**Seeking Solidarity and Living Agreement: Disabled and Indigenous Artists and Curators Opening Access with Public Creative Institutions**

[Keynote talk for the *Living Agreement Symposium*, Banff International Curatorial Institute; co-organized by David Garneau and Carmen Papalia. The Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity, August 6-9, 2019. Unpublished.]

*Living Agreement* was a gathering of artists and curators at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity (August 7-9, 2019) who were interested in reimaging relations with each other and with creative institutions. Social practice artist Carmen Papalia and Brandy Dahrouge, director of Visual Arts at the Banff Centre, designed the symposium based on Carmen's recognition that art galleries disable non-conventional learners when their designs and programs are based on normative standards for minds and bodies, or on accommodation protocols that seek to group non-normative folks into comprehensible sets for easier management. He argues that accessibility should be considered as a temporary and relational practice in which participants and institutions co-design experiences. The intention of *Living Agreement* was for folks who embody a continuum of experience, and people who work with or for creative institutions, especially art galleries, meet to figure how artists, creative institutions, and audiences can refigure their relations as a 'living agreement'. Carmen asked me to give a talk and to co-host the gathering. He invited me, I think, because of how, in our many conversations, we found parallels between disabilities and Indigenous activism in public display spaces.

The symposium was intense and complex, dense with teachings I continue to learn from. I am grateful to Carmen for the invitation and thoughtful companionship, to Brandy for her grace and organization, to Elder Sykes Powderface (Stoney Nakoda) for his wise teachings and guidance, and the many participants who made the event so engaging. For the past few months, I have tried to write about my experience there. I am not up to the task. My attempts were either reductive or organized by hindsight and therefore not as honest as is needed. Besides, the most engaging moments were non-public and should remain so. Perhaps I need to write a short story rather than an essay. So, for this publication, I have decided to include a lightly edited version of my Banff presentation which, though written before the event, does touch on some of the ideas we wrestled with.

I acknowledge that we are on Treaty Seven territory, homeland of the Stoney Nakoda, Blackfoot, and Tsuut'ina Nations. A grateful guest, I offer respect from Treaty Four—homeland of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Lakota, Nakota, and also the Métis, my nation.

I am a frequent guest. Our family camped and hiked in these mountains in the 1960s and 70s. The hot springs cave I visited as a four-year-old continues to be the setting of my more primordial dreams. My dad's stories of the cave's pre-colonial use were torch light revealing a universe hidden by the world. In 1985, I crashed an art residency. I was a furtive guest of my now life-partner who was a legit attendee. In the 90s, I visited Joane Cardinal Schubert, Cheryl L'Hirondelle, Edward Poitras, and other friends during their residencies. Since then, I have attended lectures, panels, performances, symposia, been a visiting artist, given talks, including a recent keynote, attended a short residency, and co-led, with Candice Hopkins, a longer one.

Banff is a sanctuary but not home. This is a sacred site whose energy I can only absorb in small bundles.

While perpetually awed by this place, I'll admit to being especially humbled this visit, by your company. Those of you I know, I know as exceptional. And those new to me, well, your CVs and application letters, and now meeting you in person, reveals a range and depth of experience, intelligence, skill, energy, creativity, and care that is at once thrilling and daunting. I am honoured by your presence and alert to the responsibility and challenge you inspire.

I teach painting and drawing at a modest university in a small Prairie city, Regina, which has a large First Nations and Métis population. My art attempts to give visual form to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. I also try to extend traditional Métis visual culture into our contemporary moment. My curation and writing focus on Indigenous contemporary art, identities, struggles with institutions, and possibilities for creative conciliation.

