

**Know Your Place for Mental Health on the Prairies:
Tacting a Topography of Learning from Alberta for Curricula and Educational Studies**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Secondary Education

University of Alberta

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Abstract

How might we understand the role of place within mental health? Already exposed as a teacher to a harmful curriculum of place in Alberta, I posed this question based on the opinion that place relations mattered for making sense of mental health here. Local educators and many beyond, may need to be made aware of a long-running local curriculum on the prairies once invested in perpetuating the eugenics project. Violent and racist, this mental health initiative applied pioneering metaphors, ancient philosophy, medicalized definitions, and ideals shaped by settler-colonialism to garner public support. In resistance, I purposely sought place-conscious ideas in and around amiskwaciy wâskahikan on Treaty 6 territory or Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. A review focusing on intercultural, transdisciplinary, lyrical, and decolonizing sensibilities assisted with generating *tact-full* educational exercises for grounding the co-creative approach introduced as an innovation for academic and critical ecohermeneutic research. Of late, ecohermeneutics has emerged from the texts of curriculum studies as a philosophical, place-conscious practice of interpretation to question and challenge conceptual notions associated with collective mis/understandings and broken relations in Canada. From four rounds of one-on-one meetings with former junior high students over eight months, possible alternative, conceptual responses relevant to the contexts of present-day schooling were expressed and gathered. Following each round, I met with a local Knowledge Keeper, providing ecological teachings and translations of place names that emerged through my former students' resonant descriptions. Then, layered images from the field were arranged alongside our transcribed interpretations.

Keywords: co-creative ecohermeneutics, curriculum studies, mental health, place, tact

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Regan Holt, in collaboration with a collective of creative contributors—Yari, Joey, Dorthia, and Dr. Shaun Hains.¹ As a result, this research does include the introduction of a *co-creative* critical ecohermeneutics as a novel contribution to the hermeneutic, interpretive research tradition. The research project of which this thesis is a part received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board. Project Name: “*Know Your Place for Mental Health on the Prairies: A Conceptual Study for Canadian Curricula*,” REB Pro00113591, September 20, 2021. Funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Canada Graduate Doctoral Program Scholarship, formerly the Joseph-Bombardier Graduate Scholarship, provided financial support. SSHRC Application Name: “*Exploring Intercultural Understandings of Mental Health for School Contexts*.”

Sections of this thesis were previously published, including:

- the image of *amiskwaciy wâskahikan* on p. xvii and the poem embedded in the field note on page 97, as found in *Poetic Inquiry for Synchrony and Love: A New Order of Gravity* (forthcoming), A. Fidyk and D. St. Georges (Eds.), Publisher: Common Ground, by Regan Holt under the title *Rendering the “Reinhabitation” of a Research Setting*.
- text on pages 48 to 68, as found in the *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education/Revue canadienne des jeunes chercheurs et en éducation*, 13(2), 89-102, by Regan Holt under the title *What Does Mental Health Mean? An Ecocritical*

¹ Yari, Joey, and Dorthia are pseudonyms to protect the privacy of these individuals as former students and research participants.

Conceptual Review of an Albertan Curricula, retrieved from,

<https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/cjnse/article/view/75799>

- the image *Solastalgia* found on page 116 of this thesis was the featured cover image for this volume of the *Journal of Jungian Scholarly Studies*, 17(1) in 2022, retrieved from <https://jungianjournal.ca/index.php/jjss>
- page 117—a similar artist statement can be found on page 111 of the volume named above: <https://jungianjournal.ca/index.php/jjss>

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge my mother and father, Ivadell and David Holt, my little sister, Kelsey Holt, and my long-time friend, Carla Broad, for their critical assistance. Without their support, I may not have completed this work due to an unexpected, serious physical injury. I would also like to thank my second family, the Stewarts—Katherine, Hashim, Amira, and Amar for their ongoing assistance.

I am forever grateful to Dr. Alexandra Fidyk, my program and research supervisor. Dr. Fidyk, thank you for your bravery, courage, ingenuity, creativity, and patience. I also wish to express my gratitude to Drs. Diane Conrad and Kent den Heyer for their service as members of my supervisory committee. I am further honoured to have had the following scholars on my examination teams: Drs. Dwayne Donald, Trudy Cardinal, Maryanne Doherty, Nancy Moules, D.G. Smith, and Derek Gladwin. Also, I wish to acknowledge Drs. Reva Joshee, Lenora LeMay, and Denise Larsen, alongside Wendy Edey, for teaching me about hope and peace in post-secondary education (not to forget Dr. Karen C.!). To Drs. Ali Abi and Makere Stewart-Harawira: Thank you for the blessing of your guidance and support back when I was a student in educational policy studies.

Further, I would like to thank Melaina Weiss, Alexandra Olsivik, Emilia Monkiewicz, Linda McFalls, Billie-Dawn McDonald, and Drs. Mandy Krahm and Vessela Balinska-Ourdeva, my fellow learners, teachers, creatives, and friends. Marlene Hanson, Dr. Elizabeth Shen, Errol Johnson, and J. P. Cooper—thank you for supporting my professional growth and development as a teacher. Yari, Joey, and Dorthia—as former students, you continue to challenge and inspire me. Thank you for your gift of time and creative contributions to this research. Finally, to Dr. Shaun Hains: nya:wëh sgë:nö’.

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The Conversation



Field Note. Edmonton, Alberta, May 2021, The Conversation. “[Embroidered with acrylic floss woven in and through a white plastic backing stabilizer, snagged with shears, photographed, framed, and filtered with the Snapseed application for Android devices; by R. Holt]. Artist statement: This work was rendered to honour Dr. Shaun Hains, the Knowledge Keeper who contributed ecological teachings to inform this research.

Some Preliminary Research Notes

The Purpose of this Research

Discovering, recovering, and identifying place-conscious, intercultural understandings of mental health in Edmonton, Alberta, was the intended purpose of this research to inform Canadian curriculum and educational studies. Ecohermeneutic writing, a philosophical style of rendering text, was the chosen medium to express this co-creative inquiry. As a result, this body of work may read for some as alternative or untraditional in its arrangement and formatting.

Ecohermeneutics, a *hermeneutic* research approach, was recently and notably developed to challenge conceptual ideals that dominate to privilege Eurocentric or Westernized cultural ways of being or knowing how to be (Derby, 2015; Jardine, 2015a). Unfortunately, some very harmful assumptions have taken up fortified or fixed positions in *educational* understandings, shaping the curricula of schools and local institutions of learning to inform students and the teaching profession. Some of these assumptions have, for a long time, lingered in conceptualizations of health, contributing to idealized systemic beliefs, including those relevant to the topic of this research—*mental health* (see Chapman, 1977; German, 1927; Grekul et al., 2004; Ladd-Taylor, 1997; McLaren, 1990; Parlbay, 1916; Soltice, 1996).

As a result, there was a cautious intention throughout this inquiry to avoid perpetuating what the trailblazing hermeneutic scholar John D. Caputo (1987) called “eloquent assurances” (p. 4; see also Jardine & Field, 1996). Explained further by renowned Alberta-based hermeneutic educators David Jardine and James C. Field (1996), Caputo introduced this notion to reflect a sensitivity for interpretive research practitioners. According to Jardine and Field (1996), this was a hermeneutic sensitivity that did not avoid and subsequently should never overlook the “intractabilities of everyday life” (p. 255). In other words, hermeneutic researchers influenced by

the work of Caputo (1987) have aimed their attention toward the complex problems or issues at the core of conflicts of understanding that offer paradoxes or cannot be simply solved or explained. Following in the earlier tradition of hermeneutics, *eco*-hermeneutic scholars, such as Michael W. Derby (2015), David Jardine (2015a), Andrejs Kulnieks, Dan Longboat, and Kelly Young (2010), would also reject “*idealized* images of rationality, clarity, and understanding that underwrite the European philosophical heritage” (Jardine & Field, 1996, p. 255). Indeed, most hermeneutic writing as philosophical writing has historically challenged its own Eurocentric tradition and prejudices. As a result, differing branches of hermeneutics still often require a dedicated, reflective space for the researchers within their own research.

My process for integrated reflection was profoundly experienced yet also, at times, a struggle. This difficulty was due to how my research reflection was always ongoing and, over time, became more of a *reflexive* exploration to render personal, cultural, historical, linguistic, and geographic biases that readers of this research can access. Much like standing on a great stretch of unfamiliar prairie meadow reaching out to a destination just beyond the horizon, I could not assume that the path ahead would be flat and straight or lead to a particular outcome as I set out in a direction. There were possible trenches, sinkholes, boggy grounds, or something else unknown to consider. Therefore, my capacity to be flexible, open, curious, and attentive to ever-changing surroundings was necessary, albeit difficult at times, to embody. For example, occasional missteps would prompt a redirection or some backtracking. Consequently, just as a compass as an innovation of scientific methodology could not alone advise such a journey, ideas of science as a discipline could occupy to inform but not dominate to direct my ecohermeneutic approach to this research.

Importantly, through collaboration with other creative contributors who were the research participants, conceptual ideas emerging from this study were *visually expressed* and *lyrically rendered* to reflect variation, conflict, ineffability, and inconsistency in and between translations and interpretations of languages and images. Also, symbols signalling contested conditions have been highlighted, including some that inhabit seemingly universal assumptions linked nowadays to mental health as a prominent term in Eurocentric or Westernized educational curricula.

Notice the Curricular Movements

Moving on, be sure to notice how the following sections framing the required elements of this research unfolded as *curricular movements* to disrupt the predictability of organized chapters. These movements emerged from this research, seemingly for the benefit of educators like me, now reading this work. Perhaps others may also wish to challenge, reflect, or refine their approaches when engaging their students in the study of mental health. In other words, these movements, called *Arrivals*, *Regressions*, *Departures*, and *Returns*, mark for readers the imminent conditions supposed to be relevant to the conceptualized terrains waiting ahead.

What else might readers expect? Well, over time, the meadows surrounding my local landscape, much like other terrains, will inevitably be altered by weather, erosion, climate, and seasonal shifts, just as understandings across time do also change as a result of conditions of *place*—also the setting of cultural and linguistic norms. So readers can expect to encounter what generally gets taken for granted by dominant Western society here in Alberta and beyond, to be interpreted as a precondition of inheritance, history, cultural values, language, relationships, and ecology. Readers can also expect that the ideas transcribed in this text, whether historical, hidden, radical, predictable, or something else, have been depicted as transient, impermanent, and prone to the natural processes of decay.

As philosophical texts, many hermeneutic sources can be read repeatedly as ongoing or continuous supports to destabilize communicative and historical modes of thought to evolve human understanding. Therefore, the textual structure, style, and rather untraditional formatting may have contributed to some unsettled interpretive passages for readers to grasp at a first, second, or third reading. However, wary of this warning, readers should not expect neatly framed assertions or linear designs to render the processes in this text. For example, certainties given to the definitions of terms could *not* (and should not) be pinned down, fixed, exacted, or claimed to be an outcome of my hermeneutic sensibility, the ecohermeneutic approach engaged through co-creativity, or the ideas generated by the participants of this research.

Following the rhythms of Treaty 6 territory as the research setting, the implications of this inquiry surfaced slowly and so will naturally deviate over text in time for readers. *Field notes* have been inserted as a navigation support for reading through this research, although these differ from traditional research notes. These field notes, set in quotation marks, signal to readers content written explicitly by me in reflection to reveal some of the philosophy underpinning conceptual ideals given to different sections of this text and to highlight the often metaphoric assumptions shaping many of the beliefs discovered. As an additional medium for translating my ecohermeneutic writing and approach, these field notes also reference the images that would develop alongside co-created, transcribed interpretations given within passages of dialogue.

My engagement with ecohermeneutic writing did assist in inspiring some of the ideas highlighted in this research focusing on mental health. Significantly, the developments of this interpretive project would lead me to propose a set of ten exercises that express a more co-creative ecohermeneutic approach for educational and curricular research. These ten exercises, explained in detail in the section of this text titled *Departures*, would include topobiographical

reflexion, eco-haptic visuality, place-conscious hermeneutic journalling, place-conscious dialogue integrating image creation, conversations with a local Knowledge Keeper, participatory eco-pictorial scripting, symbolic amplification, metonymic highlighting, and the identification of metaphorical coherence.

Keeping in mind the need for more relational, intercultural conceptual understandings of mental health was my observation. So was the need to engage with a flexible place-conscious philosophical focus on the more fixed and fixated positions charged with shaping psychological or mental health interventions for education. My attention here was in support of creative research that might better contribute to the health of learning environments. Educators are responsible for establishing safe learning environments, which, importantly, includes protecting the psychological health of children, youth, and adults as *our* students and fellow human beings in *our* care (I am a practicing teacher, after all).

Next, I wish to note my attention to word spelling and translation. Admittedly, I am using terminology in my writing outside of my first language, so I have relied upon academic research, dictionaries, a trusted Knowledge Keeper, and former students to support the translation of the expressions of language portrayed as new learning for me.

Most critically, terminology from the Cree-nêhiyawêwin language was distinctly featured in this regional study contemplating the conceptual relationship between mental health and place. Notably, as mentioned by Kyle Napier and Lana Whiskeyjack (2021), the Cree language, or nêhiyawêwin dialect here, does not use capitalization conventions for proper nouns.

According to these local educators, avoiding capitalization conventions prevalent in English grammar was “so as not to hold orthographic hierarchy and prioritize one word, sound, or morpheme as more important than others” (p. 3). That said, readers can expect to encounter

Cree-nêhiyawêwin words, on most occasions, as an uncapitalized first term at the start of sentences or as a proper noun. Indigenous words that *have been* capitalized then signal that they are not of the Cree-nêhiyawêwin language but of another language requiring different grammatical conventions. Notably, I have also applied alternative grammatical patterns to communicate the expression of writing given to this research, including how I have purposefully integrated *past*, *present*, and *future* verb tenses and juxtaposed first, second, and third-person perspectives.

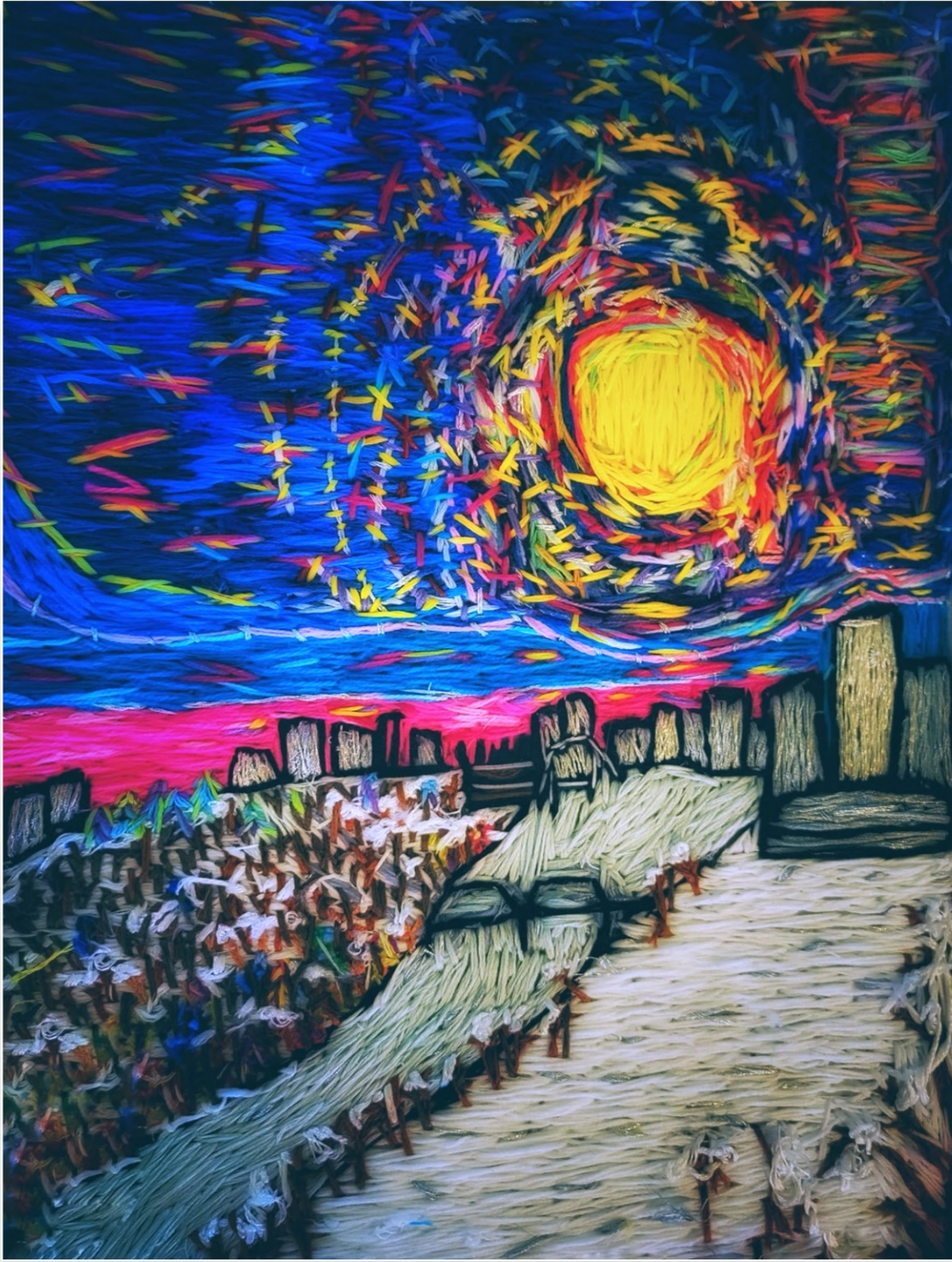
Furthermore, as a gesture to signal the relevancy of each of the four curricular movements (*Arrivals, Regressions, Departures, and Returns*) sectioning the majority of this text, an alperta (Alberta) nêhiyawêwin (Cree) translation of the title for each movement was *placed* alongside an English origin of definition. This contrasting of a local land-based Indigenous expression with the etymology of the English language as a colonial source for developing translations was purposeful as a means to shed light upon some of the *conflicts of understanding* within the curricula, *here in places*, for instance, by provoking social or collective movements, whether consciously acknowledged or not.

Image as text. Finally, to share, for now, all images given to this research relay stories inspired by awesome, curious, and also awe-full/awful memories linked to places. Many of these images also expressed a lingering sense of ineffability felt after research meetings and during attempts to recover missing, forgotten, or emergent details from deeply personal, complex, and meaning-filled memories. As a result, it did not seem ethical or in alignment with the standards of the *Publication Manual for the American Psychological Association (APA)*, 7th Edition (2020), to describe any images generated for this research as *figures*. APA (2020) has instructed that “good figures” (p. 225) embrace “simplicity, clarity, continuity, and information

value” (p. 225). Whether the images generated from this research were sketched, coloured, woven, photographed, or threaded, all rendered complicated stories carefully curated to support comprehension of the meanings and conceptual ideas that emerged from this research. Therefore, when encountered, these images should be considered equal to any word to express meaning in this text (see Fidyk & St. Georges, 2020, 2022).

Field note. Stoney Plain, Alberta, July 4, 2023. “Following next is a land acknowledgement to demonstrate my appreciation for the research setting. This land acknowledgment introduces readers to descriptions of regional place names set alongside references to land-based languages spoken here. These descriptions and references to origins of place names include language derivations that reveal to *us* as *human-beings-in-the-world* (see Heidegger, 1927/2010) an existence of interrelated living ecologies (i.e. places) that inform how we-humans interpret *things* (M. M. Weiss, personal doctoral student communication, July 3, 2023). The indication is for each of us. Particular places will shape our understanding of the world, our connections to the world, and our relationships, including to the *self*—as the routinely assumed psyche or soul in mental health.

Take, for example, the origins of my European surname—*Holt*. Researching the etymology has taught me that at least some of my ancestors were likely *of the woods* and *the forests*—as the literal translation of *Holt*. Even before learning about this meaning derived from my family name, my natural tendency has been to seek out earthen pathways that would allow me to linger near or under a tree canopy, when possible, for the sake of solace. Yet, highlighting the roots of my inherited last name here was *not* an attempt at some *idealization* of my identity or my origins. Instead, tracing the linguistic roots underpinning my ancestry was about the awakening of my consciousness to an aliveness of place within and beyond me—to gain some sense of an *inherent spirit*, prone to the more forested and brushier topographies, as alluded to by my place-conscious surname in translation.”



Field note. Edmonton, Alberta, March 8, 2022. *amiskwaciȳ wāskahikan*. “[Embroidered with acrylic floss in and through a white plastic backing stabilizer using a yarn darning, framed, and filtered using the Snapseed application for Android devices; by R. Holt].”

In Appreciation of the Regional Research Setting

For thousands of years, and still, the high prairie hills on the great North American plain shaping the setting of this research was, and is, for many nations of people, a place to stop, rest, cross over, trade, and gather (Alberta Teachers' Association or ATA, 2018a). Perhaps due to European settlement or not, the Cree-nêhiyawahk and Dēnē Sųłnē-Chipewyan nations would name the local landscape amiskwacyi wâskahikan or sawyah-thay-koi which translates to *beaver hills house* (Donald, 2004; LeClaire et al., 1998; Shields et al., 2019). The T'suu T'ina-Sarcee, Ojibway-Saulteaux-Anishanaabe, and nations of the Siksikaitsitapi used slightly different toponyms or place names, although together they expressed a singular meaning for this land as the *big house* or Nasagachoo, Omukoyis, and Titunga respectively (The Canadian Museum of History or CMH, n.d; Silversides, 2005).

Distinct and topographical dialects spoken here include those of the *mix* or Michif—French-Cree; *the river*—Enoch Cree, sipiwiyiniwak (The City of Edmonton or CoE, 2020); *the rocky mountains* or Stoney—Sioux Nakota Isga-Assinboine (CoE, 2020); *the rapids*—of the Saulteaux (Asikinack, n.d.); *the land and water*—Dēnē Sųłnē-Chipewyan kin to the Dene Tha (CoE, 2020); and the Blackfoot confederacy of *the prairie fire*—or the Siksika, Kainai-Blood, and Peigan-Piikani (Bastien, 1948/2004; Van Tighem 2017). Also present are the vocabularies of more distant geographies arriving from *the eastern longhouses* of the Haudenosaunee-Iroquois as Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora (Barman, 2019); *the thundering bay north of the superior waters*—home to Ojibwe-Anishanaabe (Hains, personal communication, 2022); *the white-clay southern plains*—of the Algonquian, Atsina-Gros Ventures, or A'aninin (Kane, 1925; Kuiper, 2022); and *butte valley of the south wind*, Arkansas, as long occupied by the Osage, Caddo, Chickasaw, Tunica, and Quapaw (Gladstone, 1985).

A river has long-endured, running in and through this place, despite the throngs of seasonal extremes as a regional habitat for walleye, sturgeon, perch, trout, and other fish species, and as a watershed ecosystem for the beaver, prairie caribou, prairie moose and elk, white-tailed deer, coyote, woodpecker, wood duck, gull, goose, and more. The name of this river originated from the Cree-nêhiyawêwin language as—kiskâciwani-sîpiy (Indigenous Place Names of Edmonton or IPNE, 2022; nêhiyaw masinahikan, n.d.), although eventually, and through the recurrent use of this toponym were phonetic syllables lost or dropped by settlers to form the *North Saskatchewan River* as the more directive Anglo-friendly sounding version (Government of Canada, 2017). Broken down by morpheme—kiskâ expressed shared meaning with *fast* and *quickly*—ciwani to *flowing, running waters* and—sîpiy as to *river* (NPCD, 2022). Also instructive was to learn of this waterway as Ponoká'sisaahataa—from Niitsi'powahsin as a Blackfoot language (Blackfoot Dictionary, 2022).

Tracing back westward exposed a retreating icefield nestled in the slopes of a rocky mountain pass (Savage, 2020). From there, a glacial meltwater stream cascaded down to headwaters from a great divide that established the running direction (Savage, 2020). The waters rippled on and through a subalpine boreal region of lodgepole pine forest into foothills, a parkland biome, and over hundreds of kilometres of cultivated prairie-once-grasslands eventually to join a familial southern, flowing river (IPNE, 2022). Next, further east-over into the heartland of the prairies, fields of marshland followed into streams of a delta until finally, the splintered waters channelled to the shores of a large bay (The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance or NSWA, n.d.). Back on Treaty 6, this fluvial activity has formed deep cuts for the endemic making of a valleyscape filled with hidden rolling trails of aspens—wâpimitosak, willows—nîpîsy, birch trees—waskwayiskâw, poplar trees—mîtos, sagebrush—paskwâwihkwaskwa, and

Saskatoon berry bushes—misaskwatwâhtik (nêhiyaw masinahikan, n.d.). Here, the optimistic echoes of birdsong can be encountered as made by the warbler—pewayisis ka takahkihtakosit, waxwing—okaweyoskesikosîs, blue jay—kwîhkwîsiw, chickadee—picikîskisîs, and finch—okimowanahkes there nesting in the tree-lined hillsides and where the occupying beaver—amisk has long worked at river-living (nêhiyaw masinahikan, n.d.).

Official histories have suggested that the flats by the river dividing these beaver hills, and the surrounding area, came to be associated with the name—*Edmonton* in around 1795, when rival forts of the fur trade were first established on Blackfoot Land—at an outstretched parkland area situated between the high banks of kisiskâciwani-sîpiy and the not too far away numâo-sîpiy or Sturgeon River (Donald, 2004; McIntosh et al., 2022; Silversides, 2005). These forts were called Augustus and Edmonton, about forty years after Anthony Henday arrived close by at wâwâskêsiw-sîpiy or Elk River (nêhiyaw masinahikan, n.d.). However, it was more likely then known to Henday, an early trading scout, as Rupert's Land, to mark claim as England's territory (Silversides, 2005; Van Tighem, 2017).

Edmonton, nowadays home to a population of nearly a million people with more than a hundred first languages counted as spoken in this city, was my chosen place for this research (Government of Alberta, 2022b). Admittedly, in this prairie-west, I am non-Indigenous as most of my ancestors did come from away east, across an ocean. I am also an English-speaking teacher of this Treaty land.

Whoever/however I am, I contribute to the mix of this place, the variation, and intercultural conditions as a resident teacher and researcher. The participants of this study as co-creative contributors are also part of this mix. This place, as Edmonton, Nasagachoo, Omukoyis, Titunga, amiskwaciy wâskahikan or sawyah-thay-koi—is *holding* all of us as we live here in

this community.

Together, as co-creatives, our ideas were discovered, shaped, and kept by this place, and other places too, there—teaching us (Fidyk, 2021b; Georges & Fidyk, 2023; Weiss, 2023). This learning has informed our impressions and shaped our capacities to generate the intercultural, meaning-filled expressions given to this research.

Now, if willing to do so, imagine for mental health, from here:

a place,
no-place,
no more,
connecting you,
slowly vanishing, but ok
not evolving in time,
kept from your knowing,
you don't know what it is for you
familiar yet unfamiliar
the beauty of the breathtaking
holding you
those feelings caught—
not just inside,
for somewhere
out there
over beyond
to stop
to wonder still
paskwāhk—on the prairies

Field note. *Edmonton, Alberta, April 18, 2023.* “As the researcher, I created the found poem on the previous page using comments transcribed from research meetings, conversations, and my ecohermeneutic *topobiographical* (Gladwin, 2020, p. 130) journalling. This found poem has been co-created, integrating the words and insights generated from collaborations with the contributors, otherwise known as the participants of this place-conscious research.”

Arrivals

a Cree translation in *alperta nêhiyawêwin*

in Northern and Plains:

- *petâstamohtew*: a *form of arrival* as a *meeting* and as *approaching from both sides* (*nêhiyaw masinahikan*, n.d.)

- *takosinowin*

AND

- *takwâsiw*: *arrive with the wind; the wind blew them there* (LeClaire & Cardinal, 1998, p. 201)

the English etymology

- a noun derived from Middle English (circa 1380) as found from Chaucer's *House of Fame* in the Anglo-French *arivaile*, meaning for *a landing; disembarkation; coming to land* (Chambers, 2017)

Field note. St. Albert, Alberta, August 10, 2023. “Strikingly, much of this *Arrivals* section contains my *topobiographical* (Gladwin, 2020, p. 129) and reflexive hermeneutic journal writing composed during the fieldwork of this research. This activity integrated landscape tracing, image creation, lyric rendering in reflection, and the researching of interpretations given to the etymological origins of familiar place names (i.e., the local toponymy here and also beyond). From now on, however, note that all research activities described in this text will be referred to as *tacting-exercises* or the *activities of a tacting-exercise*, but *not* as *methods*. Skip to page 143 in *Departures* to learn why.

Next, I must point out how critically influenced I was by Jan Zwicky (2003, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014), a Canadian philosopher, poet, and scholar with an irrepressible lyric style, who has expressively informed the ecohermeneutic co-creative developments in the approach to this research outlined in this section of text. Importantly, in *Wisdom and Metaphor* (2003) and her other works as well, Zwicky *quite deliberately set aside surface historical associations with Romantic poetry* (p. 11). A frequent assumption in academic scholarship did claim that lyrical expressionism was an overtly romanticizing, thus superficial, condition in practice. However, in keeping with Zwicky (2003), lyrical and expressively metaphoric or poetic references in this research were considered far more reaching than depicted by this prior accusation, given the *epistemological, ecological structure* (p. 11) of a lyric expression. For Zwicky (2003), and many ecohermeneutic scholars, the lyric rendering of an expressive feeling or sense can be considered an authentic mode of thought (p. 11). Supporting this standpoint, Zwicky (2003) identified *resonance* and *integrity* (p. 11) as the *formal properties* (p. 11) of metaphor to move research *beyond the [root] condition of language* (p. 11). Naturally, the hope for this research that the topic could shift from its *colonial condition* of language—at least somewhat, at some

point, to avert the process of perpetuating taken-for-granted notions set within dominating views about mental health.

Exploring ideas rendered through *metaphor*, subject to place-conscious interpretative exercises, would assist in developing conceptual *intercultural* connections in topobiographical reflexion. For instance, some metaphors outlined in *Regressions*, shaping contemporary definitions in this conceptual research exploring mental health, revealed violent expressions relevant to local and regional places. In comparison, this research generated expressions that potentially serve educational contexts better, demonstrated through their capacity to bridge some of the conceptual distances between the differing perspectives encountered in the fieldwork.”

The Research Overview

On Seeking a *Sense* of Understanding

Like other ecohermeneutic scholars before me and many Indigenous Knowledge Holders in Canada and elsewhere, *places* as ecological sources were considered “the primary resource[s]” (Kulnieks, 2008, p. 17)—for developing or coming to a relational form of *understanding* for this research (see also Derby, 2015; Kulnieks et al., 2010; Smith, 1991, 2003; Young, 2006, 2007). Most likely, some readers might be pondering a definition to frame an idea of *understanding* within this inquiry for the participants or for me as the researcher attempting to discover or generate a renewed *sense* of mental health. My first response to this wonder would be that *ecohermeneutic* wisdom would inform an ecological understanding (Derby, 2015).

According to Susan Rowland (2012), professor of literary and Jungian studies—and the first to integrate evolutionary sciences, mythology, literature, and critical theory to portray the *ecocritical psyche* in her own hermetic way, traced the access point of ecological wisdom near to “the borderland of human understanding where words fail to capture [or almost fail to capture]

meaning” (p. 3). Rowland (2012) called this place “the critical edge” (p. 3). From here, the “intuition of resonant relation” (Zwicky, 2013, p. 49) was taught to be “the experience of meaning” (p. 49) to express an *understanding*. In other words, ideas sensed as felt and sourced through social and ecological relationships were interpreted as significant meaning-filled discoveries. At times, these understandings were disclosed through expressions set within creative mediums or in the movements of instinct as gestured through memory to inform enlivened and earthened interpretive translations.

In *Place, Being, Resonance: A Critical Ecohermeneutic Approach to Education* (2015), the ground-breaking text by curriculum scholar Michael W. Derby (2015), Zwicky’s ecological perspective was integrated to inform *pedagogy*, the practice of teaching and educational research. Here, Derby (2015) hermeneutically translated the *intuition of resonant relation*, as a presence felt, that signalled a “living matrix *beneath* our thinking and being (and often beyond our wanting and doing)” (p. 131; see also Gadamer, 1975/1989; Jardine, 2015b). Derby (2015) did then elaborate:

Echoes of this polyphonic structure reverberate inside us when we think intensely and beautifully; when it gets into our mouths, we call it poetry; when it guides how we walk in the world we call it integrity; when we trace its address as teaching, we call it *Wisdom*.

(p. 131)

According to Clifford Mayes (2024, in press), as an additional literary Jungian scholar (beyond Rowland) and source influencing the exercises of this research, *intuition as wisdom* “utilizes the integrity of the whole-person—soma, heart, head, spirit, and experience—to render a holistically nuanced judgement of a situation, not an artificially pinpointed and formulaically-focused one”

(p. 27; see also Mayes, 2012; 2010, 2012, 2015, 2017a, 2019)—more on this for those of us-educators as we go on.

For now, given that the Gadamerian hermeneutic tradition also informed this research, be advised that this interpretive approach had long ago adopted the notion that *understanding* brings with it *pre-understanding as a prior situatedness or placement* (see Gadamer, 1975/1989, 1996; Heidegger, 1927/2010). According to this tradition, when conceptual understandings have been taken for granted within a culture, these understandings often become harmful, even lethal, to those living beyond, as on the margins of, or excluded by, any given dominating culture or, for that matter, dominating language, if colonial forms. In this frame, the ethical approach to understanding should best engage any idea promoted as *truth* to be a situated interpretation. More simply put, all ideas researched for this inquiry were subject to the exercises of interpretation.

To further this hermeneutic discussion on the situated nature of *understanding*, as interpreted for this research, consider how *place*, for instance, as a concept, all on its own, much like the concept of *mental health*, can be and often has been contested in definition across the academic disciplines. That said, the more resonant conceptualizations identified for this inquiry about—*place*—were more likely to express as *paradoxical* (Greenwood, 2016); *animated* (Abram, 1996; Battiste et al., 2005; Donald, 2019; Fidyk, 2017, 2021b; Jardine, 1996, 1998, 2015a, 2015b; Haraway, 2016; Zwicky, 2003); *more-than-human* (Abram, 1996; Basso, 1996; Derby, 2015; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015); and *affective* as a landscape caught up by emotions (Chambers & Blood, 2009; Gussow, 1974; Hébert, 2016)—that could also get caught up, in, and between—me, you, and also by others.

Notably, almost any form of hermeneutics, not just *ecohermeneutics*, could be described as “the task of the art of understanding” (Gadamer, 1996, p. 143). This “interpretive work,” my doctoral supervisor Dr. Alexandra Fidyk (2010) would teach me, “strives to create the experience of *the learning self* [i.e., the researcher as learner] by bringing inner thoughts, feelings, memories, fears, desires, and images into relation with outside others, events, history, culture, rituals, nature, and socially constructed ideas” (p. 13). Notice how, for instance, the prefix-*inter*—connecting this task reveals an etymology suggesting that perhaps an interpretation requires something or someone else to “interpose” (Chambers, 2017, p. 535), meaning “between, among” (p. 535), as “one with the other” (p. 535). As such, these associations will be revisited in a later discussion on the *co-creative* character of *ecohermeneutics*, beginning on page 143 of *Departures*.

Also, informed by decolonizing, Indigenist, and intercultural scholarship, it was further assumed that *relationships to the land were the cause of most common conceptual mis/understandings*, present within the conflicts of curricula in Canada and far beyond (see Battell & Barker, 2015; Battiste, 2013; Bowers, 2002, 2003; Chambers, 2008, 2012; Chambers & Blood, 2009; Derby, 2015; Donald, 2012a, 2012b; Fellner, 2018; Gruenewald, 2003; Haraway, 2016; Hains, 2001, 2023; Jardine, 1996, 1998; Johnson, 2019; Kulnieks et al., 2010; Linklater, 2014; L. T. Smith et al., 2019; Robbins & Dewar, 2011; Smith, 2020; Stewart-Harawira; Styres, 2019; Wilson et al., 2019—and more). In this respect, any *understanding* derived from this research can be identified through its character as “deeply imbued with ideas and images of place” (Malpas, 2022, p. 14), yet will still be considered “prejudiced with preunderstandings” (p. 14).

That said, and despite the purposefully disruptive order of the research arrangement, following next, I have inserted some of the essential features related to this inquiry: an introductory overview with a description of the research question and some details about the research approach. Then, this section shifts, focusing on my understanding and relationships to the local landscape here, leading into the problem identified for education that this study attempted to address. Importantly, this final act intended to bridge the next movement (or section of text), where this problem was further elaborated upon in *Regressions* (beginning on page 44).

The Research Question

How might we understand the role of place within mental health (N. Moules, doctoral candidacy exam feedback, June 30, 2021)? Responses to this research question have inspired visual and lyrical forms of *haptic* (as tactful), *physiological* (as embodied), and *grounding* (as ecologically orientated)—place-conscious expressions of mental health.

Interposing Meetings with Conversations

Some of the expressive ideas conceptualized through the exercises of this research developed in dialogue with Yari, Joey, and Dorthia. All three were my former junior high students, invested in sharing their newcomer and Indigenous experiences to improve perceptions of mental health as a concept of curricula for various disciplines. As adult educators, working professionals, and caregivers of children learning in our shared community, I met with them individually, one-on-one. There were four rounds of meetings. During some of these meetings scheduled over an eight-month period, we engaged in creation-making as part of the fieldwork. Other ideas were generated from tracing etymology, topography, and toponymy in conversation with Dr. Shaun Hains, a local Knowledge Keeper and a Hereditary Chief, sharing ecological language teachings which followed each round of my former-student meetings.

The Illustrative Grounds

As research creatives, I asked Yari, Joey, and Dorthia, to consider mental health within the rhythms of place as terra, fauna, flora, wave, tide, sky, climate, and the transitional phases of relationship, season, and time. In turn, their associations uncovered memories of being away, from, outside, within, upon, in-between, over, and kept of knowing—places. Architectural and ecological ecotones also emerged to establish a common ground for understanding mental health. From there, we revisited the textures, shapes, sounds, patterns, and sensations in some foreign yet still homely habitats. Imaginal and collaborative creation-making furthered our interpretations and translations of the expressive renderings shared in reflection and to contend with personal memories linked to the place-conscious concepts that did (re)surface. Some of these were illustrative accounts that included ineffable and curious circumstances of paradox, in turn revealing more potential possibilities for reconceptualizing and teaching about mental health.

Finding A Local Historical Context

As the researcher, I would also sift through transdisciplinary literature to investigate the collective underpinnings of mental health movements perpetuating colonization through harmful curricular representations. Local and historical, this examination would include revisiting the eugenics movement as a colonial mental health project of re-*placement* on Albertan lands.

The Research Approach

Eventually, a *co-creative* ecohermeneutic approach did unfold. With this approach, reflective and reflexive exercises brought my attention to the condition of my relationship as the principal researcher with Edmonton, Alberta, the research setting. Admittedly, there was some difficulty for me here. Over time, there was an expanded exploration of this setting. Learning more about Edmonton's past, I became increasingly overwhelmed by the consistent resurfacing

of the generational pain and suffering abiding in this place and the vast distances in and between historical perspectives discovered. The topography here was always teaching, although at times, revealing too much, too fast, then too slow. Indeed, for me, this research was a difficult and uncomfortable reflexive exploration of complex philosophical and relational issues surrounding local and contemporary conceptualizations of mental health, including some stigmatizing beliefs that could be perceived as aligned with my “*historically effected consciousness*” (Gadamer, 1975/1989, p. 312). Otherwise stated, this research was a formidable challenge as it led me to question most of what I thought I knew as a teacher-educator and human being. Still, this work was generative in addition to having been lived-in, embodied by my inhabitancy, and the additional and critical, local inhabitancies of Yari, Joey, Dorthia, Dr. Shaun Hains, my supervisor, Dr. Alexandra Fidyk, and the supervisory committee, which included Dr. Kent den Heyer and Dr. Diane Conrad.

In an attempt to take flight from the conditions of language, participatory “pictorial scripts” (Gimbutas, 1989; see also Fidyk & St. Georges, 2020) assisted with expressing and amplifying the illustrative place-conscious associations of meaning generated during the fieldwork. The integration of this participatory exercise to render the symbolic, metaphoric, and lived descriptions provided by Yari, Joey, Dorthia, and Dr. Shaun Hains was inspired by the research of local arts-based scholar Conrad (2015) as a developmental source. Through her theatre work in communities, Conrad (2015) has found that participatory-creative mediums of expression can support “social innovation” (p. 4). Although for Conrad (2015), this discovery was based on the condition that the choice of expressive mediums for research remained “flexible and yet rigorous, allowing for *safe* and *smart* risk-taking” (p. 4, citing Government of Canada Policy Research Initiative, 2010, p. 4).

Importantly, participatory pictorial scripting as an ecologically-orientated, hermeneutic exercise, and novel experience for the participants of this research, did manage to relay some “transperspectival” (Wilber, 2006; cited in Walsh, 2015, p. 162; see also Mayes, 2024, p. 22) conceptual notions. In other words, these scripts could connect ideas provided about mental health, individually while consciously-emerging in the field. Engaged through *intuition* and an *awareness of place*, as capacities shared, expressions generated were chosen through discussions to establish a transpersonal (and neutral) grounding for making meaning here. As additional sources to inform this work, den Heyer and his curriculum and teacher education colleague Laurence Abbott (2011) have rather firmly stated how “crucial” (p. 612) to the development of “imaginative and emotional capabilities” (p. 612) was, and still is, for educators and teacher candidates to find ways to access “multiple interpretations” (p. 612) on social justice issues in education, “to potentially expand the range of responses to pressing issues of social concern” (p. 612). For den Heyer and Abbott (2011), this work included a purposeful examination of “the internal psychic investments involved in historical identifications conveyed by grand narratives evident in [historical] moments” (p. 612), such as those given to celebrated events and places.

Ecohermeneutics was the approach chosen to disrupt the potency of local “myth histories” (Letourneau, 2006; cited in den Heyer & Abbott, 2011, p. 612) and “historical identifications” (p. 62), that were acknowledged as detrimental for education within the literature review of this research exploring the concept of mental health (found in *Regressions*). Notably, Derby (2015) has promoted ecohermeneutics as an inoculation for static ideas. Procured from the experiential sense of *being-there*:

Ecohermeneutic inoculation in this respect is a deliquescent move—at once critical and remedial—that compels a tradition to reveal what it knows, what it has yet to teach, and

where it needs to reconnect in order to remain in resonance with the world, and our lives as it is lived now. (Derby, 2015, pp. 60-61)

Guided by this approach, the research exercises were not over-planned but left to unfold alongside the learning, involving all of us (i.e., me, Yari, Dorthia, Joey, and Dr. Hains), as creatives conceptualizing together in one-on-one meetings, collaborating, and discussing our lived experiences in and out of a shared community.

Field note. *Edmonton, Alberta. July 25, 2020.* “During this study, protective measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic mandated that most of the activities given to this research project which included writing reflection, fieldwork, and the application of expressive co-creative exercises, were engaged in and around my home, and remotely online. And it was from home, away from most others, that I would attempt the challenge of attending to my subjectivity and how it would concern the research setting—on *Treaty 6 territory*, which follows next.”

Introducing: A Topobiographical Researched Reflection of the Research Setting

Edmonton, as the setting for this study, was once known to England and its Hudson Bay Company (HBC) as the most prominent western fur trading outpost due to its midpoint placement in a thriving riparian ecology and resource-filled region (Siversides, 2005). Yet even still, and despite geographical advantages, this outpost was rebuilt and moved four times in a century, five times in total (Siversides, 2005). These moves were allegedly due to the overconsumption of local resources, extreme climate, and flooding (Siversides, 2005). Down, over, and again, the outpost relocated but remained consistently near the low-lying flats of the most significant, local interconnecting waterway, the North Saskatchewan River. All but for the final fort built to protect this post, which was deliberately positioned on the higher ground atop

the beaver hills, amisk-waciy, here, a site presently known today to mark the boundaries of the Province of Alberta's legislative grounds (Christensen & Shappka, 1999).

The Fur-trading Place

Celebrated by official histories, both local and national, the fur trading here assisted with establishing the wealth of a young colony, now Canada (Foster et al., 2022; Morse, 1969/2019; Silversides, 2005). Back then, it was amiskwayân; the *beaver pelt* sustaining this commercial enterprise—as high-end and in-demand source material for the Top hat trend fashioned in European capitals (nêhiyaw masinahikan, n.d.). Few items could out-value a beaver pelt back then in this place of trade (Silversides, 2005; Van Tighem, 2017).

It was reportedly around and about 1795 when *Augustus House*, the first fort of this region, arose from these lands (Silversides, 2005). It was a structure named by the *Nor'Westers*—an independent company stealthily managed in resistance to English authority by Highland Scots and French Canadiens (Silversides, 2005). This company of men, renowned for skills likely acquired from partnerships with Indigenous Nations travelling or residing nearby this fort of the *forks*, would choose a site located in a parkland area situated between the high banks of the North Saskatchewan River or kisiskâciwani-sîpiy and the not-too-far away numão-sîpiy or Sturgeon River (Silversides, 2005; Switzer, 2015).

In response to the establishment of the Nor'Westers' move into this area as an unauthorized English rival, the HBC was motivated, raising their own fort very near and in the same year as *Edmonton House* (Silversides, 2005). Territorial stories have placed the original foundations of these twinning forts on Blackfoot land to mark a dis-position for the Cree-nêhiyawahk Nation, who were used to being the main point of contact for European traders, at least, down east on the river, from here (Donald, 2004; Silversides, 2005).

Conflicts seemed to have shaped the way of life for local residents in the earlier days of fortified trade. The more violent struggles were allegedly caused by uncontrolled conditions of weather, fires, rebuilds, changing locations, overhunting, logging, outbreaks of infectious diseases, and naturally, competition over trade—as challenges for securing profits and developing capacities for survival (Hudson Bay Company Heritage Foundation or HBCHF, 2016). As a result, by 1821, a merger between adversaries was made (Siversides, 2005). Historical storyteller Brock Siversides (2005) has recovered narratives about Edmonton forts constructed on behalf of a combined company, including one about the vulnerability of two former outposts built in shallow places, including one set upon a “graveyard flat” (p. 19; cited first by Young, 1894). Despite taking up precarious positions, the forts of Edmonton were, however so, renowned as successful fur trading places at the northern edge of the western plains because there was access to other outposts from any direction (IPNE, 2022). Consider that from 1853-1877, resources extracted by the hunters, trappers, and traders of Edmonton had filled warehouses of the HBC for a record shipment of three million beaver pelts, inevitably sent east to the folks back in England (McKenzie, 2017).

A noteworthy historical transcript registered Marie-Anne Gaboury (1780-1975) as the first non-Indigenous woman to take up a place, to live here in one of Edmonton’s forts (1807-1811). In matrimony, Marie-Anne had eight children with her husband, Jean-Baptist Lagimodière (Gwiazda, 2021; Siversides, 2005). Julie was her sixth child and the mother of Louis Riel (1844-1885), the renowned Métis politician and devoted leader of both the Red River (1869-1870) and North-West (1885) Resistances (IPNE, 2022). As celebrated in stories told here, for three generations (~1829-1853), Edmonton House 4 and 5, on Cree territory, also

known as *le fort de prairies*, provided the appropriate palatial conditions for the traditions of Riel's Métis nation and culture to thrive (Coutu, 2004; Dumont, 2016; Silversides 2005).

As it was in those days, Métis people were tasked with navigating the precarity of river trade. Often, their work would take place on rough routes of long kilometres given to rushing rocky river rapids and the deep buggy waters of hazy lakes to work sixteen to eighteen hours a day or more (Morse, 1969/2019). The canoes of voyageurs were notoriously loaded down with cargo, contributing to the dangerous nature of working conditions (Morse, 1969/2019). Canadian historian Eric W. Morse (1969/2019) reported it was common then to encounter a mass of roughed-out wooden crosses on and along the banks of watery trade routes, such as those belonging to kisiskâciwani-sîpiy, clustered and made to mark for the hazards, hardships, and deceased. Here, Métis people were also liaisons for trade with Indigenous nations, guide-hunters on buffalo or bison hunts, producers of pemmican or dried bison meat, and providers of skilled labour for the York boats that eventually replaced canoes for moving goods up and down the river (FEP, 2022). It was known, for this time, that the Cree-nêhiyawahk referred to the Métis as —otipemisiwahk—*those who rule/own themselves, the free* (Fort Edmonton Park or FEP, 2022).

A record claimed a range of languages spoken in and about the forts as Silversides (2005) documented:

Most of the HBC servants were engaged in the Orkney Islands, Hebrides, or the Isle of Lewes in northern Scotland, and as such most spoke Gaelic. Many of the boatmen, hunters, and fishermen were Métis descendants of the original Quebecois voyageurs and spoke French. With the addition of English amongst the HBC officers, and the large number of First Nations dialects, one could never be sure of being understood. (p. 41)

Albeit generally practiced then by the inhabitants was an Indigenous lingua franca as the most

commonly expressed language (Morton, 1924; Silversides, 2005). A determined Saskatchewan historian Arthur Morton (1924) had tracked this regional linguistic practice as detailed:

The records were kept, and the official business was done in English, but the spoken language both inside and outside the fort was in large measure Cree. The men employed within the fort could communicate with each other more conveniently in Cree than by each learning the several languages of the others. The fort was in Cree country ... it was an advantage to everyone, no matter what his native language to speak Cree. (p. 73)

However, these local ways with words would soon change. 1859 signalled the arrival of one of many tragic famines caused when the buffalo herds failed to migrate north (Savage, 2012; Silversides, 2005). Nevertheless, perhaps confusing for some as it was, the very next year, the HBC did manage a claim for 106.5 tons of prairie pemmican haul weight sent east—that was twice as much as any shipment made in the previous decade past (Savage, 2012).

A Confederation

By the early 1860s, colonial negotiations would set up terms for a Canadian confederation (McIntosh et al., 2021; Waite et al., 2019). On July 1, 1867, the *British North America Act* was passed in Ottawa, or Odàwàg as in the Algonquin way, to assert a new order of establishment—the Dominion of Canada and its four provinces—Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia (McIntosh et al., 2021). Yet, the boundary lines on the great plains were not so clear that year and the newly formed government did not want to lose ground. Proposed was a railroad solution, connecting the Atlantic to the Pacific to increase the numbers of settlers efficiently, farther away upon the plains and into the plans for the west and its development. *Canada* would exert pressure on the HBC to sell its pricy and princely investment so that the newly formed federal government could acquire a vast area of Rupert's Land in 1870

for its nation-building projects. Still, the HBC would retain its presence here by keeping a claim of over 3000 acres (1214 hectares) that had surrounded some of the forts of Edmonton (IPNE, 2022).

In 1874, and down south from here, an international group of surveyors showed up to impress boundaries next to finalize the western Canadian-U.S land division (Savage, 2012). Then, Dominion surveyors turned up to map out track lines and chart, by number, plots for farming (Savage, 2012). As promised by a new government and as early as 1883, the movement of European settlement was sweeping in on the trains to take homes on the prairies. Europeans new to this place pursued their claim to land based on an existential (i.e., ontological) belief in *terra nullius*—a Latin concept, meaning *without settlers, the land belonged to no one* (Donald, 2012a).

In Resistance

Some prairie histories recorded that after the sale of Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada, living here and elsewhere on the plains became more deadly (Donald, 2004; Savage, 2012; Van Tighem, 2017). For example, near Lake Winnipeg, news of the mass land transfer sparked the first Métis resistance at Red River (Bumsted et al., 2021). The Métis lost the battle and then the ability to occupy that land. Forced away from their once-were-home-places, many Métis people followed scattered buffalo herds in strained and starved migration, into the north of the western prairie region toward Edmonton (IPNE, 2022; Savage 2012).

As emphasized by the fervent Albertan naturalist and conservationist Kevin Van Tighem (2017), the last decades of the 19th century were difficult for most species living near any outpost place around here. Local trappers would find the beaver population was dangerously low, and said Van Tighem (2017), "As beaver populations crashed, their dams washed out.

Wetlands shrank. Streams became more flood-prone” (p. 7). The aspen nests, once home to whooping cranes and trumpeter swans, were abandoned (Van Tighem, 2017). Local elk and caribou herds had seemingly vacated local meadows for higher, more remote mountain regions. Nearby waterways would lose what was left of the bull and cutthroat trout (Van Tighem, 2017).

Lost Land, Lost Herds

By most accounts available nowadays, only a few herds of prairie bison would survive the midpoint decades of the 19th century (Savage, 2012). These dispersed herds would sometimes appear on the horizon, lingering close to where local Indigenous Nations still lived. This proximity would allow for traditional hunting alongside the Métis, who could also produce pemmican, the staple food source (Savage, 2012; Silversides, 2005). However, these northern populations would soon no longer be considered a reliable resource. The servants and officers of trade companies, Wolfers, and new farmers protecting fields would contribute to the mass increase of the death toll numbers on hunt kills each year-round. Then came along American operators, again and again returning from the South, creating even more competition in a relentless search for hides to belt in machines as innovations for an industrial revolution (The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation or CBC, 2001; Savage, 2012).

Such as it was, new technical progressions had disastrous results for and across this prairie land. Geo-historian Candace Savage (2012) accessed records evidencing the manufactured devastation from the United States South as the action was soon after experienced here in the North:

Like Charlie Chaplin’s horror-struck little tramp, the buffalo were now trapped in the whirring cogs and wheels of modernization. Out on the plains, the result was butchery of unparalleled rapacity and rage. The hide hunters hit the southern plains en masse in 1871,

and by the time their campaign ended, the southern herd had been shattered. The death toll reached a million buffalo per year and counting, buyers sometimes took in 200 000 hides a day, and block-long stacks of reeking hides awaited the east-bound trains. (p. 110-111)

Savage recovered U.S. Army Colonial Richard Dodge's genocidal upside to the sickening death stench there back then, allegedly, captured by Dodge's own colleague. Savage said that Captain W. F. Butler (1872) had overheard Dodge celebrating as he remarked, "Every dead buffalo is an Indian gone." (p. 241; cited by Savage, 2012, p.111). Savage (2012) then described:

By the mid 1880s, there were about two hundred survivors on the continent, in half a dozen shattered groups. The last wild herds in Canada, and the last subsistence hunts, occurred in the rich pasturelands of the Cypress Hills [in Saskatchewan]. The near-extinction of the buffalo is an oft-told tale but, judging from the current global status of wild species, one from which little has been learned. Instead, we [historians] prefer to pass over the tragedy lightly, with phrases like "*after the buffalo disappeared*" and "*when the buffalo vanished*", as if the animals had wandered peacefully into the great beyond. (pp. 90-91)

Violently, a once great rumble was silenced here. Van Tighem (2017) recounted this loss of the buffalo ecosystem on the plains, as a "growing stillness [that] settled across a land that, only a few decades earlier, had teemed with life" (p. 8). According to Van Tighem (2017), "death no longer led to rebirth" (p. 7)—for this place anymore.

Still, Treaty 6 territory managed to retain allure in the imagination and ambitions of foreign minds. After all, this place was the way it was advertised, depicted abroad, as the land of living skies, rolling out endlessly with its willowy-aspen belts, freshwater lakes, weaving river

passages, and long fields of curving grassland to farm potential. However, the newcomers who came later or were born here after the buffalo, including me, would find in their *arrival* a deadened terrain, whether they knew it or not (Savage, 2012). The land no longer thrummed with buffalo drumfire, conceivably a tragedy of distance, as now the sky above was the only place to retain the thunder.

Immigration

A consequence of all the ambitious settlers desiring to move West was the creation of opportunities for thousands of workers from southern China (Government of Canada, 2022b). As early Chinese pioneers, many would get hired to build remote train lines for the Canadian Pacific Railway (Government of Canada, 2022b). Unfortunately, federal government records have documented the early pioneering lifestyles of these Chinese newcomers as a group of people who quickly became subjects to several racialized indignities. An early example included a fifty-dollar head tax sanctioned by the *Chinese Immigration Act* (1885), also known as the “Chinese Exclusion Act” (Government of Canada, 2022b, para. 5), so that the work here remained challenging to profit. Further exposing the oppressive conditions, the Canadian government estimated a gaping death count during the construction of the first Canadian railroad between 600 to 2200 Chinese labourers (Government of Canada, 2022b). Admittedly, this range, a statistical approximation, was due to records lost amid dynamite accidents, natural disasters, disease, and vast distances requiring long travel back then to any available medical services or morgues (Government of Canada, 2022b).

Starvation, Residential Schools, Scrips, and Reservations

Eventually, with little or no buffalo around here, more famine would strike local people. In this state of starvation was found a racist opportunity for those who considered Indigenous

and Métis lifestyles a problem. For example, one popularly proposed solution was to force European ways on local Indigenous children.

