Canadian Journal of Indigenous Studies ISSN:
Vol 1, Issue 1 (2025) 85-102 https://doi.org/

"IT'S ONLY RIGHT THAT YOU SHOULD PLAY THE WAY YOU FEEL IT" : INDIGENOUS DREAMS AND CREATIVITY AS ENACTMENTS OF SURVIVANCE AND THRIVANCE

JOAQUIN, MUÑOZ[1]

Abstract. This paper explores Indigenous conceptualizations of creativity through the production of Indigenous creators. Too often, the creativity of Indigenous peoples is misunderstood or pathologized by non-Indigenous people as a function of a restricted vision of what constitutes creative production. The culturally embedded construction of creativity contributes to the misinterpretation of creativity and its output. This paper begins with an examination of a single viral TikTok video that developed through conversations and reflections with colleagues and the community. These conversations led to an initial exploration of the conceptions of creativity of Indigenous creatives. Using their language as the site of analysis, this paper offers reflections on the creative process of Indigenous peoples, centered in identity, resisting invisibility and countering erasure, connecting creativity to activism, creativity as a site of joy and celebration, and creativity as community building and connection. In exploring creativity, this aims to support educators in their work with Indigenous students and those working with Indigenous people' topics and content to develop culturally responsive conceptions of Indigenous creativity.

Keywords. Indigenous Peoples, Creativity, Settler Colonialism, Education

1. Positionality Statement

Before shifting to the remainder of this article, it is crucial to offer a positionality statement, to share who I am and the way that my identity shapes my relationship to this article and its ideas. My articulating this positionality better equips the reader to explore my conceptions, my potential biases, and any unexplored assumptions. This is in respect to academic relatives, the scholarly foremothers and forefathers who draw explicit attention to the practice of naming our multiple identities as part of maintaining a critical lens (Reyes, 2020). Naming our respective subjectivities and positionalities resists the settler colonial myth of objectivity (Masta, 2019) and locates research and scholarship as connected—and accountable to—our relationships and communities. This is especially necessary

Date: Received: April 22, 2024
* Corresponding Author Joaquin Muñoz

for scholars who write about black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), diversity, and culture to foreground how social identities shape research and how research is in turn shaped by interactions with power and privilege.

My identity as a member of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe and Chicano person plays a direct role in how I live, teach, and learn. I was born and raised in what is colonially referred to as Arizona on the Pascua Yaqui Indian Reservation and now live in what is colonially known as Vancouver, British Columbia, the ancestral and unceded territories of the Musqueam peoples. As a teacher educator, I work to develop pedagogies for future teachers, most of whom are either of European settler colonial ancestry or of settler, non-Indigenous people of color identity, to recognize concepts central to Indigenous peoples' experiences. This includes working within anti-oppressive educational frameworks to open spaces that celebrate Indigenous ways of being while resisting settler colonial logics (Powell, 2002) and working to unsettle tendencies towards "epistemological hegemony" (Brant-Birioukov, 2021, p. 254). As an Indigenous person, story and storytelling figure prominently in my epistemological and ontological frames of reference; like Brayboy (2005), I contend that stories and theories are not mutually exclusive. In the work of teacher education, a story can be as effective—if not more so—at communicating crucial knowledge and understanding. As a cis-hetero male, I work to center the experiences and accounts of BIPOC people and specifically BIPOC women's views of the world. This is in response to feminist critiques of the academy for its lack of engagement with women and to centre women's narratives, especially in classes taught by cis-gender heterosexual male teachers.

2. Introduction

> ""Now here you go again, you say you want your freedom Well, who am I to keep you down? It's only right that you should play the way you feel it""
>
> Fleetwood Mac, *Dreams* (1977) and bona fide rez anthem.

The popular Fleetwood Mac song "Dreams," originally released in 1977, found an unexpected resurgence in popularity in fall 2020, gaining 16.1 million streams in the week of October 15 and earning a spot on the Billboard Top 10 Streaming Songs Chart (Garvey, 2020). The reason for this return to popularity might surprise many: it was a used in a viral TikTok video posted by the creator-influencer Nathan Apodaca, also known by his TikTok handle Doggface208. His video, which has now enjoyed more than 80 million views via Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, spawned hundreds of remixes and recreations, including TikToks by band members Mick Fleetwood and Stevie Nicks themselves. The viral sensation also led to commentators in the mainstream media, YouTube, and other social media addressing the Doggface phenomenon. The context of Doggface's viral video and his subsequent rise in popularity—due in part to the global context at the time of its release—has carried on into the present day. Along with the continued popularity of his TikTok productions, Doggface has earned endorsements

from Ocean Spray, developed collaborations with rapper Snoop Dogg, begun producing a line of cannabis products, and become a featured actor in the critically acclaimed television program *Reservation Dogs*.