I am not a disabilities scholar. I don't know the literature, discourse, or lived experience. I am mono-aural: my right ear stopped working a few decades ago. Frustrating, but not much of a disability. I'm Métis with ancestors reaching through St. Paul de Métis, Edmonton, Red River, and Sault Ste. Marie. But as a white appearing cis male, my journey is smoothed and burdens lightened by unearned privilege. My empathy may have broadened by being, during my teens, the eldest son of five in an unemployed, single parent family; by years of working with children in daycares and an emergency children's residence run by Franciscan nuns; and by sharing a home and life with our transgendered adult child who continues to educate me beyond theory. I am here because my friend, Carmen Papalia, invited me. My work resonates, he says, with some of his thoughts—and he feels you might find something useful in my being here with you. I trust him. But I'll also test his claim.

This talk considers how Carmen's ideas rhyme with a traditional Indigenous worldview, how they echo a First Nations' sense of treaty as living agreement, and accord with recent strategies Indigenous artists, curators, and their allies have used, not only to increase access to public creative institutions, but also work toward Indigenizing them. My goal is to consider opportunities for solidarity among Indigenous and disabled creative advocates, to reconsider the institutions we desire to transform, and to simply provoke discussion.

This is a big quilt. There's only time to present a few patches, and an abundance of loose threads. I trust that in the Q and A, and in the days ahead, you will supply your own swatches, tie some threads, and that we might stitch these ideas together to form something of use, of comfort, perhaps even something beautiful.

If we are to be socially—rather than just theoretically—constructive, following Carmen, we need to keep specific individuals and places in mind. Real life grounds—and grinds—concepts. The grist for this mill, this symposium, is us: artists and curators, educators and facilitators, thinkers and doers, builders and maintainers; and places like this, institutions that aspire to be creative, public, and inclusive. Our work is intersubjective. That is, rather than positing objective claims which identify and regulate grouped subjects before the individuals are even known, we begin by sharing our individual experiences, then look for patterns and possibilities that might attract

alliances and inspire protocols and actions that work for us and, hopefully, for similarly positioned others. Intersubjective and intersectional dialogues among minoritized peoples are how we map the contours of a common oppression, its resistance, and alternatives. Intersubjective and intersectional dialogue is the striving toward collective understanding *through* personal experiences.

For example, a personal example, about fourteen years ago I joined the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective. Talking with curators and artists from Northern Turtle Island, I realized that experiences I assumed were personal and local were in fact shared by us all. It was eye-opening. Before meeting them, I was a regional person—a Métis from the Prairies. After meeting with the ACC, I recognized myself as not only Métis, but also Aboriginal; not only regional but also swept up in a larger struggle. A few years later, in 2008, I went to Australia for the first time. I hadn't travelled much, hadn't left northern Turtle Island. Meeting with Aboriginal folks in Sydney—nearly 14,000 km away—popped my eyes further! Not only did we curators share identical institutional struggles, our experiences as Indigenous people were also familiar. Our first meeting was with community artists and knowledge-keepers. They told us about their boarding schools, forced adoptions, loss of language, disproportionate poverty, incarceration, and so on. They talked about their political struggles and efforts at sovereignty. If it wasn't for the accents, I could have been at home. As Australian Aboriginal artist Vernon Ah Kee explained, referring to his earlier residency here in Banff, "It's not that our experiences are *like* theirs; it's that they are exactly the same."[i] My experience in Australia, then and in more than a dozen subsequent visits, brought home the breadth, depth, and perniciousness of colonialism. To repeat: Intersubjective and intersectional dialogues among minoritized peoples are how we map the contours of a common oppression, its resistance, and alternatives. Intersubjective and intersectional dialogue is the striving toward collective understanding *through* personal experiences.

Intersubjective and intersectional dialogue is living out loud rather than stewing alone on experiences that, while felt individually, are collectively shared. Consider us, here, right now. I want to tell you that I feel anxious at the start of every visit to Banff. Other Indigenous, Black, and of colour folks have reported similar discomfort, a sense of displacement. It's not just the terrifying "Welcome to Bear Country" pamphlets, or the rutting Elk alerts. Some figure it is guilt arising from the perplexing irony of being an activist at a resort. Our presence means the absence of an/other, equally or perhaps more deserving person. Our inclusion constructs us as elite. How are we to be at once ourselves and represent absent others? How do we contend with this privilege, convert ethical anxiety into responsibility and right action?