In 1874, Holy Angels was the first European-style school for Indigenous children to open in this region, located in Fort Chipewyan (ATA, 2018d). Then, in 1876, a consolidated federal *Indian Act* was approved to wipe out Indigenous culture in favour of assimilation (ATA, 2018d). This Act deprived First Nations people of their right to govern themselves, denied Canadian citizenship, and barred Indigenous people from voting in federal and provincial elections (ATA, 2018d). A few years later, residential schools opened for the 1883-1884 school year. These schools received funding from churches and the federal government to separate children from their parents and impose Christian values and beliefs. Back then, the closest residential school to the amiskwaciwâskahikan area was reportedly High River, known to the Blackfoot as Ispitzee (Alberta Culture or AC, n. d.).

By 1877, local Cree-nêhiyawahk Chief Papasschayo would have to agree to the terms presented in Treaty 6 by the Government of Canada in return for Papaschase Reserve Land No. 136 (Donald, 2004). Unfortunately, the reserve was located mere miles across the river from the final Fort Edmonton site (Donald, 2004; Dubois, 2018). Hurried European arrivals would push this growing settlement outside the boundaries of the fort by 1892. By this time, Edmonton was incorporated, as a town, with nearly seven hundred inhabitants (Cashman, 2002). Shortly after, vocal, local, and influential Edmontonians did begin to express resentment over the designation of a reserve so close to their pioneering homes and businesses (Donald, 2004). Today, what was once Papaschase Cree Reserve Land is now the Millwoods residential development, one of the largest urban neighbourhood developments in North America, as a major land assembly project (Dubois, 2018).

In 1894, amendments to the *Indian Act* made attendance mandatory for First Nations students. Some police arrived to take children to faraway schools and prevented parents from visiting due to the *pass system*. This pass system, authorized in 1885 by the Department of Indian Affairs restricted the travel of Indigenous people. From then on, only *Indian Agents* had the right to issue residents on the reserve passes to issue leave and a return. This pass system was designed as a means of ensuring separation between Western settlers and what was perceived or promoted through narratives depicting Indigenous populations as potential or future *rebels* (Nestor, 2018). The longevity of the residential schooling system was the result of a partnership between the federal government, local Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and churches that established and sustained these schools. This partnership ended in the 1970s. However, even after the 1970s, some churches continued operating residential schools on the prairies up until the mid-1990s (ATA, 2018d).

Following the Northwest Resistance in 1885, which involved several battles between Métis people and Indigenous supporters in opposition to the Federal Government, was the *trial* and hanging of Louis Riel. Set up alongside Riel's sentence was the execution of six nêhiyawahk and two Assiniboine supporters, notably tried without legal counsel (Beal et al., 2021). The consequence of loss was that the federal government developed policies to restrict prairie Métis people from gathering with each other. Even within their homes, Métis people could become criminals here just by practicing their cultural traditions, that is, until the passage of the *Métis Population Betterment Act* in 1938, fifty years later.

Allegedly promoted as a consolation, Métis heads of families were issued scrip for either two hundred and forty dollars or two hundred and forty acres of land (Donald, 2004; Weigel, 2022). Nevertheless, this scrip system proved a failure as the transferable land certificates

reportedly did not include support for farming equipment and extinguished claims to any future land on reserves. So many Métis families ended up selling their scrips at a loss to unscrupulous local land developers and became homeless in the process (ATA, 2018d; Donald, 2004; Gaudry, 2009). Around here, half the scrips issued in 1899 were for the Lesser Slave Lake area (Madill, 1986). Other scrips distributed were for places by Fort Vermilion, Fort Chipewyan, and Peace River Landing (ATA, 2018d).

In 1905, the federal government and the Northwest Territories regional government declared Alberta as a province of Canada and Edmonton its capital (Cashman, 2002). That year, Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier was in Edmonton to celebrate this land claim (Cashman, 2002). Six years later, during his last few months as Prime Minister, Laurier supported more land grabs by creating an amendment to the *Indian Act* (January 19, 1911), allowing for the expropriation of *Indian* lands for public works (Donald, 2004). This amendment would clear any potential obstacles for settler municipal governments reclaiming land previously reserved through treaties, including Treaties 6, 7, and 8.

By 1911, most of the local Papaschase had already been starved out, displaced, or disentitled to their Treaty status (Donald, 2004; Dubois, 2018). Nowadays, some of their descendants reside at the Enoch Reserve, twenty kilometres west of Edmonton or Ermineskin, Samson, Louis Bull, and Montana Reserves, one hundred kilometres south of Edmonton. For the Blackfoot people, reserve land in southern Alberta was compensation for lost nomadic rights in this region. Treaty 7 was signed, reluctantly, in 1877 at the Blackfoot crossing of the Bow River, involving the confederacy of the Kainai (Blood), Piikani (Peigan), and Siksika (Tesar, 2019). The O'Chiese Nation near Rocky Mountain House, descendants of the Saulteux, relocated after signing Treaty 6 in 1876. Allied to the Cree-nêhiyawahk, many Nakota Sioux or Stoney people

received reserve land near the sacred lake Wakamne, Manto Sahkahikan or Lac Ste. Anne (ATA, 2018d). Other Stoney people have chosen land reserved by Hinton and Whitecourt near traditional hunting territories (ATA, 2018d). The Dene signed Treaty 8, and now many of their descendants remain in northern Alberta on three reserves: Bushe River, Meander River, and Assumption (ATA, 2018c).

In *A Space for Race* (2018), Canadian social historians Kathy Hogarth and Wendy Fletcher (2018) have reminded Canadians that reserves in Canada remain in effect to this date:

Many First Nations (Indian bands) include several separate portions of lands as their reserve. Only those with Registered Indian status (i.e., Status Indians) may own land on a reserve, although such ownership remains at the discretion of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and does not entail full legal possession. Certificates of Possession often referred to as CPs, convey *ownership* of reserve lands to their holder, but they lack the legal status of deeds. In other words, the land given in treaties was not given with the right of ownership analogous to Euro-descent Canadians. Control of the land to this day legally remains the preserve of the colonizing interest, the Canadian government. (p. 30)

The Canadian reserve system has had a long reach. For instance, Hogarth and Fletcher (2018) have noted how the apartheid system developed in South Africa was an example of the influence of this reach. Reportedly, South African government officials studied the forced separation witnessed on reserves in Canada as a successful containment solution to address the North American “Indian problem” (p. 29). Upon returning to South Africa, these same government officials would inevitably become the creators of South Africa’s segregation policies shaped by

the ideals of Canadian governance structures, as researched on reserves (Hogarth & Fletcher, 2018).

Notably, apartheid was dismantled as a system in South Africa in 1994. Still here in Canada, our system of reserved segregation has remained active (Hogarth & Fletcher, 2018). The Government of Canada still legally controls many aspects of life on reserve land, including who gets to claim ownership as an ever-present reality shaping local lives and livelihoods in this region of the world (Hogarth & Fletcher, 2018).

Climate and Suitability

Other actions were taken to ensure that the early township of Edmonton became a segregated community. However, this time policies would be targeting Black pioneers. In 1907 Oklahoma was declared a prairie state in the United States South. Soon afterwards, the new government there would pass discriminative legislation quickly. As a result, many former enslaved persons in Oklahoma and their descendants lost their land and rights (Cobb, 2020, 2021). By train and cart, a good number of Black Oklahomans fled toward Alberta's border, hoping to escape this new state's increasing violence and oppression. Reportedly, one-thousand Black pioneers arrived near here to settle on Albertan land (Cobb, 2020, 2021; Payne, 2004; Wittmeier, 2020).

At first glance, Canada's immigration inspector of this time, W. J. White seemed open to more Black inhabitants on the Canadian prairies following a first wave of arrivals. However, by 1911, it was clear that White had a change of mind (Payne, 2004). The timing of White's new stance suspiciously would align with the release of local petitions sent directly to Prime Minister Laurier. These were petitions from this region's trade boards in Alberta, including Edmonton, Strathcona, Calgary, Fort Saskatchewan, and Morinville. *The Edmonton Capital* (1911), a local

newspaper, captured archival evidence of efforts to halt Black immigration in a regional appeal that claimed the Black Oklahoma pioneers as a “serious menace to the future welfare of a large portion of Western Canada” (para. 1). Soon after would follow P. M. Laurier’s Order of Council (1911) to denounce southern Black pioneers as “unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada” (Government of Canada, 1911, section 38(c); cited by Yarhi, 2020).

Still, Black folks did continue to arrive on these lands after 1911, but in smaller groups. The livelihoods of these locals were able to be sustained here despite the limited opportunities. Many worked in the fading fur trade industry or reportedly were engaged in ranch, domesticated, and porter work on trains (Payne, 2004). Despite this stability for some Black communities in and around Edmonton, decades would have to pass before the growth and activity somewhat quieted among the local Ku Klux Klan, or the petitions ceased for the reintroduction of the head tax and other legislative movements viciously targeting Black American immigration (Wittmeier, 2020).

The Oil and Gas Industry

Jumping ahead to February 13, 1947, as a significant date here that has been described by local Edmonton historians Jo-Anne Christensen and Dennis Shappka (1999) as a freezing winter’s day to mark the first time the Leduc Number One went into production. Based on these historians’ accounts, a fiery roar was let out around four in the afternoon to signal the beginnings of a black gold boom. This impressive result, told to be witnessed by five hundred people, occurred after a reported 113 dry hole digs conducted by the Imperial Oil Company (Christensen & Shappka, 1999). After this event, more changes to the local landscape were to come:

What the black gold boom meant to Edmonton was a dramatic change in the previously agricultural economic base, and an era of unbridled prosperity and growth. Within ten

years, the city's population more than doubled. Within twenty years, it had tripled, and construction of businesses, schools, and housing reflected the trend. Downtown was transformed into towers, hotels, and shopping complexes; and suburbia swelled to accommodate the huge numbers of new people. Refineries, pipelines, and petrochemical plants appeared almost overnight, and Edmonton celebrated its new role as the oil capital of Canada. (Christensen & Shappka, 1999, p. 149)

As though it was inevitable, Edmonton became *the* northern gateway for the Canadian oil and gas economy. Now this place houses legislative groups and policies normalized to privilege the natural resource sector, workers, and those who identify with its industry. Narratives celebrating oil workers have even been promoted through local sporting institutions. As a result, in more recent years, a very grand arena has been built here, funded for entertainment. This arena resembles a palace, much to the enjoyment of the die-hard fans of the Edmonton Oilers and Oil Kings hockey teams. Here players enter the ice rink following a tradition of skating through an animated oil derrick, electrifying the fans with what is nowadays a symbol to evoke pride in the power and production of resource industries occupying these prairies.

Amendments

Four blocks northeast of this arena still stands the first school in Canada where I would find active employment as a teacher on a full-time contract. This red brick school was built many years ago as part of one of the first of this city's most central communities. A mere two blocks away from this school is the old Immigration Hall on 101 Street and 105 Avenue. In the early 1890s, Immigration Hall was the first stop for immigrants/newcomers looking for better opportunities here. At one time, the former Canadian Northern Railway branch line passed this hall. This was a line that was completed in 1891, running north from Calgary to Edmonton. As

soon as this line could move people, many Ukrainian immigrants travelled here to settle in and around the city. Today, pioneering Ukrainian institutions are still closely positioned to this old line and Immigration Hall, now a repurposed building. These institutions include Saint Josaphat's Catholic Cathedral and the Ukrainian Canadian Archives and Museum of Canada. Of note, as recorded in 2006, descendants of Ukrainian settlers represented 14.1 % of Edmonton's population, making Edmonton the largest Ukrainian urban community in all of Canada (Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine, 2001). This reputation still holds. Due to Russia's recent and ongoing attack on Ukraine, it has been reported that 32 % of all Ukrainian arrivals fleeing this war for Canada are coming to Edmonton to settle (Lamb, 2022).

Turning back to Edmonton's early beginnings as a city, I have learned that the federal government held tremendous influence over the growing demographics at the start of the 20th century here. For instance, the *Immigration Act* of 1910 provided the Government of Canada discretionary powers that could further prohibit certain immigrant populations from landing in this region of the plains, as in the case of the Black Oklahomans assumed for "belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada" (38c., p. 14). It appears there was an easier welcome for those arriving from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, and France as preferred places of departure.

By 1930, John Dunlop, a local contractor, would be hired by the city to support the construction of a new and larger Immigration Hall (Hope Mission, 2020). The new hall was made of brick as a colonial three-story structure to accommodate the increasing number of immigrants arriving. This extra space was helpful in the 1950s when immigration opened after World War II amidst a recruitment rush for the ever-expanding oil and gas industry. By the 1970s, processes for settling newcomers would change. As a result, the Immigration Hall in this

neighbourhood closed its doors. Later, this hall was renovated to host adult-orientated substance use recovery and transitional programming (Hope Mission, 2020). The surrounding streets mark the borders of the Little Italy and Chinatown business communities, where services can be accessed to support the consumer needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse resident population. Significantly, descendants of First Nations and Métis people involved in the early pemmican and fur trade have remained in this neighbourhood, once part of the hunting and trapping land surrounding the Forts of Edmonton (Dumont, 2017). Also, there resides an incremental population of houseless inhabitants.

A mōniyâskwêw

Working as a teacher in this community where Immigration Hall still stands in Edmonton, quite near to the stately arena across from shelters for houseless people, I learned that I am a mōniyâskwêw or white woman. Dorthia, a former student supporting this research, taught me so in her grandmother's Cree-nêhiyawêwin first language. Those words spoken signify that I am non-Indigenous in Canada. Admittedly, my ancestors were pioneering English, Irish, and German settlers, arriving by cart and horse through southern buttes and ships, then trains from the east. The familial details of these journey stories of how my ancestors got here have mostly escaped my knowing—a learning loss that I tend to contribute to the passage of time, but also from ancestral experiences of poverty, displacement, distance, rejection, rebellion, love, and denial. In short, my ties to Canada's Western prairie landscapes are but a few generations deep. Still, as it is, I am here.

Field note. *Edmonton, Alberta, August 17, 2023.* “The work of literary and linguistic scholar Derek Gladwin (2020) has guided me through so far in this historical exploration of Edmonton as an intuitively directed *topobiographical* (p. 29) reflection, or rather reflexion.

According to Gladwin (2020), my uncovering of a regional history should bring awareness to some conflicts here. Most certainly, my learning has benefitted from writing in reflection while exploring my local surroundings. I have revisited to re-examine local stories, myth histories, and retellings of the fur trade, early immigration, residential schools, nearby reserves, the pass system, treaty agreements, and local government policies. These contexts have caused many social issues here to inform *what might be* or *has been* perpetuating the violent historicity and romanticized patterns in the more oft-told tales shaping the past and present conditions of this place, as personally encountered in The City of Edmonton.

So following next, I have written to amplify more personally detailed *interrelational experiences* (Gladwin, 2020, p. 131) to render my connections to this setting as a researcher, teacher, and resident in this region of Treaty 6 territory. In other words, my writing continues, but what follows next was more intended to relay the complexity of my relationship with this place and my relationships embodied by this place to establish my credibility to conduct research beyond the dominant forms of knowledge assisting in colonizing people here. Also, to evidence my commitment to maintaining the integrity of this research as a place-conscious mental health project taking place, here within the research setting, where I presently reside (Gladwin, 2020).”

The Carlton Trail

I was born near the Carlton Trail, a fading, pioneering route on Treaty 6 territory outside the Province of Alberta. Raised in a small Saskatchewan town, it would take an hour of driving to reach the nearest city, Saskatoon. In those early years, I lived with many sisters, a mother, and a father. Much like today, my hometown, an agricultural hub, was populated primarily by English-speaking German Catholics, English-Protestants, or white people, and yes, also the nearby cattle, horses, and other variations of farming species.

This rural lifeworld shaped my childhood. There were great distances to cover before encountering a larger community, an obvious barrier for those seeking an unfamiliar face. Still nearby was my beloved grandmother, once a country school teacher. She was always talking about the weather, baking, farming, or making plans for gardening and quilting. She was also entertaining as a spontaneous piano player who danced out most Saturday nights in her living room to polka music on the a/m stations blasting from her radio.

During this time in my life, I would frequently go out on long walks along the natural edges of *my town* to stare out across the field crops. As years passed, a growing neighbourhood emerged to line up behind me. Back then, my mind was so busy and beyond wondering what was out there past the waving and whistling wheat, canola, mustard seed, or blanched-out terra, depending on the season—but also still, watching, and waiting.

More recently, as an adult, I now recognize how uninformed, unaware, and disconnected I had been growing up residing in that place. Many Indigenous students had been forcibly displaced from their homes only a few hundred kilometres away from my hometown, confined and estranged from their families and communities—hostages of an educational system of residential schooling intent on destroying their culture. However, there was no consciousness of this actuality within me then.

On Teaching a Curriculum Learned from Childhood

My first professional educational experiences as a teacher was a practicum position assigned to my mother's former high school. Somewhat close by, this high school was located in another small town, one hundred kilometres northeast of where I was born. So, my knowledge back then was predominantly informed by rural life contexts as a continuation of a curriculum learned during my childhood. My professional training, at this time, was in middle years

curricula acquired at the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. I completed my education in the first year of the new millennium there. Shortly afterwards, I left the prairies to teach abroad for adventures in distant, lesser-known places.

The move to my current place of residence on Treaty 6 territory, and the setting of this research, happened many years later. Admittedly, I was motivated to locate here because of the economic prosperity derived from the colonial development of prairie lands that provided local teachers with reliable salaries to suggest secure employment. Most jobs here have been stabilized by resource industries that willingly assault the soil and groundwater beneath one's feet. I would also follow my family here after several years of travelling and educating abroad. Once back in Canada, I would soon resume old prairie hobbies. Summer Saskatoon berry picking, open sky star gazing, hiking in the river valleys, and cross-country skiing remain my favourite activities.

It was 2004 when I returned to Canada, landing in Edmonton, Alberta, after a combined four years of teaching English as a foreign language in 高雄市 or Kaohsiung City, Taiwan, R.O.C., and middle school science in Luton, Bedfordshire, England. The city centre school by the downtown arena, where I first taught on a full-time contract, was the second Edmonton school I would teach in. The year before that position, I had acquired a part-time teaching gig to gain entry into the city's local public school board. This first job was in a more affluent suburban junior high school in an outskirt area in the southwest part of the city. The following year, 2005-2006, I taught junior high students in the city centre. After four years there, I moved to another junior high school further north and filled with an overcrowded and significantly more diverse student population.

My responsibilities in these early assignments included teaching science, math, social studies, English language arts, specialized literacy programming, student leadership, health,

physical education, and English as an additional language at K-9 grade levels. Later on, with more professional training and experience behind me, I would also engage in literacy coaching and curriculum coordination, supporting school staff and administration with individualized program planning to assess student learning to access multidisciplinary support to meet student needs. Next, I got hired by the same school board as a consultant to guide and plan health initiatives at a jurisdictional level. More recently, I held a position as a program coordinator, organizing mass professional learning opportunities to promote *school mental health* and encourage healthy educational programming.

All that said, I was inspired to become a doctoral student and potential scholar based on my early teaching experiences in my first downtown school by the old Immigration Hall and Edmonton's spectacular hockey arena. While working there, my students and I participated in a university research project. This project introduced me to arts-based social-emotional learning activities to encourage classroom discussions on hope and hopelessness. Resonating throughout this school-based mental health initiative was the contrasting variation in the meanings students associated with these two concepts. I attributed the diversity within the student population of this school community to why my students' conceptions of hope and hopelessness would vary. For instance, in a review of student progress with assignments, were meanings derived within Métis cultural understandings, others from newcomer settlement experiences or Indigenous place-based perspectives, from their uniquely lived interpretations.

By the end of this research project, my students were doing the teaching, challenging me and the university researchers to reconsider our assumptions. As a result, I felt compelled to reflect on my teaching practice as needing change. Ultimately, my interpretations of concepts significant to the human experience were too privileging of Western or Eurocentric ideals as

inherent images prioritized, limiting my capacity for thinking and feeling. Later, when I became a health consultant organizing mental health training for teachers, I would ponder the meanings and graphics promoted and taught to be associated with mental health. Notably, this was when mental health was re-emerging in local schools as a critical public health concept, curricular, and pedagogical priority. The result of this curiosity led to my enrolment in the Faculty of Education's doctoral program at the University of Alberta. This program has encouraged me to explore my wonders about mental health as an educational phenomenon.

Nowadays, I am inclined to describe myself as a place-conscious educator. Central to my professional approach to educating others is the intentional sharing of knowledge about the ecology and history of the lands where I teach. Somatic, intuitive, contemplative, expressive, and creation-centred educational practices are the priority now to sustain a healthy sense of connection for my students to their communities and the regional places they belong or are inspired to be.

Field notes. *Edmonton, Alberta, August 18, 2023.* "Inserting photographic images of my artistic renderings in the field as I journalled allowed me to garner insights and develop my *reflexive* research capacities. Now, to explain, I understood this term—*reflexion* as the creative task of *bending or turning the action back upon the subject* (OED, 2022). In my process of reflexion, creation-making was the multisensorial attempt to encourage forgotten or overlooked images to emerge through memory. In time and together, the images that developed would reveal small details, contributing to a shift in my thinking about knowing and, in turn, learning about thinking about knowing mental health ... "



(From) Molina del Rey, Spain, June 10, 2023. Ingrained: The Western Red Spring at Sundown. “[Embroidered with acrylic floss in and through a burlap canvas using a yarn darning, framed, and filtered using the Snapseed application for Android devices; by R. Holt].

Artist’s Statement: This image was inspired by a picture once present in my grandmother’s rural home, cared for now by my youngest sister.”

The Consequences of a “Relational Psychosis” Here

Revisiting my upbringing in small-town Saskatchewan would focus my attention on places—as topographies that teach. Notably, this was already an assumed position shaping the ecohermeneutic approach guiding this research in sensibility. That said, what I learned by returning, imaginably and literally, to my hometown lifeworld in *reflexion* of my fieldwork was that for many, many(!) years, I had been unable to grasp the complexity of the place relations or the impacts of my positionality within these relations here on the prairies in Canada. As evidence of my privilege on these lands, I had not even felt compelled to do so—back then.

“Disregardance”

I have gathered some personal memories to provide examples of what Alberta-based Indigenist scholar Dwayne Donald (2019) describes as “relational psychosis” (p. 157). According to Donald (2019), relational psychosis, a *collectively expressing* cognitive condition, was due to “a decades-long curricular project dedicated to the telling of a Canadian national narrative that has largely excluded the memories and experiences of Indigenous peoples” (p. 157). Donald (2019) attributes this condition to a curriculum of place informed by the habitual disregard of Indigenous presence in Canadian geographies, in histories, and elsewhere. Said Donald (2019):

I use the term relational psychosis to draw attention to the ways in which the institutional and socio-cultural perpetuation of colonial logics has trained Canadians to disregard Indigenous peoples as fellow human beings. This disregardance maintains unethical relationships and promotes the development of cognitive blockages (psychoses) that undermine the possibility for improved relations. In light of these difficulties, a poignant question arises: Who belongs to the place now known as Canada? (p. 157)

Like many fellow Canadians, I have also been lost in this foggy sense of place, experiencing this *psychic block*. Indeed, fortified positions on the prairie frontier have remained, but not to protect any outpost. Many now exist *internally* to shape a form of thinking obstructing the conscious acknowledgement of entangled relations—on shared lands (Donald, 2019).

Now, to illustrate with a personal example, I can recount memories of long car trips beginning around the age of ten. Back then, on the weekends, I often braved potential boredom or cold weather conditions to travel south away with my father in his 1977 Pontiac Parisienne. I would go with him to leave fewer kids behind with my busy mother. After our goodbyes to the family members left back at home, we would head two hundred kilometres straight south to *oskana kâ-asastêki*—to the pile of bones (*nêhiyaw masinahikan*, n.d.), The City of Regina, and claimed capital of Saskatchewan.

These trips to visit my ailing grandparents were scheduled bi-monthly. The drive to get to these visits was so seemingly dull. The landscape was too flat, with little to see or do, providing only telephone poles to count, to pass the time, and, yes, for entertainment. My father would have to bribe me to encourage good behaviour. With his bribe came the midpoint in our destination. He promised we would stop at *Nokomis*, a somewhat sleepy town with a rest stop. Here it was that Dad would pick us up some *pop and chips* to get us further down the road in peace through the remainder of this long, flat, possibly scorching, or freezing drive.

As a child, I found *Nokomis* the mid-point place for these trips, relatively unremarkable, but for my treats. It could be dusty or snowy, but that was not very interesting. It was as expected to be. Assuredly, I did not know much about the town or the origin of its name. Certainly beyond me was the idea of *Nokomis* as an *Odàwàg-Ojibwe*, Algonquin, and Chipewyan sentient spirit name for a central figure of a creation story. She was Sky Woman—fallen from the sky, a great

mother creator of the Ashinnabeg—the good beings (Asimont, 2013, para. 7). Nokomis, her name translated in English, revealed that she was and is—for all the “people who eventually became Canadians” (Asimont, 2013, para. 7). I did not know from the signs. I had encountered no books to read, stories that had been told, as something to learn at my not-so-far-way elementary school. Maybe the familiarity of our travel routine had overshadowed any subtle encounters with the incomprehensible there. So, for a long time, Nokomis was simply for me, yet another small-town place to stop or pass along the way to my people, my family.

In reflection of the fieldwork given to this research, I recalled additional details of these trips that would reveal how unconscious of the local histories I had been, more than I had previously imagined in my adulthood, so I had to assume I likely still was quite ignorant to significant places here. For instance, I did reclaim a lost detail I felt worthy of telling. It was a detail prompted by recalling that I would have weathered many visits to *Pasqua* Hospital in Regina because my grandparents were frequently ill in their old age. Now, to get to the hospital, my father and I would have to leave my uncle’s home, where we would stay, a place accessed by driving on *Pasqua* Street. Before that, we would have approached the City of Regina on Highway 20, a mostly straight road running north to south that would eventually weave Dad’s car through the Qu’Appelle Valley. There, the signs for *Pasqua* Lake would flash across our windows. So it seems I might have run out of telephone poles to count back then because I did manage to track those *Pasqua* signs!

Likely, some readers of this text might be viewing the inclusion of my youthful attention to these *Pasqua* signs as nothing more than a remedy for boredom. Perhaps even more so, this detail, for some, does not offer much importance given the nature of the research topic—mental health. I respond to the possibility of these charges by recalling how, in remembrance of these

signs, my consciousness was awakened to my privileged position as a white child on the prairies. Furthermore, this detail would teach me that I needed to unlearn Pasqua as I believed it once to be.

For many years, the word *Pasqua* was assumed by me to be named after some infamous pioneer, just like the names immortalized on the signage in my hometown. Nevertheless, I did find there was a European translation here to consider as the Italian language can provide a probable local interpretation for Pasqua—as the holiday and religious event known in English as *Easter*. Noticeably, there were places nearby named after the Grey Nuns renowned for establishing Pasqua Hospitals in devotion to the beliefs and ceremonies of Catholicism.

Yet the hospital in Regina was and is still a hospital for the Qu'Appelle Health Region—situated on Treaty 4, with services for members of the Saulteaux-Cree Pasqua First Nation Band No. 383. This band location was negotiated by Chief Joseph *Pasqua*, notorious for once arguing against the sale of Rupert's Land, nowadays considered part of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the Northwest Territories—to the Canadian Dominion. In 1874, Chief Pasqua did have to concede and sign Treaty 4 for the local Cree-nehiwâhk, Assiniboine, Sioux, and Saulteaux people (Nestor, n.d.). So it seems the signs I noted in my youth as Pasqua had etymological origins to paskwâw or paskwâhk—in Cree meaning, *on the prairies*.

Unconsciousness

As a topobiographical example of my youthful unconscious condition, my *Pasqua story* was reflected back to me through the lens of adult memory. The retelling of this seemingly benign story did reveal that I had been speaking Cree-nêhiyawêwin my whole life. Sadly, I had not known I had been speaking nêhiyawêwin as part of my everyday existence here on the prairies. This realization contributed to me revisiting a series of foundational existential

questions about the nature of being and what it means for me, here, and for others. Imagine: How could I claim to know my sense of *self* when I had not even known the origins of my own words in my local language or where I was in the world for most of my life?

A Problem for Education

If readers are wondering if I found *examples* of relational psychosis in the academic literature conceptualizing mental health, my response is simply yes. I discovered several instances of relational psychosis linked through metaphoric associations in research shaped by the imaginal ideals of settler colonialism. Furthermore, and more famously, so has the decolonizing trauma researcher Renee Linklater (2014) in great detail. Linklater's (2014) experiences and scholarship as a leader suggested that most "Western medical terminology and psychiatric language" was a violent implication of colonization as most Western meanings still shaping popularized conceptions of mental health tend to imply "that the individual is responsible for the response" (p. 22) "rather than [placing any responsibility for poor psychiatric health on colonization] the larger systemic force" (p. 22).

Notably, on an even larger scale, China Mills (2011), author of *Decolonizing Global Mental Health: The Psychiatrization of the Majority of the World*, has remarked that mental health as a concept prevalent in the world today now denotes the "*medicalized colonizing of lands, peoples, bodies, and minds* that are deeply entangled and yet rarely thought about together" (p. 23; citing Roman et al. [i.e., the text in italics], 2009, p. 19). This issue of a culturally one-sided biomedical perspective of mental health dominating the consciousness of collectives worldwide, informed by presumed professional beliefs unconscious to the prevalence of relational psychosis on colonized lands—was considered a *regression* in this research.

Unfortunately, relational psychosis became a collective condition that amplified during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, when I had begun to finalize the academic literature review for this research.

I could not be anything but concerned that as an infectious disease was inciting anxious conditions across the globe, *a popular weekly news magazine* reissued a specific special edition. It was a limited edition but could be found within reach of most grocery store counters around Alberta, advertising a title that suggested the magazine's editors had uncovered a new understanding of mental health, just in time, for a pandemic. Moreover, I do remember well the extensive outline of a brainless human head that filled most of the cover page of this edition as fragmented hues of biofeedback coloured the inside and out. I read a copy as I waited, masked in line, set, and distanced from others. There framed as fresh ideas, conceptions of health, illness, loneliness, anxiety, Depression, hope, suicide, and addiction ascended from the table of contents. Articles linked medical information on brain diseases, offering information on genetic testing, healing through psychedelic drug use, floating therapies for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, strategies for adolescent anxiety, and so on.

Now, feeling quite overwhelmed as one might in a worldwide crisis, I found, both personally and professionally, that this edition could offer me no relief or anything novel to improve how I care for my mental health or that of others, despite the need. Flashing back was a range of titles for articles that echoed professional learning sessions I had attended many times over. Then, I found an off-putting brain-based mantra that repeated throughout the articles. It seemed permanently assigned to mental health, the understanding that *mental health was brain health* and *mental illness was brain illness*. Even though this association was promoted as universally accepted to foster inclusivity, there were still listings of disabilities. Also, many

articles would allude to the possibility of an elite superiority within human understanding. For instance, there was the suggestion that *only* some people *with poor brain health* in those pandemic times *were lacking* or *in need* of assistance (see Breslow, 1972; Linklater, 2014; Mills, 2014; Rose, 2006; Summerfield, 2008). Promoted as unifying statements yet insinuating divisiveness were also biologically reductive comments framed in deficit thinking. Consider the statements: *We all have brains. We all have feelings.*—A subtle belief was lingering to imply that *some brains work better than others, and some are not the same as others* (see Mills, 2014).

Presumably, it was an opportunity missed by the editors of this *mental health* edition not to include any voices representing decolonizing mental health researchers. So I have considered those of Karlee Fellner (2018, 2019), Frederick Hickling (2019), Nadia Kanani (2011), China Mills (2014), Renee Linklater (2014), Leslie Roman (et al., 2009), and Nikolas Rose (1996, 2003, 2006), among others. These scholars have fostered concern for hidden ideologies in metaphors that underpin the words carrying meaning for mental health. Their research has also collectively highlighted the impact on those targeted by overt and implicit suggestions of deficit, disability, or lack of development. Bravely, all have challenged the language of disorder that has infiltrated the practices of education and infected identifications in relationships and within society. The conclusion I found across their work was that a culturally one-sided vision of mental health has been perpetuating an over-fixation on outcomes of production, individualized functioning, and brains—my brain, your brain, and the brains of others.

Educational Importance

In search of alternatives to the settled, colonial, and overtly Westernized medical standards ascribed to the *language of mental health*, I conducted a preliminary literature review

across caregiver professions, including nursing, social work, psychology, psychiatry, medicine, and education. Indeed, medicalized mental health definitions framed by Western philosophy dominated the literature, creating clear distinctions between the body and mind for mental health, isolating most influences of ecology to create meaning. Further, conceptions of mental health that offered differing cultural perspectives, pluralistic understandings, and paradoxical or *otherly* ways of being appeared to be absent, forgotten, isolated, or mostly excluded (Fecho & Clifton, 2016; Linklater, 2014; Mills, 2014; Summerfield, 2008, 2013; Tekin, 2014). As an educator who supported diverse urban public schools on Treaty 6 Territory, I thought this was a most worrisome curricular condition.

For “Others”

Moreover, in time, my review exposed a learning site in Alberta claimed for education as the primary location of the eugenics project. This site was known as a provincial training school built to resemble residential schools, where young, local, and racialized students perceived to be mentally deficient were sent away and sometimes involuntarily sterilized. The eugenics project, for me, was the most blatant, local example of how defining ideas shaped by familiar or nostalgic metaphoric associations can be quickly adopted with little consideration and easily appropriated to oppress. For example, support for the eugenics project came early in Alberta’s history through a seemingly helpful mental hygiene movement. However, it was a movement that promoted oppressive beliefs entrenched within the place-based value systems of influential pioneers. In time, this movement contributed to the displacement and confined resettlement of racialized Albertans perceived unfit for society, including children (Belshaw, 2018; Christian, 1974; Hogarth & Fletcher, 2018; Wahlsten, 1997).

The long legacy of the sustained eugenics project here was an ever-present concern for me during this study as a regional influence that could be forgotten, overlooked, or purposefully kept from the collective memory of local educators. Still, learning about eugenics as a mental health initiative did motivate me to seek more relational and intercultural ideas to reconceptualize mental health. Ideas about mental health have a history here, much like in other places—as I have found in echoes of expressions for living and being well in the curricula of late. So following next, readers can access my academic review exploring mental health as a concept on the Western prairies and beyond here.

Field note. *Stoney Plain, Alberta, July 2, 2023.* “Admittedly, at this point in this research, it is vital to share that I have attended more than just one *school mental health* meeting at the original building and site of the eugenics project in Red Deer, Alberta, as part of past professional responsibilities. The hosts of these meetings would never mention the historical significance to account for this place renamed as the Michener Centre, nor did the attendees. Likely, one of us must have known the history of this place at the time. Even in my ignorance, I should have known better. These circumstances stated have been communicated here, not to shame, but to illustrate another example of relational psychosis at play at that time, not so long ago. As for me, it would take a review of the literature next, engaged in establishing the grounds for this project, from which I would become profoundly aware of what I had been a part of.”

Regressions

a Cree translation in *alperta nêhiyawêwin*

Northern:

- wâyinokiwewin: as in *regress* or *in retreat* (LeClaire & Cardinal, 1998)

Plains:

- wâyinowin (LeClaire & Cardinal, 1998)

the English etymology

- regression: circa 1424, derived from the Latin *regressionem* for—*a going back or backwards, a return, and a less developed state or form* (Chambers, 2017)

Field notes. Edmonton, Alberta, January 18, 2021. “This section presents a review that began with an interdisciplinary topic search with these keyword formulae: mental health + concept, mental health + environment, mental health + land, intercultural + mental health, global mental health, mental health + meaning, ecopsychology, mad studies, crip studies, and the question: What does mental health mean? Databases searched included ERIC, SpringerLink, Google Scholar, JSTOR, PsycINFO, Medline, Scopus, and ProQuest.”

Edmonton, Alberta, August 23, 2023. “*What does mental health mean?*—Critically, this question was posed to guide the literature review next. Distinctly, it was a review that would evolve from an *interdisciplinary* inquiry into more of a *transdisciplinary* one. Knowingly and purposefully, some researchers might apply these terms (highlighted above) interchangeably. However, I have not for this review. Based on my research and learning, I presumed the interdisciplinary approach to be consistently thematic. So rather than combining knowledge between disciplinary fields as an interdisciplinary practice, this review sought to disclose differing points of view to facilitate an *exchange of perspectives* (Webber et al., 2023, p. 2) and expose symbols, metaphors, or metonymies shaping traditions of meaning taught to privilege the ideals of oppressive rationales entrenched within human-made systems and institutions. The intent was ecohermeneutic and critical: wary of any common sense forms of logic that might contribute to the marginalization of individuals and targeted groups through familiar place-conscious expressions (as prejudiced) of mental health as a Westernized concept and the topic of this research. That said, this review was supported by engaging with the following three exercises to inform my writing: i.) symbol amplification supported by etymological tracing, ii.) metonymic highlighting, and iii.) identifying *metaphorical coherence* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980,

p. 22). Readers can learn more about these exercises starting on page _ in the *Departures* section of this text.”

What does *mental health* mean?

About the *Questionable-ness* of the Literature Review Question

What does mental health mean?— This question may need to be more specific for some readers to guide this sort of critical literature review or even to establish a research inquiry. Still, it was the question I would pose as this is not an empirical review dependent on methods for a critical analysis to deduce, ascertain, or argue a thematic conclusion. Notably, and according to Canadian hermeneutic scholars Nancy Moules, Graham McCaffrey, James C. Field, and Catherine M. Laing (2015), “hermeneutic research differs from other research approaches because it is divergent rather than convergent: it involves carefully opening up associations that strengthen understanding of the topic rather than focusing in on a single governing theme” (p. 117). Ecohermeneutics, as an applied hermeneutic practice, should then be suspicious of a question that might predetermine the nature of or theme within potential responses. For this reason, I opted for a question that was deliberate in its *questionable-ness* (see Moules et al., 2015). In other words, I did not want to force a fit for meaning by over-fixing (i.e., bind up, prescribe, over-qualify) my question as it could have undermined the integrity of this ecohermeneutic review. This move was to ensure the topic could be explored flexibly and relationally rather than from any personal desire to find a conclusion attached to a reductive response or standard answer (Moules et al., 2015, p. 5).

Further Qualifications

Importantly, critical ecohermeneutic scholars aim to highlight the resonant structures and expressions of life sensed and generated within the particularities of local ecologies and place

relationships (Derby, 2015; Jardine, 2015a; Kulnieks et al., 2010). So, the sensibilities of the ecohermeneutic research approach further still qualified this review. For instance, perspectives given to the ideas encountered in the literature of this review were considerate of regionally situated contexts and contemplated through reflexive and interpretive exercises. Guided by these conditions, more questions arose regarding mental health and its verbal and conceptual history. Eventually, these questions led me to explore the normative and global definitions set in contrast to interpretations derived from more regional settings. Spontaneous wonders often provoked these interpretations about teaching to generate questions that would contribute to a mental health discussion in response to curriculum and educational studies.

Still, there remained few sources for this review to access for questioning the curricular inheritances or the ideological foundations of mental health in Canada's curriculum studies literature. Even so, with emergent school mental health initiatives ongoing in my region revealing a research gap, I did gather sources from other disciplines to inform this review intended to support the intentions of this research, aiming to provide intercultural curricular perspectives on the topic of mental health to reference. Moules et al. (2015) have expressed that a conceptual topic like mental health requires a "multifaceted engagement" (p. 118) if one is to develop a critical explanation of how "it is lived out in the world of practice, how it has evolved over time, how it relates to the surrounding culture, and what it means for the practitioners involved" (p. 117). So, indeed, there appeared to be a gap to inform and guide this review for research. Assumptions about mental health have shaped many views on pedagogy and education, although most remain directed by a rather culturally one-sided set of logics.

That said, among psychology, psychiatry, and public health, there was a common focus in studies exploring the origins of conceptualizations given to mental health. However, I was not willing to be swept along with the taken for granted in several conceptual justifications validating what I encountered as predominantly medically informed mental health definitions framed by Western philosophy. So I would seek out more sources, this time local and focus on the vocabulary shaping conceptual construction that had seemingly contracted rather than expanded over time.

To the Chin

Following my keyword search online and some time in reflection, my next move was to recover word origins or etymology. This exercise would involve tracing and mapping the semiotic nature of mental health as signified by the literal, symbolic, and, at times, more locally-lived expressions of terms interpreted within meanings. My first sources were somewhat standard, including *The Chambers Dictionary of Etymology* (Chambers, 2017) and the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of English Etymology* (OCDE, 2003). Strikingly, both texts presented the concept of *mental* as an adjective term: *of the mind*, as borrowed from the Middle French *mental* (c. 1422), the Late Latin *mentālis* and the Latin *mēns*, also linked by the suffix—*ment* from the Latin—*mentum*, meaning *chin*, or *to the chin* from which there were expressions of mental and physical action or the means or instrument of it (OCDE, 2003).

From here, in contemplation, this image impressed upon me: *The Thinker* (1880-1881), the notable bronze statue sculpted by Augusta Rodin, for rendering the act of pondering and symbolizing intellect as a head heavy in the business of thought so in need of propping up. Followed by a back-handed gesture to the chin, *the chin flick*, signed to communicate that one should *get lost, beat it, be off with you, go away, go back from which you came, make yourself*

scarce. This action brought forth a boxing reference, suggesting that *taking it on the chin* did suppose an encounter of significant impact. I had heard this before: Chin up!—no flinching, winching, or whining, even under attack, assault, or violation! Display strength. Stay upright even while taking on a physical/emotional blow. If one could stand it, it was an act of bravery or not, as a more passive acceptance to endure unpleasant life experiences.

Further along, some extended terms were linked through the task of tracing etymology, presented these meaning-filled expressions: *fragmentum* as *a broken piece* (from French, *frangere*), *ōrnāmentum* as *putting or arranging into place* or *en-placement* (from *ōrnāre*), and *pavimentum* for *stones beaten down flat* (from *pavīre*).: *fragmentum* as *a broken piece* (from French, *frangere*), *ōrnāmentum* as *putting or arranging into place* or *en-placement* (from *ōrnāre*), and *pavimentum* for *stones beaten down flat* (from *pavīre*). The English verb stem—*ment* produced several common words for depicting mental and feeling experiences, such as *amazement* for *mental stupefaction* (c. 1600), *atonement* as *a condition of being at one with others in reconciliation* (c. 1500), *bewilderment* as *confusion to a direction or situation* (c. 1600), and *discouragement* as *a deprivation, or cause to lose courage*, from the Old French, *déscoragier* to reveal the *disheartened*. Then, root terms were translated from the Modern French *décourager* to signal—*des* meaning *away*, suggesting a distancing direction from *courage* or *corage* (c. 1300 from Old French) as *spirit, nature, the heart, seat of feeling*, or *frame of mind* (Chambers, 2017; OCDE 2003).

Next, the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry, once emergent in time, introduced—*mental age* to depict *mental capacity* (c. 1691) and—*mentality* (n.) as *a sense of outlook* (c. 1895). Lingering associations to *mentālis* echoed from *the psyche*, intimately linking psychology and psychiatry as disciplines constructed to study mental health. In turn, *the psyche* disclosed the

soul, spirit, and mind. Then, in ancient Greek form, expressing the roots of *psȳchē* were translations of *breath* and *respiration* given to the action of *taking-in* (Chambers, 2017; Gadamer, 1996; OCDE, 2003).

A Sound Condition

Health (n.)—derived from Old English (OE) as *hællth* (c. 1000) or *hælp, helthe*, and later as *helth*, conveyed *a soundness of body, mind, or spirit* and as *being whole, sound, or well* (Chambers, 2017; OCDE, 2003). Also noted as—*uninjured, of good omen* from OE *hal* and Old Norse *heill* (*Online Etymological Dictionary* or OED, 2022) or *heal* (c. 725, in Genesis A) and its original relation with *wholeness* through the OE *hælen* (OCDE, 2003). Also, there was *healthful* (c. 1400) as a term that superseded *healthy* as *wholesome, curative, saving, serving to promote health, having good health, and away or free from disease* (Chambers, 2017; OCDE, 2003). Further, OE expressions of *whole* included references for being in *good or sound condition, not divided*, and *wholesome as conducive to well-being* (OCDE, 2003). The adjective, *sound* (OE, c. 1200)—uncovered a condition: *free from injury or defect* (Chambers, 2017).

Health-care or *health + care*, from 1915, (OE) was *carian* or *cearian* as *grief, anxiousness, solicitous* or *a burdened state of mind, calling for serious attention* (Chambers, 2017; OCDE, 2003). Also, *care* could be applied (c. 1400) as *charge, oversight, attention*, or *to heed the view—for safety or protection* (OED, 2022). Then, there was *care-worn* (adj.) as *oppressed or burdened with cares* (1828), *care-free* (adj.) as *free from cares* (1795), and *after-care* (n.) as *care given after a course of medical treatment* (1854; OED, 2022).

The Well Being

Alongside these root translations would emerge a rather ideal image of normalcy in depictions of *well-being* as a positive state to portray a seemingly *good* mental health condition

(see Huppert, 2014; Keyes, 2014; Public Health Agency of Canada or PHAC, 2006; Ryff, 1989; Seligman, 2011; Westerhof & Keyes, 2009; World Health Organization, 2014a). I first encountered this affiliation of meaning from the literature of psychologists and researchers Gerben Westerhof and Corey Keyes (2009). These scholars have habitually been well relied upon, specifically for constructing a mental health model, integrating two assumed traditions for well-being. The first tradition, *hedonic*—expressed *happiness, satisfaction, and interest in life* to portray *contentment* as an emotional disposition. It was a concept shaped by hedonism, a Greek influence, for *the pursuit of pleasure as a way to achieve a good life* (see also Deci & Ryan, 2008; Kraut, 2018; Moore, 2020; Sheldon, 2016; Waterman, 1990, 2008). The second tradition, *eudemonic*—would maintain the ideals of *human flourishing, fulfillment, welfare, and wholeness*. This latter tradition was also the result of Greek philosophical ruminations from which the concept of *eudaimonia* was conceived and translated in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (384-322 BC).

Some have opposed Westerhof and Keyes' (2009) adoption of Grecian positivism as a conceptual approach, including international mental health researchers Silvana Galderisi, Andreas Heinz, Marianne Kastrup, Julian Beezhold, and Norma Sartorius (2015), who have notably rejected the idea of *well-being* as exclusionary and so irrelevant for rendering the psyche. For me, the term was limited and limiting when framed by the synecdoche of metonymy entrenched within applied definitions informed by this popular tradition of positivism—substituting a singular sense of *well-being* to render a pluralistic, collective relationship. Here, health linked to the associative expression of *being well* to personify the holistic complexities of psychic functioning. Moreover, Galderisi et al. (2015) claimed a lack of consideration for any paradoxical emotional accounts of lived experiences reconciled by meanings made by

privileging the notions of positivism. Galderisi et al. (2015) pointed to examples of brutality in war to make their case. Notably, some veterans have reported a numinous, hedonistic state, described as a sense of well-being while shooting to kill. Up for consideration was the question of whether these veterans, within these circumstances then, were to be considered conceptually exemplar of being-*well*? Moreover, given as a further instance to challenge the positivism in contemporary conceptions of mental health by Galderisi et al. (2015), were times when healthy people experienced desperation or grief after losing their jobs or income when opportunities and resources had become scarce (Galderisi et al., 2015). Now, would it not be more conceptually informed to allow the existence of distress to be emotionally expressed for the benefit of psychic function when one was experiencing grief and loss? Given the probability and prevalence of such circumstances, Galderisi et al. (2015) were still determining how best to reconcile interpretations of human experiences, particularly when belief systems shaping popular conceptions of mental health derived from these hedonic and eudaimonic traditions—so was I.

The Good Life

Then there was the social psychologist Marie Jahoda (1958) to support the view that the fundamental values and ideals underpinning expressions of mental health were a troublesome conceptual matter. However, back in 1958, when Jahoda published with the British Joint Commission on Mental Health, her position was more for demonstrating dismay for the ambiguities and mysteries entrenched by mental health as a concept:

That it means many things to many people is bad enough. That many people use it without even attempting to specify the idiosyncratic meaning the term has for them makes the situation worse, both for those who wish to *promote* mental health and for

those who wish to introduce concern with mental health into systematic psychological theory and research. (p. 3)

Jahoda (1958) plainly discouraged philosophy to establish a definition, stating, “all that can be expected from its [i.e., a definition’s] usefulness [is] in achieving the purposes of science” (p. 4). According to Jahoda (1958), any attempted grappling over the nature of human beings, what they ought or could be, was a value-laden hindrance as an individual and private matter for the personal good and thus unsuitable for any research purpose. Jahoda also remarked that “every historical period probably has its own characteristic way of searching for expressions incorporating its ideals of a good man in a good society” (p. 4). For this practitioner, meanings of mental health should be validated by the observable as caught by the science of methods and the development or progress of evidence-based understandings.

Perhaps, for Jahoda (1958), discussions on the *good life* were cause for concern as offsetting the release date of the first *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* or DSM (APA, 1952) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA). This manual has now been published in its seventh edition and remains as formidable as ever a force for shaping psychiatry, psychology, education, and most societies (Kawa & Giordano, 2012).

Around the same timeframe that Jahoda (1958) was presenting her views, the social scientist Lawrence Frank (1953) was receiving accolades for his research in support of his ideas on the “promotion of mental health” (p. 167). Frank (1953) would lead others to believe that mental health was a condition of life or, at least, how life felt experienced. Moreover, Frank (1953) suggested for mental health, a commitment to “continue to grow, develop, and mature through life, accepting responsibilities, finding fulfillments, without paying too high a cost

personally or socially, as they [i.e., all people] participate in maintaining the social order and carrying on our [Westernized] culture” (p. 69).

Shared in common to the publications from both Frank (1953) and Jahoda (1958) was their apprehension of one-sided, narrow developments in science collapsing views, curiosity, and imagination. Both avoided the influences of an emergent research movement of their time that focused on the knowledge of deviations, illnesses, and malfunctioning. These focus topics were considered to be overshadowing opportunities to advance any understanding of healthy psychic functioning by these scholars. For instance, consider what Jahoda (1958) said about mental health in terms of creating a distinction from disease as “perhaps the most widespread and apparently simplest attempt at definition. In other words, Jahoda (1958) too simply reduced in most instances, by definition and to accept this approach presupposes a definition of mental disease” (p. 10). As for Frank (1953): “The insights and understandings which have come from psychiatry, psychoanalysis, psychology, cultural anthropology, and sociology await translation into larger and more inclusive terms and reorientation of all the varied activities of individual, group, and community living” (p. 167). Respectively, expressions of *positive mental health* would emerge from the texts of both researchers. Nevertheless, more particular to Jahoda (1958) was her resistance to efforts attempting to shape psychological meaning through the absence of disease, well-being, and normalcy. She could not find in science a method to reconcile this sort of mental health criteria for meaning statistically through the frequency concept—or definition. In other words, the concepts of well-being, disease, and normalcy were insufficient, not evidenced enough for Jahoda (1958) to establish or claim the existence of a well-informed meaning to articulate the complexities of mental health as a concept.

Offering more of a contrasting perspective in social psychology at this time was Erich Fromm. Fromm (1955/2013) would focus his concerns on what he perceived as the *pathology of normalcy* permeating mainstream society. Significantly, Fromm (1955/2013) had located meanings framed by pathology within depictions of healthy functioning despite the emergence of newly proposed paradigms in health. For instance, here, in *The Sane Society* (1955/2013), Fromm would write:

Mental health cannot be defined in terms of the *adjustment* of the individual to his society, but, on the contrary, that it must be defined in terms of the adjustment of society to the needs of man, of its role in furthering or hindering the development of mental health. Whether or not the individual is healthy, is primarily not an individual matter, but depends on the structure of his society. (pp. 72-73)

Fromm's (1955/2013) view was that ideas about mental health should not lead to the renovation or modification of the individual to fit society, as this signalled it was society suffering from sickness. Any logic applied to support a meaning given to mental health should encourage a collective change in a culture rather than placing responsibility on anyone, as an individual, to change for the betterment of health. Still, today, the task of recovery from mental illness to achieve *sound* or *positive* mental health frequently remains an individual responsibility to serve the basic needs of power among most dominant groups (Fromm, 1955/2013).

Back again to Jahoda (1958), as her research also provided a significant reference highlighting the influence of environment on mental health—a speculation that could be perceived as somewhat in line with Fromm's (1955/2013) vision of mental health:

Though the distinction between what is inside and what is outside the organism is fundamental and clear-cut with regard to objects, it is difficult to apply it to psychological

functions. Light is outside the organism, the visual nerve, inside. Seeing, a psychological function, is equally dependent on both. In the sciences of man, the distinction is always to some extent arbitrary. (Jahoda, 1958, p. 105)

In this passage, Jahoda (1958) acknowledges that aspects of the unseen inner psychic function were likely part of or linked to an external, natural force. However, any in-depth exploration in this direction was put on hold and postponed—at least until a more targeted meaning of mental health as an attribute of human behaviour and character could and eventually would take form.

By the 1950s, Jahoda (1958) enlisted the Joint Commission on Mental Health to assist her with redirecting popular perceptions of mental health through a *Positive Mental Health Movement*. This movement would remain for many decades, aligned with the science of behaviour (an observable phenomenon), a current felt still in contemporary educational research today. The enduring attributes of a person or a specific action (i.e., behaviour) in a particular setting gave way to three domains of criteria framed as indicators of positive mental health, which included *self-realization for exploiting potential*, *a sense of mastery over the environment*, and *a sense of autonomy* through identity, confrontation, and problem-solving (see Galderisi et al., 2015). These descriptors of settled domains have contributed to the normalization of binaries in the modern language of mental health (i.e., positive versus adverse mental health; good vs. difficult emotions). Increasingly, these binary expressions have become a requirement for the effective communication of psychic experiences and conditions within many educational and academic contexts, such as when communicated within the positivism of public health during Jahoda's time and still nowadays.

The Moral Matters of Mental Hygiene

Despite Jahoda's (1958) commitment to *positive mental health*, the moral matters given to mental health as a conceptual topic in academia remained seemingly troublesome for her. For instance, Jahoda (1958) recalled the impacts of beliefs inspired in the early twentieth century during the *Mental Hygiene Movement* (Est. 1909). Here, Jahoda (1958) can be found coupling mental health with mental hygiene as a fix still hindering and lingering, albeit likely unconsciously, for many Western educators in research fields studying mental health today. Jahoda (1958) contributed to this issue by stating:

Whether we like it or not, the term mental health, or mental hygiene, is firmly established in the thought and actions of several groups: First, under the guidance of voluntary and governmental agencies, the public has taken hold of the term in spite of (or, perhaps, because of) its ambiguity. Funds are being raised and expended to promote mental health; educational campaigns are being conducted to teach people how to attain this goal for themselves, for their children, for the community. (p. 5)

Likely, Jahoda (1958) was intent on cautioning her readers. Decades before, several public health practitioners and psychiatrists had published articles linking conceptual understandings of mental health to mental hygiene and deficiency (see MacMurchy, 1917; Meyer, 1918; Taft, 1917; Weatherly, 1924; White, 1917). At the time, the common perception was that *this movement* was a benign act of advocacy to elicit public support by praising the virtues of mental health and targeting individuals for the betterment of societies shaped by capitalist values and Western affinities. However, for the people as patients the movement sought to help, there would be a tremendous loss and cost to gather a result.

Mental hygiene, an antiquated term for nowadays, may have first appeared in English literature around 1843 (Bertolote, 2008), established by the philosophy of Baltimore-based

psychiatrist Adolf Meyer (1866-1950). However, it was not so much from Meyer or his writing but more likely from his patient Clifford Beers (1908/2010) and his book that catalyzed Meyer's celebrity (Bertolote, 2008; Thomson, 1998; Toms, 2012). In *A Mind That Found Itself* (1908/2010), Beers detailed his terrifying experiences at mental hospitals or asylums in the United States. His readers would be motivated by his autobiography to act for change. This motivation led to a developing Mental Hygiene Society with spreading influence that efficiently crossed borders. Soon, a national association in Canada organized to ensure a minimum of humanizing care for anyone deemed *mentally deficient*—proposed for eradicating the abuses, brutalities, and neglect from which the sick had traditionally suffered (Bertolote, 2008; Thomson, 1998; Toms, 2010, 2012). However, this advocacy also generated stigmatizing tales about mental illness as a moral sickness to render deficiencies in others.

In Canada, participation in the *Mental Hygiene Movement* was perceived as fashionable during the second decade of the twentieth century. Even nowadays, some still believe the Roaring Twenties to be the heyday of public health here (see Brown, 1986; MacLennan, 1987). Reviewing the research of those times, sociologist David MacLennan (1987) described Canadian mental hygienists as advocates for social reform and physicians invested in establishing the practice of medicine. For many social elites in Canada, this movement became a well-intentioned lobby issue. However, some took advantage of this movement to publicize her assumed sense of urgency for dealing with perceived social problems in their communities (MacLennan, 1987). One such person was the Ontario-based physician Helen MacMurchy, notorious for her capacity to rally mental hygienists together in morality (MacLennan, 1987). The reformer and doctor reportedly promoted institutional provisions aimed at those members of society seemingly

demonstrating what she deemed undesirable personality or behavioural traits or characteristics (MacLennan, 1987).