It is the identity of Doggface himself and the circumstances leading to his designation as a relative to many communities that inspired this paper. Apodaca, who self-identifies as an Arapaho and Mexican American man from Idaho Falls, and the multiple communities claiming kinship with him demonstrate the power of social media as a connecting medium for Indigenous peoples and illustrate elements of both survivance and thrivance (Muñoz et al., 2023). The embrace of Doggface's status by various communities raises crucial questions about Indigenous identity, technology use, and the implications of social media for conceptions of indigeneity. Within Indigenous communities, meaningful conversations about identity, social media as a form of storying, and the communication of vital cultural knowledge are at the forefront of Indigenous creative processes. For non-Indigenous communities, critical reconstructions of creativity and creative projects by Indigenous peoples open an entry point to challenging hegemonic Western visions of creative processes. As Doggface's output shows, Indigenous peoples are articulating distinctively Indigenous experiences that do not reify historic stereotypes (Wyman, 2012). Apodaca's presentation (2020) is a unique and generative act and works as an adaptation of "rhetorical conventions" that "resist and ... comment on hostile circumstances while expressing connection to unique Indigenous identities" (Wyman, 2012, p. 12).

In engaging with various colleagues and individuals with storying methodologies (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017) to appreciate, celebrate, and explore the Doggface phenomenon, a more expansive inquiry emerged. Creativity, as both concept and practice, frequently emerged as a topic and led to examinations of other Indigenous TikTok creators and creatives more broadly to examine conceptions of creativity and production through Indigenous lenses. And while pedagogical and curricular possibilities are a practical interest, the implications for understanding Indigenous creativity more broadly are also important. Exploring Indigenous conceptions of creativity contributes to challenging colonial constructions of Indigenous peoples and serves as an entry point for considering Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies (Walter & Andersen, 2013). These investigations challenge epistemological hegemony (Brant-Birioukov, 2021) and cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2013), emphasizing the celebration and joy of engaging with Indigenous peoples' creative activities.

This work aims to develop an understanding of how conceptions of creativity— especially through an Indigenous lens—can help teachers develop knowledge of Indigenous peoples' expressions to foster a clearer understanding and enable them to support youth in classroom settings. Along with illuminating teaching and learning processes related to literacy, this research supports greater awareness of the cultural influences on learning and can provide useful insights into transdisciplinary areas of curriculum design and evaluation and learning and teaching in both formal and informal settings.

The paper describes the initial stages of conceptual research related to two topics and Indigenous peoples: creativity and cultural production. It arose from an inquiry into a viral TikTok video posted in the fall of 2020 and analyzed through lenses of educational and linguistic anthropology (Muñoz et al., 2023). After becoming a viral sensation at the end of 2020, the clip became a production of cultural significance to Indigenous communities and stands as an important cultural artifact of interest to researchers. The video serves as a way for researchers, educators, and others interested in examining the creative practices of Indigenous youth to develop a deeper and more nuanced appreciation of their creative production on social media.

3. Guiding Frameworks

The examination of creativity calls for lenses of decolonization, critical race theory, and indigenization. The reason for this lies in the problematic history of conceptualizing Indigenous peoples. Non-Indigenous peoples have frequently been educated in both formal and informal ways to pathologize Indigenous peoples' ways of being, systems of knowledge, and methods (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005). In schooling processes, Indigenous peoples were educated for purposes of assimilation and submission to settler colonial logics (Rifkin, 2013). Simultaneously, discourses of settler colonialism created constructions of Indigenous peoples that devalued their knowledges, technologies, and creative processes. Richard Van Camp's Thcho protagonist Dene Cho voices many Indigenous peoples' pain of their experiences in schools: "Why do our teachers keep calling our stories 'legends' and 'myths' when I know in my heart that they're our Truths with a capital "T!"" (2018, p. 1). Dene's pain refers to the traumas of assimilation and erasure as the end goals of schooling and, at the same time, undertaking the double work (Shalaby, 2017) of demonstrating to others demeaning views of Indigenous peoples' creative expressions and privileging interpretations of those expressions framed as primitive, unsophisticated, and archaic.

Indigenous peoples are frequently not seen as creative in a contemporary context. In lieu of examining Indigenous creative expression as having the potential to be powerful, beautiful, and able to speak to our current climate, society is often taught the privileging of Western, white (usually male) mainstream conceptions of creativity and mastery of artistic forms. This is true of multiple artistic expressions, whatever the medium. When examined at all, Indigenous peoples' creative expressions are most frequently conceived of as historic, even prehistoric, and are subjected to interrogations of authenticity. In this sense, creativity in classrooms must be explored with an eye on critiquing ethnocentric and Eurocentric conceptions of creativity and artistic merit: hence this project's reliance on and privileging of stances based in decolonization (Smith, 1999, 2021), critical race theories (Brayboy, 2005), and Indigenization. These frameworks help us critique Eurocentric and white supremacist conceptions of creativity and artistic merits and turn toward visions of interpreting creative expressions that expand our definitions of who can be creative, what creative output can look like, and what

its meaning is to the artist and the community of which they are a part. Because even though attitudes and perceptions of Indigenous peoples have shifted over time, conceptions of creativity remain largely constructed through biases towards very specific types of creative output.

