

## **Project of Heart: Art Installation and Alternative Settings**

### **Placement in Teacher Education**

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#### **Abstract**

This paper is a self-study between an Assistant Professor and a Teacher Candidate as they curated an arts-based installation as part of an Alternative Settings Placement at Trent University School of Education in Peterborough, Ontario. The installation focused on the legacy of residential schools, with Teacher Candidates creating artifacts that represented their learning and commitment to truth and reconciliation. The results of this project include analysis of the authors' interactions throughout the project under the themes of pedagogy, problem solving, and personal growth. This project is significant to education, exploring alternative teaching placements, faculty and teacher candidate mentorship, and using arts-based creation methods for awareness and activism.

*Keywords:* alternative placement; experiential learning; arts-based methodologies; teacher education

## **Introduction**

This paper is a self-study between an Assistant Professor (KT) and a Teacher Candidate (MJ) as we explored our experiences curating an art installation as part of an Alternative Settings Placement at Trent University School of Education in Peterborough, Ontario. The content of the project included Teacher Candidate (TC) created artifacts through arts-based practices to demonstrate our collective commitment to teaching about the legacy of residential schools in Canada. The focus of this paper is on the project itself as well as how it shaped our teaching practice from the lens of settler-educators.

Project of Heart is an inquiry based, hands-on, collaborative, intergenerational, artistic journey of seeking truth about the history of Indigenous people in Canada (Project of Heart, 2022). It draws upon arts-based ways of knowing to connect past to present, theory to practice, and self to community. It began in 2007 with Grade 10 history students who, upon learning about residential schools in class, wanted to educate others about the topic through art and activism (Project of Heart Ontario, 2022). Since then, the project has grown to include national commemorative exhibits, lesson plans and educational resources, and countless project installations across the country with the goal of calling Canadians to action.

The School of Education took up this project with the incoming cohorts of TC's from 2019-2021. Before engaging in the project itself, they participated in a session developed by the First People's House of Learning entitled "Just Get Over it". In this session, participants: a) explore the true and historic relationship between Indigenous Peoples and settlers, b) reflect on stereotypes, biases, and racism that still exist and c) are encouraged to reflect on their personal identities and learning within educational systems and discuss ways to make a difference in sharing these truths (Trent University, 2022). TC participants take their own learning from this

session and explore how to mobilize it with their future students through arts-based creation methods in Project of Heart.

Project of Heart explores how aesthetic representations and the act of art creation itself can represent participant experience (Eisner and Barone, 2012). For the workshop, each participant drew a representation of their learning on two wooden tiles, roughly 2x3 cm, with the intent to keep one for themselves and include the other in a display at the School of Education. They are encouraged to display their tile in their future classrooms as a reminder of their learning from the project and to prompt conversation with others about their experiences. The final product is an artistic representation of their commitment to this ongoing work, one that has been collected and curated in a community display at the School of Education with the intent to deepen our collective intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual understanding of reconciliation (LaFever, 2016).

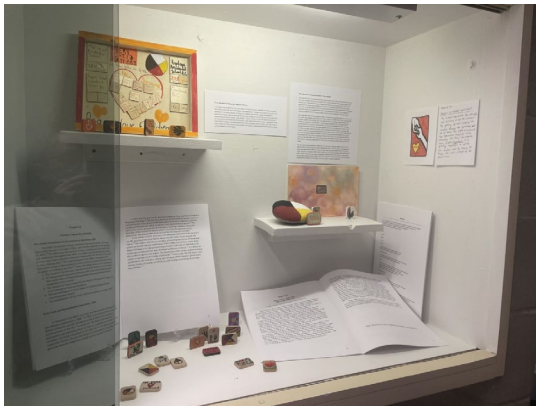
The display features the project tiles created by TC's and text guiding the viewer through a timeline of the history of residential schools. The installation includes additional artifacts that TC's created during the pandemic when they did not have access to the Project of Heart materials. These artifacts were created through painting, printing, and fiber-arts. It ends with a traditional teaching about how to move forward in what is known as the Eighth Fire of peace, love, brotherhood and sisterhood (Benton-Banai, 2010). This aspect is integral to this work within the context of the School of Education as TC's work to bring their new knowledge and understandings into their future classrooms.