For the Welfare of the *Mentally Deficient*

In time, mental hygiene as a movement did shift toward advancing preventative measures and early treatment of *suspected* mental problems (Porter, 1987; Toms, 2012). However, beliefs informing how to make this turn in the movement would have far-reaching impacts and, unfortunately, some severe consequences. The most obvious example was the public adoption of an assumed relationship between *mental deficiency* and *social inefficiency*. It seemed this association perpetuated in public through Meyer's publications, as included in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (1918). Media would translate Meyer's published work, contributing to the *Mental Hygiene Movement's* increasing popularity. However, it does appear this movement was *not* evolving the way that Meyer's star patient, Clifford Beers, had intended or ever wanted, as based upon what gets revealed in the section next (Bertolote, 2008; Thomson, 1998; Toms, 2010, 2012).

A *Well-born* Project to Deal with Misfit Populations

Here in Alberta, mental deficiency, as a conceptual notion, was presented alongside an overt colonial project on the prairies. The project would span five decades, supported by the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene (CNCMH). This organization is better known today as the Canadian Mental Health Association, although still notably established by Clifford Beers and Canadian psychiatrist Clarence Hinks in 1918 (Richardson, 1989). Sometimes forgotten or overlooked by academic references, CNCMH's involvement would include submitting reports to the Province of Alberta to elicit support for eugenics policies (Leung,

2012). Local sources and available literature on this so-called public health initiative have described *eugenics in Alberta* in several ways, including as an idea, campaign, and project.

Tracing the etymology of *eugenics* revealed the Greek *eugenés* and an origin-derived meaning of *well-born*, in essence, to describe and identify—*good (eu-) genes (genés)* (ten Have & Patrão Neves, 2021, p. 487). According to physicians and authors of *The Dictionary of Global Bioethics* (2021), Henke ten Have and Maria do Céu Patrão Neves, the concept of eugenics was notably conceived by Plato and others during ancient times to relay the idea that “some are well-born while others are not and that the birth of the latter should be discouraged while the birth of the former should be promoted” (p. 487). In short, this concept of eugenics reproduced a meaning for uncovering a Platonic logic to be suspiciously minded.

After all, the following rationale took little time to spread across the local, pioneering commons here: *If genetics could lead to improved herds and crops on the prairies, then Albertans should and could harness the power of science (like you would with a tractor) to improve the human species* (Chapman, 1977; German, 1927; Grekul et al., 2004; Ladd-Taylor, 1997; McLaren, 1990; Soltice, 1996). It was a local idea metaphorically and culturally coherent to a farming logic, preserved in records and past publications by the United Farmers of Alberta or UFA and the United Farm Women of Alberta or UFWA (Chapman, 1977; German, 1927; Grekul et al., 2004; Ladd-Taylor, 1997; McLaren, 1990; Soltice, 1996). For instance, the minutes of the UFWA Convention in 1916 captured feminist-activist Irene Parlby introducing her opinion in an audience address:

Scientists differ, I think, in their opinions as to the extent of prenatal influences, but there seems little doubt that the conditions of a mother’s mind have great influence on the temperament of her coming child. How many women think of this, of how that future

citizenry is developing for good or evil even before they have given him to the world?

(Cited by Soltice, 1996, pp. 84, from the Glenbow Museum and Archives)

Demonstrated here was that Parlby's (1916) advocacy attempted to increase biases against fellow Albertans, those more vulnerable, perceived as socially less desirable through an unfounded belief applied as a fear tactic. Read here, as it was Parlby (1961) who said:

until women—all women—are raised to a much higher standard and educated to realize that in their hands lies the remedy for these evils, not by getting of the vote, and the passing of the laws, but by searching their own hearts, and thoughts, and lives- by their prayers, and resolutions, and ideals to bring forth only that which good, by refusing to give themselves to men of low and ignoble lives. (Cited by Soltice, 1996, pp. 84-85, as found in the Glenbow Museum and Archives)

—*How interesting as comments by a celebrated suffragette advocate for women's rights.* In this speech, the aim of acquiring women the right to vote was presented second in place to a different priority. It seems Parlby was more interested in advancing an imposed practice of reproductive selection, at least, perhaps, as advocated for in Alberta. In any event, there was more evidence of local support beyond Parlby, such as the article written by Mrs. R. O. German (1927) published by Alberta's UFA with the following headline to threaten: *The Problem of the Feeble Minded: A Growing Menace Which Must Be Dealt With.*

Other supporters for the eugenics project came forward in their commitment to nation-building with the goal of a law-abiding, physically, and mentally healthy population (Belshaw, 2018). In this frame, the very existence of mentally deficient *others* was claimed to jeopardize the health of the province and the greater nation (Belshaw, 2018; Moss et al., 2013). For example, James Shaver Woodsworth (1874-1942), an influential regional champion for the

eugenics approach, was infamous for preaching about eugenics as good for society and claiming it was promoted in the *gospel* (Chapman, 1977; Grekul et al., 2004). According to local sources, Woodsworth described himself as a white, upper-class, God-fearing Christian, translating his fear of what he believed was a *declining quality of immigrants* arriving in the West into a public crisis (Chapman, 1977; Grekul et al., 2004). He allegedly warned that *no segment of Canadian society would be left untouched by the inferior stock from central and eastern Europe* (Chapman, 1977; Grekul et al., 2004).

Some of Irene Parlby's feminist colleagues and fellow suffragette members of the Alberta Famous Five may also have contributed to public support. Yes—Nelly McLung and Judge Emily Murphy were seemingly quite vocal in their campaigning for sterilization to mediate their claim of the growing numbers of mental and social inefficiencies in Alberta (Belshaw, 2018; Grekul et al., 2004). It seemed they had attempted to establish and promote a philosophical ground for eugenics feminism (Belshaw, 2018; Grekul et al., 2004).

In addition, a somewhat notorious publication was uncovered, produced here, and printed down south by the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, highlighting the productive pace during the first four years of the eugenics experience in Alberta. The writers of this article included a director of mental health and superintendents from nearby mental institutions (Baragar et al., 1935). For the record, these Albertan residents would conclude that “sterilization was the only rational procedure” (p. 907) for dealing with the mentally deficient, “prone to pass on to posterity their own defects and to bring into the world children double handicapped by both heritage and early environment” (cited by Grukul et al., 2004, p. 907).

Reportedly, between 1929-1972, over 4700 adults and children of mostly First Nation, Métis, Inuit, and Ukrainian, Polish, and Russian backgrounds, were authorized for sterilization.

Over 2800 performed sterilizations were completed, condoned under the provincial *Sexual Sterilization Act* (1928) which gave reproductive authority over the so-called mentally deficient to the Alberta Eugenics Board (see Caufield & Robertson, 1996; Grekul et al., 2004; Wahlsten, 1997). A noteworthy mention was that Alberta and British Columbia were the only provinces with this legislation for Canada. Although and despite a similar population size, Alberta sterilized about ten times more statistically in contrast to British Columbia (Grekul et al., 2004). Rather infamously, the Province of Alberta would become renowned across North America as one of the few places initiating an *involuntary* sterilization program (Reilly, 2015).

The ardent global historians Alison Bashford and Phillipa Levine (2010) have suggested that European imperial expansion in Canada would have set the stage for the acceptance of eugenics in the Western societies of the prairie provinces as it merged with ideas about savage populations and their relationship to modernity and modern places. Alberta's eugenics project did share a roster of concerns allied with imperial visions shaping the ideology of settler-colonialism in Canada. After all, it was a project aimed to (a) address the oppositional behaviours of displaced-misplaced, misfit populations (MacEachran, 1932); (b) improve social productiveness (see Caufield & Robertson, 1996; Wahlsten, 1997); (c) conserve the established social order (MacMurchy, 1917)—deal with those that have seemingly fallen from the grace of Christianity so against the *common good* (Meyer, 1918); and (d) achieve colonial goals by fostering a haunting fear of *regression* (see Bashford & Levine, 2010). Importantly, settling differences due to fear of the *Other* was a driving force; immigrants, First Nations, and Métis individuals were vastly over-represented in Alberta's sterilization cases (Belshaw, 2018; Christian, 1974; Grekul et al., 2004).

Some research sources have alluded that most Albertans were not privy to the actions of *The Eugenics Board* during most of the many decades the project ran. Reportedly, The Board would meet several times each year, but in secret with closed sessions, away from the public, with the reporting submitted by the chairman sent directly to the minister responsible (Wahlsten, 1997).

Still and yet, there appeared as historical evidence a stream of publications highlighting enthusiasm for eugenics in Alberta. Long-standing Board Chairman Dr. John A. MacEachran was one such supporter. In *A Philosopher Looks at Mental Hygiene* (1932), MacEachran would attempt to establish philosophical grounds for eugenics by integrating the musings of Plato (c. 380 B.C.). University of Alberta's professor emeritus of psychology Douglas Wahlsten (1997) investigated MacEachran's (1932) work and found this passage from *Republic* (2004) appropriated in an archived text:

The proper officers will take the offspring of the good parents to the pen or fold and there they will deposit them with certain nurses who dwell in a separate quarter; but the offspring of the inferior, or of the better when they chance to be deformed, will be put away in some mysterious, known place, as they should be. (in MacEachran, 1932, p. 134; see also Wahlsten, 1997)

Wahlsten (1997) identified these remarks from which MacEachran derived his entitlement in 1932, adopting "Plato's measures to regulate marriage and reproduction" (p. 191). The publication was there to validate the racialized and gendered activities of MacEachran's Eugenics Board of Alberta. Further stressed by Wahlsten (1997) was MacEachran's boastful goal to eliminate a seeming number of *imperfect* persons in his promotion of Alberta as an all-

powerful region romantically rendered by depicting local professionals controlling reproductive decisions as *philosopher kings*.

The associations between mental health, mental hygiene, and mental deficiency exemplify how ideological thinking of settler colonialism has shaped hindering expressions of health and ill health as meaning-filled re/presentations. Left unchallenged, these expressions had contributed to normalized acts of violence against individuals and groups of people here. Later, I traced the origins of *hygiene*, which revealed an association with the ancient form, *hygiēs* (Greek), meaning *live well* (ODE, 2003). I found this a shady translation for a term promoted alongside the racialized targeting of so-called unfit citizens, those perceived as living with a social or genetic impurity and, thus, considered void of well-being.

From neighbouring British Columbia, professor of educational studies Leslie Roman (2009) and colleagues describe the abuse of boundaries to render the “so-called fit and unfit citizens” (p. 3), a history of “crazymaking” (p. 3) and an example of “medicalized colonizing” (p. 3; see also Roman, 2005) due to the racialized and gendered targeting of vulnerable individuals in Western Canada. This targeting contributed to “confinements on stolen land” (p. 3). Esteemed Canadian historians Caroline Strange and Jennifer Stephen (2010) were aligned, faulting biomedical politics and expert-directed human betterment framed through a colonial discourse that pathologized populations who dared to disrupt the social order. For these scholars, Alberta as a province was precedent-setting in the appropriation of regionally developed place-based metaphors applied to sway public opinion (e.g., *if it is good for improving vulnerable crops, unnatural selection can be good for vulnerable human beings*). This appropriation would contribute to the normalization of institutionalized abuses such as those with roots to eugenics and other allied concepts, including mental hygiene and mental health.

Local sociologists Jana Grekul, Harvey Krahn, and Dave Odynak (2004) highlighted the statistical significance by analyzing a large data file on eugenics in Alberta. Their project involved recovering data on the populations evaluated for Alberta's sterilization project (N=4785) accessed from the Provincial Archives of Alberta. These researchers noted that *The Board* had passed 99% of all cases before them. In one sample set of 861 persons, there were references to a patient being mentally defective or deficient in 55% of the cases. Regarding children under 14, 93% referred to *The Board* were rendered mentally deficient compared to 82% of teenagers. For all decades combined, the probability of being sent for evaluation to *The Board* consistently favoured an over-representation of cis-gendered girls or women to target their reproductive rights. Most noticeably impacted were those identifying or labelled as Indian, Métis, half-breed, Treaty, Inuit, and Eastern European—as Ukrainian, Polish, and Russian.

At this point, there was cause to reflect on how, historically, colonialism in Canada involved adopted projects of reconstruction or renovation, where first, an inferior other gets established and readied for assimilation (Hogarth & Fletcher, 2018). The mental and moral activities shaping the dominant pioneering society as a living curriculum on the prairies would inevitably target unique expressions of individualism and identity. Mainly targeted were individuals expressing a sense of self through more intercultural ways of being and knowing or living beyond the boundaries of a public opinion shaped by conceptualized place-conscious norms perceived critical for healthy functioning. (Fernando, 2014; Hogarth & Fletcher, 2018; Linklater, 2014; Mills, 2014; Rose 1996, 2003, 2006; Summerfield, 2008, 2013). Then, from the assigned label of deficiency, behaviour accounts could be reported, assessed, reasoned over, and planned for. Still today, I am mindful that many Canadian residents are still vulnerable to such processes in evolving colonial formulations. For now, to better understand this process through

the lens of eugenics as a movement rendered through meaning, one can revisit the local experiences of Leilani Muir (1944-2016). Muir was once a student of the Albertan eugenics project. Wahlsten (1997) researched Muir's childhood:

Leilani Marietta Muir, then known as Leilani Marie Scolah, was born July 15, 1944, in Calgary, Alberta, into a family that was poor and moved frequently. The identity of her father was uncertain. Her mother was married to Earl Bertram Draycott who was in military service overseas when Leilani was born. Little information is available about her early history, but it is apparent that she was an unwanted, unloved, and abused child. She was not allowed to eat at the table with her family, and her mother attempted to starve her, although her brothers gave her food on the sly and she stole what she could. At school she was punished for stealing food from other children, but there was no suggestion she was failing in her schoolwork. (para. 39)

In court records, Muir had described vivid memories of her mother making numerous attempts to get rid of her. Muir shared that at age eight, she was placed in a convent for a month while her mother initiated an application to the Provincial Training School for Mental Health Defectives (PTS) in Red Deer, Alberta. In her submission, Muir's mother reported that Muir spoke intelligently despite attending little school. The major complaint focused on her behaviour—as she stole money and pills. There was also concern about her eating large amounts of food. Additional comments listed for the record included how she was bossy, often indolent, impulsive, and bad-tempered (Wahlsten, 1997). At age eleven, Muir was forcibly moved to the institution without an IQ test and very little observation about her so-called mental deficiency (Wahlsten, 1997). Still, the parental consent for Muir's sterilization was notably included in the successful application.

Two years and four months into her institutional confinement, court records confirmed that the superintendent of the PTS conceded a formal diagnosis rendering Muir *a mentally defective moron* to proceed with her sterilization. Muir's diagnosis was despite her academic performance records at the institute indicating otherwise (Wahlsten 1997). As an adult, Muir would successfully hold the Province of Alberta accountable when her case went to trial in 1995 at the Court of Queen's Bench in Edmonton, Alberta. However, dealing with lifelong issues of infertility and the stigmatization as a moron was said to cause Muir great pain for the rest of her life and every day (Wahlsten 1997).

After reading about Muir's experiences at the PTS, I thought of contemporary academic research making a case for mental health curricula in schools by highlighting the reluctance of Canadian children, youth, and families to access mental health services due to stigma. A frequent assumption regarding the stigma of mental health as a concept given to reactionary and oppositional responses to diagnoses, treatment, or care has been the belief that more modern curricular measures can address it.

Nowadays, the typical approach to mental health stigma reduction in schools reveals the standard perpetuates no more than the same. For instance, what gets proposed in schools is often readily available, streamlined, and endorsed evidence-based understandings and mental health services promoted through a seemingly benign, engaging, and modernized branding. However, lost in this progression for mental health is any acknowledgement of the corresponding re/presentations familiar to existing personal, familial, racial, and cultural traumas, such as the traumas derived from historical encounters with a settler and an elite class of so-called pioneering mental health experts here. Rarely, if ever spoken or taught about, is the history of conceived ideals given to promote mental health—on the Western prairie lands. It seems it is for

here, as post-colonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1998) once said, you never completely step out of an ideological inheritance. However, what you can do: “the most responsible choice seems to be to know it as best one can. Recognize it as best one can and through one’s necessarily inadequate interpretation, to work to change it, to acknowledge the challenge of it” (p. 165).

Educational settings need to pay attention to the history of eugenics and with gentle care on this territory. It was, after all, a conceptual project producing the projections of colonization for mediating supremacist fears of exposure to the so-called unfit, imperfect person. So, it may be surprising to some, but should it be? I continue to encounter features in schools and in the curricula of schools that symbolically reflect the imagery and ideology that established long-standing support for the eugenics project here.

Field note. *Edmonton, Alberta, January 18, 2023. Seclusion.* “Maybe in Alberta, a general lack of understanding about the legacy of the eugenics project is why seclusion room doors remain a lived learning reality in many classrooms of this region and elsewhere in Canada (see Johnson, 2019a; Szulc, 2023). In this province, some students, this year, will attend regular and specialized programs, learning within a classroom framed by a soundproof metal barricade that was once a door, or still is to secure students in a separate, isolated room.

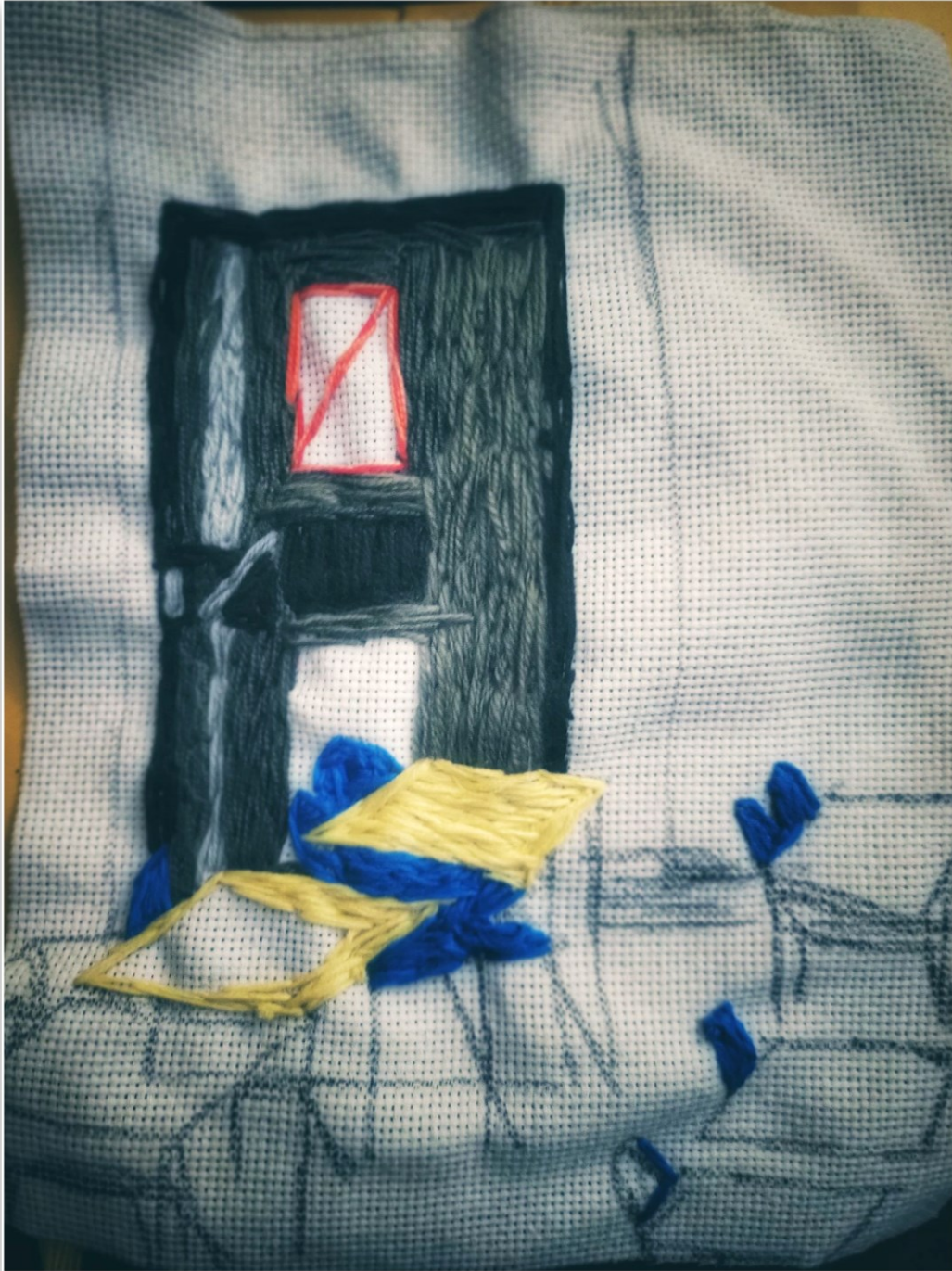
Suppose a seclusion room door, even if it cannot lock, stays in a learning environment (nowadays, most rooms have been decommissioned—meaning the remaining doors cannot lock). In that case, such a door noticed by students or staff members may still be sensed or felt as a symbolic gesture to remind them of a threat once applied to displace and confine students demonstrating undesirable behaviours or emotions, responses, and reactions. Imagine if you can, if you have never seen such a door before, a boundary—ten centimetres thick with steel and only

a latch handle on the outside available to students. Then, think of how many students get exposed to it year after school year, presumably while expected to remain at their desks for learning.

Now, I wonder about the values and logics that must remain intact within systems, organizations, and political parties in government that would not fund the removal of these doors and the comprehensive decommissioning of these rooms from all classroom settings.

If such a door goes beyond your imagination, I have recreated an image of one once encountered in a classroom. I would teach by that door rendered in my picture following next. Students would always struggle if they sat near to it. Of important note, I could not remove that door or petition to do so when I was teaching by it. And at this time, I am unable to explain publicly why.

You will likely notice that my image on the following page needs to be completed. It has been purposefully left unfinished. This seclusion project as a movement in education is far from over with—for me to move on from it or for many students to do so.”



Field note. Edmonton, Alberta, February 28, 2023. The Seclusion Room Door.

“[Embroidered with acrylic floss in and through a white cotton backing using a yarn darning, framed, and filtered using the Snapseed application for Android devices; a project ongoing and unfinished].”

Divisive Metaphors

Through image and reflection, I would return to the issue of stigma. Notably, I had encountered a precondition of meaning rooted in divisive metaphors contributing to perceptions of *madness*. For instance, I learned how madness could be considered the conceptual result of a dominant society's privileging of reason over other forms of wisdom, including emotion, sensation, and intuition. The influential and controversial critical *theorist* and poststructuralist scholar Michael Foucault contributed ideas to form such a translation.

In *Madness and Civilization* (1965), Foucault claimed that the pressures of conformity in unequal societies had shaped many metaphors of meaning. Further, he would state several metaphors of this sort continue to be perpetuated by lingering contemporary notions that have sustained in the collective Western consciousness a "vain presumption" (p. 29) in reason. Foucault's (1965) own interpretation of *reason* was then rendered as a "merciless language of non-madness" (p. ix), as exemplified in Medieval European historical events during times when individuals suspected of mind sickness would also suffer through enforced rituals of exile.

According to Foucault (1965), the act of exile was often unconsciously motivated within a collective, yet still persecutory regardless. As evidenced by classroom seclusion practices, it is a process that remains prevalent within systems and institutions seemingly intent on alleviating fears of any unwanted psychic infection or wounding, such as being succumbed by "the wisdom of fools" (p. 22). As a result, nowadays, the more intuitive or sensed forms of knowing, such as those informing many marginalized individual or collective ways of being, may still garner unwanted attention from Westernized professional opinions in health or education, proclaiming a disorder as an echoed expression of an infected "possession of the mind" (p. 22).

In the past, madness was thought of as an *impurity*, albeit this was an interpretation I felt was still made within modern-day society, although perhaps less consciously acknowledged—but active within dominating collective beliefs, including in Alberta and beyond here. That said, it was important to learn that there were even historical periods when “access to churches was denied to madmen” (Foucault, 1965, p. 10). Consequently, water and navigation would frequent many lives. Those believed to be possessed by madness, perceived as *social threats*, were often handed to boat captains in force and exiled to unknown lands:

Confined on the ship, from which there is no escape, the madman is delivered to the river with its thousand arms, the sea its thousand roads, to that great uncertainty external to everything. He is a prisoner in the midst of what is the freest, the openness of routes: bound fast at the infinite crossroad. (Foucault, 1965, p. 11)

In consideration of structures left out in plain sight on the prairies and the generations of newcomers who have made passage towards an ambiguous horizon to get here, I contemplated migrant border walls proposed and politicized down south, the displaced conditions of conflict and climate rendering people stateless and houseless, alongside the prioritizing of efficient spending rationalized here routinely alienating those considered too complex for care.

Not From a Solid Land

Across the passage of time, fears continue to develop about those who seemingly do not arrive from solid ground (Foucault, 1965). Suspicion also continues to run high against the *landless*. Now, recall MacEachran’s (1932) use of Plato: those familiar with the ceaselessness of rivers and seas, having travelled on unknown highways from parts of the world beyond, often remain contained to mysterious places, hiding in plain sight to separate the order

of people. Likely, Foucault (1965) would identify MacEachran's reasoning as, but the age-old logic of scission used by the powerful to convince others of their sanity:

We have yet to write the history of that other form of madness, by which men, in an act of sovereign reason, confine their neighbours, and communicate and recognize each other through the merciless language of non-madness; to define the moment of this conspiracy before it was permanently established in the realm of truth before it was revived by the lyricism of protest. We must try to return, in history, to a zero point in the course of madness at which madness is an undifferentiated experience, and not yet a divided experience of division itself. (p. ix)

The contempt was there for those seemingly authorized to control societies by claiming mastery over reason and, so too, madness as, perhaps, a more sensible rendering of insanity in these times. It was a Foucauldian spurn to discredit the reign of modern-day reasoning bound to a logic that has promoted the use of secure spaces for the confinement of heterogeneous individuals and groups perceived unfit to share the everyday world (see Mills, 2014; Rose, 2006).

The Superior Sensitivity

From American philosopher and activist Susan Sontag (1977) were perceptions that would also disclose historical images of possession by plague. Sontag (1977) was rather inclined to question beliefs about illnesses as mythic, ancient, primordial disturbances to provoke and stigmatize the more contemporary agonies of disease. In *Illness as Metaphor* (1977), Sontag faulted modern society for perpetuating objectional beliefs about disease, including those thought to be infecting the mind as psyche. That is to say, Sontag's (1977) approach included confronting collective myths about mental health and disorders, such as *the mind can betray the body, people get sick because they unconsciously want to, and cures work for those who mobilize their will for*

health, whether through prayer or intention. Thus, according to Sontag (1977), contemporary practices of psychiatry and psychology were offering up a “sublimated spiritualism, a secular, ostensibly, scientific way of affirming the primacy of spirit over matter” (p. 54) to provide a sense of control over the experiences and events which people have little or none, at all.

To illustrate, Sontag (1977) crafted a description of a hectic, reckless sufferer (a.k.a., the hot mess) as a creature of passionate extremes to ridicule an ideal that once glamorized insanity as “the repellent, harrowing disease that made the index of superior sensitivity” (p. 34). It seemed to be a fantasy for a time of religious piousness when a passionate public display signalled a so-called unbridled mind and impurity of spirit. Sontag’s (1977) description was to translate idealizations within the trappings of metaphors glorifying brutalizing experiences against those deemed weak, uncivilized, or immoral as thinkers.

Mad and Crip Resistances

In the spotlight of more recent times, mad and crip studies have motivated researchers to include the voices of psychiatric survivors (see Eales & Peers, 2020; Faulkner, 2017; Gorman, 2013; Le François et al., 2016; McWade et al., 2015; Thorneycroft, 2020). Comparatively, in the past, the survivors of institutions would have been more likely frozen out of knowledge translation in the West. Still, more work remains to claim a fulfilling inclusion for these times.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, sociologist Ryan Thorneycroft (2020) published to promote mad and crip studies for enduring at the political edge of diversity. Moreover, Thorneycroft (2020) was moved to translate the concepts of *mad* and *crip* as terminology meant to represent bodies—to mobilize a movement of change by creating awareness of embodied and intersecting *mad* and *crip* subjectivities, which includes queer and trans peoples, Indigenous peoples, people of colour, women, and working-class people (Thorneycroft, 2020).

Danielle Peers and Lindsay Eales (2020), queer-crip researchers from the University of Alberta are rising scholars. Together, these educational researchers have collaboratively called out the normative violence rooted in the conceptual notions of ableism and saneism. Both ground their research through lived knowledge derived and validated from personal experiences of oppression, abjection, and disablement (see also Butler, 1993, 1997; Faulkner, 2017; Spivak, 1998). Notably, their work also focused on alienation as a hindering, interior and evolving sense of becoming foreign to one's home and family (Thorneycroft, 2020). In this conceptual space, these scholars would expose an assumed allied notion of *care* as the act of being—*taken into care*. From here were evident and entangled associations with experiences of *confinement*, *forced extraction*, and *removal of the right to autonomy* (Eales & Peers, 2020).

Outwardly, scholars have sought to render unique associations of mad as a concept and topic at the centre of debates. For instance, clinical psychologist Shaindl Diamond (2013) has applied *mad* as a term to challenge perceptions of people labelled and treated as crazy. Rachel da Silveira Gorman (2013), a critical disabilities scholar, once claimed the term for the ex-inmates of society's asylums in the literature who speak for themselves and the radical reclaiming of psychological spaces. Thorneycroft (2020) would suggest that the *mad* were but the scholars who *dared to* question presumed conceptions of *sane*. Others applied theory from social work to associate the concept of *mad* with resistance (Le François et al., 2016)—contesting biomedical expressions that perpetuate the notion that brains break down, like machines or as fragile objects, to create rationales that have worked to render subjects for psychiatry. Take, for example, the activist professor Peter Beresford (2019), who presented his views in opposition to perceptions of *mad* as something “finite, time-limited or soluble” (p. 34). Noticeably, Beresford (2019) was

troubled by the lack of cohesion in the limited language applied to form meaning for his understanding:

Here is one of the meeting points between us as human beings with lived experience and the issues which we focus on that were formerly the preserve of traditionally understood *expert* and *expertise*. I have come to realize that my use of language and ideas is necessarily idiosyncratic, but we don't often have chances to explore our personal use of language and concepts and the wider relations they might have. (p. 35)

In this passage, Beresford (2019) suggested something that I, too, have long suspected—that the present order of words used for shaping meaning was unlikely to contribute to a relational understanding of mental health in Western fields, at least within present contexts. There were just too many gaps to establish a common grounding. In other words, there existed a lack of concern for mental health as an idea beyond the *self* in most researched disciplines, with vast distances between the perspectives of the practitioners and those suffering from illnesses.

Assuming the Millet Seed Measures

Expressed from her lived perspective of Indigeneity, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) has implicated scientific research for excessive epistemological and psychological violence. Widely acknowledged for pointing out the harshness of colonial language forms, Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) assumed mental health as a Western construction and the catalyst for objectifying actions, recognized as such, by many colonized people living today:

Just knowing that someone measured our faculties by filling the skulls of our ancestors with millet seeds and comparing the amount of millet seed to the capacity for mental thought offends our sense of who and what we are. It galls us that Western researchers

and intellectuals can assume to know all that is possible to know of you, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us. (p. 1)

Evidence of these claims made by Tuhiwai-Smith was revealed to be prevalent within Westernized research forums and studies of the psyche, which, indeed, would also expose denials of existence, land, bodies, and territories; to the right of self-determination; and survival of language, cultural knowledge, and resources (see also Fellner, 2016, 2019; Kanani, 2011; Mills, 2014; Rose 2003, 2006).

Here, with intention, I paused this review for a time. Perhaps not surprisingly, I was developing concern for the historical intensity of focus in research on the methods of collection and classification for making meaning of mental health concepts used to render and guide the measurement of individual capacities. I would turn in reflection to revisit teachings provided by University of Alberta professor and Indigenous scholar Makere Stewart-Harawira (2005), who participated in training me, once stating, “In the disorder and chaos of the contemporary moment, as identities, structures, and subjectivities get reordered in the flux of rapid integration, disintegration and reintegration, the need for meaning in the world is more potent than ever” (p. 153). The most urgent task for educators, then declared Stewart-Harawira (2005), was to challenge one’s relation to the world or the ontological underpinnings in which a person found the world conceived and meanings of existences articulated.

“Being-for-other”

Encouraged to start up again, I journeyed to 1952, a time marked by the insights of French, western-Indian psychiatrist, and philosopher Franz Fanon. In resistance to the idealization of Negritude as a European imperial fantasy in *Black Skin: White Masks*, Fanon (1952) asked his readers to think about what gets imposed upon colonial subjects through

colonial racism. Fanon (1952) answered back for himself in a response captured in the experience of “being-for-other” (p. 1), as he found the colonized forcibly inflicted by a colonial mindset that teaches them to *stay where they are*.

A decade later, Fanon published another influential text, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963). Fanon’s writing, this time, focused on a specific colonial project, “curing a colonized subject correctly” (p. 181). Fanon (1963) was concerned that colonialism had evolved to construct circumstances that further situated the psychic functions of the colonized in service of the colonizers. Fanon (1963) located this evolution in the “systemized negation of the other” (p. 182) to force the colonized to question, “Who am I really?” (p. 182). According to Fanon (1963), a conscious acknowledgement of this question was evidence of the successful construction of a colonized personality. For example, Caribbean psychiatrist, Frederick Hickling (2020), would revisit similar concerns, pointing out, “the physicians who set up the mental health system in Jamaica in the nineteenth century were all Britons doing colonial service, carrying out the civilizing mission of the British Empire” (p. 27; see also Smith, 2010). Grounded by his ancestry and lived experiences, Hickling (2020) recalled the stigma of enslavement and colonization, leading him to the conviction that “we all have to own our madness” (p. 28). Hickling (2020) was wary of “the psychosocial straitjackets of the Western-dominated global mental health movement” (p. 28)—as providing new conceptual architecture to maintain a postcolonial value for mental health.

Decolonizing perspectives from Canadian contexts would further my access to psychologists and scholars in allied fields, responding to their ethical responsibilities. For instance, Nadia Kanani (2011), an anti-racist gender scholar and intercultural researcher, questioned the conceptual impact of *care* amid intersecting social and political identities in

Canada. Kanani (2011) disputed this term and other psychiatric language terms that have aided in the inhumane displacement of Indigenous peoples from their lands in Canada, remarking that:

By regulating Indigenous people through psychiatric institutions (among other forms of regulation such as penal systems and residential schools), settler societies have been able to permanently subordinate Indigenous people and ensure the transfer of Indigenous land to colonial governments. (p. 7)

Kanani's (2011) research was intended to address the systemic processes in health and education that have resulted in Indigenous Canadians being disproportionately diagnosed with mental disorders for breaching social and racial conventions. Indeed, some scholars have speculated that this imbalance could be due to practitioner perspectives shaped by the same ideals of settler colonialism that had facilitated eugenics projects in Canada (see Menzies & Palys, 2006). Kanani (2011) declared diagnostic conditions in Canada undignified based on current labels inflicted upon Indigenous populations as additional reference points, including the following: addicted, criminally insane, developmentally delayed, traumatized, and nervously broken down.

Furthermore, Kanani (2011) exposed Canadian diagnostics of mental health for fueling present-day fears of classifications as stigmatizing and worse—as creating new grounds for resettlement by establishing cause for removal from homes and homelands (Kanani, 2011; see also Menzies & Palys, 2006).

Then, Karlee Fellner (2016, 2018, 2019), a local Cree-Métis woman and multicultural psychology researcher, emerged from the prairies to relay the values of her profession's principled responsibilities, including (a) *respect for the dignity of persons and people* and (b) *care*—“to act ethically in conducting the affairs of the discipline within society; in particular, a commitment to try to assure that each member will place the welfare of society and individual

members of society above the welfare of the discipline and its own members” (Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, 2017, p. 3). In keeping with these responsibilities, this formidable new scholar expressed a critical distrust for what she interpreted as a historically inherent settler-colonialism structuring the traditions of psychology. Fellner (2016, 2018, 2019) evidenced this view by highlighting the contemporary existence of psychometric assessments still used despite their link to files that justified the forced sterilization of prairie-Indigenous people. Furthermore, Fellner (2016) identified several evaluations *in care* infected with cultural assumptions rooted in adjectives fixated on deficits and pathology. Instead, as a better, more relational alternative, Fellner (2018) proposed a healthier focus on place relationships to foster affinities of one another and the lived experiences associated with mental health. Fellner (2018) suggested more exploration to form a reconceptualized curriculum in Canada, as likely requiring the reconnection of mental health through meanings linked to the land and integrating learning from places informed by new and varied voices.

Before Fellner (2016, 2018) in theoretical alignment, Renee Linklater (2014, 2016, 2018, 2019), a member of the Rainy First Nation in Northwestern Ontario, has expressed a similar sentiment as a leading expert on decolonizing psychological practices for mediating colonial traumas. Linklater (2014) had previously acknowledged the ideals of settler-colonialism in mental health, identifying and commenting on images that depict the *soundness of the mind* as consistently lacking in any *relationship*. Linklater’s (2014) research intended to interrupt the persistency of research priorities that have “medicalized the experiences of Indigenous people” (p. 21). In resistance to this research trend, Linklater (2014) would encourage studies inquiring into Indigenous practices and philosophies to counter the habits of thinking that had previously contributed to incidences of alteration in the fields of psychology and psychiatry and to honour

knowledge derived from ancestral ties to land (Linklater, 2014). Following afterwards, fellow trauma researchers Terry Mitchell, Courtney Arseneau, and Darren Thomas (2019) would then approach mental health as a research focus based on the assumption that land was of essential importance for the integrity of psychology and for the benefit of all people in concern for health, care, dignity, and respect.

Journeying to the Point of Peace

Providing me with further conceptual research support, Dr. Shaun Hains (2001, 2013, 2022, 2023), a local Métis leader, retired teacher, practicing psychologist, and the Knowledge Keeper supporting this study, had established for psychology and, subsequently, mental health research, the Indigenous ethics of a peace process to facilitate relational encounters in fieldwork. According to Hains (2013), educators must engage in research that prioritizes learning from others “to the journey point of peace” (p. 5). This journey included acknowledging one’s unique ways as a researcher, first by identifying “the historical principles that have guided [their] ... research [and thinking] for many years” (2001, p. 44-45).

In my commitment to conduct this research toward the *journey point of peace* as a teacher-researcher, I would act cautiously in applying the following terminology. First, readers should note that the term—*Indigenous*—acknowledges the heterogeneous and diverse groups of people with ancient affiliations to the research setting and elsewhere, far beyond the years of Canada as a nation-state (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015). Still, I understand multiple unique expressions of self from intersecting identities. As it has been here, footsteps can mark more than one world at a time, for instance, at the natural edges of any given topography (Derby, 2015). *Identity*—was to relay how relationships remain entangled by places, including “our individual relational, spiritual, and religious experiences; the written and unwritten laws of society, and our

personal relationships with the natural world” (Stanley, 2016, p. 174) as a translation recommended by the West Coast trauma-sensitive practitioner, Sharon Stanley (2016). Stanley (2016) acknowledged all experiences as affecting “the fluid construction of meaning-making” (p. 174). The term—*pioneer* would render some accountability as a starting point to mark my curricular inheritances, inhabitancies, and social position as an educator in Alberta. Furthermore, as Hains (2023) would guide, the concept of *dignity* was integrated to ground the relationships with the participants as co-creatives/former students and the research setting, generating ideas for this educational inquiry.

Camouflaged Development

Over the past few decades, *globalization*, as a colonizing planetary process, has played a dominant role in shaping the most referenced conceptions of mental health through a worldwide mental health movement. Educational policy researcher Joel Spring (2008, 2014) once noted that globalization, as an idea, appeared to have emerged from the writing of Theodore Levitt in 1983 to describe global economic changes affecting production, consumption, and investment. Retired Alberta-based curriculum scholar David Geoffrey Smith (1999) would also famously refer to globalization in *Pedagon* as a “glamour word that hides subtle but profound difficulties in our culture” (p. 8). Smith (1999) would follow up after this, further claiming that the notion of globalization was an abstraction in the false promise of speaking for the conditions of the whole world. Still, many consider globalization inevitable based on the assumption that human beings are social beings that continue to increase their capacity for communication, travel, commercial trade, sales, and the sharing of ideas (Fukuyama, 1989).

Conceptually, the processes of globalization have marked the structural standards underpinning the activities of *global mental health* or *GMH*, a movement generated by the World

Health Organization or WHO (Mills, 2014). Notably, since this organization's activities began, the WHO has claimed an administrative section for organizing expert meetings focused on improving mental health experiences worldwide (Bertolote, 2008). After World War II, the first global assembly was established in New York in 1946 to gather clinical practitioners to develop a record of technical references that would eventually transform the concept of mental health into a field or discipline of study (Bertolote, 2008).

The WHO officially formed as a global organization two years later in 1948. That same year, the British Association for Mental Hygiene hosted the first International Congress of Mental Health in the United Kingdom (Bertolote, 2008). A perceived outcome of this congress was the development of the very first international recommendations for a worldwide conceptual and educational initiative. These recommendations were soon approved to promote a more *globalized* understanding of mental health (Bertolote, 2008). Reportedly, back then, during the congress proceedings, John Carl Flügel (1948), the conference Chairman, created space for only one definition, a Western version, that he believed was “not at variance” (p. 113) with any other cultural understandings of mental health. Flügel (1948) claimed: “a condition which permits the optimal development, physical, intellectual and emotional, of the individual, so far as this is compatible with that of other individuals” (cited in Bertolote, 2008, p. 113). Only after the congress had convened was any concern seemingly expressed for the limited number of delegates from Asia, Africa, South America, or the Soviet Union, leaving out representatives and considerable insight as an inequity imposed against a significant portion of the world's population.

By the 1950s, the emergent WHO Expert Committee on Mental Health (September 11-16, 1950), assumed *mental health* and *mental hygiene* distinct as directed by a global definition proffered in a committee report:

Mental hygiene refers to all the activities and techniques which encourage and maintain mental health. *Mental health* is a condition, subject to fluctuations due to biological and social factors, which enables the individual to achieve a satisfactory synthesis of his own potentially conflicting, instinctive drives; to form and maintain harmonious relations with others; and to participate in constructive changes in his social and physical environment.

(WHO, 1951, p. 1113)

Notably, this report was the WHO's first attempt at promoting *schools* as suitable places for practicing mental hygiene principles. In my read-through of this report, it does appear that significant adversities were assumed inevitable for most school-age children as a problem of "very special significance" (WHO, 1951, p. 19). Identified as potentially hazardous for *student mental health* were lists of school year routines set alongside preconceived conditions of learning, such as starting and leaving school, the learning process, the individualistic nature of personalities, familial relations, dealing with the mental health of educators, and lack of access to effective mental health service delivery.

That said, for several decades following, there were several scholars voicing their protests against this old report for pathologizing the day-to-day learning activities of students and for increasing parental angst over their children's schooling experiences. As a result, global mental health has become its own problem, garnering the interest and focus of postcolonial and decolonizing educators. For instance, the sociologist China Mills (2014) researched global mental health to spotlight how the movement mimics the adaptative capacities of colonization to

“impose Western values, customs, and practices on non-western cultures” (p. 6.). Mills (2014) expressively implicated the WHO report (1951) for rendering students potential candidates for medical colonizing. According to Mills (2014), the report successfully established the medicalization of childhood conceptually constructed and sustained through the vision of students as objectifiable global subjects.

During the 1990s, the WHO attempted to reframe the organizational ideals promoted within their defined interpretation of mental health (Bertolote, 2008). In a section of a preamble given to a WHO Constitution in 1994, a novel definition would emerge, rebranding mental health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (p. 1). For some, this change fundamentally signalled a conceptual regression, including me. For instance, and in response, José Manoel Bertolote (2008) stated that the 1994 definition was troubling as it conflated two terms he found to be distinct (i.e., *mental* and *health*). Bertolote (2008) associated the coupling of terms likely due to an assumed relationship between *mental health* and *health*, comparably producing a conceptual likeness to the now antiquated concept of *mental hygiene*. It was Bertolote’s (2008) opinion that researchers again ascribe to—*well-being*—(which I found to be yet another conceptual regression) as the designated noun. At the time, Bertolote (2008) considered the latter notion of well-being to be more advanced for developing attributes depicting the functions of the psyche.

After reading Bertolote, I would research the etymology of the term—*state* (c. 1200) as an expression applied in the WHO’s 1994 global definition to render mental health attributes physical, mental, or social. I found it to be a concept borrowed from the Latin *statūs* as *the manner of standing, position*, and in the Latin phrase *statūs rēi pūblīcae* as *a condition of the*

republic, revealing active associations with *the commonwealth*, *body politic*, and a *territory belonging thereto* (Chambers, 2017).

Anyone, Anywhere

Before the global COVID-19 pandemic, international mental health researchers Supriya Misra, Anne Stevenson, Emily Haroz, Victoria de Menil, and Karestan Koenen (2019) completed a systematic review of mental health as a global definition shaping the agendas of scientific research. In their discovery, Misra et al. (2019) found that most scientific mental health research studies were completed and conducted in English as the primary language and that “there is no standardized translation of the term into other languages” (p. 2). Aiming to improve their results, these researchers searched for translatable terms in published sources and used *Linguee.com* to gather conceptual understandings posed through different languages. Here was what they found:

We found six French translations of *global mental health* based on 28 translations of the term. Over half the French translations (15/28) eliminated the adjective global, translating the term as simply *santé mentale* or *mental health*—some of them placing the adjective global on a different noun (such as movement, alliance, call) and others removing it altogether. Similarly, the Mandarin term (*quánqiú xīnlǐjiànkāng*), used as a translation on the website of the World Federation for Mental Health, appears to have a broader definition closer to *well-being*. (p. 2)

As further outcomes of their endeavours, Misra et al. (2019) identified some common research trends shaping knowledge production worldwide. According to these researchers, there was evidence of a predisposed interest and bias toward empirical studies and imposed demands in conclusions specifying particular regions of the world that needed to do a better job promoting

the concept of mental health. Also notably common to several research recommendations explored through their inquiry was the endorsement of improved research designs to mediate the limited number of sources depicting the heterogeneity of the populations under study.

Still, as Mills (2014) discovered in *Decolonizing Global Mental Health: The Psychiatrization of the Majority World*, informed by others (see also Rose, 2003, 2006), mental health could not be considered an expression of neutrality within the range of a global curriculum.

Much like Misra et al. (2019), Mills' (2014) research would expose findings that revealed how Anglocentrism too narrowly defined the concept of mental health. Mills (2014) implicated popular conceptual expressions that solely focused on neuro-biological, chemical, and psychiatric or clinical features of the brain, relaying concerns that bio-medical research's dominance over globally accepted definitions had successfully achieved an international acceptance of a belief in the superiority of psychiatric knowledge. Purposefully, Mills (2014) encouraged her readers to question those claiming a rightful authority to produce conceptual understandings about mental health. As reported by Mills (2014), the privileging of medically informed evidence as the only reliable source for legitimating meaning in these times of globalization had contributed to further suffering for the sufferers who reportedly felt less credibly perceived as sources to relay their personal sense of self in health.

In 2014, the WHO again reported systemic research promoting mental health as a favourable concept for teaching K-12 schooling. Access to a school-based mental health curriculum was found to be a strong predictor of increased health outcomes when strategies taught through instruction were adopted by students, such as those that produce positive attitudes toward healthy lifestyles or improve help-seeking behaviours (Jorm, 2000; Ofosu et al., 2018;

WHO, 2014a, 2014b). The curriculum in more health-promoting schools was also highlighted to strengthen the capacity for healthy living, learning, and working (WHO, 2021).

Despite the WHO's many attempts to improve the conceptual possibility of healthy futures worldwide, I would retain my concern for the more predominant ideals routinely promoted through conceptualizations of mental health in school-based curricula I had encountered. As a teacher framing my pedagogy within the WHO's organizational terms, I was likely reproducing a colonizing logic hindering my ability to establish relational understandings in practice and within the diverse school communities where I taught on the Western Canadian prairies—Treaty Land 6, also near 7 and 8. I did not want to project or further normalize harmful beliefs or stigmatizing terminology through my teaching of curricula (Erevelles, 2005).

For instance, consider the following definitions adopted by some Alberta school divisions. Let us first begin with a definition from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC, 2006). PHAC's definition has been frequently applied and used as a point of reference for middle and secondary school health courses:

Mental health is the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges that we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections, and personal dignity. (p. i)

Now, for contrast, review this conceptualization from the WHO (2014b) as a definition that has influenced schooling systems worldwide:

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stress of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (para. 4)

Reflecting on my practice and ethical sense of education, I have decided to avoid promoting these definitions as inclusive terms to render an understanding of mental health. Both examples integrate associations that originate from the deepest roots of Eurocentric imaginations. A closer look will expose qualities featured in the age-old ancient Greek debate on the *good life* to relay portrayals of *well-being*. Thus, it seemed these terms had indeed formed from the same set of logics once relied upon to facilitate the eugenics legacy here in Alberta (see also James & Prilleltensky, 2002; Smith, 1961).

Although well-established and highly regarded as definitions, no sense of difference was mentioned. Gaping omissions existed that could act in service of the norms of ableism and saneism, therefore undoing the advocacy presented by mad and crip researchers contributing to mental health scholarship. The concept of diversity appeared to be the intended sacrifice for a more common good (Beresford, 2019). The pronouns applied in these definitions were also exclusive. Safe only for a gender majority. I also found the terms of meanings given to these definitions exceptional as anthropocentric yet placeless—community and culture were referenced but not named or located. Furthermore, there was nothing to note of multi-species-ed presences, an extinction by default.

It seemed that there was but only this ethical way forward. Consider these public health/medical conceptualizations as fixed associations, unchanged by the historicity of colonialism. It was a decision made in contemplation of those I had taught, some still labelled for failing to possess or reflect a desirable status or well-born/elite state of emotional, spiritual, or physical being in Alberta. Moreover, I thought of students unable to demonstrate a perceived *fit-ness* or *suitability* to ensure their enrollment at a particular school community they

wanted to attend. I also thought about individual student reports I had encountered suggesting a genetic predisposition to render a student at-risk.

Then, I revisited ideals portrayed as *coping*—a standout term from the WHO’s (2014b) global definition. Assumed to be an individualized responsibility, I found the isolated meaning somewhat confounding. In and about the seasons of extreme conditions experienced here on the northern edge of the great plains would always require the presence of others to survive. I also had concerns regarding these two adjective integrations—*productive* and *fruitful* as terms entitled to the legacy of Enlightenment, the era most foundational to the progressive and even religious beliefs given to reason the logical sense of settler colonialism as an established and oppressive ideology in Canada.

Further on, in my deliberation, I would identify issues based on the following assumptions promoted by PHAC and the WHO as the basis for what could constitute a proper or mentally healthy existence:

1. One must attain an elusive transcendence as an above-average state of being—set seemingly, at times, through aspirations related to Christian religious values, intimated through the subtle images of fruitful labour and production, as the sort of social gospel once touted by pioneering elites here in Alberta. Of note, to support this referential claim, I have relied upon research completed by a recent doctoral program graduate from the University of Alberta, Michael J. Kohlman (2018), who studied American evangelizing eugenics, identified an extensive “gospel of memetics” (p. 35), that included the use of religious memes or religiously prudent metaphoric ideas to propagate educational outreach programs based on notions of “*Fitter Families*” (p. 53) and “*Better Babies*” (p. 53), among other memetic analogies during the 1930s, which would have undoubtedly

impacted perspectives of Canadian Christian neighbours then residing in the North.

Kohlman's (2018) research inevitably revealed that "race-hygiene memes can become dormant, but never fully extinguished" (p. vii) as a powerful perspective to consider as it relates to mental health in schools nowadays.

2. Reflect an image of coping in an isolated but normalized depiction of modern-day life, assuming that individuals have the resources to live well, noting the lack of noticeable inequities or oppressions existing or imposed upon individuals and groups.
3. Demonstrate a sense of emotional and spiritual well-being driven by progress despite the historical subjectification of vulnerable groups here and elsewhere targeted by mental health movements designed to further nation-building projects.
4. Develop the capacity for generating increasing levels of production associated with an Anglo-version of prosperity in the cultivation of land or culture to contribute to a Westernized societal expression of abundance (e.g., Thanksgiving) through pre-determined conditions of well-being, the assumed positive entitlement for ascribing to a hard-work ethic.

Notably, the WHO (2023) recently updated and expanded its defining terms to include the following:

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well, and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development. (para. 2)

Individual psychological and biological factors such as emotional skills, substance use, and genetics can make people more vulnerable to mental health problems. (para. 6)

Exposure to unfavourable social, economic, geopolitical, and environmental circumstances—including poverty, violence, inequality, and environmental deprivation—also increases people’s risk of experiencing mental health conditions. (para. 7)

Albeit and despite considerable revisions, I still could not relate or make sense of the WHO’s most recent conceptualization of mental health, framed by an idealized vision claimed by a global organization to suggest that the defining terms could adopted by *anyone, anywhere*. Indeed, the literature from decolonizing, mad, and crip studies had presented views that dramatically contrasted with the notion of mental health as a positive form of expression to establish intercultural interpretations or neutral grounds for local dialogue or mediate associated stigmas by way of a global definition.

Again, I was left to contend with anthropocentric terms shaping an internationally accessible definition. Take, for instance, how there was little beyond a slight reference to *the environment* and *environmental deprivation* as a form of material loss to overshadow the importance of relationships with the natural world. This oversight downplayed how ecological health might be relevant to mental health. However, looking back now, it could be by design. Tracing the rationale underpinning the WHO’s defining terms as provided, the organization did seem to promote a logic that might keep people and territories subject to oppression. I am referring to those without sovereignty over their rights or who lack access to natural or even ancestral lands, as perhaps, now easily identifiable potential mental health client populations, thus ensuring the continuance of mental health movements shaped by a history of advancing globalizing-territorial developments.

Exclusion by Way of a Conceptual Construction

So, after all this literature, what was learned from this review? I am an educator, so this section should likely close with some lessons. For starters, this review established that normative concepts abuse the people who do not fit them (Erevelles, 2005; Mindell, 1995). Likely, there are many or will be many people residing on Treaty 6 and elsewhere—who find their experiences excluded in the language defining the terms of mental health as presently promoted by educational systems and institutions.

Transcultural psychiatrist Laurence Kirmayer (2019) once attributed the psychological boundaries that mark an ingroup and outgroup as a form of Othering—a concept that is foundational to many research paradigms. When allied with post-colonial and critical theory, this concept of Othering offers an entry point for alternative interpretations to counter those still perpetuating the ideals of colonial racism (Brons, 2015; Thomas-Olalde & Velho, 2011). According to Spivak (1985), the act of Othering has always required the “worlding of a world” (p. 254) through forced alienation, a violent practice to divide even the innermost place of being (Heidegger, 1927/2010). Ethnographer Patrick Wolfe (1999) once warned researchers that invasion was “a structure, not an event” (p. 388). Wolfe (1999) understood settler colonialism as enduring through cultural norms and cultivated thoughts that have subsequently shaped social, political, economic, and educational standards, protocols, expectations, and understandings—to become institutionalized processes.

From his perspective here on the prairies, Donald (2012a) has depicted the dominant values shaping local perceptions through a frontier logic. According to Donald (2012a), this logic has conditioned many to adopt, without question, colonial ideals as common-sense notions and quickly. Informed by a familiar fort pedagogy, this logic still teaches people: “Divides are

natural and necessary” (p. 93). As part of this region’s curriculum of place, for decades now, almost all other *ways of knowing* or *knowing how to be*—have been systemically displaced, as “all must be brought inside, incorporated, and become like insiders—or be eliminated, excluded, replaced, and repaired” (p. 44).

After completing this review, from my regional standpoint, my interpretation of mental health was that of a concept casting an overtly frontier logic. As it appears now, the metaphors of expression underpinning most mental health definitions still perpetuate the cultural norms of a colonizing medical and pioneering vision for living and being well. From the literature reviewed, I found meanings constructed, emulating fears about unsettled people in places, inspiring aspirations for a culturally one-sided version of heavenly abundance, and imaginal notions of superiority to form images that promote Anglicized and Eurocentric versions of psyche in health. Moreover, if by design, these meanings, as I interpreted, reference to honour only the rights and entitlements of those solely engaged within the ideals of globalization for living on the prairies and elsewhere.

Furthermore, this examination exposed several so-called healthy terms well-established within the local popular culture as complicit by association with a sinister colonial motivation: gaining access to stolen lands and terrain. I must also implicate mental health movements, which once thought of as helpful, now appear to be mostly not. The conceptual histories underpinning many of these movements routinely revealed to me often objectifiable and deplorable metaphorical foundations still relied upon to establish rationales for institutionalized and systemic acts of enforced estrangements, displacements through confinement, and the alienation of people from places and homes. In other words, if global mental health continues as it is nowadays, following the same framing, cultural exclusions and oppressions may increase, if not

persist. Ethical educators need access to more alternative conceptions of mental health to resist repeating past and current trends. This need must be addressed and fulfilled if the profession wishes to evolve as it claims to be, committed to Truth and Reconciliation in education. Now is the time for educators to engage with each other, students, and their communities, as all can contribute as conceptual creatives.

