies in Mexico, I was told about these young men: they were leaving "gang" life because of their involvement in the Sun Dance. I was determined to find them and know who they are. I had heard they were signing "peace treaties" with each other to stop

the killing. I eventually found these young men and women who were identified as Hispanic or Mexican "gangs". You can imagine, with the kind of media coverage that they usually get, they were very wary of who's going to come in and talk to them. So it took me a long time to build a relationship and to build trust. When I arrived, they knew that I was not going to be exploiting the violence, talking about the killings, or about prostitution, or about things that most mainstream media talk about. I wanted to humanize them. I met them amongst their families. I met their Mothers and their children. I met the women who were also in the so-called "gang" life, their wives, and their girlfriends. We really looked at it from a human perspective. I asked, why was it important for them to make "peace treaties" amongst themselves as so-called "gangs".

It took a long time and it was very complicated. But it was worth it. These young men that I interviewed were incredibly intelligent, with an in-depth political analysis of their own situation, of why they were where they were. They grew up being ashamed of their Indigenous identity. When they moved to the United States they were taught to try and be American rather than acknowledge where they came from. Their parents had distanced them from their Indigenous roots. Through this reclaiming of identity—the "peace treaties" – these young people were going back to Mexico and finding the villages that their parents and grandparents came from. They were finding out what the names of their tribes were and the people they came from.

Indigenous aesthetics, the Sacred, and visual sovereignty

SM: What you have shared is much more than an introduction! Thank you for that. Returning to what you said about the problematic of thinking-working through a "post-colonial" lens, we want this publication to highlight the frustrations around film production and how they interface with Indigeneity, film and festival programming. In my programming work as part of VLAFF, we are in the thick of resisting and trying to learn from each other, community leaders, and trailblazing Indigenous and Afro directors and producers, about how it is that we're still stuck with norms of time like film pacing, and issues you just brought up, and how this all translates in the industry. My colleague Sarah Shamash and I often wonder why we are looking at film production and programming through the lens

of speed rate or fitting it into anything. I cannot even imagine how it was for you to pull and navigate so many institutional, industry and community spaces simultaneously. With all you have been involved in, what meanings does the visual industry have for you, particularly in relation to the concept of "visual sovereignty"? How do you position it in relation to the concept of "cultural congruency"?

DC: There are a number of people who have been involved in the conversation around visual sovereignty. I see "cultural congruency" as an aspect of "visual sovereignty" because it's a very complicated term. "Visual sovereignty" goes back to one of the people with whom I have spoken during my PhD research, Hopi filmmaker and photographer Victor Masayesva, Jr. (born 1951). He has been engaged in visual representations since 1965 and has played an influential role in Native American multimedia production in the United States (Romero, 2010). I will be doing a retrospective of his work at the *imagineNative* Film & Media Arts Festival in Toronto October 2019.

The term visual sovereignty and Indigenous aesthetics go hand-in-hand with cultural congruency, I believe. Masayesva says that Indigenous aesthetics begin in the sacred (Padget, 2013). It took me two years of relationship building with him. In his clan, he is known as Water Coyote, wary of anybody. Finally, he started talking to me because I had to challenge him. If you look at his work and you go right back to his original film, *Hopiit* (1981), he strictly uses the Hopi language, without any explanation and without subtitles.

Now, fast forward to the 19th *imagineNATIVE* Film + Media Arts Festival in Toronto in 2018. I was invited to curate a program there. I went to see as many of the Global Indigenous films as I could. I was so happy and my heart was dancing! There were so many Indigenous films that were done in Indigenous languages, without apology and without explaining how they were situated in colonialism. Finally! I thought to myself, people are catching up with what Victor Masayesva was talking about almost 40 years ago. Indigenous filmmakers are now producing stories, and creating stories from within the culture. That was completely delightful to me even though I may not have understood some things because they are obviously made for their peoples' eyes and ears. As an Indigenous person, I could

understand the premise of the story; however, when they have English subtitles I understand the story from their culture. This is one place where you can tie all aspects of Indigenous visual storytelling together, that is the aesthetics they chose and how they braid the sounds, visuals and other nuances to maintain the cultural congruency of visual sovereignty. This all relates to our Indigenous worldviews and how we connect to our lands with all of our senses.

I spent time with Victor Masayesva, Jr. in his village of Hotevilla, on Third Mesa in northeastern Arizona where the Hopi reservation is located. He is a practitioner of his culture in that he carries spiritual responsibilities in his Clan. He does not like to discuss the responsibilities he carries for his family. Victor identifies himself as a farmer, first and foremost, as that's what his father taught him. Masayesva said that, throughout his life, his father had never engaged in the capitalist system. His main focus was to plant corn because that's the mainstay of their culture. All of the cycles relate to that. The planting cycles are complex because you have to consider the moon, the sun, and the cycles of the earth. These cycles determine when the rituals and ceremonies occur. When Masayesva talks about "visual sovereignty", it is through those eyes and through in-depth and inward looking eyes that he, as a Hopi, understands.

Indigenous knowledge and production practices

André Elias Mazawi: Two aspects appear to underpin your approach to "visual sovereignty". The first consists in not letting the colonial gaze capture or dismiss that internal voice you are talking about. Hence, the importance of looking at things "from within", that is, treating film as an epistemic space through which people and communities can come to know ourselves, others, history, time. The second aspect seems to be related to a pedagogical (or educational) engagement and commitment. The way you narrated your experiences and engagement with the Phoenix-based group of young people gives some idea about this pedagogical concern. Could you elaborate on these two elements?