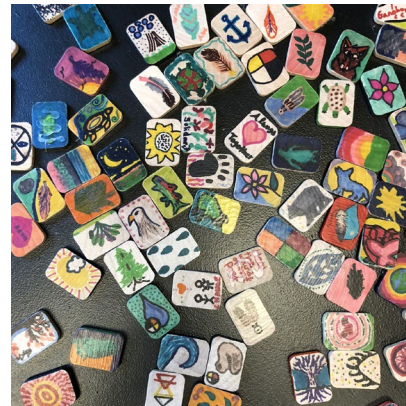
*Fig. 1: Display Case 1*



*Fig. 2: Display Case 2*



*Fig. 3: Display Case 3*



*Fig 4: Sample Tiles Pre-Installation*

MJ's role in this project drew on her previous experience working in museum education and creating exhibits with an Indigenous content focus. She also brought her undergraduate background and Intermediate/Senior subject specialty in History and Indigenous Studies. KT's involvement included her experience as Faculty Advisor for students in Alternative Settings Placement as well as her previous work in arts-based education and incorporating Indigenous perspectives in curriculum and pedagogy.

### **Literature Review**

This project was part of an Alternative Settings Placement (ASP) which is a mandatory placement for TC's at the School of Education. A description of the ASP requirements can be found on the university website:

As part of the 2-year Consecutive Bachelor of Education program, Teacher Candidates are required to complete 75 hours as part of the Alternative Settings Placement. The placements can be non-school placements... The School of Education strongly encourages Teacher Candidates to find placements in settings that they may not traditionally find themselves in. Our hope is that Teacher Candidates will adapt their experiences and learnings from the program and apply them to situations and scenarios that may not be familiar. (Trent University, 2023)

Participating in alternative placements demonstrates an evolving and broadening conception of the role of teacher, with responsibilities extending beyond the narrow boundaries of subject knowledge towards a development of transferable skills (Purdy & Gibson, 2008). With an increasing recognition that teacher education should be more than acquisition of knowledge and skills, ASP's can lead to a personalization of learning and professionalism that teachers forge for themselves to support their developing teacher identity (Sangster & Green, 2012).

An integral part of this ASP was faculty mentorship embedded within the project. Faculty mentoring is a crucial component of education programs as beginning teachers require individual and unique support for their learning needs. Kutsyuruba, Godden, and Bosica, (2019) investigate the impacts of mentorship with early career teachers, however many of their findings are applicable in ASP and practicum settings as students take on teaching roles. Themes of positive impacts on teacher self-confidence, reduction in stress and increase in motivation are applicable

to the ASP context as TC's develop their teacher identity. This is a reciprocal benefit for the faculty mentor in which they construct a collaborative partnership with the student that influences their own teacher identity (Langdon & Ward, 2015).

Work-life balance and teacher retention are also themes that emerged in research on teacher mentorship. Many early career teachers cite work-life balance as a challenge to maintaining well-being (Kutsyuruba, Godden, & Bosica, 2019). There are similar challenges working within a faculty of education, especially in a provincially accredited intensive teacher education program. The ASP gives opportunities for students to exercise their professional judgment as learners under the guidance of their faculty mentors, to practice creating boundaries and managing stress, and to experience establishing a work-life balance that can support them in their future teaching careers.

An aspect of this particular project is to contribute to the TC's education about residential schools. This is for their own personal development as well their pedagogical development around teaching about these topics in their future classrooms. The project itself aims to serve as a response to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, and the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) FNMI Policy Framework. The project addresses the UNDRIP Article 15, that "Indigenous cultures, traditions and histories shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information" (UNDRIP, 2007, p.14) as well as TRC Call to Action #63, which calls for a commitment to Aboriginal issues, including the specific focus on "sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history" and "identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above" (TRC, 2015, p.11). The project also aims to respond to the Ontario FNMI Policy Framework Strategy 3.2: Build Capacity, to

“increase the knowledge of all Ontario educators about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit issues and raise their cultural awareness by encouraging faculties of education...to provide appropriate training and professional development focused on Aboriginal histories, cultures, and perspectives” (OME, 2007, p.18).

