Walking on Two-Row: Assessing Acculturative Identity through Material Interaction

An Indigenous Art-Based Heuristic Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

WALKING ON TWO-ROW: ASSESSING ACCULTURATIVE IDENTITY

THROUGH ART MATERIAL INTERACTION

AN INDIGENOUS ARTS-BASED HEURISTIC INQUIRY

MEGAN KANERAHTENHA:WI WHYTE

This arts-based heuristic inquiry explored acculturation, identity and art material interaction through the use of Mohawk First media, western art materials and the Expressive Therapies Continuum Assessment (Hinz, 2009). Through Moustakas' six-step inquiry (1990), Hervey's three stages of arts-based research (2000) and Wilson's concept of land as measurement (2008), the art therapy researcher who is Mohawk First Nations examined her own material interaction with both western media and culturally specified Mohawk First Nation's media over a 28-day lunar cycle, noting emotional, cognitive and other stimulated areas of functioning during the process (Kapitan, 2010). The images were examined using the ETC Use and Therapist Self-Rating Scale (Hinz, Riccardi Gotshall, & Nan, 2017) as well as image reflection through Witness Writings (Allen, 1995). The purpose of the research was to explore how material interaction could form an assessment process of acculturative identity for First Nations populations. The findings indicated that access to both Western and First Nations media within an art therapy setting can help to foster a bicultural identity status, which has been linked to wellness for Indigenous populations (Kvernmo & Heyedahl, 2002; Watson, 2009). This research thus pointed to the value of applying the ETC assessment under an Indigenous paradigm to explore acculturation through culturally mixed media material interaction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this work to the children who attended "Indian Residential Schools", their families and the generations that came to follow—including my own.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all those who supported me throughout this art therapy journey:

To the natural world, for providing teachings and foundation for life and learning;
To the Mohawk First Nations people of my community, Kahnawà:ke, for passing down resilience and cultural knowledge;
To my clients in Kahnawà:ke, for bringing your courage, resilience and stories to life;
To my family, for your validation and support;
To my daughter Kahnawiióstha and Iotsistohkwaténion, for inspiring me to think outside the box, love unconditionally, and be unapologetically messy;
To Maria, my research supervisor, for your guidance and inspiration throughout this research process;
To my art therapy cohort, for your beauty and compassion;
To Mike, you are my home;

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

To set the foundation for this culturally-based research, it is important to first introduce myself as the art therapy researcher within the project. My name is Megan Kanerahtenha:wi Whyte, Turtle Clan, mother and Mohawk First Nations art therapist from the Mohawk ancestral territory of which this research has been conducted. Raised in a Mohawk community for the duration of my life, I spent time reflecting on the wealth of lived experience I gathered around cultural identity, political identity and overall identity struggles through meeting the Western world outside the borders of my 'reservation'. Here, I grappled with stereotypes, gendered violence and racism as well as a strong connection to ceremonies, the land and the language, each of which has impacted my definition of what it means to be First Nations in the current societal context. The following research project aims to honor both experiences through adopting an Indigenous research paradigm and heuristic arts-based approach to explore identity, which will include valid and reliable measures as well as honor to the knowledge and ceremonies of my community. As an art therapist, these influences impact the work that I do with my community to help the current generations and the generations yet to come grapple with their own identity tied to multigenerational and colonial trauma. This is the work of the research I am about to present.

Literature Review

For over five hundred years and to the present, First Nations, Inuit and Métis populations have been subjected to cultural genocide, systematic governmental assimilation, and violent legislation that stripped families of their children, their culture and their identity (Dufrene & Coleman, 1992). Throughout this period, language and cultural practices were banned from communities; Indigenous people were relocated off their traditional territories and placed on reservations; and children were forcibly removed from their homes to attend residential schools that ultimately converged to dismantle the essence of an Indigenous identity (Archibald & Dewar, 2010; Hunter, Logan, Goulet & Barton, 2006). For generations to follow, the consequences of these acts included physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and multigenerational traumas that continue to contribute to "the disproportionate need for healing among Aboriginal people today" (Müirhead & De Leeuw, 2012, pp. 2-3).

To understand these needs, framing mental health services for Indigenous communities in culturally appropriate ways is necessary to meet clients "where they are at" (Macdonald, 2014). To do so, research has suggested that services overall need to acknowledge that wellness is often rooted in healing the loss of cultural identity and by regaining cultural identity, individuals develop resilience, coping tools and a more positive self-perception (Hunter, Logan, Goulet & Barton, 2006). Art therapy as a modality has specifically correlated the inclusion of symbols and cultural practices within therapy with the potential for therapeutic change for Indigenous clients (Dufrene & Coleman, 1992; Hunter, Logan, Goulet & Barton, 2006; Lu & Yeun, 2012; Müirhead & De Leeuw, 2012). To extend this correlation, future qualitative studies could suggest that the presence of cultural art material in an art therapy model could be a culturally appropriate approach to support Indigenous clients in navigating identity, trauma and current mental health issues (Hillbuch, Snir, Regev & Orkibi, 2016).

Through art therapy and Indigenous psychology research, this research project will explore the relationship between culturally informed materials for art-making, a model for understanding therapeutic material interaction and the overall health of Indigenous people to fill the gap in Indigenous art media research. This will be accomplished by overviewing the impacts of cultural loss on Indigenous identity, the role of acculturation in predicting wellness and the influence of culturally sensitive visual media in the therapeutic space followed by an arts-based and heuristic exploration of material use, associations and symbols.

To situate this research in a culturally safe and appropriate manner, it is critical to first introduce myself as the First Nations art therapy researcher. I am Turtle Clan with roots tied to the Mohawk First Nations territory of Kahnawake and am inspired to conduct research on creating cultural safety and relevancy for First Nations people to address the diverse needs of this population. Growing up on a reservation and tackling the impacts of grandparents and close family members who attended Residential schools, I know firsthand the struggles of identity adjustment between Western and Indigenous worlds. Taking into account this role as a First Nation's researcher, this project will aim to explore my own material interaction along the Expressive Therapies Continuum (Hinz, 2009) by examining and contextualizing how material, culture and identity intersect.

Using an arts-based approach and Indigenous-based research paradigm, the overall project will include and honor aesthetic, experiential and emergent meanings through the use of metaphor, symbols and meaning-making (Brown, 2008).

History of First Nation's Identity

Pre-contact Identity

Through a global, cultural and pre-contact lens, Indigenous identity emerged from the relationships formed with the land (MacDonald, 2014). Through metaphors tied to the elements of the earth, the creation stories born from each nation and the symbols found in ceremony, Indigenous people historically co-created their definitions of self from their experience of the Earth (Doxtator, 1988; Dufrene, 1990; MacDonald, 2014). There was an understanding that the land held knowledge that allowed individuals and communities to overcome social, emotional and spiritual crisis and that healing came from holistically re-grounding the self with the earth (Dufrene, 1990).

Accessing this knowledge was channeled through Elders (knowledge keepers) of communities during ceremonies and gatherings that bridged the lessons and stories written in the land to the real experiences of the people (Doxtator, 1988; Macdonald, 2014; Vivian, 2013). Ceremonies ranged from spiritual interactions with the ancestors in sweat lodges to laying tobacco down on the earth to relieve thoughts; they included opportunities for creative expression during song, dance and art-making as well as responsibilities to follow seasonal ceremonial protocol to honor their relationship to the land (Doxtator, 1988; Dufrene, 1990). Ceremony was thus "simultaneously art, religious practice, ritual models and markers of governance structures and territorial heritage; [they were] maps of individual and community identity and lineage" (Vivian, 2013, p. 24). Ceremony was part of the land, and the land was the identity of people.

Cultural Identity Theft

However, with the wave of colonialism and the influx of "settler colonial laws, policies, practices and structures", Indigenous people experienced an "inventory of losses" that contributed to multigenerational traumas and a fragmented self-perception (Müirhead and De Leeuw, 2015, p. 2). This trauma of losing "land, [children, rights,] resources, and political autonomy [as well as] the undermining of cultures, traditions, languages and spirituality" woven into legislation created shame, fear and the loss of self

for Indigenous communities (Archibald & Dewar, 2010, p. 17). The "sociopolitical structures" of interconnectivity between land, language and the self that defined the core of an Indigenous person were therefore separated and degraded by borders and laws (Müirhead and De Leeuw, 2015, p. 2). It was argued that separating the self into reservations, conditional rights and shunned cultural practices created voids in identity, self-regulation, autonomy and positive self-perceptions (Kvernmo & Heyedahl, 2002; Hallet, Want, Chandler, Koopman, Flores & Gehrke, 2007).

This multigenerational identity loss contributed to the shame and negative self-concept in individuals that has been correlated with complex emotional, behavioral and social difficulties of Indigenous populations (MacDonald, 2014). With the ceremonies and traditional ways of healing through the land removed, Indigenous people were left without a means to process trauma and eventually, the memories of the past slip away, "unprocessed and unmourned" (Shulman & Watkins, p. 94). Communities [then begin to lose] the capacity to reflect on current events with any depth of understanding or affect" (p. 94). Therefore, without the acknowledgment of identity loss and separation, those negative emotions become misattributed to internalizations of fear, anger and shame towards the self.

Bi-Cultural Identity: Traditional and Western Selves

As a base, many developmental theorists including Erik Erikson and James Marcia describe identity development as the process of deconstruction, reconstruction and the resolution of the self. It was argued that the self was built on the foundation of family and culture, which was tested, challenged and adapted by experience (Arnett, 2013; Kvernmo & Heyedahl, 2002). For Indigenous populations, this identity development process is accompanied and complicated by cultural identity development as well, which tends to be influenced by community ties, cultural teachings and the integration into a predominantly white society (Arnett, 2013; Kvernmo & Heyedahl, 2002; MacDonald, 2015; Robert, 1992).

