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The Power of Visual Art in Indigenization Abstract

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Introduction

Abby

I was born and raised on my traditional homelands of Aamjiwnaang First Nation, which is situated in Sarnia, Ontario. Aamjiwnaang is located alongside the beautiful *Gichegami-Ziibii*, also known as the St. Clair River, where I spent all my time growing up. Aamjiwnaang forever holds a special place in my heart and has offered me incredible lessons of resilience. Our community is surrounded by what is known as "*Chemical Valley*", an industrial complex that hosts 40% of Canada's petrochemical industry. The effects of living here challenge my community's health and wellness on a daily basis. Growing up in this harsh reality has offered some inspiring activists and advocates to look up to as I grew up. I grew up as a jingle dress dancer, alongside my older brother Jacob, who was a grass dancer. We grew up really close with my family and were involved in all aspects of community and cultural life. As a child, I attended ceremonies, I received my Anishinaabemowin name, and as a family and community we practiced *Mno-Biimadiziwin*, or the way to live a good life. I went to an elementary school with a large Indigenous population. Anishinaabeg culture was present in all aspects of my elementary school education. I was fortunate to be a part of this early wave of cultural education in the classroom because I know previous generations of my family did not have this benefit. This early cultural immersion was foundational to my upbringing and is at the core of my educational journey and future aspirations. This drive led me to Indigenous Studies at Western. Living in London, where I am a short drive to my family in Aamjiwnaang, but also getting a broader scope on the traditional lands of my people.

We have been learning about the importance of situating ourselves through the Head and Heart Fellowship, particularly within the learning circles. We learned that our positionality is unique to

us, and it shapes our perspectives and has bearing on all aspects of our research (Holmes, 2020). We also learned that positionality can affect the totality of the research process, shaping the outcomes as they are informed by our experiences in life (Holmes, 2020). At this point in my journey, my focus is broad, but squarely grounded in Anishinaabeg understandings of the world. The Head and Heart Fellowship has enabled me to apply this focus on Indigenous representation in visual arts.

Tyme

As a Cree-Métis person, I look at the stories and history of what I'm researching from an indigenous perspective. This involves looking at historical accounts and analysis, but also looking at the story within. It's one thing to just look at and know history, but it's another thing to understand the story and spirit that’s vested among it. This research is very important and personal to me. I am trying to learn more about and understand myself and my own indigenous identity. As an urban Plains Cree and Métis man, who I am is at the heart of what I do. I often visited my metis grandparents when I was growing up. I was fully immersed in the culture when I visited them. We made bannock, fried bread, venison stews, fried fish, and other country foods. We often went camping on the land, fished, and partook in many of our cultural practices. My father, who works in hockey, taught a hockey school in Maskwacis (formerly Hobbema), an Indigenous community in Alberta. Pope Francis recently delivered the Catholic Church’s official apology for their involvement in the residential school system from Maskwacis. When I was there, I was surrounded by fellow indigenous people and spent lots of time around the reserve. This had a great impact on me as a child. My Great Grandfather, who is still alive today, attended residential school in lesser slave lake. I knew this growing up, but now I’m coming to understand the greater impact this had on my family, my community, and my own being. I have

moved many times in my life, but my connection to the land through my Dad's family is foundational to who I am as an Indigenous person. This drives my research right now. I want to get back in touch with my culture. I want to expand my understanding of my indigenous culture and indigenous art, and how I can honour my ancestors in my practice. My research is guided by wanting to understand more of the traditions, stories, and knowledge of Indigenous art, and how we can use it in the present-day. Indigenous art must be kept alive in modern times. The stories and knowledge vested in Indigenous art need to be passed down and used if they are going to continue to represent who we are as Indigenous people in the world today. My research examines how Indigenous art can be used and reclaimed in contemporary times.

Why did you come here?