4. Creativity and Indigeneity

Kanyen'kehà:ka scholar Kiera Brant-Birioukov's research on Indigenous creativity points to the power of "Indigenous resilience, innovation, and adaptation in times of crisis," which she calls "In(di)genuity" and which can be considered a parallel construction to Vizenor's concept of survivance. And while so much of Indigenous peoples' creative expression is done in response or resistance to settler colonial logics, it is important to remember that settler colonialism is not the reason for Indigenous creativity. Settler colonialism impacts Indigenous creative expression, but Indigenous creativity seeks to move above and beyond settler colonial constructs. Vizenor (1990) points to this expanded discourse, this "more discourse" that surpasses "mere responses to colonialist demands or social science theories" (Vizenor, 1990, p.278). Creativity moving beyond colonialist demands requires care by members of Indigenous communities to reject constructions of identity forced upon them by settler colonialism, which only allows for imaginations beyond the "provincial, protective and patronizing" visions of "an 'Indian' art that depict[s] traditional themes, abstract designs or representational portrayals of culture, which viewers could immediately recognize" (Vizenor, 2010, p. 42).

While Vizenor's critique of the art world and its shift toward an embrace of Indigenous creative expression beyond "traditional representation" (Vizenor, 2010, p. 44) may appear to indicate a broad acceptance and understanding of dynamic Indigenous creative outlets, the common discourse related to Indigenous Peoples—particularly in the context of education—tends to default to seeking and highlighting "simulations of authenticity" (Vizenor, 2010, p. 46). Put another way, the common conversation around Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island tends to focus on historic representations and hearkening back to pre-colonial times at the cost of dynamic and emerging activity. The embrace of this simulation emerged in the literature review done for the present study: a search of five leading journals on creativity and creativity studies produced no results with articles focusing on Indigenous creativity and conceptualization. For schools and teachers to fully see Indigenous peoples, it is imperative that history be balanced with the present and the future.

5. Survivance and Thrivance

Vizenor's "aesthetics of survivance" (2008, p. 1) is a crucial starting point for exploring Indigenous peoples' creative activity. Vizenor notes that the practice of survivance (which in the present paper is extended to include visual and digital creative expressions) shapes "an active presence, more than the instincts of survival, function or subsistence ... prompted by natural reason, by a consciousness and sense of incontestable presence that arises from experiences in the

natural world" (Vizenor, 2008, p. 11). This sense of incontestable presence demands a shift from the purely historicized version of Indigenous peoples to one that examines, embraces, and celebrates the complex and nuanced vision of Indigeneity. Lindstrom et al. (2023) articulate this shift by asking educators to move from resilience discourse—a reflection and response to settler colonialism—to a discourse of perseverance. In the context of a Blackfoot-centred pedagogy, perseverance means balancing history and the present to centre relationships among all beings and to create an existence of generosity, sharing, respect, and kindness.

Building further, survivance opens doors to perceive and exist in thrivance, "a resistance, perseverance, and endurance that looks toward an imagined, flourishing Indigenous future and healthy community" (Muñoz et al., 2023, p. 801). Here, thrivance is taken up to emphasize the "flourishing Indigenous future and healthy community" which center community-led and developed perspectives and practices, in support of "educational programing, and capacity building" that supports "the reassertion of sovereignty and self-determination [of] Indigenous Peoples" (Muñoz et al., 2023, p. 801). Thrivance draws on Vizenor's vision of active presence and consciousness and projects into the future; it invokes imaginations and celebrations, a triumph over the history and presence of settler colonial logic to a future connecting to the natural world as a common practice. It is an act of creation and artistry that acknowledges the past without the limitations of the "familiar cultural information frequently framed through stereotypes of Native tragedy, Native suffering and the complications of the loss of traditions and cultures" (Vizenor, 2010, p. 46). These experiences are neither denied nor ignored but are seen through the context of the present and the celebration of the future.

6. Social Media

Social media sites are a rich space for engaging learning around Indigeneity, especially contemporary visions of Indigeneity. In these spaces, Indigenous people are constantly developing and expressing critical views related to politics, identity, and sovereignty. Indigenous peoples use social media outlets to resist "settler colonial violence" while "remaking representational politics, communicating humanity and community-building" (Muñoz et al., 2023, p. 803). Social media outlets provide some of the most dynamic and challenging spaces in which this creative work occurs; the dynamism can be found in both content and the speed with which technologies evolve to meet user needs. At the same time, these platforms are challenging given their reification of economic and technological stratification and access. Indigenous users of these platforms carve out spaces of "creativity and experimentation" (Anderson, 2020, p. 9) where they speak to Indigenous topics and themes while also helping (and certainly complicating) notions of Indigenous identity, authenticity, and community. On social media outlets, young people can enjoy greater influence and power, as they are able to create content and impact media without relying on dominant forces to promote and circulate ideas. As Indigenous youth drive shifts in explorations of culture, language, and creative expression, they generate, support, and maintain

community connections as well. As a result, Indigenous youth and others connected in social media communities recreate definitions of Indigeneity through their expressions. Social media platforms are a landscape on which Indigenous creators express the "viable futures of survivance ... beyond historicized us/them dichotomies" and toward the longer views of our communities" (Bang et al., 2014, pp. 38–39).

These frameworks helped develop the research questions guiding this inquiry:

- How are Indigenous people expressing creativity through technology and social media?
- How are Indigenous peoples using multimedia tools to build and sustain community?
- What does Indigenous survivance look like in contemporary contexts?
- How can teachers learn from exploring Indigenous creative expression?