DC: About epistemology and pedagogical concerns, it has to go right back to our Indigenous systems of Knowledge(s). Before I started my PhD I met Lee Maracle, a good friend of mine, and a prolific First Nations writer and contributor to Canadian

postcolonial critique[1]. I said to her that I'm really sick and tired of colonialism. We waste so much time talking about this all the time. She said she knew what I meant. We can have fatigue around it but we can never not acknowledge that it has happened. I agreed with her and we had a great conversation about it.

This stance of mine, I believe, became more solidified when I was writing my PhD. I was adamant to write my dissertation from an Indigenous perspective, placing it within an Indigenous research paradigm, and I privileged Indigenous Knowledge(s). I also engaged critical non-Indigenous thinkers in my theory analysis. I had to look at other points of view. In my choosing to do it that way, I had 14 knowledge keepers from across the country, from many different nations as well as 14, what I call "visual storytellers", from many different nations (Christian, 2017, pp. 177-180). They were multigenerational. I had someone in every decade: the youngest being in their 20s, just graduating from film school, the eldest was Alanis Obomsawin[2].

At the source of all my questions was the central question of how their culture informs their production practice, because I was exploring whether or not my experiences in the field was similar to their experiences. When I worked for the national broadcaster for eight television seasons I knew that I was doing things differently than my peers. I knew that I took way longer to get ready than everybody else did. I also knew that when I got there (to the community) with the camera crew, the people trusted me. I have worked with camera crews that were amazed at how the people shared such intimate knowledge about their cultures. They trusted me; they trusted my approach; they trust me with their story.

When you're in production you're moving so fast that you don't have time to do the intellectual deconstruction of concepts. So I've intuitively followed what I knew was right. If I

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1 On Lee Maracle's life and work, refer to <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/lee-maracle>.

2 Born in 1932, Alanis Obomsawin is "one of the most acclaimed Indigenous directors in the world". Her cinematographic work is drawn "from performance and storytelling". Refer to <https://www.nfb.ca/directors/alanis-obomsawin/>.

couldn't speak to an elder of that community, to present them with tobacco or a gift, I would quietly go and find a spot away from everything and put tobacco on the land and introduce myself, explain where I come from, what nation I come from. I explained, on a spiritual level, that my intention is not to harm anyone, that my intention is to carry out the story that the people want me to take out.

I used to tell my colleagues in Toronto, you can't fly into Indian country and stick a microphone in someone's face and expect them to spill their story to you. They don't know who you are. You haven't made the time to get to know them. I remember this one instance with a Toronto colleague who called me in a desperate moment. I had done a visual essay of the Kamloops Powwow in my home territory and had beautiful visuals, with so many colours. He asked me if he could use some of those visuals for the production he was doing right then because he wasn't able to collect any of those kind of visuals when he was working with Indigenous peoples in Thunder Bay[3]. I just said, "I'm sorry I can't do that, because when I went and sought permission to do this filming my people were very specific that those visuals were being given to me as a Secwépemc nation member. They trusted me with what I was going to do with this story and that only I could use these visuals, no one else"[4]. I had to explain to him that the visuals from out here, in the West, are not necessarily culturally congruent with visuals in Northern Ontario and that he needs to find out what are the cultural things up there that represent them visually.

AEM: These are aspects that non-Indigenous producers don't necessarily take into account when they shoot a film. Could you share with us an example of a scene, from your own work where these elements have come to bear on your work and films?

DC: One of the short productions I did that I really treasure in one I made for Vision TV, it was called, "*Grandmother Story*". I was very fortunate because to a certain degree I had creative freedom in creating the visual stories I produced for Vision TV.

3 Thunder Bay is a city located in the northwestern part of the Province of Ontario, Canada.

4 On Indigenous stories and their underpinnings, refer to Ignace (2008, 2017).

In this particular instance it was recreating a dreamscape. A woman that I know, who was a student at the time in Penticton, BC, crossed my path one day. She said, "I dreamt about you. You will have to come over for tea". She is, a Mohawk poet, and writer. As she was describing the dream to me all these visuals got dumped into my head and I just walked around with that for two or three months before I worked up the courage to ask her if I could visually recreate her dream. For many Indigenous peoples our dreamscapes are precious and they're not shared outside of your family or your immediate people. I was pushing the boundaries in many ways. I asked her if it was okay to recreate her dream in video. She gave me her permission and we did the shoot.

In the meantime, she left Penticton to do her master's in Colorado. When I finished the video, I sent her a copy. I didn't hear from her and I was so afraid. I thought, "Oh, my God, she hates it!". I thought I had maybe crossed some boundary. Months later, she faxed me a letter. I cried when I read it. She said that she was so touched with the sensitivity with which I recreated her dream. She said that she would never have given it to anyone else because she's really a shy person and she doesn't like to be on camera. But she allowed me to recreate her dream because she trusted me. She talked about how her grandmother influences her in her writing. She said that there was this old house at Six Nations in Ontario where she envisioned her grandmother visiting her in this old house. Luckily, there was this really old log house on the Penticton reserve. I was able to get permission from the owner and we filmed in that house. That's one instance in which I had to be really mindful and really careful. Even though she is not of my nation, I was able to recreate her dream with her vision.

"Talking in/Talking out" and the politics of solidarity

SM: Having seen so many Indigenous films from around the world at the *imagineNATIVE* Film + Media Arts Festival in Toronto, how do you feel about the global Indigenous film movement and about the possibilities for solidarity within it? Are there, maybe, aspects that leave you uncomfortable? I am asking that as someone who is navigating all of this. On the one hand, we see such beautiful moments of learning coming from Indigenous youth. On the other hand, I am also seeing a lot of us make mistakes along the way, mistakes in alliance

and relationship building. What possibilities are you seeing for solidarity among Indigenous Peoples in the film industry given the very unstable territory we're navigating in terms of how to honour traditions and build relationships?