To understand this interaction between ethnicity and identity, the role of acculturation becomes central to this research. Acculturation categorizes identity adjustment based on the level of self-identification between an individual's ethnic group and the majority culture (Watson, 2009, p. 127). The level of acculturation is based on a

status scale (separated, assimilated, bicultural and marginalized) and used to build a culturally appropriate treatment plan to address adjustment, identity and wellness. Looking through this lens, it was predicted by two separate studies on identity and culture/race/ethnicity that the most significant predictor of wellness was a bicultural identity status, where the individual strongly identified with and was secured in both Indigenous and western cultures (Watson, 2009; Kvernmo, & Heyedahl, 2002). Fostering this bicultural identity was tied to the reconciliation of cultural differences between Western and Indigenous culture, which situates art therapy as a tool to symbolically bridge two imposing and conflicting identities (Garett, 1990).

Indigenous Arts-Based Assessment

Art-Making as Symbolic Self-Exploration

Based on these identity studies for Indigenous people, the validation of ethnic values, creating culturally relevant spaces and fostering a bicultural competence are correlated with increasing therapeutic change and wellness for Indigenous populations (Dufrene & Coleman, 1992; Garrett, 1999; Hallet et al., 2007; Watson, 2009). Through research, Western Interventions often focused on value clarification, self-awareness, stress management, communication enhancement and cultural validation, but often "failed to take into account the holistic understanding of health and the central place of spirituality that persists in indigenous communities" (Garret, 1999, p. 62, Lemzoudi, 2007; Oulanova & Moodley, 2010).

Art therapy has been studied as a modality that can build a bicultural identity status by allowing access to both ceremony, symbolism and culturally informed art materials as well as Western means of expression within the therapeutic context (Archibald, Dewar, Reid, & Stevens, 2015; Dufrene, 1990; Müirhead & De Leeuw, 2012; Robbins, 2002). Research suggests that because art can provide "culturally sensitive avenues for expression" and the opportunity to create "a symbolic vehicle [to] enhance personal and social functioning", Indigenous clients can symbolically explore concepts of the self through the art-making process (Rosal, 2001, p. 217). Symbols, it was argued, "carry the psychic energy of the belief systems they are from […] and activation of its power is [also] the healing process" (Robbins, 2002, p. 13). In this regard, symbols can be viewed as vehicles for healing and access to the self.

The historical expression of symbols, often etched in stone, in painting, in beads and through the creative process of healing, are diverse in form; they can be derived from drawing, imagination or stored into the fabric of a material itself (Müirhead & De Leeuw, 2012). Creation, in this context, can be viewed as "intrinsic to maintaining a balanced life and to holistic healing when life falls out of balance there is no separation between arts, culture and healing" (Archibald & Dewar, 2015, p. 15; Dufrene, 1990). This would suggest that access to cultural, natural and land-based materials in an art therapy space could create opportunity to practice cultural and identity healing by connecting to traditional symbols in image formation and material properties (Archibald & Dewar, 2015; Hunter, Logan, Goulet & Barton, 2006).

Art Materials as Symbolic Self-Exploration

Culturally informed materials and the ways in which they can be used will vary depending on the traditional practice employed and from the geographic location a nation is situated upon (Archibald & Dewar, 2015; Dufrene & Coleman, 1994). Müirhead and De Leeuw (2012) describe traditional practice, which may include "feasting and gifting rituals, body ornamentation, singing, dancing, drumming, weaving, beading, basket-making and carving" as "simultaneously art, creative expression, religious practice, ritual models and markers of governance structures and territorial heritage, as well as maps of individual and community identity and lineage" (p. 2).

Each creation, in this regard, offers a range of uses including the production of functional objects (pottery for instance), items for ceremonial use and connection to the land (totems, drums or masks) or stories, myths and traditions expressed through song, dance, painting or clothing (Müirhead and De Leeuw, 2012). The act of creating or creative expression can therefore be viewed as an integral process in the daily life of Indigenous people and may provide more access to exploring inner worlds (Archibald & Dewar, 2015; Doxtator, 1988; Robbins, 2002).

Deoborah Doxtator (1998), a Mohawk First Nations artist from the Kahnawà:ke community describes material as a container for "the memories of the person who used it, the knowledge of how to gather and prepare it, the prayers and songs, the philosophies and metaphors for making sense of the world" (p. 15). Beads, baskets and natural materials represent "an ancient process of human decorative expression that has existed

from the beginning; [they are] an extension of [Indigenous People] defining [themselves] (p. 12). Access to culturally informed media could, in theory, symbolically provide Indigenous people with access to culturally relevant means to self organize.

With the legacy of settler colonialism however, how art therapists select material becomes just as important to providing it (Oulanova & Moodley, 2010). Consulting with the communities, rather than generalizing Indigenous knowledge, to determine appropriate uses of various materials was deemed an appropriate method to avoid extractive and oppressive means of collecting media and information (Dufrene & Coleman, 1994). As Doxtator (1988) states "knowledge requires a network of knowers" (p. 12).

Therefore connecting with knowledge keepers, scholars and elders from specific nations can help to inform art therapists of culturally appropriate material to provide for clients. From a Mohawk First Nation's perspective, it was suggested to provide a range of materials, including "beads, jewelry-making supplies, drums, natural materials connected to the territory, leather and feathers alongside Western materials like paints, pastels and clay" (Doxtator, 1988, p. 12). Arguably, offering a selection allows the client to choose how they wish to express themselves in a way that reflects and respects their acculturation status (Archibald and Dewar, 2015; Garret, 1990; Lu & Yeun, 2012; MacDonald, 2014; Müirhead & De Leeuw, 2012; Robbins & Goffia-Girasek, 1987; Vivian, 2013).

Art Materials and The Expressive Therapies Continuum Assessment

To assess the material interaction and information processing capacities of Indigenous clients, the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) is proposed to be an appropriate art therapy framework to contextualize the material-client relationship. The ETC is a theoretical structure for understanding the ways in which individuals interact with art media to take in, process, and express information along a continuum of fluid to resistive qualities (Hinz, 2009; Penzes, Van Hooren, Dokter, Smeilsters & Hutschemaekers, 2014). Using the characteristics of art-making, the ETC is designed to align behavior and visual expression with corresponding brain structures and functions. For instance, resistive art materials such as pencils and collage images are associated with

cognitive processes whereas fluid art materials, such as paint and wet clay often indicate affective processing (Hinz, 2009; Penzes et al., 2014).

Once the fluidity/rigidity or affective/cognitive preferences are identified, the ETC structures information processing into four levels based on a developmental hierarchy: the kinesthetic/sensory level, perceptual/affective level, cognitive/symbolic level and the creative level (Hinz, 2009; Penzes et al., 2014). As Lusebrink (2010) suggests:

> the left-hand components of the ETC [which corresponds with the left hemisphere of brain function]—namely the kinesthetic, perceptual, and cognitive components—seem to be enhanced through the use of resistive media, such as pencils, crayons, or markers. The right-hand components—the sensory, affective, and symbolic components—tend to be enhanced through the use of fluid media, such as poster paint, watercolor, or finger paint (p. 173).

How a client moves between levels can indicate areas of functioning that are overused or blocked, which can be seen in Figure 1, can provide direction for treatment planning (Lusebrink, 2010). Understanding the ETC framework can therefore enhance assessment accuracy and reduce or eliminate guesswork during art therapy treatment.

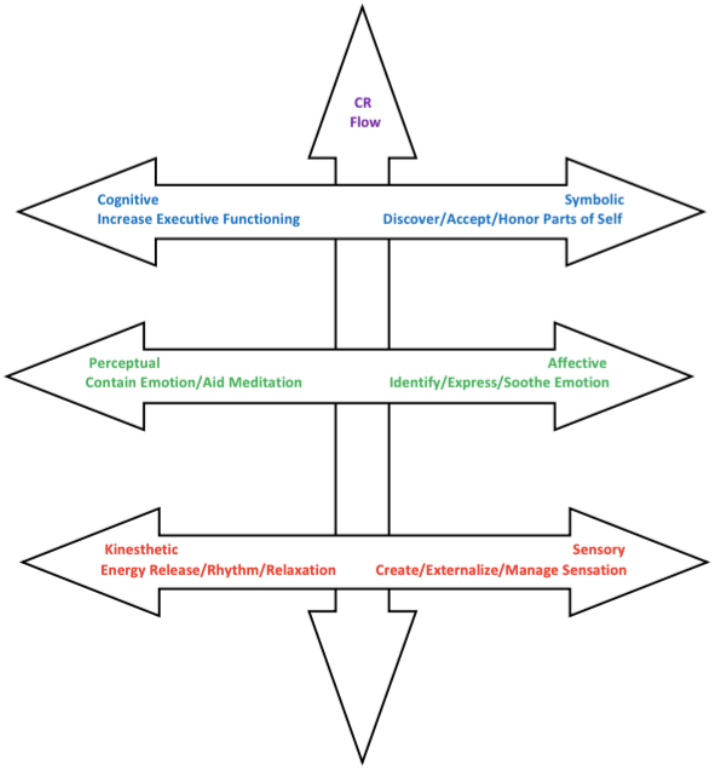

Figure 1. The Expressive Therapies Continuum. Riccardi, M., Hinz, L., Gotshall, K., & Nan, J. (2017, November). *Experimenting with the Expressive Therapies Continuum: Reflection upon an Arts-Based Assessment through Heart and Mind*. Workshop presented at the 48th annual conference of the American Art Therapy Association, Albuquerque, NM.