There is a difference between unconscious enjoyment of privilege and the conscious use of an earned, temporary privilege. Right action, being a righteous actor, *requires* routine ruptures. Everyone needs, on occasion, to separate from their web of daily responsibilities so they can better recon these relations and themselves. This may mean introspection, actually or metaphorically climbing a mountain to see your environment from an extra-personal vantage point. Or seeking seclusion to better know your private selves; to reassess whether you are being spurred by your preferences, by institutional needs, or guided by higher values. Sometimes we need to dissolve the self in the solvent of nature.

Alternatively, social retreat, gathering together, apart, with like minds and hearts at a site of facilitation, is another way to renew personal missions, but also to forge social agreement. Such purposeful communions are neither escape nor luxury but labour. In moments of collective subjectivity we share experiences, thoughts, intuitions, and feelings, and listen for resonance and dissonance, for affirming accord and challenging discord. It is an opportunity to check, challenge, and recalibrate our perceptions, judgements, and actions. This symposium gathers individual perceptive folks to produce a reflective social being, a temporary collective intersubjectivity that generates insights that cannot be achieved on one's own. Intersubjectivity is a means of exploring relations that are unknowable to scientific objectivity. Intersubjective agreement is as close as we can get to the real and the true in these matters. And, as I will soon describe, again echoing Carmen, and the philosophy of Richard Rorty, these are contingent truths tested in performance and made durable by solidarity.

So, you're not on vacation. You've retreated to increase and improve your resources, to forge new tools and alliances.

In non-colonial Prairie societies, important decisions, choices impacting the whole group, were determined by consensus. Whether to make war or peace required days of council—talking, eating, and ceremony. Many written settler accounts of Treaty negotiations express frustration over the slow progress of the talks.[ii] They thought it quaint that everyone had to be heard and in agreement before papers could be signed but could not recognize it as essential. They heaped particular scorn on the inclusion of women—something, formally at least, alien to settler tradition. In hierarchical societies, decisions slide from the top, those downhill are recognized, and are encouraged to see themselves as, lesser beings who must inevitably defer to their betters. In societies where people understand themselves to be individuals who reach solidarity through agreement, know that accord takes time. Once achieved, everyone works together for common *and* individual goods.

As you know, Carmen conceives access as exceeding the institutional accommodation of non-standard bodies and minds. Ramps, braille texts, described audio, and so on, are essential to access, but he cautions that we should not focus on hardware at the expense of human relations. Hardware addresses—that is it recognizes and constructs—group-able difference rather than respond, in dialogue, to individual persons with unique needs. Such devices only assist those with visible, familiar, generic disabilities that can be ameliorated by a common solution. Most importantly, they only recognize those disabilities that can be remedied by things. Hammers seeking nails. The architecture of art galleries and museums impose a hierarchic ontology of ability and disability. Their structures sort folks as they enter, favouring some averaged persons, and disadvantaging many individual others who, even before entering, know this place is for them or not. Carmen proposes a richer sense of care.

A few years ago, my adult kid and I were invited to a Sundance ceremony near here.[iii] I was anxious that B would be made to feel out of place in this traditional setting. Would they be asked to wear a skirt? Would they be interrogated about their moon time? As we were being introduced around, B explained that they were two-spirit. An elder took them by the arm and said, we have a place for you and led them to the circle—which was divided by gender—and invited them to sit between the groups. Care is a personal invitation, feeling welcomed, having a place.

Colonial, capitalist, racist, patriarchal, hetero-centrist, humanist, and ablest regimes are characterized by a desire for frictionless commerce. “Commerce,” as in buying, selling, trading, and the movement of goods, but also in the sense of social relations. Colonialists want unimpeded access to the resources of others. Capitalism demands the same, but also desires the elimination of borders and regulations; anything that resists the easy flow of goods, capital, communication, and data. Resistances may include privacy and human rights. Frictionless flow increases with standardization. Regulation is imposed on everything. Well not everything, not every person. In colonial, capitalist, racist, patriarchal, hetero-centrist, humanist, and ablest regimes, privilege is the degree to which one enjoys unstandardized things, experiences, identities, desires, and the luxury of privacy.