Unangax̂ scholar Eve Tuck (2009) points out that research involving Indigenous peoples often emerges from damaged-centered approaches that both overtly and covertly produce negative, dismissive conceptions of Indigenous peoples and their ways of being. These damaged-centered perspectives also work to operationalize and naturalize deficit perspectives that undermine Indigenous identity and ways of being. Developing and expanding teachers' conceptions of creativity requires deep engagement beyond the damage-centered to support their awareness of Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies (Kovach, 2021; Walter & Anderson, 2013). In the field of Indigenous education, teacher preparation must also engage crucial questions of how to support decolonizing practices (Battiste, 2013) and how to support teachers in resisting settler colonial logics (Muñoz, 2024). An exploration of creativity as an expression of Indigeneity supports the work of resistance to settler colonial practices by preparing teachers to resist the "epistemological hegemony" of Western educational constructs (Brant-Birioukov, 2021, p. 254). Any exploration of Indigenous peoples' creative expressions must be informed by desire-centred approaches, illuminated by the imaginations of Indigenous futurisms (Dillon, 2012) and the possibility of otherwise worlds (Justice, 2018). If not, educators may miss crucial opportunities to understand and celebrate Indigenous youth and their creative expressions.

7. Methodology

7.1. **Doggface and Linguistic Play.** An initial exploration of Doggface's viral video was undertaken as part of an examination of language, play, and innovative communicative practices (Muñoz et al., 2023). In conversation with examples from across the world, the authors argued for attending to the diverse ways Indigenous peoples use "language and the capacity for creativity and inventiveness" (Muñoz et al., 2023, p. 797) as a form of communication, along with its vital function of promoting healing and resistance to settler colonial structures.

The examination of Doggface's viral TikTok and the resulting responses, homages, and celebrations provided the initial points of inquiry. This analysis was explored through the lenses of language play and prompted numerous ongoing conversations (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017) with colleagues—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—whose comments produced new insights and lenses into the significance of the video. These conversations were analogous to of Doggface's rise to fame and stardom and his significance to Indigenous peoples as a symbol of identity, joy, and relationship. Along with the millions and millions of views, the overwhelming response by fans as evidenced by the hundreds of tribute and copy versions of the original video led to a deeper exploration of Indigenous peoples' creative expression in digital spaces.

7.2. **NativesCreative and the Articulation of Indigenous Creative Expression.** The examination of Doggface's TikTok sparked an interest in exploring Indigenous social media production as a site of creativity and an opportunity to characterize Indigenous peoples' conceptions of creativity. This led to the development of a corpus of linguistic data. This NativesCreative database is a collection of interview excerpts, artists' statements, and publicly available materials from creatives across Turtle Island. The corpus currently includes over 100 language tokens, including phrases or terms. These tokens are categorized into 10 groups organized by medium of production (e.g., "visual artist," "author," or "comedian") and by location of the creator. The names of the various creators were found via articles, Instagram posts, and blogs from Indigenous authors.

After the names were compiled, searches were conducted for interviews, artists' statements, and language from the creators to describe their creative processes. The NativesCreative database includes excerpts from interviews conducted with creatives. Also included are artists' statements, personal correspondence, and website materials. The language tokens frequently emerged as answers to questions about artists' creative processes or from artists' statements articulating the rationale for particular pieces.

As the database was compiled, themes emerged that showed commonalities amongst Indigenous creatives in articulating their processes. Qualitative coding processes were then applied to further analyze the data. The coding was informed by scholarship in Indigenous studies, Indigenous literary studies, and other work critiquing settler colonial epistemologies (Justice, 2018; Rice, 2020a; Vowel, 2016). These approaches were used to inform and expand key terms in the language of artists and creators to illuminate critical themes in the data that point to the "why" of Indigenous creative processes. As the tokens were collected, a series of qualitative codes (Saldaña, 2013) were applied to analyze the data, including holistic coding, descriptive In Vivo coding, and values coding.

8. Findings

The inquiry into Doggface's viral TikTok and examination of Indigenous creators' expression yielded a rich data set for considering definitions of creativity while exploring Indigenous identity. As much as the creations themselves, it is

the response from communities connected to those expressions that offers key insights into Indigenous peoples' artistic output. For Doggface, the reactions from Indigenous communities on various social media platforms illustrated forms of powerful community and solidarity, touching a nerve among diverse Indigenous peoples that evoked joy, celebration, and a distinctly Indigenous perspective on the immediate situation of global pandemic, both locally and globally. In examining artistic expression in the NativesCreative corpus, the themes that emerged though analysis of creatives language statements pointed to Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies familiar to many Indigenous communities. These themes stress Indigenous-centred experiences of the world and Indigenous-focused interpretations of artistic production while maintaining the distinct natures of the myriad Indigenous peoples represented in the corpus. Ultimately, these examples offer crucial insights for developing deeper and more nuanced understandings of Indigenous communities and aspects of Indigenous knowledge systems.