While the project aims to address the above contexts, it also draws upon the practice of creating art to demonstrate understanding and commitment to reconciliation in the classroom. This approach is reflective of Indigenous pedagogical practices of developing knowledge through experience and meaning through artistic engagement (Battiste, 2002; Simpson, 2011). In this way the project investigates artistic practices as embodied learning while also connecting to issues of Indigenous local activism (Smith, 2021). Local activism involves curating artistic experiences with reconciliation at university school of education which will then shape and inform this ongoing work as TC’s become educators in their own teaching contexts.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Our theoretical framework for this project is situated within the field of teacher education as well as aligning with pedagogical approaches in classroom teaching practices. To help make sense of our experiences in the project we chose to incorporate a collaborative Curricular Inquiry model. Harvey and Daniels (2015) identifies the process of Curricular Inquiry as presenting essential curricular information to students and giving them the responsibility and support for thoughtful investigation through a meaningful, hands-on approach to learning. We chose this approach for the project because it allowed us to investigate the content in relation to our subject matter knowledge and lived experiences. The Curricular Inquiry model is developed through four stages: Immerse, Investigate, Coalesce, and Go Public (Harvey & Daniels, 2015, p.213).

In the Immerse stage, teachers introduce the curricular concept while students explore topics and build background knowledge. Part of the Immerse stage involved MJ starting preliminary research about residential schools, which activated her background knowledge from her undergraduate degree, but also working with KT to consider the context of the installation and the purpose of the ASP.

The Investigate stage is where students start to develop questions, search for information, and discover answers about the topic. Teachers continue to guide students on their learning journey by helping them articulate thoughts and provide support to introduce new knowledge based on their learning. During this part of the project, we brainstormed the layout of the installation, including what physical changes we would need to make to the display case to support our design.

The Coalesce stage is where students start to synthesize their information for knowledge building and creation. They confer with groups and individuals, sometimes outside of the classroom, while teachers continue to facilitate the group interactions. This stage involved working with the TC's to create artifacts for display, as well as connecting with them to provide and gather materials during remote learning, and then curating them in the space itself. MJ discussed the project with her peers, including those self-identified Indigenous students in the BEd and Indigenous BEd Programs, for guidance and feedback.

In the final Go Public stage, students share their learning and demonstrate how they will take action as a result of their experiences in the classroom. Students are encouraged to reflect on their social and thinking processes and share their findings with others. In our Go Public stage, we worked together to include all of the final reading materials, artifacts, and any other



educational information into the display itself which resulted in the final installation being shared with the department.

### **Methodology**

The methodology for this project is a Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices (S-STTEP) as it considers both method and methodology for teaching and learning (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). S-STTEP draws upon themes from several research frameworks, including autoethnography and action research, and theoretical frameworks of reflective practice and process, such as curricular inquiry. As we engaged in the process of creating the installation, we applied the principles of inquiry and reflection as a way of understanding and explaining the physical and social worlds of arts-based curation as pedagogical practice (Samaras, 2011).

The context for S-STTEP research can include the classroom as a site of inquiry, but it can also be expanded to include points in space or time that challenge assumptions about teaching and learning in order for new understandings to emerge (Ritter, 2017). Through this project we intentionally worked in an alternative education space, outside of the K-12 classroom, and using the S-STTEP approach allows us to reflect on the pedagogical choices we make in these different educational settings and what we can learn from these experiences as educators.