I have been fortunate to have visited with Indigenous peoples throughout Turtle Island, in Aotearoa, Australia, Bangladesh, and Sampiland. Common to all is a struggle to have their humanity recognized. The American philosopher, Richard Rorty, argues that every society has a metaphysical yardstick with which to measure humanness. [For example, Plato’s Great Chain of Being.] The yardstick is seen as a real or natural order when it is in fact a theory invented by the privileged and imposed on the world in an attempt to organize it in a manner that best suits the needs and desires of the designers. Rorty argues[iv] that metaphysical yardsticks are the source of cruelty. If we have mental pictures as what counts as human, then we also have contrasting images of what is less than human. The logic goes: less than humans deserve less than human treatment. Settler antipathy toward Indigenous peoples goes even deeper than racism. Unlike the ontological hierarchy, the yardstick, that structures much of western thought and every colonial institution, the Indigenous worldview understands that humanity is inseparable from ‘all our relations’ and that people are in a web of relations and are not superior to our relations. This is a fundamental, existential odds with colonial, capitalist, racist, patriarchal, even humanist thought and behavior.

The rule of men in the west set the healthy, straight white male as the standard, the measure against which difference was determined. Difference is deviance. Societies in which ‘man is the measure’[v] designs its spaces and images to reify this myth. In such a regime, anyone outside one or more of these categories of privilege is considered a friction. Friction because they do not conform to the default design, and therefore slow its smooth operation. Bodies and minds disabled by these designs, then, are deficient and in need correction, training, assimilation, sanding down or building up, or accessorized so they can fit into the existing design, move a little faster, behave ‘normally’. Failing this adjustment, they need to exit the current: be settled on reserves, interned in special schools, installed in hospitals—and most sinisterly, prevented from existing in the first place.

Indigenous and disabled people—anyone, really, with substantial differences when measured against the regime’s protected preferences—are not just seen as physical impediments to progress, but also as existential threats. Folks who are not only disenfranchised by the current regime, but have lost interest in measuring up, lost interest in distorting themselves so they might better flow in the main stream, folks who have found in their difference community and even better modes of being themselves, people who have embodied values and narratives that

contradict, or more radically, are disinterested in dominant modes, these folks are perceived as a danger in need of containment.

Picture the pearl, the irritant made precious. Our relations with dominant institutions must be on our terms, and in collaboration. We can in these spaces create liberating relations. But, if we are not vigilant, we can find that we have co-authored our own containment, become a pearl strung on someone else's necklace.

Open Access is a collaboration not an accommodation. Collaboration means that both parties are challenged and changed, and a system is subtly disturbed. When I go to a hotel, I am accommodated. The rooms are standardized, and so am I. When I leave, I am replaced by another human unit. And so on. Nothing changed but the sheets. When I stay with friends, I impose on them, and they impose on me. We obligate ourselves to a relationship that goes beyond having our creature comforts met. Unlike a hotel, there is no standard fee. There are protocols and subtle, wordless negotiations. I bring gifts; my hosts make special food. "Am I being a good host, a good guest?" We create and share a time that is irregular, a caesura in the routine, a delightful disruption. But we are also prepared to share intimacies, to have conversations that may disturb, reveal, and transform.