In an Indigenous context, the presence of culturally informed and natural materials within an ETC model of understanding may provide both processing information and coping tools in response to images, creations and aversions in art material as well as the opportunity to gauge the gap between inner and outer worlds in a culturally relevant visual language (Hillbuch, Snir, Regey & Orkibi, 2016; Penzes et al., 2014; Robbins & Goffia-Girasek, 1987). Art therapists can further link "material experience to aspects of the client's mental health" (Penzes et al., 2014, p. 487) by assessing their personal characteristics expressed through the use of art material; this may include "self-esteem, self-efficacy, perfectionism, need for control, rigidness, the ability to deal with and feel (negative) emotions, anxiety and agitation" (p. 489). Knowledge of these properties and interactions can then allow art therapists to identify preferences, functioning, patterns and relationships in order to therapeutically and systematically apply material properties "to meet the goals of art therapy assessments" (p. 490-491; Pesso-Aviv, Regev & Guttmann, 2014).

Indigenizing the Expressive Therapies Continuum Assessment

Using the model of the ETC, material interaction can be used to both determine the information processing capacities of Indigenous clients as well as create a space to "foster self-determination [and cultural healing] through choice and empowerment" (Hunter, Logan, Goulet & Barton, 2006, p. 19). By incorporating Western and traditional art media into an "implicit cultural assessment", art therapists may be able to determine both the acculturation status of Indigenous clients through media choice as well as their processing abilities as part as an overall culturally appropriate approach to art therapy (Oulanova & Moodley, 2010, p. 351). This becomes key for treatment planning as the material used, both in image formation and property, has the capacity to evoke a symbolic connection to and restoration of the self (Doxtator, 1988; Robbins, 2002). Adapting the ETC to include cultural media may therefore allow art therapists to evaluate

the potential impact of multigenerational trauma, identity loss, emotive and cognitive functioning and the relevant healing mechanisms of cultural symbols for Indigenous clients through material use (Müirhead and De Leeuw, 2015).

Methodology

Indigenous Research Paradigm

Based on the theoretical correlations between wellness, identity and culturally safe therapeutic practices, this research aimed to examine the relationship between material interaction, Indigenous identity and culturally informed art media when conducting initial overall functioning assessments with clients. In using culture as the basis for this research, it was critical to first establish ethical measures that addressed cultural safety, decreased the generalization of Indigenous art media, community needs and traditional beliefs and avoided reinforcing aesthetic stereotypes, extractive methodologies and power imbalances within the data collection and dissemination process (Archibald & Dewar, 2010; Doxtator, 1988; Dufrene, 1990; Vivian, 2013). To do so in this study, I included my Mohawk First Nation's social locator to adopt an Indigenous research paradigm that (a) identified a specific nation under the umbrella of "Indigenous people", (b) used art media relevant to that nation and (c) gathered data in a way that honored the knowledge gathering processes of the culture.

In this regard, an Indigenous research paradigm acted to acknowledge that Indigenous ways of examining a phenomenon is often cyclical and organic in nature as opposed to the Western linear structures of conducting research and presenting findings (Wilson, 2008, p. 42). Through this paradigm, information was thus gathered through stories, metaphors and the relational framework between the land, our bodies and all of creation (Wilson, 2008, pp. 69-70). Storytelling through cultural means further entailed that knowledge can be drawn through the many ways in which stories can be shared, created and expressed. As a research process, this storytelling paradigm allowed me to choose from a variety of tools borrowed from multiple methodologies rather than to focus on one primary Western approach (Wilson, 2008, pp. 39). By then connecting to my Mohawk community of Kahnawà:ke, this research used both Western and Indigenous culture methodologies that honored, guided and filtered Mohawk First Nations knowledge in culturally appropriate ways.

Under this research paradigm, the current study drew from heuristic, cultural and arts-based methodologies to answer the following research question regarding indigenizing an arts-based assessment: What are the experiences and insights gained from exploring Mohawk First Nation's media through the framework of the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) assessment over a 28-day period? Supplementary questions included: (a) What themes, symbols and associations arise through use of Mohawk First Nations media? (b) Do these experiences of art media fall into the cognitive and/or affective ranges of functioning as described in the ETC? And (c) How can the use of Mohawk First Nations media describe an Indigenous assessment process through witness writing? (Allen, 1995)

Multiple Methodologies

To explore the experience of First Nations art media as a First Nation's researcher, I triangulated the methodologies borrowed from arts-based, cultural and heuristic inquiries. As a foundation, the best fit for understanding material interaction within this study was to incorporate an arts-based component that immersed the self in the experience of using art media. Through a "systematic measurement" of reflexivity and critical vision, this methodology allows researchers to both connect and distance the self from the artwork to create discovery (Kapitan, 2014, p. 157). To do so in this study, the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) was used as the measurement to critically "observe patterns in material experience, the art product, and the material interaction" (Penzes, Van Hooren, Dokter, Smeilsters & Hutschemaekers, 2014, pp. 490-491).

To frame the arts-based process, heuristic inquiry was also employed to use "self-awareness to engage intensely in [the experience of art-making] so as to discover new, in-depth meaning" about the connection between the self and culture through material interaction (Kapitan, 2014, p. 144). Following Moustakas' (1990) six-step heuristic inquiry, three of Hervey's (2000) steps to arts-based research and Wilson's (2008) land as measurement feature of the Indigenous research paradigm, I critically examined my personal experience with Mohawk First Nation's materials, systematically noting emotional, cognitive and other stimulated areas of functioning during the process (Kapitan, 2014). Choosing these methodologies aligned with the need for First Nations people to conduct their own First Nations research to enhance culturally and historically

informed approaches to art therapy and assessment (Oulanova & Moodley, 2010, p. 347).

As Wilson (2008) states, Indigenous research should include "the measure of the land as the measure of the body", which entailed that measuring the experience of a person should include a component tied to the land (p. 61). Through the teachings of the Mohawk First Nation's culture in particular, one method that was used to measure personal change and growth was the phases and ceremonies related to the moon. The moon, as described in the Mohawk Creation Story, was mother to the Earth and grandmother to the people born on the Earth (Macdonald, 2014). The bodies of people in this way were innately tied to the land and thus directly tied to the moon.

Ceremonies, particularly for women and their moontime (menses) cycle, were conducted to guide individuals to self-care, fast, vision quest and enter the moonlodge (sweat lodge) as a time for reflection with the self, elders and the ancestors of the land (Macdonald, 2014). It was within this lodge that emotions, troubles, traumas and thoughts were offered to the stones (ancestors) and reflected upon in relation to the visions and symbols that appeared within the ceremony. Through this process, individuals gathered teachings to carry with them through each of the thirteen moons. To honor an Indigenous paradigm, the present study also used the moon cycle followed by a sweat lodge as the time frame for the heuristic and arts-based inquiry.

Ethical Considerations and Bias

Given the nature of heuristic inquiry and the culturally specific context of my own nation, there are ethical considerations to make before drawing conclusions from personal experiences. As a First Nations researcher, it is indeed my ethical obligation as stated in code 6.3 of the AATA (2013) guidelines to "seek and understand the nature of social diversity and oppression". Stating my Indigenous stance on oppression and my bias as a First Nations researcher is essential to creating an awareness of the "multiplicity of ways that art is construed and constructed" through the lens of privilege and oppression (Moon, 2010, p. 12). This would mean to develop an understanding of how my cultural knowledge, political views and possible multigenerational traumas influence my material interaction and interpretation. Knowing one's self, including my social locators, my acculturation levels as well as preferences and aversions in art media was therefore critical to developing an ethical and multicultural research practice (Moon, 2010).

An additional ethical consideration to take into account is the use of autobiographical information and its limitations to generalizing the research findings to a larger population. By taking a heuristic route, there was an innate potential to drift away from the primary objectives of the research project and "spiral into labyrinths of personal feelings and fragments of thoughts" (McNiff, 1998, p. 55). This can often lead to a lack of consistency and reliability in the process, which is common with many qualitative methods. These limitations were partially addressed by clarifying the research purpose and creating a detailed design that organized the overall process, but replicating my own process or reaching the same result may be difficult for future research studies due to the heuristic nature of the research. Furthermore, the data collection process, the large amount of data collected and its analysis was time consuming due to the changing cycles of the moon. This would also indicate that future studies using the moon cycle may differ based on the time of year.

Data Collection Procedures

Drawing from Moustakas' (1990) six phases of heuristic inquiry, three steps drawn from Hervey's (2000) arts-based approach and Wilson's (2008) use of land as measurement, the following emergent research procedure was followed:

Phase one: Initial Engagement

In heuristic inquiry, the first phase of research involves identifying an area of passion to which can be explored by the researcher (McNiff, 2011). Through an inner dialogue, one will encounter this passion and the self within a social context, which will situate the foundation of the study (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). Driven by my experience as a First Nation's individual, artist and art therapist, I followed my curiosity through the relationship between art media, nature and my First Nations Identity. Throughout the art therapy program, I found myself frustrated by the objectives to self-reflect without having access the natural materials I was accustomed to in my community. I then began to question how Indigenous traditional forms of creation can be incorporated into the art therapy frame to decrease this frustration between Western and First Nations media choices in order to increase the capacity to better self-reflect in a visual language that is culturally appropriate.

