

# Finding Our Co-: Witness Blanket as Co-curricular Making for Local Indigenous and Settler Relations

Jody Dlouhy-Nelson and Kelly Hanson

## Abstract

This paper reveals the journey of two settler-researcher-educators supporting learning in preparation for Carey Newman’s Witness Blanket Art Exhibit. Invited to create curriculum for students and educators of K-12 who would visit the exhibit, the authors describe co-curricular making as a living, re-generative, re-cursive experience. The learning alongside diverse perspectives of educators and community partners in circle—including Syilx Okanagan, School District, Art Gallery, Museum, and University—led to reconsidered understandings of co-curricular making. Relational commitments that invite co-curricular engagement with the Witness Blanket foreground Syilx Knowledge toward resisting colonial ways, and supporting *tmixw*, the life forces of Syilx Okanagan Territory.

## Background

Together we acknowledge that Syilx land, the unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan Nation, holds up the experiences that we share. It was on Syilx land that we came together in 2021 through a research project involving multiple community partners. The project, entitled *Co-Curricular Making: Honouring Indigenous Connections to Land, Culture and the Relational Self*, is a five-year project and in Year One, over 100 local educators came together to engage in local Syilx teachings through four land, language and culture-based experiences, complemented by reflection sessions and a rich foundation of oral and visual resources (Okanagan School of Education [OSE], 2022B). In this paper, we tell the story of our unique journey as co-curricular makers for a specific thread of the journey which relates to a significant art installation: the Witness Blanket was created by Carey Newman (Newman & Hudson, 2019) to commemorate the Indian Residential School children, both those who survived the taking of their childhood, and those whose lives were taken in childhood.

## Land Acknowledgment: Land First

*We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Peoples.*

*kʷu t̥ə c̥uləl’uʔs iʔ l̥təmxʷulaʔxʷs iʔ syilx tali əc haʔ stim at̥iʔ əc mistim  
axaʔ iʔ t̥əmxʷulaʔxʷselx lut p̥ənkin’ kl swit t̥ə xʷic̥x̥mselx*

This formal land acknowledgment, in English and *nsyilxcən*, with the translation attributed to Syilx Elder Richard Armstrong, carries significance in its fulfilling of a committed relationship between the University

of British Columbia Okanagan and the people of the Syilx Okanagan Nation. We, the authors, Settlers Kelly and Jody, are learning to express our own land acknowledgment as part of our personal praxis. A personal expression of what we appreciate in the land (Syilx Elder Barnes, 2021, personal communication) is connected to the ongoing learning and sense-making we share in this account from our perspectives as settler-educators. This learning is always in the making as we return to our land acknowledgments each time we gather. The reflections become our intent—the internal thoughts influence our actions over time. This is how we change. Learning is a transformative act.

**Jody:** *As a person of Central-European and Anglo-European settler-colonizer ancestry, I have the gift of living my life on the unsold lands of the Syilx Okanagan People, who have walked these lands of the Interior Salish Plateau for at least 10,000 years (Armstrong, 2009; Sam, 2008; Cohen, 1998). A longtime educator, I am fortunate to work closely as a doctoral candidate-graduate research assistant with Syilx People who carry traditional teachings about this land, water, and all the interconnected life forces. While I cannot go back in time, I can learn and work with educators who, when empowered, have the capacity to instill these learnings in the students of today and future toward healing the damage to Mother Earth resulting from violent, colonized ways over time.*

**Kelly:** *I was born in Southern Ontario on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territory. Over a decade ago, I settled on unceded Syilx Territory and this is where I live and learn today. I am an uninvited person on Syilx Land. In my current role as a K-12 consulting educator, I have the opportunity to learn with many different teachers and students across our school district and we share the hope that together we can live truth and reconciliation in our schools. I hold responsibility, hope, uncertainty, and humility in mind and heart as I set the intention to be part of an improved ethic of relationality with the land.*

We un-script our land acknowledgments. We are committed to being and acting in relation with Syilx people on Syilx terms, acknowledging that their land/water right is central to working towards reconciliation. We are learning that land relationships must come first in our learning. We say these words aloud before we write them.