Carmen emphasizes the contingent nature of these moments. Open Access is not especially about written policy or the accommodation of groups. It is a call to individuals to support each other for a set amount of time so everyone can participate, contribute, learn, and grow. Most importantly, these relationships recognize that needs, tastes, and moods change. Therefore, Open Access is "a perpetual negotiation of trust."[vi]

I'd like now to wade into the murky history of the Numbered Treaties, but only up to the toes. If the subject interests you, I recommend Skeldon Kransowski's (2019) thorough account, *No Surrender: The Land Remains Indigenous*; and the collection *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings* (2018);[vii] especially Michael Asch's essay "Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation: Stepping Back into the Future," and John Borrows' "Earth-Bound: Indigenous Resurgence and Environmental Reconciliation." These, and most recent Treaty scholarship, focus on the difference between the written contracts and what The Joint Council of the National Indian Brotherhood describe in their *A Declaration of the First Nations* of 1981 as "the Spiritual concept of Treaties."[viii]

The Numbered Treaties refer to eleven agreements signed between First Nations peoples of the Plains and the Crown between 1871 and 1921. They cover territories from northwestern Ontario, all of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, northeastern British Columbia, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. The First Peoples belonging to these territories were not conquered by war. They and settlers entered treaty to avoid war. According to British law, before Canada could assumed control of these lands after its partial autonomy from Britain through Confederation in 1867, the Crown had to treaty with the original inhabitants.

I first saw the slogan "We are all Treaty People"[ix] in Saskatchewan a dozen or so years ago. It was part of an education campaign reminding that Treaties are not just historical documents but affect the present, and they are not just about First Nations people. The Numbered Treaties are

between the Crown—representing settlers, their descendants, and anyone else who accepts the social contract by becoming a Canadian—and First Nations people. However, I noticed a dramatic difference between what Natives and Canadians understood by 'treaty'. If by 'treaty' you mean the legal documents, then the texts are clear: in exchange for reserved lands, limited hunting rights, some farming supplies, token annual payments ($5 each, not adjusted for inflation), education and healthcare, and some other provisions, First Nations did "cede, release, surrender, and yield up to the Government of Canada for Her Majesty the Queen and her successors forever, all their rights, titles, and privileges whatsoever to the lands included within the following limits…."[x] First Nations from Northern Ontario through to the Rockies and up to the Arctic signed away all rights to their territories. And the Indian Act made them wards of the state.

And yet, I have not met an Indigenous person who agrees that they ceded territory. It's as if they haven't read the documents. Even though their reserves have shrunk or been eliminated, and promises have been broken, these folks remain reverential about the Treaties. When pressed, elders explain that treaty is an agreement their ancestors made with the Crown and the Creator. They say they were to receive the goods, services, and rights in perpetuity in exchange for *sharing* the land with settlers. That is, settlers can literally use the top of the land, the soil to the depth of a plow. These concepts do not appear in any of the written Treaties.

Every scholar of Treaty agrees that there is this discrepancy and, for years offered two broad explanations. According to Kranowski, historians agreed that Indigenous worldview does not include Western-style land ownership, Indians did not understand what they signed. Chalk it up to cultural differences, not a premeditated scam. As James Daschuck details in *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*,[xi] the Treaties were signed during a period of devastation: Indigenous people were decimated by disease and the systematic extermination of their primary food source, bison; and the railroad were bringing waves of European economic refugees. These facts bolster the second popular narrative, that First Nations were vulnerable to exploitation and signed away their rights to save their lives.

Both stories make sense. However, by examining the written and oral accounts surrounding Treaty negotiations—diaries, letters, newspaper stories, and other traces—Krasowski and others flesh a third narrative. They demonstrate that while Indigenous people of the Plains did indeed not practice western concepts of property, after more than a century of contact, they understood what settlers wanted, and they were unwilling to agree to those concepts. Current historians contend that in oral negotiations, and in ceremony, all parties agreed to the share the soil idea. However, the Treaty commissioners did not record this agreement in the Treaty texts. They presented the contracts, with minor amendments, that were written in English, and in Ottawa before the talks even began, for signatures. Few Indigenous signers read English. They signed what they thought was a written account of their oral agreement. They trusted the honor of the Crown.

As I understand it from elders and knowledge keepers,[xii] and from reading, the First Nations signatories understood that they were put on this land by the Creator. They don't own the land as property but steward this gift as a responsibility. They belong to the place they were placed in or led to. They learn from, use, and protect the territory, which is not just the soil, but the animals,

plants, rocks, spirits of the place, everything—'all our relations'. Unlike the Platonic worldview, which is thought to be real, not a human invention, and universal, each Indigenous web is located in a particular place. While webs have similar structures, each is unique to its territory/ecosystem. Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers understand that some of what they know resonates elsewhere, but much of what they know is specific to their region.