In this phase of initial engagement, a literature review was conducted to investigate how culturally appropriate media impacted material interaction and self-reflection for Indigenous clients. Integral to this literature was the tension between Indigenous and Western philosophies, histories and colonial contexts, which helped deepen my understanding of the research question and guide the creative process. I thus decided to select a variety of First Nation's material (land-based, animal-based and ceremony based) as well as Western media (paints, drawing tools, fabrics) to explore the tension.

Phase two: Immersion

Upon crystalizing the research question, I then "[turned] inward with unwavering attention and focus" in the creative process to attain a deeper level of understanding (Kapitan, 2014, p. 146). Coupling this phase of heuristic inquiry with arts-based and Indigenous frameworks (Wilson, 2008), a "systematic focused attention, creative action and measured reflection" was employed during a daily art-making process over the course of one lunar cycle (Kapitan, 2014, p. 166). The cycle began with a sweat lodge at the December 2017 Full Moon to clear my mind and set the research intention to explore material interaction, self-reflection and identity (Macdonald, 2014). For the 28 days following, each art-making session began with a smudge, which is a culturally learned practice that consists of burning sage and taking in the energy of the medicine in order to clearly see, think, and create.

The creative process was then marked by a consistent time, space and structure for art-making. The art-making space and materials were permanently set up in my home studio and arranged along the ETC framework, which entailed a selection of art media that included Western materials (clay, acrylic and water-color paint, oil and chalk pastels, Sharpie markers, pencil crayons) as well as First Nation's identified media (natural dyes made from fruits, leather, shell and stone beads, feathers, bark, bone, antlers, fabrics with Indigenous patterns) positioned from fluid to resistive on a table in front of me.

This material arrangement was selected to ensure that I would have access to the potential of fostering a bicultural identity based on bi-cultural art media selection. The artwork was manifested on one large piece of leather and incorporated both Western media and natural materials along the process. Critical to this experience was the

inclusion of material collection as part of the art-making process, which involved meeting with elders and using session to go out on the land, reflect on its teachings during the process and exchange tobacco (medicine) for media found on my journey. The sessions themselves lasted sixty minutes each day and included material collection on the land, art-making and written reflection. The data was collected and measured through *Witness writing* (Allen, 1995) and the *Art Therapist Self-Inquiry Scale* (Riccardi, Hinz, Gotshall & Nan, 2017).

Witness writing. This emergent process involved a dialogue between the artwork created and myself. Dialoguing included writing a few words to objectively describe the image, marking down spontaneous associations and noting present somatic sensations directly after art-making. The purpose of doing so was to draw personal meaning from the artwork and inform my experience of the art material (Allen, 1995). This data was stored in a notebook to refer to in the analysis for themes at a later stage.

Art therapist self-inquiry scale (see Figure 2 in appendix). At each quarter mark of the lunar cycle, this assessment scale was completed to measure my preferences and aversions to material interaction along a kinesthetic, sensory, perceptual, affective, cognitive and symbolic level of functioning continuum. This allowed me to systematically compare and deepen my understanding of the experience of material interaction over the course of one cycle (Riccardi, Hinz, Gotshall & Nan, 2017).

Phase Three: Incubation

During this phase of inquiry, the data gathered was incubated for a period of five days without influence from any additional sources to further allow the "inner tacit dimension to reach its full possibilities" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 26). Incubation, in this regard, was marked by a "temporary retreat" to allow the knowledge to drift outside of conscious awareness (Kapitan, 2014, p. 146). This occurred for a period of seven days at the end of the lunar cycle, which gave me time away from concentrated focus to allow new perspectives to form and the reflection process to occur. At the January full moon, I once again cleansed myself from the lunar month's work through a second sweat lodge (Macdonald, 2014).

Phase Four: Illumination

Breaking the period of incubation was the illumination phase, which was marked by new insight and a "breakthrough into the conscious awareness of the essential qualities that are inherent in the question" (p. 146). During this phase, I came to the realization that the material interaction that followed a bicultural continuum was necessary to explore my relationship to my own First Nations identity. In isolation, each set of materials triggered shame but in conjunction with each other, created a space to meet and heal the multigenerational trauma as a First Nations individual. By allowing myself to move between materials, I was able to reflect on my preferences and aversions to media, functioning and identity as well. This realization led to a return to the literature review, which consolidated these insights by reaffirming that wellness is connected to the reconciliation between cultural differences rather than the preference or rejection of one or the other (Archibold & Dewar, 2010).

Phase Five: Explication

To situate the data collected into a "critical context that can be communicated to others" (Kapitan, 2014, p. 147), it was critical to "organize and identify patterns and themes" into a format readable by an audience (Hervey, 2000, p. 49). To do so within this research involved reviewing the visual, written and form data to mark down recurrent words, symbols and themes that evolved over the course of the lunar cycle. To synthesize the data collected from the *Art Therapist Self-Inquiry Scale* (Riccardi, Hinz, Gotshall & Nan, 2017), three graphs were created to demonstrate the change in ETC and acculturation levels at each quarter moon. The first graph (Figure 3 in appendix) revealed the preferences and aversions as well as the adjacent functioning levels using Western media while the second graph (Figure 4 in appendix) focused on the levels met by First Nations media. The third graph (Figure 5 in appendix) was created to visually represent the average score on each component between Western and First Nations material interaction. These graphs were linked to the thematic analysis of the artworks in order to contextualize material interaction with stylistic themes.

Phase Six: Creative Synthesis

During this final phase of arts-based inquiry, the cumulative artwork was placed and presented in a context that "maximized [its] effectiveness in communication"

(Kapitan, 2014, p. 167) and valued its meaning (Hervey, 2000). To do so, I collected themes, metaphors and personal reflections emergent in the research process connected to the images created and presented them in a visual book form. This book acted as a container for the acculturation process and honored the challenges experienced as a First Nations individual in navigating Western and Indigenous media, identity and existence in society. This book, alongside the cumulative artwork, will be displayed at the Semaine Nationale de la Santé Mentale in Montreal on May 6th 2018.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected included (a) 28 daily artworks (b) the description and reflection of images through witness writings (c) four ETC self-assessment scales (see Figure 2 in the annex) and (d) graphs created based on these forms. Over the course of one lunar cycle, a combination of Western and First Nations materials were used on a leather surface to explore media interaction. The materials ranged from Sharpie, acrylic paint and fibers (Western) to fruits, charcoal drawn from a fire, bark, shell beads, antler, medicines, and feathers (First Nations). The paint was applied via paintbrush while the berry juice and coal were applied using my fingers. Each session, lasting forty minutes of daily art-making and witness writing responses, began with a smudge (burning of sage) to clear the mind (Lu & Yuen, 2012).

The art materials and natural media were then set up at a table and arranged according to the ETC (Hinz, 2009) rigid to fluid property format. The most rigid (drawing media) were placed at the far left of the spectrum of material properties and the most fluid (paint) placed at the far right. With the mind cleared, I spontaneously created artwork inspired by the prompt of "cultural identity". The following sessions were built upon the themes, symbols and metaphors that arose during the process, which created an emergent overall narrative of identity on one surface. After each art-making, approximately five to ten minutes was spent witness writing (Allen, 1998), which included documenting current somatic sensations and associations to the images within a notebook as well as photographing the change in artwork. At each quarter moon, the ETC self-assessment was completed to align with the reflective rhythms of Mohawk First Nations moontime teachings, which naturally documents change throughout a cycle

(Macdonald, 2014). During this self-assessment, preferences and aversions as well as blocked functioning was noted.

The following section will provide an analysis of the lunar quarterly accumulated art created, with emphasis on the media properties, material interaction, and the emerging function(s) and theme(s) from each phase. Media dimension variables, including the level of structure (the amount of direction and boundaries) and the complexity (number of sequential operations), were also reflected upon within the context of the ETC to explore of the influence of variability in approach on the movement along the continuum (Graves-Alcorn & Kagin, 2017).

Images, Witness Writings, and Personal Reflections

Figure 6. Calling the Medicine and the Ancestors. Cumulative art-making over ten sessions.

Full Cold Moon to Last Quarter Moon. This period included ten art-making sessions presented in Figure 6 that focused on meeting the materials, exploring their relation to the moon cycle and creating a space to assess my relationship to culture. The overall approach was low structured in terms of an open studio direction but high in complexity through the steps taken to initial drawing in the center of the leather (Graves-Alcorn & Kagin, 2017). Noting the high level of cognitive functioning and my low level of interaction with the media themselves, I shifted the complexity from detailed steps to a simple touch of the material to allow myself to experience the sensorial properties of natural materials, including absorbing the textures of leather, raspberry juice and seeds, burnt wood, beads and abalone shells. Through this level of exploration, I was able to

discover how leather absorbs different properties, how form can emerge through play on the surface and how each media used in this context could create symbolic meaning for identity by meeting nature in an intimate way (Hinz, 2009).

Discovery or the moment of creativity between touch, form and symbolism seemed to lead to an increase in affective stimulation and self-understanding through the connection of developmental levels on the ETC (Hinz, 2009, Lusebrink, 2010). I understood that by connecting to the sensory experience and life history of each of these objects, I was brought a sense of gratitude, joy and connection to the earth and myself as a First Nation's person (Dufresne, 1991). Through this sensorial to affective process, symbols of reproduction and growth, such as the uterus, the moon phases, and the raspberry juice as uterine medicine, emerged and grounded the narrative of the art-making as the symbolic seed for growth. However, an additional affective experience emerged in this phase, which was marked by the fear of meeting my cultural identity in the art and feeling inadequate in material understanding. Fear triggered anxiety on how to treat and apply the media, which was experienced through a fast paced interaction and a breaking of needles while sewing through the leather. This further increased my anxiety around uncertainty and led to automatic cognitive functioning (planning, creating line and perceptual form) as a way to combat the shame I was experiencing around perceived inadequacy. Despite containing the shame through form and cognition, I did not feel emotionally satisfied or less anxious during the process.

