3
PEDAGOGICAL ASSEMBLAGES
EXPLORING SOCIAL JUSTICE
ISSUES THROUGH DRAMA
EDUCATION

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Introduction: patchwork quilts, assemblages, and relational ontologies

My great-grandmother Ross was a quilter. So, as was customary, when I was born, she made me a sunny yellow and white patchwork quilt, which I used as a bed cover for 20 years. Once, when I was a teenager, my mother, brother, and I drove the six hours to visit great-grandma and found her wooden quilt frame set up in the living room. The frame was so big that no one could sit down for the duration of the visit, and we ended up standing in the kitchen. At the time, I was baffled as to why she hadn’t been more prepared to host us, but later I learned that she was working around the clock to finish a quilt that was promised to an upcoming charity fundraiser. As a child, I never really appreciated my quilt or the time it must have taken to make it. I didn’t understand why I couldn’t have a bed-in-a-bag that matched my curtains and the white canopy bed I saw in the Sears catalogue. It wasn’t until I volunteered as a teacher in Guatemala from 2000 to 2001, where I needed a blanket to keep me warm at night, that I searched for and found a richly coloured hand-stitched quilt in a tiny open air market. I learned about the craftsmanship, time, and importance of quilting from the local women. Now when I think of quilts, I am reminded not only of my great-grandmother’s craft, but also of the skills of the Indigenous women in Guatemala and all of the steps involved in the creation of their quilts: gather the materials, select the fabric, cut the shapes, sew together the pieces, “quilt” the quilt, and bind the whole piece together. My experience in Central America not only began a reframing of my great-grandmother’s quilt, it was a beginning for me, of developing a critical stance about who I am as a white, cis-gender settler born in northwestern Ontario, Canada. The experience helped me to become aware of the many things I took for granted and prompted me to question why I was teaching Guatemalan children, who have their own rich traditions, his/her stories, and legends, using books in English. Like the threads of a quilt, a gradual unravelling of my positionality and seemingly cohesive identity started to come apart. This unravelling continues and currently prompts me to use drama education, specifically Image Theatre, as a tool to explore topics around social justice and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action in Canada with in- and pre-service teachers.
The patchwork quilt is both a metaphor and a narrative touchstone within this chapter. My great-grandmother generally used leftover scraps of material in bright colours for her intricately designed award-winning quilts. The image of the patchwork quilt she made came to mind when I began writing this chapter, because of the different ideas, questions, positions, languages, and cultures that are a part of this research. As such, the patchwork quilt and this project are like assemblages, or collections of things that are put together, as theorized by Deleuze and Guattari in their ontological assemblage framework (1987). For Deleuze and Guattari, the assemblage is a way of representing the various way(s) that bodies, political systems, machines, and other material systems intermingle to create particular kinds of collections (p. 503). They contend that “the first concrete rule for assemblages is to discover what territoriality they envelop, for there always is one” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 503). These territories are made from decoded fragments and are more than the mere organism; they are “the relation between the two: that is why the assemblage goes beyond mere behaviour” (p. 504). The assemblage is thus a part of the regime of signs, content, actions, and passions. Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the assemblage necessarily focuses on not only the final assemblage itself, but also on the territory, the kinds of materials used, and the space between the materials. For arts-based educational researchers (ABERs), the attention to these three concerns is of particular importance because they provide a place/space for (re)configuring, (re)imagining, becoming, and being in relation to the self and other living and non-living beings. In arts-based educational research, research is a relational, meaning-making activity (Chilton, Gerber & Scotti, 2015; Cooper, Lamarque & Sartwell, 1997; Dewey, 1934) that values pre-verbal, imaginative, and partial way(s) of knowing in the continual choreography of becoming (Carter, under review; Leavy, 2009, 2017).