These experiences also gave opportunity for both of us to consider how our teaching practice is influenced by the historical and cultural systems of education in Canada. Indigenous scholars have written about the importance of explicitly teaching cultural understandings of curriculum and challenging student assumptions about Indigenous content in teacher education (Kanu, 2011; Battiste, 2013). These assumptions are situated within historical and cultural systems of education and using S-STTEP methodology allows us to consider our learning from

the project within the wider social context of arts-based and reconciliatory practices in teacher education as well as in alternative settings (Brandenburg, 2021).

Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) identify four areas of pedagogical approach within self-study: tacit knowledge, personal practical knowledge, present moment and practice, and relating the conceptions to each other. We incorporated these approaches as a methodological framework to guide our thinking as we completed the project. Tacit knowledge involves the relationship of “knowing from” to “knowing to” as a way of recognizing and responding to stimuli in the classroom. In this project we went through the phase of recognizing and responding to the challenges we encountered in terms of accessing materials and making decisions about how to present student artifacts in a way that represented our program as a whole.

Personal practical knowledge emerges from our narrative history of what we have learned and helps guide in decision making in the classroom. In teacher education, personal practical knowledge can be situated in ideas of curricular planning through Backwards Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). In these approaches, teachers identify the learning outcome for their students, determine appropriate assessment tools for evaluating their learning, and then design learning experiences to lead them to these new understandings. Backwards Design also asks educators to consider differentiated content, process, and products when designing learning tasks to meet the needs of all students (Tomlinson, 2017). This project challenged our use of Backwards Design because we could not know what the end result would be in terms of the installation itself, so we needed to be more responsive in designing the project as it evolved rather than following a prescriptive lesson plan.

The approach of present moments of practice focused on the experiences we encounter as well as how it changes over time. They are not “just segments of time that we live, but those

moments when we are aware and conscious of our experience which is felt as a whole” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p.23). One of the main challenges we experienced with the project were conflicting expectations surrounding concepts of time. Typical alternative settings placements occur over a period of two weeks or 75 consecutive hours (Trent University, 2023). This project took several months of planning, preparation, execution, and problem solving to get to a final product. We both felt this challenged how we interact with time in the classroom and our own planning styles.

Pinnegar and Hamilton (2019) write about standing in tension between arrival and arriving in terms of professional practice. These moments are the Zone of Maximal Contact, in which past, present, and future come together and, in that moment, can be shaped and transformed. We would extend that idea to standing in tension between colonial and cultural concepts of time, with Indigenous conceptualizations of time and space being nonlinear with a focus on interrelatedness for meaning making (Archibald, Xiiem, Lee-Morgan, & Santolo, 2019). We definitely felt the challenge of trying to create space for the project itself to naturally unfold within the creative process while still working within the parameters of the ASP.

In relating the concepts to each other, theory and practice connect to the larger discussion of curriculum through experience. For both of us this project was a departure from our previous experiences planning and implementing lessons in the classroom and truly highlighted the alternative nature of the placement. The discussion portion of this paper will delve deeper into how we connected curriculum to our experiences and the impact it had on our pedagogical practice.

## **Data source**

The data source for this paper includes our field notes, journals, photos, and conversation transcripts from our Zoom meetings about the installation of the project from September 2021 to April 2022. We used our field notes and journals as artifacts for reflective practice to tell the story of the installation and how we used the creative process to problem solve throughout the project. Our conversation transcripts demonstrate our thinking through the philosophical and theoretical aspects of using arts-based practices to engage in acts of reconciliation through the lens of teacher education. Our results can be categorized by the overarching themes of pedagogy, problem solving, and personal growth.

## **Results**

### **Pedagogy**

The project challenged our assumptions about a Bachelor of Education program and alternative education, the notion of expertise and co-creating with students, and the explicit connections between the project and our own instructional planning approaches. This Bachelor of Education program is accredited with the Ontario College of Teachers where upon successful completion, students are eligible for certification to teach in publicly funded K-12 schools in Ontario. While many students choose to pursue this option after graduation, the program is also designed to support professional development for educators in contexts outside of K-12 education. MJ explained her perspective on the program before the project:

MJ: In the program in general, I kind of recognized myself in the first few months trying to almost fit in with everybody else. And I remember not speaking about how I wanted to go into museum education

KT: Yes, I recall seeing you throughout your first year and the change in your affect as the program progressed. MJ: I feel like I was at a little bit of a standstill in the program to where I was struggling and I remember you and the dean coming to me and saying we want you to feel at home here, and that makes me feel at home. And I feel like that changed my whole perspective on education, because I was in such a rut and I realized like it doesn't have to be that. Teaching is for me.