Abby

The Head and Heart Fellowship allowed me to focus on appropriate Indigenous representation through artistic murals. The Indigenous Studies Program at Western is in the process of putting Indigenous art, in the form of a large mural, on their exterior office wall. As part of this project, I reached out to local Indigenous artists who could best speak to the local nations (Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Lenape). As Indigenous Studies is growing, the focus of the mural project is foundations, and how they might best be represented by an Indigenous mural. My work researching potential artists began when I started as the Indigenous Studies summer student. I was granted the opportunity to work through the Head and Heart Fellowship to help structure and facilitate the mural research. I spent quite a bit of time researching and delving into the art space, learning as much as I could about Indigenous murals. While I have always appreciated art,

and art displays, this research offered me insight to the important role they play in representing culture and traditions.

My research focused on indigenizing spaces and the importance of murals. Indigenizing space is an integral part of creating a place where Indigenous people can flourish. A collective effort to get the academy to be more inclusive of Indigenous ways of knowing and being will transform our future for the students and faculty. A large issue is having adequate resources and funding from the academy itself to initiate any sizable change. Resources are not the only roadblock within the academy. Indigenous people have not been a priority in aspects of academia.

> Canadian post-secondary institutions are now struggling with how to ethically engage Indigenous communities and Indigenous knowledge systems. Communities, scholars, and administrators want better relationships, but are faced with the challenging task of reconciling these aspirations with a university culture that is still, for the most part, invested in Indigenous erasure and marginalization. Conceptually, *indigenization* represents a move to expand the academy's still-narrow conceptions of knowledge, to include Indigenous perspectives in transformative ways (Gaudry, Lorenz. 2018: page 218).

Actionable change can come through incremental steps.

Tyme

I first heard about the Head and Heart Fellowship in 2021 during my second year at Western. I was very close to applying, but ultimately decided not to. This past year, however, I was certain I

wanted to do it. I was ecstatic when I received the email saying I got the position. Over the past year, I have become much more interested in my Indigenous heritage. I am a Cree-Métis man. I was always involved and interested in my heritage growing up. My grandparents on my father's side are Indigenous. When I visited them, I was enriched in Indigenous culture and traditions. As a child, I went with my family to Maskwacis, a reserve community in Alberta. There, my parents ran a hockey camp and health and wellness camp for Indigenous youth on the reserves. This had a great impact on my upbringing, and helped me to understand my indigeneity from a young age. However, I feel I became a bit out of touch with my culture as I grew up. My family moved many times during my lives, and I was somewhat cut off from my Indigenous roots in the process. When I found out about it, I thought it would be the perfect opportunity to connect again with my culture. I wanted to learn more about my culture and what it means to be Indigenous to me. Moreover, I wanted to meet fellow Indigenous scholars. I haven't met many other Indigenous people in my time at Western, and I felt this opportunity would be perfect to connect with other people who share a common heritage as me. My objectives with Head and Heart go beyond wanting to reconnect with my Indigenous culture. I wanted to learn more about Indigenous art. I feel that, as an art student in a western institution, my learning has been very focused on western art. This has been my desire as well. I had never had a massive interest in Indigenous art, and I knew the head and heart fellowship was my chance to both explore the rich visual culture of Indigenous people and ignite a passion for it in myself.

How did it change?

Abby

Speed bumps and hiccups can be expected when working with community. One of the first setbacks was how the wall was going to get into proper condition for the artists to come in. This

process started back in my first week in May. It is unfortunate how overworked Facilities Management is as they were only able to have the wall prepped for the first week of July. Leaving us unable to pursue any potential artist to proceed until this was crossed off our list. As we were shifting to the changes, we learned a certain amount of adaptability through our summer. Now with the final plan of having Mike Cywink do the mural and collaborating with Indigenous students and community members in the Fall. This allows for input from many different people and offers a fully collaborative opportunity for everyone involved.

Community-based work is susceptible to delays. This became apparent as we attempted to organize multiple artists to come in. We received little interest in the open call, and so we shifted the focus to one artist who could work with others. Initially, it was the dream to have artists coming from the 3 surrounding communities to grant us a mural to emulate their Nation on campus.