In Rolling Jr. (2013), Sharma’s PhD work is described through the Deleuzoguattarian idea of assemblage to question and create regenerative narratives of Indian art in times of postcolonial globalization (pp. 115–116). Research such as this links assemblage to an emergent and relational notion of identity that honours both process and complexity (Braidotti, 2019). In post-human theory, subject and intersubjective hierarchies are flattened and relational identities are understood as “we-are-all-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one” (Braidotti, 2013, 2017). In drama education contexts, framing the subject as “we-are-all-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one” creates a shift from the subjective and intersubjective (Carter, 2014) experiences of the individual/actor during rehearsals and performances. The subjective experience of the actor has long been a definitive way of understanding how an actor creates a character by embodying the experiences, habits of mind, and emotions of (an)other, before working alongside their fellow actors (Benedetti, 2000; Carter, 2014). To focus on relational encounters that are affective (Massumi, 2015) and post-human, there is a shift from individual subjectivity, normally viewed as the core for creating a character. For example, motivation for “doing social justice work” because it is a “good thing to do” translates to “becoming ethical, justice, compassion, joy, and love” in a relational choreography of infinite becoming(s) (Carter, under review). For Tsing, a part of this relationality is remembering the precarity (2015) that makes life possible and...the condition of being vulnerable to others. Unpredictable encounters transform us; we are not in control, even of ourselves...we are thrown into shifting assemblages, which remake us as well as others...everything is in flux, including our ability to survive.

(p. 20)
In the context of this research, precarity, vulnerability, and care have been central when considering the proliferation of a single view of (Canadian) nationhood or national identity that “(represents an) idealized version of history...made simple and coherent in...reference to true experiences for dominant group members that morph into hegemonic expression(s) of existing value structures and worldviews of the dominant groups” (Donald, 2012, in Carter, under review). Specifically, through the use of drama activities in classroom contexts where teachers and students are learning to take up the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), relational ontologies and counternarratives of national identity are needed. This notion prompted the following research question (RQ): “What techniques and approaches do senior scholars in drama and theatre education (in Canada) use in their teaching and research to explore critical Indigenous issues”?

The research in this chapter was a response to my previous work, with pre-service teachers using drama and theatre techniques and strategies to engage with the calls to action in the TRC (2014–2018) (Mreiwed, Carter & Shabtay, 2017; Shabtay, Carter & Mreiwed, 2019). During this experience, I found that I tended to use strategies that I was familiar with, such as Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed techniques. When I reflected on my teaching, I questioned whether I was using the most suitable techniques, and this led me to explore the drama-based strategies of five drama education professors in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia, Canada. This chapter captures the first part of phase one of the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)-funded project: “Mapping drama education strategies across Canada”. In addition to my reflexive rationale for this focus, I consider the experiences of individuals who were established in their careers as both researchers and drama education specialists in order to complement and expand the limited documentation of practices, techniques, training, and experiences of Canadian drama-in-education instructors. After participant observations, field notes, and interview data across sites were collected, I worked with two research assistants (RAs) to analyse and compare data using NVivo, a qualitative software for developing themes and codes. NVivo was selected, despite the relatively small sample size of data, as a way to mentor the RAs to learn about this software. Observations of undergraduate B.Ed. and theatre education classes taught by the senior scholars, which took place over a five-month period (Sept. 2017–Jan. 2018), along with post-observation interviews of selected participants, helped to answer the RQ.

Selecting materials: mapping drama strategies across Canada

This research began as a way to investigate the pedagogical practices of Canadian senior scholars in drama education when teaching social justice topics in response to the TRC’s calls to action for education. The chart below overviews the various classes that were observed across sites, the length of the interviews, and some of the unique approaches senior scholars opted to use to approach the research question (Figure 3.1).