Throughout the paper, the dialogue, noted in italics, is the authors' exchange of reflective and reflexive thoughts as we engage with the complex agential experiences of our co-curricular making journey as lead curriculum planners working toward the introduction of K-12 learners to an art exhibit of *The Witness Blanket* (Newman & Hudson, 2019). We invite you, our readers, to imagine our italicized words as being spoken. Moreover, we invite you into our circle as you "hear" our land acknowledgments, our commitments, our struggles. We hope that you might embrace the opportunity to consider your own land relationships. It is a weighty responsibility to reflect, and engage in one's own settler land-acknowledgement-as-praxis. If your worldview is Indigenous, please bear with us on this meaning-seeking journey.

We speak these thoughts aloud and we wonder how they change as we write them down. Our settler-writing pedagogy is inspired by the oral traditions of the Syilx. In it, we foreground transformation, as we have been taught (Cohen & Chambers, 2021; Cohen, 2010). We take care to announce ourselves as settler-speaker-writers knowing that every word, every image, every thought holds a worldview and an

identity, in a place and time. We are aware that every word and image is not our own, but the result of our co-creating and co-curricular making (Macintyre Latta, 2012; 2018; 2023; Pinar, 2011). We are trying to make visible the webs of knowledge building we engage in over time, and we wonder how to attend to the intricacies of respect and reverence for oral traditions and storytelling. For the Syilx, knowledge is built through the practice of *captikw4*—the oral stories which convey traditional ecological and environmental wisdom—and the *captikw4* are the People (Armstrong, 2009). They are what enabled the People to maintain their knowledge and traditions even through European contact since the late 1800s. And we have been gifted access to all of this Knowledge. How we handle this extraordinary gift determines how we go forward.

## Co-creating Curriculum for the Coming of The Witness Blanket

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) announced that they were looking for proposals for commemoration projects, Indigenous artist Carey Newman submitted a proposal and designed a piece; Newman wanted to tell the whole story of Residential Schools in Canada. This proposal became the travelling Witness Blanket (Canadian Museum for Human Rights, 2022) and, with it, an opportunity that inspired an important journey for us—in the beautiful place of the Syilx Okanagan Nation. With an invitation to support the Kelowna Art Gallery's hosting of the Witness Blanket, a collaborative working group emerged by design, through the Co-curricular Making Project (OSE, 2022A). These folks held Syilx, Indigenous, School District, Art Gallery, Museum, and University roles and perspectives and shared common relational commitments. The group wondered how the Witness Blanket exhibit on Syilx land might offer all involved the opportunity to better understand stories of place and community through a Syilx Okanagan lens. What pieces of ourselves would we and our students uncover? What might we make in preparation . . . in response? These questions were the beginnings of our co-curricular endeavors.

A year before the Witness Blanket would be exhibited at the Kelowna Art Gallery, an exhibition years in the making in partnership with Central Okanagan Public Schools, we (Jody and Kelly) were invited to take the lead in creating some kind of curriculum support that would “deepen the learning for our students, educators, and community members” (Deputy Superintendent T. Beaudry, personal communication, April, 2021), and set the conditions for educators to learn from “witnessing the students’ experience of this understanding” (T. Beaudry, personal communication, May, 2021).

**Kelly:** *I remember responding to the invitation with excitement and also wondering about the nature of this curricular design opportunity. I expressed my belief and practice that curriculum is a living process that involves ongoing experiences and reflection. It is also a community process that is situated, relational, and involves a kind of self/world making that is recursive and is always changing. We were not seeking a curricular plan that might predetermine and constrict what is possible for teachers and students in their learning journeys.*

**Jody:** *I accepted the gift of this invitation knowing I could not be part of an effort that was intended to deliver a fixed set of goals or outcomes with a series of linear steps to achieve that, disguised as a bundle—a term used by some Indigenous People with various connotations—but in this context for some, a clone of a rubric. Aligning with Kelly’s view of curriculum-as-lived (Aoki et al., 2004), and co-meaning-making as ongoing and vital to learning (Macintyre Latta, 2012; 2018; 2022), I sought ideas to support multiple entry points into a sphere of reciprocal learning, in which Indigenous voices of wisdom and a rich collection of resources could be found.*

Ignited by the gift and committed to the responsibility to support Witness Blanket learning through our lens of curriculum-as-living deeply in need of relationships, we believed that our role was to witness and participate in bringing together community to join in a process of co-curricular making. We would document the hopes of this group in ways that might inform learning in classrooms. Carey Newman described his process for creating the Witness Blanket as moving into an unknown space. He did not know how the pieces and stories that he and his team collected would come together and describes that, “rather than making a different version of something that I had seen before, I needed to come up with a completely original idea” (Newman & Hudson, 2019, p. 6). Our process would be the same.

