



**University  
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

**KAY JOHNSON**

MA-IS (Athabasca University, 2009)

MLIS (McGill University, 1996)

BA Hons. (University of Ottawa, 1994)

BA (University of Ottawa, 1986)

**“Unsettling Exhibition Pedagogies: Troubling Stories of the Nation  
with Miss Chief”**

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Tuesday, September 3, 2019

1:00 P.M.

Clearihue Building

Room B007

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Kathy Sanford, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Lorna Williams, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic (Member)

Dr. Darlene Clover, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic (Outside  
Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Cindy Hanson, Faculty of Education, University of Regina

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Mary Ellen Purkis, School of Nursing, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## **Abstract**

Museums as colonial institutions and agents in nation building have constructed, circulated and reinforced colonialist, patriarchal and heteronormative national narratives. Yet, these institutions can be subverted, resisted and transformed into sites of critical public pedagogy especially when they invite Indigenous artists and curators to intervene critically. They are thus becoming important spaces for Indigenous counter-narratives, self-representation and resistance—and for settler education. My study inquired into Cree artist Kent Monkman's commissioned touring exhibition *Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience* which offers a critical response to Canada's celebration of its sesquicentennial. Narrated by Monkman's alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, the exhibition tells the story of the past 150 years from an Indigenous perspective. Seeking to work on unsettling my "settler within" (Regan, 2010, p. 13) and contribute to understandings of the education needed for transforming Indigenous-settler relations, I visited and studied the exhibition at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta and the Confederation Centre Art Gallery in Charlottetown, PEI. My study brings together exhibition analysis, to examine how the exhibition's elements work together to produce meaning and experience, with autoethnography as a means to distance myself from the stance of expert analyst and allow for settler reflexivity and vulnerability. I developed a three-lens framework (narrative, representational and relational/embodied) for exhibition analysis which itself became unsettled. What I experienced is an exhibition that has at its core a holism that brings together head, heart, body and spirit pulled together by the thread of the exhibition's powerful storytelling. I therefore contend that Monkman and Miss Chief create a decolonizing, truth-telling space which not only invites a questioning of hegemonic narratives but also operates as a potentially unsettling site of experiential learning. As my self-discovery approach illustrates, exhibitions such as Monkman's can profoundly disrupt the Euro-Western epistemological space of the museum with more holistic, relational, storied public pedagogies. For me, this led to deeply unsettling experiences and new ways of knowing and learning. As for if, to what extent, or how the exhibition will unsettle other visitors, I can only speak of its pedagogical possibilities. My own learning as a settler and adult educator suggests that when museums invite Indigenous intervention, they create important possibilities for unsettling settler histories, identities, relationships, epistemologies and pedagogies. This can inform public pedagogy and adult education discourses in ways that encourage interrogating, unsettling and reorienting

Eurocentric theories, methodologies and practices, even those we characterize as critical and transformative. Using the lens of my own unsettling, and engaging in a close reading of Monkman's exhibition, I expand my understandings of pedagogy and thus my capacities to contribute to understandings of public pedagogical mechanisms, specifically in relation to unsettling exhibition pedagogies and as part of a growing conversation between critical adult education and museum studies. I attend to the contextual and intertextual dimensions of viewing a decolonizing exhibition at settler museums, offer an intersectional approach that understands the inseparable interconnectivity of issues of race, gender and sexuality within colonial structures, and self-reflexively inform my understanding with Indigenous epistemologies.