After data were collected, it went through a “coarse-grained analysis” (Butler-Kisber, 2010) using NVivo software to identify initial themes. According to Butler-Kisber (2010), coarse-grained phases of analysis involve the researcher getting to know their data. These phases include reading, listening, viewing, and dialoguing with the self. The coarse-grained analysis of our data on pedagogical practices involved myself and the RAs reading the raw
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Selected Strategies</th>
<th>Courses observed</th>
<th>Interview length</th>
<th>Highlights or notes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>- improvisation</td>
<td>- 1st year introduction to drama education for pre-service teachers</td>
<td>- 2.5 hours post observations</td>
<td>- focused on using familiar stories told in a new way with 1st year students and themes of power, bullying with secondary students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- in role</td>
<td>- specialized course for drama specialists (secondary)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- image theatre</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- hot seating</td>
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<td>- discussion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- retelling of familiar stories (e.g. Cinderella)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>- word wall</td>
<td>- none, participant was not teaching at the time</td>
<td>- 3.5 hours</td>
<td>- focus on universal themes and issues as research problems that theatre can help bring awareness to (i.e. water, socio-emotional wellness, power relations)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- hot seating</td>
<td>- a focus on the use of research and theatre was predominant</td>
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<td>- use of universal themes</td>
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<td>- image theatre</td>
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<td>- research based theatre</td>
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<td>- audience “talk back” conventions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>- David Diamond’s “Your Wildest Dream”</td>
<td>- 2 part/multi-day pre-service exploration of “Your Wildest Dream” for teachers specializing in drama and theatre</td>
<td>- 3 hours</td>
<td>- participant addressed the topic of MMIWG and how this issue and the highway of tears are in the news in AB - additional material/ readings were provided to prepare students for the workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>- guided imagery</td>
<td>- pre-service teacher ed course for drama ed students</td>
<td>- 2.5 hours</td>
<td>- there was no direct focus on indigenous topics/issues, but the participant linked their work to curriculum studies and neo-liberal agendas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- warm up activities</td>
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<td>- scene work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>- original creation(s) of scenes building on Grimm’s fairy tales</td>
<td>- theatre education students</td>
<td>- 3 hours</td>
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</tbody>
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*Figure 3.1 Overview of data and participant details*
data, making notes about the data, discussing our first impressions at two different research meetings, and then entering the data into NVivo to look for initial themes. The five emergent themes presented in Figure 3.1 were then discussed and analysed. When considering the RQ, the research team noticed that throughout the observations and interviews, a resistance to explicit engagement with Indigenous topics in drama classrooms was noted. Instead, meta-themes such as racism, power, or injustice were introduced. Certain professors justified these decisions by noting that content related to “bullying” or “social justice” could be more universally relatable for pre-service teachers. Initially, these findings suggested a pervasive uneasiness with colonial and institutional relationships to Canada’s settler past, and this is especially noteworthy given that all participants indicated that they had developed their classroom techniques inductively. These initial coarse-grained findings led to a “fine-grained analysis” (Butler-Kisber, 2010) between myself and my R.As. Butler-Kisber (2010) writes about coarse-grained and fine-grained phases of analysis in which coarse-grained phase relates to the researcher getting to know their data. This phase includes reading, listening, viewing, and dialoguing with the self. The “coarse-grained” analysis of the data included myself and the RA reading the raw data, making notes about the data, discussing our first impressions at two different research meetings, and then entering the data into NVivo to look for initial themes.

In our case, the resulting fine-grained analysis, in which the researcher looks even more closely at the data in order to chunk texts together to generate codes and categories, included the creation of concept maps and charts by the research team.

**Setting up the pattern: coarse-grained analysis, relevant considerations, and emergent themes**

Deleuze and Guattari’s categories for assemblages, territory, kinds of materials used, and the space(s) between them were considered during the coarse-grained data analysis and interpretation. In order to understand the territory of drama education, arts-based educational research, and the exploration of Indigenous topics as they relate to the TRC’s calls to action for education in Canada, related conversations, concerns, and critiques around positionality, power, and systemic racism must be considered. To explain how these considerations form a part of the curricular territory or landscape, Foucault says:

> Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity instills each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination.

*(Foucault, 1977, p. 151)*

This assertion means that educational institutions, and the rules, buildings, and people that support them, have arguably been affected by the initial concerns of subjectification and violence that ultimately found their way(s) into current systems. The narratives that are told in the dominant or mandated curriculum are valued because they are what is assessed, and most often these curricular narratives have focused on a white settler context related to Canadian national identity.