DC: The work of Barry Barclay had an immense influence on my writing.[5] He was the first Indigenous filmmaker who spoke about the Indigenous "gaze". He didn't use that term, but that's what I came to call what he was talking about. He was the first one to talk about what would it look like if the Indigenous people had a camera on the shore when the colonizers were coming in on their ships, and the Indigenous camera was looking at the colonizers. That's the Indigenous gaze in my mind.

Barclay talked about the seduction the film industry exercises on our young people because the Māori filmmakers are huge leaders in Indigenous filmmaking. He was the first Indigenous filmmaker from Aotearoa (New Zealand) to have his work recognized at the Cannes Film Festival, in 1987, with his film *Ngati*, I really respect him and another pioneering Māori filmmaker Merata Mita, who was a contemporary of Barry Barclay. We just saw a film about her, *Merata: How Mum Decolonized the Screen*, screened at the Doxa Documentary Film Festival. I think it goes back to Barclay's reference to the "seduction" the industry is having on young Indigenous people. If people are not grounded in who they are, they tend to make shortcuts because they don't understand the cultural knowledge and they don't take the time to learn. We live in a very exciting time, because so many of us have mastered the technology. But, going back to Barclay again, we as Indigenous people have to use and adapt those tools to suit our needs rather than have those tools dictate the kinds of films we make. So, when you're talking about these kinds of conflicts that arise, I think it's because people do not understand their own knowledge. They are much more assimilated and entrenched in Euro-Western

5 Barry Barclay (1944-2008) was a filmmaker and writer of Maori and European descent. His book, *Our Own Image* (1990), discusses Indigenous-to-Indigenous "talking in" visual story telling practices (Christian, 2017, p. 24). See also, Murray (2008) and Columpar (2010) about Barclay's role in coining the term "Fourth Cinema" to signify "any visual storytelling/filmmaking that has Indigenous peoples in the key creative roles, thus being the creative intelligence behind the film" (Christian, 2017, p. 125, fn 55).

thinking, which is diametrically opposed to their own cultural values. Some people adopt a superiority attitude, just because they are successful in the mainstream film industry. It's not uncommon for Indigenous people to master the technology really quickly. Our people are ingenious. For instance, in my Syilx nation, a man I knew, and who was like a brother to me, designed a computer that could identify me by name! This certainly defies any stereotypes of savages, without intellect. I do know that Indigenous peoples have a multi-dimensional way of being. We can accomplish a high level of functioning in many different realms, if we chose to do so. For many of us, we are honouring the gifts that we carry. You can't suppress those gifts. You're given those things for a reason and I believe we have a responsibility to exercise those gifts. My friend/brother, who is no longer with us, was exercising his brilliance in quantum physics and in his knowledge of computer science when he created that talking computer.

SM: How do you feel about rapid distribution platforms, like Netflix[6], which are not only distributing films, getting them out quickly, but also producing films, sometimes directly with directors? How do you feel this is going to change the ability of Indigenous directors to promote visual sovereignty, given that Netflix and other platforms are out there?

DC: For so long, Indigenous filmmakers couldn't distribute their work. They had no platforms. Maria Campbell talked about that the other day at her keynote address at Congress[7]. People

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6 During the development of this conversation, Netflix signed and announced partnerships with *imagineNATIVE* Film , the Indigenous Screen Office, and Wapikoni Mobile with a focus on supporting Indigenous producers', screenwriters' and directors' labs, mentorships, and promotion. Refer to <https://www.cbc.ca/news/entertainment/netflix-indigenous-groups-partnership-1.5172017>

7 Maria Campbell (1940-), a Saskatchewan-based Métis Elder, author and filmmaker. One of her first films, *Edmonton's Unwanted Women* (1968), builds on her 1963 initiative "to establish a halfway house in Edmonton for women who were destitute or experiencing other personal crises". According to the Virtual Métis Museum, "Maria Campbell's first professionally produced play, *Flight*, was the first all Aboriginal theatre production in modern Canada. Weaving modern dance, storytelling and drama together with traditional Aboriginal art practices, this early work set a stylistic tone that her most recent productions continue to explore". Refer to <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/db/11900>.

ask you, “Where can we see your films”? They’re still in the old format. Way back, when Maria was working (she is 80, now), she got someone to digitize her old films. But she said, “We didn’t have ways to distribute our films”. I think that is up to the creative teams that are producing and directing Indigenous films, whether or not they distribute through Netflix, or other formats. For me it is great that I can go on to Netflix and find Indigenous films and to see that Indigenous filmmakers are actually making some money from their work. I don’t see any problem with that. I think it is part of the adapting. They got the story made, and the story is the most important for me. Everything is about the story and getting it out there.

Film genres and fitting circles into squares

SM: Hmm. I often wonder though, is this development of platforms and ‘wide’ or ‘easy’ access to content, creating a sense of production and consumption entitlement?

DC: To answer your question, I would like to further address the epistemological and pedagogical concerns we referred to earlier. I really believe that contemporary film production is a form of knowledge production for our world. So many Indigenous communities are using this form to preserve knowledge; it is not for public distribution, it is only for their internal use.

There are some really touchy points around intellectual property rights and Indigenous knowledge(s) because our communities have had knowledge extracted from our peoples for hundreds of years – much of it without informed consent. Researchers came into our communities and took our stories and copyrighted that information in their own names to earn their scholarly degrees. This means our communities are very careful about how research is done in our communities in these times. Our stories, which have been reduced to myths and not recognized for the critical cultural knowledge they hold. Our stories hold our laws that were given to our respective peoples. These stories provide guidance regarding how we are to interrelate with all the other beings on the land. Our stories inform our epistemological and pedagogical processes, our ways of knowing within our systems of knowledge.