KT: It was interesting for me to learn about your experience with your peers. I think it prompted me to address the assumptions I might make about the program as well as how I could incorporate alternative examples and expectations of education in my classes.

While there are examples of co-creating with graduate students, there are few instances where faculty engage in an academic project with undergraduate students in the same way. Ontario teachers are expected to co-create learning goals and success criteria with their students in the classroom to guide their learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). However, in this alternative setting, it raised the question of how do we engage in co-creation without predetermined learning outcomes? To answer this question, MJ drew upon her previous experience working in museum education:

MJ: When I was learning how to do exhibits with a museum, we always started with a sketch to see it and the space we had to work with. Exhibits are meant to be grade six level, that's the playing field, so for me I was actually intentionally looking at the grade six curriculum when I was doing this because I don't want it to be knowledge that is almost too much or not enough... thinking, "what are my learning goals here? What do I want people to take away here?" Because it's nice if there's an intention, more than just a

display. And I feel like that's what we need to remember as educators; that you need to have an intention, more than just speaking at your students.

KT: Also thinking about the context and the time, and how long is somebody going to spend standing at a display case versus how long they will spend in your class. And can the audience glean the information from the display without a teacher there.

MJ: I think I always recognize that working in a museum, but I never think I fully absorbed that information. And now I think differently in my museum. We're doing exhibits right now, and my whole thought process is different than it would have been two years ago.

Within the theme of pedagogy, we investigated the notion of “expert” through the process of co-creating between teacher and student. We discovered different contexts for teaching and learning while seeing parallels between project, lesson and unit planning strategies. MJ made connections to their lesson planning process on their practicum, with direct connection to the K-12 classroom and her teaching practice on a micro level. KT’s interaction with the project was more on a macro level, thinking about their own teaching in relation to the context of the university institution while also supporting individual teacher candidates:

MJ: I thought it was almost like lesson planning. It was kind of funny because we're doing lesson planning in my practicum course right now, and I was like this is sort of parallel. In my practicum my associate teacher was teaching Indigenous English (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019) and I was using that research from this ASP in my class to teach. I was using all of it, the format everything, even the whole book idea - I made it fit the curriculum.

KT: It's interesting that you say it's similar to lesson planning, because I was thinking about how to give the structure and support that is needed for an ASP but also the creative freedom for you to bring in your background experience with museum education. I wanted to make sure that I didn't overwhelm but also gave you that space to incorporate different planning frameworks.

The project gave us the opportunity to consider the influence of our individual experiences and pedagogical approaches in education, the parallels between the project and planning for instruction, and learning about different contexts of teaching from each other. Situating our work directly in education meant that we could be open to these new insights and apply them to our teaching contexts in both theory and practice.

### ***Problem Solving***

The context of the project itself and the physical installation of the artifacts posed specific problem-solving challenges. These included providing context for the display and opportunities for education about the content as well as working with the physical materials. We also identified working within the temporal constraints of Covid-19 as a challenge for the TC's and for our own process of installation.

Providing context for the display was an important aspect of curating the materials, as part of the project's purpose was education for the audience. We needed to think about how we might communicate these learning goals without knowing who our audience would be and their background experience with the content. We discussed this challenge through the lens of incorporating relevant and appropriate texts to accompany the artifacts themselves:

MJ: It was honestly nerve wracking at first, and I obviously wanted to do it justice. I started my research for this and went to Indigenous sources. I also reflected and looked a

lot towards other Project of Heart displays. I had read the Mishomis book (Benton-Banai, 2010) and it had mentioned the Seven Grandfather Teachings and I had read about Channie Wenjack and “seven matches” (Downie & Lemire, 2013) and there’s seven books [in the display]. So, for me that was my “Aha” moment; that’s when I was like this is going to work. Because I was a little worried for a bit, I wasn’t going to be able to succeed in it, it felt like a lot. But I think I was just waiting for something to just spark.