Nation building has been the main theme of Canada’s history curricula for a long time, and Aboriginal peoples, with a few notable exceptions, have been portrayed as
bystanders, if not obstacles, to that enterprise. …Beginning in the 1980s, the history of Aboriginal people was sometimes cast in a more positive light, but the poverty and social dysfunction in Aboriginal communities were emphasized without any historical context to help students understand how or why these happened. This has left most Canadians with the view that Aboriginal people were and are to blame for the situations in which they find themselves, as though there were no external causes. Aboriginal peoples have therefore been characterized as a social and economic problem that must be solved. By the 1990s, textbooks emphasized the role of Aboriginal peoples as protestors, advocating for rights. Most Canadians failed to understand or appreciate the significance of these rights.

(Madden, 2019, p. 287)

Madden’s description of how the nation-building enterprise found its way into dominant discourses speaks to the need for counternarratives to be imagined, told, and retold in order to create a new curricular territory.

In the province of Quebec, where this research emerged from, the core learning outcomes for arts education are for students to:

- Communicate and give concrete expression to ideas, inner images, impressions, sensations, and emotions in various artistic productions, by using or considering elements and principles specific to the artistic languages used; and
- Appreciate facets of one’s own works and those of classmates, as well as works by men and women of the past and present, from here and elsewhere, by referring to varied criteria and expressing himself/herself orally or in writing. (Le MEES, 2001, p. 207)

The focus on encouraging students to understand the experiences of men and women in the past and present through personal self-expression creates spaces within the curriculum in Quebec to explore counter-narratives that challenge the predominant national narrative of nationhood that prevails. It was with this grounding that the work was taken up. The materials used to create the assemblage(s) observed included the voices, ideas, bodies, and emotions of the participants, who crafted their drama lessons for their students around similar content-, context-, and assessment-based objectives. The themes indicated in image #1 show how important emotions, Indigenous issues, social issues and educational strategies were for this work.

The identification of these themes also reveals that, while we were trying to discern specific drama strategies that could be used to best teach Canadian Indigenous topics to pre-service teachers, the lessons observed and the way(s) that instructors made sense of their teaching revealed complex processes behind the use of a teaching strategy. This revelation emphasizes how the spaces between the categories of the assemblage are relational and situated in particular provincial (and personal) contexts. This work is not just about learning “what strategies work” and then applying these strategies in all classes in all cases. The work is about understanding who we are as instructors and where our students are coming from, and then suitably framing issues around social justice in reflective and emergent ways.

For Participant 1, this was framed as resisting “Disneyfication”.

I use Larry Swartz and Debbie Nyman’s Drama Schemes, Themes & Dreams, and like most drama teachers do, I have adapted it in certain ways, but it is an Indigenous version of
Cinderella called *The Invisible Hunter and the Ash Maiden*. There is a picture book version of it called *The Rough-Face Girl*. So we’ll be using sculpting, we’ll be doing some spontaneous imagery. And then, after I’ve told the story and we’ve done those first activities, then we’ll be doing some tableau work and if we have time, some improvising work with the story. So it is about inviting students to think about the fact that the way folktales and fairy tales tend to work is that there are so many versions of familiar stories and to get them out of that sort of Disneyfication thing, which is there’s only one version of *Cinderella* and that’s the Disney version.

*(Participant 1: Post-observation interview)*

This example highlights how this instructor uses many different drama techniques, including sculpting, improvisation, tableau, and spontaneous imagery, to retell and reframe a traditional version of a taken-for-granted fairy tale. When I observed this lesson, the class had comprised a pretty homogenous group of students (i.e. white, female, early 20s). Building on stories that students may be familiar with (Disney’s “Cinderella”) provides an immediate context, and then retelling something familiar in an unfamiliar way immediately forces students to think about this other perspective and to consider themselves in relation to it.

