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## From the Guest Editors

### Engaged Scholarship and the Arts

Kathy Bishop, Catherine Etmanski, M. Beth Page

Singing and songwriting; graffiti, protest art, and mobile art installations; oral, digital, video, literary, métissage, and mixed media storytelling; drawing, photography, and other visual arts; Witness Blanketing and body mapping; embodying Indigenous literatures and expressing values through metaphor; dancing, performing, and more—as you will read in this special issue, these creative actions have become essential to the practice of engaged scholarship.

Engaged scholarship has a history of being integral to, not isolated from, pressing issues of our times. Engaged scholarship in Canada has a rich tradition, with roots reaching back to institutions such as “Frontier College (1899), university extension (University of Alberta, 1912), [and] the Antigonish Movement at St. Francis Xavier University (1930s-60s)” (Hall, 2013, p. vii). Engaged scholarship has likewise included universities’ responses and commitment to the transformational social movements of the 1960s, 70s, 80s, and beyond (Hall, 2013). In present time, the *Engaged Scholar Journal* plays a leading role in advancing engaged scholarship through exploring the intersection of community engagement with learning, teaching, and research in interdisciplinary contexts. The focus of this special issue is engagement through the arts.

Throughout North America, the field of engaged scholarship and the scholarship of engagement have been positioned as a foundational means for post-secondary institutions to fulfil their civic responsibilities. For example, in 1996, Ernest Boyer argued that “the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems, and must affirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement” (p. 18). Similarly, Cynthia Gibson (2006), suggested that “engaged scholarship can enhance the credibility, usefulness, and role of universities as important institutions in civic life” (p. 20). With this context of civic engagement as our background, we specifically asked contributors to share their experiences and describe how the arts are currently supporting engaged scholars in addressing today’s interconnected and seemingly




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intractable socio-political, economic, and environmental problems and opportunities. We were thrilled with the response.

### **Arts-based Engagement**

If we are to identify new ways forward, the complex nature of today's challenges will require our collective creative capacity to address. This need for new ways of thinking, being, doing, and knowing has inspired some engaged scholars to enter into the realm of experimentation, co-learning, creativity, and innovation—spaces where they don't know the answers and where their current knowledge may be incomplete or even wrong. Amabile (1988) defined creativity as “the production of novel and useful ideas by an individual, or group of individuals working together. Innovation is built on creative ideas as the basic elements. Organizational innovation is the successful implementation of creative ideas within the organization” (p. 126). Furthermore, The United Nation's *Creative Economy Report 2010* promoted “adequately nurtured creativity” for economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability (p. xix) while the Conference Board of Canada (2008) stressed the need “to ensure communities have the means necessary to support creativity and diversity” (p. 53). Arts-based approaches to scholarship are tried and tested ways of promoting creative, embodied, sensory experiences, engaging multiple audiences, disrupting our habitual, linear-rational ways of working, and sparking new ideas. As such, the contributors to this special issue invite readers to imagine new possibilities for generating solutions to the pressing issues of our times and co-learning into the future (Scharmer, 2007).

When considering the learning and teaching aspect of engaged scholarship, Joseph Raelin (2016) noted that “more attention needs to be paid to learning formats that encourage learners to momentarily think out of their context or frame of reference in order to challenge existing assumptions and beliefs” (p. 149). He went on to add that students could “learn through their own problems” (Raelin, 2016, p. 149) as they worked collaboratively with others. As a way to learn through problems, John Dirkx (1998) suggested that it is possible to use intuition, feelings, personal images, metaphors, and myths to explore the connections between what is happening inside ourselves in relation to our outer experiences. In this way, coming together through arts-based practices can support learners in generating a sense of empowerment and desire to effect change.

Creative and arts-based practices can offer unique ways to tap into our innate creative potential as humans. As Darlene Clover and Joyce Stalker (2007) suggested, “when people bring creative works of art into existence they become active producers and transmitters of culture and identity, rather than simply passive consumers of a ready-made, often culturally homogeneous world” (p. 14). However, in contemporary North American society, art has mostly become a product to consume rather than a natural right of human expression (Diamond, 2004; 2007). For some, this repression of the creative spirit is seen as a form of oppression and, hence, reclaiming the arts can lead to healing, building community, and increasing our abilities to communicate and connect using a broader range of strategies (Etmanski, 2014).

As is understood by grassroots activists, corporate marketing teams, and politicians of

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all stripes, the arts are central to communicating powerful messages. Because symbolism can bypass rational defence mechanisms and go straight to the heart, creative and arts-based practices have a role to play in revealing our shared humanity and building understanding, empathy, and trust—useful foundations for most engaged scholarship endeavours (Etmanski, 2014). Moreover, engaged scholars who employ creative and arts-based strategies recognize “in the creative process the integration of intuitive and rational modes of understanding through engaging the whole of the person (emotions and intellect)” (Simons & McCormack, 2007, p. 297). Employing arts-based and embodied methods can bring to the surface pre-conscious or previously unarticulated concerns and desires (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks, & Kasl, 2006), sometimes bypassing the censorship of the brain (Jackson, 2002). When facilitated skilfully, then, creative practices can support greater self-awareness and *ah-ha* moments of insight (Etmanski & Bishop, 2017).

