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WITNESSING THE WALKING WITH OUR SISTERS
EXHIBIT/MEMORIAL: LEARNING FROM TRAUMA

Leisa Desmoulins

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WITNESSING THE WALKING WITH OUR SISTERS EXHIBIT/MEMORIAL: LEARNING FROM TRAUMA

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Abstract

This article reports on a recent study into volunteers' experiences in learning from the Walking With Our Sisters (WWOS) commemorative exhibit to honour missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. The study is grounded in Indigenous pedagogical possibilities of educational transformations within the context of learning from Indigenous commemorative exhibits that tell the hard truths of colonization (Lonetree, 2009) through visual testimony and witnessing of the stories of Indigenous Peoples. Bearing witness responds to the call of testimony to act for justice (Laub, 1992). Interviews with 15 participants at a site of the WWOS touring commemoration provided insights into a learning process of remembrance, embodied knowing, and acting for change. Engaging with WWOS reshaped participants' relationships to events and people in the past as transformative learning. Participants formed generative relationships and acted for justice for Indigenous women and girls today.

Résumé

Cet article présente les résultats d'une étude récemment menée sur les expériences d'apprentissage de bénévoles relatives à l'exposition commémorative Walking With Our Sisters (WWOS) à l'honneur des femmes et filles autochtones assassinées et disparues. L'étude se fonde sur les possibilités pédagogiques de transformation éducationnelle autochtones dans le contexte de leçons tirées d'expositions commémoratives autochtones qui exposent les dures réalités de la colonisation (Lonetree, 2009) à l'aide de récits visuels et de témoignages de parcours de peuples autochtones. Ces actes répondent à l'appel du témoignage pour agir au nom de la justice (Laub, 1992). Des entretiens avec quinze personnes participantes sur l'un des lieux de cette tournée commémorative ont permis de mieux comprendre le processus d'apprentissage axé sur la commémoration, sur les connaissances incarnées et sur les actions pour le changement. Leur engagement avec WWOS a remodelé les relations des personnes participantes aux événements et aux personnages d'autrefois pour en faire des expériences transformationnelles d'apprentissage. Les personnes

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participantes ont créé des relations génératrices et ont agi pour la justice pour les femmes et les filles d'aujourd'hui.

On a gorgeous late September evening in 2014, I took a class of graduate students to view the *Walking With Our Sisters* (WWOS) exhibit/memorial at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery (TBAG). Beforehand, Vivian,¹ a staff member at TBAG, visited our class to discuss how the WWOS had emerged from Christi Belcourt's desire to respond to the ongoing trauma of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls through an installation of beaded moccasin vamps—the uppers of moccasins—that are intentionally left unfinished to mark the women's and girls unfinished lives. More than 1,700 pairs of vamps were made and contributed to WWOS by caring souls.² An additional 108 pairs of children's vamps had recently been added in the spring of 2014 to "honour the hundreds of children who never returned home" ("Walking With Our Sisters," 2015, para. 2). These vamps were added at Algoma University, the site of the former Shingwauk Indian Residential School (for more information, see Dewar, 2015).

Vivian explained that a National Collective oversees the WWOS as it tours in galleries and museums within Canada and the United States. A local collective leads each site (Walking With Our Sisters, 2018). Prior to the 2014 installation at TBAG, an Elder from the Fort William First Nation had cared for the vamps in her home. The local collective also hosted bead-ins, community conversations, and other events before and during the WWOS installation. At the conclusion of her talk, Vivian invited us to attend these events or volunteer at the installation. Then she accompanied us to the gallery.

At the gallery, Vivian asked us to remove our shoes, led us into a waiting area, introduced us to an Elder, and left us with her. The Elder offered us tobacco ties, tissues, and skirts for women to wear, and smudged our group to purify our hearts and minds. After preparing us, she asked for silence as our group entered the lodge together. We "walked with" the Sisters alongside the vamps on a cloth path underlain with cedar boughs. The beauty of the beadwork and other sacred items around the room that honour the women's and girls' lives were juxtaposed with the tragedy of the many missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. An honour song by a women's drum group played softly in the background. Together, we wended our way along the path, with heads bowed to view the vamps, until we arrived at the centre. Here, baby vamps were arranged and shaped to represent Turtle Island. The path then led us out of the lodge, where we dropped our used tissues into a container and then exited through the western door. Each of us then went our own way to reflect on what we had seen, experienced, and learned. I was struck by how the installation affected all of us.