8.1. **Doggface Plays the Way He Feels It.** The video creation and sharing app TikTok has rapidly become one of the most popular social media platforms in the digital universe; it allows users to create content that can be shared on a loop and stored on a user's profile for later viewing. TikTok offers a place for creative engagement and construction in innovative ways (Anderson, 2020; Bresnick, 2019). It has also proven to be a site of robust engagement by Indigenous, First Nations, and Native American people across Turtle Island (#NativeTikTok), offering a space of Indigenous expression connected to the ongoing traditions of community building and solidarity.

Apodaca's TikTok, "Morning Vibe," was posted on September 25, 2020, setting off an outpouring of views, commentary, and inspired responses. Briefly, the video shows Doggface as he longboards on a public road, lip-syncing to the Fleetwood Mac song "Dreams." One immediate reaction is in the improbable action of Doggface filming himself with a cellphone while maneuvering a longboard, but he does so with ease. As the clip progresses, Doggface casually smiles, nods ("Now here you go again; you say you want your freedom") and proceeds to swig from a gallon-sized bottle of Ocean Spray Cran-Raspberry juice ("Well, who am I to keep you down?"). As Doggface continues his trek, he turns his head away from the camera, exposing a shaved head and a tattoo of two feathers behind his ear, stretching all the way down to his neck. Both these features contributed to the embrace of Doggface by both Indigenous and Mexican communities, as comments on the video noted his "deadly uncle vibes" and a love for the "old school Chicano" (Muñoz et al., 2023, p. 805) identity he seemed to exude. In interviews following the viral sensation, Doggface identified himself as of Northern Arapaho and Mexican descent.

The context of the clip's production offers some insights into its rise to viral status. In fall 2020, the world was reckoning with global race-centred uprisings, protests, and resistance following the murder of George Floyd by the Minneapolis Police Department in May of that year. Simultaneously, it was gripped by

the growing knowledge of an ever-worsening COVID-19 pandemic, and anxiety, particularly intense in the United States, about the uncertain results of a pivotal presidential election. In the midst of all of this, Doggface's clip connected to a basic desire to survive, to move beyond death, destruction, and despair. One commenter described the video as "the one positive thing in 2020" (Muñoz et al., 2023, p. 805). An awareness of the history of resistance to settler colonialism, genocide, and annihilation centres Doggface's TikTok in the light of survivance and thrivance over time: his skateboarding—which ties to the history of Native American skateboarding culture (Hearne, 2014)—while singing along to "Dreams" (a "Rez anthem for years," as another commenter mentions) connects to the long history of Indigenous perseverance.

Along with the viral video itself, what may long endure is the massive influx of response, commentary, and connection to Doggface's creative expression; a moving montage at the end of a *Native Reacts* clip—a YouTube show with Indigenous hosts who comment on a variety of news items and social media trends—shows the many ways people offered homage to the original video, creating their own versions of "Morning Vibe" while horseback riding, ice skating, bike riding, and other activities (Patrickisnavajo, 2020). In the episode dedicated to "Morning Vibe," the *Native Reacts* hosts comment on the positive "Native response online" and the "way that everyone has related to it" (Patrickisnavajo, 2020).

Authenticity is of considerable importance, given the proliferation of social media practices by Indigenous peoples, which brings with it public displays of language, music, drama, and dress. For non-Indigenous observers, examining cultural expressions for signs of authenticity is often a fraught endeavor, as "authentic" is often tied to problematic and biased views and understandings of indigeneity that are often informed by inaccurate historical accounts and a reliance on master narratives (Takaki, 2003) that trap Indigenous people into particular modes of cultural and creative expression. As a function of settler colonialism, the act of measuring "authenticity" of Indigenous peoples' cultural production is, for non-Indigenous people, an act of colonial defining. The challenge for non-Indigenous people—and educators in particular—is to look beyond the immediate conceptions of what is and is not "Indigenous" to explore creative expressions, like Doggface's TikTok, as survivance: the "action, condition, quality and sentiments of the verb survive" (Vizenor, 2008, p. 19) beyond historic stereotyping and typecasting (Wyman, 2012). This "vibe" with which so many people connected has underlying links to survivance in its celebration of perseverance and joy related to the past, the present, and imagined futures.

8.2. **"Stories shape the way that the land moves, the way that we move on the land": NativesCreative and Creative Expression.** The NativesCreative corpus emerged as part of a deeper investigation into aspects of Indigenous Identity, creativity, expression, and community. In viewing social media user comments on the "Morning Vibe" TikTok made clear, Indigenous peoples were finding joy, self-expression, and kinship in their reinterpretations of the viral video. As the hosts of the *Native Reacts* remarked, while "vibing Indigenously" in

episode #26 devoted to Doggface, the beauty of his expression was paralleled in other creators' work; the "unique videos of our people ... doin' it, just feelin' the good vibes, livin' life, appreciatin' life" (Patrickisnavajo, 2020). This prompted interest in exploring other Indigenous peoples' expressions and curiosity about what was contained in their interpretations of their creative processes.