I have also learned that the practice of cultural exclusion through language and metaphor, has long been an old concern for political philosophy (Sontag, 1977). As taught by Sontag (1997), if it is plausible to compare a person's health using a governing ideology as the point of origin, it is also plausible to compare acts of resistance to oppressive norms to construct disorders and illnesses (Sontag, 1977). That said, the power and influence of a concept can vary from place to place (see Mindell, 1995). Notably, a concerning research gap revealed few studies within any discipline focused on lived experiences particular to a place for making meaning of mental health (Fellner, 2018; Mills, 2014; Rose, 2003, 2006). It was a surprising discovery. As a student of ecohermeneutics and curriculum studies, it was, for me, relatively routine to encounter expressions of conceptual understandings that included place-based perspectives and ecological teachings. Research that has sought out terms and phrases derived from regional landscapes in the past has managed to further educational fields by countering the political influences of global power relations, settler-colonialism, and dominating social constructions as the contextual attributes for a curriculum of place.

And so it was, from this place, that I would reconsider a prior research proposal so that my former students and I might contribute ideas creatively and collaboratively grounded by place-conscious conditions and ecological teachings as it felt to be wiser, more relational, and informed as a way forward to conduct this learning inquiry.

Field note. Edmonton, Alberta, March 20, 2022.

“amiskwaciy wâskahikan

is a place name

quaking

the landscape

spirit

occupying

the river valley

beavers

gathering

under

aspen hills

quilting

clouds

busy birdsong

luring

tiptoeing

coyotes

tracking

big city sky

cascading

weathering

sparkling

steeping

embankments

watery reflections

ripple

on through

dividing

shades of the season too soon snow

frozen, the land and river blanches

blowing

winter storms

white-out

despite all this frostiness,

the sun is shining.”

Departures

a Cree translation in alperta nêhiyawêwin:

- mamawisipwehtewin (noun): *the act of a concerted departure; exodus* (nêhiyaw masinahikan, n.d.)
- sipwehtewin (noun): meaning *the act of departure* (LeClaire & Cardinal, 1998)

the English etymology

- departure (noun): circa 1441 from Middle French *departeüre* and Old French *desparteüre* to render *the act of going away, deviation, divergence, a turning away* (Chambers, 2017, OED, 2022)

Field note. Edmonton, Alberta, September 10, 2023. “Perhaps, at this point, the readers already familiar with curriculum studies, knowing the ecohermeneutic approach to research as an interpretive, ecological, and expressive practice, may have already suspected a preconditioned co-creative capacity. Yet and still, most ecohermeneutic, or hermeneutic researchers for that matter, currently contributing to educational and curriculum research have yet to suggest a co-creative scope within this interpretive tradition in academic content now published, besides the limited few co-creative studies centred solely on the integration of digital technologies (see Herstad & Holone, 2012; Lang et al., 2020; O’Connell, 2022). That said, introduced in this section, aptly titled *Departures*, are what I suggest are original co-creative contributions to ecohermeneutics and interpretive research.

So what follows next is a purposeful and explicit integration of co-creative terminology in this section described to reflect the evolution of participatory, experiential, collaborative, and expressive *artfull* exercises that were generated or discovered to develop meaning-filled interpretations. I refer to these activities as *tacting-exercises*. These exercises joined the attention of all engaged in creative exertion and reflexion to bridge understandings, including between me (the principal researcher) and:

- Edmonton, Alberta, the topographical setting as a co-teacher
- Dr. Hains, sharing ecological teachings as a Knowledge Keeper
- my researched topobiographical reflexions in response,
- and my former students’ stories of personal memories relayed through dialogue and place-conscious creation-making exchanges.

In time, it became my opinion that these tacting-exercises supportively assisted to uncover—the *grammar of an ecological animacy* (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 48). According to the botanist and

Indigenous writer Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013), this animacy lies beneath descriptive writing and conversing as *something that swells around you and in you when you listen to the world* (p. 48). Kimmerer (2013) has been attending to this animacy as a grammatical *wisdom that surrounds us* [all!] (p. 58)—through Potawatomi as a dialect of the Anishinaabe or Anishinaabeg. This language was once lost to her as a hereditary tradition through colonial processes of assimilation. Notably, seventy percent of terms take up verb forms in Potawatomi to express *the wordless being of others in which we are never alone* (p. 48). Furthermore, Kimmerer (2013) teaches that, to speak of all *beings—possessed with life and spirit we must say—yawe* (p. 56), an animated Potawatomi translation meaning *to be* (p. 56). It was a translation to remind people, *in every sentence, of our kinship with the animate world* (p. 56). However, still, this relation *teeters on extinction*—

not just for Native people, but for everyone. Our toddlers speak of plants and animals as if they were people, extending to them; *self* and intention and compassion—until we teach them not to. We quickly retrain them [in our Westernized schools] and make them forget. (p. 57)

Rest assured, the following research *arrangement*, provided in lieu of a more traditional research design, was place-conscious to animate the language and image forms that rendered expressions of yawe or spirit through the retelling of lived and living experiences portrayed in this research. Willfully, the research participants volunteering their conceptual contributions were purposefully accommodating for the *neighbourhoods of non-human residents* (p. 56) as critical relations to inform the exercises and discoveries of this learning journey. As a result, *Part One* of this movement, titled *Departures*, presents a further research exploration of curriculum studies and other disciplinary fields of research to establish the integral value of a place-conscious

interpretive approach for mental health research projects, particularly this one. This section unfolds slowly, taking time to reach a point. After all, this section of text was written in process. Still, in time, however, this section of text will eventually reveal the sort of ecological understandings and co-creative translations sought within this research intent on diversifying the range of conceptual associations encountered in the mental health curricula here on Treaty 6 territory.”

Part One: Place Matters

Admittedly, a fair number of curriculum scholars had set a precedent for this study by reclaiming local places to develop more relational research practices to inform educational understandings or phenomena (see Aoki, 1993; Bowers, 2001; Butler, 2016; Cajete, 1994, 2000; Chambers, 2008; Derby, 2015; Ellis, 2005; Fidyk, 2003; Hébert, 2016; Donald, 2019; Gruenewald, 2003; Hurren, 2002; Jardine, 2017; Kissling, 2012; MacDonald & Wiebe, 2011; Morawski & Cloutier, 2016; Norquay & Garrmone, 2016; Pente, 2009; Reynolds, 2013; Sameshima et al., 2017; D. G. Smith, 1999; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014; Tuhiwai Smith, et al., 2019).

As a responsive research field, this curricular embrace of place was perhaps due to those following after the influential footsteps of the celebrated Tewa educational scholar Gregory Cajete (1994, 2000). Cajete remains well-regarded for his teachings that developed from observing interconnections within places to claim that “all places are sites of learning, as learning [was] always emplaced” (cited by Kissling, 2012, p. 111). Inspired by Cajete (1994, 2000) and other Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, many curriculum scholars who have followed him seem more inclined to contrast dominating perceptions within their subject areas—against more earthly gestures to animate meaning for learning within their institutions and for research.

The American educational researcher Mark Kissling (2012) was one such scholar attending to concepts informed by expressions of place. Kissling (2012) has made a career of identifying concepts as expressions of a living curriculum. He once detailed a *curriculum of place* “landed in a physical sense, imagined in a psychological sense, felt in an emotional sense, storied in a historical sense, enacted in a cultural sense, constructed in a social sense” (p. 111; see also Jardine, 1996).

Regarding the Etymological Course of Curriculum

Curriculum—formerly, as long ago, was applied once to reference the sense of *time* in Latin as *currere*, meaning “*the temporal space in which we live; to the confines within which things may happen*” (Egan, 1978, p. 66) as a sort of “*race*” (p. 66) or a “*race-course*”(p. 66). As age-old interpretations, these notions would re-emerge in the late 1970s, as the innovator and philosopher Kieran Egan (1978) famously attempted to shift perspectives on *currere* as an educational focus based on changing practices and priorities. To encourage more transdisciplinary activities in the research fields informing curricula, Egan (1978) revived these ancient Latin translations to eventually develop this understanding of *currere* as “*the study of any and all educational phenomena*” (p. 71). It seemed what mattered most for Egan (1978) was that conceptual researchers sought answers to curricular questions that one might also ask about *currere* as if it was a race course, “*How long is it? What obstacles are there?*” (p. 66) and “*What kinds of things does it contain?*” (p. 66). Inevitably, prominent views on curricula later again shifted after Egan, albeit more recently. Now, one can find curriculum scholars expressing the concept framing their discipline as deeply ecological in character and mood—earthly, intergenerational, inviting in the strange and awkward sense of concepts and less contained versions of the world (Chambers, 2008; Jardine, 2015a).

That said, curriculum scholars have yet to consistently agree upon the terms rendering the concept of *place* in curricula. However, likely they never will. One definition would claim it was socially constructed (Gruenewald, 2003). Another suggested *place* was the site for colonial commemorations (Smith, 2017). Other notions implied that the *concept of place* was enduring as an ethic (MacDonald & Wiebe, 2011), a point of origin (Hébert, 2016), or resonating in symbols of distant pasts, absent presences, futurities, imaginations, power dynamics, and alternative ways of knowing (Derby, 2015; Donald, 2019; Fidyk, 2021b; Jardine, 2015a; Leggo, 2018; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014, 2015; Zwicky, 2008). I also discovered this concept taught as foundational for redefining schooling (Jardine, 2017; D. G. Smith, 1999). Nevertheless, a *reinhabitation* of *physical places* was required to reclaim pedagogy (Bowers, 2002; Greenwood, 2016; Gruenewald, 2003; Gruenewald & Smith, 2010), as locations situated by intersecting contexts to inform critical theory (Styres, 2017, 2019; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014).

In practice, Professor Sandra Styres (2017) has, of late, introduced many eastern Canadian post-secondary students to North American Indigenous expressions of *place* as “concrete, sensed and grounded in lived experiences” (p. 26) to create a distinction from notions of *space* where there must be “the substance of culture and stories to render it *placeful*” (p. 26). Ecological, intercultural, geographical, psycho-social, historical, intersubjective, and emotional: places were noted to be significant for generating meaning (see Abram, 1996; Chambers, 2008; Donald, 2019; Eppert, 2009; Fidyk, 2003, 2021b; Hurren, 2003; Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991; Kissling, 2012).

Strikingly, within scholarly discussions on curricula, connections to psychic and social relationships to place have hinted at expressions of mental health in passages referencing a *lived curriculum*. Joe Kincheloe and William Pinar (1991) provided this example:

Place is that which brings the particularistic into focus; a sense of place sharpens our understanding of the individual and the psychic and social forces that direct him or her. Without place our appreciation of such particularistic forces tends to be fuzzy and depersonalized. Indeed, place particularizes and conveys embedded social forces. (p. 4)

Here, Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) detected an affinity between places and psychic feeling. Then, substantiated support for this research by suggesting it was possible to reconceptualize images, gestures, and associations shaping ideas about psychological health if one was willing to *tune* into the sense of places (see also Gussow, 1972; Kissling, 2012; Osborne, 2013). Backing such associations, curriculum theorist Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) has accounted for the somatic or felt sense of physiological-psychological responses traced to a place-conscious curriculum. So has Alberta-based curriculum scholar Cynthia Chambers (2008), renowned for promoting the sensory benefits of landscaped in-dwelling as critical for developing relevant conceptual notions and healthy students for learning.

Nevertheless, other thinkers, like D. G. Smith (2003), have voiced different opinions concerning the concept of place in curricula. Take, for example, D. G. Smith's (2013) research on the subjective nature of *no place* as a curricular experience of the dispossessed, the bruised, "the sufferers of exclusion" (p. xvi). Comparably, teacher educator Cristyne Hébert (2016) would extend this depiction, providing an educational impression of the *self* as *in-between the constraints of place and no place*. Hébert (2016) claimed this intersection was a site evoked by the emotional responses of feeling loved/not loved, safe/not safe, alive/not alive, for trauma re/lived, and joys/imagined. Critically, Hébert (2016) further acknowledged places as appropriate locations to communicate "psychic dramas" (p. 176)—embraced for learning.

The “Agony of Pedagogy” and the Art of Teaching

Pedagogy—as the transitive English form of *paidagōgíā* (Greek), characterized the task “of leading children to school” (D. G. Smith, 1999, p. xi). However, as an expression of my own professional practice, I was better moved by D. G. Smith’s (1999) interpretation, as experientially informed by the *art* of teaching or “the dense network of activities that surround the general care for the young” (p. xi). For some, like me, it was not so long ago when D. G. Smith (1999) bound *pedagogy* with *agony* as *Pedagon* to convey the persistent struggles of educators engaged in the task of teaching as one of the most effective mediums of cultural reproduction and transmission (D. G. Smith, 1999).

So also relied upon was Marie Battiste (2013) as one of the world’s foremost prairie Indigenous scholars. Battiste (2013) once profoundly documented how Canadian schooling suffered from historical challenges as an affliction felt in the educating professions. Battiste (2013) further maintained that pedagogy was the ultimate cultural tool, forever vulnerable to the influences of those in the most dominating power positions. As an instrument to shape learning, pedagogy remains easily appropriated for biased instructional design to perpetuate any chosen, preferred vision of reality taught and handed down for generations to follow (Battiste, 2013).

Offering to counter the pedagogical recommendations that tend to accompany the biases of the more official curricula that were concerning for Battiste and D. G. Smith, among many others, the sagacious artist Wanda Hurren (2003) purposefully entangled *autobiography* with *geography* to influence the topobiographical expressions sought for this research. I was particularly impressed by Hurren’s (2003) creative cartography to relay unique pedagogies of place, explored through influential *movements* in education to demonstrate that “how we know and what we know is always within a context of who we are and what we are” (p. 120). As a

result, four sections frame the majority of this text as *curricular* movements—an arrangement also entangled, as Hurren (2003) inspired.

I would also return to the work of Fellner (2019), as a local Cree-Métis mental health researcher. From her Western Canadian standpoint, Fellner (2019) would translate the concept of *place* to be sacred as *Land*. Respectfully responding to this teaching, place-conscious relationships were prioritized as a pedagogical focus to recover and protect unique cultural and linguistic language forms. Fellner (2019) promoted this priority as critical for ensuring capacities within teacher education to establish emotional safety in classrooms. Classroom safety was a necessary standard because of the mental hygiene training and residential school legacies. Most classrooms on the prairies and beyond introduce students to inherent prior conditioning as spaces embodied by violent stories and difficult pains, hurts, and traumas.

Although perhaps already evident, this research was further influenced by artistic educators, including curriculum scholars Kimberly Powell and Lisa Lajevic (2011). Powell and Lajevic (2011), much like Cajete (1994, 2000), have promoted learning as *emplaced*. However, within the context of their research, this understanding was meant to encourage creative possibilities to render pedagogy—as *something felt rather than merely something done*. Kissling (2012) shared a similar sensibility to offer additional guidance, pointing to the sensorial nature of *emplaced* learning experiences to discover or renew expressive and imaginal gestures for the generation of meaning (see also Derby, 2015; Fidyk, 2019; Jardine, 2015a).

That said, an issue did arise to signal an ongoing need to proceed with caution. Critical theories celebrated by curriculum theorists Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie (2014, 2015) have convincingly illustrated how *emplacement* as a concept to frame pedagogy in Treaty and unceded places could relay the “desire to resolve the experience of *dislocation* implicit in living

on stolen land” (p. 69), as a practice more beneficial for mediating the anxieties of settler educators than for teaching students. Nonetheless, Tuck and McKenzie (2014, 2015) did value the significance of place beyond an expression of geography for living, individually and collectively, and for curricula guided by ethical, social relationships (see also Battiste et al., 2005; Donald, 2019; Fellner, 2019; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1993).

Axiology: The Educational Ethos of Place-Relationality

The ethical position of this critical and co-creative ecohermeneutic research inquiry demands acknowledging Canada as a national state flourishing within its colonial roots (Held, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Notably, by the time I had completed the fieldwork approved by my university’s research ethics board, seven years had already passed since the release of *The Final Report* (2015) from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Residential Schools. Critically, The Commission would provide Canadian educational researchers, like me, with guidelines pointing out a pathway to peace that included how Treaty Rights were to be honoured relationally. The Report also outlined expected collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers (Held, 2019). However, in remembrance of the discovery of unmarked graves on residential school sites in 2021, such as those at Tk’emlups te Secwepemc, the Mohawk Institute, Cowessess First Nation, and the young lives recovered there in loss, I would also keep in mind the growing concern in some academies regarding the justification and practicality of researching at the interface of Western and Indigenous knowledge systems (Held, 2019, p. 2). This concern made me pause for quite a long time, for I found myself at a loss for words as I considered what might constitute ethical research within these tensions, remarkably when many violent and hidden histories still needed to be recovered and awakened with the

collective consciousness of many Canadians, including me. Complex and ongoing remains conflict over Land.

Reconciliation, Repair, and Restoration

This research was intended to build pathways toward reconciliation, repair, and restoration in education—“to the journey point of peace” (Hains, 2013, p. 5) by contributing more *just* understandings of mental health to better serve relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, people of colour, trans, and queer people, mad and crip people, and other marginalized populations here in Alberta and elsewhere (Held, 2019). Admittedly, there have been many times I have wondered, anxiously, over these years, as this project ran (beyond the fieldwork), whether this research would ever be successful in contributing to the reconciliation, repair, and restoration of relationships in education to be eventually claimed as a decolonizing endeavour.

Regardless of any claim, this inquiry was significantly shaped by decolonizing researchers in sensibility, even if *decolonization* has meant different things to different scholars (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Fitzpatrick, 2018; Mills, 2014; Regan, 2010). For instance, Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) once reserved this term solely for researchers and activists actively endeavouring to reclaim Indigenous land rights and sovereignty. For residential school history scholar Paulette Regan (2010), educational research was decolonizing when it created cause for pedagogical reform. As an ethic and guiding principle, decolonization was also deemed a collective struggle for both ending colonialism and taking action toward *becoming something other than colonial* (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015). Still, I have chosen to portray this research as something different than decolonizing for this time of study, anyhow.

This term, *decolonization*, was a troubling word for me to integrate as a reflection of my contributions as a white-woman teacher-researcher. As Derby (2015) pointed out, it was a term “troublingly over-mined these days” (p. 123). So was the term *re-indigenization* since applied by Kulnieks et al. (2010) for developing an ecohermeneutic curriculum. It was helpful that Derby (2015) recommended a local scholar to follow. Naturally, I accepted Derby’s (2015) recommendation, in my attempt to mitigate the potential of misappropriation, referring to Donald (2009), who has strongly suggested that Canadian researchers demonstrate “ethical relationality” (p. 6) from both a curricular and pedagogical standpoint. Here, Donald (2009) has explained in more detail:

Ethical relationality is an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference but rather seeks to more deeply understand how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other. This form of relationality is ethical because it does not overlook or invisibilize the particular historical, cultural, and social contexts from which a particular person understands and experiences living in the world. It puts these considerations at the forefront of engagements across frontiers of difference. (p. 6)

Now, I do suggest ethical action in this research was evidenced by the co-creative exercises that unfolded. Furthermore, the more-than-human-world was critical, informing the linguistic and pictorial concepts recovered through the restorying of memories given to recollected movements in remembrances of places. As Ellsworth (2005) once taught, through her translation of this ethic as the *topology of relationality*—this ethos included, for this research, a *sacred* commitment to the relational release of local wisdom collectively shared, portrayed, or captured as thoughts, feelings, and interactions. Kinships were the medium to relay this wisdom. These kinships

included ecologies, school communities, societies, and emotional gestures expressed from the field. Prior place-relationships made from within a community further informed the rhythmic and temporal nature of all collaborations (Cajete, 1994, 2000; Deloria Jr., 1991; Donald, 2019; Kawagley, 2006; Kovach, 2009; Stewart-Harawira, 2005; Styres, 2019; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999).

Fieldwork meetings included ceremonial protocols, such as beginning with storied land acknowledgements, along with exercises that enabled actions of reciprocity (Donald, 2019; Fidyk, 2013; Greenwood, 2016). In consideration of rendering research set on Treaty land, there were more protocols that followed: i) stories of me, as the researcher relaying significant place-relationships, were integrated from the start of this text; ii) Indigenous Lands were acknowledged and made central to the research; and (iii) foregrounding this study was my positionality or relationship to place and the community of the setting (Whetung & Wakefield, 2019).

Chambers' (2008) place-conscious standards were also integrated, outlined here to establish ethical conditions when learning from significant sites, which included reinhabiting the research setting to promote topobiographical instances for reflexion. First, by bringing attention to a "different sense of time" (p. 155)—as remember, the Blackfoot once said about settlers (as I am one) on the prairies, that "they have just arrived" (p. 116). Next, there was the process of *enskillment*—the highlighting of "the skills necessary to live in [a place]" (p. 117; see also Bowers, 2002; Gruenewald, 2003), to thrive there. Then, Chambers (2008) endorsed developing activities for engaging inner senses so that all involved might learn to know, for the better, where we were (see also Donald, 2019; Fidyk, 2003, 2021b; Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991; Kissling, 2012; Tuhiwai Smith, et al., 1999). Finally, there was the practice of intuitive *wayfinding*, or learning one's way around a place, also included, as promoted (see also Ingold, 2000). The co-creative

exercises introduced in detail in *Part Two* of this movement provide examples of how this research achieved these ethical standards.

Also expressed was the obligation to mix in processes for *unlearning* taken-for-granted notions about places to disrupt the dominating biases of a colonial collective consciousness (Boud et al., 1993; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Eppert, 2009; Snyder et al., 2019). In the case of this research, reciprocal place-conscious dialogue in meetings with former students living with intercultural inheritances and topobiographical reflexive exercises were attempted to assist with any fixed associations given to place-conscious idealizations that emerged from the field.

As the principal researcher of this ecohermeneutic inquiry, I further on would have to meet the ethical conditions outlined for all hermeneutic studies (Moules et al., 2015). For instance, *phronesis* was necessary as a *practical judgment* in adherence to professional standards, policies, and a relational research ethic (Moules et al., 2015). As a result, I had a responsibility to protect the identities of my former students as co-contributors, by ensuring their approval of co-creations expressed as findings transcribed from recordings of research meetings, as was the case integrating the ecological teachings contributed by Dr. Shaun Hains as a former colleague, practicing professional, and Knowledge Keeper.

Rigour was an assumed expectation, which included being citatious and accountable (Moules et al., 2015). The principle of *cohesion* also called for philosophical consistency across any transdisciplinary assumptions highlighted, outlining the research conducted or in the expression of findings (Moules et al., 2015). Furthermore, the basis of *integrity* for this research was that my interpretations as the researcher were rendered through an ongoing reflexive critical self-analysis exercise to expose my biases and positionalities (Moules et al., 2015).

Disciplinary Perspectives

Still, in this section of the text, I have featured only curriculum scholars as having set a precedent for this study by attending to the nuances of local social ecologies or places as an ethical way to conduct conceptual mental health research. However, I also sought considerations from disciplines beyond curriculum studies.

That said, notably, contributing to this research was Indigenist scholarship. For a long time now, Vine Deloria Jr. and Daniel Wildcat (2001), highly regarded for their studies, have substantiated their encounters with the *personality of a place* as an embodied multi-sensorial experience of understanding. Deloria Jr. and Wildcat (2001) remarked animations of the place-conscious presence were necessary for learning about the fabric of life. Also contributing to this field was the distinguished anthropologist and Western Apache scholar Keith Basso (1996), who provided more ecological support given his famous remark that “wisdom sits in places” (p. 53). Later, moving on from mere terms, Basso (1996) would map out his ideas about mental resilience and steadiness derived from more Indigenous-informed features of North American geographies (see also Herman, 2008).

Indigenist connections were also linked to research that focused on community mental health (see Anderson et al., 2011; Cajete, 2000; Deloria Jr., 1991; Fellner, 2018; Kawagley, 2006; Kovach, 2009; Ngai & Koehn, 2010; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). For instance, with a sense of community in mind, Basso (1996) alluded to how expressions of *living well* were prone to develop from collective notions given to particular places. Further along, Tuck and Mackenzie (2015) attended to the lived realities of identifications that mark minds, bodies, and lands. These scholars drew upon collective aspirations that have condoned regional actions of exclusion and

replacement to establish a *critical place inquiry*, motivating this research to attempt to go further in its address of racialized regional issues.

Within Indigenist studies, Deloria Jr. (1991), in particular, seemed most inclined to support his insights by referencing Carl Jung's (1875-1961) analytical depth psychology. Perhaps analytical psychology impressed upon Deloria Jr. due to correlations between the Oglala Lakota worldview as an inheritance shaping his perspective and Jung's (2002) depictions of a cosmically integrated psychic lifeworld. Rather critically, Jungian theory (2002) has, in the past, significantly rejected suggestions that rendered the mind as contained to the inner or internal territory of an individual. Instead, for Jung (2002) and for many scholars that would follow his theories—ecologies, societies, species, and the cosmic interconnections of these psychic existences together would contribute to *anima mundi—the soul of the world*. Jung (2002), much like Deloria Jr. (1991), acknowledged the psyche as earthly and metaphysical, consciously and unconsciously interacting through functions communicated through sacred, soulful relationships among individuals, groups, and regions of the more-than-human world.

Still, there were other Indigenist scholars notably expressing views alongside those of Carl Jung's. As a further example, Minnesota-based Menominee scholar Jeanne Lacourt (2012) applied analytical psychology in her attempt to address “a deep psychological split in the Western psyche” (p. 63). Based on her observations and experiences, Lacourt (2012) attributed this divide to a rootless psychological condition derived from severed kinships with the Land. To pose a remedy, Lacourt (2012) relied upon Jung's (2002) insights to claim that if the earth has a nourishing soul, individual and collective psychic healing then requires a re-rooting in terra, in the soils of places.

Robert Bringhurst (2006), an outstanding Canadian topographer, poet, and Haida translator, inspired me personally with this quotation:

the life of the mind, like the life of the forest, only exists in an interactive and polymorphous form. Your life may be yours alone, but unless a lot of other things are living, neither am I, and neither are you. This is true for the individual, true for the species, and true for the mind. (p. 67)

Bringhurst expressively illustrated this claim once also made by Jung (1977), who had similarly stated: “My *self* is not my body. It extends into all things I have made and all things around me. Without these things, I would not be myself; I would not be a human being” (pp. 202-203). Notably, Bringhurst (2006) was an influential source for Michael W. Derby (2015), who, in turn, wrote back in reflection of the passage above to further possibilities of place-conscious conceptual developments for mental health in education by claiming “that construing the mind, language, or imagination without sourcing place-based, ecological origins extended anthropocentrism and, by extension, colonial interests” (p. 10).

The prevalence of ecological perspectives associated with various branching fields emerging from within the discipline of psychology may perhaps provide a reason why so many of Jung’s (1964) ideas have endured for so long, such as Jung’s (1964) theories on symbols and dreams as elements of unconscious functioning, which he attempted to interpret through the imaginal exercises of amplification informed by places as locations where people visit, rest, reside, linger, and belong. For instance, there was ecopsychology to record the trailblazing endeavours of James Hillman (1926-2011). At one time, Hillman (1975) would have considered himself a Jungian scholar. However, his motivations would eventually extend beyond the analytic tradition to develop his disciplinary practice within an even more explicit ecological

focus. By this point, his interests were far beyond the human-collective experience of *anima mundi* and more toward an ecologically-orientated psychic continuum (Hillman, 1982). Those who followed in his footsteps would contribute to psychological research intended to highlight the synergistic relationships between ecological environments and personal well-being based on the hypothesis that the needs of one are relevant to the other (see Buzzell, 2016; Duncan, 2018; Fisher, 2013; Norton, 2009; Roszak et al., 1995; West, 2007). The primary condition of poor health has often been attributed to displacements from nature by research in this field. *As for separating human cultural systems from the environment and its destruction?* Well, that was the madness of these times, nowadays (Duncan, 2018).

Terrapsychology may be the newest disciplinary development, significantly shaped by the behavioural sciences yet still influenced by depth psychologies. Introduced to me by the ardent educator and psychologist Craig Chalquist (2020), this field offers researchers “a form of inquiry that takes seriously our intense inner responses to the state of the natural world” (p. ii). Of late, Chalquist (2020) has identified a collection of qualities as features of geographical sites that he has associated with individual and collective psychological preferences, noting that human beings have always gravitated intuitively:

Towards locations that symbolize what we seek, whether mountaintops for peak experiences and higher views, deserts for clear skies and contemplative austerity, valleys for settling down and soul-searching, open plains for spacious thoughts, estuaries, bays, and river mouths for opening the mind to the rest of the world. (p. 11)

Chalquist (2020) claimed that our mind states develop *in places*. More than just a collection of geographical features, according to Chalquist (2020), places were archetypal, ancient, and typical in their refraction of regional cultural patterns. Within these social ecologies brimming with

meaning, Chalquist (2020) promoted the study of place-conscious symbols, metaphors, images, and dreams—as elements that “sculpt our ideas, habits, relationships, culture, and sense of self: freeway congestion in congested conversations, lake toxins in our darker moods, salt-choked fields and bitter relations, healing landscapes and regenerating hearts” (p. 23). Perhaps too reductively stated, but as I have interpreted, Chalquist’s (2020) work attempted to show us humans how our interpretations of outer places can reflect our inner worlds.

That said, Chalquist was most likely inspired by the eco-philosopher Glenn Albrecht (2019), the captivating author of *Earth Emotions: New Words for a New World*. In his inspirational publication given to terrapsychology, Albrecht (2019) communicated what he has learned from years of focusing research on the intimacies of place-based stories rendering relationships to *sick* and *absent* landscapes.

Encountering the work of Albrecht (2019) was inspirational for me. He embodied the model of scholar I have always wanted to be—a researcher invested, imaginatively and pragmatically, in protecting biodiverse places and psychological research outside of the more traditional domains famed for studying the mind as psyche. Moreover, his contributions have managed to contribute to collective changes in consciousness, shifting the more fixed conditions within many collectives by integrating expressive depictions associated with psycho-geographical landscape features to communicate feelings sensed as beyond words. Albrecht’s (2019) terms now resonate for so many of *us* across cultures and the planet.

On a more personal level, Albrecht (2019) would introduce me to a meaning-filled, earthened existence of new words and metaphors to render expressions of mental health. Albrecht was beyond creative, tracing and bonding different place-conscious feelings evoked by changing ecological conditions. Some of his novel terms have become viral sensations as vital

contributions that have advanced not only terrapsychology, environmental research, and advocacy but also the English language.

Most famously, Albrecht (2019) would conceive of “solastalgia” (p. 10), a concept he introduced to relay the “distress at the loss of loved homes and places at all scales” (p. 11). Admittedly, it is my opinion that Albrecht’s (2019) *solastalgia* is the most compelling conceptual creation in his repertoire of “psychoterratic language” (p. 63), likened somewhat to the image of Edward Munch’s artwork, *The Scream* (1893) to symbolize a profound degree of environmentally-induced distress existing within a shared planetary existence, Albrecht’s (2019) solastalgia also relays transgenerational experiences of trauma. Solastalgia embodied a familial event experienced by Albrecht’s (2019) ancestors, pioneering colonists in Australia who unwillingly were forced to depart from their homelands to escape the pollution and job loss associated with the British Industrial Revolution.

Notably, these days, you can find solastalgia frequenting the literature of popular writing, supporting eco-psychological evaluations, framing transdisciplinary research endeavours, expressing in artistic mediums, and headlining media reports critiquing environmental destruction, at least in English-speaking places (Albrecht, 2019).

However, despite the worldwide adoption of solastalgia as a resonant place-conscious feeling, I have yet to encounter this concept referenced in curriculum studies or any official curricula for teaching students about mental health in Alberta or, for that matter, in Canada.

As for my sense of solastalgia? I have a visual interpretation to share that emerged while attending a graduate class taught by my supervisor Dr. Alexandra Fidyk. This course explored trauma through the arts, scheduled just before I was to begin my fieldwork. Curiously, my sense of solastalgia surfaced while I stitched using a haptic technique suggested by Fidyk (another co-

creative in this research). She was an acrylic revelation. Mostly blue, even her stare. But for her hair, I had spun geographical features of a secret location once familiar inside the outlines. Now, seemingly no more, no place, nowhere. But still here and now in colour:



[Embroidered with acrylic floss in and through a white plastic backing stabilizer guided by a yarn darning, framed, and filtered using the Snapseed application for Android devices].

Field note. Edmonton, Alberta, April 21, 2021. Artist's statement. “Solastalgia—the loss of a loved place emotion was first described by renowned eco-philosopher Glenn Albrecht. For me, Solastalgia was also moving, but as an emotional earthly indigo condition that called for art/full making and topographic tracing.

During an endemic season of apocalyptic wildfire smoke, crunchy russet hillsides, cracked cemented crops, retreating waterways, and a city now busy indoors, I gathered tied dyed spun cotton and flossy acrylic fibers of cord. Eventually, my collection was slowly threaded and then fastened by stitch upon a plastic backing as an embroidery stabilizer. Faint sharpie markings set to map the progress of my attempt at a patterned distraction. Admittedly, the activities of my yarn danner were more than a disturbance to the dim effects of an outline made for an intimate locality. Still and all, and despite the carpal repetition of threading undone, removed, restitched, repaired, layered, knotted up, and covered over Solastalgia did manage to find form.

Marking · Mapping · Threading · Stitching ·

My sense of what was once a possessive and filling presence was now more at ease within this tactile design. However, terra-defying forces that share soil continue to envelop that which still remains of my place-bonding memories and relationships.

Notably, this image rendering my Solastalgia was my first threaded visual creative expression, but there would be more to follow, as I found stitching to be a rather place-conscious exercise, sometimes revealing and other times, concealing—so ecohermeneutic. Each image created could never be claimed as complete, as I could easily undo to remove or restitch another pattern in—at any time, out, then, in, and back again. Moreover, in making each image, something eventually would get covered up. Although often it was the faint sharpie markings outlining the original traces of the picture now settled below the heavily set threaded patterning.

Other times, it could be an unwanted error or a misplaced symbol. Along the rhythms of repetition were the yarn darter and my emerging awareness of growing creative tensions, which, to me, did signal something was unsettled there in the concepts that kept to the place I was mindfully attempting to render, suggesting something was there but not yet known to me (see Greenwood, 2016).”

“More-than-human”

Hopefully, the influences of the vivid and pictorial perspectives running through the transdisciplinary text of another outstanding *ecophilosopher*, David Abram (1996) will have surfaced in the rendering of this research arrangement for readers. In *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perceptions and Language in the More-Than-Human World*, Abram (1996) explored what it meant to be a human being in his time. Still relevant today, Abram (1996) would follow up on his expedition with a seemingly and rather surprisingly straightforward interpretation to establish his premise. However, it was not so simple; his understanding of existence, for he would claim “that we are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human” (p. ix). Critically, Abram’s (1996) words here have shaped this research. His philosophy was always there in all reported research attempts to facilitate and renew acquaintances with mysteries of this place-conscious and hermeneutic experiential inquiry and the more-than-human world.

Back then, in the 90s, Abram (1996) pointed to the prevalence of several unnatural human commonalities derived from living and learning in a modern world. For Abram (1996), this included the second-guessing of bodily intuitions and an irrepressible sense of uncontrollable emotional loss for intangible *things*—once felt to be there before but no longer exist, in a physical sense, no more. For me, Abram’s (1996) concerns were valid, as issues this research

aimed to illustrate for the 2020s as evidenced within classrooms including my own and other acknowledged places of learning.

As an additional example of another leading scholar in support of such concerns, Amanda Dowd (2011), a contemporary Australian analytical (i.e., a post-Jungian) researcher, has referred to the “deep psychosomatic grammar of the soul” (p. 140) to relay, “how overtime, emotionally-based belief systems [can] become a part of the internal working models that structure the mind and hence self-other relationships—and hence relationships between groups” (p. 125). Dowd (2011) has managed to capture the imaginations of conceptual theorists and psychological researchers by identifying patterns of placeless-ness, where she claimed emotions felt empty. Dowd (2011) notably called it a fantasy to believe “that the history of the group exists separate from its members” (p. 12). I would call such belief a *regressive interference* unconsciously shaping oppressive forms of thinking.

Importantly, and as maintained by Dowd (2011) in her chapter called *Finding the Fish in Placing Psyche: Exploring Cultural Complexes in Australia*, any notion of *being* was likely misunderstood, even though elemental to psychic existence. Such a condition contributing to an almost “unthinkable” (p. 125) gap in most present-day Westernized research frames, as evidenced in personal narratives disavowing significant historical violations from “both literal and metaphorical boundaries wrought by colonization” (p. 125). It seems historical narratives were, then, not to be considered meaningful foregrounding to studies unless researchers consciously direct their attention toward Western modernization on colonial lands as fraught with Indigenous, newcomer, and also more-than-human, collectively connected experiences of trauma. Traumatic, whether consciously recognized or not, for all that inhabit and reside on shared lands.

Other Disciplinary Terrains Traversed

In my search for disciplinary sources to support conceptualizations of place and mental health, I would scan through some of the emergent developments in *health geography*. Here it was that Sarah Curtis (2010) published *Space, Place, and Mental Health* to claim conceptual orientations of mental health for psychological curricula. Curtis (2010) focused on the social, physical, and symbolic aspects of a place where she maintained that meanings were naturally attached to *landscapes*. Curtis (2010) then drew upon framing bodies of theory named after geographical features to make connections for health practitioners within the specificities of those place-based geographical features.

Embodied cognition (EC) was a similar sort of budding discipline, modernist in framing as a paradigm based on the research encountered, engaging the cross-disciplinary perspectives of philosophers and cognitive scientists. Less animated, however, as a field of study for developing public health-like understandings about reason. Most methods were analytical from EC, which included mixed-methods research to provide positivistic evidence, using measure and logic, to demonstrate that the healthy function of cognition was a situated activity intertwined with environments (Anderson, 2003; Dove, 2011; Shapiro, 2014, 2019; Wilson & Golonka, 2013; Varga, 2018).

I would also, in time, encounter a particularly territorial research project conducted in Brazil by *public policy* scholars Juarez Pereira Furtado, Wagner Yoshizaki Oda, Igor da Costa Borysow, and Silke Kapp (2016). Their research gathered regional and illustrative accounts of Brazilian places marked by power relations, in which they maintained hierarchical conditions that negatively impacted the mental health of local people. As concerned citizens, Furtado et al. (2016) wanted to bridge a gap caused by the lack of conceptual progress within mental health

research based in their home country of Brazil and for the few understandings that dealt with the political and social particularities of places based on their lived experiences and area of expertise.

More emphatically and critically, *environmental studies* have associated poor mental health with climate change denial as hindering conditions in places. Studies in the field have evidenced the abuse of human emotions by invested actors of resource extraction using the methods of case studies and interviews (Chapman et al., 2017; Treen et al., 2020). For instance, the lived curricula here in Alberta have taught many of us that nature, on its own, can be dangerous and should be feared when left untouched by human intervention (Pearson, 2015). This sort of emotional misapplication was reportedly the cause of despair in young people. Moreover, fear and anger were identified as the catalysts for swaying populations to hold nature at a distance as an external object for observation, taming, and destruction (Eppert, 2009; Pearson, 2015). Any future resistance to exploitation was alleged to be reliant upon educational strategies mediating conflicting values, anger, loss, disturbances, distress, and motivations (see Bahadur & Tanner, 2014; Berzonsky & Moser, 2017; Johnson & Krishnamurthy, 2010; Nairn, 2019; Scoville, 2016; Tschakert et al., 2017).

“The Situationists”

Finally, I was incredibly impressed by the discovery of a lesser-known dissertation developed in New Zealand *marking space* by psychiatric nurse and artist Heather Edwina Martin (2006), submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington. Martin’s (2006) approach to mental health research was a choose-your-own-adventure text, rendering psychiatric institutes as “places of otherness” (p. 46; See Foucault, 2013, p. 13) or “heterotopias” (p. vi; see also Foucault, 2013, p. 13) in New Zealand. Confinement, as an experience of patients residing at these sites, was

portrayed through symbolic artwork and perspectives from *literary psychogeography*. Recovered by Martin (2006), literary psychogeography was a discipline for engaging in *dérive* or drifting and *détournement* as the processes of engaging “signposts, of features of the traversed environment, in the experience of the [research] journey” (p. xx).

It has been a while since literary psychogeography emerged from *The Internationale Situationniste* (1958), a publication with an explicit anti-copyright notice. Still, Martin (2006) adopted literary psychogeography as a form of contemporary narrative in her research to illustrate her experience of “sustaining personal hope and resilience in a mental health field environment” (p. 4) and to “bring scattered images within reach” (p. 2):

Psychogeography, has been defined as *the study of the specific effects of the geographical environment (whether consciously managed or not) on the emotions and behaviour of individuals* (*Internationale Situationniste*, 1958, p.1). I have reasoned that the environment goes beyond what I can perceive with my eyes and other senses. In its gross presence it goes out into the universe and in its minutae it penetrates my skin and enters my very cells. The energy that makes me a living being does not draw boundaries between people, other living things and matter, but is the make up of all and gives us an undeniable commonality.

Those contributing as *The Situationists* of the 1950s and 1960s, including the infamous Guy Debord (1958), were relied upon by Martin (2006) in ways that sometimes seemed hermeneutically engaged to me in her conceptual rendering of mental health. Reportedly, *The Situationists*, in their heyday, had recorded experiences of alienation framed as local and collectively expressed feelings impacting the everyday lives of residents within urban spaces, as something these residents might not be fully aware of. As a result, Martin’s (2006) study on

mental health field environments produced textual passages and mapped images that resonated with me. In particular, I was impressed by her creative, place-conscious use of symbols and maps to render emotional affect amplified by the stories told by clients living in the mental health institutions she encountered in her research fieldwork. Her participants were those reportedly left to carry the burdens of their illnesses alone in their home country of New Zealand. These were folks alleged to be pushed out of society and toward institutions publicly placed but privately experienced, hiding out in the open of sites, as mapped out in fragments by Martin (2006).

Part Two: Unfolding

This second section of *Departures* introduces the composition of this research. This section also includes a description of how the activities of this inquiry unfolded over time, subsequently for gathering, generating, and presenting ideas and decisions that *came about* concerning the arrangement of the section next to come: *Returns*. However, first I did feel it was necessary to begin with a discussion focused on the approach to this research—ecohermeneutics, its relation to the tradition of hermeneutics, and the critical sensibilities of this *vivifying* (i.e., animating) medium (see D. G. Smith, 2020). *Tactfull*, co-creative, conversational, and interpretive exercises were, over time, revealed through this approach—embraced and honoured as counter activities to mediate an advancing and potent regional curriculum of place that many of us have inherited here (as students and teachers) on Treaty 6 territory, in Alberta, and elsewhere in Canada.

At this point in the text, readers might still be asking: *What is the hermeneutics of ecohermeneutics anyhow?* Here, a review of some etymology could be helpful. Take, for instance, how, according to several sources, hermeneutics, as a research tradition, was adapted for the English language, borrowing from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*—meaning to interpret or

say; the noun *hermeneia*—as the utterance or exposition of thought; and the name *hermeneus*—as in the winged messenger, carrier of cryptic codes, guardian of thresholds, the Greek God and trickster Hermes (Moules, 2002; see also Caputo, 1987; Grondin, 1994; Kearney, 2011; Moules et al., 2015; Zimmerman, 2015). Much like Hermes, the hermeneutic approach can be challenging to capture in simple explanations, better given to tricky, mysterious matters, deceptive language, disruptive interferences, inviting complication, indirection, insinuation, paradox, ambiguity, and uncertainty (Estefan, 2015). Still and all, and despite its elusive nature, the hermeneutic approach has been a form of research inquiry recognized for advancing conceptual creation, intervention, innovation, and possibility.

Borrowing from the ruminating works of D. G. Smith (1991, 1999, 2003, 2020), I can share this depiction of hermeneutics as an interpretive research tradition to claim, “a formal investigation of how meaning arises in communication” (2020, p. 38). Further along in my studies, I would note D. G. Smith’s (2020) hermeneutic sensibility was intently seeking expressions of paradox to “deal constructively with ambiguity” (p. 110). As it seemed, the hermeneutic researchers that impressed upon D. G. Smith (2020) were open and flexible in their planning attempts, content to go beyond what might materially be there, to seek to discover the not yet known or unseen meanings underpinning conceptual renderings by allowing translations to develop from confusing circumstances of critically lived, ecologically-informed experiences.

Field note. *St. Albert, Alberta, October 8, 2023.* “In a recent re-reading of hermeneutic works contributed by David Geoffrey Smith (1991, 1999, 2003), particularly his most current volume of essays highlighting contemporary perspectives on Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and education, most fittingly titled *Confluences, Intercultural Journeying in Research and Teaching: From Hermeneutics to a Changing World Order* (2020)—taught me that the practice

of hermeneutics as a research tradition in North America, particularly on the prairies, has changed rather dramatically over the past fifty years. For instance, I learned that nowadays, it is *not* unwise to claim hermeneutic orientations to be ecologically informed but also philosophical when *considering the nature of reality* (p. xv). Notably, this focus has been, however, more present for most European schools engaged in hermeneutics, consistently practiced in such ways for hundreds of years. Further alleged by D. G. Smith (2020), in the early years of North American colonial schooling, the hermeneutic sensibility had been more determined *by a dominant population of pioneers and settlers requiring very practical solutions to hard material problems* (pp. xvi). Thus, as a result, pragmatic, and empirical notions (i.e., ideas based on observations that could be seen or touched as opposed to those given to philosophies, theories, or theoretical positions)—would shape hermeneutic research for several decades in Canadian institutions and can still be the case for a lot of studies even in these times. Importantly, and as demonstrated in *Regressions*, any empirical and simply material research condition was often alarming for me. In the case of this research, so much of this type I found to perpetuate unconscious divisiveness derived from a language of mental health in support of pioneering or settler lifestyles and logics.

Fortunately, as maintained by D. G. Smith (2020), a *post-revolution* came into play in the 1970s here and beyond, allowing qualitative research practitioners to break into local academies. It was an often unwelcome paradigm shift presented as *postmodernity* (p. 170) for some informed by *a second wave who built on the earlier work of postcolonial scholars Franz Fanon [1925-1961], Albert Memmi [1920-2020], and Octavio Manoni [1889-1989], and who had extensively theorized the psychology of colonial dependency* (p. 170) to reveal *that genuine theory always has geography* (p. 170). Moreover, according to D. G. Smith (2020), postcolonial

theories would eventually pose a pedagogy of place, a likely inevitability, encouraging hermeneutic researchers *to actively vivify the sense of place as being capable of genuine teaching* (p. 170), explaining that *place can teach us a healthy humility* (p. 171); and that *as a species we require a ground [Latin humus < human], a connection, even in exile, to places on the earth* (p. 170). Now and again, to address the critique of romanticization given to research embracing the sensory nature of places, I must note that D. G. Smith (2020) was pointing to *the difficulty of living in a specific place, with specific people, under specific conditions that inspire the need for reflection and a deepening understanding of what we truly need to live* (p. 170). In support, the research by philosophical topographer Jeff Malpas (2012; see also Edward Casey, 1993, 2013) was relied on to claim *the hermeneutic condition of place—as “topos”* (p. 6); there at the very beginning of the contemporary hermeneutic tradition, or at least as it was for Martin Heidegger (1927/2010). One famous example was indeed Heidegger’s (1927/2010) temporal-spatial condition of *being-in-the-world* (p. 113) or *in-der-Welt-sein*.”

The Topos of “Being-in-the-World”

For Malpas (2022), his hermeneutic inquiries included exploring conceptual notions of “comprehension” (p. 143) as an expression of understanding by tracing back in time to reveal meanings given to the actions of “grasping” (p. 143), “seizing” (p. 143), “a taking-in” (p. 143), and “bringing together” (p.143). Malpas (2022) considered these actions of etymology the *embodied metaphors of understanding*—“no less spatial or topographical” (p.143). Notably, Malpas (2022) interpreted *the concept of understanding* as the result of an embodied sense of *topos*—rendering an ecohermeneutic sensibility. It did not matter that there was still a lack of research willing to surrender to the uniqueness and topographical virtues of diverse language and knowledge systems:

The language of understanding is deeply imbued with ideas and images of place and space. To speak of ‘understanding’ is itself to draw upon a sense of ‘standing in the midst of’ or ‘between’ (from the Old English *understandan*)—one might even say, then, that to understand is ‘to draw near or to be close to’. Heidegger (2003) points to the character of the German *Verständnis* as having the original sense of ‘standing before [Vorstehen]: residing before, holding oneself at an equal height with what one finds before oneself, and being strong enough to hold out’ (p. 40)—and here too there is surely also a sense of standing ‘near to’. (p. 143)

The conditional and contextual experiences of human identity were marked here as meaning-filled gestures, responses to the rhetoric of regional locations, according to Malpas (2022). That said, *places* for Malpas (2018) were the settings where the natural actions of collective and individual engagements in the world took place as—“all our encounters with persons and things—are always *taking place* in place” (p. 12). These engagements, embodied conceptual conditions, were most consistently ecologically established as informed (Malpas, 2018, 2022).

As an example in support of Malpas’ views, take, for instance, how Albrecht (2019), as an interpretive and creative ecophilosopher, was also seemingly caught up with the topic of *ecological understanding* as he attempted to develop a psychological language to explain the “links between failing ecosystem health and human mental health” (p. 36). At first glance, Albrecht’s (2019) attentiveness would fix upon the Heideggerian conception of “*unheimlichkeit*” (p. 36), which he found to be depicting “*unhomeliness*” (p. 36) as “*uncanniness*” (p. 36). Albrecht (2019) was also informed by a Freudian (1919) translation of *unheimlich* as the suggestive presence of “*something sinister in the home*” (p. 36). Eventually, Albrecht (2019) claimed the concept of *topos* was likely in need of a definition that went beyond

external landscapes, just as Heidegger had prior suggested in his interpretation of *unheimlichkeit* to render the “*shape of the contents of consciousness*” (p. 36; see also *Being and Time*, 1927/2010). So, notions of *home* proffered by Albrecht (2019), in time, could relay “*the seat of consciousness and as the place where one lives*” (p. 36).

In *Truth and Method* (1975/1989), the hermeneutic text of Martin Heidegger’s (1889-1976) most famous student, Hans Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), was a bit more room from which to consider a range of interpretive movements, including what was “beyond *nature* as a knowable operation of immutable laws and *absolute* ends” (p. 87). Profoundly Gadamer (1975/1989) would proclaim, “Precisely because in nature we find no ends in themselves, and yet we find beauty” (p. 47), and said this renowned scholar, “As beautiful, nature finds a language that brings to *us* an intelligible idea of what mankind is to be” (p. 47). Now it was Derby (2015), informed by Zwicky (2008, 2012, 2014a, 2014b), attaching the concept of *beauty* to the presence of the *incomprehensible* as something beyond words, based on what was given in his recent publication describing an ecohermeneutic approach to curriculum. Notably, Jardine (2015a), invited by Derby (2015), introduced this text. Jardine (2015a), in turn, contrasted the “curves of vines around a tree” (p. xviii) and “right-angled triangles” (p. xviii) to render an “experience of beauty” (p. xvii) in the radiance of magic instances. However, and significantly more so, Derby would return rather consciously, again and again, to the works of the illustrious poet and Canadian philosopher Jan Zwicky (2008, 2012, 2014a, 2014b) for “acknowledging, mourning, and celebrating what-is” (2008, p. 86), there in the “metaphorical relation between things and the resonant structure of the world” (p. 22).

Zwicky (2008) found meaning-filled expressions living within ecological gestures “bent to the shape of wordlessness” (p. 24) to reveal “a condition that intuitively as phenomenologically

selfless” (p. 25). And so, “What it [this condition] achieves, if its medium was words, was speech that integrated various human modes of understanding—emotional, logical, physical, among others” (p. 25). Zwicky’s (2008) ecocritical condition was also deemed by Derby (2015) as a “lyric realism” (p. 5), reliant upon more-than-*just*-human gestures as the mediums from which to develop intuitive translations.

Ecohermeneutics: On Seeking the Silenced or Silently Resonant

Before Derby (2015), Canadian educational scholars Andrejs Kulnieks, Dan Longboat, and Kelly Young (2010) developed a preceding ecohermeneutic curriculum. From Kulnieks et al. (2010), I was further encouraged to gather, discern, decipher, and express meanings for curricula through philosophical, ecological, sensing, or intuitive perspectives and activities. According to these scholars, it was not merely sufficient to attempt to seek out or peer behind a language to venture into the contextual world or the word, but of a critical ethical necessity to go beyond and closely consider what gets said, uttered, and sensed but also silenced or was there silently gesturing or resonant (Derby, 2015; Grondin, 1994; Kearney, 2011). Moreover, I was encouraged to *think out loud* about the metaphors that have framed understandings and what gets taken for granted in meaning through this form of interpretive inquiry that Jardine (1992) once claimed to be “pedagogic at its heart” (p. 35). Adopted by me as a research approach, ecohermeneutics was inherently critical and educational, awakening me and, hopefully, others to renewed possibilities of understanding. Consider, just as Jardine (1998) had as he translated the influential philosophy of political and historical scholar Hannah Arendt (1969), the importance of developing an ethical approach to interpretation by teachers as pedagogues:

There is ... an intimate connection between interpretation (concerned as it is with the generativity of meaning that comes with the eruption of the new in the midst of the

already familiar) and pedagogy (concerned as it is with the regeneration of understanding in the young who live here with us) in the midst of an already familiar world. (as cited and paraphrased with bracketing by Jardine, 1998, p. 31)

Notably, Arendt (1969) was renowned for her ethical standpoints as a German-born Jew and source shaping Jardine's (1998) scholarly perspectives. Still, curiously, both Jardine (2015a) and Derby (2015) would seemingly appear more in sync with the Heideggerian position over the Gadamerian interpretive approach for ecohermeneutics in the curricular sense. There was this example, a passage from Heidegger's, *On the Way to Language* (1971) cited by Jardine (2015) and inserted in Derby's (2015) introduction to his text:

Thinking is not means to gain knowledge. Thinking cuts furrows in the soil of Being. About 1875, Nietzsche wrote (Grossoktav, WW XI, p. 20): *Our thinking should have a vigorous fragrance, like a wheatfield on a summer's night*. How many of us today still have the senses for that fragrance? (p. 70; as cited by Jardine, 2015a, p. xvii)

In this passage, I get the importance of referencing *a fragrant beauty of understanding* as something that many *ecohermeneutic* researchers seek to uncover and render, just as Jardine (2015a) had done by highlighting Heidegger's (1971) interpretation of Nietzschean thought. Still and remarkably, I must point to the paradox of this illustrative alliance given to beauty here as not *just* but unjustly due to Heidegger's appalling political affiliations with the Nazi Regime during World War II that was so very ugly in every detail of account, beyond any possible critique relevant to the "heavy-handed humanism" (Derby, 2015, p. 87) of the Heideggerian philosophy overall, that was noted by me as accounted for by Derby (2015).

Hermeneutic Limitations Including the Inheritance of Heidegger

Admittedly, there were evident limitations related to the ecohermeneutic approach guiding this study, just as there would be for any approach or methodology given in English attempting to dismantle the dominance of Western philosophies that cause harm by taking shape in the assumed superiority of universal perspectives and conceptualizations. For instance, beyond the shadow of Heidegger's politics were the opinions of Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood (2012). According to these educational researchers, there was not much difference between those concepts deemed intercultural and what might be considered a multicultural term. It seems for some, including Meer and Modood (2012), that both terms previously applied in research fields had, unfortunately, contributed to the development and perpetuation of essentializing (i.e., reductive and one-sided) values and cultural specificities (i.e., stereotypes). Sociologist Michel Wieviorka (2012) was another cautioning through his skepticism, critically questioning the ethical validity of intercultural research for being overtly Anglocentric. Wieviorka (2012) was appropriately concerned, and so were many others, so I have to account, and as you will find next, did so by addressing the sincerity of studies like mine when written predominantly in English and presented through a Westernized lens and framework.

Still, my position within these criticisms has noted the emergent need for educators of a pioneering and dominating heritage here on Treaty 6, such as me, to engage with understandings that disrupt personal and collective biases and assumptions that underpin processes for making meaning—as a professional, ethical necessity outlined in the provincial *Teaching Quality Standards* (TQS) developed by the Government of Alberta (2018) and the commitments outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission funded by the Federal Government of Canada. The ethical practices outlined by these governmental structures indicate a demand for reflexive

research studies aimed at contending with the limitations of a dominant culture informed by Anglocentric or Francophone monolingualistic perspectives. French and English are the given official, colonial languages of Canada. That said, I would need a starting point, an approach within reach of my language capacities shaped by the dominant culture here to shift the orders of my consciousness as a teacher-researcher wanting to improve through personal and professional growth and change by moving beyond my inheritances of settler colonialism and a colonial language as a familiar regional ideology and value-laden language system commonly encountered in the curriculum of place here.

Even so, and despite the condition that this research would be informed by decolonizing scholars and publications intended to counter the local settler ideological logic here, this inquiry was most certainly *not* conducted in a political-historical vacuum (Derby, 2015). As a result, I will not, and must not, claim this research to be a culturally neutral project. However, and importantly, within a hermeneutic approach to research, including ecohermeneutic inquiries, neutrality would never be considered an ethical claim. Indeed, the topic of mental health was derived from Western thought, researched within a colonial nation, and based out of an educational institution that consistently assigns privilege to very particular forms of modern Western paradigms for research, despite the calls to action and the imminent need to heal broken intercultural relations in Canada and elsewhere.