Upon reflection, it would seem that a high structured and cognitive use of Western media, including acrylic paint, conte stick, fabric and Sharpie marker, distanced myself from shame but did not regulate the experience of shame within my body (Graves-Alcorn & Kagin, 2017). Thus returning to the First Nations media and lowering the structure and complexity of my approach, I instead allowed myself to experience the simple touch of the natural materials to ease the tension. Shedding the need to create symbolic meaning or cognitively explain the experience, I remained present in the moments of burning wood, squishing berries and pressing into the leather. By activating this sensorial functioning, I was led to affective release and regulation (Hinz 2009, Lusebrink, 2010). Therefore, I have gathered that Western material has mediated the

intensity of shame through distance and that First Nation's media has regulated my experience of it.

Figure 7. Walking in Sky Woman's Moccasins. Cumulative art-making over seven sessions.

Last Quarter Moon to New Moon. This phase lasted seven days and was marked by the theme of growth from new beginnings as seen in Figure 7. Through an initial high structure and high complexity approach to drawing, the theme of ceremony surfaced through the symbols of sacred tobacco and elements from traditional storytelling. However, despite the symbolic cultural presence in the art making, shame reemerged during this period as I considered my overall material preference for Western media and the hesitation I harbored for First Nation's material interaction. It would seem that the historic trauma between cultures had emerged in this art process and was necessary to explore through the material and symbolic interaction between both medias (Archibold & Dewar, 2010). Thus, I revisited my reflection on touch, sensorial functioning and the regulation I experienced to shift my approach from high to low structure. I was able to then interact with the leather through my fingers and the Sharpie pen as well as reactivate the affective process (Hinz, 2009).

During this interaction, I came to the reflection that feeling drawn to both Western and First Nations tools were part of my own cultural and multigenerational story. It became clear through this bicultural media use that relying solely on First Nations material did not increase my sense of cultural identity on its own, but through being in relation with all materials, my cultural identity felt solidified. By balancing sensorial

exploration with containment between both medias, I was led to symbolic understanding and reflection (Hinz, 2009). In other words, by activating all levels of functioning on the ETC during this process, I experienced a creative flow that allowed me to balance affect and cognition to reflect on the overall impact of bicultural media use and thus transform my narrative within this research from "can I increase my sense of identity through cultural materials?" to "what is my cultural identity with all the materials laid before me?"

This reflection led me to the Creation story within Mohawk First Nations' Culture, a metaphorical narrative that aims to describe both the beginning of the Earth as well as the beginning of our own life journeys (MacDonald, 2014). This particular narrative tells of the fall of Sky Woman through a hole in the universe and documents her plunge into darkness, her relation to the new world, and the seeds of ceremony she honored to sprout the new life of what would later become Turtle Island. By activating the symbolic level of the ETC, the narrative seemed to contain the shame and give myself permission to use all media to tell the cultural story. During this period, I primarily focused on creating a Moccasin Vamp, the decorative cover of a moccasin, to symbolize my own journey into the darkness of this research. Using the fabric I used to make my daughter's first ribbon dress as well as shell beads and abalone shell, I took a high structured and high complexity approach to creation (Graves-Alcorn & Kagin, 2017). The increase in boundary and sequential operations helped to distance and contain the affect of fear and apprehension so that I may experience the courage to plunge into the unknown in the same way that the symbols of the story held Sky Woman on her journey through the darkness. Using Sharpie to make my own roots on the leather, I slowly allowed myself to meet the sensorial process of touch in the natural media. I peeled tree bark to ground myself to this experience and cut into the leather to create the symbolic hole to fall into. Using sensation, form and symbolism, I again activated creative functioning (Hinz, 2009).

In this creative experience, I realized that mediating the shame I carried as a First Nation's person in the face of colonization (preferring Western Media for instance) was central to develop the resiliency and strength to build upon the ETC from a bicultural use of Western and First Nations' materials (Hinz, 2009, Lusebrink, 2010, Kvernmo &

Heyerdahl, 2002). Upon reflection, it would seem that attempting to separate media based on cultural differences created internal chaos and anxiety within myself. However by activating both sensation (First Nation's media) and form (Western media) along the ETC, I was able to stabilize my experience to create a symbolic meaning (Hinz, 2009) and reflection that media choice (based on cultural origins) does not necessarily determine acculturation levels on its own but that the interaction and reflection can (Kvernmo & Heyerdahl, 2002).

Figure 8. The Mind is Split. Cumulative art-making over eight sessions.

New Moon to First Quarter Moon. This phase lasted eight sessions and was marked by the internal conflict experienced in my fall through the symbolic hole in the leather into the unknown of a bicultural identity in Figure 8. Beginning with sensorial use of black paint on the leather that extended from the hole, an affective experience of anxiety, shame and self-doubt in my use of material flooded my body (Hinz, 2009). I felt shame that I was not exploring more First Nation's material and that my frequent use of Western material was compounding the research. With the desire to regulate, I returned to the natural media by chopping wood from a white pine, the symbol of peace within my culture, gathering seeds from a white corn crop I harvested the fall prior. This kinesthetic process of chopping and peeling are movements that can be correlated with a release of energy and tension within ETC research (Hinz, 2009, Lusebrink, 2010). However, the high structure and high complexity of the process, led me to feel unsatisfied with the release (Graves-Alcorn & Kagin, 2017). It would seem that this kinesthetic process led to

the creation of form and a decrease in anxiety but did not allow for the affective release of shame (Hinz, 2009). I instead returned to a purely sensory, non-cognitive and non-symbolic use of Sharpie on leather until the feeling of shame decreased.

It would seem that by activating both a kinesthetic and sensorial release of anxiety and shame, the intensity of the process was relieved enough to allow me to revisit bicultural art-making by beading on cardstock paper. Feeling, naming the emotion and taking space away through cognitive art-making seemed to create enough emotional distance so that reflection could occur on a creative level (Hinz, 2009). As part of the reflective process, the art-making led me to create a symbolic bridge between two worlds and two mediums on the leather surface. Biculturalism, as a symbolic experience, became embodied within this structure and physically transformed into a ceremonial sculpture (a longhouse) upon the leather. The longhouse in Mohawk First Nations culture is home to the people and all ceremonies; it is a place of reflection, renewal and honoring the self within the balance of the world. Symbolically, this concept of balancing both Western and First Nations media within a physical cultural place of reflection led me to feel grounded within the unknown. In other words, balancing the experience of extremities on ETC allowed me to access creative reflection and self-acceptance (Hinz, 2009, Lusebrink, 2010).

Figure 9. Breath as Ceremony. Cumulative art-making over six sessions.

First Quarter Moon to Full Wolf Moon. The final six sessions leading up to the full moon were marked by self-acceptance. No longer did I hold shame for feeling drawn to Western material because I had come to accept during this process that colonization

and the tools that my ancestors had gathered continued to be part of my identity. True acceptance was experienced by balancing affect and cognition through my sensorial, kinesthetic, perceptual, affective, cognitive and symbolic experience of material, where choosing material that helped to process, contain and experience shame allowed me to make symbolic meaning of it within my artwork (Hinz, 2009). This newfound acceptance of biculturalism allowed me to interchange material use between glitter glue, paper and paint to antler, beads and symbols without feeling overwhelmed by shame. It would seem that I became fluent in my intentional use of sensorial and kinesthetic processes in the application of glue and paint to meet the affect of occasional shame and to ease the tension of the accompanied anxiety I was carrying through rolling paper in a more fluid and balanced manner (Hinz, 2009).

In addition, by intentionally maintaining a low complexity and structure for sensorial and kinesthetic experiences, I was able better access these states and let go of these normally blocked energies. Meeting affect and form from this kinesthetic and sensorial place, allowed me to then increase structure and complexity to play on perceptual and symbolic levels and create personal meaning (Hinz, 2009, Graves-Alcorn & Kagin, 2017). This ETC flow, knowledge of media dimension variables and the bicultural use of media seemed to lead me to an increased level of self-discovery within the cultural symbols that appeared. These symbols mirrored the birth of "Turtle Island" within the Creation story, which led to the reflection I too had overcome the fall into the unknown by finding self-understanding for which to grow from.

Findings

Through data-analysis, the following reflections emerged in relation to material interact and identity formation. It was clear that overly relying on either Western or First Nations media could create shame and tension within the exploration of self-identity. Using primarily Western media for instance seemed to create ambivalence within the process as I struggled to accept the shame I felt for wanting to use paints and Sharpies over natural media within this project. During these times, I felt myself distance from the art-making and occasionally experienced dread. Forcing myself however to use only natural material to explore identity also created shame and the need to distance myself from the project. Centering the process, I gathered that balancing the containment

capacity of Western media with the sensorial process of First Nation's media allowed me to experience, name and regulate the affective experience of shame and move further through the continuum to have more reflective and cognitive thinking. Easing this process was the awareness of how the level of structure and complexity in my art-making approach can impact the movement through the continuum. In this regard, I noted that lower structures/complexity allowed for more sensory and kinesthetic processes to occur while increasing structures/complexity scaffolds higher order functioning (Graves-Alcorn & Kagin, 2017).