In compiling the corpus for this study, the initial step was a search through online media and social media pages, Instagram accounts, and other sources to identify Indigenous creators, with attention to balancing between Canadian- and U.S.-based creators. The corpus included authors, visual artists, comedians, musicians, and social media influencers, all of whom are designated here as "creatives." After the list of names was compiled, a second search was undertaken in an attempt to find language data from each creative, with searches such as "Melissa General creative process" or "Stephen Graham Jones interview." Much of the language of creatives collected and analyzed in the corpus came from interviews and artists' statements on websites or other publicly available materials. Creatives expressing ideas about their artistic processes via TikTok or Instagram video reels also produced some of the language tokens for analysis. As the number of tokens in the corpus began to grow, a reflective process of coding began, along with more formal coding processes (Saldaña, 2013), and some common themes emerged. No single theme was expressed by all creatives, just as no creative spoke to every theme that emerged. The vision that arose was complex and nuanced, open to interpretation and exploration: in short, a vision of complex survivance and thrivance.

As the database was compiled, themes emerged that showed commonalities among Indigenous creatives articulating their creative processes. Many of the people on the list shared stories about their work connecting to a variety of topics, including

- identity
- resisting invisibility and countering erasure
- connection to activism work
- joy and celebration in art
- working with and in communities

When artists commented on the *identity*, they frequently described their artistic production as connected to their sense of self as an Indigenous person. Many artists also commented on their creative expression as a being *resistance to invisibility* and part of the work of countering perpetual erasure by settler colonial logics, artistic establishments, and the conventions of Western epistemology. Many artists also connected their work to *activism stances*, with some describing allyship and solidarity with various Indigenous peoples' movements for land rematriation, Indigenous sovereignty, and other social justice movements. Several creatives described their expressions as being their form of activism, articulating a real hope for art to make change in the world. And while many of the creatives

reflected on pain and trauma as part of their processes, many also described *joy and celebration* in the process of their artistic expression and in completed projects. Several spoke of *collective elements* in their work, whether it was carried out in community with other creatives, the collective inspiration of home, or connections to relatives, kin, and ancestors, both human and other than human.

Dallas Goldtooth (Bdewakantunwan Dakota & Dine), a comedian, actor, and founding member of the Indigenous comedy troupe The 1491s, described the experience of his most famous portrayal to date, the character "Sprit" in the hit TV show *Reservation Dogs*. Goldtooth describes his creative process in the role, commenting on Native storytelling and portrayals of Native people in the media. He noted that *Reservation Dogs* seeks to "to tell its own story, but at the same time, we're also trying to confront and dismantle those portrayals" (Hunte, 2022). He goes on to evoke the joy and celebration of the role: "I had a blast portraying this character, but I did not really expect how much joy people would find out of this character" (Hunte, 2022). Throughout his interview, Goldtooth also refers to the work of countering erasure and poking fun at Indigenous peoples' self-conceptions and self-portrayals, hearkening back to the survivance and thrivance that connect to complexity and futurity.

In another example, Cherie Dimaline (Métis), author of *The Marrow Thieves*, *VenCo*, and *Funeral Songs for Dying Girls*, connected to multiple themes. Focusing on story and storytelling, Dimaline challenges settler colonialism's impact on Indigenous peoples through the "Western sort of literary cataloguing system" and offers the significance of storytelling as creating "pathways and roads for all those neurons and thoughts in our brains ... so it shapes the way your brain works" (Rice, 2020b). She goes on to point out that stories "shape the way that the land moves—the way that we move on the land" (Rice, 2020b). Her descriptions and connections to both story and land point out the significance of identity and identity development. Later, she jokingly mentions that "as long as no one in my community is mad at me for doing something wrong with my stories, I'm good!" (Rice, 2020b), illustrating themes of connection to family, relatives, and ancestors, and a sense of accountability as a function of her creative process.

A third example, from ceramic, automobile, and visual artist Rose B. Simpson (Santa Clara Pueblo), involved the themes of collective and connections to family, community, and relationships to humans, other then humans, and the earth itself. She remarked that "I'm always tossing around the idea that for an art practice, we take resources from the earth" with the hope that her works "are made [to] make systemic change to benefit the planet" (Schulman, 2021). She goes on to describe her work in ways that illustrate the themes of identity, resisting invisibility and countering erasure, and connection to activism. Simpson remarks that her current work focuses on "building awareness around the energy of colonization, around Indigenous culture, bodies, and place" (Schulman, 2021). Like many artists profiled in the NativesCreative corpus, Simpson's descriptions of her creative process are not siloed or compartmentalized; rather, they interconnect and intertwine in complex ways. The "energy of colonization" indicates

creative expression pertaining to activism and countering erasure, while the focus on "Indigenous culture, bodies, and place" connects more to the work of identity and work with and in community. These connections are crucial but also familiar aspects of Indigenous peoples' artistic expression and illustrate the multiple ways that Indigenous creatives are moving towards the future.

In exploring these examples and many others in the corpus, teachers, educators, and others can develop new understandings of Indigenous peoples' creative expressions and, by extension, gain awareness of elements of Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies. Educators can simultaneously impact their teacher practice and their own mindsets. Developing more complex conceptions of creativity can support teachers' awareness of creative expression and output to better celebrate its production and meaning. At the same time, this expansion can help teachers develop a more nuanced, and contemporary vision of Indigenous peoples.