These concerns also apply to film production because gathering visual stories is also a form of research thus have

a very strong pedagogical aspects. The conundrum is that many of the films that are being created now are coming from within Indigenous culture, without apology and without an explanation, regarding how they're located within colonialism. In that sense, most of our stories are teaching stories. This is an extraordinary development for our visual storytelling. Notwithstanding, this raises questions regarding how we, as filmmakers/visual storytellers, are protecting our cultural stories by respecting the epistemology of whatever culture is making that film. For instance, take the film *The Edge of the Knife*, directed by Gwaii Edenshaw and Helen Haig-Brown[8]. The core of this film absolutely comes from within the culture. It's done in the language; on the Haida landscape and completely infused with intimate interactions between the people, giving the audience the rhythm of the Haida culture. So, that story is a teaching story. Last year, at the *imagineNATIVE* Film and Media Arts Festival, we were picked up from the airport and I was riding in the same vehicle as Gwaii. The driver or someone referred to the film as a "horror film". I could feel and see the uneasiness of Gwaii, the Haida director. I jumped in and said, "It is not a horror film! It is a story from the culture. It is a teaching story". I think that, in all the film festivals, because we're consistently trying to fit our circles into square boxes and we're expected to think in their terms of Euro-Western "genres" and this skews the understanding of our visual stories. I keep asking this question, "What would we call these stories? What genres would we create from our perspectives? And, would we even call them "genres"?

SM: How can we rethink the film festival space? I really love what *imagineNATIVE* is doing, but there is always room for improvement for all festivals, especially when striving to properly include works by peoples of other nations, communities, and cultures, than those of staff and board. How can we rethink the role that is taken up by the "cultural advisor", in festivals, production and academic spaces, a position which is

8 *Edge of the Knife* (2018), in the Haida language as *SG̲aawaay K̲'uuna*, is a 2018 drama film, the first using various dialects of the Haida language. Co-directed by Gwaii Edenshaw and Helen Haig-Brown, it is set in 19th-century land of the Haida Gwaii People, off the northern Pacific coast of today's Canada. It re-enacts a Haida story of a traumatized and stranded man transformed to *Gaagiixiid*, the wildman. Refer to <https://youtu.be/DnbOw5Nuq2U>.

sometimes also be referred to as the “First Nations Advisor” or the “Indigenous Programming Direction Advisor”? Or, should we just move away from that entirely?

DC: This question brings up some of the complex relationships in terms of accountabilities because the funding bodies have conditions that have to be met by the creative team. It always matters where the money comes from. I think it calls for having producers who can be the bridge between funders and the creative people on the team. That is, creating a space where we, as Indigenous visual storytellers, are able to answer funders but still create within our own cultural context. I think that “cultural advisers” can be a problematic “appointment”. The industry will always find people who represent their interests. I have seen this over the years because in Indigenous country around the world you have a whole spectrum of thinkers. You are always going to have the one that’s assimilated and thinks it’s okay to be part of the State, who doesn’t understand the “visual sovereignty”, or the sovereignty of the people in terms of maintaining a spiritual relationship to the land, which leads to ensuring a continuance of life on the planet.

AEM: You pointed out that Indigenous film production is about knowledge production, seated firmly within Indigenous languages and traditions. On this point, I’m reminded of Martin Heidegger’s observation that language is “the house of life”. In that sense, the work of Indigenous filmmakers operates at the borderlands of culture, politics, history, and identity. It is located within reclaimed cultures, in relation to self and other, and in transgression of the colonial and colonizing frames of reference imposed by modernity and its contemporary articulations. Hence, Indigenous film production is not just about language revitalization and knowledge production. It is about (re)building, in a meaningful way, that “house of life” that one can inhabit, dwell in, live in, and in which one can find a meaning and a sense of purpose. Such a journey also speaks to the role films can play, under certain conditions, in decolonizing our modernity-saturated epistemic frameworks. Since Robert Flaherty’s “silent documentary”, *Nanook of the North* (1922), in

which he purported to "salvage" or record the Inuit way of life[9]. *Nanook* was a project driven by what I would call "a colonizing externality". In contrast, the work of contemporary Indigenous film production can be conceived of as "project of internality", associated with the (re)building of the "house of life", from within, "without apology or explanation", as you said.

DC: Yes. Such a project is absolutely centred in the language. In my dissertation, I developed a localized Indigenous Secwépemc-Syilx place-based/land-based theory, which is fundamentally located in concepts from the language(s). Visually, it is represented by a DNA spiral, which is often referred to as the building block of life. The two sides of the spiral represent two concepts from the Secwépemc and Syilx philosophies. First is the "reciprocal accountability" principle from the Secwépemc (Christian, 2017, p. 109). Then, the outer strand is the Syilx regenerative principles (Armstrong, 2009). These outer strands are linked by two Secwépemc concepts from the language, which are "*k'weltktnews*" (interrelatedness) and "*knucwestsut.s*" (personal responsibility) (Michel, 2012).

Stated differently, first, as individuals, we have a "personal responsibility", to be a healthy individual so that we may contribute to the collective of our families, communities and Nations in a healthy way so that life is perpetuated on the planet. Secondly, there's also reciprocal accountability, where you are not just accountable to yourself but you are also accountable to your family, your community and your Nation. As an Indigenous filmmaker, these principles underpin whom I had to be accountable to in writing my dissertation. There were layers of protocols that I had to attend to, and pay attention to, not just with the Nations I was working with, and who agreed to share their stories with me, but also within my own Nation. I had to go and explain to the Elders and leadership what I was doing; what the work entailed.