P3 took up this work in another way:

I used Image Theatre[^1], generally, and then specifically a technique called “Your Wildest Dream” (YWD) in my lesson, and I have used them in the past as well. YWD was developed by David Diamond at Theatre for Living in Vancouver. The reasons I like it is because it helps, it sort of engages us in imagining a way forward. Not only identifying problems and issues that are currently exiting, but also thinking about how we would like to see the future unfold. The technique begins with a real image. I have students actually physically create an image physically with their bodies, and then the technique also involves photography. So, I take a picture. I use my Polaroid Snap Camera, a little ad there for Polaroid Snap. It’s useful to have the actual tangible thing to put on the board, right? Or on the wall. An image of the real and then an image of the ideal, so what you imagine is an ideal situation. Create a physical image, take a photograph, and then you put the real and ideal images at either end of a wall or a pin board, which is the case in my class. It makes it also very tangible for students to see. It gives them that bit of distance, looking back at what they’ve created, and then begin to populate images between the real and ideal. Then the journey of getting from the real to the ideal.

The choice to use Image Theatre in this example was really significant, as well as the rationale for using it instead of Forum Theatre, because while there are some similarities between the two, the extension of co-creating an ideal image is important. P3 also chose to bring attention to MMIWG[^2], so she explored not only the issue itself but also how a specific technique could address the topic. The students who participated in the MMIWG classes came to the lesson having read a lot of background information from news articles and had a chance to then discuss some of what they had read and talk about how Indigenous youth had made sense of this horrific reality through graphic novels, and a bit about the Your Wildest Dream (YWD) technique. This combination of educating through the reading of prior materials on
Social justice through drama education

a topic, having a chance to collectively discuss the concerns, and then collaboratively work on a “solution” was a strong choice.

These two examples exemplify how two different instructors took up Indigenous topics directly in their teaching, using drama and theatre. These examples are focused on the coarse-grained analysis because they most directly helped to answer the initial research question. With the additional list of strategies used by select drama education professors in Canada to teach issues related to power, privilege, and social justice, highlighted in Figure 3.1, RQ is answered. However, through the process of meaning-making previously highlighted, the need to consider how to discuss the tensions and the way(s) that this work was done in drama education classes emerged, and the following question arose: Why did only two professors teach pre-service teachers directly about Canadian Indigenous topics in their drama education classes? This emergent question raised other concerns, such as the following: Should white settler teachers only teach from the colonial canon, or is it the purpose and hope of education to prepare individuals who want to be teachers to feel confident to teach counter-narratives? What counter-narratives do (Canadian) educators need to be familiar with in order to teach a representative his/herstory of Indigenous people in Canada? How are these topics learned? What is included? What is Excluded? Given the parameters of this research project, it was not possible to answer some of these questions, but these questions drove the development of additional colour-coded categories during the fine-grained data analysis.

Stitching and stuffing: fine-grained analysis

The colour-coded categories created during the fine-grained data analysis led to the identification of three broad themes: purpose of education, pedagogy, and professional development and teacher training. Within these themes, sub-themes emerged (Figure 3.2).

Following the “stitching, stuffing” metaphor from the patchwork quilt analogy, these three themes were made sense of by assembling direct quotes for each theme from the research transcripts to highlight what participants meant by each sub-theme. Together, my RAs and I considered how the three themes could inform understandings about how to better support all teachers to include Canadian Indigenous topics in their programmes.

Purpose of education

The first theme, “purpose of education”, and its sub-theme, “the importance of education”, illustrated that the participants during their interviews often had much deeper understandings and experiences learning about/from/with Indigenous artists, educators, and youth through their research, and that it was up to all teachers to find the most effective way(s) to help their students succeed. The way(s) that the sub-theme was taken up in relation to learning about Indigenous (Canadian) content for primarily settler teachers varied. Some participants (in Western provinces of Canada) noted that required courses on Indigenous perspectives for undergrad students had been running for over five years. The content of these courses, as described by P1 and P3, had changed drastically over this time and one example had shifted from a course that focused on “…introducing terminology like ‘moccasins’ and ‘wigwam’ and ‘bow and arrow’…to one that discussed different kinds of cultural
frameworks” (P1). Such shifts in content were in response to students coming into their first- and second-year university courses in British Columbia and Alberta with a larger amount of background knowledge about Indigenous content. P1 and P3 indicated that they felt they could build upon the increased prior knowledge of their students and focus on more specific concerns, such as themes related to power and privilege or MMIWG. In this example, the importance and purpose of education for P1 and P3 was to deepen students’ understandings about social justice through theatre, as an extension of participating in a democratic society. Across all sites, the purpose of education in general, and of drama education specifically, reinforced this finding, where education was viewed as a way to prepare future citizens for democratic and socially just engagement with the interconnected world.