Our summer tasks also included the task of tackling the much-neglected display case outside of the Indigenous Studies Office, which contained largely outdated and irrelevant information. It was housing faculty publications, most of which no longer work within the university. Working on the display case offered an immersive way to get involved within Indigenous arts. We had the opportunity to go to Oneida Nation of the Thames to visit a locally owned small fabric store to adorn the display case. Rick, Tyme and I collectively agreed on a selection of fabrics to have in the display case. We were hosted by Ursula Doxtator who offered us an amazing experience and tour of the community. This honour granted both Tyme and I a feeling of connectedness and kinship as we were able to create meaningful relationships and experiences throughout our trip.

Tyme

Originally, our plan was to have a mural commissioned for the indigenous studies office. We had the idea of having one artist from each of the three original inhabitants of the land western is upon (Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, Lenaapee) do a portion of the mural. We did face some setbacks with this, however. As Abby mentioned, facilities management had a backlog on getting the wall cleared and painted in preparation for the mural, so we did not have a lot of time left for the artist to complete it over the summer. Our new plan was then that our artist we found, Mike Cywink, would complete the mural starting september, and have coffee hours to ask indigenous students what they'd like to see on the mural. Including this, I switched gears to look at what it means to indigenize spaces as a whole. How indigenous visual culture, manifested through murals, can help to bring indigenous culture into western institutions. For this, I did a survey of several indigenous murals on Western's campus. I talked with the artists and community leaders to ask what their murals represent. What is the significance of them being in this space? This would help me to gain an idea of how indigenizing spaces is significant and what can be done to aid it. This process involved getting involved with the community as well. Me and Abby went with one of our mentors, Rick Fehr, to Oneida of the Thames to pick up fabric for the Indigenous studies office display case. While there, we connected with Rick's old friend Ursula Doxtator. She showed us around the reserve and talked with us about the community and the haudenosaunee culture. This was a big deal for me, as I'd never visited a reserve in Ontario before. It was so interesting to see. I really connected with the culture and the community. It was an amazing experience to go there and see one of the reserves of ontario. The experience really helped to frame my mindset going into my surveys.

Storytelling

Abby

While I focused on what it means to indigenize spaces with murals, I was recognizing parallels within my parallel work with SOAHAC (Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre), where I have been volunteering one day a week since May to support their traditional foods food basket program. SOAHAC sources traditional foods for its clients. On my end, this work includes sourcing pickerel and venison, which traditionally is an incredibly vital local traditional food. Urban Indigenous people often do not have access to these types of foods. Typically these foods are not easily found nor moderately priced. Making these foods accessible to members of the community allows for connection with culturally significant foods in London. Hearing the gratitude people have from receiving both the traditionally sourced food bags to the wild game and fish was beyond rewarding. The hard work going on at SOAHAC is not going unrecognized. SOAHAC received a substantial grant from the London Community Foundation which will provide financial supports to extend this work. “The Minomode-zewin nunge-gehwin or “healthy ways of eating” project will address food insecurity by offering a Traditional Foods Bank for urban indigenous families. This unique pilot project aims to use food as means of healing and reconnection to culture and will collect valuable information through storytelling. Additional funding will allow for expansion of the food offering and allow the basic needs cupboard to include more traditional indigenous foods. Jocelyn Zubrigg, a dietitian with SOAHAC, focuses on improving food security, “*Minomode-zewin nunge-gehwin* is a pilot project that aims to improve access for indigenous families to traditional foods and ways of preparing and preserving these foods…It not only addresses food insecurity but reconnects families with their traditional

foods*”* (London Community Foundation, 2022). Being a part of this project has been a meaningful and fulfilling experience.

Art is an integral aspect of Indigenous culture. Art both emulates and preserves culture through its presence.

> Settler colonial laws, policies, practices, and structures systemically eroded socio-cultural practices that for generations had defined Aboriginal peoples. These practices - including, among many, feasting and gifting rituals, petroglyphing, body ornamentation, singing, dancing, drumming, weaving, basket making, and carving - were simultaneously art, creative expression, religious practice, ritual models and markers of governance structures and territorial heritage, as well as maps of individual and community identity and lineage (NCCAH, 2012: Page 2).