### **Methodology-as-Relationships: Syilx/Settler Pedagogy Circle, Gathering the Bits**

To share our experiences, we speak from our Settler I's and we draw upon the form and function of storytelling as a research methodology (Archibald Q’um Q’um Xiiem et al., 2019). We seek ways to create and share stories that can move toward a decolonizing way of learning (Archibald, 2019; Davidson, 2019). For example, our attending to the importance of orality and oraliture (Armstrong, 2009) makes room for embracing a local way of knowing and being, and thus influences our pedagogies as teacher educators, positioning relationality at the center of the research process (Archibald, 2008; Cohen, 2010; Macintyre Latta, 2022). Syilx perspective elicited our concern about our positions as story-maker through modes of writing. Our research process challenged us to move away from the danger of a single mode of communication, toward our own incomplete and ever-evolving stories. The methodologies we attempt to live move us toward ecological ways of knowing and understanding by reflecting Syilx place-based perspectives of story without appropriating them.

Our methodology lives within our relationships with our partners. As we engage in the dialogues of what we call the Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle—a space to talk frankly and openly about curriculum/pedagogy decisions—our perspectives are re-created. In these conversations there is a sustained focus upon foregrounding the Syilx voice and the environmental ethic that is embedded in Syilx pedagogy through the captik<sup>wł</sup> (Armstrong, 2009).

The captik<sup>wł</sup> have served as the means by which teachings of sustainability and how to live with and for each other have been taught across the generations (Armstrong, 2009). We prioritize *process and protocol*, which aligns with enowkinwixw, the Syilx concept for governance and decision making (Armstrong, 2009). We explore ways to describe and acknowledge our relationship to the land. We are drawn to Coyote and Eagle of Syilx captik<sup>wł</sup>. When Coyote tries to be Eagle, he dives off a cliff and breaks into many pieces. Fox gathers the bits of Coyote, jumps over Coyote four times, and Coyote comes back

to life (Cohen, in Cohen & Chambers, 2017, p. 3). This experience of drawing together pieces and breathing life back into them informs our collaborative sensemaking and helps us express our curiosity and anticipation regarding what we might make with these pieces that support regenerating life, uplifted by Syilx knowledge across our schools and community. Further, how are we transforming our actions and ways of being to support the educators we engage with?

For 18 months, we found ourselves deeply entangled in questions and practices of living our Witness Blanket experiences with the group that came to be known as the Syilx and Settler Pedagogy circle. It was a title that would hold up local perspectives as primary and we were committed to the idea that all curricular makings evolve through the lens of the Syilx. Foregrounding the Syilx Voice.

The first identifying name we had for ourselves was Syilx Pedagogy Circle, a name that we came to understand hid our own identities in problematic ways. The group did not want us to take on a hybrid Syilx-Settler voice. We were Settlers and we needed to name our stance at all times as we traverse(d) a never-ending process of unsettling our settler selves (Regan, 2010) to understand more deeply. Being aware that an “Anglo-Eurocentric” lens (Luke, 2014) is the view in which many settlers were raised, means understanding that settlers do not have the readiness to view the world through an Indigenous lens. It takes immeasurable time in recursivity to nurture these understandings.

**Kelly:** *At first, I thought we could translate our experiences together in a way that would represent the shared experience of each of us in the circle. Writing in this way felt safe and known to me. I thought we could offer our writing as a kind of service to the group—a record of all of our learning for further reflection. I see that I was limited in this thinking. It was a clumsy, and possibly hurtful, assumption that Jody and I could take a lead as collective story tellers so quickly and through writing. I was assuming a “co-” when there was not one.*

Ways of being and thinking that come from the Syilx Knowledge system are conveyed to us over and over again in Syilx Community voices. We understand—at the very least—that entering a space in-between, an “ethical space of engagement” (Ermine, 1995; Poole, 1972) is a space of relationships. We work to broaden our understanding of our role and our perspective in allowing the complex and relational Syilx Knowledge system its agential space, and then seeking approaches to apply the learning we are gifted in our practice, without removing it from its wholeness, its roots, its intents and above all, without claiming these ideas as our own.