On *Being* Ecocritical

The place-conscious nature of this research project did provide a means to establish a *common grounding* within the intercultural understandings generated and discovered from co-creative conversations and meetings to join attention with others. A good example was a result of the fieldwork. For instance, to the benefit of my pedagogical practice, I have managed to develop

a more nuanced intercultural understanding of mental health due to my collaborations with Yari, Joey, Dorthia, and learning from Dr. Hains to support the integrity of conceptualizations based on what was recovered through this research. However, it would require that in preparation for the fieldwork, I would engage with my sense of understanding mental health as biased by my assumed associations with the research setting and my relations of place here—where I resided, studied, taught, and stood. Moreover, when I was in the field, it became evident that the ethics of relationality would demand the integration of co-creative mediums to *exercise* insights as called for by a healthy ecology, interpretive research practice, and my privilege as a sense of standing here in this place of Edmonton (see Aoki, 1993; Chambers, 2008; Derby, 2015; Donald, 2019; Fidyk, 2013, 2021a, 2021b; Gruenewald, 2003, 2010; Hains, 2013, 2021; Hébert, 2016; Hurren, 2003; Jardine, 1998; Kulnieks et al., 2010; MacDonald & Wiebe, 2011; Pente, 2009; D. G. Smith, 2020).

Furthermore, the ethics of traditional hermeneutic inquiry required that I demonstrate interpretive integrity. That means that I had to adhere to the acknowledgement that no method as a technique or tactic—or methodology or approach, for that matter, provides all the answers to render a hermeneutic sense of ecological or intercultural understanding (Moules et al., 2015). So, most likely, in contrast with a quantitative, statistical scientific study on mental health, this research in its arrangement could seem to lack *power* in a positivistic or Western enlightenment-informed paradigm due to the lack of numbers or data set classifying research participants and my resistance to reference methodology or establish objective themes in conclusion. Instead, variances in perspectives as distinct expressions or experiences of voice were rendered subjectively. So, there could never have been a singular conclusion among the depth of

resonance sought from the particularities of momentous instances considered integral to the *gestalt* or *form* of meanings encountered in this research (see Zwicky, 2019).

Now rather notably Jardine (1998) had before, and many times over, expressed the critical capacities of a place-conscious or ecocritical interpretive approach to research as an improved response to inquiry for the benefit of education, such as stated here:

Ecology offers both education and hermeneutics images of the old and the young, of places and histories, of disciplines and work, that break out beyond the confines of the human voice, out into the pitter-patter of an animate, living Earth. (p. 3)

As a result, I consciously decided to seek out particular meanings derived from the sensory life of places as a more sensible and holistic approach to interpretation and conceptual development (Abram, 1996; Derby, 2015; Jardine, 1998).

Elizabeth Kinsella (2006), a prominent Canadian scholar, was also influential. Kinsella (2006) wrote what I consider a go-to article for astutely highlighting the critical potential of hermeneutics to benefit the *ecohermeneutic* approach framing this inquiry. In this article, Kinsella (2006) identified several influential thinkers who she found had effectively developed arguments for integrating critical or deconstruction theory into hermeneutic practice. Kinsella (2006) included the following hermeneutic scholars: John Caputo (1987), David Jardine (1992), Richard Kearney (1988, 2003, 2011), Hans Kögler (1996), Paul Ricoeur (1981), David G. Smith (1999), Robin Schott (1991), and Janice Wallace (2000). As a result, Kinsella (2006) would inspire others to do as she would, infusing interpretive practice with a critical perspective (see also Dussel, 2003; Nagel, 1986; Palermo, 1975; Roberge, 2011; D. G. Smith, 1999). This move for Kinsella (2006) would, notably in time, improve her capacities for disturbing

unequal political grounds establishing dominating ideologies rendered within the commons of places (see also Dussel, 2003; Nagel, 1986; Palermo, 1975; Roberge, 2011; D. G. Smith, 1999).

Of note, a standout critical-feminist hermeneutic scholar highlighted in Kinsella's (2006) inspiring interpretive review of critical theory was Robin Schott (1991). Schott (1991) had previously pointed hermeneutic attentions, and with conviction, toward a power imbalance given to the situated nature of interpretative practices. Maintained by Schott (1991) was that "groups [and ecologies] whose resources, histories, and traditions have been marginalized need to struggle for the self-affirmation that is both a condition and consequence of naming oneself an interpreter" (p. 209). As a result, Schott (1991) maintained that the integration of a critical self-analysis should be considered a necessity for interpretive researchers if relational hermeneutic sensibilities were to become developed and, importantly, address the question of the interpreter's power and positionality.

So it was that I, too, was influenced by the critical theory in hermeneutics. As a consequence of this influence, participatory, experiential, collaborative, and descriptively art-full activities were allowed to unfold as part of the fieldwork. Rather purposefully, I have chosen to refer to these activities, named as taught by curriculum and educational studies, as tacting-exercises to render the ecocritical nature of these creative tasks and for improving pedagogy in educational fields and the practice of ecohermeneutics as an inclusive, relational interpretive research approach. More on that to come in time!

About: The Artistry of a Hermeneutic Inquiry

In his publication, *Gadamer's Poetics: A Critique of Modern Aesthetics* (2013), a book source recommended to me by Nancy Moules after my candidacy exam, American English

language educator John Arthos supportively contemplated the Gadamerian interpretive and hermeneutic significance of creativity in artwork. Here, Arthos (2013) maintained:

For Gadamer, art is a kind of witness to the self-conscious pathos of our finitude, a coming to terms in reflective openness that feels somehow a pledge of order, and falling short of that order, sees the comedy and tragedy of its predicament. The path that shows itself in his writings begins, on the one end, from the stability of the work as a permanent text that words a pledge against subject isolation and finitude—a stability that is severely qualified by the radicality of hermeneutic understanding—and ends, on the other end, with the changing historical cultures that ceaselessly infuse, deepen, and transform the ongoing meaning of the work. (pp. 35-36)

In short, and critically, the “hermeneutic identity” (p. 36) was claimed by Arthos (2013) to be predisposed amongst artists as creatives. Arthos’ (2013) text did render the act of artistry timeless as a craft or slow endeavour but also subject to fading impermanence as an interpretive eco-relational communicative medium to reflect lives once lived. To explain, one might consider how, for hundreds of centuries, artworks as creations have assisted in conceptualizing existences, at times, by capturing a meaning-filled moment now past but still moving, possibly and again at times, in present conditions. Furthermore, artistry provides subjects as topics fixed by perspective, an opportunity to dismantle any sense of exceptionalism as a creation of temporal paradox, including the paradox of being something before, now lost, yet capable of being renewed in its passing from generation to generation. Moreover, as I noted, the co-creative rendering of place-conscious movements unfolding as a result of the artistic composition of this inquiry indeed did evolve this project to reveal something that became a sort of “hermeneutics-in-process” (Holt, 2023a).

In Jung's (1966) *Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature—The Collected Works, Volume 15*, I would take notice of the writing given to visionary developments of creation-making, which I read to be rather ecologically driven and hermeneutic in philosophy:

In works of art of this nature [visionary]—and we must never confuse them with the artist as a person—it cannot be doubted that the vision is a genuine primordial experience, no matter what the rationalists may say. It is not something derived or secondary, it is not symptomatic of somethings else, it is a true symbol—that is an expression for something real but unknown. (p. 148)

Jungian symbolic sensitivities were inevitably integrated into my reflexive processes of interpretation, there informing translations to guide this research and develop ideas. For instance, pictorial expressions were created by Yari, Joey, and Dorthia, just as Jung (1966, 1968a, 2018) had done many years ago to reveal personal psychic meaning. From this creative exercise, crucial developments materialized. For Jung (2002), it was a view that revealed the psyche as a soul inherently creative and attached to symbols to express the depth of attachment given to the often unconscious sensory fields of collectives. For this research, the creations that developed in time were meaning-filled as place-conscious memories embodied by metaphors caught up in haptic expression and other developing innovations.

Paradigm: A Lifeworld Animating

Alluded at the beginning of this movement described through Kimmerer's (2013) *grammar of animacy*, the paradigm framing this inquiry was that of an animated-interpretive lifeworld as a place-conscious ontology (Blenkinsop & Beeman, 2010). Jardine (2015a, p. xxi) once described this paradigm to advance his own hermeneutic work by recalling this Gadamerian depiction (2007) of a world ecologically connected that “compels over and

over, and the better one knows it, the more compelling it is” (p. 115). Here, interpretation gets shaped by gestures in places as *there things happen*. Although seemingly in common to *these things that happen* or critical gestures was the tendency to reveal meanings far beyond the interpreter’s conscious desire or “wanting and doing” (Gadamer, 1975/2013; p. xxvi; see also Fidyk, 2013; Jardine, 2015a).

Importantly Donald’s (2019) ethic of relationality has called for the re-animation of place to overcome the relational psychoses within curricular research projects in Canada. Donald (2019) alongside other noteworthy place-based curriculum and Indigenous scholars consider the animated nature of place as “not just a neat idea” (p. 160), but a curricular reality that honours the spirit of life, to nurture its continuance (see Battiste et al., 2005; Chambers, 2008; Fidyk, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2013, 2021; Gruenewald, 2003; Jardine, 2015a; Hains, 2001, 2013, 2022, 2023; Kulnieks et al., 2010; Leggo, 2018; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014, 2015). Others for instance, led by Daniel Wildcat Vine Deloria Jr. (2001) have depicted this inspirited animacy as *the personality of place*. That said, it was this very condition of animacy that was sought in expressions of meaning to render place-conscious conceptualizations of mental health as a way of *seeing* to develop a renewed sense of knowing about *being*.

The Multivocal Nature of an Ecohermeneutic Epistemology

At the core of any hermeneutics has always been the idea of *aletheia* or the disruption of a reductive narrative, metaphor, value, belief, or the sense of an idea as a despotic truth (Gadamer, 1975/2004; Moules et al., 2015). As a result, the concept of truth could only apply as an interpretation of perspective in this study or to identify ideas *taken for granted* by and within collectives or groups (Gadamer, 1996).

Aletheia, as a concept, revealed an original association to *Lethe*—the root etymon of *lethal*, and the place name given to the mystical waters of the rivers Hades that was once believed to be capable of washing away the past (Moules et al., 2015). Ancient tales taught me that aletheia beckoned to recover the forgotten or dead, concealed, repressed, suppressed or any unearthed expression believed to be lost, buried, or lifeless (Caputo, 2018; Derby, 2015; Jardine, 2015; Moules et al., 2015). Guided by this animated spirit of Aletheia, exercises engaged in this study were integrated as activities intended to *mine* buried meanings (see Fidyk & St. Georges, 2020). Indeed, the more-than-human world was considered the primary resource to develop and bridge understandings, as claimed by feelings, presented through lyricism and metaphorical expressions, and further animated by relations to frame collaborations. Often, discussions in dialogue, considered interpretive exercises of this research, focused on concepts that might render the wholeness of mind as embodied by places (Bringhurst, 2006; Derby, 2015; Gussow, 1974; Kulnieks et al., 2010).

Derby (2015) deemed the hermeneutic significance of an ecological wisdom alive beyond the bounds of individual capacities: “Fruiting bodies of thought emerge from the cultural-historical humus of a particular place and healthy eco-cultural systems and intellectual landscapes—bloom, grow, spore, and convey something of the world before decaying and putrefying as all things must” (p. 19). In other words, with attention jointly turned toward the interrelatedness and multivocal nature of communicating place-relationships were possible research and conceptual opportunities to expand or fuse our conscious horizons as co-creatives (see Kulnieks et al., 2010; Nagel, 1986; Palermo, 1975; Roberge, 2011; Zwicky, 2008). As a result, published texts were approached as ecological mediums and languages—particularly

those land-based, as life forms (Derby, 2015). Allied disciplines would further contribute to the nature of this research as the fields of living relations (Derby, 2015; Jardine, 1998, 2015a).

Applied by me, lyric interpretation translated the expressions personally rendered as findings. Now, in keeping with Zwicky (2012) and her lyrical hermeneutic sensibility, I had reserved the term *meaning*—“for what we experience when we perceive resonant, atemporal, non-sequential complexes as *feeling tones*” (p. 209). And *meaningful*—“for a special class of experiences: those in which our perspective is significantly altered” (p. 209), including any educational event as a happenstance that leaves a group or individuals inspired, changed by the present sense of the ineffable to further inspire through awe and wonder (Jardine, 2015a, p. xvi). That said, ecological significance was directed at punning wordplay and metaphoric expressions to possibly reveal the patterning of an “extralogical” (Zwicky, 2012, p. 203) condition.

Field notes. *Edmonton, Alberta, March 8, 2021.* “According to the sources I have encountered, most hermeneutic researchers will refuse the claim of methodology as something essential or given to this interpretive and qualitative research tradition (Moules et al., 2015). Yet, importantly, hermeneutics and the *ecohermeneutic* research approach are not considered *methodless* (Kinsella, 2006; Moules et al., 2015). In this study, *tacting*-exercises were integrated to engage with topos—at least to some extent, as something somewhat novel for making sense of mental health as intercultural learning support for conceptual and curricular research.”

St. Albert, Alberta, November 4, 2023, “*In Touch: Recovering Our Most Vital Sense* (2021), the conceptual imagination of Irish hermeneut Richard Kearney featured—*tact*—as a hermeneutic etymon that I have adopted to portray the exercises of this inquiry as reflexion-in-process. As further along in this research, I would also explore the etymology of *reflexion*, which would in in turn expose the interpretive art of *bending* or “*turning the action back upon the*

subject” (OED, 2022) as a direction I interpreted to be curricular in its orientation to render a creative shift or turn in movement. Consequently, I decided on calling these activities tacting-exercises as an innovation to establish a co-creative approach for ecohermeneutic research. And also, as educational exercises to enhance the pedagogy of teachers working in the classroom, as I am trying out in my own practice with junior high students this year. Indeed, I believe these tacting-exercises to be unique as transdisciplinary interpretive developments.”

Introducing: Tacting-Exercises to Establish a *Co-creative* Ecohermeneutics

Of late, Kearney (2021), as an influential source shaping hermeneutic scholarship, has featured the concept of *tact* in his interpretive research as “a special intelligence of the body” (p. 9)—to render the *capacities of intuition* as an ecological wisdom, as it was here, maintained:

Tact is an interplay of far and near, knowing how to be subjects of our actions while being subject to others’ actions—being touched even as we touch. This active-passive dialect is what the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl calls double sensation. In the reversibility of touch one has the feeling of both touching and being touched. (p. 10)

Accordingly, Kearney’s position on tact as an educational form of intuition would lead me to embrace it as a “sensory restoration” (p. 9) or embodied notion to render expressions of the psyche. Notably, Kearney (2021) did suggest that *tact* was the spell to cast for the “recovery of self” (p. 9) as “living well means coming to our senses again” (p. 9):

Tact is synesthetic through and through. Tactful taste we call *savvy*; tactful smell we call *flair*; tactful sight we call *insight*; and tactful sound we call *resonance* ... The term tact derives from the Latin *tango-tangere-tactum* and denotes the skill of people who have a way with people. (p. 9)

Impressed by Kearney's (2021) commitment to *tact* in his writing, "as feeling that resonates, emotion that evaluates, mood that appreciates" (p. 47), I felt I had finally found a term to establish a diplomatic—respectful, relational, trustworthy, ethical forum or conceptual meeting grounds to engage in the exercises of dialogue, reflexion, and place-conscious creation-making for this mental health research project. To this end, I would find Kearney's (2021) sense of *tacting* intuitively derived, artistic, and critical as a quality to foster shared intercultural expressions of interrelationships. Take, for instance, that this notion of tact, as a term, remains enclosed within this concept—*intact*, as the root idea of *wholeness*, *holistic* or something more *complete*.

A regional article recently published in the *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics* written by an Alberta-based physician and director of undergraduate family medicine at the University of Calgary, Martina Kelly (2023), did adopt Kearney's (2021) views on tact, albeit as a concept connected to a "touchy subject" (p. 1) in clinical and medical education. However, as a term applied to establish *holistic* expressions of *care*, tact was, said Kelly (2023), an essential quality for teaching future physicians about the address of a typical healthcare experience—the intersubjective *holding* moments between a physician and their patient, as expressively relayed to Kelly through conversations with colleagues as an encounter felt deeply in time (Kelly. 2023). Kelly's (2023) publication did remind me that "part of being 'seen' is being felt ... as in having [one's] presence acknowledged" (p. 7), as something that was "beyond the physical and verbal" (p. 7); rather tact was more "intersensory" (p. 7) as an ecological form of *understanding*.

Importantly, I must note more local research conceptualizing *tact*, notably the studies conducted by the University of Alberta's professor emeritus and world-class phenomenologist, Max van Manen (1991/2012, 2016). Several years prior, van Manen (1991/2012) was acutely

engaged in research, as evidenced by his extensive publications highlighting the nuances of tact as an appropriate response to compelling moments of a pedagogy-in-action. Back then, van Manen (1991/2012) had marked the more popular and contemporary formulated approaches to methods in teaching [or research] as “pedagogically loaded” (p. 45). van Manen (1991/2012) reportedly interpreted step-by-step directions set to guide learning instruction to be better suited for improving the teacher’s techniques than for broadening or “increasing one’s understanding of what one does and what one has done” (p. 45), subsequently providing educators with a *tactless* example of teaching to inform practice.

van Manen’s work (1991/2012) did shift the attention of teachers and scholars, for at that time, van Manen (1991/2012) described *tact* as a concept presently known within educational disciplines but understood as a hindrance to pedagogy as something unplannable. Albeit, for van Manen (1991/2012), tact was, and would remain, a synonym he associated with good teaching, stating that “to be tactful is to be thoughtful, sensitive, perceptive, discreet, mindful, prudent, judicious, sagacious, perspicacious, gracious, considerate, cautious, careful” (p. 126). Critically, for this research, the art of tact was diplomatic when rendered by van Manen (1991/2012) as he had once claimed it a “magical term that promises a solution” (p. 127), yet still given to “heedfulness” (p. 117) as an addition of another critical act of teaching, that of nonaction—“holding back, waiting” (p. 127). In *heedfulness*, van Manen (1991/2012) sought out an allied interpretation found in *Truth and Method* (T & M), as Gadamer (1975/1989) had developed a translation of tact based on the views provided by physiologist Hermann Helmholtz (1821-1894) as something “practiced through scholarship” (cited by van Manen, 1991/2012, p. 130). Further given in *T & M* was an expression of tact to relay “developing a sense of the aesthetic or historical” (p. 130) to inform van Manen’s (1991/2012) “interpretive work” (p. 130).

van Manen (1991/2012) also recovered the insights of a long-time-ago educator named Johan Friedrich Herbart (1802), who, as it has been reportedly told, in his very first lesson, noted, “The real questions as to whether someone is a good or bad educator is simply this: Has this person developed as sense of tact?” (Herbart in van Manen, 1991/2012, p. 130). Now as it appeared, van Manen (1991/2012), by way of his friend Helmut Danner, a German scholar, was sent a book by Jacob Muth (1982) titled *Pädagogischer Takt*, which contains the 1802 lecture by Herbart (Herbart in Muth, 1982, pp. 54-55). Allegedly, it was here that van Manen (1991/2012) was able to suggest that a “scholar demonstrates the measure of his or her tact by the insights that he or she is able to produce with respect to the meaning of a text or the social phenomenon” (p. 130-131)—to establish the tonal intention for gathering ideas for this research as a mental health place-conscious curricular inquiry for teacher education.

Later, I would study the concept of *exercise*—as the *other* term linked to describe the activities of this research. Once again, I would engage in a hermeneutic exploration of English etymology before offering a translation. I found a noun derived from Old French *exercice* (13 c.) as a “physical or spiritual exercise” (OED, 2022, para. 1) and *play*—from an ancient Medieval Latin form as an expression of the arts in *exercitar* and *exercere* as something to “disturb, disquiet” (OED, 2022, para. 1). There was also a Latin verb (14 c.) that was the “doing or practicing; [of] a disciplinary task” (OED, 2022, para. 2), applied to “to make use of ... mental and spiritual training” (OED, 2022, para. 3). However, there were other translations to consider. One that caught my attention was in Cree-nêhiyawêwin as a local land-based language and former lingua franca here on Treaty 6. As a result, the co-creative activities introduced as tacting-exercises have also been considered as an interpretation of manâtisiwin—as *tact*; *the art*

of being respectful and *iyisâhow*—for *resisting temptation; the exercising of restraint*—as the meanings given to render terms in Cree-nêhiyawêwin (nêhiyaw masinahikan, n.d.).

Of important note: my application of *tact* or the action of *tacting* to depict the co-creative exercises of this research is not to be confused with *tact therapy* frequently used to mediate speech-language pathologies, as introduced in the theoretical perspective of behaviourist Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904-1990).

Approaching the Research

To prepare myself for the fieldwork, I engaged in an ecocritical place-conscious form of reflexive writing as the first of several tacting-exercises. This initial exercise applied *topobiography* (Gladwin, 2020) as an expression of *reflexion* to rendering the research setting, Edmonton, Alberta/amiskwaciy wâskahikan as a teaching place. This exercise intended to establish my credibility and integrity as an ecohermeneutic teacher-researcher and scholar as outlined on p. 99 and found throughout the movement of text titled *Arrivals*.

Tacting-exercise I: Topobiographical Reflexion

Topobiography, as an exercise of this research, was introduced to me through a published article by Derek Gladwin (2020). Here, Gladwin (2020) integrated topobiography into his narrative practice to engage “transdisciplinary conjunctions and environmental perspectives” (p. 130)—establishing an embodied form of inquiry to render eventful ideas supported by place-based narratives and the embracing of multi-sensory, interpretive, intuitive techniques. It seemed it was indeed Gladwin’s (2020) intention to develop a process that could uncover personal memoirs of lived experiences in places as ecologies-in-relation through prose, montages of images, and architectural terminology (Gladwin, 2020; Karjalainen, 2009, 2015).

Admittedly, in my exercise of topobiography, there were some additional haptic adaptations made by me in support of the fieldwork. For example, as part of my topobiographical reflexion, I would engage with imaginal creations, layered, and textured as visual images. These images traced out my relationship to amiskwaciy wâskahikan as a landscape, blending and unfolding reflections from the land. Also integrated were language associations, poetics, conceptual notions, events, histories, feelings, and local stories combined to express “place-based writing with interrelational experiences” (Gladwin, 2020, p. 137) that developed through a more “personalized lens” (p. 137). At first intended as an experimental activity, my engagement with topobiographical reflexion did shift some of my priorly established tendencies. The processes of this exercise awakened my consciousness to the possibility of *unconscious* curricular motivations within me as I became increasingly aware of the cultural-one-sided living curriculum perpetuated within the dominant culture here within the research setting where I also lived and taught.

Tacting-exercise II: Eco-haptic Hermeneutic Visuality (Stitching-as-mending for Meaning)

Gladwin (2013) would also introduce to me the creative possibilities of “haptic viscosity” (p. 157) as an ecocritical co-creative tacting-exercise. As an *arting* practice this exercise can be traced back to the musings of creative historian Aloïs Riegl, who in the nineteenth century, reportedly was the first to conceive or coin the term—haptic—to reference touch (Gladwin, 2013; Marks, 2000).

However, it was Gladwin (2013), following in the footsteps of a film studies professor, Laura Marks (2000, 2004), who first advanced haptic expressions through *visual mediums* to communicate “embodied experiences” (Gladwin, 2013, p. 161). According to these scholars, *visual* mediums could also be tactile to relay sensory meanings that were often all too “subjective

and close” (p. 161). In other words, as taught by Marks (2000), haptic visuality “makes us reflect ... memory ... in touch, sound, perhaps smell, as more than a vision” (p. 129). Once again, I took some liberties adapting this activity as an exercise of tracing, stitching, and threading as I attempted a critical self-reflection supported by images of places encountered in my fieldwork. These images, darned with threaded embroidery floss would reveal to me layers of rich meaning critically associated with the research setting.

The natural rhythm of loosely embroidered stitching was slowed by the repetition of darning sewing threads intended to depict the intimacies of my lived conditions. As time passed, I found that in my unhurried attention, new details would emerge as the daily developments of this exercise, now connected to the research setting. Eventually, I would develop a strengthened capacity for stretching beyond personally imposed confinements. That is, it was through loose-stitched embroidery as a form of haptic ecohermeneutic visuality that I learned to artfully, or rather tactfully, craft out my sense of places as wandering expressions of ecological health and wisdom.

My exercising of *eco-haptic hermeneutic visuality* was initiated through inspiration evoked by a photograph or sketched image I took or created, resembling features of landscapes belonging to Treaty 6 territory. After I had chosen an image to trace, I would copy it onto a plastic backing embroidery stabilizer with a Sharpie marker. Then, after gathering acrylic threads and flossing, choosing colours and shades carefully, I would stitch them in with a yarn darning. As a developing visual, each work-in-process would sit within eyesight of my computer desk, where I wrote in reflexion. Over the eight months of fieldwork, I would engage with this creative medium before and after research meetings and conversations, and sometimes during these meetings, as the other co-creatives, my former students, worked on their own forms of eco-haptic

visuality later highlighted in this text. Snapseed as a free, downloadable application installed on my Android phone and camera, then framed, and filtered each image. Most creations I made took a month to embody what I felt was a sensible impression. Even still, near the end of the fieldwork, a series of earthwork impressions rendering biomorphic expressions had taken up form.

Field note. Edmonton, Alberta, March 8, 2021. Co-creative ecohermeneutics-in-process: Eco-haptic hermeneutic visuality. “The following six pages present images arranged to illustrate how I engaged with eco-haptic hermeneutic visuality as an exercise to render ideas for this research. While generating these images, Dr. Shaun Hains was sharing ecological teachings to inform translations from the field, expressed through dialogue to shape the work featured as reflected, with more to come in the contents of *Returns*. Noting the lack of text on the pages next, you may still find, as I found so much meaning there, to sense and discover.”



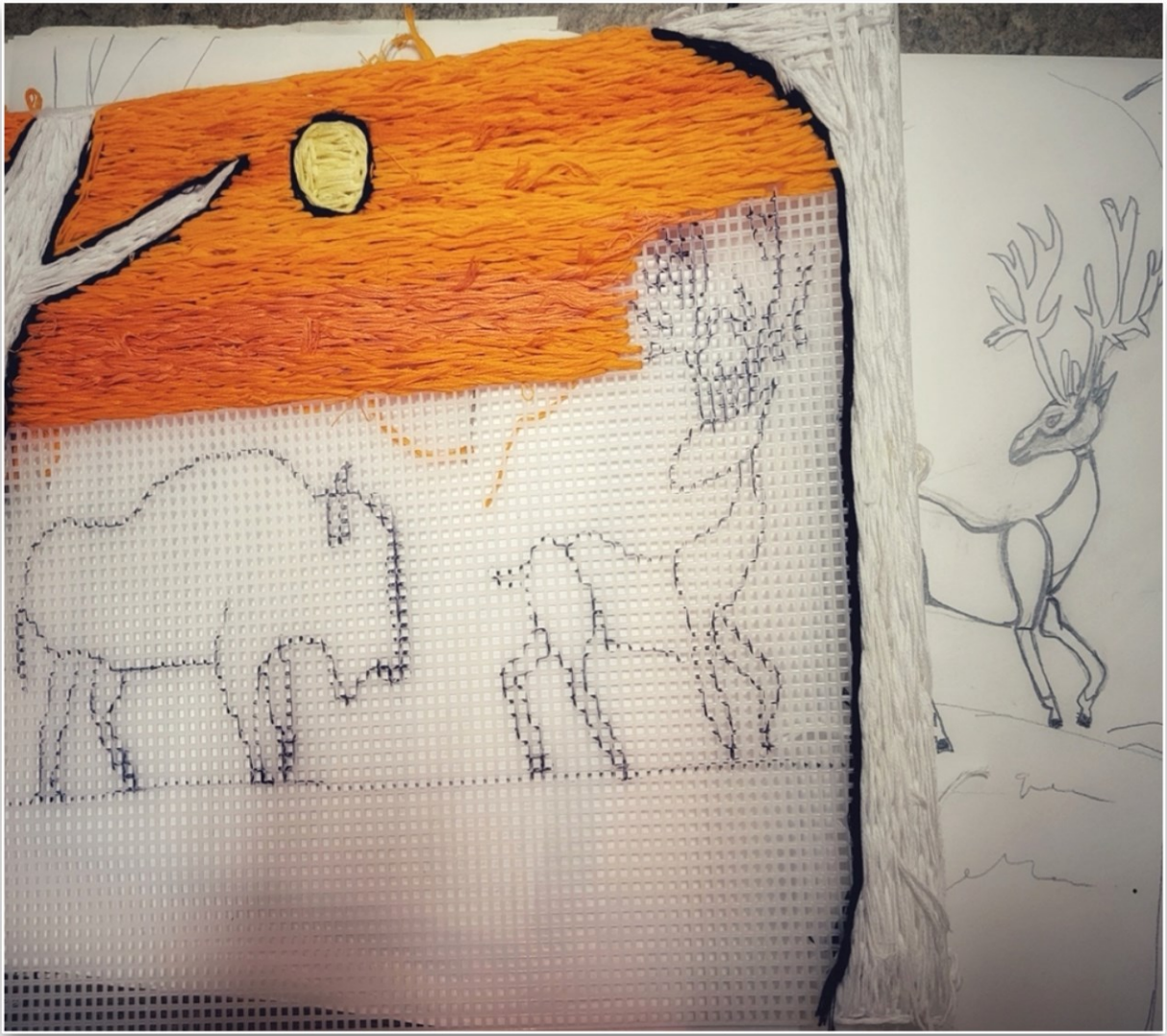
Elk Island National Park, Alberta, August 23, 2020. paskwâwimostos. [A digital rendering by R. Holt using a Snapseed filter applied to a photographic image from the camera of a personal Android device]. Artist statement: With the dog days of summer almost past, I drove out to Elk Island National Park, 30 kilometres east of Edmonton in 2020, to visit the descendants of the original herd. There, that day, I met up with this bison. Later on, I would integrate this image into this research to highlight *photography* as an activity of *eco-haptic hermeneutic visibility* as a tacting-exercise of co-creative ecohermeneutics-in-process.



Edmonton, Alberta, May 5, 2022, *A sketching conversation*. [A photographic image rendered with a personal Android device of a pencil sketching on canvas paper in a journaling notebook]. Artist statement: This image was photographed by R. Holt to highlight *sketching* as an activity of *eco-haptic hermeneutic visuality* to introduce as a tacting-exercise of co-creative ecohermeneutics-in-process.



Edmonton, Alberta, April 7, 2021, Gathering threads. [A photographic image taken with a camera on a personal Android device]. Artist statement: A photograph by R. Holt to highlight *gathering* as an activity of *eco-haptic hermeneutic visuality* to introduce as a tacting-exercise of co-creative ecohermeneutics-in-process.



Edmonton, Alberta, May 3, 2022, *Tracing, threading*. [A photographic image taken from a camera on a personal Android device by R. Holt]. Artist statement: A photograph to highlight *tracing* and *threading* as activities of *eco-haptic hermeneutic visuality* to introduce as tacting-exercises of co-creative ecohermeneutics-in-process.



Edmonton, Alberta, May 3, 2022, Refining the conversation. [A photographic image taken by R. Holt with a camera on a personal Android device]. Artist statement: A photograph to *highlight* refining as an activity of eco-haptic hermeneutic visuality; proposed tacting-exercise of co-creative eco-hermeneutics-in-process, inspired, in part, by the work of a recent graduate of psychotherapy and spirituality, Stephanie Godel (2022, University of Alberta), for posing this question from the text of her thesis: *What is art for?* Then responding: “Refinement—I make art to distill or refine ideas.” (p. 50). So here, in my own activity of refinement, I recorded this moment of landscaped reflexion in response to ecological language teachings received as something new to inform my sense of place within the research setting.



Edmonton, Alberta, February 5, 2023, Revisiting, reinhabiting: The conversation. [A photographic camera image rendered by R. Holt with an Android device to display the ulterior side or backside of an eco-haptic hermeneutic visual creation]. Artist statement: This photograph highlights *revisiting and reinhabiting* as activities of *eco-haptic hermeneutic visuality*, inspiring my words in reflexion. Revisiting the backside of this creation was insightful as a gateway activity leading into a mostly unseen, more hidden hermeneutic foundation of learning. As it is that I will often return the ulterior impression of my haptic creations, allowing my hands to smooth over this underside, as my tactile sense catches the rhythmic movement of the darning

patterns that rendered textured layers and knotty, tangled fibres of acrylics, as again, and beyond what is less available to claim through vision.

Tacting-exercise III: Place-conscious Ecohermeneutic Journalling

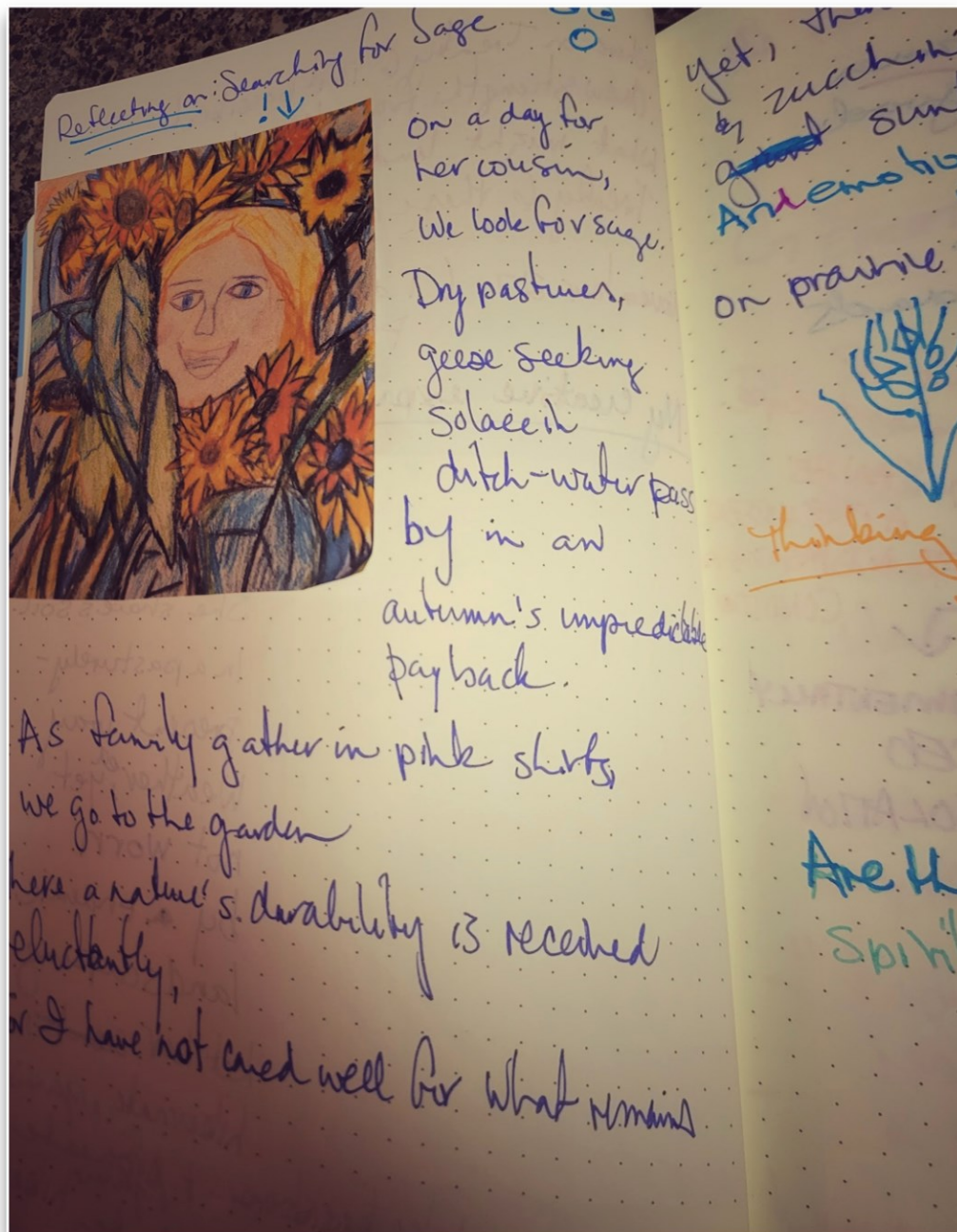
Next, I would discover ecohermeneutic journaling as a tacting-exercise to explore the subtle and expressive metaphoric and mythopoetic images surfacing from the fieldwork. Notably, Derby (2015) recommended ecohermeneutic writing for integrating processes for reflection to consciously confront personal views and biases related to political, geographical, spiritual, and contextual conditions often present in the research setting, including curricular and familial conditions as possible cultural interferences. In time, this journalling exercise became a pivotal resource to address discomforting feelings that I sensed were activating unconscious personal material as possible psychological complexes, which I attempted to work through with image creation, symbolic amplification, and tracing rhythmic movements in contemplation.

When the fieldwork had ended, my journalling notebook, the container of this exercise, included etymological ruminations; place-name histories and tracings or toponymy; sketches; drawings; photography; ecopoetic meditations; mapped topography; and multi-media visual artmaking images, in addition to place-based story writing, as a medium of intuitive topobiographical inquiry. Combining lyric and creative expression resulted in my journal becoming a sort of altered book in appearance, as a valued archive. It now contains diverse ideas to render place-conscious landscaping impressions of the psyche, extending out of metaphor.

Of note, I would apply an additional handwritten journal as a separate source to record the routines of research activities, marking down meeting dates, contact dates, receipt of consent dates, correspondences, and reflection pre- and post-interview sessions.

Ecopoïesis. Following Bringhurst (2006), Derby (2015), Fidyk (2017, 2020), Zwicky (2003, 2008, 2012, 2013), and others, I relied upon place-conscious poetry as a rhythmic, reflective, feeling medium responsive to the physiology of the body (Fidyk & St. Georges, 2021). According to Fidyk (2017), ecopoetics, the embodiment of harmonizing perspectives set side-by-side, has been demonstrated to be an engaging medium. Fidyk (2017) frequently encourages educators and researchers to turn to their poetic senses as way to tune into their emotions, intuitions, imaginations, and feelings—or to explore their interrelations with and in places, ecologies, and alongside other creative beings (Fidyk, 2017; Fidyk & St. Georges, 2021).

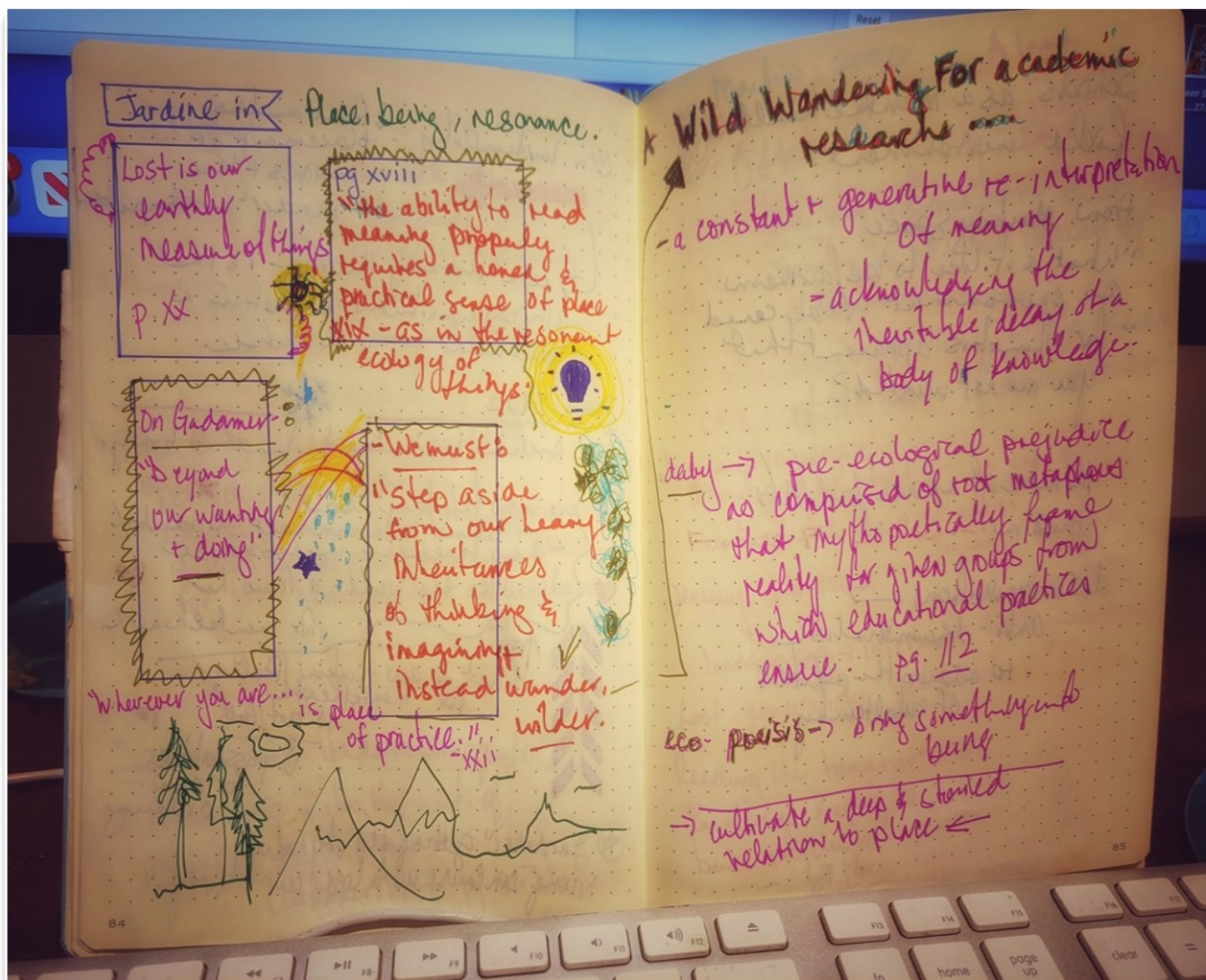
Field note. *Edmonton, Alberta, June 20, 2023.* “Following next are three pages of images depicting my place-conscious ecohermeneutic journalling while engaged in the fieldwork of this research.”



Edmonton, Alberta, November 27, 2021, *Returning, re-storying*. [A photographic image rendered with a camera on a personal Android device by R. Holt]. Artist statement: This is a page of co-created curricular content that generated from recording topobiographical, lyrical, imaginal, and visual expressions of *reflexive place-conscious (eco)hermeneutic journalling*.



Edmonton, Alberta, December 19, 2021, Receiving, reacting. [A photographic image rendered with a camera on a personal Android device of an image created by R. Holt in reflexion]. Artist statement: This is an example of a creative journal rendering that later inspired *haptic* curricular content that generated from the activity of exercising *reflexive place-conscious (eco)hermeneutic journaling*.



Edmonton, Alberta, December 19, 2021, *Recollecting*. [A photographic image rendered with a camera on a personal Android device of an image created by R. Holt in reflexion]. Artist statement: I took this photograph to share a sample of my work that later inspired *haptic* curricular content generated from the activity of *reflexive place-conscious (eco)hermeneutic journaling*.

Tacting Exercise IV: Place-conscious Dialogue and the Integration of Creation-making

Derby's (2015) ecohermeneutic writing and sensibility directed my attention to place-conscious *dialogue* as a crucial co-creative exercise for conceptual and educational research. In his words, Derby (2015) taught me how dialogue can create "the space for a critical moment whereby dominant narratives are situated within their cultural-historical development and where subaltern, local, and more-than-human voices become foregrounded" (p. 105). Here, Derby (2015) was concerned, as I was, about including marginalized voices and experiences (i.e., subaltern or oppressed, local, and more-than-human) that *do not* seem to *fit* into contemporary circles informing research, particularly those that "might easily be written off as *irrational*" (p. 105). That said, a critical ecohermeneutic understanding of dialogue would shape the activities of this exercise as I sought the support of the participating co-creatives, my former students, to "draw [differing] ways of knowing into an ecology of possibility" (p. 106) to generate expressions of "multivocal interpretation" (p. 106). And so, our co-creative dialogues were, for me, critical in our shared attempt to shift conceptual perceptions of mental health beyond "the arrangements of the dominant culture" (p. 107) we were all living within.

I invited former students into this research to dialogue as participating co-creatives because of my prior relationship with them as their former teacher. I knew them as children once and adults now as we lived in the same shared community. Over the years since they had graduated from K-12 schooling, I had managed to stay in touch and remain updated on their lives, coincidentally by running into them on the city sidewalks, at local shopping centres, graduation ceremonies at the University of Alberta, and even through third-party conversations. I was also familiar with their level of comfort concerning this mental health research and their

capacity with creative educational exercises for the rendering of memories, imagining, and ideas, or at least I had been when they were once my students.

Also, it was, for me, a necessity, based on the guiding ethic of relationality, that I should engage only in research with people as participants I already knew in my community if I was to explore intercultural understandings of mental health as a white-woman teacher. Our meetings in dialogue were consistently conversational, inquiring, reflexive, collaborative, place-focused, artistic, moving, and meaning-filled, more so than I could ever have imagined. This result was likely due to the sense of trust in one another and the unspoken relational accountability we established before this research that contributed to these most welcome developments.

It was after my research ethics approval from the University of Alberta that I sent Yari, Joey, and Dorthia initial invites using a poster as a visual to summarize the study information. With Yari and Joey I would extend the invitation through email. However, in the case of Dorthia, it was through a former teaching colleague via a sealed envelope that I was connected to extend my request to participate in this research. Of note, the recruitment poster is in the appendices of this text; so are the invitational email and proposed telephone transcripts.

Yari, Joey, and Dorthia met with me individually in four one-hour online meetings over eight months to engage in reflexive dialogue as a critical and co-creative ecohermeneutic exercise. With ongoing pandemic conditions, Yari, Joey, and Dorthia requested that our meetings be online using Google Meets. These online precautions were needed to ensure safety through physical distancing. I recorded our dialogues online using Voice Recorder Pro on my Android device.

Before our meetings, I sent each of my former students an e-gift card to purchase *their choice* of art supplies for their creation-making and the rendering of ideas generated in our

meeting sessions. Food gift cards were also provided for comfort and as a thank-you for volunteering their time before each meeting. As additional support for this research was a one-year City of Edmonton Attractions Park pass provided to each participant so that on their own time, Yari, Joey, and Dorthia could go and inhabit, sense, explore, and experience local places identified in the land acknowledgments reflected upon at the start-up of each of our meetings. The reimbursement of travel costs was an option provided to Yari, Joey, and Dorthia as they went to and from the locations visited using the Attractions Park pass. In addition, a mental health resource list was included, along with the consent forms and information documents.

Delimitations. Former students participating as co-creatives to generate ideas through dialogue and creation-making had to be able to identify with the following research qualifications: i) having been a former student of the principal researcher of this educational study during the school years in the range of 2005-2008 to ensure they were at the age of consent to the inquiry—of note, and interestingly, at the time of this study, all of my former students participating in this inquiry were relatively the same age I had been when I was their teacher [28-30 years old]; ii) experience living through geographical moves due to resettlement, displacement, replacement, or estrangement as either a newcomer to Canada or through a familiar-cultural inheritance or place-relationship to Treaty 6 as ancestral land pre-colonization; and iii) holding current residency in Edmonton, Alberta, on Treaty 6 Territory.

I created the initial questions posed in our first meetings in advance. However, after these initial meetings, questions asked became more intuitively raised. Back and forth, our questions became more reflexive over time during collaborative moments of dialogue, still directed as anticipated toward the felt experiences of fit/misfit, displacement, replacement, resettlement, and estrangement in places. Responses from former students did include expressions of etymology,

topography, image, and metaphor. By our third meeting, Yari, Joey, and Dorthia would engage in creation-making to purposefully render their sense of place in relationship to a place-conscious memory they had associated with their personal understanding of mental health. Each person consented and contributed to at least one image for this research. I transcribed all the meetings scheduled between November 2021 and June 2022 for every round. I decided to do the transcribing myself to honour the guiding ethic of relationality and the intimate knowledge shared. Personal copies of each transcribed meeting were provided to my former students through email for their review, allowing for time to give revisions and approval.

Dialogue 1: Relationship Renewal. During the first round of the online meetings, most of the scheduled time was set aside for catching up and sharing significant life events as celebrations for renewing connections and trust, as an implicit recommendation I interpreted from readings by Derby (2015) and my supervisor, Dr. Alexandra Fidyk (2017, 2021a). At these initial meetings, I would avoid any explicit references to the curricular topic I intended to explore (mental health) or the established research question—*How might we understand the role of place within mental health?* Instead, our dialogue focused on the places my former students had resided. This focus contributed to descriptions later transcribed and revisited to identify figurative and metaphoric expressions that rendered a sense of place and embodiment of feelings. During this round, we did not engage in creation-making or *arting* to ensure adequate time to re-establish safety through respectful dialogue. Following my land acknowledgement as a re-storying of the research setting were the following questions posed, bulleted below:

- *Do you remember me as a teacher? How many years do you remember learning together at school? (This was a confirmation question to demonstrate adherence to delimitations).*

Do you remember the specific years? (Posed for further confirmation to establish integrity).

- *Have you always lived here? How long have you lived here? What areas have you lived in? Do you speak any languages linked to these places? If so, which ones?*
- *Where else have you lived? How long did you live there? Can you remember what it felt like to live there? What images come to your mind?*
- *Is there a place that you felt the most at home, like it was a good fit for you? What words would you associate with the sense of home?*
- *Have you ever been moved from a place that you did not want to leave? How did that feel for you?*

Dialogue 2: Place-conscious Storytelling. My former students, their sense of need, and their storytelling led this round. Following my students' lead, I would accept this direction, regardless of whether their storied responses appeased my desire to provide some ideas that could directly answer the research question, a hermeneutic tension I was ethically accountable to hold. As an example of this holding tension, I had intended to engage my former students in some creation-making, but it would not be. All of them would explicitly indicate a sense of being *just not ready yet*. Instead, our dialogue focused on revisiting stories evoked by asking follow-up questions at the start of this meeting round. These were questions based on what each person had chosen to share in the past meetings, posed to engage a greater depth of understanding in meaning-filled place-conscious ideas depicted prior. Some former students even began integrating intercultural expressions to express their feelings. It was an intuitive development, unfolding in reflections of personal place-conscious storytelling. This development I interpreted as a collective or shared shift in consciousness as these meetings over time became

less analytical, as an approach to responses more prevalent in the first or initial round of dialogue.

During round two of our meetings, my contributions to our dialogue continued to avoid the term *mental health*—as an explicit and dominating cultural reference shaping the concept I sought to explore differently. So following the land acknowledgement initiating our dialogue, I did manage to pose some pre-planned questions that included:

- *Based on our conversation from the previous interview, is there an image that comes to mind that represents a sense of place for you? Can you draw it or describe it to me? What sorts of colours do you associate with this sense of place?*
- *What images or symbols do you associate with a sense of place, how about displacement or ____ (the words they used in previous interviews)? Can you tell me a story?*
- *Have you ever felt a place fit you? What was that like? Can you describe it to me? Tell a story?*
- *Can you think of a place that did not feel right to you? If so, can you describe it to me or tell a story?*
- *Has anyone ever told you to go back where you came from? How about, “stay where you are”? What was the circumstances around these words? How did it/does affect you physically? Can you describe how being targeted by these words can feel?*

Dialogue 3: Creation-making. During the third round of dialogue, everyone engaged in creation-making, including me. But first, there was a reminder of the research intention: that this inquiry was aiming to explore intercultural place-conscious understandings of mental health. Then, I shared how I had highlighted transcribed sections of our prior meetings in dialogue that identified inspirational or creative ideas that had resonated with me. Some of these ideas had

been highlighted and emailed in advance of our third meetings. Next, each of my former students chose their own phrase that could be metaphoric or storied, but consistently place-conscious to develop further through creation-making as a personal expression of a mental health image. So following the land acknowledgement researched and relayed by me, my participants turned their cameras off and started to render their work. I kept my camera on, stitching a place-conscious image I was working on as a landscape feature of Treaty 6 territory. After fifty minutes passed by, sometimes more, I asked each former student as a co-creative to turn their cameras on and contribute an *artist's statement* to describe the intention and meaning in their works. Some of the questions posed to support my former students with identifying a resonant, storied or metaphor place-conscious moment of meaning from their transcripts to render included:

- *Are there any other images that come to mind that represent the idea of social, emotional, physical, mental health for you? They do not have to illustrate a sense of place.*
- *Do you know any other word equivalents in any other languages that explain or portray the idea of social, emotional, physical, mental health for you?*
- *Are there any other things that you would like to share that you associate with social, emotional, physical, mental health?*

Post-interview: I photographed the images through the computer screen and asked the participants to email a photograph from their physically-distanced location.

Dialogue 4: Identifying Ideas For the Expression of Meaning. The final round of meetings included using a shared Google document. The transcripts linked to this Google Document highlighted ideas identified one-on-one with each participant. My former students, as co-creatives, then colour-coded these ideas, ranking them as captured in transcript fragments to

signal significance. These were ideas generated in one of the meetings given to the four rounds of dialogue.

Resonance, as a profound feeling felt, was the most critical factor guiding the identification of and preference toward the linguistic, symbolic, or imaginal expressions chosen during this final round. Then, my former students offered translated terms to amplify outstanding ideas acknowledged as resonating for them.

Notably, this round of dialogue, like the other rounds, began with a land acknowledgement and a question period to check assumptions given to the past meeting I made as the researcher. However, this round, I would also share highlights as the researcher and co-contributor of ideas generated in individual discussions that I had personally resonated with. Then, I asked the participants if any of what I had identified was worth consideration as conceptual implications for this research. To that end, I requested that participants review and recommend possible mediums to express their ideas to present the research findings.

The Participants. I asked each of my former students to provide a pseudonym for reporting this project. They chose Yari, Joey, and Dorthia. Critically, these former students contributed to this research much more than just as mere participants. As the research unfolded, they became creatives, generating and rendering discoveries current and relevant to the complex interculturalities within schooling contexts that I have often struggled to articulate as a teacher-researcher. Also, they kept me in check as they could openly give feedback on my missteps in reflection of my early teaching practice and offer suggestions for processes to express our findings to ensure ethical accountability for this research. If I appeared biased to them in my approach to dialogue, they would tell me so to establish *tactful interactions* (van Manen, 1991/2012). Notably, all had experienced learning in a diverse school community, which was the

foundational basis as a student experience for this research set within the commons of amiskwaciy wâskahikan. Further, I could confirm their experiences in diverse school settings as already known and witnessed.

Yari was the first of my former students to consent to participate in this research. Initially, I had felt nervous about seeking out former students, not knowing what to expect, so I was grateful for Yari's enthusiasm and engagement throughout this research inquiry. In our first meeting, Yari would relay to me that she had identified with the research call for participants as she had arrived in Canada as a young newcomer, soon after learning English as an additional language in schools on Treaty 6 territory.

As it was, I had been Yari's junior high teacher fourteen years prior, supporting her learning journey across three grade levels: 7-9. After she moved on through junior high and secondary school, Yari became involved with volunteer activities and events as a university student and now works professionally in our shared community.

After our scheduled meetings were complete, I received an email expressing how she had come to choose the pseudonym Yari. I learned that it was a name used back-home by her late mother and friends, a name that she wanted to recover in memory of her young self as once, long ago, it was an endearing way to get her to answer calls on the phone. Although she knew nothing about the origin of this name in her first language, Yari learned that in Japanese, this pseudonym meant spear or blade, which she assumed was for a flowering plant.

Joey had already been a teacher for seven years when he agreed to participate via his reply through email. I was shocked to learn of his years in the profession, as it signalled how quickly time passed for me. The last time I saw him, we had encountered each other by happenstance before this research. His friend, another former student, was receiving their

education degree at the same convocation ceremony as some of my former classmates in a master's program then. In this shared celebratory encounter, Joey told me he was working through the many phases of attaining a permanent contract in the teaching profession.

I taught Joey in his junior high school for his grade 9 year of learning (2007-2008). That was also the year he arrived to settle in Canada, leaving Macau to live with his mother here. At the time, he had very little English, so we often had to rely on his classmates to assist with translations so that he could complete his assignments. And he did. Always and still, Joey shines with brilliance.

Connecting with Dorthia, the third and final former student, took over a month to get her consent to participate in this research. Truthfully, I had not seen Dorthia since her grade 9 graduation in 2009. It was through a colleague that I learned about Dorthia's whereabouts as her daughter was attending a neighbourhood school where my colleague, a former teaching partner, now taught. So I sent a handwritten card with the research recruitment poster folded and sealed inside, delivered by hand via this trusted teacher-friend.