AEM: Do you see that as underpinning the very actions and practices through which you built that "house of life"? Filmmakers are, in a way, the "builders" of that house. What I like about

9 *Nanook of the North* is a 1922 "silent documentary" on Inuit life, directed by Robert J. Flaherty, with elements of staged drama (Mackenzie, 2015; Barnouw, 1993, pp. 33-51). A fully restored version is available on YouTube <https://youtu.be/m4kOIzMqso0 >.

that, and perhaps you can speak to it in some way, is that your approach offers a strong response to those who misunderstand the underpinnings of Indigenous filmmaking. For instance, some insinuate that they understand what happened under colonialism, the dispossession, the racism, and the genocide that were part of it. But, they keep asking whether it is possible to go back to a past that has been disrupted. I like your response: It is not so much about finding some kind of "lost paradise". Rather, Indigenous filmmaking is about reclaiming meanings and fulfillments *in* the present day, as part of reconnecting to that past while, at the same time, being creative and innovative in responding to present concerns of Indigenous peoples. This is, I think, how I understand the "accountability" you have been talking about as part of confronting the temporal consequences of colonialism. This articulation generates lots of insights into the role of Indigenous filmmakers, about their being in this world, of this world, and about them being "house builders" in a way that generates self-fulfillment, this sovereignty we have been talking about.

DC: Yes. So many people want our Indigenous cultures to be frozen in time because it pleases some kind of romantic notion for them, rather than looking at us as live beings today. My position is that our cultures are alive. We're constantly moving. It is organic. We're putting together things to maintain those foundational principles that contribute to building life and extending life on the lands that we are born on and for which we carry responsibilities.

AEM: I really appreciate that point, because Indigeneity cannot be reduced to a curatorial activity, whether within the frame of a museum, gallery, or some exhibition space, or as part of filmmaking. Rather, Indigenous filmmaking captures life in all its complexities, openness, unpredictability, challenges, innovations, traditions and, most importantly, aspirations. The ways you refer to your work—in writing, filmmaking, and art—speak strongly to that.

Indigenous filmmaking as travelling in entangled worlds

SM: Our conversation is really highlighting for me how entrenched the mainstream film industry is within the neocolonial—it really has been the neoliberal mainstream and it is this industry that struggles with accountability, consent,

respect, equity—imposing patriarchal, and many other, colonial norms, especially in relation to Indigenous, Afro or people of colour anything and women. It struggles with 'no'. But perhaps this is also because it is unfamiliar and disconnected from the forms of accountability you are referring to, Dorothy. In your doctoral dissertation you talk about "Fourth World" cinema and that it is more like a Fourth World justice[10]. It is a way of life that has not been stuck in the past. Neither does it exist in parallel to the past, nor is it future-obsessed. Rather it is intersecting through past and present in ways that connect with what both of you are talking about. In a time when many of us are grappling with standing firm with our 'NOs', this gives me hope. Your dissertation very much goes into this. Everything that has been the making of this "Fourth World" cinema, and how right now it keeps shifting and evolving, like a dance of survival, resistance and creation, it is so rich. It is another way for all of us to be, in the creative industries and, more generally, with our relationships.

This special issue will most likely reach (or so we hope) those active in the area of film studies, as well as other students within and outside of academia striving towards being among the industry's future generations. How do you feel about "film studies", if we are going to rethink the field of filmmaking?

DC: Note that I did not do either one of my degrees in film studies. I did that purposefully. My experience of that particular field is that it is very white. It assumes superiority towards filmmakers who are people of colour. The field is based in a white supremacist ideology like many Euro-Western disciplines that avoid the uncomfortable conversation when that is challenged. I am just being blunt here. Those in the field are very cliquish in terms of what they think makes a film or the criteria that they feel make films acceptable to them. This is also one of the

10 The term, "Fourth World" cinema comes from Barry Barclay's work, building on Secwépemc leader George Manuel. In my PhD dissertation, I put the two understandings together to speak of "Fourth World Cinema". Columpar (2010) explains that Barclay considered it in contradistinction to all forms of "invader cinema" (by First, Second, and Third worlds directors/producers). In that sense "Indigenous cinema" represents a "phenomenon" that comes from within Indigenous cultures and societies.

reasons why I did my graduate studies because I was reading in the film discourse about how, we, as Indigenous people, did not have a production practice. And I was like, Oh yeah!? I'm going to show you that we do!

That backdrop has been a large motivator for me. I mean there are some people who give me hope, like Corinn Columpar, from the University of Toronto[11]. She wrote a book, *Unsettling Sights* (2010). I was so pleased when I read it. Columpar clearly understands the land relationship. She understands the Fourth World and its cinema. Being involved in the film industry and in academia, as I am now, as Associate Director of Indigenous Initiatives at BC's Simon Fraser University, I have to deal with the Indigenous systems of knowledge meeting Euro-Western knowledge on a daily basis as part of my job. My title represents a huge umbrella. It is still about Indigenous Knowledge, its pedagogical and epistemological aspects, and how they can be used in classrooms. It's also about how we change curriculum to inform those classrooms. This is a very heavy administrative position in terms of paperwork. I keep myself involved in film because I have to stay in touch with the creative aspects to maintain a balance in my life.

AEM: Have you had instances or experiences of pushbacks, of challenges posed to collaboration, of misunderstandings, or even opposition to the kinds of insights you have brought to bear on your work?