Within the forming relationships, we experienced an intangible sense of purpose. The tensions and grief and fragmentations that were part of our Settler identities signified that we needed community and shared lived experiences. We wondered how to make this kind of opportunity accessible to our greater community—to the students that we had committed to designing curricular invitations for. Within this context, and our conception of curriculum as a living, relational, community-building experience, we moved to consider how and what technologies might support us to make visible the ways that we engage in an open-ended dialogue that is generative, and in a state of perpetual change.

## Co-creating a Digital Story With An Invitation

What emerged over time was a co-curricular invitation to learn from our Circle conversations through a webpage. The webpage (OSE, 2022B) is a space which highlights a sustained focus on the Syilx voice and the environmental ethic that is embedded in Syilx pedagogy. This pedagogy, contained within the *captikw̓ł*, has served over generations as the means by which teachings of sustainability and how to live with and, for each other, are taught (Armstrong, 2009). Currently, the learning on the webpage begins with two video provocations offered by Syilx Elders and Scholars. These teachings/provocations are followed by six agreements which are essential to living our methodology in a good way, and which emerged from our conversations within the Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle.

**Jody:** *Over time engaging within the Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle, I realized a new view was opening up for me; not a unidimensional snapshot of a moment in human time, but a living, breathing, multi-faceted moving view imbued with a past, a present, and a future. Our responsibility was to support the respectful “mobilizing” of the rich and complex ways of knowing and being, and the Residential School experience of the Syilx. As non-Indigenous educators, this is the Local work we are to embrace as we take up our responsibility in Truth & Reconciliation. We listened, and listened, and listened some more. Embedded in each Circle, in the Syilx *captikw̓ł* and in the oral teachings, are principles of understanding which compelled us to step up.*

How Food was Given (Kou-Skelowh, 2009) is at the heart of the agreements. When we began to build the webpage, envisioned as a portal into the living knowledge of the Syilx, Syilx Knowledge Keepers and Elders guided its shape. For example, the suggestion that it look and feel more “circular” and that this could be done through How Food was Given (Cohen, personal communication, 2021), led to the natural connections between the recursive teaching “agreements”—the operative tenets for living which surface and recur in oral teachings again and again—and the Four Food Chiefs in their role in the greater environmental pedagogy and wisdom of the Syilx (Armstrong, 2009). The decision of the Syilx People to share their learnings— a hugely generous act—means for local educators the opportunity to centralize Syilx voice and perspective in every classroom where the Witness Blanket would be taught, and perhaps hold space in the future. The “co-” of co-curricular making comes with considerable responsibility and reciprocity, something which requires knowing how to act. The recursive oral teachings of the Elders and the Knowledge Keepers have an unequivocal nature and, in the agreements, which express the values of relationship to land/water, culture, and ancestral knowledge, settler-educators are invited to seek deeper understanding (OSE, 2022B).

We think of each agreement as a gift and provocation from Syilx Knowledge. Further, each of the agreements is contained within a kind of “portal,” offering a view inside an operative tenet for being, and alongside that, the Food Chief that helps us “embed” that in our memory—in the way Elder Pamela (Barnes, personal communication, 2022) teaches us about Syilx pedagogy and the purpose of *captikw̓ł*.

The webpage was one way to move away from the primacy of writing (OSE, 2022B). The Syilx voice is presented wherever possible in oral format, with the intent to preserve and emphasize oral teaching as a way of learning, for oral teachings put into writing lose that which contributes to meaning: expression,

emphasis, body language, sound (Elder P. Barnes, personal communication, 2021). Further, the original webpage structure evolved from linear to more circular to convey the Syilx Way of Being, with multiple and recursive entry points, signaling a less colonial approach.

On the webpage, Cohen (OSE, 2022) provides insight into this approach which holds relevance for the transformative processes required of non-Indigenous educators who support their students' learning. Cohen draws links between Newman and Hudson's (2019) "Picking up the Pieces" and the Syilx gathering of the bits in Eagle and Coyote, with the processes described as opening up pathways to inner and collective transformations. These collective transformations through multimodes of knowing are at the heart of co-curricular making.

Once the collective website was created, we shared the agreements with community partners, educators across the local school district, and the research team of the partnership grant, with an invitation to continue this learning through an online webinar. All were welcomed through conversation to discover how educators might prepare themselves to learn alongside their students, while witnessing the Witness Blanket together on Syilx land. Together, we began to take up bits of knowledge and wisdom from the webpage, supporting each other to build a web of understanding that supports transformative action (Cohen, 2010).