KT: I agree, my concern was something that is, like you said, static in time, and that someone will come and look at this exhibit and see this final product, but not understand the amount of process and care that went into it.

In addition to the background materials, we found it challenging to plan and work with the artifacts without knowing how many pieces we needed to incorporate. This also challenged our timeline for installation as we waited for students to submit their work. One of the biggest challenges was also physically working with the information booklets as artifacts themselves. We discussed these issues and how we tried to find creative solutions for how it impacted our workflow:

KT: I’m thinking about artifacts in terms of that they aren’t found artifacts, they are actively being created by other students.

MJ: That was tricky because in the museum world your artifacts are already there in that sense--you’re not waiting on them to be finished. And so, for me, that was 100% a learning point because I had to remind myself, they’re going to take time.

KT: For me, the big challenge was the timeline and the order of events of what needed to happen. That I had to have the shelves installed for you to paint the cabinets and it was a very strange time frame since we had to work at different times. Just because of



scheduling and leaving these asynchronous notes and materials for each other, like paint, and thinking “I hope this is enough”. And the process of what we went through with the books themselves.

MJ: That was probably the most frustrating part to me. I know from experience with exhibits and doing my own crafts and such it's sometimes good to make a clumsy version first, if you will. And then to be like okay, at least I have this idea and I think for me at first it frustrates me because I'm such a perfectionist, I want things to be perfect the first time.

KT: I remember the moment of you and I physically trying to make them stand up in the case. And the little stands not supporting them and then falling over and that we had to sit in that frustration together and feel that feeling before we could problem solve. And then I just remember trusting you on what that final picture would look like. And when you got the books printed, I remember that you had each book printed in its entirety instead of having one page for each display book. I thought that was so smart because if we need to adjust one for some reason, the story is still complete, and that's not something I would have thought about from a museum perspective.

The final theme for us to problem solve came out of the COVID-19 pandemic itself. During this time, we fluctuated between in person and online learning, with rolling lockdowns affecting our ability to gather together for the workshop. We created an instructional video for students to watch and they picked up materials before Winter break. The university moved to online instruction in January and students returned completed materials 6-weeks into the term after we pivoted back to in person learning. During the installation phase we compared this

experience with previous iterations of the workshop when we were all together for the whole project:

MJ: It was kind of interesting to see the titles come in when everybody did it on their own time individually, because I think that made the tiles much different than they would have been if we were all together. The titles that were coming in were so individual, so special to that person without the influence of being in the same room as others.

KT: I think that's something that we've learned here is just what you said, is it gives them time and some people want that time to think about it. So, I think if I do this again in the future, I'll give people the option to say, do you want to stay here and work on this with me, or do you want to take it home and sit and think and work on it there? And I think the danger that people fall into is that they don't trust that participants in a workshop are going to go home and continue working on it.

MJ: I think for sure we probably received less than we would have if we were in person, but if they prioritize doing it, I think they really meant it and they really bought in. They really understood the importance of the process in the experience and what the whole intention was. I think the fact that we were able to do it on our own time in a way, we got some really interesting titles, like one of them was beaded. I don't know if we would have gotten a beaded one, we actually probably wouldn't have if you were sitting in a workshop.

This project had unique constraints and opportunities for physical application of our teaching approaches. Working with a physical space and artifacts and adapting to the needs of the pandemic meant we needed to change our plans. We needed to revisit ideas and learn to become more comfortable with uncertainty and change. These skills directly contribute to being

flexible in the classroom and meeting the learner where they are, to support their individual contributions as co-learners and to work together to move toward a final result.