Eventually, with the delivery assistance, Dorthia passed on her phone number so I could invite her personally. We met at a downtown public library and, from there, for coffee. During our coffee, Dorthia agreed to participate but noted that initially, she had felt reluctant to accept my invitation as she had found me a *hard-ass* teacher in those old-school days (circa 2006). I likely had been. Still, I discussed the opportunities this research might present her as I knew she wanted tangible action for changes in education through practices that promoted Truth and Reconciliation for better outcomes in the future for her children and people. Taking part in this study, Dorthia provided a critical perspective as a local woman, mother, sister, granddaughter, and community member with Indigenous roots and deep ancestral land ties here.

Risk-Benefits. The benefit of participating in this research promoted along with my invitation included the opportunity to contribute to ideas that might lead to published works as a catalyst for meaningful change in official and lived curricula, pedagogy and education in Alberta for one of my former students as a colleague albeit in another school division; for another as a parent and descendant of residential school survivors and the Sixties Scoop; and also for the working professional invested in a more relational and holistic education for her future children living in a shared community.

This was a place-conscious inquiry seeking healthy and holistic understandings of mental health for curriculum and schooling, so there were minimal risks for participants. However, some difficult memories could have surfaced, as could be the case for any other form of educational research. As a precaution, participants received mental health resource lists just in case psychological services were required. Check-ins happened during each meeting. Further along in the fieldwork, my former students as research participants had full access to their transcribed electronic or hard copies (upon request) from each of our meetings to review, correct, provide, or remove consent for ideas or images rendered as their contributions to the research. That said, based on informal and transcribed feedback from Yari, Joey, and Dorthia, and without any initial questioning or prompting from me, all would indicate they had experienced comforting feelings from recovering memories in the field. Indeed, helpful intimate recollections surfaced while participating in this project were reported by these former students.

Tacting-exercise V: Knowledge Keeper Conversations

I requested further conceptual support from a Knowledge Keeper I knew as a retired colleague and as a mentor to guide my reflexive processes for this inquiry of learning. I met Dr. Shaun Hains when she worked as a psychologist and teacher in a local school board office.

Furthermore, I also knew Dr. Hains to be a critical, influential Indigenous scholar of Canadian and Indigenous Research Ethics. Due to the pandemic, our conversational meetings had to be hosted online through Google Meets. These meetings would be following each round of dialogue with my former students. I recorded each of our conversations using Voice Recorder Pro. Then, Dr. Hains received transcripts, transcribed by me, sent through email, which I was honoured to do.

During our scheduled meetings, we only spoke a little about the ideas I had encountered in dialogue with my former students. Instead, I wanted to learn straight from the insights of Dr. Hains, as she had a depth of experience and knowledge derived from witnessing the land lead for learning. Inevitably, she would teach me the tact of dialogue in our meetings, often as I asked about Treaty 6 Territory as a natural world and social ecology. As the fieldwork progressed, I questioned the histories I had learned related to the research setting, meanings given to the root terms of the Cree-nêhiyawêwin language, and topographical names for places. Each meeting was conversational. The questions I prepared were often research related to the developments of land acknowledgements. I also shared fragments of my ecopoetry along with my eco-haptic stitched creations.

I would honour Dr. Hains' teachings in different ways. For instance, a donation in her name contributed to the Elk Island Society to protect local bison. After pandemic restrictions ended, there was a lunch in Fort Saskatchewan. She was also gifted a necklace made by an Albertan Blackfoot artist selling her works from the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump National Park, a World Heritage Site. Finally, a copy of her most recent chapter was purchased as a new publication and posted to her at home.

Dr. Hains further provided me with creative support through her lyric and dialogical responses. Dr Hains also offered me feedback on landscape images I had rendered to amplify the ideas discovered alongside my former students in research meetings. Together, but apart I felt a sense of community in this research—at least, “intersubjectively,” as a term used by the inspirational psychotherapist and educator Sharon Stanley (2016, p. 108), relying on Jungian psychology to describe “the space that is created between people that includes both the unformulated and known experiences of each” (p. 11)—as a vital forum or field for our creative collective un/consciousness.

Once the fieldwork had been completed, with more time for prolonged reflection, I realized that Dr. Hains had modelled for me how to conduct a somatically-led inquiry by demonstrating her capacity for somatic empathy. To explain, I will borrow from Stanley (2020) as she developed a curriculum quite recently promoting the practice of somatic inquiry for mental health professionals attempting to join attention through “a sense of caring, wonder, and curiosity to the inner world of another” (para. 5) by using somatic reflection “as a dialogical process that seeks to integrate the innate wisdom from the body with the knowledge of the mind and intellect” (para. 6). According to Stanley (2016) somatic reflection was capable of “transforming the biological regulation of the relational system” (Stanley, 2016, p. 123). Adopting additional theory from the renowned physicist David Bohm (2004), Stanley (2016) further suggested mental health researchers should seek out “tacit ground” (cited by Stanley, 2016, p. 123)—*wordless* neutral places—this was a crucial place-conscious insight. Consider that from here, Stanley (2016) said that knowledge could grow to “expand shifting perspectives in the moment” (p. 123).

Now, I will point out that Dr. Hains (2023) shared a very similar sentiment in her most recent publication titled *Indigenous Inclusion and Intervention: The Flight of the Eagles* teaching that engagement with “nonverbal dialogue” (p. 245) was a necessary educational exercise evidenced “through the visual arts” (p. 245). Dr. Hains (2023) explained that art could relay and express “the love of land, language, [and]—learning” (p. 245), which she expressively encouraged educators and educational leaders to practice in translation. In other words, Dr. Hains (2023) taught me that the creation of place-conscious images could contribute to a healing sense of *intersubjective psychic relationality*, but only if people were willing to engage in the wordless dialogue of “telling a story” (p. 245), best rendered perhaps “through drawing the story of the land” (p. 245) as a curricular direction this research has embraced.

Tacting-exercise VI: Critical Ecohermeneutic Writing

Critical ecohermeneutic writing was consistently applied in this text as an interpretive, lyric or ecopoetic, and reflexive exercise, building on the earlier contributions of Jardine (1992, 1996, 1998, 2015a, 2017), Moules (2007, 2015), and D. G. Smith (1999, 2020). Supported by journalling reflexion, this interpretive writing style was practiced and applied to develop a dialogical form of communicative expression, open and flexible to invite “what might arrive as new” (Moules et al., 2015). There was a focus on the integrity of symbolic resonance in non-verbal gestures and images of landscaping tones to counter more dominating views shaping ideas about mental health. Descriptive imagery of somatic feelings included place-conscious and intercultural forms of language and symbols. All the while I would have to keep in mind that:

writing in hermeneutics [and ecohermeneutics] is, of course, not separable from the writer, so that it is not just that the researcher presents a novel arrangement of the facts,

but that the researcher writes from an altered horizon of the self. (Moules et al., 2015, p. 51)

And so it was I found myself learning about tact and somatic possibilities for ecohermeneutic inquiries, inspiring a move toward a graphic and co-creative medium to exercise ecohermeneutics as an interpretive practice alongside others contributing to the movement following titled *Returns*. See the next section of text for more details.

Tacting-exercise VII: Participatory Eco-pictorial Scripts

Eco-pictorial scripts were integrated as a co-creative tacting-exercise and medium to amplify the ideas and images contributed by my former students participating in this research and teachings provided by Dr. Shaun Hains. I first encountered pictorial scripting in conceptual research publications developed by my supervisor, Dr. Alexandra Fidyk, and her colleague, local artist, and scholar Darlene St. Georges (2020, 2022). Fidyk and St. Georges (2020) based their interpretive scripting process on the pictorial archaeomythological studies conducted by Marija Gimbutas (1989). Gimbutas (1989) had previously integrated this mode of graphic visual scripting as a style of expression to render her research findings and to emphasize the transdisciplinary nature of beliefs, symbolism, and language through cultures.

As a hermeneutic contribution I did note that Rowland (2012) had supported the idea that graphic scripts could render ecocritical sensibilities “so long as the actual script is pictographic, meaning that it remains implicitly connected to embodied reality” (p. 17). As an ecohermeneutic co-creative exercise this medium seemed intuitively-sensitive to enhance developments of place-conscious interpretive and conceptual reflexions. Furthermore, according to Fidyk and St Georges (2020), pictorial scripts could be applied to track, to mine, “to excavate” (p. 82)—“lessons for living well” (p. 82). Following their work, I was admittedly impressed by the

capacities of pictorial scripting to reveal “concealed patterns and associations” (p. 82)—hermeneutic treasures.

That said, ideas generated and identified by my former students as co-creatives and given in the teachings by Dr. Hains as the Knowledge Keeper contribute to four pictorial scripts as the contents of *Returns*. Each script was carefully curated by me and by the featured participants of each script (i.e., Yari, Joey, Dorthia, and Dr. Shaun Hains). My stitched images sit side by side with lyrical insights, fragments of dialogue, and other creations made in the field.

For each of the four eco-pictorial scripts rendering the findings of this research, the comments provided by the *participants as co-creatives* were copied verbatim from transcripts. These scripts do not follow a linear time-frame order based on meeting dates but have been arranged to bridge understanding and make meaning. Readers can expect to encounter literary sources in excerpts integrated as recommended by the participants and from some of the literature reviewed in *Regressions* and elsewhere in this text.

After the fieldwork, Dr. Hains, Yari, Joey, and Dorthia received a template copy of their eco-pictorial scripts, initially organized by me for review and to confirm the accuracy of associative placements, provide additions and refinements, and to give feedback on the arrangement and inclusion of details. Inevitably, these scripts would change in time. As a result, I have kept copies of all written feedback regarding the interpretative arrangement and content in these scripts as part of the record-keeping for this research, as any inclusions, revisions, or adjustments were made. Additionally, most images in these scripts were not accompanied by a field note or artist’s statement. Readers can refer to the appendices for access.

Tacting-exercise VIII: Symbolic Amplification

The amplification of images as symbols for shaping and expanding meaning was another exercise integrated into this ecohermeneutic inquiry, acquired from teachings provided by my supervisor, Dr. Fidyk. The style of amplification I chose was ecohermeneutic, unfolding from an intuitive, felt sense of place but also informed by Jungian and post-Jungian theories. Notably, symbolic amplification was a practiced innovation of Jung (1964) and others, including his close colleague Marie-Louise von Franz (1915–1998) to exercise the imagination to benefit psychological scholarship.

In the case of this research, symbolic amplification involved “*arting*” (Fidyk, personal communication, April 24, 2022) and curating transcript fragments through interpretive arrangements as an activity to engage the conscious and unconscious functions of the mind (Salman, 2008). Naturally, informed by Fidyk (2022), I was guided by the Jungian lexicon (Sharp, 1991) to support interpretation of associations rendering place-conscious storied analogies or to depict landscaping images created by the participants, but more so in the case of my activities in reflexion.

That said, Zwicky (2012) was also relied upon to support my integration of symbolic amplification as an illustrative and interpretive arting exercise for mental health interpretive (i.e., ecohermeneutic) research. First, through her revisionist use of Freudian notions on the psyche as the mind, Zwicky (2012) explained how lyric and symbolic forms of expression were compatible with different modes of thought—using the conscious and unconscious mental functions as distinctly known examples. Zwicky (2012), in a turn away from the views of neurologist Sigmund Freud (1958), pointed to the capacity for dream-like expression, the exploitation of paradox, and a sense of “timelessness in connection” (Zwicky, 2012, p. 203) in creation-making

as a conscious condition of artful activity. In contrast, Zwicky (2012) found significance in punning wordplay and metaphor as expressions that linger intuitively to render patterns of the ineffable, as “extralogical” (p. 203) to awaken unconsciously biased psychic conditions.

Tacting-exercise IX: Metonymic Highlighting

I integrated *metonymic highlighting* as an exercise to support the development of my critical ecohermeneutic writing and journalling in place-conscious reflexion. It was a move based on the insights of cognitive linguistic philosophers George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980/2003). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) to reveal conceptual structures shaping our sense of knowing and being, researchers can identify:

Metonymy: a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to stand for another. But metonymy is not merely a referential device. It also serves the function of providing understanding ... Like metaphors, metonymies are not random or arbitrary occurrences, to be treated as isolated instances. Metonymic concepts are also systemic ... Metonymic concepts structure not just our language but our thoughts, attitudes, and actions. (pp. 36-39)

In other words, metonymic highlighting can reveal how dominating conceptualizations tend to resonate with groups as collectives to shape beliefs, values, attitudes, and actions and thus can be a powerful political tool for cultural control and domination. At worst, to create or recreate racialized, gendered, oppressive norms in societies. For instance, I can refer to the literature in *Regressions* to demonstrate how metonymic highlighting was helpful to expose why stigma associated with mental health exists. Here in Alberta, metaphoric place-conscious assumptions were promoted to elicit support for a horrific eugenics project that has continued to play out in contemporary meanings through allied metonymies including in expressions of *health* as

hygiene and well-being as normal. Furthermore there were these associations found to be metaphorically establishing ideological meanings of mental health echoing the values of settler-colonialism, such as in the examples of: *being as producing; coping as individual; sane as rational; and condition as status*—and not as functions of simile, but rather in terms of hindering metonymy. That said, metonymic highlighting was considered a form of tracing in this research as found in the pictorial scripts of *Returns*, at the start of each movement in contrast of language, definition, and etymology, and when mental health, as a term, stood for an idea as an entity, and so as the assumed function of understanding (e.g., She needs *mental health*. *This sentence interpreted as referential suggests mental health thus stands for services*).

Tacting-exercise X: Identifying Metaphorical Coherence

Sometimes, metaphors given critical meanings revealed a murky depth, leading to complications. Rather than avoid the complexity, amplification was applied to draw out any possible elements of philosophical coherence as another novel activity to contribute as a tacting-exercise for co-creative ecohermeneutic research (see Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003). Of note, I will point out that this exercise was informed and shaped by a “theory of metaphor” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2033), hermeneutically describing metaphors as “fundamentally conceptual in nature” (p. 27). It was also a theory suggesting that “abstract concepts are not complete without metaphors. For example, love is not love without metaphors of magic, attraction, union, nurturance, and so on” (p. 272). Admittedly, I was informed by this theory and thus was biased in my perception of *mental health* as a concept entering the field. I considered this term an abstract concept dependent on metaphor to dominate thought and remain oppressively existent within contemporary discourses. This was my opinion, which I have attempted to substantiate in *Regressions* and counter as a lived reality in Alberta in the next movement, titled *Returns*.

Returns

a Cree translation

in alperta nêhiyawêwin:

- kawî pecikewin (noun, intransitive) *to return*
- pekiwew (verb, animated, intransitive, VAI): as *returned home* (LeClaire & Cardinal, 1998).

the English etymology

- as *retornen* (Old English) from Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* (circa 1386), as: *come or go back* and *turn back* (Old French) as *retorner* and *retourner* (Chambers, 2017, OCDE, 2022).

Field note. St. Albert, Alberta, November 11, 2023. “Eco-pictorial scripts follow next and contribute to this section of text titled *Returns* to render a different sort of curricular movement to conceptualize mental health. An intuitive sense of the psyche could not be limited by verbal language alone in the expression of this research, nor was there a reason to do so (see Fidyk & St. Georges, 2020, 2023; Gladwin, 2013; Marks, 2000, 2004; Ranta, 2019). For hermeneutic and ecocritical contrast, eco-pictorial scripts were the chosen medium to express more than just dialogue, but the gestures of dialogue, recollected memories, imaginal co-created discoveries, storied relations to places, and people in places, set alongside literature and transcript fragments to amplify resonant meanings and sensory images identified and generated in the field of research.

The intention here was to challenge readers with a composition of ideas unfolding in ways counter to contemporary modes of thinking about research conceptualizing mental health and inhabiting the more official curricula taught in the Western prairie schools and institutions here on Treaty 6 territory. These scripts were composed to demonstrate the possible *alterability* of conceptual schemas as logics formed through language orders (Ranta, 2019) and to elicit the ecological wisdom of intuition as a more embodied interpretive function. So, I do encourage readers to tap into their intuition in this section, remain open, and *feel* into the rhythm and movement of these scripted arrangements of carefully curated conceptual expressions. According to Fidyk and St. Georges (2020), pictorial scripts provide ecologically orientated conceptual researchers with an intersubjective medium. However, if intuitively sensed interpretive reading is not a preferred activity for you as a reader, then do consider that, at a minimum, these scripts were developed to invite the idea of something new, keeping the *tact* of prairie teaching front of mind (van Manen, 1991/2012).”

Directions: How To Follow Along with the Scripting

The eco-pictorial scripts in this research follow a particular arrangement:

- Comments made by my former students as the featured participants of these scripts have been aligned on the **left side** of each page and remain in regular font. This is also the case for the script developed alongside Dr. Shaun Hains.
- My comments as the researcher in dialogue were set on the **right side** of each page in *italicized* font. I also included some internal thoughts. All of this text was primarily written in the first person to offer a sort of narration for each script.
- Breaks in the dialogue or repetition of words or unintelligible sounds in transcripts have been replaced with em dashes (—) to create a sense of continuity.
- Most titles are italicized as a 3rd heading following APA 7th standards.
- Literary and scholarly sources follow APA 7th citation guidelines but have been centred on each page as descriptive enhancements to amplify ideas given in dialogue.
- Spacing is not consistent with APA 7th standards, instead applied to support transitions in dialogue.
- Images as text have been at times, titled, but not always. Readers can refer to the appendices for notes on the images along with the artist's statements.
- Some terms have been bulleted and defined to amplify and signal significant meaning.
- Tip: Remember that these scripts were collaboratively composed on Treaty 6 territory from Edmonton, Alberta/amiskwaci y wâskahikan as an ecohermeneutic co-creative exercise of interpretation. These scripts purposefully read differently in comparison to standard expressions of research.

Eco-pictorial Script I: Language Lessons with Yari***The Backstory***

Following next, Yari introduces herself and her place of origin in her own words using carefully selected transcript fragments recorded for this research, followed by highlighted moments and images given to our meetings in dialogue.

Yari: In Her Own Words

I moved here when I was very young from Cambodia. I think I was three turning four when I first came, it would have been 97-98, twenty-four years. That sounds right. Phnom Penh, it is the capital and that is where I was told I was born—.

—but many of my memories I don't remember much. So, luckily there are some pictures [of back-home] or what people told me, and I remember from that.

—I am kind of glad I have those photos because I don't remember—not even the plane or boat or how we got to come here. I guess I was told that we flew here.

There are some pictures of the country with my mom and her siblings. Only a few but not too many. There are [pictures of] some statues or monuments, or trees and parks, some little things.

Angkor Wat is in the city of Siem Reap, Cambodia, and it is one of the wonders that everyone thinks of when you think of Cambodia. I have never been there yet [since leaving]. It is one of my goals to go there.

I only have pictures from online as one of my connections to this place that's home, but I have never been there. I have been told by others that have gone to it that it is amazing and that it is breathtaking.

I was raised speaking Khmer ['K-Mai], that's the Cambodian language. That's all my mom spoke to me. She knew very little English. I learned English from going to school and other people. I also spoke Khmer at home, so that's basically my mother tongue even though I have been forgetting it now. —When I am talking to my uncle, whenever he calls—I continue to speak it, because I want to keep it.

—I find fascination with other languages as well—in school I decided to take Latin.
I loved all the Latin phrases—people have said [to me]: Why are you taking a dead language?
I am like, I love it and it will not be dead because I will be using it.

A lesson from Yari came early in our first meeting when I asked her about places that provided a sense of home in an association that offered more clues about her intercultural lineage, which she had disclosed to me. Yari said:

Cape Town, South Africa. The architecture holds me.
That's what I love about travelling besides meeting new people, and the experiences.

All the different colours of the buildings and architecture and then across from the city
is the ocean and the sea and it makes it that [U] shape together. No matter where you are you can
see the hills and the mountains.

—the beach was cool even though I did not touch the water.
My—phobia is a shark—but the sea was beautiful. The sea was beautiful.

“The ocean I am drowned in the ocean I am—shoreless, boundless, wonderful”
(Rumi, 1207/2022, s. 9-10).

The main thing is seeing the architecture. The architecture holds me.

“hey there you are
Architecture
art and technicality of fantasy and creativity
there your beauty resides
along the line
on a wall
and everywhere
an essence providing meaning to all forms
I proclaim your motionless dance” (Devi, n.d., s. 9-17).

It is unfamiliar, but at the same time familiar. That's how I see it as home to me.

Maybe you have seen it in a picture. But then I connect it that way.

In response to Yari's backstory, I searched my memory for a time when the architecture of a place as a structure or a location felt both familiar and unfamiliar. Eventually, over time, I would stitch together an image to express my sense of being in such a place.

I rendered a backyard view from my late grandmother's home. It was an image easy to retrieve from my memory, visited often, and frequently accompanied by sweetly crisp, windswept feelings.

I would compose in reflexion:

*Home fading
through
the
window
breezing,

grandma's*

*laundry
fragrance
on the line
oh,
the sweet air
there,*

*I never
did
sewing
only
stitching*

*the
grain
elevator
towering,
heaving,
whining
the
moon clouds
minding.*

I titled this image: A Familiar Structure of an Unfamiliar Form.



Home-Sense

I asked Yari about her sense of home, what it felt like.

Carpe diem. My favourite Latin phrase: Seize the day! Which is what I did—in Cape Town. The thing I am scared to do all the time. An introvert that is how I am.

I always look at people who are extroverted with awe for being bold and doing those things. I have phobias.

—in Cape Town, that is where I did sky diving. It was scary but also fun. But at the same time it was—breathtaking and beautiful. It was *surreal*—the hills, and the mountains. The architecture holds me.

- **surreal** (adjective): *of or characterized by surrealism* (Chambers, 2017)
- **surrealism** (noun): *the distortion of dreams and the subconscious in art, literature, experience [circa 1927]* (Chambers, 2017)

Ronald Nash (1997), an archaeomythological scholar has researched the psychological details of geographic impressions. He found:

The *archetypal* [as ancient yet familiar] landscape has an additional dimension of meaning—a surreal or fantastic quality (by scientific standards) which assumes that there is no isomorphism or concordance with its natural or social dimensions” (p. 57).

Had Yari just told me about an archetypal moment or was it an intersubjective landscape experience, or both? I wondered as she described some lyrics in a favourite pop song to elaborate on what she remembered about free-falling in a sky dive over Cape Town:

—sky diving. I was uncomfortable, the harness was hurting me.

And yet ...

Once I jumped, I yelled out: I am free-falling into the unknown. I tried to do something funny.

So I screamed lyrics from *She's the Man*, the movie:

“So once I fell over. I said I will follow you to the end.
Wake up. I have been waiting for you. To open your eyes. So that I can tell
you that I think I am ready. I am ready to free fall to the unknown”
(Lichens & Wasse, 2006, Let Go, *She's the Man Soundtrack*).

The wind is hitting you, I was like I can't breathe, panicking, so what do I do?

“No duerme nadie por el cielo. Nadie, nadie. No duerme nadie.—
No one sleeps in the sky. No one, no one. No one sleeps”
(Garcia Lorca, 1929/2008, pp. 64-65).

I was clenching my fists so tight. You got to see good breathtaking views.

“You know, it isn't what I came for, this bewilderment by beauty” (Zwicky, 1999, p. 33).

But then I took the time to breathe and then I was fine.
And it was kind of cool, and then you are just falling, and I just try to tell myself to breathe,
breathe, even though the wind is coming, and then, finally the chute opened.

And it is mystical in a way—especially when there [are]—clouds and mist.

So it's very surreal kind of looking.

—in the midst of fear—you are seeing the beauty.

You are living it.

Yah.

Yari's story about Cape Town, as she described it, compelled me to return to the scholarly literature from my research review, thinking that it might provide further insight into what she had described as a sense of the mystic or surreal in this landscaped encounter.

Interestingly, David Abram (1996) had written some insightful lines about awareness and location to form this interpretation to render his sense of a healthy psyche:

It is not by sending his [or her, or their] awareness out beyond the natural world that the shaman makes contact with the purveyors of life and health, not by journeying into his personal psyche; it is by propelling his awareness laterally outward into the depths of a landscape at once both sensuous and psychological, the living dream that we share with the soaring hawk, the spider, and the stone silently sprouting lichens on the coarse surface. (p. 10)

I would also return to these stanzas attributed to Jan Zwicky (1999) as she had expressed a similar insightful sense comparable to what Abram (1996) had written but via her unique style of lyric realism and in reflection of her own landscaped encounters:

The sound of wind in leaves, that was what puzzled me, it took me years to understand that it was music. Into silence, a gesture. A sentence: that it speaks. This is the mystery: meaning. Not that these folds of rock exist but that their beauty, here, now, nails us to the sky. (s. 60-63)

I had never been to Cape Town, but it had now caught my interest. So I sought out information that might teach me more about this place where Yari had found her breath in the breathtaking. Soon, I would learn that Cape Town was known to by locals there as:

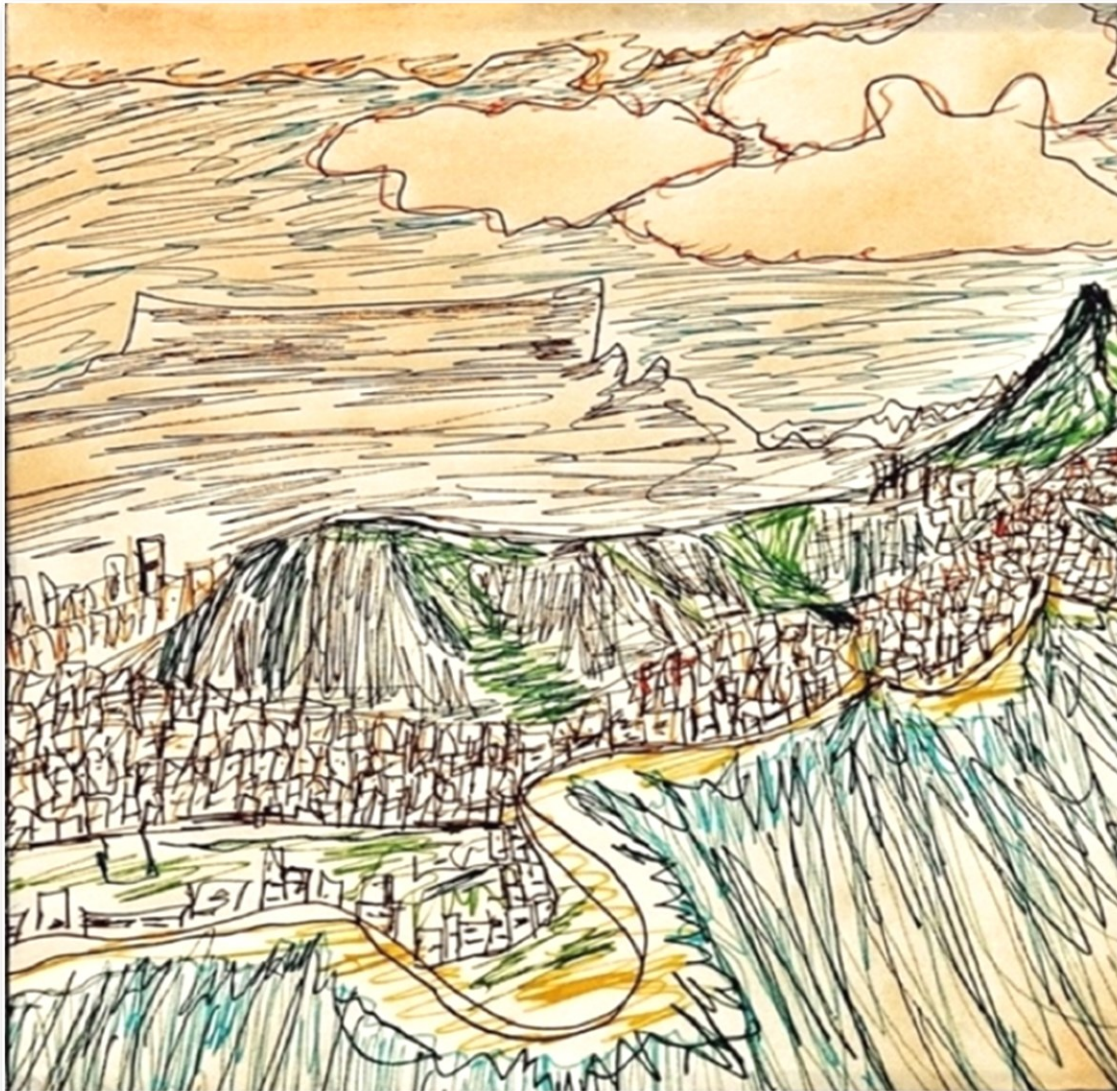
A Site of Contradiction and Mother City

In South Africa, the original city, the *Mother City*, as it is fondly called in the tourist brochures, is Cape Town. According to the earliest European navigators, this southern tip of Africa was a site of contradiction, the Cape of Good Hope, but also the Cape of Storms—. (Chidester, 2000, p. 7)

also,
A Starting End Point

Streaming through the streets are people from all over Africa; all over the world. If Jo'burg is the magnet, drawing people like iron filings to a shining, metallic metropolis, then Cape Town is the catchment area—what happens when the rest of the country shrugs. The place where everyone ends up. An end point. And a starting point. A point of arrival and departure; a place of constant transit. (Inggs, 2014, p. 11)

Along with literature to develop my learning and research on Cape Town, I would attempt an outlining sketch to travel the edges of this topography, as depicted by Yari, particularly the tabletop mountain, hilly ridges, and cape by the sea:



Whether knowingly or not, Yari had pointed my attention toward the paradoxical features of places. So, naturally, I did ask her what she had intended as meanings for terms she had detailed in association with these features described in memories.

What I mean in the unfamiliar—it is a place I have never been, everything is unknown, the only thing I knew about it was maybe pictures online or other people telling me. But then being there I was able to be in a place that seemed like, ok, this is where I belong—like I have been here before, but I have never been here before.

I forgot the word that [means] you have a strong yearning for a place you have never been. Is that wanderlust?—not dwelling—it is a travel word, not **nostalgia**.

It could be nostalgia, but I have it somewhere [Yari then started to scroll through her personal device, searching online].

Maybe it is.

Rather noticeably, the dialogue in our meetings unfolded ecohermeneutically and did so naturally. For example, in our second meeting, we turned to our pandemic-required technology to view travel sites and explore language terms to better articulate feelings sensed within the particularities of paradoxical places we had been to or longed to visit.

It could be **fernweh** [‘fernve].

As she spoke, Yari continued to type and search online, attempting to answer her own question while I attempted to provide a sensible response from across the screen of our meeting forum.

Is that a German word?

Yah it’s fernweh—an ache for distant places, missing places you have never been, craving for travel.

So, that’s literally how I always feel for most places—[but] I feel like I have not explored enough, [and] I don’t know enough about the places I have been to.

So that is one of them [a term to describe her place-conscious feeling]. I thought that [word] was [going to be] fancier, the word that I found [before] was Latin.

*Let’s see, a Latin word for yearning for a place you have never been
[I was now also searching online].*

*Here is a Welsh word—**hiraeth** [‘HERE-eyeth].*

I found this term—hiraeth—relatively quickly, as I had recently learned about a new publication titled ‘The Long Field’ (2021) by the writer, artist, and photographer Pamela Petro.

Petro’s (2021, 2022) text and interviews promoting this work provided Yari and me with an English translation of hiraeth that prompted more wonders about this place-conscious expression.

It’s one of those words that’s famously untranslatable ... In the present moment, you are perhaps longing for something from the past or from the future—or both at the same time. That could be a home or place that you’ve left or is no longer accessible, or family, or people in the past, or something you’re striving towards, towards God whom you feel disconnected from, or that one place that allows you to be a version of yourself that you can’t connect with again. So it’s that sense of incompleteness that’s always making you feel unfulfilled in the present.
(Petro, 2022, paras. 4-6)

I noted that Petro (2021), an American citizen, had reportedly experienced the emotional intensity of hiraeth in Wales. Petro (2021) described ‘the long field’ as its etymological translation. However, a more explicit definition would not be so simple:

“How easily *it* modulates from longing for a place to longing for an idealistic landscape or range of spiritual realities which the landscape might represent” (p. 297).

Petro would expose us to another Welsh term chronicling a secondary emotional encounter she had experienced in Wales, which I also spoke about with Yari. Borrowing from Petro (2022) in her past interview with CBC:

“And I experienced **cynefin** [‘KUN-EV-in], this kind of coming together of the inner self and the outer perception. And I still get chills” (para. 19).

A review of Petro’s text (2021) offered more depth in meaning to support a more extensive translation:

Cynefin is the word used for the way a sheep passes on to her lamb, generation after generation, the knowledge of the mountain that is hers.—Or it can mean that sudden sense you have that you belong to this particular place though you may never have set foot in it before. (Clarke in Petro, 2021, pp. 14-15)

Eventually, Yari would find a helpful webpage to assist with identifying some place-conscious terms worthy of mention she found on the site BonTraveler.com (2020):

I found something—12 beautiful words that describe **wanderlust**.

From there, Yari read several terms out loud to me:

Solivagant—which is Latin, it is someone who wanders or travels the world alone, a solitary adventurer [Bon Traveler, 2020, para. 1]. That explains me [she laughed].

I was also familiar with the experience of being a solitary traveller.

And—**querencia**, I hope I said that right: a place from which one's strength is drawn, where one feels at home, the place where you feel your most authentic self (Bon Traveler, 2020, para. 2).

Oh, this one, I remember this one, [sounding out] **saudade**, it's Portuguese: A vague and constant desire for something that does not and probably cannot exist, for something other than the present" (Bon Traveler, 2020, para. 2).

I looked up fernweh—[it means] a travel ache you cannot translate (Farley, 2022, para. 1).

"Fernweh"

Yah, I think that is the right one—what I felt when my friend was telling me, "I see you in Japan, this is you."

I am like oh, I have a strong urge to be there,
I have never been there—but from when people tell me stuff—about Japan that reveals a part of me and what I love—the animé and architecture. It's—another home for me already.
Like once I get there it's like home already. I feel like it, it's a home I have never been.

By our third meeting, Yari was ready to illustrate her place-conscious sense of mental health.

She chose to render an image of a place that had felt surreal to her. Yari said it was a place of awe, inspiration, and beauty. Curiously, she had not mentioned this place before.

After taking some time off camera during our meeting, we returned back on screen so that Yari could share her artist's statement and describe the place in her image to me.

Yari's Artist's Statement

I decided to sketch one of my favourite shots of Positano, Italy, that I took because of how truly picturesque it was.

It was one of the places that felt surreal to me because of the architecture, or I guess more of the scenery and landscape of the mountains, colourful houses on the hill, and the beach and ocean.

It gave me the same feelings I feel from *Rivendell*, one of the scores from *The Lord of the Rings Soundtrack* [2001].

Definitely [it was] a place that was breathtaking to me, so surreal that I do remember constantly saying, wow this is heaven! Or like one of those places you read about in fantasies.

The minute I saw the Positano view I was just like you know, a kid at Christmas.

And as I got closer, I was like this spot [place] is internally screaming!

You know when you react to a specific scene, like you get shocked, in a movie, and everyone freaks out over it?

That is how I felt.

A Place to Stop

The name Positano is linked to a legend. As told from ancient times, a Turkish boat became beached just off the shores of what has since come to be known as Positano. Aboard the ship, there was a painting of the Virgin Mary. The captain heard the painting whisper *posa, posa* (set me down, set me down) and obediently, threw the image into the sea. Miraculously, the ship floated free and was saved. (Positano.com, 2022, para. 5)

After doing a quick online search about Positano to learn more about the place, I would ask Yari in our next meeting if she had any other ways to communicate how she felt about this place. She said:

“—brilliant or epic—”

- **brilliant** (adjective) as *brillare* (Italian): *to glitter* (Chambers, 2017)
- **epic** (adjective): *of or denoting a long poem, grand in style* (Chambers, 2017)

“The landscape itself seems alert,
with every detail in unnaturally sharp focus” (Kimmerer, 2020, p. 4).

Later, Yari would return to Positano again during our final research meeting. It was at a moment when I had requested that she highlight terms or meanings she felt were significant to reference for this mental health research as place-conscious expressions that resonated with her sense of mental health.

I think I mentioned how I felt—surreal.

Like for example, Positano—touches on the physical because you—walk and utilize different transportation there.

And mental, I guess it touches on it too because it gives you a positive feeling, especially when you are feeling down, it brings you up again.

And here is a word that kind of describes ...

A place?

Natsukashii, 懐 (なつ) かしい

—it is **natsukashii** 懐 (なつ) かしい [Japanese]—when something evokes a happy memory from the past. This study has allowed me to look back and kind of go to a happy place.

Has it been a happy experience for you [participating in this study]?

Yah, it has been great.

Inside, I was relieved and grateful knowing that Yari's participation in this research had been enjoyable for her. After our last meeting, I searched online for possible topographic expressions of happy landscaped impressions. As a result of this search, I believed I had found an earthened depiction, although this sense was left nameless, worldless. It was a depiction in this quotation by Bengali poet, social reformer, and painter Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) that resonated with me:

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures. It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers. It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and earth, ebb, and flow. I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood at this moment. (Tagore, 2015, no. 16)

However, at that very moment of our final meeting, I chose simply, to respond to her happiness with yet another question:

Are there any other images that come to mind rendering your idea of mental health?

—creating art actually helps with that. Again words do not translate properly.

Then there was a long pause followed by:

Sa'at nas ('sa-art nas), ស្អាតណាស់: Which translates to very beautiful or **sam'ros** សម្រស់ which means beauty" [in Khmer].

So the Cambodian pronunciation, the way they have it [in alphabetized form] in English will get people saying it wrong."

Right, because, the 'r' is silent.

I think there is another one, and I don't know if I am pronouncing it right but—**nimol**. (**niʔmɔl**), နီမလ: a name that translates to flawless. It embodies places without blemish, without doubt.

—where one's own nature is seen for what it truly is.

- **beauty** (noun): used before 1325 in English as *fine; for the state of being handsome* (Chambers, 2017)
- **brehtaking** (adjective): *thrilling, surprising, left breathless with astonishment* (OED, 2023)
- **flawless** (adjective): *without fault or defect or fragment* (Chambers, 2017)

Typing into a shared Google document, Yari identified even more place-conscious linguistic expressions that she felt were significant terms for this inquiry which included:

- **dérive** (French, noun): A spontaneous and unplanned journey where the traveller leaves their life behind allows themselves to be guided by the landscape and architecture (Bon Traveler, 2020, para. 7).
- **hiwagà** (Tagalog; Babayan spelling ᜏᜒᜃᜅ; noun): *as mystery; full of wonder* (Tagalog Lang, 2002)
- **kenshō** (Japanese, 見性, noun): ken as *seeing*, shō as *nature, essence, true self*; interpreted as *comprehension, understanding, enlightenment, self-understanding*. “A temporary a pain that drives personal growth” (Basuki, 2020, para. 6). In simplified then traditional Chinese as **jianxing** (见性; 見性; jiànxìng; chien-hsing): *see, observe, nature, character, disposition* (Encyclopedia.com, 2019; TSL, 2010).
- **tsundoku** (Japanese, 積ん読, noun): derived from Meiji era (1868-1912), as *reading pile*. Also: **tsunde oku**: *let something pile up as 積んでおく* (OpenCulture.com, 2022)
- **vellichor** (English, noun): *the strange wistfulness (i.e., longing) of used bookstores* (Meriam Webster, 2022)

Based on the terms she had provided this meeting and the little time left, I would ask Yari if she could describe a 'kenshō place. I avoided asking about the other terms as I knew how much Yari liked to read; we had spoken of her wonder about landscapes and architecture.

Nevertheless, kenshō was on her list and highlighted as highly resonant, and I was not too familiar with this term.

Kenshō would definitely be either back at Positano or Japan. If I had to choose the places, I would escape to.

The kind of feeling I get when I hear Rivendell.—the Rivendell music, and goosebumps, it's perfect! Like walking into a painting—it was so surreal.

—how heavenly it is, but you need to be there as well.

Where else might a place be like that for you right now? That's within your reach?

Well I think the closest place is either Banff or Jasper [Alberta]. Just because it is our closest mountains, being out there, hiking or in the forest, it gives you the chance to experience that Zen, that surreal moment.

Seeing the mountains, just magnificent—majestic.

Beauty [and majesty] isn't all about just nice loveliness, like. Beauty is about more rounded, substantial becoming—an emerging fullness, a greater sense of grace and elegance, a deeper sense of depth, and also a kind of homecoming for the enriched memory of your unfolding life.
(O'Donohue in Tippett, 2008, para. 1)

After our research meetings had passed, on September 22, 2022, Yari emailed to let me know she had continued working on her Positano image, now fully coloured in with a mindful choice of watery pencil crayons as a place to set, stop, stare at.

Positano

Peering upon Yari's image once claimed completed, I found myself at the end of this fieldwork, reminded of thin places—as a place-conscious idea I had of late rediscovered in stories from my Irish ancestry:

In Ireland the Otherworld is always near at hand, over your shoulder, down the lane. There are special places embedded all over the landscape—special in ancient times, special now. They are often known as *thin places*, for it is here, where the veil between worlds is transparent, that you come closest to encountering the Wise Ones. (Kerrigan, 2015, p. 170)

“Nature contains everything, it also contains the unknown” (Jung, 2002, p. 82).

Field note. St. Albert, Alberta, November 14, 2023, Language Lessons with Yari. “There was a lot of *beauty* or sam’ros ស្រស់ ជួប ជុល encountered during my meetings with Yari. There was beauty noted residing in places, almost otherworldly, filled with fantasy and creativity, yet grounded by earthly estuarian bays, waterways, and cradling architecture. Places that one can actually visit, inhabit, and reside. Moreover, Yari’s depictions revealed to me a great capacity of health in her details and awareness of an *emerging fullness* experienced in a homecoming to a place she had never been to before (see O’Donohue, 2008, para. 1). Actually, there were a number of homecomings relayed to me by Yari in reference to several places she had never been. Yari was not bewildered by this sense of familiarity in unfamiliar locales that seemed to beckon her. Rather, in this paradox of place, it was a catalyst, activating a Christmas-like excitement, motivating her to Carpe Diem! Seize the Day!

Yari’s rendering of Positano as a place to stop, to rest, to set down, as an expressive sense of surrealism felt and then surrendered to her creative medium, suggested to me her experiences there could have been *archetypal*. Knowing that Yari was exhilarated by the landscaping impressions of not only Positano, but also Cape Town, among other estuarian places with striking architecture, had remarkably impressed upon her courageous sense of self. As told by Yari, she became bolder in these places, so she would engage in skydiving and other healthy risk-taking yet terrifying activities, not generally drawn toward as a self-proclaimed introvert. That said, in the retelling of her experiences in these places, both her introverted and extroverted sides were mixed up together in these encounters as a critical psychological conceptual development relayed for this research. Two sides together—introvert and extrovert—coexisting in these places where Yari felt alive, present, connected, held—possibly, more whole, complete—yet overcome by breathtaking beauty.

So what is an archetype anyway? According to Mayes et al. (2019), an archetype can be a healing image evoked to relay ancient felt-knowledge (p. 32). Furthermore, places as sacred locales can be sensed and relayed as *prominent archetypal landscapes* (p. 33). Such a place might be considered, here applying my Western background for rendering a translation and following the tradition of the Gaels and Celts, a *thin place* (Kerrigan, 2015, p. 170). A thin place would be connected to something *transpersonal* (Mayes et al., 2019), otherworldly, surreal, majestic, and magical, adopting Yari's descriptive terms, strikingly evoking a sense or moment of awe, wonderment, bewilderment, and fear.

Down South from here, beyond Treaty 6, I have learned that the Blackfoot-Niitsitapi nations have a name where contrasting features of landscapes meet in Paahtómahksikimi. There, you can find an inner sacred lake sprouting rivers flowing in four directions across this continent, Turtle Island. This lake is both hugged and rocked by a very temperamental south wind constantly blasting a prairie mountain range, fencing this watercourse in, at a surface level, as part of Waterton National Park. Noticeably, this is a location where the prairie land dramatically meets up with the Rockies-Miistakiistsí (an ecotone). Here, the Blackfoot-Niitsitapi teach that this is a place—animated, enlivened, aatappiiskoo (Paahtómahksikimi Cultural Centre, 2023)—which I believe to be an archetypal landscape based on its description, nature, and as a result of my personal experiences there.”

Paahtómahksikimi



Eco-pictorial Script II: On Teaching and Learning with Joey

The Backstory

*Joey's experiences as an educator would prove most helpful in support of this research.
As a proud teacher of his from long ago, I was grateful for his contributions.*

Joey shared his ideas grounded by a solid understanding of curricula and learning on Treaty 6 territory as once a student and now as a high school teacher and adult educator, teaching in diverse schooling communities. Joey was fluent, intimately familiar, with a number of languages. That said, readers can find out for themselves here:

Joey: In His Own Words

I would say I have always been in the middle of the West and East.

I moved here [Edmonton, Alberta, Canada]—from Macau. It was a Portuguese colony. So—it was not a very traditional Chinese setting. It is—the longest [running] colony in the entire world [that lasted] for five hundred years, [from] the 1400s or 1500s until 1999.

The culture that was in Canada was—in a way similar—to what I had experienced in Macau because it has always been a mix of everything,

In Canada we always get French and English signs anywhere [and everywhere]. In Macau, it was Portuguese and Chinese.

So when I first got here, my English was not very good, I don't mention it a lot, however—the huge culture shock was the English part.

What languages did you speak?

It would be Cantonese at home, and even now, most cases, when I speak—it will be Cantonese. Besides Cantonese, I also know how to speak Mandarin, the official language of China. So I can do both.

What languages do you speak [these days]?

Later, at the University of Alberta I learned Japanese.
But now, my Japanese is very rusty.

And what about Portuguese?

I can only recognize my [former] address because Portuguese, even though it is—
one of the official languages, not really a lot of people can speak it at all, unless you are some
government officials or workers at the post office. All the official letters will not be [written in]
Chinese, it will be the Portuguese name and the Portuguese address.

Returning to Macau

And when I think about Macau, it is right by Hong Kong.

Well, yes.

Which is English-speaking [as a former colony of the United Kingdom].

Exactly—literally, nowadays, it [takes to travel] about forty-five minutes between the two
cities—and they do share something similar because they are both colonies.

Can you remember—what it was like to live in Macau?

Macau is a little island, so there is a bay facing there.
It has this little mountain—and at that mountain, they built a lighthouse—next to a church.
I think the municipal rule from back then was that no building could be taller than that [little]
mountain—they can't cover that view.

But now that rule is slowly disappearing—.

[Macau], it has about the same population as Edmonton. So, it is very crowded.

One of the stories—learned as a kid from school was when—the Portuguese settlers arrived at the port they obviously don’t speak Chinese, and the Chinese don’t speak any Portuguese.

So when they [the Portuguese] were asking where this [place-Macau] in Portuguese, the local Cantonese people were saying—I don’t know what you are saying!

And they, [the Portuguese], heard two [possible] combinations:

So there are two theories. Number one is [the Chinese] were—using—slang [terminology] to say: What are you talking about? **Ma-Cau.**

But the other one was because there was a temple right by where [the Portuguese] first arrived called—**Ma-Go** in Cantonese.

When they [the Portuguese] heard this Ma-Go—[they must have thought] this must be Macau.

Joey’s storytelling taught me a lot about Macau’s early origins and Joey’s storied sense of place there:

But the thing is, even though it is a West and East culture, in the mix, we are still, Chinese at heart. We have our traditional days like Lunar New Year.

The tastes of the culture are very strong there—tastes of the gatherings.

“Knowing what our roots sink into,
what they wrap around and bring to the surface ...
helps us understand the tastes and sensations of our present” (Krawec, 2022, p. 11).

More than once, Joey would reflect on the festival activities of Lunar New Year in Macau as significantly experienced during the early years of his life by recalling gestured memories with him still:

Regardless of religion or not, Buddhist or not Buddhist, you celebrate Lunar New Year. Even in Korea too, and Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, they all celebrate.

It is a cultural thing, not a religious thing.

The Feeling Effect of Lunar New Year

[Lunar New Year] is a lot of family gathering, not just your direct family, but all your distant family as well.

A fifteen day festival, we value that a lot as I remember. It was the one time that the family would gather—and remember those who had passed away—that is how we connect with each other.

It is a kind of tradition, that calls you home.

The main gathering place would be home.

If you have a big family like grandparents still here, and the siblings, uncles, and aunties, it would be at the grandparents' home.

The older generation, grandparents, mom, dad, uncle, auntie—they will give you the red envelope, hoping that for the next year you will be healthy, you will succeed, you will do good things, and make good choices—all that contained in the red envelope. And once you receive it, then you hold on to it, and hopefully, it comes true in the new year.

It has always been like that and that part I guess I miss a lot. That part I miss a lot!

Slowly, eventually, in Canada I stopped celebrating.

I don't have a lot of family here—so that part died off—the feeling towards that festival becomes gradually decreased.

It is just another day for me now, and that changed a lot of things too I think, personally.

It does not have the same effect anymore. You don't entirely experience the culture.

I asked if Joey could elaborate on what he meant by not being able to experience his birth-place culture:

—A feeling effect.

When you talk to people you are forced to face interactions, that is the most important thing. Well, at least for [my] Asian culture. It is always about a gathering—.

I have a sense that I want to go back and be part of it [Lunar New Year] again because it was part of me as a kid.

I wouldn't say it [the effect] has died off, but it is dying. I do have it once in a while. I do want to go back and reconnect to get that feeling again.

But I do not know when that will happen because there is no way to get days off [work in Canada] in the Lunar New Year. I don't think I will ever, but parts of me want to.

Round and Full: Like a Lunar Gathering

I was told when I was a kid here and when I was taking a linguistics course at the University of Alberta—about how, for especially the Chinese, the round table—has some meaning—because [with] round tables you can see everybody at the same angle.

Lunar, like round?

Exactly it is always going to be round because round means fullness.

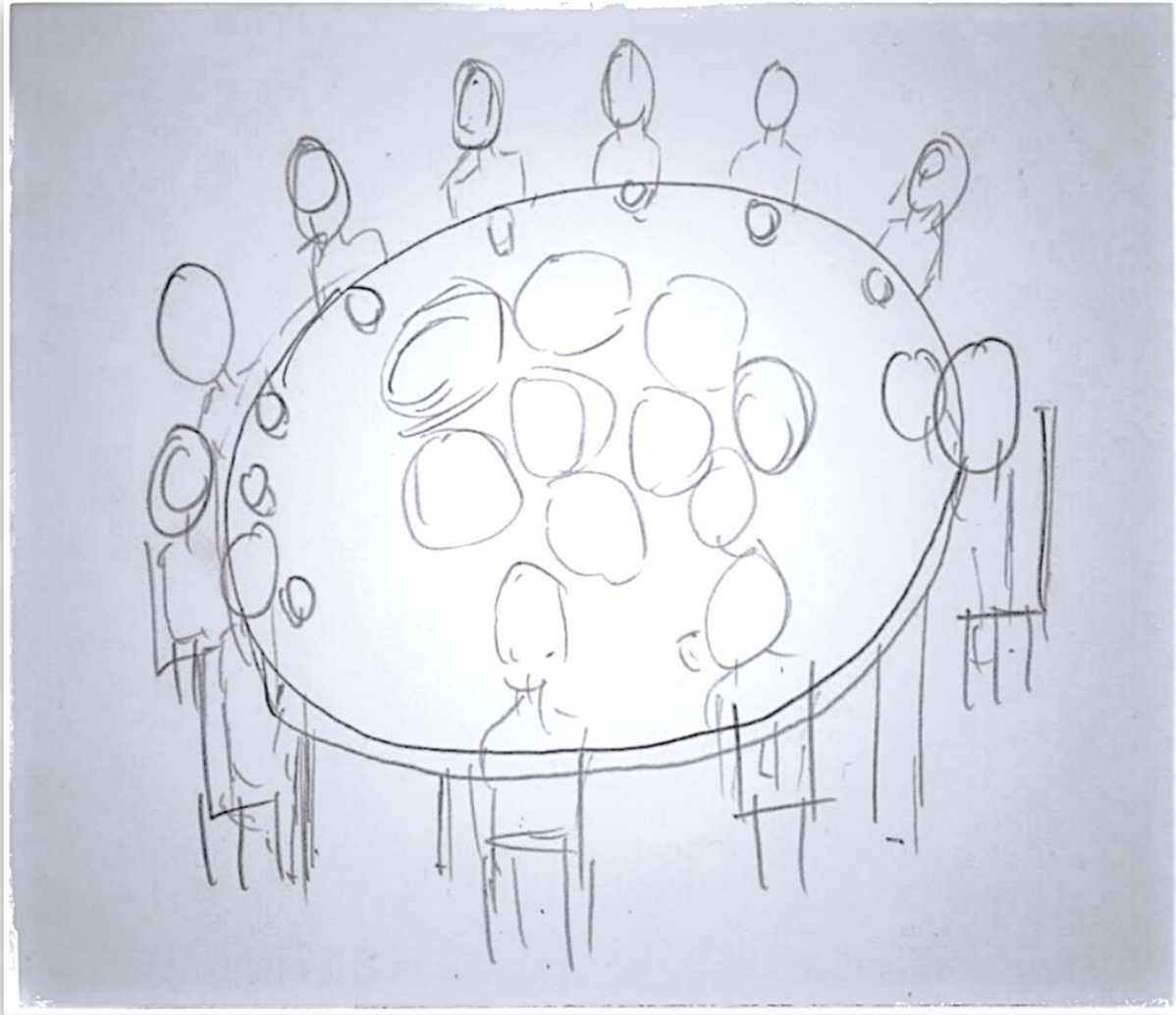
Symbolic wise—[it means] to reconnect because as a distant family, we don't see each other all the time—[we need] to reconnect, for reunion, to regrow that relationship.

[When] we gather as a whole group, that is fullness—a whole circle, completeness, and togetherness.

Pay attention to the moon. When the moon is full, the moon is round, with circularity and with completeness. A full moon is a good day.

In our [Chinese] vocabularies anything about gathering has the word **round** in it.

Reunion by Joey



See this—團圓—the Chinese characters that represent—wholeness, that idea.

The combination is tyun團 and jyun圓, tyun jyun.

Together, it [means] to unite, together, and when I think of this word, I think of a table because that is where we will gather, so, at home, basically, at a round table with people around it and food in the middle.

Later on, Joey would explain that for him, Lunar New Year remained an annual reminder to revisit and return in remembrance to his ancestors:

For Chinese communities, and we still do it even in Canada as well, for most families, we also have a date to go back to our ancestors' tomb. Then we will go there and visit, just to remember them from before, and what they had done, just as a gesture of appreciation and hopefully things will go well, and in a way, reporting to them.

The ancestors' spirit is still with us. They will protect us. They remind us always to do good things—we appreciate our ancestors, how they brought us here, and what they have done to get us here today.

It is always in a circle. They [the ancestors] come to life, they [the ancestors] pass away, and then they come back.

So, we always talk about what we—have done before and how it has an impact on what we will have in the future. We do that on a yearly basis.

Yup, again and again, reincarnation—it is a cycle.

So, this connection—I grew up with it. That part is still very important to me.

I think that is very similar to First Nations in Canada, where they talk about the land and appreciate what they are given. So, we appreciate our ancestors, how they brought us here, and what they have done to get us here today.

And we are still, in a way, quote on quote, reporting back to them that we are doing well.

In response to Joey's shared memories of family gatherings in reunion, my mind was also activated, animated, but by black topsoil and visions of aspen belts and birch stands crisscrossing the landscape.

*Between our second and third meetings, I created a personal image of what was a good sense of gathering for me: **These Woods at Night.***



The life of the mind, like the life of the forest, only exists in an interactive and polymorphous form. Your life may be yours alone, but unless a lot of other things are living, neither am I, and neither are you. This is true for the individual, true for the species, and true for the mind. (Bringhurst, 2006, p. 67)

The Current of Attachment

I asked Joey about his sense of home, what it felt like, where it was.

I think it would be Canada. In my memory, I have been here longer now than when I was in Macau. I grew up here as a teenager, so most of the things I do, learned, or adapted to were in the Canadian culture, so Edmonton [is home].

I no longer feel that I fit in anymore in Macau.

Also, sometimes I don't feel like I belong here, well, not entirely, but some part of me. I don't belong here entirely.

I grew up in Macau and I carry that part of deep inside.

All the Macau memories—are still memorable and still special, but those have—slowly faded. Because I was so little, it no longer seems to matter as much anymore. But then here, I developed my career, I went through my education here, and I made friends here.

My attachments belong to Edmonton. Those are current, and I am still in that current. The connection I have developed in this land—keeps me here and—makes me feel this is home.

I even remember the time when I first landed in Edmonton. That base temperature in the air, I remember it very clearly, and sometimes, once in a while, in June, I get that same sensation as well, [which] would remind me of that day I arrived in Canada. [The air] it's clean; it's crisp.

It smells sweet, and it's cool.

You arrived in the month of June?

Yes, I did.—It wasn't hot, it was not cold—a little bit of wind blew in my face—hot and warm.

It smells like home, yah. The air in this land [Canada]—smells different than air in Asia.

Familiar but Different

What about Edmonton's Chinatown? I wondered, was this place, this neighbourhood, part of Joey's Canadian attachments?

I remember when I first came here, I remember—I was thinking—what is this? It seemed so very old-fashioned.