**Pedagogy**

Broadly, the theme of pedagogy was a central one across interviews because this category captures the way(s) that instructors select the curriculum for their course, teach (required) content and facilitate learning through the spaces used. Arguably, the pedagogical choices made by instructors reflect the stances that they have in regards to how they view the purpose and importance of education. As seen in the first theme, P1 and P3 were aware of cross-programme content shifts in relation to Indigenous topics in their respective undergraduate teacher education programmes, and of how these changes played out for them in the pedagogical space. Both P1 and P3 also spoke in their interviews about direct experiences of working in community or in collaboration with Indigenous people and scholars as a part of their research. In particular, these personal and lived experiences had had a direct impact on the way(s) that they thought about the lessons that they chose to teach and how to teach them. P1 and P3 were the only participants who directly included Indigenous topics in their teaching. For example, P3 set up the learning space by asking students to come to her workshops on MMWIG, having done prior reading on the topic.
She then chose to intentionally create a collective opening inspired by Image Theatre that “honoured ceremony, but did not appropriate the ceremony, because I don’t feel I have the right to do that” (P3, Fall 2017). P4 and P5, despite not directly focusing on teaching their students about Indigenous content in the drama classroom, focused on fairy tales that, as P5 described, have a

… moral … but it’s not just about what’s at the bottom of a moral, it’s what’s behind it, how it can be a carrier of an idea, an image, things like that, and of their values too. So it becomes something interesting, and how to translate that and how to be pushed by that, too.

(P5, Fall 2017)

The pedagogical focus on learning about fairy tales with morals embedded in them was also used by P1 and P4 because they felt that this pedagogical choice helped them to “kind of sidestep cultural appropriation questions by just inviting students to have a brief but quite genuine lived experience” (P1, Fall 2017).

**Professional development and teacher training**

The final identified theme in the fine-grained analysis focused on in- and pre-service teacher training. In addition to being aware of the Indigenous education courses across their B.Ed. programme for P1 and P3, and how the level of background knowledge of students in a topic area could permit instructors in drama to go further into exploring Indigenous topics, was a conversation around teacher and student emotional responses. A need to focus on offering “proper support” for the emotional responses that can emerge for students in drama education came up, because drama can intensify, bring up, and help students to release and express emotions. Because P3 was concerned about exploring MMIWG, a “heavy topic”, she chose to use YWD to do this work because “I think that’s another thing that I like about the Wildest Dream technique, because it looks at issues but it doesn’t get too emotionally intense, because I don’t want to take students in such a short time to some place that I’m not prepared to follow up with” (P3, Fall 2017). This consideration of how to limit and manage the work being done in the dramatic space was also discussed by P1 when she found herself teaching pre-service teachers who primarily taught in reserve schools and decided she had to reconsider her own approach to teaching in order to better meet the needs of her students, whose own needs were unique.

These conversations underline positionality and how its importance for one’s awareness of their own relationship to themselves and the topics being explored is central to this work. Even the way(s) that academics talk about the work of the TRC varies as a result of positionality. For non-Indigenous folks, “truth”, “reconciliation” and “forgiveness” are terms that are often used to understand and engage with the calls to action of the TRC. However, as P1 and P3 both highlighted in their experiences working alongside Indigenous educators and in community, they face reminders that these terms are not always appropriate or relevant. As P1 described a discussion with a student:

…he just kept gently saying, “That’s your term; we’re interested in resurgence,” right, and the difference between reconciliation and resurgence. So from our side – the dominant culture side – it’s like, well, to reconcile. You know: “We’re reaching
out our hands and you’re taking our hands and we’re going to build bridges and we’re going to fix things.” Right? And from the Indigenous side that can seem like a lot of bullshit.