Art is entrenched into our identities and well-beings as Indigenous peoples.

> In 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples documented the specific and unique importance of art to Aboriginal peoples, linking various creative practices directly to the vitality of individual and collective identity, strength, resiliency, and overall well-being. A growing body of evidence, explored herein, documents that art is beneficial in the healing process, cultivation of good health, and maintenance of well-being for individuals and communities, particularly for Aboriginal peoples in Canada " (NCCAH, 2012: page 2).

Having a qualitative study to support what Indigenous peoples have been articulating in for millennia only supports its critical importance in our society. Having a western based research

study only reaffirms this Indigenous ontology. Art involves both the corporeal and incorporeal aspects of our world. These facets implicate and implore us to dig deeper into our own beings. It should be valued and respected as a paramount aspect of our society.

Tyme

Kanatawakhon, a professor of Indigenous studies at Western University, has completed two murals on western campus. One for social science building, and one for the department of anthropology. Kanatawakhon is Mohawk, an Iroquois nation, from Kenhtèke on Mohawk of the bay of quinte territory. Though they are called the Haudenosaunee today formally, Kanatawakhon prefers to use the term iroquois. So I feel I owe it to him to use the term iroquois for his survey. Mohawk and Iroquois art as a whole influences Kanatawakhon's art and is the pimmical style of his murals. His mural in social science, yesterday, today, and tomorrow, painted by him and a colleague, was completed within two days of collaborative work. It is painted on 4 insert lengths here birch wood panels in acrylic paint, totaling insert length here. The style of the mural is minimalist, with large colour blocks and geometric patterns, an ode to indigenous art styles in Canada. The themes of the mural are that of the passage of time and interconnectivity. The sky domes, used prominently in the piece, represent the separations of the cosmos in Iroquoian tradition. The blue domes show our world that we live in, while the green domes show life and abundance, the growth in the world(ask Kanatawakhon about 3 pronged leaves and 5 pronged leaves). Atop the blue sky domes, three celestial trees sprout from the sky domes. Celestial trees in Iroquoian art are symbols of abundance and nourishment. In this context, they also come to symbolize aspiration and hope. They continue to grow and live, showing promise of a bright future. The river flowing with beams of sun intertwined underneath the banks of the domes shows the passage of time, from the past to the present and to the future.

These are not to suggest, however, that one is inherently better than the other, quite the opposite. The sky domes, according to Kanatawakhon, represent how each section of time is beautiful and subjective to the next. Living in the present should not discount the past or draw anxiety or loathing for the future, and vice versa. The mural follows a layered pattern scheme, which can be seen going from bottom to top. The ground, the river, the banks, the tree sky domes and the blue sky domes. The space around the sky domes, this liminal space of sorts, has an undefined meaning. It is open to interpretation. Kanatawakhon acknowledges the ability to green screen/superimpose images within this space. This gives the mural an infinite and multi applicable feeling. This allows the mural to be used to represent a multitude of landscapes, peoples, and cultures. This ties into a major facet of the work. Kanatawakhon states that the three sky domes represent the Iroquois, English, and French influences of this area of southern Ontario. This is in tandem with the larger theme at play of inter connectivity and continuity. This mural pays homage to the connection of everything in this world. The sky, the plants, the earth, the water, the sun. But also the people and cultures of this area. A subjective unity between all things, and how it will continue to grow and move through time and space.

Kanatawakhon's mural for the anthropology building plays into a similar narrative as that of the aforementioned. Through my conversations with Kanatawakhon, you get a real sense of this idea of connectivity and continuity. The domes are once again prominent in this mural, showing the earth realm. The space underneath shows swirls, Iroquoian glyphs used to represent water, and cross hatching, used to represent land. Above this, we see miniature sky domes with plants growing from them. This represents the growth and infinity of living things. On either side of the pinnacle skydome are wind motifs which symbolize the four cardinal directions (north, south,