## Finding the Co-Curricular Makings Through Our Experiences

In what follows we reveal some important intersections between curriculum, community, and autobiography in navigating what we see as the terrain of the co-curricular. This space holds tensions, destabilizations, lingering questions from our experiences within a framework of lived curriculum and our experimental settler-writer lived methodology.

As described, the co-curricular making that we seek alongside prospective educators and students through the Witness Blanket is neither fixed nor predetermined: it is living, re-generative, re-cursive, and relational. Here, we reflect on the co-curricular emergent tensions across our ideas, identities, and ways of being. Within the co-curricular experiences there are not only intersections, but also collisions from which new ethical relationships are possible. We wonder whether the tensions are in any way like those tensions Mourning Dove explored as she used her understanding of the Okanagan (Syilx) oral story in the novel *Cogewea* as

one way she stood 'between' two cultures, not only by combining two forms, but also by using a captikw<sup>w4</sup> lens as a method of reflecting upon and speaking to societal issues. The novel conveys her view of those times through the way she chose to explore tensions confronting the new generation of Syilx in cultural transition after settlement and the divergent choices before them. (Armstrong, 2021, p. 21)

**Jody:** *I check in with myself continuously on the ethics of the work we do. In my mind, I believe that I understand the difference between being a colonizer and being an anti-colonizer. But my belief that I act to transform, with ethical reverence to local Syilx Ways of being with the land, with informed deeper understanding and compassion, does not make it so. My believing it does not mean that the people with*

*whom I dialogue (in the Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle) and collaborate see it that way. My ways of speaking, my entrenched patterns of needing to speak and to steer conversations, the emergent academic discourse in my expressions are all likely to be nothing but monstrous colonial flags in Circle. In this notion, there is ongoing tension in my heart, and I have to figure it out.*

Stumbling toward possibilities of supporting individuals' co-curricular processes in ways that are ethical, we ask ourselves again and again:

What/who/where is the co-curriculum?

What processes might grow our imagination and help us re-story our individual and collective selves?

What assumptions and practices might we let go of in this process of becoming a co-?

In the tensions of building knowledge through the Pedagogy Circle, we stumbled into a new sense of the "co-". We name these reflexive turns here in service of those who also hope for the greatest possibilities for the "co-".

## **Co- Is Multimodal**

We began our experience assuming shared interest and commitment to co-curricular making. However, in *writing* the hopes and pedagogical teachings of the Circle from a collective perspective, members of the Circle began to feel uncomfortable and unheard. Over time, we learned that Syilx land/water needs to be the beginning of all learning and that if land is not at the center, Indigenous perspectives would feel invisible. As Settlers, we do not speak the language of the land/water, and as we learned about and experienced Syilx ways of knowing the land, we continued to be reshaped and strengthened by new relationships. Yet, we continued to stumble as we continued to prioritize writing as our mode of sense-making and communication. Through tensions with the process of co-writing—we really hoped that we could engage in a collective write with our Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle partners—we began to develop a deeper self-reflexivity to honor this knowledge, without the violence of appropriation, in a way that contributes to our own capacity to be settler-educators in this Place. It took gentle, patient, candid Matriarchal Syilx Voices to help us confront our misplaced desire to write from all of our perspectives. (Barnes & Lecoy, 2021). We understood that we could only write for ourselves, as settler-speaker-writers.

Through the lived experience of sharing and learning together, we are connected through different modes of communication. In the Pedagogy Circle, dialogue was primary and we lived our conversations through words, gestures, pauses, tone. Sharing our interpretations of collective, co-forming ideas in circle ignites new possibilities in ourselves, including the possibility for misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

Language, agreements, ways of being, and telling stories emerge in the "co-". We experienced a creative culture. In many ways the co- is quite natural. To dream in spiral together according to Syilx Knowledge (Cohen, 2010, p. xiv), we must be thoughtful, mindful, and responsible for our creations.



We have experienced that no-one will experience the Circle in the same way. However, if one journeys around the circle—if one theorizes—in deep and thoughtful ways, one will begin to see or understand something that was previously hidden (Styres, 2017, p. 31). Transformative power is found in welcoming multiple perspectives, with genuine and considered attention to what is meant by what is said. This is the power of enowkinwixw (Armstrong, 2009). Educators and their students need to be able to articulate why, how, and what they are orienting their learning toward. However, with the embodiment of these ways of being within lived practices occurring within a colonized landscape, and in the context of a history that is continuously being written into the truth, we are left with many questions about the unlearning process.