In this special issue, we invited submissions exploring successes, challenges, and possibilities for moving beyond delivery of content to active engagement with learning, teaching, and research in a holistic, embodied, and multi-sensory way. The articles and reports from the field are helpful for scholars and practitioners alike: they are grounded in scholarship, and include concrete examples articulating lessons learned. The books we selected for review offer further reading on the subject. Here is a taste of what’s to come.

### Essays

Our essay section begins with Kathy Bishop, Catherine Etmanski, M. Beth Page, Brian Dominguez, and Cheryl Heykoop offering a window into their diverse experiences with *métissage*, a creative storytelling method that can be used for engaging people in research, learning, teaching, and community or organizational development. They provide a theoretical overview, a practical description of insights and processes when facilitating *métissage* workshops, some key lessons learned, and conclude with an example of a *métissage*.

This is followed by Sarah Marie Wiebe who argues that stories are never simply or *just* stories, but in fact have the potential to be radical tools of change for social and environmental justice. She offers three mixed media storytelling projects that involve the co-creation of digital stories with Indigenous communities in Canada. She speaks to how stories can intervene on dominant narratives, create space for counternarratives and, in so doing, challenge the settler-colonial status quo in pursuit of decolonial futures.

Then, Myron Neapetung, Lori Bradford, and Lalita Bharadwaj offer a participatory artistic animation video on the lived experiences of Elders and safe water on reserves in Canada, in Yellow Quill First Nation, Treaty Four Territory. The authors demonstrate how the collaborative research process and co-created video enhanced community-based participatory knowledge translation and sharing.

Next, David Monk, Bruno de Oliveira Jayme, and Emilie Salvi consider the power and potential of art for public engagement and its use in social movement learning and change, exploring representations of protest art and public art exhibitions. The authors frame social movements as important sites of scholarship and learning. They contextualize their writing

with stories of mobile art exhibits in Sao Paulo, the anti-Bill C-51 protests in Lkwungen territory (Victoria, BC), and the ‘maple spring’ in Montreal (Tiotia:ke in the language of the Kanien’kehá:ka).

In the subsequent article, Kayla Jubas and Kimberly Lenters present graffiti texts as examples of how graffiti can become pedagogical. Place, space, and identity are taken up as sociomaterial phenomena, whose meanings develop as people, texts, physical structures, and various cultural artifacts come into contact with one another. Graffiti as pedagogy also have the potential to expose ideologies about what is (ab)normal and (un)desirable that circulate throughout and across societies. They identify three pedagogical purposes that graffiti artists and educators might employ: contemplation, reflection, and action.

Considering place in another way, Amie Thurber and Janine Christiano explore the role the arts play in sustaining place attachments, restoring relationships, and building knowledge of place in gentrifying neighbourhoods. The authors identify that the strongest community building interventions bridge approaches—engaging artists as/and researchers, educators, and community leaders while mobilizing residents as participants in knowledge/cultural production. They conclude with recommendations for future research that attends to issues of equity, process as well as outcome, and longitudinal effects of *more than material* interventions in gentrifying neighbourhoods.

Virginia McKendry then explores how an action research project to advance inclusive leadership at Royal Roads University in Victoria, British Columbia, adapted a visual data elicitation method and used metaphor analysis to reveal opportunities to align espoused, communicated, and enacted values. The research highlights that arts-based action research effectively equips academic and administrative leaders to transcend deficit-based problem solving to approach organizational development with the creative energy that arts-based research inspires.

Shelley Jones moves us into the global arena with her project conducted with teachers in rural Northwest Uganda. Multimodality was employed as a “domain of inquiry” (Kress, 2011) for social semiotics (meaning-making within a social context). Participants both represented gender inequality as well as imagined gender equality. Findings from this study show how a multimodal approach to communication, using drawing in addition to spoken and written language, established a democratic space of communication.

In their article, Moshoula Capous-Desyllas, Sarah E. Mountz, and Althea Pestine-Stevens represent the visual voices of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer) former foster youth through photovoice in order to engage various stakeholders, diverse communities, and the participants themselves. The authors shared their findings and incorporated social change efforts through the dissemination of the visual data in various formal and informal spaces.

Also on the theme of voice, Tamara Plush and Robin Cox talk about the power of song for youth post-disaster recovery in the context of the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfire in Alberta, Canada. Their community-engaged research process underscores the power of music creation as an empowering method for enhancing youth engagement. The young people’s musical

reflections revealed insights on their priorities for a resilient community after disaster.