From this experience, I sought to explore whether, and how, the WWOS touring exhibit/memorial acts as a site for learning within museums and galleries that might motivate action and contribute to justice. This article focuses on the WWOS commemorative art

1 I use Vivian's and Leanna's names with their permission. Names for all others are pseudonyms. While many participants granted permission for me to use their names within the research, I respect other participants' preference for a pseudonym by giving pseudonyms to all.

2 See the WWOS website for the names of all caring souls who contributed vamps. As well, the WWOS's website uses a Google map to show where the moccasin vamps originated (<http://walkingwithoursisters.ca/about/map/>).

installation that brought the trauma of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls into the public gallery space of the Thunder Bay Art Gallery. It explores how bearing witness to this exhibit led to learning for participants. In this article, I argue that participants learn from witnessing the testimony of the vamps through Indigenous pedagogies.

As a very brief overview, Indigenous pedagogies have several features that are relevant to this study. They are grounded in local Indigenous epistemologies (Battiste, 2002; Ermine, 1995; Wilson, 2008). They emerge from incorporeal (from within rather than outside of oneself) (Ermine, 1995) and local Indigenous knowledges (Castellano, 2004) and ways of doing (Simpson, 2011). Indigenous pedagogies are embedded with knowledges that emerge through “ceremonies, teaching and cultural expressions” (Settee, 2011, p. 437), place (Simpson, 2014; Wane, 2011), and community (Marker, 2011; Simpson, 2014). The process of coming to know is “learner-led and profoundly spiritual in nature” (Simpson, 2011, p. 151). While Simpson (2011) used “whole body intelligence” (p. 151), Lane, Bopp, Bopp, Brown, and Elders (1985) explained that Indigenous pedagogies engage all aspects of a learner’s being—mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. These pedagogies are transformative, which Battiste (2011) explained “is about incremental change, taken in a number of steps in multiple sites of struggle” (p. xxiii). The WWOS commemorative installation brings Indigenous pedagogies into museums and galleries for transformative learning and acting for justice for Indigenous women and girls today.

In the sections that follow, I review the literature on remembrance, testimonies, responsibilities of witnessing, and the nexus of ceremony and learning from Indigenous Peoples. I describe the Indigenous methodology that I followed for this study and the methods I used. Findings share participants’ rich experiences and stories through three themes: remembrance and awareness through art and ceremony; embodied knowing about the trauma of these women’s lives; and acting for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls today. The discussion shows that participants’ pedagogical witnessing is relational and generative. To begin, I introduce myself, the WWOS, and the research approach from which this article is drawn.

Personal Introduction

I am an educator and researcher who gained Indian status through marriage. This status connected me to Biigtigong Nishnaabeg (formerly known as Pic River First Nation). My husband and I raised our three Anishnaabe children in the urban Aboriginal community of Thunder Bay, where I live and work. These connections to family and communities inspire my research, which focuses on community-led initiatives in education and its interconnections to justice. Within the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University, I teach undergraduate and graduate students in the Department of Aboriginal Education and the Department of Graduate Studies and Research, respectively.

The WWOS installation

WWOS seeks to end the silence around missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, create awareness of the historical and ongoing trauma, honour the women’s and girls’ lives, and provide love to their grieving families. The commemoration has toured across North America since 2013. At each location, local volunteers (local Elders and knowledge keepers, Indigenous community members, and other citizens) and gallery staff form a

collective to host the exhibit/memorial, guided by members of the National Collective. Sandals (2014) interviewed Belcourt, the artist who conceived of WWOS and gathered a National Collective to aid in implementing the exhibit/memorial. During the interview, Belcourt described the process of how the group works to transform the space for the commemoration:

Basically, we take a space, whether it's a community space or a gallery, and all that matters is the community then transforms it into a sacred space, and the ceremony is held for the 10-days-to-3-weeks duration. Then everything is wrapped up and it goes on to the next location. (in Sandals, 2014)

Importantly, these are public places for informal learning that are transformed into sacred spaces by community members and gallery staff, guided by local Elders and grandmothers.

In another interview, Belcourt explained the importance of local Indigenous knowledges and ceremonies for the commemoration: "We're bringing Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ceremonial practices into this space...It's not an exhibit: it's a memorial" (in Tabobondung, 2014). A closing ceremony took place in Batoche, Saskatchewan, in summer 2019.