Knowing that biodiversity is key to life (Cohen, 2010) and that Syilx Knowledge contains the wisdom of the life forces,

tmix<sup>w</sup> ~ There are thousands and millions, and trillions of things that are surrounding us, and continuously regenerating themselves —Jeannette Armstrong, 2021

we embrace a curriculum that explores and illuminates multiplicities of experience so that it can be seen more clearly, understood more fully (Macintyre Latta, 2023). In this view, student and teacher agency can be deepened. With that, perhaps the needed unlearning is brought forth through the ongoing contesting of shared and individual experiences within webs of relationships characterized by healthy, dynamic tensions (Cohen, 2010). We recognize that we need to expand and broaden our circle to continuously encounter ways that contribute to making multiple interpretations visible, which, taken as a whole, inform our ongoing meaning-making (Macintyre Latta, 2023).

### **Co- Is Multisensory**

The Witness Blanket exhibit (Canadian Museum for Human Rights, 2022), and our thinking about it, was a recursive sense-making practice, resulting in embodied understandings emerging from provoked feelings and physical encounters.

*Kelly: The first time I saw the witness blanket exhibit was with my three-year-old daughter. She was drawn to the open door that is in the middle of the piece. “Where does the door go?”, “May I walk through?” There was both wonder and serious attention on her face as she walked through the door. How did her physical movement, coupled with her question, become her embodied experience? Walking through the door created a memory that she can still recall and her question of where does the door lead to lingers with me.*

### **Co- Is in Need of Trust: The Ethics of Co-**

We learned that all in the Circle are present for a reason and that the arrival of each of us is meant to be (Syilx Elder R. Caldwell, 2021, personal communication). In this way, everything we need is at hand—the people, the water, the land. What the agreements based on the captik<sup>wł</sup> offered us were ethical protocols on ways of being. Yet, as has been articulated often through our reflections, settler worldviews are a barrier for tuning into the movement of informed action. Any settler lack-of-attunement created a

kind of gap between us as Settlers and the needed beings (human and more-than-human) in the ethical space of engagement. As we learned to be more attentive, we learned to be attuned to moments, more careful with our thinking, more respectful and more mindful, we began to embody different kinds of actions.

**Jody:** *Assumptions are a barrier I need to continuously overcome. I think it is about being stuck in a worldview. I hold a belief that I am acting through care and kindness. Four decades of experience as an educator-leader result in a near unshakeable self-trust, and by extension, I am accustomed to my perception of my being trusted by people in the particular space I know as education. Now, I understand I have been settler-naïve. Yes, Kelly, that sacred belief we share in students as capable meaning-makers is at the core of who we are as educators. And we have come up against an important resistance signal: students in the colonial classroom are meaning-makers . . . gathered into the proverbial aprons of their educators. We can talk all we want about inquiry-based learning and meaning-making, but if trust isn't established in our capacity to first set the conditions that will allow those students to make meaning of the Canadian travesty that includes the Indian Residential Schools, then we cannot earn a place in the interconnected web of the Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle, so in need of trust for the relationship threads to strengthen.*

While Dion (2007) offers that educators can embrace a stance of ethical learning through curriculum, Hare (2022) specifies that there must be a focus on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007; 2022). This stance requires foregrounding Indigenous Rights within a reimagining of practices such as circle gathering, storytelling, remembering, witnessing, and reflecting to raise awareness of the ways in which the identities of all people in Canada have been shaped by the colonial nature of education (Battiste & Bouvier, 2013). It must understand the power of perspective in the ethical space of engagement, alongside a capacity to set one's own perspective on hold to listen intently to articulations of diverse perspectives.