I think time stopped in Chinatown—time stopped.

My understanding is Chinatown's primetime was maybe back in the 80s and 90s. And that was when—immigrants from Hong Kong were coming—and Vietnam—the Vietnamese-Chinese.

The atmosphere is not exactly the way it is in most of the major cities [in China] and Macau. Yah, it is familiar [to the design of Chinese cities]—because [it] is the only place [in Edmonton] where Chinese signs and characters are and all the colours—red and yellow, but it feels different.

The younger generation of Chinese, like even my friends, or my neighbours, will see that their kids don't even go to Chinatown.

Yah. I have not been to Chinatown for a long time too.

The older folks—go there regularly because that is the only place, they are comfortable with, and you can communicate in Chinese fully, as opposed to having to use English.

I think time stopped in [Edmonton's] Chinatown—time stopped. Yah. It seems time stopped and in the mid-90s for Chinatown. But Vancouver and Toronto—are moving forward along with the upswing.

In a way I think it [Edmonton's Chinatown] is slowly dying, in a way.

“It Was Solid But Then I Had To Erase It”

I have only been back to Macau twice. It is not the same anymore—.

Like I said, the majority of my teenager time and adult time I am here, so I [have] understood things going on in Macau in the older fashioned way.

Macau, Hong Kong, China, and anywhere else—are advancing. [These places] have modified [advanced]—but not me. I am not disconnected, but time stopped for me—the China time, the east-Asia time, I stopped like the past tense. I did not change with it.

You go back—[the neighbourhoods have] vanished. Gone, like a fire extinguisher—in Chinese, we use that same word—to erase and—gone. Smoky—flying away, not at a fast rate, slowly disappearing, vanishing [Joey gestured here with floating hands].

Smoke like a campfire and then the wind blows it and the smoke kind of goes that way and never comes back and then the smoke takes up the whole place and disappears and does not come back after.

I don't know this place anymore [Macau]. I am the Chinatown in Edmonton. I stopped with time. So when I go back [to Edmonton] or when I return to Vancouver as my landing spot, it's more familiar. I have changed with [these Canadian places].

After this discussion, Joey chose to sketch an image to render this smoky, vanishing sense of Macau as his place-conscious expression selected to yield a holistic feeling of the psyche, in other words, to make meaning of mental health.

Joey's Artist's Statement

I tried to remember a time when my grandma and my cousin walking down the street from the grocery store. This person, the one that is clearly outlined, is myself because that is all I remember. And then—this little guy, I erased a bit—because that is my cousin. Then, the middle person holding the bag is my grandma. After I drew all that, I erased it with my eraser diagonally to create a vanished and smoky idea. And this is a street around our neighbourhood—this is the market or the store that we always went to for either afternoon snacks or just buying food to prepare for dinner.

I created this image and erased it a bit because I had said from the other meeting—I have been gone for so long—but the connection is still there.

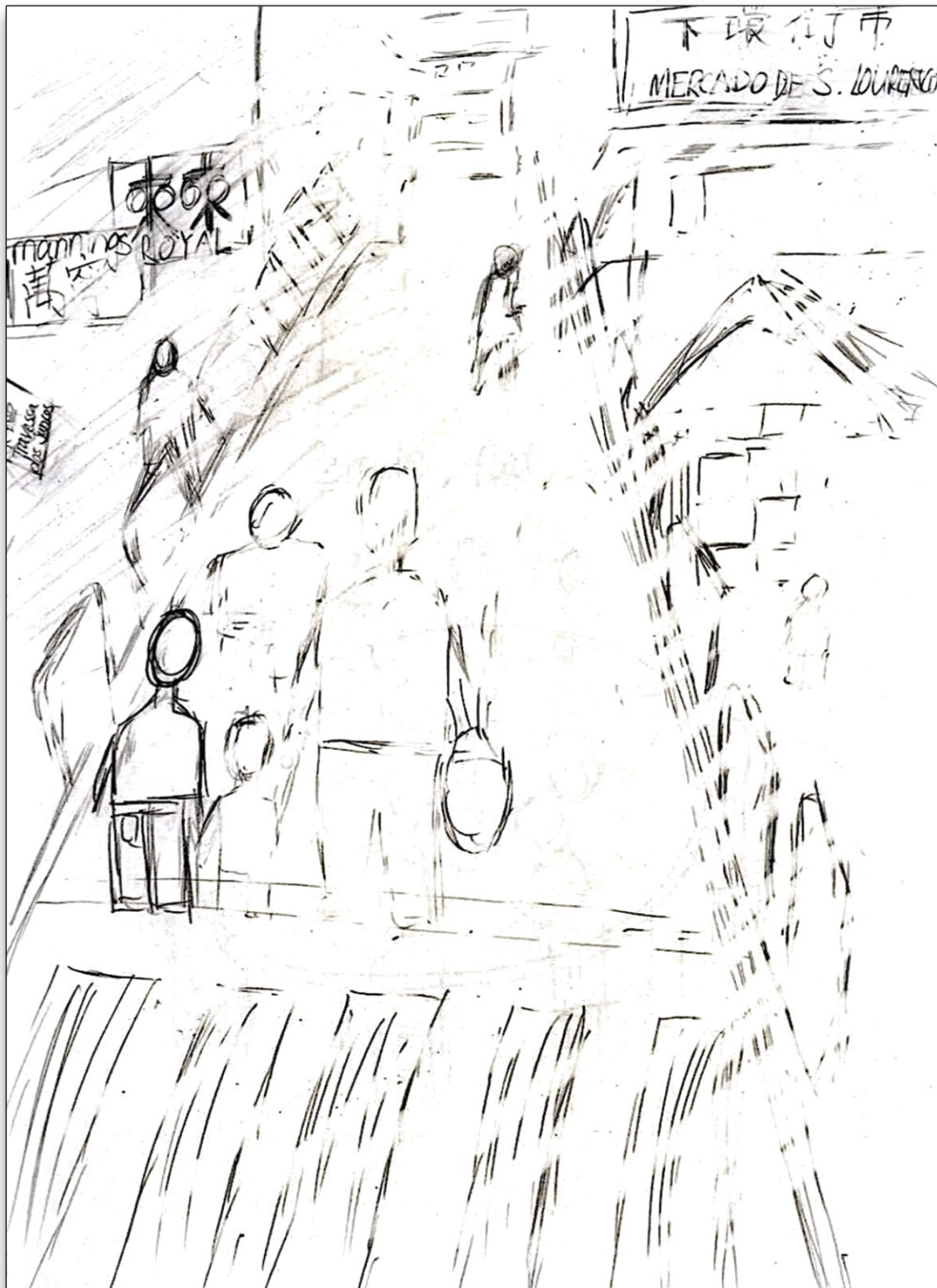
You can see—something, but then I erased it.

Then my grandma passed away too, so that person is not really, there anymore.
And my cousin, well my cousins, they are all older now, so they no longer look the way they were when I was still there. So even though they are still there, the image is not really the same anymore because they are not taller, or older.

When I return, my time has stopped, but these surroundings [have been] moving forward.
The buildings from my memories are no longer there.

It was solid but then I had to erase it.

The Past: A Slowly Disappearing Memory



I inquired about the feelings that accompanied Joey's image of the past.

I wouldn't say sad anymore—I came here for a reason. How I see this is almost like it is an equal exchange. I gave up this part of my life to get something better. [Looking] at this picture, I may miss the good old times. I cherish it [this memory of the past].

I still look at it, like in old photos, to try to remember that and to reconnect.

Actually, after our conversation last time, I—thought about talking to my uncles and people back-home a little more often.

Sometimes, you know, you haven't talked for a long time, and you don't know what to say, so you avoid talking to them so that you don't feel that awkwardness. But then, since our conversation, it got me thinking that the more I don't talk to them, the more awkward it would be.

I would rather be a little more awkward, just once in a while, to keep that going, and I did, right before the Lunar New Year. So I talked to them and wished them a happy new year, something short and simple.

I think that asking me those questions brings me back. When I explained Tyun Jyun: Gather-Round to you, I had the image, and it brought back that memory, which is nice.

I appreciated those questions.

At this moment, I was feeling tremendously grateful for what Joey had just shared. However, I still wondered about Joey's creative process. I was still curious about the image he had just rendered.

I drew the street first. It's easiest. I drew the general geographic feature first. Then the people—I added the people at the very end. I drew the place first.

I drew the street first, the main street leading towards the other side. Then I drew the surrounding buildings and then the people. And then I erased it. So I have a *before* and *after*.

I created an image from a memory like a photograph—with my own version of how I wanted to see the memory.

Before 'The Past'



Joey, having found comfort in a vision of his birthplace, smoky, hazing, slowly vanishing, readily returning to linger still, relayed a sense of psyche in conditions that left me wondering after our meetings.

For conceptual support, I would turn to Byung-Chul Han's (2017) 'The Scent of Time,' where I found some helpful interpretations of being and time. Here is what I would learn:

In China, an incense clock called *hsiang yin* (literally: seal of fragrance) was in use until the end of the nineteenth century. Until the mid-twentieth century, Europeans believed it to simply be a censer; the idea of measuring time with incense was obviously alien to them, as perhaps was the idea that time could take the form of a fragrance. (p. 55)

As a medium for measuring time, incense differs in many respects from water or sand. Fragrant time does not flow or trickle away. Nothing is emptied. Rather, the scent of the incense fills the room, even turns time into space, it thus gives a semblance of duration. (p. 57)

“These scents of time are not narrative, but contemplative. They are not arranged into a sequence. Rather, they rest in themselves” (p. 58).

“It is particularly the emptiness of mind, freeing it from desire, which deepens time. This depth connects every point in time with all of being, with its fragrant intransience” (p. 59).

Back to the fieldwork, on screen in a meeting, I would find that Joey had created another image, and thankfully, he wanted to share it.

I got another one.

You have another one!

Tyun jyun! I love it—these are beautiful renderings and—ancient font I see.

Yes—in ancient font—and modern.

This would be your good gathering.

New Year—we love to use this word because it is the time we gather.
Another time is in mid-Autumn, we would say the same thing as well.

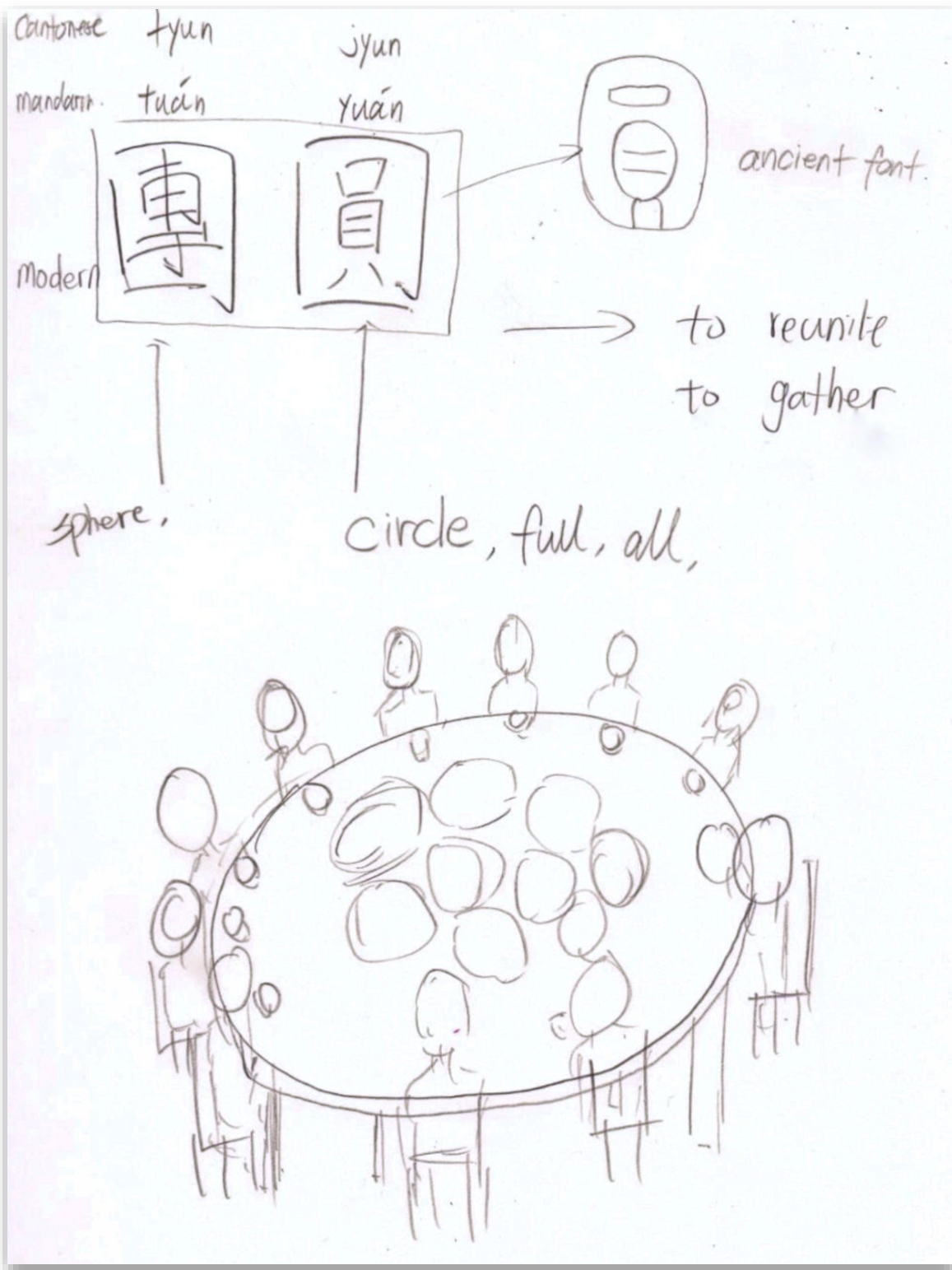
We would hope to *tyun jyun* because that's when the moon is full.

The biggest moon we get, mid-Autumn.

As a result of further study inspired by Joey's contribution to this research, now introducing an enduring combination of images, Ch'iao Chi (1345/1994) in Ch'üan Yüan san ch'ü, No. 594-5, was lingering there, too, as part of this precious moment of learning:

“Like billowing silks, sinuous, cloud-tipped
Smoke has written ancient script.
From the last of the incense ash to burn.
There is lingered warmth in my precious urn,
While moonlight had already died” (p. 136).

Tyun Jyun, 團圓



Finally, it came time to ask Joey some closing questions, which mainly included if any particular images or descriptions stood out during our meetings that might fit with his understanding of social, emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental health.

I feel like when I was drawing those images in our third meeting—pretty emotional!

It's comforting, although sad, because that image [of Joey's whole family together in the past] will never reappear outside my memory. That image is only going to be in my memory or my mind. It is not going to actually—physically be here anymore.

But the more we talk about it—the more we are expressing what is really true to ourselves and meaningful to our own selves.

So a good representation of social, emotional, physical, and mental health would be having a group of people together, especially [those] closest to you—creating memories.—most importantly are the people around you. And sometimes, when you are not talking about it, just deep inside there, you are aware of this. However, you are not sure if it is—true or not.

For example, I mentioned that I haven't been connected—with my family overseas for a long time because I don't know what to say.

But it ends up; the more I talk about it, the more I would like to re-establish, at least some small talk, here and there.

I think deep inside I knew it, but without that conversation, with me and you, I don't think I would re-establish it because, I mean, talking about it feels more real that way.

And you ended up calling them at one point, is that right?

A couple of text messages—back in February, I messaged my aunt and my uncle.

It was nothing long, like a phone call, FaceTime, or anything. Just a quick text saying—Happy Lunar New Year!

You said that drawing [as a research exercise] was a little emotional for you.

I think that was the memory of childhood when things were simple, and we didn't realize that, but back then, simply going to the market to buy food or groceries did not seem that special. But now, with the person [grandmother] being gone, away from the place [Macau]—back then, we would never cherish or think about this as memorable, but now that 15 some years with my grandma being gone—and I am no longer there, it feels that even those moments —walking past the street with my grandma, well, it felt more special [revisiting that memory] than when we were actually living in that moment.

So, revisiting the memory felt more special?

Mm-hmm [Joey nodded].

Not to ruin the significance of this moment, but at this point, as we were short in time together, I also wondered about any possible word equivalents he could offer this research in any of the languages he spoke that might be conceptually compatible with tyun jyuan as a translation.

When I was learning Japanese, there was a phrase in Japanese—it is literally, you know how you walk into a forest—and there is sunlight—through the gaps of certain leaves and branches and—little spots [of sunlight] on the ground.

Sunlight being filtered by the leaves and the branches of the forest to represent—I forget the exact meaning, but it was something indirect.

Do you know how to say it in Japanese?

I will have to search it up.

That would be amazing!

And, after a bit of a pause, Joey's search online would reveal:

The pronunciation is in Japanese: **komorebi**: 木漏れ日.

What is the translation?

The literal translation would be, oh, let me change back to English—the sunlight shining through the trees.

It is usually expressed in—poetry, the poetry [of] Haiku. I remember learning this phrase—in university—it is popular in Haiku.

So, if you were learning as a student in school, in Japan, you would be very familiar with this phrase.

Yes. It is from artists from ancient times. For poets, it is [generally] untranslatable, but the literal meaning is *sunlight shining through the trees*, [which] can apply to things specific to you. For me, it represents physical-mental health. I like being in nature, and I don't like things too dark—[or] hot either, but I think the sunshine in a forest is not too hot—[or] cold.

The first thing that came to my mind [was] to equate the powerful beauty projected by this world with sunbeams and sunshine—nature's landscape and the magnificence of nature—something like that.

It is the interplay of the aesthetics between the shadow and the leaves, and the shape of nature and the earthly systems.

And in English, is there anything—that sticks with you as a word?

Tranquility would be a good word for the sun shining through or filtering through the trees and leaves. That is calming.

- **tranquility** (noun): from Latin root *tranquillus* as the *quiet of an uncertain origin* (Chambers, 2017)

Joey would also note:

The moon represents calm 月 (yue).

Near the end of our final meeting I asked Joey if he had anything else he would like to add or say:

That picture thing, hmm. If I were to draw the future, it wouldn't be Macau. That is what I know, for sure, because I don't see myself in Macau anymore. So Macau would not be part of the future.

I guess the future—there's a little road, a little pebble road, and it leads to a forest, in a way, not like an isolated forest, but some sunshine forest like with komorebi, and a road—leading towards—a big city, a big place, a good place.

It is almost like I am taking time off, and then I would go into the forest and then come back out, that kind of feeling because I don't think I would enjoy one-hundred percent nature, but I kind of like half and half or a 60 percent/40 percent split.

I do not like to be—in nature for one-hundred percent of the time. I probably would hate it so much, but it would be very nice to withdraw from the city into—nature—yet be able to return to the city—to recharge and—continue with life.

[Do you] see the city in the distance?

I don't want to be in the middle of nowhere. I want to have a destination. I want to have a point A and a point B.

But if I can see the city far away—and a landmark or a landscape—I can follow through. I think that is what I would draw—a little city far away with the sky lines—I am surrounded by trees, but I can still see the urban area, but I can forget and withdraw myself into the nature.

Oh—that is amazing!

*Inspired after the last meeting with Joey, I would thread in return to find I also noticed I felt a better being in the company of this presence: **Komorebi**, 木漏れ日.*



Field note. St. Albert, Alberta, November 14, 2023, Teaching and Learning with Joey.

“In dialogue with Joey, he connected me to metaphors, suggesting that perhaps feeling firmly attached to his homeplace was necessary for him to establish a good sense of mental health. It was an attachment seemingly formed based on where he grew up. In Edmonton, for instance, Joey grew into adulthood alongside the changes in the surroundings here, witnessing modifications to the landscape and architecture as they developed. Over time, Joey became increasingly attached to these changes. Nowadays, Joey relates to Edmonton as a beckoning, guiding, carrying, and holding place for him. Consider, for instance, Joey would say, *My attachments belong to Edmonton. Those are current, and I am still in that current.*

In contrast, Joey would depict an image of Macau as once solid but vanishing. Notably, Joey did relay the benefits of recalling traditions that had called him home in Macau through memory, including the Lunar New Year. However, these were memories that had to be recaptured. Joey did this by keeping a solid sketch of a moment he had created with his late grandmother and now adult cousins walking in a market that was no more, in an architectural sense. So admittedly, I did interpret this image of Joey’s as a moment in time in a market past, now a sort of utopia, structured by Joey’s memories, stories, and creative renderings. It is a no-place but still fondly treasured as it is comforting.

Quite sensorial, lingering descriptions further detailed Joey’s relational sense of attachment. *The tastes of the culture* were vividly noted when Joey spoke of gathering-round in tjun jyun with family, called home to celebrated traditions. There was also the *sweet and chilled scent* of home. Notably, Joey pointed out that he still spoke Cantonese at home as his language preference, signalling his culture remains for him there, albeit his residence here in Edmonton.

Joey also relayed a holistic sense of togetherness, stating that recalling the scents and tastes of both home and back-home made him feel *full*—in a good way.

The smoky, vanishing, extinguished sense of back-home in our dialogues developed here into a feeling effect of holidays as annual returns that included visiting ancestors now passed on. Joey's depictions of his smoky, fading sense of timeless encounters lingered in present but vague surroundings. Joey claimed this smoky sense was because time had stopped for him in Macau. In other words, he relayed how he felt out of sync with his birthplace. So for him, his attachment there was smoky; his sense of connection, however still comforting, reported Joey, perhaps as though filtered for him, his relationship to that place there, like the sunlight is through the tree leaves spotlighting the Japanese term he introduced to me: *komorebi*. That said, Joey did report recapturing these old memories had been beneficial to his sense of self and others in his back-home place as many welcomed memories surfaced warmly back into his place-consciousness. Joey also relayed wanting to connect more with the natural world. However, it seemed he preferred that architecture remains within sight/site, if not back in the distance, within vision, so not very remote, rural, or distant."

Eco-pictorial Script III: Into the Layers of Meaning with Dorthia*The Backstory*

Dorthia would teach me much about myself as a teacher and human being. Dorthia, a straight talker, did not hold back in discussions on Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in Canada or concerning my biases as a white woman and teacher. Our meetings were often filled with laughter and, at times, through tears. In between our research meetings, one of Dorthia's beloved brothers passed away, which would, in time, prompt more memories of family members, present and lost, or back-home in honour of his memory.

But here, you can learn about our time in dialogue through her story, in her own words:

Dorthia: In Her Own Words

I have lived downtown [Edmonton] for twenty-one years, and then I moved to the west side, to the north side—I know it all—this city.

Back-home, it's so different—. I call—back-home—where my mom comes from—that is, you know, our reserve.

I think about back-home—and my airways always close. I feel really like, suffocated because it is something I don't know.

I don't really go back-home [to the reserve] much because I don't really have deep connections with my mom's side of the family.

And yet, I did find out:

But when I do go there, I feel connected to my mom—that's where she grew up. So I hear stories about her, how she played—ran around—.

And relearn that:

I lost my mom in the summer of grade 7—2006.

I always remember her as a person who [had]—a soft touch. She was so caring, so loving.

Here, I immediately froze up on the screen connecting our meeting, realizing that, as her seventh-grade teacher, I had frequently overlooked this significant event, mainly when she misbehaved in class, was late, or had trouble completing assignments.

It was a profoundly humbling and painful realization, exposing my limited capacities as a teacher at that time, but still more about myself as a person. Thankfully, Dorthia would continue to lead this dialogue, so I had time to return to it.

Back to the present moments of our discussion, Dorthia detailed more of her experiences on her late mother's reserve:

It is not like here. We have dirt roads. You can walk around—the townsite.

I go to my nimosôm's house—which is my grandpa.

There are three major hills—one on the north side—one on the west side, and one on the south side. My nimosôm lives on the south side—at the top of a hill and my aunt lives at the bottom of a hill.

It's just different representations of how to tell where you are. I guess that is how they talk there.

They say they are at the top of the hill, so you know where to go. Or they say they are at the bottom of the hill—.

"I Can't Answer Back in Cree"

This is my dad's side here [in Edmonton]. I feel safe here—but for my kids, no.

I am French—Irish—and Native. I identify as Métis.

My daughter—she’s—Japanese and part Native.

My son was born—about a month and a half before the pandemic hit really hard here [in 2020].

Do people speak Cree at home?

I speak—a little bit of Cree—I understand it more than I speak it.

My grandma speaks fluent Cree.

I did go to a Native school, and they taught about our Cree heritage, so I learned a lot for grades 4, 5, and 6. But did any of it stick? No, so I say I understand it more than I speak it.

When grandma is speaking full Cree to me, I can tell what she is saying, but I can’t answer back in Cree.

I have to answer in English.

“Nowhere Feels Right Because Where is Home?”

Next, I would ask Dorthia how she felt about schools as places for learning in Alberta as a Métis mother.

For me, the way my daughter talks about everything, they teach the outside of it. They don’t really teach her what happened and everything.

We are not talked about. We are not people. We are not learning what happened to us, to keep us where they want to keep us.

Naturally, the issue of residential schools needed addressing.

Residential schools were not there to make us a better person, or a smarter person, it was there to take the native out of us, to make us a white person, and to make us ashamed of the native parts of us.

So it was never put there to make us better, to better our lives, or better us, it was put to wash out, to kill us—it was. I think our culture has suffered so much as a people. It is going to keep getting passed down from generation to generation.

People, living on the streets right now, are people who went through residential schooling. A lot of homeless people survived the residential schooling or lived through [the] *60s Scoop*—taken from their families—abused for speaking their own language. They say right now that I don’t know my own language because of how my family was raised and abused for speaking our language.

You can go and ask a Native person, or a homeless person, too—they’ll tell you that they don’t know where home is because there is not one place that connects them no more.

How are you supposed to connect with something—?

Or someplace.

—if you feel like you are just going to be taken away—again? Nowhere feels right because where is home?

Based on what Dorthia was teaching me, her sense of nowhere was somewhere significant. Knowingly, there was this contrast in etymology that D. G. Smith (2020) recently pointed to:

- **nowhere** (noun): from Old English *nahwær* meaning *not at all; an inaccessible place; a place you knocked something or someone into* (OED, 2023)
- **nowhere** (adverb): *in no place at all* (OED, 2023)
- **utopia** (noun) from Modern Latin: *ou* meaning *no* + *topos* meaning *place* = no place (OED, 2023)

In alperta nêhiyawêwin:

- **namoya nânitâw** (particle): no place; no where (LeClaire & Cardinal, 1998)

There was also this notion of no place as another place or other place, such as found in Foucault's (1986) text, Of Other Spaces:

Probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and in-verted. (p. 24)

Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (p. 24)

Back-home

Perhaps predictably, I asked Dorthia, do you feel like you know where home is now?

My nimosôm's house, for example.

Can you tell me about it?

This is where my mom lived. This is where everything is.

My nimosôm's home makes me feel connected to my mom, the last time I felt really connected with—my mom and dad! We used to go there all the time, to visit, and you know, have little *gatherings*—.

This was before my mom passed away—my mom used to always talk to us about [this place].

She'd always tell me, "my girl, this is where you come from. This is where I am from. This is where I grew up. This is our home. This is us. I think that's like the first time I—felt like, I was like, ok—I come from a reserve."

But now that I have my own kids—I love my home [in Edmonton]. I love being with my kids, and I love them. I feel like anywhere could be home—I have my family, and I will be fine.

“My Home is Lived-in”

My home is loud, and I have people in it.

Can you tell me more about a lived-in-home?

It’s loud. It’s destroyed. It’s so busy. There is always somebody there.

There is always coming and going.

You hear people around you and it’s comfortable.

I was familiar with Dorthia’s lived-in-home-sense. Returning to my childhood, I recalled the noise and comforts of living in a house with many sisters and close friends nearby as neighbours.

For possible contrast, I asked if she could speak to this phrase, as I had often heard uttered at school between students: “Go back where you came from!”

I haven’t heard it as much, but a lot of people still do. [It means]—you don’t belong here—you should be on the reserve.

It’s Different from New Heights and in the Twilight

Our dialogue would shift into more adventurous terrains afterwards. Dorthia would tell me about her desire to travel due to her interest in foreign places.

I really love Rio de Janeiro. That is—on my bucket list. Number one on my bucket list.

Have you ever watched *Twilight*—*New Moon* or is it, *Eclipse*?

[The movie characters] stop in Rio—they take a cab through downtown—[and] this whole celebration [is] going on. People are dressed up in their costumes. They are dancing in the street—it is very interesting.

They [Brazilians] have nice oceans.

I went once—to Los Cabos, many years ago. It was really nice. The art—the museums, different places.

[I also]—went to Toronto—for a youth exchange—for high school. We did the CN tower tour.—It was scary.

Did you look down at the city [from the top of CN tower]?

[The city] was really tiny. I felt really big—really, tall. They have this outside wrap around the whole CN tower—you can sit on it and take pictures. I got pulled on [the wrap netting] by my cousin. I did that. That was scary.

Yah. I was terrified. It was really scary. But I did it and skydiving.

You went—skydiving? Not lost on me at this moment was that Yari had also mentioned skydiving, unbeknownst to Dorthia.

Yup. When you are up there—you start dropping—you just see everything.

It's different. You see it differently and want to look around the world. You want to see what's down there. Like they say, it's different up there.

When I went to Mexico, I sat in the window seat [and] when I went to Toronto and when I went to Disneyland. Looking out the window and seeing everything, all the clouds that were below the plane.

It was different. It was nice. It was crazy.

Afterwards, I would search online to learn more about the Brazilian settings of Twilight as a movie Dorthia referenced. In the following meeting, I shared what I had learned with her.

I looked it up, where Bella and Edward had their honeymoon in Brazil because you talked about—travelling there. I found it interesting [how] that place they visited on their honeymoon was called Paraty, which means river of fish. It is a name from the Tupi in their local Indigenous language there (Swan, 2017).

And I did notice that a lot of the places that you want to travel to are [located]—where—the ocean meets the land. Or where the shore of a great lake shapes the surrounding land, such as in the case of Toronto!

So I wondered if you could create an image of somewhere nice to render your sense of mental health, where would it be?

In the mountains, in the sunset, with a little bit of orange in it. I like those types of sunsets. Those are my favourites, my daughter's favourite too.

Admittedly, I was surprised by these comments from Dorthia. Dorthia's response differed from the answer I anticipated her providing, mainly because she had listed several tropical places, or at least warmer locations, like Toronto.

“Stuff Happens in the Winter Time”

My favourite season is winter.

I like the coldness.

[The cold] makes the earth look, so pretty, so nice.

Just think when the snow hits the ground—[It] is time for a fresh new year, fresh new snow.

I was not sure that I agreed with Dorthia about the winter here:

Of all those memories we share when we're old, none are more clear than that hard bitter cold. You'll not find among us a soul who can say: I've conquered the wind on a cold winter's day. If you're not from the prairie, you don't know the cold, You've never been cold! (Bouchard, 1993, p. 20)

That said, Dorthia would continue on.

The trees are starting over. They're starting fresh. They lose all their leaves. They get snow, they grow a bit bigger—a lot of stuff happens in winter.

Notably, there are many ways to describe snow in the winter, from the land here in alperta nêhiyawêwin, including (LeClaire & Cardinal, 1998):

- **kôna** (noun): snow
- **akotakonew** (verb): the snow falls on the branches
- **paskakonakiyâw** (verb): it is freshly fallen snow which makes it good for tracking
- **pawahamoyâw** (verb): the snow falls from the branches
- **sâhkweyaw** (verb): the snow grinds under foot
- **timikonew** (verb): the snow is deep
- **waskitateweyâw** (verb): the snow carries

When I was a kid, I used to love sledding. We went shovelling snow. We went skating, skiing. We did everything possible.

Dorthia's winter inspiration reminded me of this particular section of text that I had just recently read:

In winter brilliance, the only sounds are the rub of my jacket against itself, the soft *ploompf* of my snowshoes, the rifle-shot crack of trees bursting their hearts in the freezing temperatures, and the beating of my own heart, pumping hot blood to fingers still tingling in double mittens. In the break between squalls, the sky is painfully blue. The snowfields sparkle below like shattered glass. (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 303)

Winter activities—that I could relate to and enjoy:

*A frozen haze.
The trails
beaming, shining,
glistening, blistering.
My footsteps
tunnelling, funnelling.*

*Binding the boots,
my poles plodding,
the tacky waxing.*

Soon to glide away.

*But then, Dorthia transitioned, orientating the topic of focus by elaborating on her sense of
springtime returning to the prairies:*

The spring hits—you come out of hibernation, you just refreshed yourself for four months.

Here I sensed a possible ecocritical psyche:

In spring small birds lace soft twigs. The squirrel knows no gravity swimming up to the sky. Like an oracle, oak leaves speak in many tongues, their compositions please clouds who speak to them. Trees and clouds see poems in your blood. Wild rivers running through veins as we drown, to renew our skin, new leaves in our forest. Of entangled limbs of wood and bone. (Rowland, 2012, pp. 171-172)

You grow [in the winter] and [in the spring] you present a new you.

“What Is It Going To Be The Next Day?”

My daughter—we have been going for late night walks—her favourite thing is to stop whenever she sees the sunset.

She will go, “Look, mommy! The sunset, the colouring, what is it going to be the next day? Let’s think! Today it’s orange and then yellow, and it’s really bright! It looks really nice.”

Yesterday, she was looking at the sunset, and she said, “It has a little bit of pink in it and a little bit of purple—I like it.”

Following this comment about spending time with her daughter as the sun went down at the end of the day, Dorthia indicated in our meeting that she wanted to develop and work on an image of a sunset to portray her place-conscious sense of psychological health.

Lately, she [Dorthia’s daughter] has been going through things a lot.
She is trying to pick out little things that make her happy.
So maybe that is what I will draw, a little pink and orange sunset [sunsets make her happy].

That said, Dorthia also decided to include:

I don’t know, I haven’t been to the mountains in a—long time—the mountains are—cool.

When you talked about cultures being erased, I thought about the mountains.

It is—for me, in a way, this idea—[that] they reveal layers of how they survived—like First Nations peoples have done here [on the prairies].

Despite all the storms—remained.

Yah. The mountains, they tell their own story—how they survived—in the world—they are still here, the one thing that remains, gorgeous as ever.

That’s my homeplace—in the hills, that’s what I want. It is my happy place. One of my first memories, I was—three—in the mountains and I remember how happy we all were.

- **kiskeyitamowin** (noun): *the act of knowing* (LeClaire & Cardinal, 1998)

“These lines are my markings. The story of my journey meant to be told. I walked these lands and know my way home” (Qilavaq-Savard, 2022, s. 17-19).

That's My Homeplace



“**Cynefin** is the word used for the way a sheep passes on to her lamb, generation after generation, the knowledge of the mountain that is hers”
(Clark in Petro, 2021, pp. 14-15).

- **nîkânikiskeyimêw** (verb): *s/he [they] knows her/him [them] before everyone else* (LeClaire & Cardinal, 1998)

- **asiniwachiy** (noun): *a rocky mountain* (nehiyaw masinahikan, n.d.)
- **waciy** (noun): *a steep, rugged mountain, or hill* (nehiyaw masinahikan, n.d.)

Dorthia's Artist's Statement

A perfect Sunday with a gorgeous, bright yellow and orange sunset, my favourite type—reminds me of my mom—since I was a kid.

The mountains—tell their own story, like a person—through depression.
It is easy to get knocked down—but hey—you can climb again.

To me, Dorthia's statement could have lingered in the same world rendered by Brontë (1838/1996), although many years ago:

“Well-well; the sad minutes are moving, though loaded with trouble and pain.
And sometime the loved and the loving, shall meet on the mountains again” (s. 68-70).

Near the close of this mental health research, I asked Dorthia if he had any other images to contribute. She said:

I like looking at—drum work. When you see a drum [mistikwaskihk]
—the art in the middle of them, those pieces [of art are]—different parts of story.

Drums and drumming tell stories.

A lot of people don't know how to tell their stories in words.

Here I recalled that:

“Storytelling can be tricky” (Penak, 2019, p. 140).

Then, Dorthia mentioned:

Waterfalls. They are calming, the way the water crashes. I like listening to waves, it relaxes me when I get angry, or depressed, or hurt or upset.

“Moment by passing moment, season by season, the leaping river changes its voice, its mood, its aspect, in sensitive response to the varying elements around it” (Barton, 1974, p. 6).

Naturally, I would choose some literary and research sources to mark this particular starting-end point:

“Where the water of life flows, no illness remains.
In the garden of union, no thorn remains.
They say there’s a door between one heart and another.
How can there be a door where no wall remains?” (Rumi, 1207/2022, p. 14)

- **kisiciwan** (noun): *waterfall* (nêhiyaw masinahikan, n.d.)

*And for Dorthia there was: **kiskeyitamowin***



“A glance at the river pouring down from the mountain showed me the outward image that had endangered this conclusion: Obviously, all life came from the mountain, for where there is water, there is life” (Jung, 2002, p. 44).

Field note. St. Albert, Alberta, November 14, 2023, Into the Layers with Dorthia.

“Dorthia ended our dialogues with imaginal images of waterfalls and drumming. Unfortunately, we were out of time to engage in any more creation-making. Now, waterfalls often begin from *great heights, high rocky places*, at least in this region of the world. Noticeably, Dorthia did relay a sense of height, as being high up, above in the sky, whether from the CN tower in Toronto or in an airplane window seat on the way there, to the opportunity of novel perspective-taking, in other words, getting the chance to be able to see something or view, or experience, something that was unfamiliar to her, in a new or unaccustomed way, perhaps allowing for a change of *mind*.

As she pointed out, drums in Dorthia’s culture relay precious, intimate stories without using words, but through images carefully painted on or carved in to relay a personal journey rendered through craft. It was not lost on me that as we discussed the missing histories given to residential schooling, the ’60s scoop, and homelessness in Edmonton, Dorthia afterwards chose to point to a medium that could give voice to the voiceless. The percussion of the drumming tells stories, reveals them, and gets memories out as an embodied movement of emotional, physical, physiological, creative, and spiritual expression. Drumming brings people together, to gather-round, round in a good way, in community, there to witness in a circle—gestures of feeling, memory, and story relayed through changes in rhythm, breathing, purpose, and need—sensitive to what is in the local surrounding area, the ecology.

Profoundly, Dorthia shared personal and cultural expressions of inaccessible places that have caused people in her community to report that nowhere feels right, nowhere is home, so that a back-home place becomes a confusing place; a utopia that is no-place. Here, in our dialogue, there was so much pain. *My airways close back-home*, that was what she said. Yet she

also had her lived-in home here in Edmonton, which was loud, full of life, cluttered by comforting evidence that people were still there. *They have remained, just like the mountains edging the prairies here.*

Critically, Dorthia highlighted the significance of metaphors that she developed to make meaning of the mountain sunset memories she now shares with her daughter, as expressions given to the anticipation of a new day, a fresh start, a new season, as an expectation of change. There was a beauty as she recalled such moments depicted through the lyricism of metaphor. It does seem to me that Dorthia knows her way home, her lived-in home, and now wants to pass that knowledge to her little ones, how to get there, mapped out in memories, to follow from generation to generation, with many fun travelling adventures in and between.

Remember that *stuff happens in the winter here*. Now, admittedly, winter is not my favourite season. But the cold here can remind us, residents here, how alive we can feel in our bodies as the biting chill settles into all extremities. We are all prone in the winter, vulnerable to the possibility of freezing to death here. Still, when spring comes, those that reside here, the many of us, do often indeed feel, as Dorthia suggested, somewhat reborn, renewed, if not relieved by a springtime arrival.”

Eco-pictorial Script IV: In Conversation with Dr. Shaun Hains*The Backstory*

I approached Dr. Shaun Hains for ecocritical support as an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper, current psychologist, retired teacher, and scholar residing on Treaty 6 territory. I was humbled and grateful for her assistance. Her support furthered my knowledge of the local terms and landscaping topographies that surfaced during my meetings with former students. She also knew all too well, through professional experiences, about the diverse schooling contexts I was considering while attempting to find more of an intercultural understanding to make sense of mental health.

Before this inquiry for research, I knew of Dr. Hains as a former colleague and a highly regarded member of the Métis Nation of Alberta as a Hereditary Chief. Moreover, Dr. Hains has significantly contributed to academia, for instance, by assisting the Tri-Council of Canada by contributing ideas for defining Indigenous Research Methods. Dr. Hains was also an Aboriginal Ethics Working Group member for the Canadian Institute of Health Research.

Less formerly perhaps, Dr. Hains described herself as a Cree-speaking Seneca woman. A gifted canoer, after all, she did grow up on the waters of the James Bay area and Lake Superior. In addition to being a retired teacher, academic, national leader, and Knowledge Keeper, she is a mother and wife.

Per Dr. Hains' request, I placed sage under the ground before our research meetings. I chose a location along the banks of kisiskâciwani-sîpiy near the original site of Edmonton's very first forts built by settlers.

Dr. Hains: In Her Own Words

I am a Seneca woman. I am Mohawk. My being, my understanding of the world, and the matters of the heart are—Seneca.

Where are the Seneca [from]? New York—but the Mohawk came through Alberta. Lac St. Anne and Calahoo are all Mohawk.

I was born by water. So, there were many nations around me. Our language is deep [like the waters of the Great Lakes]. I go into my guts when I talk. I use my diaphragm up.

I came to know Regan [the principal investigator of this study] when a massive forest fire occurred in Northern Alberta. Her exceptional leadership led to gentle care for staff and students.

Then, through the busy times of COVID-19, Regan once again led with the well-coordinated dissemination of information to support schools and students. Regan's research, leadership skills, and wisdom allowed me to—confirm my support of her work.

When Dr. Hains and I met for the first time online for this research, the recent discovery of 200+ unmarked graves of missing children was on my mind, including those recovered at Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and Marieval at Cowessess First Nation in addition to other events leading to the dislocation of people into the Edmonton region.

In its final report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or TRC (2015) has identified **3200 deaths**, although it noted that the exact number of students who died at residential schools remains unknown due to the incompleteness of the documentary record. Since then, the TRC's estimate has increased to over 4100 and is expected to keep rising. The former chair of the TRC, Murray Sinclair, said that approximately 6,000 children could have died at the residential schools. (Leddy Library, 2022, para. 11)

At this time, I sought advice from Dr. Hains, asking how she thought it best to honour all the people impacted by these places overwhelmed by loss due to genocide. Dr. Hains responded:

There are times like the Fort McMurray fire, that was a massive event.

When you look at an event that massive and you have people coming into Edmonton, you have newcomers, you have Métis ... Do we have time to stop and watch the geese fly by? Not always. It is important to me that I do.

We need to stop and breathe, that is what I found out.

The need to pause even in our dialogue. Just to breathe, that is a change of rhythm, and change of purpose, a change of awareness of needs.

Breathe! Sing. Sing to the trees. Watch the tree leaves.

As you are learning Cree words, is there a void of love? Or is the love strong enough to address the deeper questions?

Dr. Hains entered this study knowing I had been learning Cree-nêhiyawêwin to support my research of local places and place names.

Sometimes when you look around at all there is right now, there's a place of void, an absence of. I know of such love, but is the love always there?

“Let Me Tell You a Story”

It is so old. Yet it is one of the common elements of the heart of the buffalo people. And so, when you see the Elk Island buffalo, you go, “These must be buffalo people around here as well a beaver people.”

The buffalo story goes back to the 1700-1800s. It is a very simple story about the Food Bank—okay, that's the best Edmonton example.

We take time to give to the Food Bank. That Food Banks gives to others. The simpleness of caring and extending forward. Is the food bank about poverty, or is it about a beauty?

Honouring the place names is important. Knowing a place name like amiskwaciy represents the land—our living system. That is a complex system.

The buffalo story is a Sioux story in its origins that grew. It's about leaders, leaders of Human Rights.

Watch migration. The deer migrate, the moose migrate, the geese migrate, that is a complex system—the coming and going and the rhythm of the land.

Edmonton had previous events, a tornado, and fires.

So we became known as *a place that could respond best*—we could, and we became wiser in that.

So, when you look at the buffalo, it is an old story, a story of a love beyond us. Those buffalo are here, visibly at Alder Flats, visible in our communities of Edmonton. That's the love, the mahetuya.

- **mahetuya** (Sioux): “a deep and profound truth of the acceptance among other races and cultures during the farm trade and fur trade years” (Hains, 2023, p. 256).

I shared that buffalo story, that heart, that mahetuya. And when I start to think about what's good for people, or a good sense, or a good way of gathering together, that's a good gathering to know about. The gathering of the buffalo there.

With all her years of experience working with children and families, I asked Dr. Hains if she could speak to the urban Indigenous presence in contrast to the reserve experienced as a place—back-home.

When we look at how we are trained in education and health, do we really understand the dialogues on the reserve? This [question] is about a thoroughness of care. And that, I think, is where we are, and when you look at *back-home* or the concept of the reserve as a settlement.

So back-home, I have been writing about this, I don't know if we have talked about it enough as Native people. We haven't talked about [understanding reserves] in the Native-Canadian-Albertan-amiskwaciy way.

In the dialogue, what has been forgotten is the *permission* to be *new*. That is what is really coming out now when you watch the news about the [lost] children, and you watch leadership now.

I think what I am doing is to ask you to critically analyze that.

In your question, maybe keep the word (*new*) in brackets because we have systems around you that talk about a lot of old stuff because it needs to be said. We need to know about residential schools. Residential schools go beyond your knowing. This goes so far back. You were kept from it.

But are they going back to the reserve for new? Do they want to move on to new?

Now, life is new every spring. Can we pause for something new? Do we have this word (new) in our dictionary? Yup we do.

The buffalo story—how do you take such an old, ancient, beautiful story and make it new, you know, you can. Bring it back to its real meaning—*health*.

A healthy learning environment would be a place where students have the right to expect new experiences.

Yes. Do we have beauty? Oh, we know that beauty is so old. Do we have anything new?

It may be the same land, but new. The right for a young person to grow with their own sovereignty of expression and voice.

They want to paint, they want to draw, they want to respond, they have a voice.

I am going to give you—*thank you* words that are all Native. So, wela'lin—that's Mikmaq; niá:wen—that's Iroquois; wopila tanka—that's Sioux.

That's a good way! And as you are speaking to native people, you're showing respect for language at a time when we really value that. You know that's a lot. To show an effort with language means so much.

Ske:nen is a deep word. Now, as I say this to you, is there anything new? This is a 900 year old thing. What does one word mean? Health, peace, strength, civics, ethics, health? Is it a new strength? It could be a new strength. Is it civics? No. It is probably a new health.

- **ske:nen** (Kanien'kehá:ka, Mohawk): great peace; a song to continue Mohawk ways so that the tree of peace will never fall to the ground (ELP, n.d., Learn, 2018)
- **new** (adjective): from Old English *neowe*, *niowe*, *niwe* as *untried* or *novel* (14 c.) as *not habituated*, *unfamiliar*, *unaccustomed* and *resupply*, *substitute* (OED, 2023)

“Being of the Hills on the Prairies Here”

In our second meeting, I was struggling with a Cree-nêhiyawêwin term.

It was paskwāhk, which I understood in Cree meant on the prairies. It was such a familiar word for me because it was given to so many of my childhood memories, so I asked about it:

There’s this idea of the prairies as vast and expansive, windswept, wild. In settler culture, there’s also this notion of the prairie as frontier land. I was wondering, would you consider letting me know what paskwāhk might mean for you?

I look at Cree from other languages.

paskwāhk—for me, is about it’s a place. It’s a place of diplomacy. And so, we break that paskwāhk up into bear hills: maskwacis, and amiskwacis: beaver hills. Each of those hills has a name. Your prairie has hills.

And the hills have meaning. But in your learning, you are at the paskwāhk place, not the **wacis** place.

If you were talking to someone, they could explain it to you. That would open history or diplomacy, whatever their paskwāhk meaning is. So that is a very important word that you have chosen because—beaver hills and bear hills are part of **paskwācis**.

The place of being of the hills on the prairie. When you look at your prairie, notice the hills. All those hills have meaning. Okay?

And often we can gather on the hills, but we can also gather in the valley.

Now, the Cree word for buffalo is paskwāhk mustus—we don’t have as many buffalo, but paskwāhk means the prairie. You have to have the land for the animal to live on, so if you think of the naming, we have paskwāhk, and then paskwāhk mustus.

So, a prairie of love, includes **wacis**: that means hills—maskwacis, amiskwacis—hills.

“A Prairie of Love Includes Wacis”

So those hills had names. But what names? They are named after the animals, not the people, the beaver, the bear hills, and so they honoured the land with these names. So that’s just the way—that’s important.

It is not Cree Hill and Blackfoot Hill. It’s beaver hill, bear hill, you know, eagle ridge, hawk ridge, it would be about the animals.

paskwāhk is a good word to start with because it is a container for a conversation that can open up.

It’s always there [paskwāhk]. It’s present; [it’s there]; it has stayed in place names even if they have been anglicized.

In another of our meetings, I shared that I had recently learned that nêhiyawêwin-Cree was the common tongue in the Forts of Edmonton at the time of the fur trade.

I would ask: About the common language being Cree [during the Fur Trade]—why not Blackfoot or another dialect of these parts?

That must have been an issue for the Blackfoot people.

There’s so much beauty in your question. When you go for paskwāhk, that’s land and animals and life around you, wildly.

When you want to talk about relationships, then you want to go to—**wahkotowin**. Have you heard of wahkotowin?

The word means—kinship.

There’s a kinship. We’re related, we’re related. Cree is an Algonquin language that goes from Delaware to where you are, and so there are so many dialects.

When you open up—about language, you’re now going into wahkotowin, a relationship.

But to give you an example: **mitso** means eat. You know where I can find that word? Delaware. They use this same word.

Here’s another one: **nehiwan**. I think I might have spelled it wrong. Anyway, you know where I can find that word, California.

- **nehi:** *those ones over there* (nêhiyaw masinahikan, n.d.)
- **nêhiyawewin:** *Cree* (nêhiyaw masinahikan, n.d.)

One of the things you will notice is this word—**awin**. It means a relationship. But that’s a Cree ending. I see a Sioux word with -awin in it, I go that’s a little bit Sioux and a little bit Cree.”

Language spreads. There’s a little bit of Cree in California. There is a little bit of Cree in Delaware, so there are common words. Our language carried with us.

One of my favourite words to teach with, is this—a Sioux word because most people around here don’t know Sioux.

sung’ manitu táńka—and in that word, you see this word: **manitu**. I like sung’ manitu táńka because it brings out the manitou of the Anishinaabe.

sung’ manitu táńka, sung’ manitu táńka.

Well, people have heard that word—manitu. I have heard that word. That is an Anishinaabe word. sung’ manitu táńka—means wolf. The animal of the north.

Why would we have a Sioux word with a root word that is Anishinaabe? Because we were on the same water! Who is going to translate the waters?

You can’t get the Anishinaabe out of the names of the Great Lakes. We talk about them as **giche manitou**—the living waters—the Anishinaabe had such an important role in the Great Lakes as translators.

Just like mitso in the Lenni Lenape dictionary. Where do the Lenni Lenape people live? In Delaware. So, we have parts of each other's language, and when you think of it, English—it is a composite of many languages, right?

Another quiet little nation who was very good at it was the Dene. Dene words go all the way to Albuquerque. They were translators.

“Like Being In a Canoe Trying to Talk about Flat”

Now with Blackfoot language, there are words that—over time—you can see elements of another language. But they're distinct.

Now, the Cree language has a basis of animate and inanimate, so when I look at the sun it's pîsim ᐱᓯᓄᓐ [meaning] the sun. The beautiful sun, pîsim.

But when I look at a clock, it's pîsim-ohkon—a *false* sun. So as the children come into the school, it's a building with a clock, so now their pîsim has a suffix to say false, false, false, false.

When you realize that, you go; how do you bring life in? You can't change a clock into a sun—it's like being in a canoe trying to talk about flat.

“Forest Opera”

Then Dr. Hains shared ideas from her work in schools:

After forest trauma—sometimes a gentle breeze will go over the Aspen trees in the playground. I would pick regions of trees for each vowel and wait for the wind to blow. I'd go, A-a, E-e, O-o—.

The leaves sang, and then we sang. The creator was conducting the orchestra—and I called it my forest opera. Oh, the students loved it.

And that's when the eagle would fly by and the hawks—that's when the creator was singing. The trees and the land, it was eloquence. The eloquence of the poetry and the depth of the land.

Can a kid in grade two do that? Like yesterday.

Walking, soaring, dancing—use the rhythm clock—through the verb + ing. A sentence structure that can be rhythmic. Where you are going is living, not false, like a clock. Allow the sentence structure to bring the rhythm, the awe, and the eloquence.

“Remember When I Talked About the Deer?”

*Dr. Hains once asked me, before this research, what it meant when a deer approached nearby.
At the time, I had replied, “Well, that is health.”*

You just fluently understood.—somehow the deer hide is with you.

It was only when the explorers truck out across the grasslands that they really started to notice deer: a small herd of does at the mouth of a brush-filled gully a lone buck silhouetted along the crest of a rocky ridge.—These animals were mule deer, a typically western species that ranged—and still ranges—from the woody draws and breaks of the prairies through to the Rockies and all the way to the Pacific.

The white-tailed deer, by contrast, is adapted to a gentler landscape of meadows and leavy groves, where a frightened deer can melt into the shadows. (Savage, 2020, p. 208)

We protect our forests, alongside each other. You take care of the moose; we take care of the deer.

Despite a turn of the century crisis, in which both mule and white-tailed deer were almost exterminated by overhunting, white-tails have come back in abundance and extended their range across the Great Plains and beyond. Meanwhile, the deer of the west—the mule deer—have been placed at disadvantage by the changing landscape, including the expansion of trees, have suffered widespread population declines since the 1990s.—signs and symptoms of the loss of the scrubby, open country that the species loves. (Savage, 2020, pp. 208-209)

When I was going through the schools, I had about eight different kinds of drums, to listen to—women, to see which drum matched their voice. And I thought that was just the bear in me. The buffalo drum is strong and loud, but the bear is “wuh, huh”.

There are not many bear drums around, but I have one. Most women have to carry a deer—high drum, or a buffalo drum, but they need a bear drum.

The war in Ukraine had just broken out when I started with the deer image soon to follow—stitched together in colour along with my hope for a future of gentle peace. Edmonton, as the most extensive urban Ukrainian community in Canada, would welcome many newcomers due to an ongoing invasion of Ukrainian lands by Russian forces during this research. I teach some of these Ukrainian newcomers this year.

Touch it, feel it, respond to it [tact].



kinnikinnick

I also shared a developing Land Acknowledgement to honour the research setting (see pp. iii-vi).

Your land acknowledgement is beautiful. I'd like to add to the beauty of what you have done—sometimes language, you know, is as we rebuild it.

Do you know what the **kinnikinnick** looks like on the ground?

I will take a picture because I have some outside my house. It's like a small leaf, and it spreads like moss on the ground. Unami [the language of the Lenni Lenape] has the same word from far away.

kinnikinnick goes all the way to the Algonquin longhouses.

kinnikinnick—is a Cree word. Well, everybody around here would know kinnikinnick because we use it in our pipe as we pray.

Like moccasin, kinnikinnick—that word is really old.

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi—red bearberry is a trailing, evergreen shrub with paddle-shaped leaves on flexible branches. The thick, leathery leaves, rolled under at the edges, are yellow-green in spring, dark-green in summer, and reddish-purple in the fall. Nodding clusters of small, bell-shaped, pink, or white flowers occur on bright-red stems. Flowers in racemes on short branches. Bright-red berries succeed the flowers and persist into winter. (LBJ Wildflower Centre, 2013, para. 1).

When mixed with tobacco, it was referred to as kinnikinnik, from the Algonquin for mixture. Smoking the leaves as a tobacco substitute is the most widely mentioned human use of bearberry. Native Americans also used uva ursi tea to treat inflammation. (Locock, 2000, para. 4)

The naming of berries is one of those things. You know how, through colonization, we have language loss.

So that is part of our language recovery, too, finding out what was originally here.

Then, Dr. Hains told me about a Cree Dictionary published in 1865.

It is written by a pastor or reverend who was sent to learn the Cree language for the Missions. The beautiful part of it is that they got some really complicated words in here.

They [the Cree-nehiyawak] did not just share anything. One of the words was dignity—**kistayetakoosewin**.

Later, I would read this dictionary Dr. Hains recommended and discover these mindful translations:

- **kikisew:** remembers, calls to mind, recollects (Watkins, 1865, p. 237)
- **kiskisooopuyew:** *it flashes across the mind* (Watkins, 1865, p. 238)
- **mamitoonāyètum:** *mindful* (Watkins, 1865, p. 258)

In one of our final meetings, I told Dr. Hains about something I noticed in the field with my former students. I shared that several images depicting a place-conscious sense of holistic psychic health pointed to where water meets up with mountains or hills. So, naturally, I wondered what she thought of that, how she made meaning of it.

That [where land meets water] is where the fresh water and saltwater meet. Estuaries are so important to seals, sea otters, and clams. People cannot even comprehend what happens when freshwater meets saltwater, so estuaries are very important.

It is as simple as why the sea turtle is important. Growing up, we had all sorts of freshwater turtles, and we also had really clean water. To lose the turtle is to lose clean water. That's how important it is, and then you go to the water and the moon—everything makes sense.