Much of the relevant literature on memorial exhibits in museums and art galleries examines how curators connect testimony to learning for visitors to remember and witness the aftermath of violence and trauma (Igloliorte, 2011; Lehrer, 2015; Simon, 2014). I found several examples of learning from Indigenous Peoples and from commemorations within museums and galleries that are relevant to my study. Two examples explored engagement with the residential school system in Canada. Robinson and Martin (2016) edited a collection of writers on aesthetic engagement with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and Igloliorte (2011) developed an exhibit on Inuit residential schools with school survivors who continue to heal from their experiences. She found that successful curation allowed for audience dialogue and reclaiming Indigenous perspectives for the public, for public history, and within the archives. The final example comes from Susan Dion's (2009) experience of visiting the Hall of Fame at the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brampton, Ontario, with her brother. Dion and her brother were inspired by the relationship between testimony and witnessing to shape the way Aboriginal Peoples are remembered and represented in museums and gallery spaces and the pedagogical possibilities of witnessing. Together they sought to retell the stories, ones that "provide alternative representations of Aboriginal people" (p. 12) and "contribute to a discourse that affirms the humanity and agency of Aboriginal people" (p. 13). My study of WWOS builds on learning from Indigenous Peoples within the informal learning spaces of museums and galleries. Lehrer and Milton (2011), however, noted that few studies have asked about visitors' responses to remembrance and witnessing, commenting that it had not yet been studied.

Responding to the gap Lehrer and Milton (2011) identified and building on Dion's (2009) study, I explore visitors' and volunteers' responses to remembrance and witnessing by asking how visitors learned from the WWOS exhibit/memorial. This article presents data from one site of a larger study of WWOS at several locations. For this article, I report on participants' experiences and learning from the WWOS exhibit/memorial in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Specifically, this article responds to one question from the broader

study: How does the WWOS act as a site for learning that might motivate action and contribute to justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls?

Literature Review

This literature review focuses on four areas: remembrance of the hard truths of colonization; testimony; relationships and responsibilities of witnessing; and the nexus of ceremony and learning from Indigenous Peoples.

Remembrance of Hard Truths of Colonization

Lonetree (2009) contended that most public museums continue to perpetuate narratives that subvert the hard truths of colonization and do not aid Indigenous communities. She sees tribal museums as sites to share the truths of historical traumas. She sees these truths, told by communities, as a means of community healing. She sees value in naming the harms and the perpetrators:

The only way to heal from the historical trauma that we have experienced—genocidal warfare, land theft, ethnic cleansing, disease, and the attempted destruction of our religious and ceremonial life at the hands of government and Christian churches—is for us to speak the truth about what has happened, document the suffering, and name the perpetrators of the violence in our history. (p. 325)

She further contended that this approach will ensure that history is passed on to future generations: “In speaking the truth about the violence in our history, we are also ensuring that future generations can never claim ignorance of this history” (Lonetree, 2009, p. 326).

To tell these truths, Indigenous Peoples have curated exhibits and hosted installations that bring testimonies to various publics through public museums and galleries (for example, see Macdougall & Carlson, 2009; Robinson & Martin, 2016). Testimony is one important means of telling the hard truths of colonialism.

Testimony

Simon (2016) relayed the dual purpose of visual testimony within exhibit/memorials. First, testimony tells of past traumas that may be unknown to visitors. Simon contended that testimony also affects current social relations and the potential for change. On this second purpose, he wrote, “Clearly there is a long history of the public display of visual imagery depicting violence and violations...to mobilize transformations in existing and future social relations” (p. 20). He contended that visual testimony must look backward and forward to seek justice for the past and forge change for the present. Thus, those who do not turn away from the testimonies bear witness to past traumas.

Relationships and Responsibilities of Witnessing

How does one bear witness? Laub (1992) described three types of witnessing: “the level of being a witness to oneself within the experience; the level of being a witness to the testimonies of others; and the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing itself” (p. 75). Memorial exhibits in museums often seek to activate Laub’s third level of witnessing,

where viewers are "bearing witness to a truth about humanity and suffering that transcends those [eyewitness] facts [that cannot be seen]" (Oliver, 2004, p. 81).