Indigenous society and individual being is incompatible with any colonial, universalist, or totalizing system. However, if the two societies are respectful of each other and territory, they can co-habit. An expression of this agreement is the two-row wampum. These are the earliest treaties between First Nations and Europeans. They are not a signed text, but an oral contract embodied by a physical object, the wampum belt, and sealed in ceremony. Even though not a text, both parties were able to understand, and for generations, abide by the covenant. The Two Row Treaty of 1623, for example, was made between the Five Nations of the Iroquois and the Dutch in what is now upstate New York. The Two Row is a beaded belt with five horizontal rows of beads. The three white rows represent flowing water, and two black rows represent boats and their passage. Treaty confirms that the Dutch and Iroquois will share the river but will not try to steer the other's vessel. Because the agreement is a symbol rather than a written contract, it is open to interpretation, to living agreement. Change is essential to the Indigenous worldview.

Treaty is a holistic understanding, a commitment that includes not just the signatories, but every being in that territory, now and in the future. Before it is a contract, agreement is, according to dictionaries, "harmony or accordance in opinion or feeling" (Oxford English Dictionary). Agreement is concurrence, unity, rapport, sympathy, assent, acceptance, consent, endorsement, confirmation, understanding…. Agreement is an active noun. Living agreement is the perpetual struggle to maintain good relations with the understanding that life is dynamic, things change. The goal is harmony and equity rather than hierarchy and domination. This wisdom can be applied to how we (re)negotiate our art world relationships. In most cases, Western contractualism requires holding to an agreement despite change, including changes that might devastate one of the parties. In Western power traditions, the less powerful and less informed are routinely contracted into relationships, made to do and give up things unevenly, though legally. A corporation, for example, can extract resources, bankrupt itself, and leave a mess for the people to clean up. The corporation is legally a person. Bankruptcy is a death. And, yet, those real individuals who profit from that entity live on, unburdened by the deceased corporation's responsibilities.

I'd like to return to Rorty, and inch toward my inconclusive conclusion. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty argues that societies and institutions are held together by compelling stories. When these narratives lose their credibility new forms of social cohesion and momentum emerge.[xiii]

In 1988 the Glenbow Museum launched *The Spirit Sings*, an exhibition of Indigenous artifacts. I loved the objects and was, initially, confused by the protest. Protests which eventually led to reforms not only at the Glenbow but began to transform ethnographic display around the world. Indigenous critics claimed that *The Spirit Sings* continued the colonial habit of displaying First Nations culture and people as past and not present; and that it was no longer cool to have their best belongings collected and curated by non-Indigenous people—nothing about us without us.

In deliberative responses, the Glenbow collaborated with the Blackfoot to revamp their displays and protocols, and they returned most of the sacred things in the collection.[xiv]

The old ethnographic narrative was that Indigenous people would soon die off or would be so assimilated that their culture would be illegible as 'Indian'. Therefore, acting on behalf of humanity and the future, museums mandated themselves as stewards of Indigenous cultural objects. The thinking was that Indians did not deserve their best belongings, stories and songs; museums did because they knew better what to do with them than did the folks who made them. The veracity of this concept crumbled in the late-20th century, particularly with the rise of Indigenous curators and thinkers who revived Indigenous counter-narratives that showed how the meanings of these objects were inseparable from their use, that Indigenous people were neither exterminated nor fully assimilated, and that we were beginning to articulate Indigenous forms of curation that could reside within and without the colonial institution. These institutions are changing because they agreed that their foundational myths were no longer credible.