### ***Personal Growth***

The final theme was one of personal growth, where we questioned our role in this project and the unlearning that would be part of the process. We sat with feelings of discomfort around the topic and the trial-and-error approach of working in this particular medium. We also unpacked our interpersonal relationship and how we worked together to understand our responsibility to the project, to the TC's and to each other.

Unlearning was a large theme in this project as it directly related to the intersection of our personal positionality and previous lived experience that shaped our teacher identity. MJ found she had to take a different approach for this project:

MJ: I was lucky enough to work on an Indigenous exhibit with my museum and when I was doing that exhibit, I learned so much about ethics and responsibility of working with Indigenous history, especially about telling a story that's not yours to tell. And so, I felt better about having that knowledge in my back pocket because I realized the respect that needed to be had and the steps I needed to take. It's a part of my history as a Canadian but I didn't live it, it's not my story, and I wanted to make sure that that separation was there. Because I didn't want that to become my voice. And so, throughout my research, I very much felt like I had to unlearn how to tell a story that is another's, which was new for me as a history major because essays are always your voice.

KT: I think you bring up a good point too about balancing authentic voice and responsibility and allyship, because as a teacher, I could have gone to our Indigenous BEd program and asked one of those students to lead this project. But we have to think

about who is reconciliation for, and who's responsible for reconciliation. And it's not Indigenous peoples who are responsible for it. So, it gave us an opportunity to demonstrate what that responsibility would look like for our BEd students as they go into their own teaching contexts. This is a project they can take up with their future students. I think that's really important in an education space, because your colleagues and your peers can go out and do this work, and now you have to model that.

Along with unlearning, we wanted to make space for personal growth and acknowledge potential feelings of discomfort around the topic. We wanted to make decisions going forward in a good way, with students feeling supported in creating their own artifacts and about the impact of the installation overall on the school community. MJ shared how she and her peers were feeling during this work:

MJ: And taking part in that process of reconciliation, which I feel for so many people, was almost scary because they wonder how do I do this properly? With the people that I spoke with afterward about the project I could see that for them it kind of clicked where they're like okay, it's not as scary as I think it is, I can do it, I need to do it, this is how I can do it right.

KT: I think it's necessary and I think reframing the word "scary" as "uncomfortable" would be helpful because those feelings are different, and we need to sit in them. We can work with discomfort.

MJ: Well, you need to be uncomfortable sometimes whenever it comes to these topics. I think if you're not uncomfortable you're not experiencing it or really engaging with it enough. It's an uncomfortable topic, it's not a positive part of our past as Canadians, you need to be uncomfortable, so what do we do with it? We're doing something.

KT: I always try to bracket Project of Heart for our teacher candidates as both learning for you as a person, but also giving you something you can do with your future students. So, you're not left with this feeling of what do I do now? What can I do now? This is something you can do.

The final theme of personal growth had to do with relationships. MJ had previous relationships with her peers and taking on this project shifted it in terms of roles and responsibilities in the program. KT had to be aware of these dynamics and ensure that MJ was receiving support in these interactions:

KT: I want to mention that it was really helpful having you do the outreach with gathering the artifacts from the TC's, because when it comes from me with the faculty lens there's a power imbalance where students feel like they have to, whereas just with their peers, it is more of if you're interested and want to. That was a helpful benefit to working with everybody.

MJ: I didn't think of it in that way, but that's absolutely true. Like you said, it changed the perspective that they took with it. I feel like we also had some really cool conversations. Even just in other classes with my peers they come up to me and be like, oh Project of Heart, and then we'd have a whole conversation.

MJ: You can't please everybody, which is something I realized really quickly in this process when I had some commentary from other students. I had one situation where a student, in confidence, I told them about this project with hope for feedback and the feedback was not what I wanted and then for a few days afterwards I was very much like, should I be doing this? Am I the right person to be doing this? Is this wrong? And I had a lot of settler guilt, and that didn't mean it wasn't what I needed to hear, but if I have 1000

voices, I can't listen to all of them, otherwise the exhibit just would be blank at the end of the day, or probably wouldn't exist.