Simon (2016) explained how bearing witness requires understanding past and present. These understandings in relation to the testimony need to be intersubjective and dialogic. In sum, a dialogical relationship forms between the testimony and the witness that receives the testimony (Laub, 1992; Oliver, 2001, Simon, 2014). Further, Oliver (2001) described response-ability as the responsiveness of the witnesses in relation to the testimony and toward social change. Regan (2010) wrote that witnessing Indigenous Peoples' testimonies of historical trauma bears a response-ability for witnesses to learn from the past. She wrote, "We cannot change the past, we can learn from it" (p. 4).

Past trauma cannot be changed; rather, exhibit memorials offer opportunities for viewers to connect the history they are witnessing as a bridge to understanding the present (Dion, 2009; Lehrer & Milton, 2011; Simon, 2014). The purpose of the testimony is for witnesses' feelings and thoughts about past events to combine to "allow the understanding of someone else's life to interrupt my own" (Iseke, 2011, p. 311). The WWOS commemoration offered ceremonies for visitors to learn from the trauma.

Ceremony and Transformative Learning Nexus

Simon (2005) asserted that public commemoration sites are spaces for learning that require practices to learn from another's life as a way to interrupt one's own and attend to the lives of others within the present. These educational spaces can be informal and formal sites of learning and practice. Significantly, transformative pedagogies go beyond theory and critique to actions that create meaningful change (Grande, 2004; Iseke, 2008). Commemorative installations are intended as sites for transformative learning because witnesses are encouraged to move beyond guilt or other negative emotions because of the pains from the past. They are aided to respond by localized, cultural contexts and ceremonies—to learn from the knowledge they gained. This knowledge does not come from a book or other external sources; it comes from within, in relation to the testimony and ceremony. Ermine (1995) connected ceremony and inner knowing. He asserted that ceremony connects to higher powers and gives access to internal knowing. Thus, inner knowing in relation to testimony is essential for learning from Indigenous Peoples and pedagogies. When a witness has learned through an Indigenous pedagogy, they may feel compelled to act.

Battiste (2013) further illuminated how transformative learning through Indigenous pedagogies are well suited to today's contexts of informal learning in museums and galleries. She described an Indigenous transformative approach to learning that "embraced Indigenous knowledge, experience, and knowing while respecting mainstream knowledge and experience, and including both a formal and informal approach for learning programs that reached all ages" (p. 176). These pedagogies are not separated into ages and stages; rather, they are lifelong, holistic processes of learning. The WWOS offers testimonies to the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. It asks participants to bear witness to the historical and ongoing trauma. It seeks public responses to the injustice for those who are gone and for vulnerable Indigenous women and girls among us today. To explore how the WWOS acts as a site for learning that might motivate action and contribute

to justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, I used an Indigenous methodology and methods for this study.

Methodology

Indigenous methodologies employ Indigenous approaches—both theories and methods (Kovach, 2010). Hampton (1995) reminded us that research at its heart is “about learning and so is a way of finding out things” (p. 48). To find out things within an Indigenous approach, this study activates two of Smith’s (2012) 25 Indigenous research projects: creative work by and for Indigenous Peoples and remembrance. Smith described creating as “channeling collective creativity in order to produce solutions to indigenous problems” (p. 160), which connects to representation as “a project of indigenous artists, writers, poets, film makers and others who attempt to express an indigenous spirit, experience, or world view” (p. 152). Smith explained remembering “of a painful past, as re-membering in terms of connecting bodies with place and experience, and, importantly, as peoples’ responses to that pain” (p. 147). As well, this study adopts the four principles of WWOS: love and kindness, humility, honouring the cultural protocols of territory and peoples, and volunteerism (Leanna Marshall, personal communication, February 25, 2015). During the study, I volunteered for the installation of the WWOS exhibit/memorial at the MSVU Art Gallery (the Mount). Further, the other principles inform my life beyond the WWOS exhibit/memorial as practices of daily living to sustain me (Debassige, 2010). Thus, learning as a way to find out things, creating, remembering, and the four principles of the WWOS exhibit/memorial ground my approach for this study using Indigenous methodology.

Research Methods

To begin, I proposed a qualitative research study on the WWOS commemoration to Leanna Marshall (Thunder Bay Co-lead for WWOS). My purpose for the study was to investigate whether, and how, the WWOS touring exhibit/memorial that honours missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls acts as a site for learning that might motivate action and contribute to justice on this matter. Following local protocols, I offered her tobacco and shared tea to discuss my ideas for the study. Leanna brought my proposal and tobacco to the WWOS National Collective. They accepted my study. Upon gaining their approval, I sought and gained approval from the Research Ethics Board at Lakehead University.