DC: [With humour [laughter]. I can think of one instance when I was appointed Chair of the Ontario Film Review Board. I had served as a board member during my undergraduate studies

11 Corinn Columpar is Associate Professor and Director of the Cinema Studies Institute at the University of Toronto. Her work focuses on "filmmaking practices and textual politics of various counter-cinematic traditions (especially feminist, Aboriginal, and 'independent') as well as, more generally, film theory, embodiment and representation, and collaborative practice". Her *Unsettling Sights: The Fourth World on Film* (2010) is "a monograph that examines the construction of Aboriginality in contemporary cinema from Canada, the US, New Zealand, and Australia". Her co-edited volume (with Sophie Mayer), *There She Goes: Feminist Filmmaking and Beyond* (2009), is an anthology dedicated to the flows and exchanges that characterize feminist cultural production. For more details, refer to <http://www.cinema.utoronto.ca/faculty-columpar.html>.

before being asked to be chair for a couple of years. On my very first day on the job, an elder white man came into my office. His energy was just very weird and he said to me, "You know, the only reason you got this job is because you're an Indian" [laughter]. I remember looking at him and my internal voice asking, "how should I deal with this"? I said to him, "Oh really? Have you read my CV? Do you know where I've worked, in what corporations?" Then, I very graciously stood up and said, "I have a meeting in two minutes; can you please leave". I did not have a meeting. I just wanted him out of my office. I had to work with him for over the two years as Chair. He was also one of the people who kept talking about "*our* Aboriginals" and "*our* Natives". One day, I finally said to him, "We do not belong to you; we do not belong to anybody. We belong to ourselves. We are the bosses of ourselves". He stopped saying that.

A second example, regarding challenges facing collaboration, concerns my interaction with two white men filmmakers, quite established in the industry. They wanted me to come on board and serve as a co-director with them, working with Indigenous people up north. It was around a very sensitive subject matter, namely sexual abuse. After several encounters and communication exchanges I recognized that it's *their* story. They need to tell or explain what they are going through in terms of their politically correct idea in order to not be seen as telling an Indigenous story without consultation. I said to them that I could not co-direct with them. I would gladly help them along their process and they could ask me questions as they go along. But, I strongly saw that it was *their* story and that the people trusted them. So, maybe they needed to talk about relationship building and what it was like for them, as two white men, trying to do this Indigenous story and the things they encountered. I said that would be a really useful film for people to learn from, if they did that. I was not prepared to serve as the "Indigenous" director so they could access funding; nor was I prepared to legitimize their story with my name and reputation.

AEM: I think your story that resonates with the ending of Juan Carlos Valdivia's 2013 film, *Yvy Marae* (known in English as *Land Without Evil*), which VLAFF programmed in 2014 as part of its 12th edition. The film retraces the experiences of a Spanish filmmaker who travelled to Bolivia to shoot a documentary on the Guarani People. Accompanied with a crew, and with full

equipment, they travelled in a Jeep reminiscent of an "explorer" in a colonial expedition. The interesting thing is that, in one of the last scenes, that Jeep—the driving technological force carrying everyone and everything into Indigenous land—ends up in a bush, completely dismantled—that is, mechanically deconstructed – by members of this Indigenous people. The film ends with the camera undertaking a close-up of an Indigenous girl, sitting on the dismantled Jeep, capturing her eyes, through which the story ends. This scene provides a vivid reminder of the need to always interrogate the ethical practices of those who stand behind the camera. Flipping the camera around, in an act of "doubling", as in Valdivia's film, helps interrogate those ethical practices associated with the manipulation of the camera. Garnet Butchart (2013) refers to the "camera as sign" in discussing the ethics of concealment in documentaries and in films, more generally. In that sense, eyes set borders to the camera, borders I may not want to transgress because I do not see myself part of someone else's story. I can go with you so far. But, you would have to take the remainder of that journey on your own terms. I appreciated that kind of nuance that you're bringing into your experiences, Dorothy, because your experiences show that when we talk about collaboration, especially between Indigenous and non-Indigenous filmmakers, it is not something to be taken for granted. The eyes, or the camera lenses we use, extend beyond the technology, into the mind and the cultural forms of representations it carries.

Visual decolonizing pedagogies

AEM: Could you speak to your engagement with Indigenous filmmakers, artists, and writers? To what extent have their works found their way into your own work?

DC: Barry Barclay is a major inspiration, right at the outset. His book, *Our Own Image* (1990), was difficult to find. When I first read that book, I was jumping up and down because I was so excited that Barclay had put into words so many of the things that I had experienced in the field. I thought, "Oh, good! I'm not by myself". Equally, the impact Alanis Obomsawin had on us, across the country, and indeed around the world, is un-measurable. I call her the Grand Dame of Indigenous film production. When she spoke to me as part of my doctoral work, she was 83 at the time and working on five films. She just doesn't stop. I mean here she is, I believe she's 87 now, and

she's working on two productions, I heard. When she made *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), I was there at Oka when she was behind the lines collecting footage of the experiences of the Warriors, Clan mothers and Faith Keepers who were surrounded by the Canadian military. She was being brave and fierce in staying with the people behind the lines, even though the government had ordered all the journalists out[12]. I was behind closed doors, doing communications, reaching out to people all around the world because Canada had mainly closed us out in terems of the media [13].

There are so many Indigenous people who have influenced me and affected me. I was learning from them around the cultural appropriation issue in the 1980s. I was living in Toronto then and working on my undergraduate degree. They used to come and stay at my house—Lee Maracle and Jeannette Armstrong[14]--because nobody could afford hotel rooms. They used to sleep on my couch, or on the floor, and we'd have incredibly deep discussions about many things. I spent time with Maria Campbell during that time too. There have been some really important opportunities for me to work alongside these women. It was an incredible learning opportunity because I was taken away from my culture. I was in white foster homes when I was a

12 *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* is a 1993 much acclaimed documentary directed film by Alanis Obomsawin. It chronicles the 1990 land dispute that took place in Quebec and which involves the Mohawk people and the town of Oka. The documentary won 18 Canadian and international awards, among which the Distinguished Documentary Achievement Award from the International Documentary Association.