The project also affected our relationship, adding additional layers of project co-creators to our existing roles. This led us to reflect on how it affected our teacher identities and working together in a larger context of education:

KT: You talked about your undergraduate experience and learning as a student and how that's a specific lens. And then assisting at your museum job with the curator and again being in like a helping role there. But here I wanted to give you the opportunity to step into it as the lead person with my support. And I wanted to give you that space for it. I was very cautious the whole time as we were working together to check in and to see how you were doing and so as not to, like, push-push-push during times of stress but to give you an opportunity to get excited about education again.

MJ: I think it was good for me because I'm somebody who really has always needed to schedule my life, like this is how things are. I won't lie, at first, I was a little bit like... I just wanted it done. But then I thought no, I need to take my time. When I initially rushed trying to put together the books, they didn't turn out well. Then we had the books printed, we waited on that process, and it looked so much better. So, it was a lot of just allowing things to just kind of be.

KT: And I agree, I was on that journey with you, having trial and error and disappointment. I think there was part of myself as the faculty member for the ASP, thinking about my role as a teacher in the School of Education, but then also working on the exhibit together and feeling like I should have anticipated these problems, so that you wouldn't have to experience them. And then I interrogate my own practice as an educator,

like hey, why do you feel like you need to do this, why can't we struggle in it together and demonstrate what this looks like? And I think that's really important in terms of really leaning into process and what process means because process isn't always good sometimes it's messy and hard.

MJ: Yeah, and it's not linear. I think that's the other thing I realized, it wasn't just going to be like a straight line, it wasn't just going to go perfectly. If anything, I feel like it took some windy turns. It's just fine.

KT: It was such a rewarding experience to come in and see the work that you had done in different stages. And to say, and when I came in for the final look when all the artifacts were up and the artist statements and to go whoa, it looks like a real museum display. I couldn't have got there on my own, I know I couldn't have and that's why I think it's important that we did the ASP together.

MJ: Yeah, and I know I wouldn't have been able to do the research alone, so I think we were bound to each other in a way that needed to happen in a very healthy and good way.

This project provided space for personal and professional growth overall. Making space to have important conversations about intent and impact, of learning and unlearning, was important for the efficacy of this project and to ensure we were approaching it in a good way. Being able to go through the process and feel the accompanying emotions gave us some insight into our students' lived experiences in the classroom as they engage in similar learning situations.

Reimagining our roles as teachers outside of the classroom also led us towards rethinking our dual relationship as faculty-student and co-creators. We considered our relationship to each other, how we might share our responsibilities for the project while also ensuring we approached

each other respectfully and from a place of reciprocity. This learning from approach can then translate into additional teaching contexts, helping guide us in our work with future students.

### **Discussion**

The educational importance of this study is situated within teacher education. This project highlights how teacher education can use alternative settings placements to prepare TC's to teach in and beyond the K-12 classroom context. This project also demonstrates how to engage with problem-solving and inquiry-based approaches in teacher education through co-planning and co-creation. It illustrates the importance of building mentor relationships with TC's for ongoing support and professional development. This study demonstrates how faculty-student mentorship in a professional education program can contribute to the field of education in both academic theory and professional practice.

This project also explores the pedagogical approach of using arts-based creation methods for learning and teaching about reconciliation. It gives concrete examples of how teacher candidates might engage in similar types of projects through the role of allyship and commitment to the TRC Calls to Action (2015). The project was about the individual participant experiences as well as how they will mobilize their learnings with students in their future classrooms, thus supporting ongoing work in the field. Potential future implications of this project include: a) continuing to bring awareness and action to teacher candidates by exploring this type of inquiry project in university faculty of education classes, b) working with practicing teachers as faculty advisors to mentor teacher candidates as they create a similar project on their practicum placements, c) offering professional development opportunities through partnerships with school boards to demonstrate to teachers the benefits of engaging in arts-based learning with their students, and d) working with community partners and faculty of education programs to offer



alternative settings placements as an option for practicum requirements to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners within a teacher education program.

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