I developed open-ended, semi-structured interview questions for participants. The study design emerged with Leanna and members of the local collective. For example, they suggested using ceremony as part of the data collection process by holding sharing circles and having an Elder open and close the sessions. Further, Leanna introduced me to Alice, an Elder who guided the data collection for the sharing circle and provided support for participants. I met with Alice one afternoon at her home. I offered her tobacco and tea and then described my study. Alice agreed to open and close the sharing circle and to share her contact information so that all participants in Thunder Bay could contact her to talk after they met with me for an interview, if needed. Leanna helped me to shape the interview questions, which were intended as a guide for participants. I applied Kovach’s (2010) interview as conversation, which involves dialogic participation by the researcher who also shares experiences. This approach is relational.

We recruited participants through prior relationships, as relational sampling (Wilson, 2008). Leanna put out a call to contacts on the Thunder Bay WWOS Facebook page. As well, I invited students who had toured the exhibit/memorial with me, others who had shared their experiences of WWOS with me, and staff of the TBAG to share their experiences. Participants chose to interview individually or with others. Fifteen people—Elders, volunteers, and visitors from the Thunder Bay WWOS installation—agreed to participate. Participants were both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

To begin each interview, I offered participants a gift of a tobacco tie, a package of tissues, and a card with contact information for Alice, which was attached to an information sheet about the study that participants kept. All participants signed consent forms. I held one sharing circle with nine participants, two paired interviews, and two individual interviews. I audio-recorded individual interviews and video-recorded all other interviews with more than one person to identify each speaker for transcription.

All recorded discussions with participants were transcribed and roughly sorted into themes using the qualitative software program NVivo. From this rough sorting of themes, a transcript was created of participants' contributions to this discussion.

Findings

Participants described their processes of witnessing and learning through (1) awareness and remembrance, as "a touch of the heart"; (2) inner knowing and knowledge, as in "you really felt it inside as you went through" the installation; and (3) acting on the knowledge gained for justice—so that Indigenous young women can "keep wearing their moccasins on their own feet." First, participants gained awareness or renewed their remembrance.

"A Touch of the Heart"

Participants developed awareness or renewed remembrance of the trauma of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, as well as children who did not return from residential schools, through engagement with the WWOS commemoration as volunteers or through related events, such as bead-ins and community conversations. All names below are pseudonyms.

Stella is an Elder from the Fort William First Nation who volunteered with the WWOS exhibit/memorial. Her awareness began before the exhibit/memorial arrived in Thunder Bay, when she was asked to volunteer for the WWOS. She recalled preparing for her role as Keeper:³ "Well, I took more interest in learning about the missing and murdered Indigenous women and paying more attention to that focus and that connection to the moccasin vamps." For others, WWOS awakened them to historical trauma within their own lives. Cedar is an Elder who volunteered for the exhibit. She recalled sitting with the Elders and the vamps:

And then when we got involved in doing that, coming in here [to the exhibit/memorial site] and I came and I sat down with the Elders, with the Elders part when they were sitting, and all the vamps that was there, for the first time in my life I really, really saw what really, really existed

3 Within the context of WWOS, the role of Keeper is held by traditional Indigenous women with ceremonial knowledge. They hold responsibility for sacred items and protocols for these items.

for some people that are still suffering right now, that are still searching for their families and their sisters. And this was the first time I think I really acknowledged my family background, where some of my family went missing and never made it back home to my community, where I was raised.

Meadow was one of the Co-leads for the exhibit/memorial in Thunder Bay. Like Cedar, she connected strongly to families—specifically, families that came to the exhibit/memorial to grieve their loved ones: “Just allowing that space for family members to come in and grieve...I still feel like I’m very much a part of it.” These participants connected to the vamps, families’ histories of violence against women, and grieving families.