It would thus appear that the ETC helped to manage shame and media interaction as part of my overall exploration of Indigenous identity formation and the art-making process. This may indicate that knowing a client's cognitive and affective functioning levels can be critical for art therapists to provide appropriate suggestion for art media, structure, complexity and support during times of identity crisis and shame within the art process (Graves-Alcorn & Kagin, 2017, Hinz, 2009). Acknowledging my own ETC levels within this project, including blocked areas and overused areas, helped me to structure my approach and identify my needs within the art-making process. Moreover, the balance discovered between containment and experience, allowed me to meet, hold and place shame within myself so that I was able to accept the desire for both Western and First Nations media as part of my identity (Penzes et al., 2014, Müirhead and De Leeuw, 2015). Therefore, as aligned with the research on bicultural identity, resolving inner conflict in both cultures through the use of art media and symbolism allowed me to accept my identity as a whole (Watson, 2009; Kvernmo, & Heyedahl, 2002).

As a secondary finding, the use of both Western and First Nations media indicated that there were differences between functioning levels on the ETC rating scale. By comparing the graphs presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3, it would appear that my use of Western media focused primarily on perceptual and Cognitive functioning through the use of rigid material as well as a near absence in kinesthetic interactions. In line with ETC research, the process revealed that the use of marker often led to a cognitive explanation for images and a desire for containment within the artwork (Hinz, 2009). Conversely, the use of First Nations media demonstrated an increase in Sensory and Kinesthetic functioning with a surprising decrease in affective interactions. It would

appear that feeling all materials absorb within the leather, gathering and preparing natural media (cutting wood, peeling bark, picking seeds off of corn), and using the full capacity of physical manipulation to bead through thick surfaces led to energy release (Hinz, 2009). Generally, the ETC (Hinz, 2009) stipulates that sensorial experiences such as these can be linked to affective responses, which were unexpectedly not experienced through the use of First Nations media. Possible explanations for an affective absence may be blocked responses to cultural media, rooted in multigenerational trauma and my own level of affective functioning.

Upon reflecting on these averages between Western and First Nations material interaction however, it would appear that combining both media types led to an increase in functioning across all levels. For instance, during moments of affective deregulation in First Nations material use, Western media aided me to process emotional experiences in order to continue visual identity exploration. This observation also coincides with my initial finding, which indicates that fostering a bicultural identity status or the balance between minority and dominant cultures can lead to increased overall wellness (Watson, 2009; Kvernmo, & Heyedahl, 2002). In this regard, having an in-depth knowledge about art media, including their functioning capacities and symbolic meaning, can help contain or release intense emotions based on the amount of reflective distance required to interact with the artwork created (Hinz, 2009). With the additional contribution of Graves-Alcorn & Kagin's (2017) concept of Media Variables within the ETC, also noting the influence of structure and complexity on material use can help clinicians to map the approach to material use along the spectrum of over or underused functioning.

Within art therapy, these findings also indicate that a knowledge of acculturation, shame, cultural history and media properties become critical to creating a treatment plan for First Nations clients. The creative process revealed both abstract images aligned with energy in motion as well as cultural symbols related to the First Nation's Creation story, moontime and uterine health. Following the Creation story as personal metaphor, emergent in the process was the collection of materials in session, which involved venturing out on the land and interacting with the natural world as integral to the reflective journey. It would appear that being in relation to the land and the media was part of being in relation to myself.

The ETC assessment form was helpful in mapping the fluctuations in functioning across self-exploration and material interaction. With reference to natural media in particular, understanding the sensory and kinesthetic aspects of material interaction helped to clarify the blocked areas of my own functioning. Sensory material for instance is described in the ETC as a gentle touching, stroking interaction with verbal comments often recounting external and internal sensations (Hinz 2009). This experience can lead to cathartic release and affective reflection, which were two elements that initially scored low on my own ETC assessment levels and increased over time. A kinesthetic interaction, which includes an energetic, tearing, pounding, kneading and overall effort to manipulate, similarly led to a cathartic release through the use of media as facilitators for action (Hinz, 2009). As a critical finding in this research, the use of cultural and western material lead to an increase in affective, sensorial and kinesthetic functioning, which are generally blocked areas for First Nations populations (Hallet, Want, Chandler, Koopman, Flores & Gehrke, 2007; Kvernmo & Heyedahl, 2002; Müirhead and De Leeuw, 2015).

Discussion

Employing an Indigenous, arts-based and heuristic approach was an efficient methodology to explore the relationship between media and identity. In fact, by directly using art media within this research practice, I was provided with key insights into the process of material interaction to determine my own information processing capacities through the ETC assessment. Following an Indigenous paradigm complemented this process as it provided structural freedom to set my own cultural rhythm and moon cycle, further "[fostering] self-determination through choice and empowerment" (Hunter, Logan, Goulet & Barton, 2006, p. 19). In this regard, the freedom to explore material properties without the burden of stereotyping Indigenous art-making practices allowed me to navigate the narratives of the material themselves as they relate to me. Shame, expectation and stereotyping identity became key challenges within this research, which coincides with the research on Indigenous trauma.

The multigenerational trauma of losing "land, [children, rights,] resources, and political autonomy [as well as] the undermining of cultures, traditions, languages and spirituality" woven into society indeed created shame, fear and the loss of self for me throughout this process (Archibald & Dewar, 2010, p. 17). It was clear upon insight that

my own history of separating the self into reservations and conditional rights based on stereotypes created a void in my own identity, self-regulation, autonomy and positive self-perceptions within my art-making (Kvernmo & Heyedahl, 2002; Hallet, Want, Chandler, Koopman, Flores & Gehrke, 2007). The art-making itself was a challenging process of identity integration that used media to bridge, heal and acknowledge the scars colonization left behind.

As hypothesized, employing an Indigenous art therapy based process provided the space to integrate trauma education, knowledge of art materials and a history of Indigenous communities to explore the identity formation of clients (Kvernmo & Heyedahl, 2002; Hallet, Want, Chandler, Koopman, Flores & Gehrke, 2007). Bicultural identity status, founded to be the primary indicator of wellness for clients who struggle between their minority culture and that of the dominant, became the major finding within this practice. By exploring both First Nations as well as Western media, it was determined that two media strains were needed to understand the potential differences between an assimilated, traditional and bicultural identity within art-making (Watson, 2009; Kvernmo, & Heyedahl, 2002). I found that to focus on primarily on either media led to deregulation within myself while the balance of both properties created balance and clarity.

These findings return me to the initial questions posed at the beginning of this research regarding the overall insights on ETC use, symbolism and role of media in First Nation's assessment building. It would seem that the knowledgeable use of First Nations Media in conjunction with Western media can help art therapists to assess a client's level of acculturation or connection to their First Nations and dominant culture. As a secondary finding, the blend of both materials can aid in assessing and exploring shame, trauma and through media interaction. Using the ETC can determine blocked areas of functioning which can further help both clients and art therapists to assess areas, materials and interactions that trigger multigenerational trauma. Regardless of the media selected, it would appear that the narratives and metaphors generated over the course of this research process seemed to bridge together the narratives of the media, trauma and the history of culture. As seen in Figure 10, connecting to the earth, the body and culture were the three primary symbols that guided the exploration of bicultural identity.

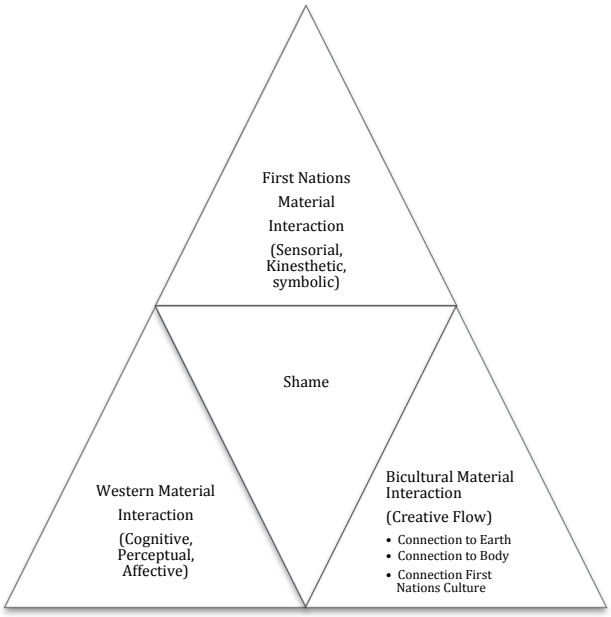

Figure 10. Chart of overall material interaction qualities between Cultural, Western and Bicultural Identity statuses (2018).

Connection to Earth

Following an Indigenous rhythm through the phases of the moon and using natural materials in the art-making seemed to enhance the connection with the earth in this research process. As argued by Doxtator (1998), origin narratives were attached to each narrative, which brought an enriched experience of interconnectedness between the stories of the media and the stories of myself. The corn, for instance, was grown from my own garden from a five-hundred-year-old heirloom seed gathered from my ancestors; the white pine came from a fallen tree on Mohawk First Nations territory that has attached to it a history of resilience and peace within local stories; the leather was cleaned from the body of an animal that brought its life journey to my creation. All of these individual narratives became part of my own story before the art process began, which is what Wilson (2008) describes as relationality in Indigenous research. Creating space to gather media, dialogue with its stories and draw strength from their own life teachings in this regard become a critical part to understanding an indigenous art-making process. In addition to the inclusion of these generational stories of media come the generational

stories of communities, resiliency, restoration, loss and colonization as well (Archibald & Dewar, 2010).