east, west). These details add a nice symmetry to the mural. A feature that is prominent in Kanatawakhons murals. At the very top of the mural shows mountains and life within the sky world. This brings in the connected nature between turtle island and the sky world. The plants shown between the mountains are black cherries; a symbol of the light of the sky world. The infinite continuity of the mountains past the bounds of the walls demonstrates the infinite nature of the cosmos, as well as the earth realm. The pinnacle skydome, showing earth realm, is held up by human figures all in a chain. The ones with the vertical heads represent the indigenous population, while the ones with the horizontal heads, meant to emanate European style hats, represent the settlers. The repetition of these connected figures is reminiscent of the covenant chain in a sense. The complex system of deals and alliances made between indigenous nations, like the Iroquois, and the European settlers. It reminds me of the story of the whiteman and the Onkwehonweh. While the Onkwehonweh made wampum belts for agreement, the white men made the three-link covenant chain, and whenever it became rusted or tarnished, the two parties would meet again to repair and polish the chain to renew the agreement they had made. The figures supporting the sky domes symbolizes their collaboration in trying to maintain the world, as well as friendship between the two peoples. It seems this idea of mutuality and cooperation plays a unique role in Kanatawakhon's murals. This unity in his works almost exhibits a dream of reconciliation and compromise between the two people groups. In an Iroquois style such as this adds a rich emphasis on this. Including the west as the guest within and along with indigenous stories and ideas sends a powerful message.

Mike Cywink (Thames Hall mural)

When I first met Michael (Mike) Cywink, to be completely honest, my first thoughts were "wow, this guy's cool." Mike is Ojibwe from Whitefish River First Nation near Manitoulin Island. He works full time at Western University for the faculty of education in the centre for school mental health, and is currently working on a bachelor's degree in indigenous studies. He carried himself so well, and had this atmosphere around him that was so relaxed and humble, yet sure and confident with a great sense of humour. His work is no exception to being so fascinating and pleasant. Mike's mural sits in Thames hall on western campus, in one of the waiting rooms of the health and wellness centre. This mural completely wraps around three walls surrounding the entrance into the clinic. The mural was painted with the help of several art students paid as assistance. Much like Kanatawankhons murals, they are done in a minimalist, colour block style reminiscent of Indigenous art. Mike's style lends itself to Anishinabek artistic traditions of subject matter, depiction, and symbolism. The mural is meant to represent the traditional lands that Western University sits upon. Moreover, we also see nods to friendship and interconnectivity within the mural. First of all, it's important to remember that the mural is within Western's health and wellness clinic, so we must remember that context. On the south wall, we see a rising sun, with two indigenous people beating drums. Opposite this on the other wall, we see the moon with another indigenous person in dance. This is an immediate example of the interconnectivity message of the mural. The connection between day and night. The drums and dancing above the sun and moon is also reminiscent of traditional healing practices and ceremonies. With the mural being in the health clinic, I think this juxtaposition is a beautiful display of the connection between traditional and western medicine, the friendship between the two healing practices. This reference to traditional medicine is seen again further down the mural with the turtle shell in the river. The bottom four panels of the shell are painted in the colours of

a medicine wheel: white, yellow, red, and black. We see more references to Western residing on the traditional lands of the Haudneshaunee, the Anishinaabe, and the Lenaapee. The turtle shell represents home. This pays tribute to these lands being the shared home of both Western and the original nations that inhabited them. The crane that is perched upon the turtle shell alludes to the Anishinabek clan system, in which the Crane Clan members are the leaders. This represents how Western breeds and creates leaders in its programs. The use of an ojibwe symbol to represent a western institution is an interesting use. It makes me think of the idea of interconnectivity. The original inhabitants of this land and the western institution that is now on it are in a relationship now that is being strengthened and worked through. This gesture in the mural is a perfect representation of that process. A gesture of friendship of sorts from their neighbours. Next to the shell and crane, a deer is drinking from the river.