For other participants, the children’s vamps heightened their awareness. Libby and Grace acknowledged the children’s vamps at the centre of the display. Libby works at the TBAG. While the power of art awed her, its impact evoked her anger. She explained:

But I also learned to be angry when I saw those vamps. And you hear a number, you hear a number [and] your head that says this many women are missing and murdered. And that’s the power of the art, really...you see it in front of you, represented in each of those vamps...And I always knew, I knew, but I really know now. You know it was the children, the children’s vamps and I got so angry because I grew up outside of [name of city in southern Ontario] and I went to high school there. And I didn’t know when I lived there that there was a residential school [that] was still open when I was in high school. And we didn’t know that. And why did we not know that?

Grace grew up in a remote northern Ontario reserve and she recalled children being taken away to residential schools. When she saw the exhibit/memorial, the remembrance was haunting for her:

So, for me it wasn’t until we, I walked almost to the centre, like at the centre of the vamps were in remembrance of those children from residential schools—the missing ones or the ones that passed away. So that really *touched my heart* more so because knowing some schools, especially closer to home, and the stories I’ve heard of students attempting to run away so they can go back home...The presence of those children. They are still there.

All participants felt that the vamps touched their emotions and heightened awareness through their thoughts, remembrance, and emotions. The combination of thoughts and emotions prompted an awakening to the realities for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls for participants. Awareness and remembering prepared participants for inner knowing, which Meadow described as “you really felt it inside when you went through.”

“You Really Felt It Inside When You Went Through”

Participants described their responses to the commemorative installation as embodied experiences, which means being physically present in our bodies as we move through the environment with awareness, in relationship with others, and through ceremony for

WWOS. As mentioned above, Elders and knowledge keepers guided visitors through ceremonial smudging before entering the lodge. Nadeau and Young (2006) found that traditional spiritual practices (such as smudging ceremonies) deepened sensory engagement for embodied practices.

Amber explained how walking through the installation engaged all aspects of her being—mind, emotions, body, and spirit:

I think, it's holistic because it is, if you look around that entire room and all those rows [of vamps], that intellectually makes you think, "How many people is this? What does this look like?" There is that intellectual part of it and it's affective and emotional and it's spiritual, so obviously spiritual.

The embodied experience of walking through the display along a guided path also affected participants in sensory ways. Earlier, Libby described the effect of seeing all the vamps in front of her. Grace extended the visual impact of the display for herself holistically:

It was just the presence of, it was the colour...red. It was the red colour and I was really happy that they put cedar boughs, cedar there too. Those colours that they used to represent Aboriginal people—the red is powerful, a powerful colour...I was really glad that, you know, people took time to set it up. That was a lot of work to have set it up that way. It was a powerful presentation.

Meadow returned to the power of the vamps. She explained how the vamps produced an embodied experience for her as she went through the display:

Then going through the exhibition, the room, it just made a big impact, when you walk through and see the vamps, the writing on some of the vamps, some of the designs, and that made it a lot more tangible as you walked through. So, I think that's how I would frame it...having been a part of the process of bringing it here and then going through it just materialized a number of social and spiritual and political and all of that into the commemoration—it made it more tangible so *you really felt it inside when you went through*.

Elder Alice guided the sharing circle, supported participants, and served as an Elder for the WWOS. She recalled travelling with a group of Elders who were bringing the sacred bundle from Stella's home on the Fort William First Nation to the TBAG for the opening of the exhibit/memorial. She described her experience:

We're driving down the road and we come to a park, just after, I believe, just after the Native Treatment Centre Road. And it was there at the base—and I don't know that I would call it a mountain or anything, but [it is] quite steep. And we're driving along and I'm not really thinking anything. And, all of the sudden, it opened up and it was, it was almost like one of these pictures with the light behind it [points to an example within the sharing circle space]. And there were all these women. And these were women who were among the missing and the murdered women. And one of the women spoke to me and she said, "Don't worry about us, we're in a beautiful place. We're fine, we're okay but thank you."

And that was it. And then I had to stop at home on the way over because my mascara was all over. I was so moved.

Thus, participants engaged through an experience that was affective and embodied by moving through the space of the WWOS installation with others, aided through spiritual practices. Meadow summed up participants' experiences, saying, "you really felt it inside." Morin (cited in Robinson & Martin, 2016) explained this inside feeling. He asserted, "The body is a resonant chamber"—a place where experiences echo, sinking deep into the bones before reverberating back out into the world" (p. 11). In the next and final section, participants described how their experiences from the exhibit/memorial reverberated back into the world.