13 My people, the Sewepemc and Syilx Nations of the interior of BC did a Peace Run starting in BC and they ran across the country to deliver a medicine bundle to the Mohawks. Of course we did not include that information in the press releases because it would have become an object of curiosity, rather than understanding the spiritual intent. The Elders and Spiritual people charged me with managing the front-line communications, writing press releases and VISION TV was the only Canadian media outlet that "heard" our message of Peace – the majority of media outlets were promoting a sensationalized, glamourized version of the events while they criminalized some of the men and women behind the lines.

14 Jeannette Armstrong (born 1948) is a member of the Sylix Okanagan nation in British Columbia. She is a prolific writer, artist and activist. For more details on her work and accomplishments refer to <https://bcbooklook.com/2016/02/02/103-jeannette-armstrong/>.

kid. I was apprehended when I was13 but luckily I had the first few years of my life with my grandparents who raised me. The time that I had with these women was a part of my reconnecting to my people and my culture.

AEM: In many ways, Barry Greenwald's *The Experimental Eskimos* (2009), a documentary (partially based on archival materials), chronicles "social engineering" experiments undertaken in the 1960s on the part of the Canadian government in Ottawa. These experiments sought the assimilation of Inuit communities by forcefully removing Inuit children of "outstanding ability" from their families and communities and assigning them to foster urban white middle class families, thus disrupting northern Indigenous family ties and destroying Indigenous culture. The documentary makes particularly visible the vicissitudes associated with the emergence and organisation of Indigenous activists and leaders, and the struggles they had to continually endure over the backdrop of traumatising Canadian federal policies of dispossession[15]. Policy makers and politicians were adamant regarding the implementation of such experimental policies. One Ottawa official observed in one of his letters that, "We must follow through with the natural consequences of that program," though the "consequences" were already fully understood at the time. The struggles of Indigenous activists and community elders and members, as was the case during the Oka crisis of 1990 in Quebec, share a similar pattern to the one you shared with us here.

DC: Inuit people, and their struggles, have had a huge influence on representation of story in this country. I do not think that they get the attention that they deserve for that. When I was speaking with Zacharias Kunuk, he explained to me that it was his community of Igloolik who voted not to have film programming from the south parachuted into their communities during the

15 For details on this documentary, refer to <http://www.whitepinepictures.com/experimental-eskimos/?v=3e8d115eb4b3>. Regarding the involvement of the Canadian State, as well as religious congregations, in forced assimilation and social engineering experiments (including residential schools), refer to The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, at <http://www.trc.ca/>.

early 1970s[16]. They voted against because there was nothing in these films that represented them. They were all in English, of course, and the Inuktitut language wasn't there. To me, it is no accident that an Inuit was at the helm of making sure that Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) got the licence. Abraham Tagalik worked tirelessly with Indigenous groups in the south to achieve this amazing feat[17]. It is also no surprise that Zacharias was the first Indigenous from Canada to get his film, *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (ᐊᑕᓇᕐᔪᐊᑦ, 2001), screened at the Cannes Film Festival in France. The film was awarded the *Caméra d'Or*, the first Canadian film to achieve that honour. *Atanarjuat* was one of the community's stories and it was from within the culture. I had to go and see that film three times to understand it! I have a tremendous amount of respect for Zacharias for doing that, because he created this film for his people and they were involved in every aspect of the production. He chose aesthetics (landscapes, sounds, and images) that are congruent to his culture and language.

AEM: What you say, Dorothy, brings me to think about the challenges met by Indigenous films, and you referred to that earlier. Normally, in Western cinema production one would make distinctions between different "genres" of films, say a documentary film, a fiction or narrative film. Would you think that these distinctions hold in relation to Indigenous films? Should there be different kind of distinctions with regard to Indigenous films?

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16 Zacharias Kunuk (1957-) is an Inuk director and producer, best known for his film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (2001), the first Canadian film to be spoken entirely in the Inuktitut language. On Kunuk's life and work, refer to <http://www.isuma.tv/members/zacharias-kunuk>. Igloolik is an Inuit community in Foxe Basin, Qikiqtaaluk Region, Territory of Nunavut, northern Canada. It is worth noting that Zacharias Kunuk and his collective in the north distribute Indigenous stories internationally. Refer to: <https://rdvcanada.ca/en/creating-with-canada/find-creative-partners/companies/isuma-distribution-international/>.

17 Abraham Tagalik was APTN's first chairperson. He envisioned APTN as contributing to "intercultural understanding and community building" (Tahmahkera, 2014, p. 148). He currently describes himself as "an announcer operator" at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation North, in Iqaluit, Nunavut. Refer to this video interview with Tagalik < https://vimeo.com/63942888 >.

SM: I want to push that to the following question: Is the industry now ready to grasp that story is knowledge? I'm connecting this question to the release of a new book, co-edited by Jo-ann Archibald, Jenny Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo (2019), with a foreword by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*, and to which you contributed a chapter. This groundbreaking book emphasizes the centrality of stories in the construction and transmission of Indigenous knowledge. Do you feel the industry is getting that Indigenous stories represent knowledge?

DC: Well, I think they are grappling with it, but they do not fully understand it. Maybe this is where film festivals can begin to explore this problematic. I have tried to talk about this with some filmmakers. They are not interested in this intellectual conversation. They just want to make their visual stories. So, I think it is up to us, as scholars, who are involved in the intellectual discourse to start challenging that and finding ways to explore what are the genres from an Indigenous perspective. That said, I feel that *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* and *Edge of the Knife* are teaching stories. I do not know how the two visual stories I talked about, *Grandmother Story*, and the "visual essay" on horses—would be categorized from our Indigenous worldviews. Many of our works get slotted into "experimental" because mainstream film programmers don't understand the work.