The river can be used to reference the Thames river, but the water also represents life and how it fuels all of creation. The Deer refers to antler river, or Deshkaan Ziibing. The water gives life, and the antlers of the deer are flowing into the water while the deer drinks from it, showing the connection between the two and how they come full circle. Throughout the mural, blue orbs representing water are interlaced with a black string of paint connecting them. Water is a major theme in this mural. It connects different regions through rivers and lakes. It connects the heavens to the ground through rain. It gives life and allows things to grow. The black string linking them exemplifies this idea of interconnectivity. Moreover, it also speaks to balance in the world. Along with the sun and the moon in the mural, the water is juxtaposed by the fire burning on the north wall. The fire represents balance. It balances the qualities of water. They complement each other. This mural marries together both the indigenous history and persistence of this land and the residence of Western University upon it. This mural bridges together these

two peoples and cultures in a way that highlights and shows the traditions of Anishinabek/Ojibwa art.

Tsista Kennedy (Faculty of Education mural)

This survey is different from the rest. I did not speak with the actual artist of the mural, Tsista Kennedy. However, I feel that the way I gained my knowledge of this mural perfectly represents indigenous research as storytelling. Laurie George, program coordinator for Indigenous Faculty of Education, acted as my elder in a way and passed down the oral story of the mural to me. I think this is an excellent example of how research can be conducted in this way, through Indigenous methods like storytelling and ceremony. Tsista's mural is different from the others as well. It was done digitally, and then printed on vinyl and applied to the glass wall side of the office. The mural is done in gray scale, an aesthetic choice I believe given the colour palette of the office. This mural combines Tsista's two inidgenous heritages, Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee (specifically Oneida). The mural marries these two cultures together in its depictions. The style is much more reminiscent of Anishinaabek art, much like the works of Norval Morrisseau. Tsistas mission with his art is to mix modern styles and depictions with traditional indigenous art. He brings these styles into the modern world and begs the question of what the future beholds. In the mural, we see inidgenous people intermixed with each other. We also see animals that are sacred to both cultures. We see a bison, snake, fish, eagle, and turtle. On the turtle's back, we see a tree growing, along with the eagle perched. This represents the turtle as turtle island, or the land that we reside upon. The eagle, in the haudenosaunee constitution, represents mutual protection and warns of evil. The snake is a symbol of healing and rebirth. It makes me think of the healing and work towards healing indigenous people have done in modern

times and continue to do in present day. The fish and bison were both very significant in indigenous culture, as they were main sources of food and other materials. They were greatly respected and prized for their resources. One of the things that stood out to me when learning about the mural was that the vines with plants are a symbol of both Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The flowers are sacred to the Anishinaabe and the strawberries are sacred to the Haudenosaunee, seen as medicine and a gift from the creator. Laurie told us this is a dead giveaway that the artist is both Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee. This is a very genius detail to include. In the middle of the mural, where the doors to the office are, we see two tree of peace wampums. As well as a wampum belt above it. In indigenous culture, wampums symbolized agreements. The indigenous nations did not write down contracts, they made wampums. Agreements through wampum were signs of friendship and respect. They represented the everlasting nature of their agreements. I think the faculty of education is the perfect setting for this mural. There is so much knowledge to be gained and traditions to be learned from it. Tsista's affinity towards bringing indigenous art into modern times is very serendipitous in that this mural helps to keep modern education and institutions grounded in indigenous culture. It continues to remind us of the cultures that Western shares its land with. It reminds us that we need to continue to expand our knowledge of indigenous cultures. It asks the spectator to question how indigenous knowledge can be brought into the modern world, and begs that the knowledge and culture of these people be preserved.

What did we learn?

Abby

Throughout our time in the Fellowship, we have been learning about the 6 Rs and their significance to Indigenous Research projects and applying them to lives as well. The 6 Rs [CR1]

are relationship, relationality, respect, responsibility, relevance, reciprocity, refusal, and gifting. Throughout the Fellowship, I am able to apply the 6 Rs into different aspects of my experience. I learned about the importance of indigenization and representation in all aspects of artistic expression.

We met with Lori George, who is a Program Coordinator at the Faculty of Education at Western who showed us around the vinyl applique of art they have on the glass walls in the new office space. They commissioned an artist Tsista Kennedy to create and design the amazing piece that he created. In the early days of researching potential artists, I was immediately drawn to Tsista art style, and as the plans changed this summer, I am glad that Western has a home for Tsista's art. It was quite a treat for me to have that full circle moment.