The source of materials, both in First Nations and Western practices, also bring with them stories of disconnection, shame, desire and helplessness. Knowledge of these experiences can negate the naivety that is at times attached to assuming that bringing natural materials for Indigenous clients is the best-decolonized practice. Shame for instance can be attached to not knowing the traditional stories of media or how to use certain medicines; touching these materials can then create more harm than good if not prepared to hold the intergenerational space. An ethical research and art therapy practice must therefore have both the space to honor the generational, ancestral and spiritual narratives clients bring with their artworks as well as the framework to determine their acculturation status and overall functioning. This would entail understanding the material properties of media selection (Hinz, 2009) and knowing that a bicultural identity is linked to wellness (Kvernmo, & Heyedahl, 2002), which may help clients and art therapists foster that relationship between all medias to navigate Indigenous health.

Connection to Body

Reflecting on the use of the Expressive Therapies Continuum, the use of sensorial and kinesthetic practices within First Nations materials seemed to increase body awareness. Through touch, manipulation, and sensation, I felt an increased awareness of my breath, the tensions in the body, the soothing texture of the leather and the energetic release of beading on various surfaces. This experience was missing in my current art therapy practice using Western materials, which seemed to hold me in a symbolic and cognitive space. Solely thinking about identity without being a part of it created anxiety in exploring the concept in this research process. However, by having the tools to ground myself to the Earth and to myself allowed me to pendulate between identity loss and identity connection. Using the properties of the natural materials to ground one's self also relates to Wilson's (2008) description of relationality in Indigenous research.

By connecting to the earth in the ways in which the ancestors did through their relations to the plants, animals, waters and all phenomena in nature, First Nations people can find individual pathways to connect to the body (MacDonald, 2014). Neurological research also states that touch can both activate sensory receptors within the skin to allow

the identification and manipulation of material as well as activate a neurological affective soothing sensation from the brain (Cozolino, 2006, p. 23). In this way, the use of natural materials within this research process can be linked to sensorial and kinesthetic properties that help to enhance affective functioning. Indeed, during times of deregulation within the process, the touch of the leather and the ways in which it absorbed various media soothed my affective experience. Therefore, by incorporating the sensorial and kinesthetic experience of natural materials within an ETC assessment process may provide clients with a link to the body on a biological level as well as a link to culture through affective and symbolic processes (Hinz, 2009).

Connection to Culture

By blending together the narratives and interconnected relations between the self and materials (Doxtator, 1998, Wilson, 2008) as well as the sensorial and kinesthetic properties of material interaction (Hinz, 2009), there was a space created within this art-making process to explore cultural identity. While the narratives acted as teachings to guide and hold my self-reflections on a cognitive and symbolic level, the sense of touch and manipulation allowed me to feel grounded, connected and part of the reflection process. In this regard, the natural materials themselves enhanced the creative experience of identity exploration; I was able to think, create meaning, feel, contain and release the wealth of emotions connected to intergenerational trauma and identity loss (Archibald & Dewar, 2010). During times of shame when Western material took precedence in the process for instance, using the sensorial experience of the leather and the symbolic meaning of the stories acted as containers and energy holders of that emotional pain. However, it was the combination of both media that led to an acceptance of the self because bicultural material use honored both the colonized and restorative self.

Conclusion

As I began this research process, I intended to discover the meaning of using First Nations media as part of an art therapy assessment. I wanted to explore the material properties of cultural objects through the established Expressive Therapies Continuum (Hinz, 2009) framework in hopes to structure Indigenous media within a language understood by art therapist. Linking to my questions posed at the beginning of this research regarding the effectiveness of the ETC, the role of symbolism and emergent

media interaction for First Nation's assessment building, I found that a bicultural use of art materials help to indicate a client's level of acculturation through their use and relation to the materials themselves. Measuring interactions along an ETC assessment and a history of cultural knowledge seemed to aide in assessing and exploring shame, trauma and identity structure. The ETC in particular can determine blocked areas of functioning and possibly indicate materials and interactions that trigger multigenerational trauma. Overall, it would appear that the narratives of the media, including their own history and cultural stories, helped to frame the narratives within myself.

Following the cyclical nature of my First Nations culture in conjunction with the ETC, I began to understand that the materials themselves could be versatile in the ways in which we interact with them (Doxtator, 1998, Wilson, 2008). Leather for instance can activate the sensorial processes through touch, kinesthetic through its manipulation with beads, perceptual and affective through the ways it holds other materials, as well as symbolic and cognitive areas of functioning through the narratives the materials carry with them. These findings indicate that although material interaction can determine levels of affective and cognitive functioning, it is critical to account for the cultural history of the materials used. Expanding the ETC to include a cultural reflective component can help art therapists to understand functioning in the context of multigenerational trauma.

What was also revealed through this research was the role of acculturation within the bicultural use of Western and First Nation's media. It would appear that both the properties of the materials as well as their interconnected histories could be a foundation that holds the exploration of identity. Material properties, if understood by art therapists, can help clients to manage their over and underuses of affective and cognitive functioning to process intergenerational trauma, shame, loss and desire. The narratives, as with the practices of Mohawk First Nations people and many other nations, can then act as teaching tools and mentors for finding the self. This combination of methodologies seems to be achieved by employing an Indigenous research paradigm. By understanding the interconnectedness between land and body, culture and self, communities and others, an Indigenous research paradigm creates a space to acknowledge the interconnectedness of the art therapy practice as well (Wilson, 2008).

Using an additional arts-heuristic approach, this research allowed me to connect to, dialogue with and make reflections on how bicultural material interaction can reside within me as a First Nations person, Art Therapist and Researcher. These methodologies allowed me to follow my own natural process and that of the moon cycle to gather information in a valid, reliable and Indigenous way. Validity was maintained by the consistency within the methodological steps for research as well as through the time, format and set up for art-making. Furthermore, by using systematic forms of measurement, including the ETC assessment form (Riccardi, Hinz, Gotshall, & Nan, 2017) and *Witness Writings* (Allen, 1995), an appropriate and replicable methodological approach helped to draw reliable conclusions from my experience of material interaction. In this regard, making art about myself helped me to understand both art-making and my role within the process which provides a framework for future studies.

The main limitation of this research however, as with most heuristic studies, is the generalizability of its findings to the greater Indigenous population. In this regard, my own self-reflection, material preference and aversion as well as acculturation level will inevitably be different than that of other Indigenous people. Moreover, by excluding cultural media from Inuit, Metis and the other 600 First Nations across Canada, the specificity of material choice may only be relevant to the Mohawk First Nation people of Kahnawà:ke and surrounding communities (Statistics Canada, 2013). However, by understanding that geographic location, flora and fauna and natural landscapes are connected to the stories and histories of each nation, what can be drawn from this study is that land is connected to the body and identity. That to understand each individual is to understand the land, territory and history they are connected to, which will differ from nation to nation (MacDonald, 2014). Through this perspective, material selection may therefore be generalized to the unceded traditional territories of Indigenous peoples.

Further recommendations to expand this research would be to involve Mohawk First Nations participants within the same research process. Drawing from multiple sets of data may increase the validity of these findings as well as identify the differences in material interaction along the ETC assessment framework. This may further incorporate Media Dimension Variables research through the exploration of structure and the task complexity involved within each media interaction to deepen the understanding of the

overall art material interaction (Graves-Alcorn and Kagin's, 2017). Later studies may involve the material and historical interactions of other First Nations populations to decrease the large gap in Indigenous research (Watson, 2009). Encouraging the use of an indigenous paradigm may increase the relevancy of research findings for Indigenous populations and communities as well as set the foundation for ethical practices.

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Appendix

Art Therapist Self-Inquiry Scale

Please Rate Your Artistic Process and Product Today:

Kinesthetic (Movement/Release of Energy)

1	2	3	4	5
Limited Movement				Movement fully Describes Experience

Sensory (Involvement with Sensation)

1	2	3	4	5
Limited Sensory Involvement				Sensation fully Describes Experience

Perceptual (Involvement with Formal Elements of Artistic Expression)

1	2	3	4	5
Form is not prevalent				Form, Line, Pattern Describes Experience

Affective (Accessed and/or Expressed Emotion)

1	2	3	4	5
Emotion is not prevalent				Emotional Expression Describes Experience

Cognitive (Effortful Thought was Involved)

1	2	3	4	5
Conscious Thought was not prevalent				Deliberate Analysis Describes Experience

Symbolic (Symbolic Content was Important)

1 2 3 4 5

Symbolism or metaphor not prevalent Symbolism or Metaphor Describes Experience

Creative (Experienced Satisfaction of Self-Expression)

1 2 3 4 5

Creative Distance Full Immersion in creation Describes Experience

Please Describe Your Typical Preference for/Aversion to the Artistic Processes (What does your recent portfolio look like):

Kinesthetic (Movement/Release of Energy)

1 2 3 4 5

Aversion to the Process (I want to stop the experience) Preference for the process (I could do it for hours)

Sensory (Involvement with Sensation)

1 2 3 4 5

Aversion to the Process (I want to stop the experience) Preference for the process (I could do it for hours)

Perceptual (Involvement with Formal Elements of Artistic Expression)

1 2 3 4 5

Aversion to the Process (I want to stop the experience) Preference for the process (I could do it for hours)

Affective (Accessed and/or Expressed Emotion)

1 2 3 4 5

Aversion to the Process (I want to stop the experience) Preference for the process (I could do it for hours)

Cognitive (Effortful or Analytical Thought)

1 2 3 4 5

Aversion to the Process
(I want to stop the experience)

Preference for the process
(I could do it for hours)

Symbolic (Symbolic or Metaphorical)

1 2 3 4 5

Aversion to the Process
(I want to stop the experience)

Preference for the process
(I could do it for hours)

Creative (Experienced Satisfaction of Self-Expression)

1 2 3 4 5

Aversion to the Process
(I want to stop the experience)

Preference for the process
(I could do it for hours)

Learning from the Artwork Created: Self-Reflection on Studio and Practice

1. What did I learn from my experience in relation to who I am as an art therapist?

_____
_____
_____

2. Which materials are missing in my studio or in the art therapy sessions?

_____
_____
_____

3. With which unfamiliar materials/techniques should I experiment further?

_____
_____
_____

4. How does my adaptability demonstrate itself in my typical practice? How did it demonstrate itself today?

_____

_____
_____

5. What will I keep in mind as I formulate future art therapy interventions?

_____
_____
_____

6. Other notes to myself:

_____

Figure 2. Art Therapist Self Inquiry Scale. Riccardi, M., Hinz, L., Gotshall, K., & Nan, J. (2017, November). *Experimenting with the Expressive Therapies Continuum: Reflection upon an Arts-Based Assessment through Heart and Mind*. Workshop presented at the 48th annual conference of the American Art Therapy Association, Albuquerque, NM.