Attending to these themes, in conjunction with an immersion in Indigenous art, music, writing, and creative expression, can contribute to expanding knowledge and clarity related to indigeneity. Educators should follow Indigenous creators on social media platforms, read Indigenous authors, and challenge themselves to engage with Indigenous creative expression in all its forms. That can support teachers' awareness of Indigenous expression as legitimately creative, informed through the lenses of identity, activism, celebration, and connection. Considering these themes as aspects of Indigenous creative production can help educators better understand students and more fully appreciate and celebrate their creative work.

9. Implications: Teachers' Assessments of Creativity

This viral TikTok and the analysis of the database help illuminate key areas to consider when exploring creative production. Definitions of creativity often restrict themselves to standards of originality and effectiveness or to cognitive processes of organizing and reorganizing knowledge. In exploring Indigenous creative processes, the In-di-genuity of Indigenous peoples, creativity can be seen as involving acts beyond organization and effectiveness: that is, as acts of ceremony, sacred acts that express power and individual autonomy, along with connections to places, peoples, and cultural histories. As climate activist, writer, and social media influencer Allen Salway (Diné, Tohono O'odham, Oglala Lakota) notes,

> I decided to use social media to help my people because even when I had very few followers, I felt like I had a voice. I was talking about issues that affected me. I saw social media as a means to spread necessary information in order to combat the ignorance perpetuated in regards to our struggle. I also saw social media as a way to find other Natives, since our population is so small. It's good to connect with others through healing work.
>
> (Clark, 2019)

By exploring and expanding our conceptions of Indigenous peoples' creativity, we have a more promising opportunity to support Indigenous youth's creative expression. At the same time, this expansion supports the dismantling of settler colonial logics and by embracing the vast array of Indigenous creativities and their connections to place, community, and thrivance.

Recent events continue to remind us of the ongoing need for developing teacher awareness of Indigenous issues, Indigenous identity, and settler colonialism in the United States and Canada (Powell, 2002). Examples include the cultural violence of mocking and pantomiming stereotypes of Indigenous peoples in the name of "teaching students" (Brown, 2021) or reliving the historic trauma of residential school violence in Kamloops, British Columbia (National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, 2022). Both these examples, among countless others documented and undocumented, spring from the same mindsets that pathologize Indigenous youth in schools and classrooms, which, for those who work in Indigenous education is all too common an occurrence.

This rethinking of creativity—particularly through Indigenous lenses—is crucial in the work of decolonizing teacher education work and practices. This rethinking is not designed to replace the work of transforming structures to end systemic racism and other forms of educational oppression (Kumashiro, 2000). Deeper, culturally informed awareness of the epistemologies and ontologies that inform Indigenous conceptions of creativity can support educators in everything from curriculum development to materials selection to assessment and evaluation. Engaging in developing a nuanced vision of creativity expands educator's abilities to see and appreciate creative expression in new ways. In doing so, we can work to change beliefs that may be deeply ingrained—often without our awareness—about what is and is not creative. Settler colonialism shapes vast swaths of worldviews and perceptions of reality, which can rob educators of the beauty, creativity, and power of Indigenous youth. In expanding definitions of creativity to include the full range of expression of Indigenous peoples, we can support the work of reconciliation in schools by crafting an "age-appropriate curriculum on . . . Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2016) in the service of honoring Indigenous peoples' striving and practice of survivance and thrivance.

10. References

Anderson, K. E. (2020). Getting acquainted with social networks and apps: It is time to talk about TikTok. *Library Hi Tech News*, 37(4), 7–12. https://doi.org/10.1108/LHTN-01-2020-0001

Apodaca, N. [@420Doggface208]. (2020, September 9). Morning vibe [Video]. TikTok. https://www.tiktok.com/@420doggface208/video/6876424179084709126

Bang, M., Curley, L., Kessel, A., Marin, A., Suzukovich, E. S., & Strack, G. (2014). Muskrat theories, tobacco in the streets, and living Chicago as Indigenous land. *Environmental Education Research*, 20(1), 37–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2013.865113

Barnhardt, R., & Kawagley, A. O. (2005). Indigenous knowledge systems and Alaska Native ways of knowing. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 36(1), 8–23. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1525/aeq.2005.36.1.008

Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit.* UBC Press.

Bresnick, E. (2019). Intensified Play: Cinematic study of TikTok mobile app. University of Southern California, 4(4), 1-12.

Brant-Birioukov, K. (2021). Covid-19 and In(di)genuity: Lessons from Indigenous resilience, adaptation, and innovation in times of crisis. Prospects, 51(1), 247–259. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-021-09557-7

Brayboy, B. M. J. (2005). Toward a tribal critical race theory in education. The Urban Review, 37(5), 425–446. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-005-0018-y

Brown, A. @decolonial scholar (2021, October 24), *This incident provides all the argument needed to start implementing Native History and Critical Race Theory into US school curriculums.* [Instagram post]. https://www.instagram.com/p/CVbE5MnAoFI/

Clark, M. C. (2019). Allen Salway wants you to wake up to what Navajo nation life is like. MTV.com. https://www.mtv.com/news/z5ijt8/allen-salway-interview-native-activism

Dillon, G. L. (2012). *Walking the clouds: An anthology of indigenous science fiction.* University of Arizona Press.