(P1, Fall 2017)

This underscores that:

… if you do your research and you do your work, you definitely have to teach about the TRC… It’s not like saying, I’m not gonna do it because I’m not Indigenous. So, that’s the message that needs to come across. Yes, you can do your research, invite elders, speak to them, research, bring in people who can start a conversation with you.

(Vicaire in Carter, under review, p. 76)

**Binding: assemblages and understandings**

The understandings from this research shifted from a pragmatic focus on learning more about what drama education strategies could be used to “most effectively teach Indigenous topics” to a consideration of how the multilayered and sometimes contradictory relational assemblages of our individual and collective identities are always becoming. In a country such as Canada, where the legacies of colonialism and assimilation have recently called into question the very identity we have of ourselves as a nation, an ongoing commitment to what it means to “be” in relation to oneself, one’s his/herstory, and how the dominant narratives that many of us have grown up with are partial and problematic is required. For settlers who seek to teach Indigenous topics, this may mean that before we consider how we want to teach, we need to ask for help or partner with Indigenous people(s), and/or to “unsettle” ourselves before coming to this work by understanding white privilege, intersectionality, positionality, and that we need to start social justice work from a place of openness where we listen more than we speak. As the post-human view of the subject contends, we-are-all-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one. This means that we have spaces between us that may be incommensurable, but simultaneously there is a togetherness in our difference that requires human and non-human to work together through hopeful affects that seek belonging through becoming.

**Notes**

1 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada was officially launched in 2008 as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). It intended to establish a process that would guide Canadians through the difficult discovery of the facts behind the residential school system. The TRC was also meant to lay the foundation for lasting reconciliation across Canada.

2 Indigenous: In 2016, the federal government of Canada replaced the term “Aboriginal” with “Indigenous” in government communications; some have argued that this was a “giant step back” because it reifies a nation-to-nation relationship between “Indigenous” and “Non-Indigenous” people in Canada (Joseph, 2018). The term “Indigenous” refers to the people who are indigenous to a place/land, and in Canada this is a collective term for “First Nation, Inuit, Metis” (Joseph, 2018, p. 12). In the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada), over 1.6 million people in Canada identified as Indigenous, making up 4.9 per cent of the national population.

3 Pseudonyms have been used for participants and research assistants. This research is funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada and has received research ethics board approval from McGill University, University of Victoria, University of Alberta, Brock University, and Laval University.
4 Image Theatre is a series of techniques that allow people to communicate through images and spaces, and not through words alone. It is a technique of Theatre of the Oppressed in which a group of people sculpt their own or each other’s bodies to express attitudes and emotions towards a given theme, such as bullying. They do this by individually stepping into the centre of a circle and remaking a still image to create tableaus —vivid graphic scenes presented by a group of people arranged as in a painting or sculpture. Because the sculptor should not speak while they shape the other participants, it allows for participants’ reflection and exploration of different kinds of imbalances in power.

5 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) is a human rights crisis affecting Indigenous people in Canada and the United States, including the First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and Native American communities. It refers to the issue of high and disproportionate rates of violence and the appalling numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada and the United States. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada supported the call for a national public inquiry into the disproportionate victimization of Indigenous women and girls. The National Inquiry’s Final Report was completed and presented to the public on June 3, 2019.

6 In Carter (under review) and Carter and Mreiwed (2017), parallel research explored through consultation with Ethel Jean Stevenson, Elder and Muskego Cree, and band member of Peguis First Nation, in Manitoba, Canada, and Allan Vicaire, Mi’gmaq from Listugui, and Director of First People’s House at McGill University, what topics were important for pre- and in-service teachers to learn and teach about. Some of these topics included: Indian Residential Schools; the higher than average suicide rates for Indigenous youth; the Indian Act; and concerns related to assimilation, colonization, the introduction of alcohol to some native communities, the fur trade, and youth and prescription pills.

References

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