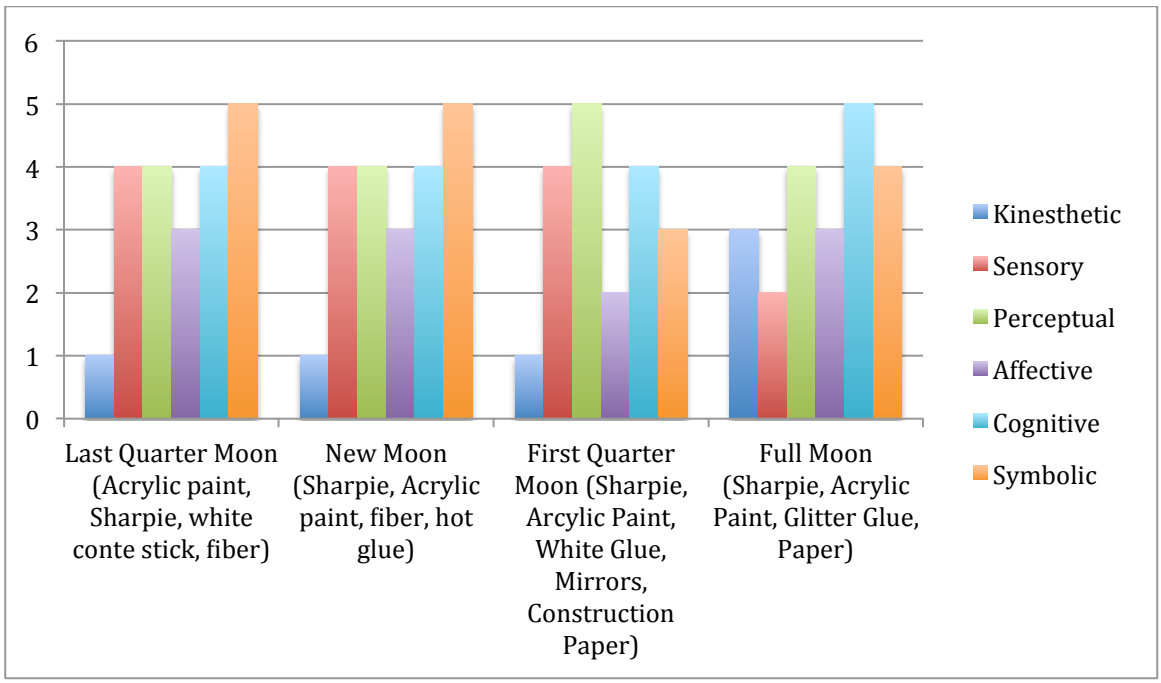

Figure 3. Graph of Western ETC levels. Moon cycle and material by level (2018).

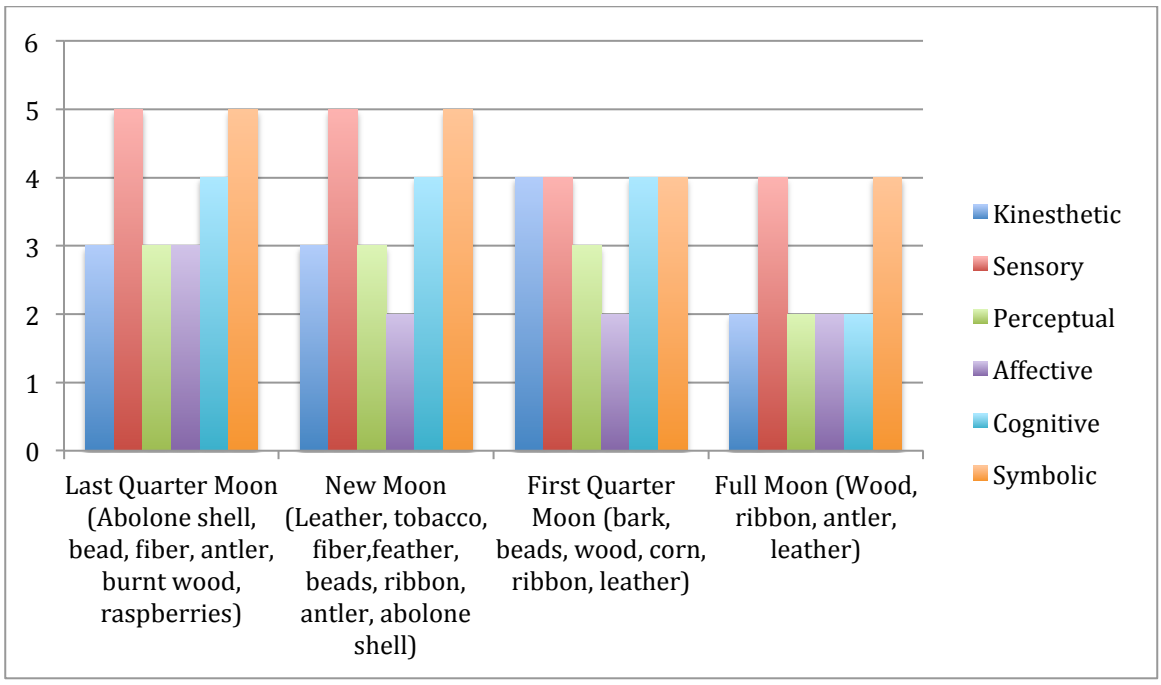

Figure 4. Graph of First Nations ETC levels. Moon cycle and material by level (2018).

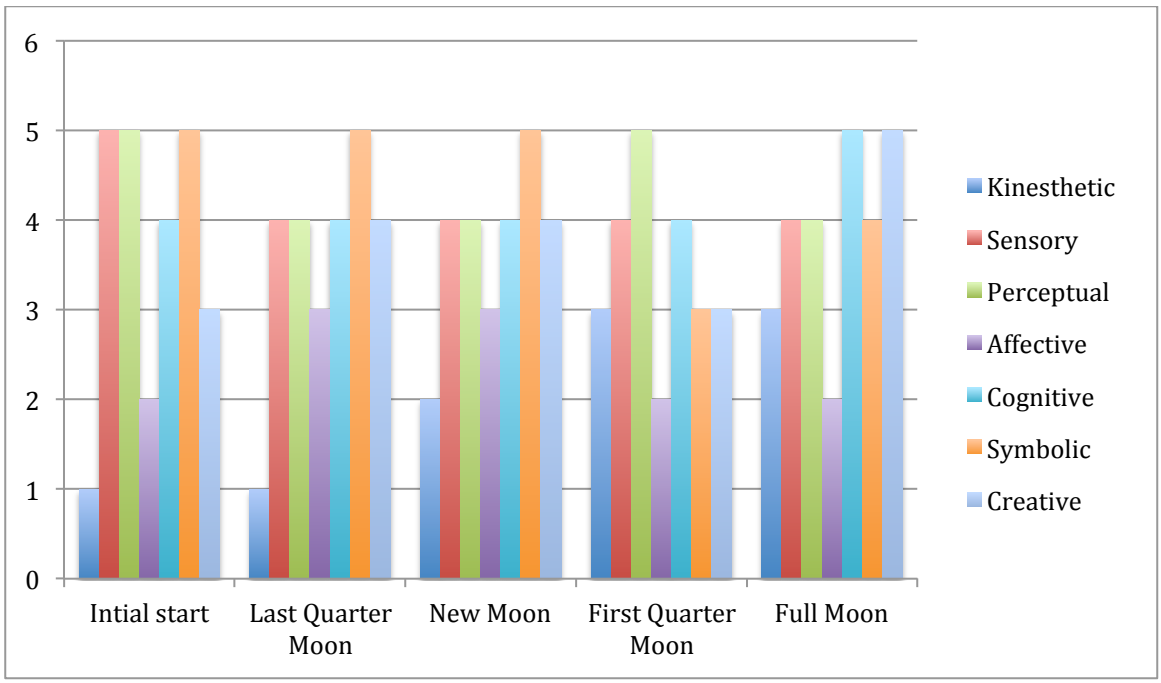

Figure 5. Graph of overall ETC levels based on the average between the Western and First Nations graphs. Moon cycle by level (2018).