In the next article, Kelsie Acton asserts that arts-based research may be useful in disability communities where people may prefer to communicate artistically or through movement, rather than through spoken word. The author examines the gap between assumptions of how research *should* be conducted and the reality of the field, specifically: the tension between university research ethics and the ethics of the CRIPSiE (Collaborative Radically Integrated Performers Society in Edmonton) community. The differences between the value of the rehearsal process and the performance as sites of data collection, and, the assumptions that had been made about necessity of a singular research question are discussed.

Integrating the community into the classroom, Nancy Van Styvendale and JD McDougall reflect on the experience and outcomes of a community service-learning class on Indigenous literatures. This case study illustrated how community-engaged and *communitist* (a term pairing community and activist) service-learning provides an embodied theoretical framework through which to read literary representations of Indigenous experience, and how literary texts provide theories for interpreting and critically analysing experience.

### **Reports from the Field**

Carey Newman and Catherine Etmanski begin this section by focussing on Carey's work engaging people across Canada in a project titled, The Witness Blanket. This project has culminated in the creation of a monument, national tour, documentary film, and novel agreement between an artist and a Crown Corporation. Carey provides insight into the process of collecting artefacts from communities across Canada and his lessons learned on the importance of including all voices and stories, and the power of collective truth. An excerpt of one of the details of The Witness Blanket is included as the cover image for this special issue, with thanks to Media One Inc. for use of the photograph.

Creating another type of storied community blanket, Kendra Stiwich, Lindsay McCunn, and Chantey Dayal discuss the "OurSchoolOurStories Project" which aimed to increase place attachment in the parent population at a small elementary school through arts-based narrative activities. In circle, women shared many stories and needle-felted squares with what the school meant to them, thus creating a needle-felted community blanket. Participants were able to share much about their place identities, which allowed for social connection, and a sense of integration within the group.

With a shift from place and connection to disrupting and altering oppressive relations, Doris Rajan, Roshanak Jaber, and Shahrzad Mojab confront sexual violence through dance and theatre pedagogy. They examine how community-engaged research and performance arts-based approaches can be used to challenge and provoke ways of understanding and thinking about how to disrupt and alter oppressive relations.

Tackling the issue of women living with HIV, Sara Greene, Marvelous Muchenje, Jasmine Cotnam, Kristin Dunn, Peggy Frank, Valerie Nicholson, Apondi J. Odhiambo, Krista Shore, and Angela Kaida utilize body mapping. Body mapping enabled participants to tell their stories in the face of intense stigma around HIV/AIDS. This reflection illustrates a collective

and iterative process of learning, teaching, and doing body mapping workshops.

Utilizing another form of performance art, Jessica Litwak's report from the field describes methods of audience engagement as a means of social engagement, and the implications for practice. It explores how artists can galvanize and empower audiences by creating experiential communities pre, during, and post-show.

### **Book Reviews**

To provide a wide representation of arts and engagement we chose four books to be reviewed: Tara Atluri's (2018) *Uncommitted Crimes: The Defiance of the Artistic Imagination* (reviewed by Nikki Bade), Kathryn Goldman Schuyler, John Eric Baugher, and Karin Jironet's (2016) *Creative Social Change: Leadership for a Healthy World* (reviewed by Brian Dominguez), Shauna Butterwick and Carole Roy's (2016) *Working the Margins of Community-Based Adult Learning: The Power of Arts-Making in Finding Voice and Creating Conditions for Seeing/Listening* (reviewed by Cortney Baldwin), Susan Erenrich and Jon Wergin's (2017) *Grassroots Leadership and the Arts for Social Change* (reviewed by Vanessa Daether).

### **Closing Thoughts**

As you travel through this collection of essays, reports from the field and book reviews, we invite you to see the common threads that cross all writings as well as where they may diverge. This collection offers the reader new forays into creative processes across various contexts. You will experience an interweaving of theory of practice for different purposes, such as learning how to facilitate workshops; garnering radical tools of change for social and environmental justice; challenging dominant narratives and changing the status quo; delving into place, space, and identity; restoring relationships, enhancing leadership, and taking action; communicating and giving voice; expanding community; and accessing the power of an audience. You will see many examples of engaging people in research, learning, teaching, and community or organizational development through the arts.

Filled with rich theoretical insights and concrete examples, this collection is useful for scholars and practitioners alike. Concrete examples speak to issues such as safe water provision, decolonization, gentrification, gender inequality, values-based organizational development, post disaster recovery, sexual violence, living with the stigma of HIV/AIDS, and LGBTQI2SA+ identity, and more. This collection speaks to the engagement of artists, researchers, educators, community and academic leaders, youth, women, and people with disabilities across contexts as diverse as academic conferences, classrooms, texts, cultural monuments in Canada, Treaty Four Territory, Brazil, and Uganda. Ultimately, we invite you to open your heart, and mind, to what these scholars have demonstrated is possible in the world of engaged scholarship and what may be possible for you.

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Traditional lands of the Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) and Lkwungen (Songhees) families

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