## **Conclusion: Continuing the Circle as a Shared Space for Learning**

There is no doubt that settler colonialism that began in the Okanagan in the 1800s has had a near devastating impact on Syilx culture and community and that our Settler ways of living in the Okanagan continue to uphold this legacy in ways that are both visible and invisible to us (Cohen & Chambers, 2021). Yet, Jeanette Armstrong (2021), referencing writing and relations established over the time period of 1870-1960, offers that the intersection of the lives of Syilx and Settler women offer important accounts: "Indigenous and non-Indigenous women interacted, adapted, and accommodated each other in various ways, developing friendships, respect, understanding and collaboration. What kinds of relationships were possible, permitted, made inroads or traversed boundaries?" (p. vii)

We feel a kinship with the history of these relationships and with the question of the kinds of relationships that are possible and permitted. We hope that we have made visible an account of the relationships that we lived through the experience of creating curricular conditions to support K-12 students to learn alongside the Witness Blanket. Our understanding that co-curriculum-making as relationship-making is

the essence of this sense-making. As the essence of our inquiry, relationship-making takes us deeper into our shared learning. We pick up the pieces as we err, breathe life into the gathered bits, make inroads, and traverse boundaries.

In March of 2022, the co-curricular resources webpage (OSE, 2022B) was made accessible to all educators. This virtual space of provocation and documentation is taking shape and offers an open invitation to whoever might be interested when they are ready. This shared space is a source of ongoing reflection as we continue to grapple with what and how we share with each other in ways that continue to make visible Syilx voice, the water, the land. We ask what kinds of documentation we might co-create that will mirror all we are learning together and leave space for all that we still do not know. Will this work represent acts of reconciliation or something else entirely? Syilx Scholar Pauline Terbasket reminds us,

We are all colonized here. We cannot avoid the triggers—we have to face them together. Following the [Tkemlúps] discovery, I have thought much . . . How are we going to address this with our children? What are they seeing, feeling when they see teddy bears and toddler shoes at the memorial? How do we have that conversation? Context, preparation, framing. All of this will be so important . . . This is huge, transformative work. It won't be perfect. It won't be right. Some will consider it wrong. We ask ourselves what kind of ancestor do I want to be for the seven generations? (P. Terbasket, 2021, Sept, personal communication)

Understanding that, “education is a process by which a culture expresses its reality and values, processes its culture, and transmits it to each generation” (Battiste & Bouvier, 2013), we acknowledge that the colonial curriculum is alive within our identities. In order to unsettle this hold of colonization on our minds and in our spirits, we document the critical and creative journey through our own stories and voices, for as White settler-colonizers, we have much to learn about establishing an ethics of relationality (Donald, 2016) through our support role in putting *tmix<sup>w</sup>* at the center of all learning.

## For Future Generations

**Kelly:** *My belief is that students are capable, important meaning makers who hold their own theories, life histories, and emotions. I hold that belief up as I ask: What is the impact of bias, and privilege within an ecology of knowledge-building? This question is born from my evolving understanding of the co. It is one I ask myself.*

Witnessing the agreements in action—in classrooms—evoked a sense that the agreements offer a promising support of co-curricular makings. We saw the Witness Blanket art exhibit provoke student thinking most powerfully when land-centered exploration across all seasons and ongoing experiences of Syilx storyways was embedded and foundational in the learning environments. When we share the details of this specific part of our experiences, we partner with students and the students inspire and move thinking in life-giving ways beyond the scope of this paper.

We have many questions and tentatively offer this invitation as we seek transformation—in the spirit of Sn̓k̓lip, Coyote, of Syilx Okanagan storyways pedagogy—for ourselves and our educational community in how we live our efforts toward Truth and Reconciliation. Our experiences within the Syilx/Settler

Pedagogy Circle and within our settler-writing pedagogy have immersed us in the primacy of transformation in our efforts, as articulated by Syilx Elders, Scholars, and Knowledge Keepers. We seek transformation in hearts and minds that might hold much promise for re-generative action. We seek sustained change that recognizes the whole of the colonial story and begins—again and again—to strengthen relationships and responsibility through praxis that is grounded in reconciliation as defined by Syilx community—we seek further attention to how we imagine the co-curricular for future generations.

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**Jody Dlouhy-Nelson**, PhD, UBC Okanagan School of Education, is an educator-researcher of White prairie settler ancestry. Her primary research interest is in illuminating beginning teachers' experience of unlearning colonial ways, bringing Indigenous ways and Syilx Pedagogy to classroom spaces they create for their students. She lives on unceded Syilx Okanagan Territory, with the privilege of working with Syilx Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Scholars.



**Kelly Hanson**, PhD, UBC Okanagan School of Education, is a settler educator-researcher gratefully situated on unceded Syilx territory. Currently a teaching consultant in public education, she is dedicated to co-creating and to sharing stories that generate understandings of learning as an ongoing, responsive, transformative process of community and self-discovery towards greater well-being.