Garvey, M. (2020). Fleetwood Mac's "Dreams" returns to the charts, thanks to viral TikTok video. CNN.com. https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/22/entertainment/fleetwood-mac-dreams-charts-trnd/index.html

Hearne, J. (2014). "This is our playground": Skateboarding, DIY aesthetics, and Apache sovereignty in Dustinn Craig's "4wheelwarpony." *Western American Literature*, 49(1), 47–69. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43025408

Hunte, T. (2022, August 16). Joyful protests and funny rituals with Reservation Dogs' Dallas Goldtooth. NPR.org. https://www.npr.org/transcripts/1116992735

Justice, D. H. (2018). *Why indigenous literatures matter* (1st ed.). Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Kinloch, V., & San Pedro, T. (2014). The space between listening and storying: Foundations for projects in humanization. In D. Paris & M. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. 21–42). SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781544329611.n2

Kovach, M. (2021). Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts. University of Toronto Press.

Kumashiro, K. K. (2000). Toward a theory of anti-oppressive education. Review of Educational Research, 70(1), 25–53. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543070001025

Lindstrom, G., Baptiste, K., & Young Pine, M. (2023, May 27–June 1). Enacting a pedagogy of resilience from a blackfoot perspective [Conference presentation]. *Canadian Society for the Study of Education* Conference, Toronto, ON, Canada.

Masta, S. (2019). Challenging the relationship between settler colonial ideology and higher education spaces. *Berkeley Review of Education*, 8(2), 179–194. https://doi.org/10.5070/B80037547

Muñoz, J. (2024). All of this is whitewashed, all of this is colonized: Exploring impacts of indigenous young adult literature on teacher candidates perceptions of indigenous peoples. *Critical Education*, 15(3), 62-78.

Muñoz, J., Galla, C. K., Wyman, L., & Gilmore, P. (2023). (just) languaging with duende: (re)inventing and innovating communicative practices as resistance, healing, and thrivance in indigenous contexts. *International encyclopedia of education* (Fourth ed., pp. 797-808). Elsevier Ltd.

National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. (2021). Resource database center. https://boardingschoolhealing.org/resource-database-center/

Patrickisnavajo. (2020, October 20). Fleetwood Mac skateboarding guy is indigenous! Natives React #26 [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJh$_B$*IbymyI*

Powell, M. (2002). Rhetorics of survivance: How American Indians use writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 53(3), 396–434. https://doi.org/10.2307/1512132

Reyes, V. (2020). Ethnographic toolkit: Strategic positionality and researchers' visible and invisible tools in field research. *Ethnography*, 21(2), 220–240. https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138118805121

Rice, W. (2020a, October 16). Why it's important not to lose oral storytelling: Opinion. *The Globe and Mail*.

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books/article-why-its-important-not-to-lose-oral-storytelling/

Rice, W. (2020b, December 1). Cherie Dimaline and Eden Robinson explore the intersection of science fiction, fantasy and Indigenous storytelling. *The Globe and Mail*. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books/article-globe-100-conversations-cherie-dimaline-and-eden-robinson-explore-the/

Rifkin, M. (2013). Settler common sense. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 3(3-4), 322–340. https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2013.810702

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE.

San Pedro, T., & Kinloch, V. (2017). Toward projects in humanization: Research on co-creating and sustaining dialogic relationships. *American Educational Research Journal*, $54(1_suppl), 373S–394S. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216671210$

Schulman, S. H. (2021, November 9). 11 influential Native American artists. Artsy.com. https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-11-influential-native-american-artists

Shalaby, C. (2017). *Troublemakers: Lessons in freedom from young children at school*. The New Press.

Smith, L. T. (1999/2021). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Zed Books

Takaki, R. T. (2003). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural* america (2nd ed.). Back Bay Books.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2016). *Canada's residential schools: The final report of the truth and reconciliation commission of canada*. Published for The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada by McGill-Queen's University Press.

Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard educational review*, 79(3), 409-428.

Van Camp, R. (2018). *When our drums play, they sing!* Mckellar & Martin.

Vizenor, G. (1990). Trickster discourse. *American Indian Quarterly*, 14(3), 277-287. https://doi.org/10.2307/1185655

Vizenor, G. (2008). Introduction. In Vizenor, G. (Ed.) *Survivance: Narratives of native presence* (pp. 1-7). University of Nebraska Press.

Vizenor, G. (2010). American Indian art and literature today: Survivance and tragic wisdom. *Museum International*, 62(3), 41–51. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0033.2010.01732.x

Vowel, C. (2016). *Indigenous writes: A guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit issues in Canada*. Portage & Main Press.

Walter, M.,& Andersen, C. (2013). *Indigenous statistics: A quantitative research methodology*. Routledge.

Wyman, L. T. (2012). *Youth culture, language endangerment and linguistic survivance*. Multilingual Matters.

[1] Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, University of British Columbia, Canada.

Email address: [rgb]0.00,0.00,0.84joaquin.munoz@ubc.ca