One of the most impactful things I will be taking away from the Fellowship were the connections I was able to make throughout the summer. Coming into a research project with a fellow emerging researcher made it a lot easier to transition into this new position. Having two amazing mentors to support me throughout my learning this summer was invaluable. The artists I met this summer alongside Tyme Thompson taught me more about art than I ever could have imagined. The community involvement we were able to participate in will forever hold a special place in my heart.

Tyme

I think the experience as a whole was so insightful and powerful for me. To start, indigenizing spaces can be a challenge. The organization process can be long and have many obstacles. I think the biggest takeaway from the mural project, however, is that you learn to ride the waves and make it come together in spite of the obstacles. Much work needs to be done to bring indigenous

visual culture into western spaces. Though we're taking baby steps, I think the work weve done towards it as a community is making an impact. These murals bring indigenous culture into spaces that otherwise would not have any reminder of the people who originally inhabit this land. Despite any obstacles, it's well with it for our people to make it come alive. Finally, the learning circle topics every week helped to frame our research. As Abby mentioned, the 7 R's gave us a great grasp of how to conduct inidgenous research. They helped to shape our research consciousness throughout this process. Tammy and Danica truly did act as our community elders in this process. They were always accessible and knowledgeable on not just how to conduct indigenous research, but *how* to be an indigenous researcher. I think back to when we picked sweetgrass with Tammy and the rest of the indigenous initiatives office. We always talked about research as ceremony in our reeling circles. This experience really showed me what that looks and feels like. All the people we went with shared their knowledge of sweetgrass. How to harvest it, what the seeds look like, how to grow it, how to braid it, what its significance is. The list goes on. I think that experience truly reflected what is at the heart of indigenous research being a ceremony. Challenges do come up in indigenizing spaces, but we learn to ride the waves, and the connections made and the stories told through the process are invaluable.

Conclusion

Abby

A big takeaway for me is my newfound deep appreciation for Indigenous art and murals. The sheer amount of coordination, thought, and talent that goes into getting a mural to finalized project is beyond anything I could have guessed prior to this summer. Just the opportunity to be

so immersed in something that's always piqued my interest, but I never really pursued. Having this opportunity to explore this new realm was beyond

The connections I made throughout the summer was something I never anticipated, but it will forever be something I cherish. I will never be able to extend enough gratitude to everyone who contributed to my overwhelmingly amazing summer. Some particularly important people to recognize include Tammy and Danica for facilitating the Head and Heart Fellowship for the Summer. A thank you to Tyme, for being the best co researcher I could ever ask for. Tyme was always there to cheer me along and to lift my spirits whenever I needed it. My final, and biggest thank you goes to my mentors Rick Fehr and Chantelle Richmond. Without these two my summer would not have been as amazing and immersive as it has been. The impact they have had on both my growth as an emerging researcher, and my personal growth in so many aspects this summer. Tyme and I got unbelievably lucky this summer and I speak for the both of us when I say we have a never-ending amount of gratitude.

Tyme

Throughout the process, challenges presented themselves and things did not go according to plan. Despite this, the experience as a whole is more valuable to indigenizing spaces and research than anything. Through our conversations, research, knowledge and story sharing, and collaboration, we gained precious knowledge of how the process of indigenizing spaces goes and what it looks like. Moreover, we learned how to conduct indigenous research and explore what it means to be Indigenous researchers. I would like to extend a massive thanks to Tammy and Danica for organizing the head and heart fellowship. This experience would not have been the same without you. To my mentors Rick and Chantelle and my research partner Abby, thank you

for being apart of my experience in helping me explore my culture and my learning experience. And thank you to the artists Kanatawankhon, Mike Cywink, and Tsista Kennedy for their murals. As well as to Lori George and the former two artists for talking with me about the artworks. Your contributions reach farther than you know and have impacts greater than the universe. Kinanaskômitin.

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Tyme

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