"So That They Can Keep Wearing Their Moccasins on Their Own Feet"

Above, Elder Alice shared knowledge she received from the Sisters while transporting the vamps to the gallery with others. She continued:

I think that [vision] helped me to maintain focus: that we focus on women who are at risk. That we'll not bring those women back who are gone, and they're okay. We need to focus on those women who are at risk and who aren't even born yet. But we have a huge job to do. And it's not just Canada; it's worldwide...I don't know if that helps anyone here [in the sharing circle], but that really helped me that day.

Ivy, too, connected the WWOS exhibit/memorial to Indigenous women at risk within the context of the local community:

We need to address the issue of violence against women and girls in our community. We need to protect our women. And we need to create a climate of respect for women. And that continues even after the vamps have come and gone. It's such an important thing that was said over and over.

Members of the local collective won a community safety award from the City of Thunder Bay in 2015 for bringing the community together through bead-ins and community conversations on topics such as safety needs for women, which continued after WWOS left Thunder Bay (Leanna Marshall, personal communication, November 2016). This award illuminates how participants take up response-ability for justice for women and girls today. They connected the visual testimony for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls to bearing witness and acting for vulnerable women and girls in the community. Jasmine also shared her connections between the WWOS installation and acting in the present, and how she had learned these connections through her participation in the sharing circle that evening. In her final thoughts, Jasmine shared that sharing circle participants had aided her understanding of the historical trauma of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in the present. She said:

Sitting here tonight with you has helped me, I think, to connect some of the dots. The other day I was at an event for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and there was a group of students there from a school. And I thought wouldn't it be great to interview some young ones to see what

they know about IRS [Indian residential schools]. So, I asked a young girl what she knew. And she told me that her grandmother had been abused at residential school and she knew what that meant because she was being abused too. So, I took her to an Elder that I knew there. And I think that's what I'm getting from you strong women tonight. That's the message, for these young women, *so that they can keep wearing their moccasins on their own feet.*

Discussion

Remembrance of Historical Trauma

Within exhibit memorials and galleries, visual testimony presents the hard truths of colonization. Scholars assert that memorial displays provide visitors with a contextual framework and the tools for remembering (Igloliorte, 2011; Lehrer & Milton, 2011; Simon, 2014).

Participants remembered the women, girls, and children through the vamps. To return to their remembrances, Libby reflected, "And I always knew, I knew, but I really know now." Cedar shared, "For the first time in my life I really, really saw what really, really existed for some people that are still suffering right now, that are still searching for their families and their sisters." Likewise, other participants shared their remembrances. Belcourt explained how visitors receive the visual testimony of the vamps through art as it melds with spiritual practices:

We can't do it by gawking. We can't do it by seeing pictures. We can't do it by staring from an outsider's perspective. We must do it by bringing their lives and acknowledgement of the value of their lives within us and within our hearts. (in Tabobondung, 2014)

Earlier I used Smith's (2012) description of remembering as "connecting bodies with place and experience, and, importantly, as peoples' responses to that pain" (p. 147). Grace connected to the children from her community who did not return from residential schools. She described her response to the pain of this remembrance as a touch of the heart. Participants remembered and they were able to bear witness to the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Bearing Witness in Exhibit Memorials within Museums and Galleries

As noted above, memorial exhibits in museums often seek to activate Laub's (1992) third level of witnessing, where viewers are "bearing witness to a truth about humanity and suffering that transcends those [eyewitness] facts [that cannot be seen]" (Oliver, 2004, p. 81). Participants bear witness and come to know through embodied and sensory experiences. Oliver (2001) explained that sensory experiences can be both motor and perceptual. For participants, the act of moving through the installation—walking the path alongside the Sisters while viewing the vamps—creates sensory and embodied experiences of seeing the vamps and hearing the music while moving through the space of the installation. This experience was collective, intersubjective, and dialogical for the participants.

As they experienced the installation, participants described their experiences. Grace responded in a sensory way to the colour red. Amber and Meadow described whole body experiences. Alice's experience of bearing witness came from the Sisters as part of "the[ir] relationship with and connection to the land" (Michell, Vizina, Augustus, & Sawyer, 2008, p. 29). Alice gained revealed knowledge transmitted through her vision of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Castellano (2000) shared, "Sometimes knowledge is received as a gift at a moment of need; sometimes it manifests itself as a sense that the 'time is right' " (p. 24). Alice further shared how her vision helped her and she offered it to others in the sharing circle in case it helped others too. This dialogical sharing, one year after the WWOS exhibit/memorial had toured at the TBAG, illuminates how the WWOS continued to inspire dialogue and relationships among participants.