Rorty argues that communities that arise after the fall of a master narrative do not come up with a single competing narrative to replace the old one but are open to a polyphony of stories. What falls is not just that narrative but the whole idea that a singular story can hold sway over an enlightened populous. In his utopia, people recognize that truth is experiential, it is known and shared rather than a pre-existing universal. As such, it is always open to doubt, to challenge by more compelling narratives of another's subjective experience. In such a world, the quality of narrative—what he calls poetry—is what shapes the world. In these minds "new vocabularies developed, thereby equipping them with tools for doing things which could not even have been envisioned before these tools were available."[xv]

The colonial metanarrative is intolerable to Indigenous people and settlers alike. While there is a growing collective sense of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis as Indigenous, as belonging to a network of First Peoples around the world, this is a political alliance, a contingent identity subservient to home identities that are more grounded and are being recovered and strengthened everywhere. I love art because it is a third space similar to the 'Indigenous'. It is a mutable space and set of relations where new ideas and forms are developed and tried. Despite a distrust of colonial institutions, I am optimistic about the inclusive capacity of some contemporary public creative institutions. This confidence arises not only from their recent good words and intentions, but because I have seen positive change.

Before the 1980s, Indigenous people were not welcomed to the Banff Centre. They were outside the institutions imaginary of who were worthy of the status 'artist' and worthy of their resources. This was the norm. The National Gallery, for example, did not collect contemporary First Nations art until 1986—beginning with Carl Beam's *The North American Iceberg*. When First Nations, Inuit, and Métis finally did take up Banff residencies, it was not by invitation, it was because they demanded inclusion. And now, the Banff Centre not only has a director of Indigenous Arts, and an Indigenous Leadership program, but has establishing trusted relationships and collaborations with local First Nations and elders. And it's not just insistent Indigenous pathfinders who made this possible. Systemic change requires allies. Sara Diamond in the 80s, Brandy Dahrouge currently, and others between, have not only been commodious but inventive, collaborative, and committed to flexible but durable relationships.

Despite their shortcomings, places like the Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity, and publicly funded contemporary art galleries, universities, libraries, and museums are mandated to provide a social good. While they had, in their formative years, an exclusive sense of who counted as worthy of inclusion—universities and the art world, for instance, were mostly the reserve of white men—there constituency has expanded dramatically. Some even now claim to decolonize, Indigenize, and become more accessible. Because publicly funded creative institutions are accountable to their publics; because they are self-reflexive; because they house creatives and activists who can be roused by injustice to bite the hand that feeds them; they are the sites most amenable to positive change. They are worth our investment of care and friction.

---

[i] From a personal conversation with Vernon Ah Kee in Sydney, Australia, in 2019.
[ii] See for example: Sheldon Kranowski. *No Surrender: The Land Remains Indigenous*. University of Regina Press. 2019.
J.R. Miller. *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-making in Canada*. University of Toronto Press, 2009.
[iii] B gave me permission to tell this story.
[iv] Richard Rorty. Contingency, Irony, Solidarity. Cambridge University Press. 1989. 88-95.
[v] This idea is credited to the ancient Greek Philosopher Protagoras, and was revived during the Renaissance as a challenge to Christian metaphysics.
[vi] From Carmen Papalia's Open Access (2015); first tenant. https://canadianart.ca/essays/access-revived/
[vii] Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully, Eds. *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings.* University of Toronto Press. 2018.
[viii] Thank you Elder Skyes Powderface and Brandy Darouge for pointing me to this text. http://www.afn.ca/about-afn/declaration-of-first-nations/

[ix] For example: http://www.otc.ca/pages/about_the_treaties.html
[x] https://hcmc.uvic.ca/confederation/en/treaty_04.html
[xi] James Daschuck. *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*. University of Regina Press. 2013.
[xii] Elders and knowledge keepers I visit include: Gerry Saddleback, Jo-Anne Saddleback, and Sykes Powderface.
[xiii] Ibid. Rorty, chapter three.
[xiv] Gerald T. Conaty, ed. *We are Coming Home: Repatriation and the Restoration of Blackfoot Cultural Confidence*. Athabasca University Press. 2015.
[xv] Ibid. Rorty,, 17.