I have one independent film that I did, just before I started graduate school, entitled "*A spiritual land claim"*. It is a story of the decolonizing of the self. It was my journey back to my land and back to my people. It is not just my story; it is the story of many dispossessed Indigenous peoples. I did it with very little narrative. I was experimenting with the concept of sound because Indigenous people treat sound very differently than other peoples, I believe. Sound is also an evocative tool for all kinds of things. You can be in a room with many Indigenous people and there can be complete silence on the auditory level. But, energy-wise there are things going on. That is what I was trying to get at; what is not not being said. Equally, Indigenous people treat time differently, and can relate to different time spaces (past, present and future) at the same time. In that film, this is what I was exploring. Here, too, I was pushing the boundaries by bringing together traditional and contemporary

songs to defy the frozen in time of our cultures. I brought in traditional values with contemporary values because I was showing that, even in this day and age, my people still hunt; my people still picked berries, doing all the things that are associated with hunter and gatherer people and we still co-exist with the land while, at the same time listening to contemporary sounds of the cello, the fiddle, and songs created by Indigenous people of this time.

Regarding documentary films, I read a book by Bill Nichols (1991), *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, when preparing a keynote for the University of Victoria (BC). I entitled my talk precisely "Whose Reality Is it Anyway?". Indigenous documentaries and the way we have been doing film, I've been watching how filmmakers have been changing the form because it's like Creative Nonfiction. They fictionalize aspects of real life or they recreate experiences from their lives that they can't necessarily "film" in a real-life situation.

AEM: It seems to me that maintaining genre labels—and not interrogating their epistemic and ontological assumptions—is a form of colonisation. Questioning these labels and interrogating them is therefore very important to build a distinctive and meaningful house, if we are to take the works of Indigenous filmmakers seriously and on their own terms.

SM: Thank you, Dorothy, you have touched me in two ways, especially the film programmer side of me. Firstly, I feel more empowered. People look at the programme and they are asking, "What film genre is this?" Can you not just call it an "Indigenous creative work" or perhaps "documentary"? Then, we go back and try to fit a film into this or another box, even though we realize what a disservice to the work and creator that is. In the past two years we have started work concertedly to move away from that, with some of my close friends and colleagues, who are either Indigenous or very connected and committed to Indigenous teachings and communities, doing a lot of (un) learning. But, it is hard! We are really learning that right now. You could not have said it any clearer.

Secondly, you also spoke to the importance of capturing what is not being said, and that is something that comes across

in *A Spiritual Land Claim*. It really moved me when I first saw it. It does not include a lot of narration, you did not need to say a lot. Visuals and sound do not need to be communicating at once. We also do not need to hear nor see everything. I feel that those attached to the production, curatorial and consumption norms of the mainstream industry are still looking for everything to be said, to get something tangible out of it, through sound or script lines. The mainstream industry is just beginning to tune in to this Indigenous knowledge, which is in relation to film, technical expertise that has always been present in Indigenous visual media works.

I think that there is so much power, and so much to get out of paying attention to what is not said. Elders, teachers, and mentors have all been teaching me this; something that we can return to within the film industry. That itself is a really important reminder and lesson.

DC: Yes, it is, Sonia. I want to go back to the comments on policies. Canada is attempting to address things through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and calls to action. There are some Canadians who want us to just get over it, that is, forget the history of how their government policies have oppressed and destroyed our peoples and our cultures. My brother takes a strong stance towards this attitude when he calls the policies that have been put in place to manage Indigenous peoples in Canada as a "legislated genocide". It makes me think about my time in white foster homes and the destruction of the generations before me who were forced to attend residential schools. I am so grateful that my grandparents did not go to Residential School and they were the ones that raised me during the first few years of my life. It also solidifies for me how it is so important for us to keep making these stories from within the culture and from our own perspectives because it is about perpetuating life on the ancestral lands that we live on. Most importantly, it is about countering the colonial narratives that continue to perpetuate the stereotypes.

For young filmmakers, who are just beginning, I remember this student asking me when I was invited to deliver a guest lecture at SFU, at Harbour Centre, in Vancouver. She asked me, at the end of my lecture, how was I so high functioning given all the things that I have lived through! I chuckled to myself,

thinking of all the images that must have gone through her mind, of all of the stereotypes, and how I defy those stereotypes just by being who I am, and by just being able to do the things that I do. To young people who are starting, I would say that what got me through was going back and reclaiming my culture. Pay respects to your ancestors. Learn what it is that your culture is trying to teach you. When you get to that point you can see through that lens. It is done piecemeal; I did it over a number of years; it is not as if you go into one class, and you sit and learn. Rather, I have had many teachers over the years, elders, and mentors whom you get to know along the way. I have put myself into experiential learning situations, which means going and participating in the culture, actually going and being on the land with the people. It does not happen instantly.

SM: That is true, we are looking and reaching out for that one methodology class which teaches students, in one term, how to reflect and decolonize themselves to be able to do a dissertation; or for that trending decolonial collective that will 'enlighten us' employing a bunch of jargon yet denying the logocentric power it wields; or, that one acclaimed film study course that teaches future documentarians how to look inside themselves and capture their emotions quickly to make an award winning film. Bringing it back to time, the importance of valuing time and dedicating time to such learning is humbling. This is totally the opposite of what the industries are (academic and film), which is a lot of speed, rapid production and publication, ego, and glitz and glam.

On this note, I would like to share my and our collective thanks to you, Dorothy, for really bringing your voice, your knowledge, your communities, your power, to this special issue project. Thank you for joining us, and for taking the time to share your experiences with us.

DC: Thank you for having me. It has been great.

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