Participants described how they bear witness to the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and the children who did not survive the Indian residential schools in embodied and sensory ways through the vamps and their experiences within the exhibit/memorial. I return to an earlier quotation from Belcourt to illustrate how the WWOS collective situated the exhibit/memorial intentionally: "Whether it's a community space or a gallery, and *all that matters* [emphasis added] is the community then transforms it into a sacred space" (in Sandals, 2014). These sacred spaces bring community members together to learn from Indigenous pedagogies.

Indigenous Pedagogies—The Praxis of Witnessing

Participants learned from Anishinaabe pedagogies of the Fort William First Nation and Indigenous Peoples, especially the grandmothers and Elders. These pedagogies have several features; they are grounded in local Indigenous knowledges that reflect "ceremonies, teaching and cultural expressions" (Settee, 2011, p. 437), place (Simpson, 2014; Wane, 2011), and community (Marker, 2011; Simpson, 2014). Through ceremonies, participants forged relationship with the Sisters, one another, and the community. Ceremonies show us how to live in relation (Simpson, 2011). For WWOS, Belcourt was explicit about setting a contextual frame through ceremonies: "Ceremony is required in order to properly acknowledge and honour the women's lives" (in Tabobondung, 2014). At the WWOS commemoration, ceremonies occurred before, during, and after the WWOS installation at the TBAG. Joining in ceremony was one way that participants learned together through Indigenous pedagogies and in the context of public museums and galleries. Importantly, the public space of the art gallery became a sacred place to bear witness and learn from Indigenous Peoples and knowledges.

Castellano (2000) shared that Indigenous knowledge is personal, orally transmitted, experiential, holistic, and narrative. Indigenous knowledges include traditional knowledge, empirical knowledge, and revealed knowledge, which is transmitted through dreams, visions, and intuitions. Indigenous knowledges and praxis ground pedagogies (Grande, 2004). Indigenous scholars assert that Indigenous pedagogies are experiential and transformational (Battiste, 2013; Simpson, 2014; Smith, 2012).

For participants, the learning process of Indigenous pedagogies and within the informal learning space of museums and galleries and these relationships are transformational for individuals and community members, who seek to understand and then act in relation to others. Ivy expressed this idea when she said, "We need to protect our women. And we

need to create a climate of respect for women. And that continues even after the vamps have come and gone." She invited others to act for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls today. Jasmine, too, came to "connect the dots." Her participation in the sharing circle showed her how her individual act of seeking an Elder connected back to acting for vulnerable Indigenous girls, and community members helped her to make these connections. Learning through Indigenous pedagogies of witnessing the testimony of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and hosting the WWOS commemoration was acknowledged as transformational by the City of Thunder Bay with an award for community safety.

Participants acted together for justice in their efforts for community safety—hosting beading groups, community conversations, and other individual and collaborative activities for Indigenous women and girls today. This learning is relational—to one another, to community, and to vulnerable women and girls within the community. This learning was generated by engaging and volunteering with WWOS and developing ongoing relations to one another. These relations were generated within the public space of the TBAG and the sacred space created by Indigenous Peoples to remember and honour missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. It was in this public place of the art gallery that Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members came together, led by Elders and grandmothers to learn about and from missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. The WWOS brought the installation into the gallery for the public to learn the hard truths of colonization for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Further, they brought Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies into the gallery for visitors to learn by bearing witness through art and ceremony. This experience was transformative in relational and generative ways for gallery staff, Elders, volunteers, and visitors.

Conclusion

Commemorative exhibits within museums and galleries are public sites of remembrance and learning. Indigenous pedagogies help the public to learn historical traumas that were unknown or unspoken previously within their communities. Learning from Indigenous Peoples and pedagogies can lead to transformative actions for individuals and communities to disrupt ongoing violence against Indigenous women and girls today and for the future. As Belcourt said, "The result of more inaction is death" (in Sandals, 2014).

WWOS is an urgent exhibit/memorial as it reveals the historical trauma of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and provides an avenue for families to heal from this trauma. WWOS provides hope for vulnerable Indigenous women and girls today as individuals and communities respond to the installation and seek to end the violence so that "they can wear their moccasins on their own feet."

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