

Artist's Statement:

As part of my personal commitment to reconciliation, this multimodal, arts-based graduating project seeks to share, in a personal, meaningful, and relational way, my ongoing journey to understand and honour Indigenous ways of knowing and learning. The script expresses my wonderings about different literacy learning spaces and the spaces between them: I aim to artistically weave a story about my evolving relationship with colonial school spaces, spaces of performance, and the land. Throughout, I use many techniques of Brecht's Epic theatre: I am aware that I am a character in a play, I break the fourth wall and directly address my audience, and I point out moments of "theatre magic" to remind my viewers that they are, first and foremost, watching a theatrical creation. However, I seek not to alienate my audience, but to connect with them in the spaces where learning and change can occur. "Acknowledging and reflecting upon our location within that space is a core part of conducting education and research that is relational, respectful, and reciprocal" (Hradsky & Forgasz, 2021, p. 984). In my play, moments of relationality become the spaces where the stage meets the land.

A crucial aspect of decolonizing my pedagogy is recognizing the ways that I have perpetuated colonial forms of violence in my teaching practice. The trio of poems that link my spaces of inquiry (the stage, the classroom, and the land) seek not to glorify systemic violence, but to remind viewers that passivity is not an option when it comes to reconciliation and decolonization, and that difficult emotions may arise. I have chosen to mitigate these challenging moments by offering healing interludes that lead my viewers, gently, to reconnect with the land in a way that encourages healing. My interludes are,

as a result, inspired less by Brechtian alienation techniques and more by Fels' (2012) notion of the stop: *"moments that call our attention to gaps, absences, dissonance, the unexpected; stops are moments that interrupt, provoke new questioning, call forth reflection, and inspire through reflection, new understanding"* (Fels, 2012, p. 53-54).

By encouraging moments of reflective silence and listening to the land, *Where the stage meets the land* also confronts colonial centrality of whiteness and white voices. "In colonial classrooms, speaking is often valued as a way to demonstrate learning, and as such the act of quieting ourselves can feel uncomfortable. Challenging our need for this comfort is an important part of participation participating in decolonizing literacies" (Duchscher & Lenters, 2023, p. 28). By intentionally silencing my voice throughout this one-person autoethnographic play, I acknowledge the challenge of expressing my white settler views on decolonizing pedagogy via a performance in which I am the only character. In wrestling with this conundrum, I embrace Irwin et al's (2017) notion of entanglement: "Relational and reflexive in character, it is a continuous state of movement that is not about an arrival, but is about lingering in the emergent, unforeseen, and unexpected events it provides" (Irwin, Le Blanc, Ryu, & Belliveau, 2017, p. 50).

I warmly invite my readers/viewers to engage with me in the important and ongoing journey to decolonized, arts-based literacy pedagogy. Let us walk together to find the space where the stage meets the land.