*Life-producing,
land protecting,
the river meets the sea,
bonding, bridging, etching,
the ecotone,
a transition place,
an estuary.*

That's really two worlds mixing. Fresh and salt water.

In the natural world, edges where differences come together are the richest of habitats. Animals often choose these ecotones, where contrasting plant communities meet, to raise their young where the greatest variety of cover and food can be found ... Change is a fundamental part of all natural communities, even those that seem stable, as the cycles of life and death set into play a succession of regenerating events. But at the ecotone change is most evident and inevitable. To an ecologist, *the edge effect* carries the connotation of the complex interplay of life forces where plant communities, and the creatures they support, intermingle in mosaics, or change abruptly. (Krall & Shepard, 1994, p. 4)

Let the meadow lead.

I would research other landforms and features considered ecotones also identifying:

*grasslands,
mountain tree lines,
riverbanks, coral reefs,
forest-meadows,
the circumpolar taiga-tundra,
waterfalls,
and marshlands.*

And these man-made examples:

*residential areas,
fuel extraction zones,
clearcuttings,
and
agricultural fields.*

And there was the turtle and its shell to mind as featured symbols for many North American Indigenous people and their relations as a lunar calendar, remembering that the Iroquois referred to the turtle in the estuary as the land or earth grasper in creation stories (Oneida Language & Culture, 2023).

Depending on how we measure a lunar month, the moon goes around the earth in approximately 28 days. This means that in one year (365 days), the moon goes around 13 times, giving us 13 lunar months with 28 days each. (Ontario Parks, 2018, para. 2)

“Conveniently, if we examine a turtle’s shell, we find the same pattern of numbers of lunar months in a year and days in a lunar month” (para. 3).

Then, profoundly was an introduction to this question:

What is the voice of the voiceless moon?

Let’s go there—How do we know racism?

When there is still silence, it is still there.

And really, this area is about oppression. Yes, this place has such a huge amount of diplomacy.

Like when you sit there, and you read even the land acknowledgement, how many nations, how many nations. Now, it is easy to understand if you are standing on Lake Huron, Lake Eerie or Lake Ontario, even Lac St. Anne.

Of course, native people would have gathered by the water. But we also gathered on the prairie, and we would gather in many ways in the summer, and we would gather in many ways in the winter.

Do I pray in the winter time? Do I!

I remember I once asked a class: did we stop and think about what we lived in in the wintertime?

You know we were in the ground [in the winter].

We had logs, and we were warm. And—earth homes, we had so many winter dwellings. And our tipis would have like three liners in there if we had to be in a tipi.

But we often just think of our prairie in the summer.

I think I spoke to you about that, in the winter, that *going beyond* was just there.

*sky floors,
oceans moon,
meadow sparkles,
sunsets land,
wind waves
mountains prairie,
rivers rock.*

*topographies
transude.*

Oh deer



Field note. St. Albert, Alberta, November 14, 2023, In Conversation with Dr. Shaun Hains. “During this research, Dr. Hains taught me the importance of the “poetics of relation” (Glissant, 1990/1997) as I attempted to reconceptualize, that is make meaning of mental health alongside my former students. Admittedly, this was a notion notably attributed to the insights of the Caribbean poet, philosopher, and critic Édouard Glissant (1990/1997), renowned for stating that, *Evolving cultures infer Relation, the overstepping that grounds their unity-diversity* (p. 1). That said, it was Dr. Hains, speaking to the setting of this study, amiskwaciy wâskahikan/Edmonton, Alberta, as a place that responds best, who told me how the Buffalo people here—were also the Beaver people. She pointed to other types of evidence, including the kinnikinnick, the living waters of manitou, the songs sung to settle forest trauma, the returning of the deer, the eagles, the hawk, and the bear voice, all there indicating that for many thousands of years, a range of diverse modes of gestured communication had been formed in the local hills of these prairies as holding grounds, for protecting the health or nature of the human and more-than-human species coming and going, migrating together. These local hills mix with the plains of the prairies as features of an ecological ecotone. So, it seems it was not so much a common grounding needed in this research to make sense of mental health but an *overstepping of grounds*, so to speak, as alluded to in Dr. Hains’ interpretation of my former students’ place-conscious mental health renderings (and mine). Indeed, it is time to overstep current grounds for the benefit of developing some new ideas so that our students get a chance to be, to have, something new. For instance, we need something conceptually new in health for education, education for health, on the reserve, and naturally, some new ideas of health in health. That is the beauty, the *mahetuya*. The potential is in what we do together. We create here.”

The Implications

In addition to the range of intercultural expressions rendered in *Returns* and the co-creative interpretive exercises applied throughout *Arrivals* and *Regressions*, highlighted afterwards in *Departures*, for this mental health inquiry, there are further implications from this research to share. However, before moving on to these implications, I first want to reflect on something Moules et al. (2015) wrote in *Conducting Hermeneutic Research*—that a successful hermeneutic inquiry *does not* rely upon “measuring, quantifying, providing proof, or answering once and for all questions of how and why, or cause and effect” (p. 184). Instead, there should be evidence of instrumental (i.e., practical), symbolic, and/or conceptual utility (Moules et al., 2015). Relevant examples included persuasive positions that advance changes in thinking and feeling about a concept and its symbolism or the inclusion of ideas that challenge beliefs about pedagogy and curricula to establish interpretive, intercultural research as valid and credible (Moules et al., 2015; see also D. G. Smith, 2020).

The Findings: An Overview

Borrowing terms from Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003), this research offered “new experiential gestalts, new [metaphoric] coherences” (p. 235) to advance ideas for conceptualizing intercultural understandings of mental health as an important implication. Rather critically, the type of metaphor mattered for my former students, contributing place-conscious interpretations based on their lived experiences more so than the geographic or cultural language origins given to words identified as relevant intercultural expressions. Many of the expressions identified would expose *us* (i.e., the participants and me, the researcher) to metaphors in meanings linked to ecological ecotones or entangled, juxtaposing topographies as significant places to bridge different cultural horizons or worldviews through dialogue and image creation. In other words,

this research's place-conscious focus revealed terms linked to topographies that transude—these ecological ecotones—were conceptually and symbolically relevant to ground intercultural communication as place-conscious expressions of mental health.

Another significant implication of this research, further explored, starting on page 270 of this section, is the application of *inscape* and *instress* as literary phenomena I associate with the ecological grammar of animacy. Educators could easily teach about these concepts, tracking terms lacking or meaning-filled by inscape and instress to bridge differences between perspectives on mental health as an intercultural practice in schools (again, see p. 270 for further details related to terms identified through this research).

Next, as hopefully, it was a rather obvious implication for readers, is the necessary address of a violent and racist historicity rooted in publicized and politicized metaphoric expressions that have shaped stigmatizing beliefs about mental health here on the prairies and elsewhere. Indeed, a history of racist thinking and doing haunts mental health definitions currently used for teaching. This reality in schools cannot be overlooked or avoided by educators if intercultural understandings of mental health are to be advanced. To challenge this current reality, sovereignty over the expression of personal interpretations and translations in conceptual mental health research should be the priority now.

On page 275, I offer an ethical standpoint as a pressing implication from this research that educators may wish to take up, based on how, in the name of mental health advocacy, there have existed several conceptualized mental health movements that systemically displaced, divided, and even created cause for the involuntary alteration of local populations of people, including children. Sadly, artifacts and attitudes, the remnants of these movements, remain in many schools here on the prairies.

Now, I will share a most welcomed and unexpected implication—my former students reported experiencing beneficial feelings during our meetings and afterwards. These feelings were the result of revisiting and, at times, recovering place-conscious memories to render personally meaningful expressions of mental health. Yari, Joey, and Dorthia relayed their gratitude and appreciation for having the opportunity to share stories, keeping details linked to intimately cherished locales, including those not yet traversed. Notably, in the case of this research, our visits to these locales were encouraged through topobiographical dialogue and haptic image creation.

Thankfully, I committed to a consistent reflexive practice for this research, using topobiographical journalling and eco-haptic visuality as mediums to confront personal biases and assumptions. Noticeable to my supervisor and me was how I changed by engaging with these embodied place-conscious exercises. Nowadays, I am much more attentive, slow, appreciative, and knowledgeable about where I stand as a teacher and researcher. As a result, eco-haptic visuality and topobiography shape my reflective work in current teaching places. I am a junior high teacher and an instructor for a graduate course that is part of a Trauma-Sensitive Practice Certificate Program in Educational Studies for the University of Alberta. Critically, the integration of these exercises has assisted me in developing, alongside my students, intercultural interpretations and identifications to render more relational, familial, experiential, sensed as felt, expressions of mental health.

Mapping the Innovations

Trusting that the literature in *Regressions* assisted in demonstrating my critical concern for conceptual research methods geared toward collections, categorizations, and classifications, as there is nothing new to be done with these methods here to inspire innovation and change.

Furthermore, what has been done in the name of collections, categorizations, and classifications, historically, particularly here in Alberta, in the name of mental health research is quite frankly appalling and shameful. Things must change. Students have the right to something new here, as do their families, friends, and communities.

So, I say this: Attending to the relations of a place to make meaning is an old, ancient, overstepping ecological art to guide practice for gaining wisdom, but it matters, and as Dr. Hains has shown me, this focus can lead folks into a dialogue about something new. Know your place. I am starting to *know my place* better because it matters when attempting to integrate the concept of mental health through intercultural dialogue or establish ethical teaching practices that respect the health of diverse school populations, which can be achieved between students and their teachers (and former ones, too), as I found by conducting this research.

Overlooked or somewhat forgotten of late, at least within the Western culture here—is an understanding of the human mind as an ecologically interconnected system rooted in physiology as a feeling of fullness, a sense of wholeness. During this project, I noticed how, as human beings, in dialogue together, the participants and I—we could find but also lose or deplete our psychological sense of *fullness* as *circular, ecological, reciprocal, and related*. This insight came to me while learning alongside my former students as I met with them to revisit and return to memories of lived-in places, back-home places, no-places, and other places of residence. Also mentioned were places encountered through trips for travel and, in some cases, places revealing unwelcome abandonments due to regional and global conditions or conflicts conducive to forced displacements, sudden replacements, and even local confinements. Through my former students' translations, I was graciously granted access to the terrains of their conceptual topo-

psychological perspectives grounded by collective gatherings and situated attachments. In other words, place mattered for this mental health conceptual research project. At least it did here.

Topographies Transude. Notably, there was a lot of *beauty* in the landscapes traversed and rendered for this research, although depicted in different ways. Yari described a beauty in Khmer as *sam'ros* ស្រស់. Dr. Hains called it *mahetuya*, a Sioux word associated with an unyielding acceptance of difference, change, the Great Law of Peace that would establish Canadian democracy, and within the responsibilities of ecological stewardship. Joey found the beauty in *komorebi*. I noted it in bay-like estuaries that touched moments of dialogue between me and my former students. Dorthia located beauty in mountain sunsets with family. That said, I am not assuming that beauty is characteristic of mental health. However, I am suggesting that encounters with an unyielding, transuding expression of *sam'ros* might, for some, more accurately render their ecological-psychological sense of mental health. For instance, a reference to beauty may best reflect the animacy of an awesome/awful, inspirational, fearful, interconnected, interrelational, psychologically sustaining or life-changing experience.

For conceptualizing mental health, topographies that transude offer something new and potent for making meaning. A focus on these places known to be ecological ecotones as landscapes that mix, intermingle, and interact were described for this research as spiritually connected, inspiring, affective, and archetypal, suggesting perhaps that we did, at times, get close to rendering the *grammar of ecological animacy* (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 48). To support this standpoint, I found *inscaping* in our works and descriptions lingering in the research creations as a surrealness expressed through my former students' renderings and depictions of their place-conscious sense of mental health.

Inscape—a term adopted by Jan Zwicky (2020) in *The Experience of Meaning*, is a literary phenomenon first noted by the Victorian poet Gerald Manley Hopkins (1844-1899):

It's a very suggestive word, the way it conjures *interior landscape*—its emphasis on the nonhuman and its sense of space, of vistas; complexities that shift with perspective; attunements that invite contemplation. Landscapes are not simply assemblages of trees, rocks, and water; they hang together in ways that are hard to analyze. (Zwicky, 2020, p. 54)

Relatively recently, Zwicky (2020) has reclaimed *inscape* as a source of meaning for the “outward reflection of the inner nature of a thing” (p. 55). Along with—*instress*, which was another of Hopkins’ (1953) original ideas for “the force or energy that sustains an *inscape*” that, according to editor W. H. Gardner (1953/1981), was an “impulse” (p. xxi), acting as a “sensation” (p. xxi) of a “sudden perception of that deeper pattern” (p. xxi) of *gestalt* as form or shape of a concept.

Zwicky (2020) has integrated *inscape* and *instress* as sources for *gestalt* thinking in her conceptual work. My approach to applying these sources derived from the idea that both, as enlivened forms of literary phenomena, offer an interpretive way to identify more holistic, intuitive, and interrelated, and thus, felt associations to make meaning of mental health through the English language and seemingly beyond.

To make my point here, I will start by annotating the following ecological text that is a passage written by Robin Wall Kimmerer (2020). My sense is that it will lead us toward an overstepping ground to elicit or at least bridge an understanding that goes beyond the mere function of one-sided thinking and into feeling. But you can read and decide for yourself:

Within the circle of stones, I find myself unaccountably beyond thinking, beyond feeling.

The rocks are full of intention, a deep presence attracting life. This is a place of power, vibrating with energy exchanged at a very long wavelength. Held in the gaze of the rocks, my presence is acknowledged. The rocks are beyond slow, beyond strong, and yet yielding to a soft green breath as powerful as a glacier, the mosses wearing away at their surfaces, grain by grain bringing them slowly to sand. (Kimmerer, 2020, p. 5)

Notice how Kimmerer's (2020) work here does not attempt to understand personal thought processes. She wrote this passage without analysis or measure but in place-conscious contemplation or perhaps what I will call topobiographical reflexion. Phrasing is set *in* rather than set *up* by metaphors, metonymic devices, and images. The language developed by Kimmerer (2020) discloses, as Zwicky (2020) understood, the inscape of meaning: "not of the grasping hand—trying to hold experience [or others or meanings] still" (p. 57). Instead, and in appreciation, Kimmerer (2020) cultivates an expression of "language overtaken by integrated comprehension, charged, torqued, smelted by the need to mean" (Zwicky, 2020, p. 57). In other words, Kimmerer's (2020) passage is meaning-filled, grounded, and yet freed. So, I suggest this form of in-process writing for future research to develop more relevant defining terms for mental health in education, as outlined here, informed by Zwicky (2020).

At this twenty-year point in my career as a teacher-researcher, I cannot say I have been able to identify any inscape or instress in the more contemporary and popular definitions of mental health highlighted and contested in my most recent review. Instead, more likely, the contributions identified and regenerated by the co-creatives in this research provide much better word orders and associations to enliven and embody the language of mental health, which includes but are not limited to:

- **hiraeth** as *the long field* (inscape), felt in the *longing* (instress) for a place never been,
- **komorebi**, 木漏れ日 as the *sunlight through the trees* (inscape) *shining then filtering* (instress) to cast moving shadows,
- **cynefin** for *the way a sheep passes on to her lamb, generation after generation* (instress as transference) the knowledge of the *mountain that is hers* (inscape), and:
- **mahetuya**, as *the storying* (instress) of *a love beyond us* (inscape)

Next, contrast those terms with:

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stress of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (WHO, 2014b, para. 4)

Now, I ask, where is the instress to provoke awe and wonder, a sense of paradox or the ineffability of living in this latter definition to indicate a presence of instress? Where is the reverberating heartbeat in meaning? Furthermore, how does this definition provide an experiential, realistic gestalt to support integrity to establish conceptual importance here? Based on this research, I do point to these questions to frame what a mental health definition should be aiming to describe. Most notably, in this passage above from the WHO, at least for me, there is no sense of spirit described or felt, nor is there any suggestion of what the psychology of particular individuals, and groups for that matter, might be prone or drawn to.

That said, educators can teach about inscape and instress as ecocritical forms of thinking and feeling by identifying these phenomena in visual, poetic, or lyrical placements as an

ecohermeneutic exercise to identify both harmful and helpful definitions or to evaluate and discuss mental health and other allied concepts and associations.

The Metaphors Matter. Remember, the issue of stigma, particularly in this Treaty region, was sometimes interpreted in this research as a response intended for protection because so many local expressions revealed to be defined by metaphors and ideas—racist, gendered, and colonizing in their linguistic and lyric associations. Some of these terms, including those given to more globalized notions of mental health, mental hygiene, and social inefficiency, had even contributed to informing public attitudes in support of a long-standing eugenics project as a violent governmental and systemic initiative in this territory.

Critically, I must note that in the case of this research, it was not so much the language of origin (i.e., local land-based, hereditary or a colonial source) that rendered an association given to mental health as relational and relevant to the intercultural understandings or experiences within diverse schooling contexts for my former students as participants contributing to this research. Instead, my former students would focus on the metaphors defining their conceptions of mental health.

Take, for instance, that Dorthia would point out how places once taken have left people she knew with *not one place that connects them*. I interpreted Dorthia's taken places, these no-places, to be utopias, unattainable as ecological locales, as a tragic loss likely impacting the mental health of many local people here. Strikingly, Dorthia did not reference deficiency or disorder in our research meetings when discussing any lack of felt connection to places. Instead, Dorthia would mention how *not one place* was connecting her understanding of mental health as a gesture to shift our conversation away from individualized illnesses and toward a more collective responsibility. *Nowhere as no-place* was the symptom of colonial legacies, including

the residential schooling system and the '60s Scoop, according to Dorthia, and for me, the provincial training school in Alberta. Indeed, these Albertan places identified as sites of racialized violence in this study fit in with Foucauldian conditions to render such places heterotopias in which no-place or nowhere would signal a utopia for those Albertans like me who wish to be far away from, far removed from, such places.

Guided by the co-creatives contributing to this research, my former students, I also learned that it was not so much the language or words spoken that perpetuated the stigmas of mental health but the sorts of metaphors underpinning the meanings as a barrier to establishing intercultural understanding and relating through tactful approaches. That said, this research did expose me to understandings of mental health promoted by my former students as relational and relevant to their intercultural lifeworlds through terms that produced animating metaphors of mixing ecologies, holding, or cradling designs of architecture and landscaping terrain, and in gatherings sensed as felt in a collective, current way, altogether.

It is Time to Stop the Construction of Conceptual Mental Health Movements that Divide Us in Places

Researching the conceptual history derived from metaphors of the land here was troublesome as this work revealed the long-lasting impacts of the eugenics legacy. Researching this racist, violent, and local legacy has admittedly shaped my opinion that there needs to be a more robust set of ethics in K-12 schooling as a critical implication of this research. My reasoning for new ethics is to ensure that no student has to learn in a place where the symbolic artifacts of this legacy remain. Take, for instance, that ethical provisions are needed so that student learning does not have to take place next to a decommissioned seclusion room door or within any seclusion room at any school. Furthermore, notions of deficit, deficiency, and

disorder being a threat to children here, historically, and still now, need to be challenged as an ethical, professional concern for educators. A new ethical standpoint requires a new mental health vocabulary to set the terms in education and, perhaps, for the allied disciplines beyond.

Many of the contemporary conceptualizations of mental health highlighted as regressions in this research projected notions about human emotion and behaviour based on theories shaped by mathematical patterns, technical data, and metaphors, rendering the mind separate from the body. Still today, several of these metaphors have remained, infecting personal understandings and how students and schools staff relate to their personal sense of self. As a more balanced approach to inspire education, I recommend that learning activities get developed and field-tested to mitigate the blind acceptance of myths about the mind and body through objectifying mediums, particularly those that have historically perpetuated the denigration of vulnerable or diverse populations of local people.

Zwicky (2012), in her research of Freudian conceptions given to the theory of the mind for depth psychology, understood that language could distort, dampen, and wash out what, at times, can be the overwhelming affect of a psychological experience based on the idea “that each of us possesses an unconscious, a realm of mental life that functions independently of and in ways foreign to conscious thought” (p. 201). According to Zwicky (2012), a sense of ineffability can signal the presence of unconscious functions through meaning-filled gestures to inform ecologically orientated interpretations, conceptualizing the human-psychological experience. Very much influenced by Zwicky (2012), I now attend more carefully as an educator when my students relay the following sensory conditions, which Zwicky (2015) had identified as the felt features of ineffability. It was through exposure to the following gestures assumed to signal unconsciousness at play:

- a sense of at-oneness with the environment or an absence of a sense of self;
- a sense of timelessness, or eternity, or that time has been suspended;
- an awareness of opposites that do not exclude each other;
- a sense of being ‘flooded’ with love or joy, often as awe or astonishment, occasionally horror. (p. 201)

Zwicky (2012) would further hypothesize that musical or lyrical expression, and I believe many other mediums of creative expression, could reveal the ineffable as suggestive of unconscious engagement and, simultaneously, be activating for the conscious condition as a more full or holistic expression of psychological conceptual or mental development. Notably, in the case of this research, my former students did indicate beneficially felt outcomes by recalling stories and then spending time embodying them by rendering images given to the surrealness of their storied, transuding terrains identified as mystical, magical, smoky, riddled with paradox, and ambiguities.

I also have considered that D. G. Smith (2020) established intercultural studies based on revealed ambiguities. According to D. G. Smith (2020), ambiguity is oracular as it “calls forth a response and one which must be *new* because old knowledge/languages are realized as inadequate to the task of naming” (p. 110). Dr. Hains repeated a similar sort of message in this research in her calls for something new for health, education, and reserves.

Remarkably, during my research meetings in dialogue with Yari, Joey, and Dorthia, we often needed to engage in online hermeneutic searches to discover more appropriate terms to render our ideas, which we could not yet articulate. I had to remain open to the possibility of ambiguities, keeping an openness to the unknown.

Notably, I did find that mystery as the ambiguous emotion of wonder and awe is good for our mental health, as claimed by psychologists Dacher Keltner and Jonathan Haidt (2003). Apparently, feelings of wonder and awe can be beneficial when consciously attached to “a perceived vastness” (p. 2) and “need for accommodation,” which can be achieved through landscaping experiences if those participating are able to attune to, witness, or be present and find in appreciation the beauty and creativity within one of these traits as identified (see also Allen, 2018). Tracing the etymology of terms reflected notions of ambiguity were often perceived as experiences of paradox, revealing awe to mean “fear” (OCDE, 2003, p. 29) and wonder as “perplexed astonishment” (OCDE, 2003, p. 544). Psychologists Keltner and Haidt (2003) found in their research on awe and wonder that “vastness refers to anything that is experienced as being much larger than the self” (p. 303) and “accommodation refers to the Piagetian process of adjusting mental structures that cannot assimilate a new experience” (p. 304). In other words, accommodation involves “confusion and obscurity” (p. 304), which can facilitate the extension of understanding through encounters with these emotions as stressors requiring a reconciliation with “truths never before known” (p. 263). From here, I believe this research has demonstrated what can be done safely and with relationality, and so can be considered beyond appropriate to inform inclusive learning activities for addressing different levels of need within educational settings and for mediating and learning about concepts in the contrasts of differing perspectives and worldviews.

Teachers Can Learn to Identify Archetypal Qualities

Furthermore, I must disclose how I was influenced by Nash (1997), who notably identified “a surreal or fantastic quality” (p. 57) in his archaeomythological research identifying images of archetypal landscapes. As claimed by Nash (1997), “a landscape becomes archetypal

when it is recurrent, recognizable in shape” (p. 59) but also “unfamiliar in its dream-like qualities” (p. 59), as almost present in the form of “surrealist art” (p. 59)—a landscaping condition that was confirmed as a resonating feature for both Yari and Joey in our research meetings. All of my former students would reference ecotones in the landscapes of resonant places, intermixing geographical features and gesturing through expressive, communicative modes. Nash (1997) would likely suggest that these transuding gestures of interacting landscapes awakened our consciousness, as we were captivated by images of remembrance and sometimes imaginings of places. Once rendered, the landscapes became an access point for us to explore the depths of our collectively shared psychic notions of conditions. Yet, still, these landscapes must also be considered the phenomena of physiological material as “grounded in the sub-cortical centres, the cerebellum, and the spinal cord” (citing Jung, 1968b, p. 166), extinguishable only through the “carbon of the body” (p. 166), so also a result of an embodied and grounded experiential or lived interaction.

Concluding Remarks

So, how might we understand the role of place within mental health? In this research, place mattered as it established an overstepping conceptual meeting ground to safely, respectfully, ethically, and relationally explore and learn about personal understandings of mental health based on my former students’ perspectives as it related to their lifeworlds. Beneficial feelings were reported to me by my former students as a result of us engaging in the fieldwork together through *arting* and dialogue. So, it seems plausible and relevant for teacher education to conduct similar research in the future with students in K-12 public schools and other educational settings to achieve improved health outcomes through a haptic, ecocritical,

intercultural interpretive approach to establish tactful exercises for conceptualizing novel expressions of mental health for curriculum and educational studies.

Over time, this research also revealed to me that the metaphors underpinning defining terms need to be better contemplated before developing research designs if mental health researchers intend to bridge intercultural communication and relations for educational purposes here on Treaty 6 territory and elsewhere. Bridging intercultural metaphors shared and expressed in this research brought my attention to the animated nature of ecological ecotones as topographies that transude as mixing and holding worlds, which was very new to redefine the Western-pioneering, Anglocentric terminology currently contributing to conceptual mental health research. Many potential places exist to conduct future research conceptualizing mental health and to explore other allied concepts promoted here in Alberta and beyond.

So, although this has been a very long, drawn-out, emotional, educational adventure for my former students, the contributing participants, and me as the researcher in consultation with Dr. Hains, I plan to continue seeking place-conscious terms and unique meanings. I will continue to teach, render, amplify, explore, and learn from my students, advocate for and alongside them, and perhaps, contribute something else about mental health that is conceptually new here.

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Appendix I: Letter of Initial Contact for Interview Participants

Study Title

Know Your Place for Mental Health on the Prairies: A Conceptual Study Seeking Intercultural Understandings for Curriculum and Educational Studies

REB Pro00113591

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Background

As a former student of the researcher for this study, you have been identified as a potential participant. This is a study that intends to inform educational and curriculum research by extending the meaning of mental health by collecting place-based perspectives in support of better intercultural communication in diverse learning environments. You have been selected because: (a) you are now an adult that has completed public schooling on Treaty 6 Territory and (b) previously shared with the researcher, your former teacher, that you have experiences with resettlement as a newcomer to Canada and/or familial/cultural ties to Treaty 6 Territory as ancestral lands. By expressing your interest in this study, you will be invited to participate in a research project that aims to demonstrate that voice, life stories, and personal experiences of place matter when it comes to talking about and learning about mental health. The results of this study will be used to develop conceptual understandings of mental health for decolonizing and meaningful change in Canadian schools and curriculum.

Purpose

This study is seeking intercultural understandings of mental health through place-based conversations and visual expressions. As a research participant, you will be asked to reflect and create images of your experiences relating to the sense of places. You will be asked to participate in four one-on-one interviews, each lasting one hour long. These four interviews will take place over the course of an eight-month time period. As part of your participation, you will receive art supplies in a gift package to support your interviews, transportation costs to and from local parks where interviews will take place (weather permitting – online interviews will occur as outlined by pandemic protective measures and may also occur during the winter season), snacks and refreshments during the interviews. If you are interested in participating in this study and agree

to provide an email for communication with the principal researcher, Regan Holt, please sign your consent on the line below.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Email: _____

Study Procedures:

- The study will commence at Hawrelak Park (9330 Groat Road, Edmonton, AB) in September 2021 and will conclude in December 2022. There will be a total of four interviews over the course of an eight-month period. The initial meeting will involve reviewing the consent forms, getting reacquainted with the researcher, and completing initial interview questions. In the following meetings, you will receive art supplies and resources to create visual expressions or art related to questions posed in the interview process, each interview lasting one hour long. The final interview will include a request to recommend ideas or ways to express the data collected in the interview process.
- The other meetings places proposed for interviews are:
 - Fort Edmonton Park (7000 143 St. NW, Edmonton, AB)
 - Art Gallery of Alberta (2 Sir Winston Churchill Square, Edmonton, AB)
 - Muttart Conservatory (9626 96a St. NW, Edmonton, AB)
 - You may wish to identify an alternate meeting location. If so, please write your preferences here: _____
- Before, after, and during the interview process, the researcher will be writing down field notes based on observations and recording the interview. For each interview, your transcripts will be provided for you to review. Information from the transcripts will be reviewed with you during the scheduled interviews 2, 3, 4. During interview 2 the researcher will ask you to sign a consent form providing permission for the research to take pictures of the images you create to use for research purposes. Your consent is voluntary and can be revoked at any time before the completion of the study date (outlined in the bulleted information above).
- During interviews 2, 3, and 4, you will be asked to create images in addition to answering interview questions that discuss experiences and senses of place.
- Pandemic protective measures may call for interviews to take place online. In such circumstances, interviews will take place using only the University of Alberta's secure online Google Meets platform will be used to conduct these virtual interviews.

Potential Benefits of Participating in this Study

All participants in this study will receive free art supplies, covered transportation costs to interviews and meetings, snacks and refreshments, access to local venues paid for by the study, and information on local community mental health services as part of the interview process. Reimbursement for transportation expenses will be made upon presentation of receipts and payment will be in the form of a cheque. It is possible that as a participant, you may find no benefit from accessing these resources and services. Consider that this educational study intends to contribute to Truth and Reconciliation on local Treaty lands. Your participation may lead to a renewed sense of connection to Treaty 6 Territory, curricular possibilities that demonstrate voice and life stories matters for mental health, and ideas for improving learning conditions for children and youth in your community.

Potential Risk

This study presents minimal risk to participants. Like any other form of educational research, it is possible that some difficult memories might surface. If this is the case at any point in the study, the researcher will work in partnership with you to access appropriate supports as required, including information on mental health services in the community.

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

Interviews in the study are planned to be conducted through in-person interaction. The following risk mitigation strategies for COVID-19 will be applied during interviews:

- pre-interview screening with Alberta Health Services' COVID-19 daily checklist (<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/56c020ed-1782-4c6c-bfdd-5af36754471f/resource/58957831-a4ab-45ff-9a8e-3c6af7c1622e/download/covid-19-information-alberta-health-daily-checklist-2021-08.pdf>).
- PPE will be provided (masks, gloves) and hand sanitizer
- personal-use art supplies will be provided to each participant, these art supplies will not be shared with any other participants.
- physical distancing during in-person interviews
- secure-remote interviews conducted through the University of Alberta's secure Google meets video platform are an option for all participants at any time in lieu of in-person interactions
- new risk information will be communicated in written and oral form throughout the study to update participants in reference to original consent to provide participants with the choice to either continue with the study or withdraw

Voluntary Participation

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. The participation is completely voluntary. You can opt out of the study until one week after the date of the final interview. Additionally, you can ask to have any collected data withdrawn from the study up until that date.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

If you agree to participate in the study, you will not be personally identified in any way in the scholarship intended to arise out of the research (conference presentations, publications, related future grant applications. Only Regan Holt, the principal researcher, and her PhD supervisor Dr. Alexandra Fidyk (fidyk@ualberta.ca), will be privy to the materials you provide in the interviews and kept confidential and stored for a minimum of five years in a secure location with hardcopies in a locked filing cabinet and electronic data password protected or encrypted. When appropriate, the data will be destroyed in a way that ensures your privacy and confidentiality. The researcher may use the data generated from this study in future research; however, if the researcher does so, it will have to be approved by a Research Ethics Board at that time. The only exception to this promise of confidentiality is that the researcher, Regan Holt, and her PhD supervisor are legally obligated to report evidence of child abuse or neglect.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct or research, contact the Research Ethics Office at 780.492.2615.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me by email rcf@ualberta.ca or phone 780.686.0376 (cell).

Regards,

Regan Holt, PhD(C)
Department of Secondary Education
University of Alberta

Appendix II: Letter of Initial Contact for the Knowledge Keeper

Study Title

Know Your Place for Mental Health on the Prairies: A Conceptual Study Seeking Intercultural Understandings for Curriculum and Educational Studies

REB Pro00113591

Principal Investigator (PI)

Regan Holt, PhD(C)
Department of Secondary Education,
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6H 4R1
780.686.0376
rcf@ualberta.ca

Study Supervisor

Dr. Alexandra Fidyk
Department of Secondary Education
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6H 4R1
780.492.3666
fidyk@ualberta.ca

Background

As a local Knowledge Keeper with ancestral ties to Treaty 6 lands, you have been identified as potential support for this study. This research study intends to inform educational and curriculum research by extending the meaning of mental health by collecting place-based perspectives in support of better intercultural communication in diverse learning environments. You have been asked to support this study as a Knowledge Keeper because:

- You have a pre-existing relationship with the researcher.
- You have ancestral ties to Treaty 6 Territory.
- You have professional experiences supporting diverse school communities within the research setting.
- You have knowledge of the local topography that contrasts colonial historical storytelling and geographical marking.

By expressing your interest in this study, you will be invited to participate in this research project to demonstrate that voice, life stories, and personal experiences of place matter when talking and learning about mental health. In addition, the results of this study will be used to develop conceptual understandings of mental health for decolonizing and meaningful change in Canadian schools and curriculum.

Purpose

This study is seeking intercultural understandings of mental health through place-based conversations and visual expressions. As a Knowledge Keeper in this study, the researcher is seeking support from you to learn about the local topography of Treaty 6 Territory. You are asked to meet with the researcher four times over an eight-month time period. By offering your support to the researcher and this study, you will receive art supplies and gift package, transportation costs to and from local attractions/venues where interviews will take place (weather permitting – online interviews will occur as outlined by pandemic protective measures and may also occur during the winter season), snacks and refreshments. If you are interested in

participating in this study and agree to provide an email for communication with the principal researcher, Regan Holt, please sign your consent on the line below.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Email: _____

You may wish to participate in this study but not provide signed consent. During the initial invitational conversation requesting your participation in the study, the PI, Regan Holt, will ask for oral consent to confirm your participation. Oral consent is in adherence to ethical guidelines of the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. You can Choose to solely provide oral consent over signed consent to participate in this study.

Study Procedures:

- The study will commence at Hawrelak Park (9330 Groat Road, Edmonton, AB) in September 2021 and will conclude in December 2022. There is a total of four meetings over the course of an eight-month period. The initial meeting will involve reviewing the consent forms and getting reacquainted with the researcher. In the following discussions, you will be asked to discuss the local topography of Treaty 6 territory.
- The other meetings places proposed as locations to host discussions are:
 - Fort Edmonton Park (7000 143 St. NW, Edmonton, AB)
 - Art Gallery of Alberta (2 Sir Winston Churchill Square, Edmonton, AB)
 - Muttart Conservatory (9626 96a St. NW, Edmonton, AB)
 - You may wish to identify an alternate meeting location. If so, please write your preferences here: _____
- Before, after, and during the conversations, the researcher will be writing down field notes based on her experiences in the meeting place and recording the conversation. For each conversation, your transcripts will be provided for you to review. Information from the transcripts can be reviewed with you during the conversations.
- Your consent is voluntary and can be revoked at any time before the completion of the study date (outlined in the bulleted information above).
- Pandemic protective measures may call for meetings to take place online. In such circumstances, interviews will take place using only the Only the University of Alberta's secure online Google Meets platform will be used to conduct these virtual meetings.

By providing your support for this study, you will receive free art supplies, covered transportation costs to the conversational meetings, snacks and refreshments, and access to local venues paid for by the study. Reimbursement for transportation expenses will be made upon presentation of receipts and payment will be in the form of a cheque.

Benefits of Participating in this Study

You will receive free art supplies, covered transportation costs to meeting places, snacks and refreshments, access to local venues paid for by the study, and information on local community mental health services as part of the interview process. It is possible that as a participant, you may find no benefit from accessing these resources and services. Consider that this educational study intends to contribute to Truth and Reconciliation on local Treaty lands. Your participation may lead to new curricular possibilities that demonstrate voice and life stories matters for mental health and ideas for improving learning conditions for children and youth in your community.

Potential Risk

This study presents minimal risk to participants. Like any other form of educational research, it is possible that some difficult memories might surface. If this is the case at any point in the study, the researcher will work in partnership with you to access appropriate supports as required.

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

Interviews in the study are planned to be conducted through in-person interaction. The following risk mitigation strategies for COVID-19 will be applied during interviews:

- pre-interview screening with Alberta Health Services' COVID-19 daily checklist (<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/56c020ed-1782-4c6c-bfdd-5af36754471f/resource/58957831-a4ab-45ff-9a8e-3c6af7c1622e/download/covid-19-information-alberta-health-daily-checklist-2021-08.pdf>).
- PPE will be provided (masks, gloves) and hand sanitizer
- personal-use art supplies will be provided to each participant, these art supplies will not be shared with any other participants.
- physical distancing during in-person interviews
- secure-remote interviews conducted through the University of Alberta's secure Google meets video platform are an option for all participants at any time in lieu of in-person interactions
- new risk information will be communicated in written and oral form throughout the study to update participants in reference to original consent to provide participants with the choice to either continue with the study or withdraw

Voluntary Participation

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. The participation is completely voluntary. You can opt out of the study until one week after the date of the final interview. Additionally, you can ask to have any collected data withdrawn from the study up until that date.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

If you agree to participate in the study, you will not be personally identified in any way in the scholarship intended to arise out of the research unless you indicate you would to be named as the storyteller in the research or as a co-author in conference presentations, publications, and

related future grant applications. To indicate your interest in being named and to indicate how you wish to represent the knowledge you share in this study, a storytelling permission form will be provided to you for your consent. Only Regan Holt, the principal researcher, and her PhD supervisor Dr. Alexandra Fidyk (fidyk@ualberta.ca), will be privy to the materials you provide in the interviews and kept confidential and stored for a minimum of five years in a secure location with hardcopies in a locked filing cabinet and electronic data password protected or encrypted. When appropriate, the data will be destroyed in a way that ensures your privacy and confidentiality. The researcher may use the data generated from this study in future research; however, if the researcher does so, it will have to be approved by a Research Ethics Board at that time.

The only exception to this promise of confidentiality is that the researcher, Regan Holt, and her PhD supervisor are legally obligated to report evidence of child abuse or neglect.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct or research, contact the Research Ethics Office at 780.492.2615.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me by email rcf@ualberta.ca or phone 780.686.0376 (cell).

Thank you for your consideration,

Regan Holt, PhD(C)
Department of Secondary Education
University of Alberta

Appendix III: Confidentiality Agreement SampleStudy Title

Know Your Place for Mental Health on the Prairies: A Conceptual Study Seeking Intercultural Understandings for Curriculum and Educational Studies

REB Pro00113591

I, Regan Holt, the TRANSCRIBER OF AUDIO RECORDINGS agree to:

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than my PhD supervisor, Dr. Alexandra Fidyk.
2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts, images) secure while it is in my possession.
3. after consulting with the Supervisor, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the participants (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).

Regan Holt
(Print name)

(Signature)

October 9, 2021
(Date)

(Print name)

(Signature)

(Date)

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board (specify which board) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Appendix IV: Permission Form for Interview Participants

(Artwork, photographs, digital copies)

Study Title

Know Your Place for Mental Health on the Prairies: A Conceptual Study Seeking Intercultural Understandings for Curriculum and Educational Studies

REB Pro00113591

Principal Investigator

Regan Holt, PhD(C)
Department of Secondary Education,
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6H 4R1
780.686.0376
rcf@ualberta.ca

Study Supervisor

Dr. Alexandra Fidyk
Department of Secondary Education
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6H 4R1
780.492.3666
fidyk@ualberta.ca

This study uses art-making for visual expression and interviews to better understand the relationship between mental health and place-based experiences on Treaty 6 Territory. In saying yes to the study, you will be creating images that the researcher will photograph. Because the findings of the study may be used for educational and/or research aims, I

_____ (name of participant), agree to the researcher photographing the steps involved in creating my visual expressions or art-making. I give the researcher permission to make a digital copy of the photographs she takes. I understand that as an anonymous research participant that I will not be given credit for my art-making in any publications. I understand that the original art-work belongs to me. If I want her to store it for safekeeping until I can retrieve it (up to a maximum of 6 years), I can ask her.

Participant Signature

Participant Name (printed)

Date

OR

You can indicate using the options below how you would like to represent your personal identification in relation to the art-making, verbal expressions, and photography you share and create to contribute to the data in this study. The art-making forms you permit to use may be called upon to support meaning-making methods alongside the data collected from other participants' images and interpretations of place.

Please check the box to indicate and record your level of permission:

1. The researcher, Regan Holt, has permission to record our conversations.
☐ yes
☐ no
2. The researcher, Regan Holt, has permission to photograph the images I create or capture through photography.
☐ yes
☐ no
3. The researcher, Regan Holt, has permission to photograph any artifacts I share.
☐ yes
☐ no
4. The researcher, Regan Holt, has permission to use my name as the contributor of the art-making I create and share in the data collection methods numbered and given above.
☐ yes
☐ no
☐ other _____

I understand that original art-work belongs to me. If I want the researcher, Regan Holt, to store it for safekeeping until I can retrieve it (up to a maximum of 6 years), I can ask her.

Participant Signature

Participant Name (printed)

Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct or research, contact the Research Ethics Office at 780.492.2615.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me by email rcf@ualberta.ca or phone 780.686.0376 (cell).

Appendix IV: Oral Stories of Topography on Treaty 6 Territory**Permission Form**Study Title

Know Your Place for Mental Health on the Prairies: A Conceptual Study Seeking Intercultural Understandings for Curriculum and Educational Studies

REB Pro00113591

Principal Investigator

Regan Holt, PhD(C)
Department of Secondary Education,
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6H 4R1
780.686.0376
rcf@ualberta.ca

Study Supervisor

Dr. Alexandra Fidyk
Department of Secondary Education
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6H 4R1
780.492.3666
fidyk@ualberta.ca

As a Knowledge Keeper participating in this study, please indicate how you would like to represent the stories and information shared in conversations that seek to better know the local topography of Treaty 6 Territory. The information and stories you permit to use may be called upon to support meaning-making methods alongside the data collected from other participants' images and interpretations of place.

You may wish to contribute to this study without signing or recording your permission. During the initial invitational conversation requesting your participation, the PI, Regan Holt, will ask for oral consent to confirm your level of permission. Oral consent is in adherence to ethical guidelines of the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. You can choose to provide only oral consent to express your level of permission in this study.

OR

Please check the box to indicate and record your level of permission:

1. The researcher, Regan Holt, has permission to record our conversations.

☐ yes

☐ no

2. The researcher, Regan Holt, has permission to record oral stories I tell.

☐ yes

☐ no

3. The researcher, Regan Holt, has permission to photograph the artifacts I share.

☐ yes

☐ no

4. The researcher, Regan Holt, has permission to use my name as the contributor of knowledge recorded in the data collection methods numbered and given above.

☐ yes

☐ no

☐ other _____

Participant Signature

Participant Name (printed)

Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board (specify which board) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Appendix V: Script for the Introductory Email to the Interview Participants

Dear _____,

I am sending this email (making this phone call) to extend an invite to contribute to my study for my PhD research.

As a former student, I am hoping that you would consider participating in my PhD research study.

Attached is a poster outlining the topic of my study, criteria I am using to recruit interview participants who will all be former students, and some of the benefits of participating in this study.

I hope you will consider an initial meeting with me to discuss in detail the background, purpose, study procedures, protocols, and to consider your possible participation.

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Regan Holt,
PhD(C)
Department of Secondary Education
University of Alberta

Appendix VI: Recruitment Poster

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR A CURRICULUM RESEARCH PROJECT

Are you interested in participating in a study seeking place-conscious ideas about mental health on Treaty 6 Territory?

Please consider volunteering your time if:

- you are over 18 years of age
- you participated in k-12 schooling somewhere in the McCauley-Boyle Community
- you have stories as a newcomer to Canada OR as a person with ancestral ties to Treaty 6 territory that pre-dates colonial contact

Participation involves 4 rounds of one-hour, one-on-one, in-person, arts-based interviews at local Edmonton parks, venues and attractions. Interviews are planned to take place over eight months starting September 2021.

In appreciation for your time, you can expect to receive:

- transportation reimbursement
- a City of Edmonton Attraction Upass
- a personal art gift basket with supplies chosen by you
- snacks and refreshments

For more information about this study please contact:
Regan Holt, PhD(c), at rcf@ualberta.ca

**DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA**

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Appendix VII: Script for Introductory Email to the Knowledge Keeper

Dear _____,

I am sending this email (making this phone call) to extend an invite to contribute to my study for my PhD research.

As a local Knowledge Keeper with ancestral ties to Treaty 6 territory, I would like your support to learn about stories of local lands that I could share with my research interview participants.

Attached is a poster outlining the topic of my study, criteria I am using to recruit interview participants who will be former students, and some of the benefits of participating in this study.

I hope you will consider an initial meeting with me to discuss in detail the background, purpose, study procedures, protocols, and to consider your possible participation.

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Regan Holt,
PhD(C)

Appendix VIII: Guide Questions for Meeting Rounds

Study Title

Know Your Place for Mental Health on the Prairies: A Conceptual Study Seeking Intercultural Understandings for Curriculum and Educational Studies

REB Pro00113591

Principal Investigator

Regan Holt, PhD(C)
Department of Secondary Education,
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6H 4R1
780.686.0376
rcf@ualberta.ca

Study Supervisor

Dr. Alexandra Fidyk
Department of Secondary Education
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6H 4R1
780.492.3666
fidyk@ualberta.ca

Purpose

This study, to be conducted with six former students of the researcher, now adults residing in an urban setting on Treaty 6 Territory, seeks intercultural understandings of mental health through place-based conversational interviews that include art activities to create visual expressions for the purposes of meaning-making. Research participants are asked to reflect and create images of their experiences relating to their sense of places and personal place-based experiences that, in the final interview, will be connected to conceptualizations of mental health.

Participatory Critical EcoHermeneutic Study with Creative Visual Expressions for Poetic Inquiry

Over the course of eight months, four interviews x 6 participants will take place. Each interview will be one hour long. Interviews intend to draw on the participants' felt sense of place to elicit descriptive images of emotional resonance. Participants will be given art supplies in a gift package during interview rounds 2,3,4 to create visual representations of their responses in addition to their verbal responses. Each interview will begin with a Land Acknowledgement, the researcher sharing a personal story about the interview setting, and review of transcript summaries (in rounds 2, 3, 4). Guide questions are given below. Hermeneutic interviews or meetings are open-ended to invite participants towards their own interpretations of experiences. The interviewer is not looking for explanations but understandings.

Guide Questions for Round 1 (one hour)

- Do you remember me as a teacher? How many years do you remember learning together at school?
Do you remember the specific years? (confirmation question)
- Have you always lived here? How long have you lived here? What areas have you lived in? Do you speak any languages linked to these places? If so, which ones?

- Where else have you lived? How long did you live there? Can you remember what it felt like to live there? What images come to your mind?
- Is there a place that you felt the most at home, like it was a good fit for you? What words would you associate with this drawing you created?
- Have you ever been moved from a place that you did not want to leave? How did that feel for you?
- Has anyone ever told you to go back where you came from? How about, “stay where you are”? What were the circumstances around these words? How did it/does affect you physically? Can you describe how that feels?

Guide Questions for Round 2 (one hour)

- Based on our conversation from the previous interview, is there an image that comes to mind that represents a sense of place for you? Can you draw it or describe it to me? What sorts of colours do you associate with this sense of place?
- What images or symbols do you associate with a sense of place, how about displacement or ____ (the words they used in previous interviews)? Can you draw, sketch, or describe it to me? Tell a story?
- Have you ever felt a place fit you? What was that like? Can you draw, sketch, or describe it to me? Tell a story?
- Can you think of a place that did not feel right? If so, can you draw, sketch, or describe it to me? Tell a story?

Post-meeting: Collect in images and photograph them with signed consent from participants.

Guide Questions for Round 3 (one hour)

- Do any of the images that you have drawn over the course of the interviews so far fit with your understanding of social, emotional, physical, or mental health?
- Are there any other images that come to mind that represent the idea of social, emotional, physical, mental health for you? They do not have to illustrate a sense of place.
- Do you know any other word equivalents in any other languages that explain or represent your ideas of social, emotional, physical, mental health for you?
- Are there any other things that you would like to share that you associate with social, emotional, physical, mental health?

Post-meeting: Collect in images and photograph them.

Round 4 (one hour)

This final interview/meeting round will provide an opportunity to follow up on recommendations for data expression and confirm insights elicited from interview transcripts. The start of the interview will follow the regular protocols to include a Land acknowledgement, my personal story of place as the interviewer, a review of previous transcripts, and the return of original art back to participants. Additionally, the researcher will offer, if wanted, their own interpretive

findings thus far as the researcher. Finally, participants will be asked to review and recommend possible mediums to express data as a conclusion to this study.

Appendix IX: A Letter of Acknowledgement

October 24, 2022

Re: Regan Holt, University of Alberta

I will begin by introducing myself. Dr. Shaun Hains, a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta. My work has included assisting Tri Council Canada in two ways. Firstly, to assist with the defining of Indigenous Research Methods with SSHRC and secondly as a part of the Aboriginal Ethics Working Group for CIHR. My research work led to:

- The Emory Cowen Dissertation Award from the Society for Community Research and Action 2002 of the American Psychology Association
- The Alberta Aboriginal Teacher Award from the Alberta Teachers Association 2012
- The Canadian Teachers Federation Outstanding Aboriginal Educator Award 2013
- Recognition from the Women's Office of the American Psychology Association as being an Inspiring Woman of Color in Research and Ethics 2018

I came to know Regan and her outstanding capacity to lead [REDACTED] when a massive forest fire occurred in North Alberta. Her exceptional leadership led to gentle care for staff and students. Then through the busy times of COVID 19 Regan once again led through with the well-coordinated dissemination of information for supports for schools and students.

Recently I presented a Deer Hide and a Turtle Shell to Regan with my blessings and wisdom around four words:

Rhythm, Relationship, Place, Land

Regan's research, leadership skills and wisdom allowed me to make this presentation to her, with this letter to confirm my support of her work.

Sincerely,

Dr. Shaun Hains

Appendix X: Additional Pictorial Scripting Notes in Order of Image Appearance

Holt, R. (2022, December 10). *A familiar structure of an unfamiliar form* [Embroidered with acrylic floss in and through a white plastic backing stabilizer using a yarn darning, framed, and filtered using the Snapseed application for Android devices]. p. 192



Holt, R. (2022, October 4). *Paahtómahksikim* [A photograph filtered using the Snapseed application for Android devices]. p. 209



Holt, R. (2022, January 26). *These woods at night* [Embroidered with acrylic floss in and through a white plastic backing stabilizer using a yarn darning, framed, and filtered using the Snapseed application for Android devices]. p. 217



Holt, R. (2022, October 9). *Komorebi*, 木漏れ日 [Embroidered with acrylic floss in and through a white plastic backing stabilizer using a yarn darning, framed, and filtered using the Snapseed application for Android devices]. p. 232



Holt, R. (2021, December 30). *kiskeyitamowin* [Embroidered with acrylic floss in and through a white plastic backing stabilizer using a yarn darning, framed, and filtered using the Snapseed application for Android devices]. p. 249



Holt, R. (2022, February 28). *Oh deer* [Embroidered with acrylic floss in and through a white plastic backing stabilizer using a yarn darning, framed, and filtered using the Snapseed application for Android devices]. p. 268

Appendix XI: Research Outline with Timeline

Question	<i>How might we understand the role of place within mental health?</i>
Topic	Exploring mental health as a concept of curricula, for intercultural understanding on Treaty 6 Territory.
Approach to research	Co-creative ecohermeneutics (Holt, 2023) (A proposed <i>original</i> contribution to ecohermeneutic research) • Inspired by (Bringhurst 2006; Derby, 2015; Fidyk & St. Georges, 2020; Hains, 2023; Jardine, 2015a; Kearney, 2021; Kulnieks et al., 2010; Moules et al., 2015; Rowland, 2012; Stanley, 2016; Zwicky, 2003, 2008, 2012, 2013) • <i>Co-creative</i>—reflects the participatory, experiential, collaborative, and descriptively art-<i>full</i> activities referred to as <i>tacting-exercises</i> for joining attention through creative tasks, dialogue, and reflexion to bridge understandings (Fidyk & St. Georges, 2020; Hains, 2023; Kearney, 2021). • <i>Critical</i>—further signified the importance of refusal, relations, and renewal (Derby, 2015). • <i>Eco</i>— suggested the need for a retrofit of hermeneutics to set the tone for sustainable, timely, and healthy ways of understanding in a world confronted by an escalating ecological crisis (Derby, 2015; Kulnieks et al., 2010).
Paradigm	Animated (Derby, 2015; Donald, 2019; Fidyk, 2013; Zwicky, 2003) • A paradigm rooted in the patterned resonance of the ecological being who points toward the world (Derby, 2015; ‘, 2019; Fidyk, 2013, 2021b; Jardine, 2015a; Kulnieks et al., 2010; Zwicky, 2012).
Axiology	Place-relationality (Derby, 2015; Donald, 2012; Greenwood, 2016; Whetung & Wakefield, 2019)
Epistemology	• Place—as the more-than-human world and primary resource for understanding, was claimed by feelings, resonating metaphors, and animate ethical relations to teach us how to develop a wholeness of mind (Bringhurst, 2006; Derby, 2015; Donald, 2016; Fidyk, 2013, 2021b; Gussow, 1972; Jardine, 2015a; Kulniek et al., 2010; Smith, 1991; 2003).
Fieldwork preparation	Included the development and discovery of tacting-exercises as <i>original</i> contributions to ecohermeneutic research:

	• Topobiographical reflexion (Gladwin, 2020; Karjalainen, 2009, 2015) • Eco-haptic hermeneutic visuality (Arthos, 2014; Gladwin, 2013; Hains, 2023; Marks, 2000) - Photography, sketching, gathering, tracing, threading, refining, re-presenting, revisiting, and reinhabiting • Place-conscious hermeneutic journalling as lyric and visually expressive (Derby, 2015; Fidyk, 2015; Jardine, 2015a; Zwicky, 2013) - Returning, re-storying, receiving, reacting, recollecting
Collection of knowledge and ideas as gathered	Included the development and discovery of tacting-exercises as <i>original</i> contributions to ecohermeneutic research: • Place-conscious hermeneutic journaling as lyric and visually expressive topobiographical writing (see previous section above) • Ecopoetic inquiry; (Derby, 2015; Fidyk 2017; Zwicky, 2003, 2013) • Place-conscious dialogue integrating creation-making (Arthos, 2014) • Topobiographical writing (Gladwin, 2020; Karjalainen, 2009, 2015) • Dialoguing with a Knowledge Keeper (Hains, 2023; Stanley, 2016, 2020)
Participants	• 3 former students of the researcher who are now adults. • 1 Knowledge Keeper contributing ecological teachings. • 4 rounds of one hour meetings over the course of 8 months.
Delimitations	Criteria for choosing participants: (i.) participants must be former students of the researcher, taught between 2005-2008 (renewal of relationship); (ii.) participants must have previously disclosed experiences of resettlement, displacement, replacement, and/or estrangement from place as either newcomers to Canada or through a familiar-cultural inheritance or place-relationship to Treaty 6 as ancestral lands; (iii.) at the start of the study, the participants' location of residence must be on Treaty 6 Territory; (iv.) participants must be over the age of 18. All interviews were conducted on Treaty 6 Territory.

Expression of knowledge and ideas generated	Tacting-exercises are presented as <i>original</i> contributions to hermeneutic research: • Ecohermeneutic writing as topobiographical in reflexion (Gladwin, 2020; Karjalainen, 2009, 2015) • Participatory eco-pictorial scripts (Gimbutas, 1999; Fidyk & St. Georges, 2020; Rowland 2012) • Image amplification (Jung et al., 1964) • Metaphoric and metonymic highlighting (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003) Seeking metaphorical coherence (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003)
Timeline:	<u>July 2021 – July 2023</u> July 2021: • Eco-haptic visual creation-making engaged for researcher reflexion August 2021: • REB proposal submitted September 2021: • REB approval • Research began to gather stories about Treaty 6 places • Potential interview settings were identified October 2021: • Recruitment of study participants; consent and permissions collected • Engage local Knowledge Keeper; consent and permissions collected November 2021: • 1st round of online meetings with my former students completed • Online conversation conducted with the Knowledge Keeper; reflective writing practiced December 2021: • 2nd round of online meetings with my former students began • Researcher artmaking, reflective writing, transcribing completed January 2022: • Round 2 of meetings with my former students completed February 2022: • Transcribing, art-making completed

March 2022:

- 3rd round of online meetings with my former students completed

April 2022:

- Online conversation with the Knowledge Keeper; transcribing, reflective writing completed

May 2022:

- The final round of meetings with former students started

June 2022:

- Online conversation with the Knowledge Keeper completed
- Emailing of final copies of transcripts from final round completed

July 2022-April 2023: Thesis draft writing, feedback and consent for arrangement and interpretations for pictorial scripting acquired

May 2023: Feedback from supervisory committee provided

June 2023-November 2023: Thesis draft two completed and submitted to the supervisory committee

Winter 2024: Defence